Trust under Pressure: Sustaining International Partnership of Higher Education

A Dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Arts at George Mason University

by

Qing Gao
Master of Science
George Mason University, 2007
Bachelor of Management
Fudan University, 2005

Director: Joy Hughes, Professor.
Department of Information Sciences and Technology

Summer Semester 2021
George Mason University
Fairfax, VA

# DEDICATION

This is dedicated to my wife Mengsha Xu, and my three children Pinhang, Sangyang, and Lingyi.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

# LIST OF TABLES

# LIST OF FIGURES

# LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

**ABSTRACT**

TRUST UNDER PRESSURE: SUSTAINING INTERNATIONAL PARTNERSHIP OF HIGHER EDUCATION

Qing Gao, D.A.

George Mason University, 2021

Dissertation Director: Dr. Joy Hughes

This dissertation delineates the international partnership as a fundamental element of the internationalization practice of higher education institutions. The sustainment of internationalization efforts in higher education has been challenged by the changing external political and social environment. American Confucius Institute programs that are the joint educational collaborations between higher educational institutions in the US and China for offering Chinese language teaching and cultural awareness activities have encountered external pressures in recent years. The author adopts the frame of the trust study and uses two Confucius Institute programs as case studies to analyze the relationships of international partnerships, particularly under external pressure. The research models adopted from organizational trust studies and organizational communication assessment provide accesses to examine the trust levels, trust development, and dynamics of the partnership related to external pressures in the two

cases of Confucius Institute programs. This dissertation aims to fill the gap of empirical analysis of international partnership and lay the ground for systematic studies of relationships among international collaborations in higher education. The findings and recommendations of this dissertation can be a resource to inform further research and administrative practice in international efforts of higher education.

**CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION**

We are living in an ever-changing world. The pace and effect of globalization influence and challenge our work and life every day. Rather than the feelings of caution, vigilance, nervousness, and disdain that emerged among most parts of private and public sectors, higher education has been embracing the notion of "the world is flat" and facilitating "the third Industrial Revolution" without much hesitation. The relentless efforts of internationalization have been undertaken by higher education institutions as their spontaneous responses to globalization.

Internationalization in higher education has evolved in its scale, scope, and priority. The transformational efforts of internationalization include transnational mobility of students, faculty, and academic endeavors. Internationalization becomes a strategic factor and focal point for higher education practitioners and researchers.

It is remarkable that universities from across the world have embarked the internationalization efforts and expanded collaborations and partnerships with counterparts from other countries to provide more international offerings for their students. However, cultivation of the relationships with international partners from different cultures is far from being empirically documented and discussed. Particularly, when the threats of isolationism, monoculturalism, hyper-nationalism, and even racism under the inward-looking anti-global political and social climate are challenging

international programs, higher education institutions must stay resilient and find ways to sustain the international collaborative partnerships strategically and practically. This study examines the international partnership in higher education with special attention on the external political pressures. In the opening chapter, the stage is set by discussing the history, concepts, overall development of internationalization and international partnership, the US-China higher education interactions, and social and political influence on internationalization as the contextual background of the entire study.

**Section One: Development of International Focuses in American Higher Education**

After the end of World War II, American higher education institutions have followed the request from the United States federal government to collaborate with international intellectual organizations and individuals to fortress the democracy-oriented world order, as well as serving as a strategic approach to provide foreign aid in international alliances (Kerr, 1991; Wiley & Root, 2003). The US federal government implemented systematic efforts and offered financial support for international operations in American higher education, exemplified by the National Defense Education Act and the Fulbright program in the middle of the 20th century. With government funding, international programs emerged in higher education institutions, such as international and regional studies teaching and research, language training, and study abroad programs. Incentives and sponsorship from the federal government for increasing international intellectual impact, and the demands from faculty and students to better explore a

culturally diverse world motivated American higher education institutions to explore and participate in internationalization (Goodwin & Nacht, 2009).

As the US continued to expand its global power – competition in global consuming markets, growth of financial and political influence and interest in other countries, and dominance of military strength deployed worldwide – the demand on higher education for inviting global talents and participating in the global knowledge and technology development and exchanges had surged (Bok, 2020). Non-governmental sector actively involved in higher education and joined the efforts to advance the international educational outreach and engagement. Financial support as well as other tangible and intangible resources from the private sector, such as scholarships and fellowships for international students and scholars, international business administration studies and consultations, transnational patent transfers, global internship placements, professional development, executive educations on international practices, and collaborations on developing global campuses, have pushed forward the internationalization in diverse and creative ways. Meanwhile the general reduction in government funding to higher education has driven colleges and universities more entrepreneurial, eager to seek external financial resources and partners in both public and private sectors. International programs in higher education could draw attention and funding resources globally (McBurnie & Ziguras, 2006). It was believed that

internationalized higher education institutions were better positioned and prepared to compete for global resources.

Since the late 20th century, the rationale of internationalization in higher education has shifted from political agenda to economic competitiveness and global awareness (Callan, 2000).  President Bill Clinton (2000) stated the new rational in a memorandum on international education policy as

> To continue to compete successfully in the global economy and to maintain our role as a world leader, the United States needs to ensure that its citizens develop a broad understanding of the world, proficiency in other languages, and knowledge of other cultures" (Clinton, 2000, p 750).

As a result, American higher education institutions prioritized international learning and expanded global educational offering at a fast pace, as an increasing number of international students attended classes on American campuses and domestic students participated in study abroad programs, enrolled in foreign educational offerings, and took advantage of online and long-distance technologies to learn from international colleges and universities (Bartell, 2003; Delgado-Márquez, Hurtado-Torres, & Bondar, 2011). The economic and commercial demands and effects from globalization are believed as stimulative forces of international academic mobility, which consider higher education as a commodity to be traded in the global market (Altbach, 2004; Altbach & Knight, 2007). Increasing academic mobility including the flows of persons and programs, and academic collaborations including joint efforts of research and teaching as main contents of internationalization in higher education have been discussed by practitioners and

scholars. The continued development in the internationalization of higher education evolved in the areas of international branding and franchising, ranking, cultural homogenization, joint degree offering, MOOCs, and transnational mobility programs, which have drawn interests of academic research (Knight & de Wit, 2018).

Higher education has become closely tied to global issues. Understanding global issues and developing intercultural knowledge is no longer an option but a necessity in higher education curriculum, which requires acceleration of internationalization (de Wit, 2002). Meanwhile, incidents and crises in other parts of the world have impacted how international programs are planned and implemented. For instance, the biomedical crisis of Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) in 2003 dramatically limited students' and faculty's global mobility to those affected areas. Many study abroad programs were canceled, and joint training and research programs were halted (Feast & Bretag, 2005). A major earthquake that rocked Haiti in 2011 put a number of American study abroad students in danger. The US-Haiti joint educational and research initiatives suffered serious setbacks (Fischer & Fuller, 2010). The COVID-19 coronavirus global pandemic outbroken in 2020 became the most recent example that higher education can be acutely and drastically impacted by global issues, and such impact from global public health disaster is still undergoing at this point leaving profound damages and numerous uncertainties in higher education practice.

Today, most of American colleges and universities offer a wide range of offerings on international subjects. students are expected to expose global topics and experiences through class teaching, campus activities, study abroad program, and foreign language

acquisitions. More students from other countries are recruited to study in the US (Bok, 2020). Faculty members are demanded to internationalize subject matters and provide international content to a diverse body of students. International collaborations on joint research become an institutional priority at many higher education institutions. Information technology and other innovative practices help explore effective strategies and approaches to institutionalize the efforts of international education.

## Section Two: Internationalization in Higher Education

As the global dynamics has been closely affected economics, politics, and educations, holistic plan of internationalization in higher education is imperative. Beside the competitiveness in the global arena for potential employers, the demand from student bodies to learn about the world also motivated higher education's pace on internationalization. A study by the Council on Foreign Relations study in 2016 found that 81% of college graduates believed it was "essential" or "very important" to keep up with world events, and 56% shared they needed to understand foreign cultures (Council on Foreign Relations, 2016).

In general, internationalization in higher education includes common elements in practice: international students, study abroad, world language teaching and learning, faculty and scholar exchange, joint research program, internationalized curriculum development, and linkages and cooperation with international counterparts (Knight & de Wit, 1997; Menstenhauser, 2002; Scott, 1998). These elements fall into three categories: students, faculty, and organization.

**Student**

Student populations in higher education are moving toward ever greater diversity, which reflects broader demographic and social changes in the US and around the world. It is anticipated that approximately eight million students worldwide will study outside of their home countries in another five years (IIE, 2020). In American higher education, the new enrollment of international students has been consecutively decreasing since 2016 which is correlated with the increasing anti-global perception in American political and social life. International students serve as an undeniable actor as a financial source. They usually pay higher fees and tuition, and also spend enormous amounts of money in the host countries. The Institution of International Education conducted an *Open Doors Report* indicating that in 2019 over one million international students enrolled in American higher education, constituting 5.3% of the total enrollments in the US, and spent $45 billion US dollars to the American economy and sustained over 415,000 American jobs with 62% of primary sources of funding outside of the US (IIE, 2020).

For study fields, 20.5% of international students pursue engineering studies followed by 19.1% in mathematics and computer sciences (IIE, 2020). These statistics show a noticeable disparity among the other disciplines such as the humanities, where 2.2% of international students studied communication and journalism, 2.0% pursued intensive English, and education only included 1.5% of international students (IIE, 2020). STEM areas have significantly more attracted international students than other disciplines. In terms of the place of origin, Open Door report indicates that China (34.6%) and India (18.0%) were the two countries mostly interested in studying in the US

(IIE, 2020). Students from China and India combined together constituted over half of the total population of international students. International students bring their values, language, culture, and educational backgrounds to American campuses, which adds to and enriches culturally diverse learning environments. American colleges and universities tend to demonstrate their multicultural and inclusive campus environment by showcasing the high number of international students on campus in order to promote themselves.

Compared with US in-bound international students, the number of American students participating in study abroad programs remains low, but growing. According to the *Open Door* report, the number of American students participating in study abroad in 2019 was 347,099, an increase of 1.6% from the previous year (IIE, 2020). Despite the slightly growing interest of study abroad, American higher education institutions confronted several issues in terms of study abroad. First, the majority (64.9%) of study abroad participation are short-term, including summer programs of eight weeks or less duration. Long-term study abroad programs for one academic year or longer only constitute 2.2% of total study abroad students (IIE, 2020). Without long-term exposure and immersion into foreign society and culture, the benefits of the global study are decreased. Also, there is a notable and consistent gender and ethnic difference in the percentage of students participating in study abroad programs. As *Open Doors* report indicates, female students constituted 67.3% of the student body compared to 32.7% of male, which has been consistent in the past two decades (IIE, 2020). Also, when analyzing the ethnicity of students, White led the list with an overwhelming 68.7% in contrast to 10.9% for Hispanic-Americans, 8.9% for Asian/Pacific Islanders, and 6.4%

for Black or African Americans. These statistics demonstrate that despite the importance of study abroad, not all students are taking advantage of the benefits the program provides and that universities should be striving for more diversity in study abroad. The location of the US students studying abroad continues to be primarily to Europe with 55.7%, followed by Latin America with 13.8%, Asia with 11.1%, Oceania with 4.4%, Sub-Saharan Africa with 3.9%, and the Middle East with 2.3% (IIE, 2020).  Other notable factors to analyze when assessing the effectiveness of higher education's internationalization efforts are academic level and fields. 86.3% of study abroad students are undergraduates. Study abroad most often occurs at the junior level, with 33.4% of students participating. In regard to academic fields, business and management capture 20.7% of the study abroad population, then, followed by social sciences with 17.0%, physical and life sciences with 8.1%, health professions with 7.1%, and foreign language and international studies with 6.9% (IIE, 2020). Despite the explicit need to prepare students to understand other cultures, foreign languages, and non-Western countries, studies on those disciplines remain very low.

**Faculty**

Faculty play a pivotal role in the level of internationalization within teaching, research, and service. The internationalized curriculum that enables students to experience other cultures requires faculty to carefully design and accommodate the international and intercultural contents, as well as issue-related comparative approaches. Faculty involvement in international initiatives is the key to facilitate the

internationalization of teaching students who graduate from American colleges and universities (Bond, 2003).

However, Altbach (2004) indicates that American faculty have less commitment to internationalization compared with faculty peers from other western countries. Based on a 1992 survey by Carnegie Foundation on 15 nations, only 62% of American faculty believe that a scholar must read literature from abroad to keep up with scholarly developments, compared with 90% of the faculty from other thirteen countries who believe so. Also, "upwards of 80 percent of the faculty in thirteen countries value connections with scholars in other countries. A little over half the American professoriate are in agreement" (p. 148). The report indicates that American professors are keen to deal with and teach international students, and to participate in conferences abroad. However, American faculty are less likely to incorporate foreign academic work into their curriculum (Altbach, 2004).

Additional research based on a quantitative survey with a sample size of 1,027 faculty members conducted by ACE in 2002 also demonstrates that while 67% of faculty value international awareness, 36% of these faculty members do not agree that it is important to teach students about other cultures and global issues in undergraduate curriculum. More than 25% believe that international education is useful, but not necessary (Saiya & Hayward, 2013).

Internationalization of faculty is not a simple process. It has to be part of a college or university's institutional strategies for faculty development, to include professional development, academic opportunities to travel abroad, and rewarding practice with tenure

and promotion (Saiya & Hayward, 2013). Changing beliefs and ideals do not necessarily lead to the change of practices, nor vice versa. The practices of student and faculty exchanges must reflect on and be guided by the internationalization strategies, which should include institutional development in governance, operations, services, and human resources (Knight, 2004). Besides, effective internationalization strategies should also take the practice of cross-border cooperation with international partners into account.

**Organization for cooperation**

International cooperation is usually based on partnerships which are cooperative agreements between one or more entities toward a common goal or completing a joint project with a spirit of cooperation (Kinser & Green, 2009). Sutton (2010) pays attention to the functions and outcomes of partnerships, and divides partnerships into exchange partnerships, transactional partnerships, and transformational partnerships. Exchange partnerships are relatively low-key collaborations in terms of breadth, depth, and length, with only a few students and faculty traveling back and forth. They are usually not reflected in the institutional mission or its strategic planning. Transactional partnerships refer to collaborating in order to share resources; these tend to have focused goals in a product-oriented fashion. Such a partnership helps establish a fluid and flexible network to support faculty and units' interests. Transformational partnerships are long-term and relationship-oriented which develop common goals over time with shared resources. Such a partnership extends the capacity of internationalization with institutional platforms for joint teaching, research, and community service. Transformational partnerships may begin with specific projects, but they also begin with the understanding

and belief that more projects will be generated over time. They are expansive, ever-growing with sustainable communications mechanisms. Partners focus as much on the relationship as on the products of collaboration and are committed to working through differences and offering support in times of crisis.

**Section Three: Higher Education Relations Between China and the US**

China and the US operate the two largest higher education systems today. According to China's Ministry of Education statistics, there were 4,568 higher education institutions with 48,442,922 students in China in 2019 (MOE, 2020). The recent date from National Center for Education Statistics shows that there were 4,298 degree-granting postsecondary institutions in the US enrolling 19,765,598 students in Fall 2018 (NCES, 2019). The exchanges and cooperation in higher education between China and the US are not only potent for the international operation and development of the higher education institutions in both China and the US, but also set a tone to the global dynamics of higher education.

The modern relationship in higher education between these two countries began from the ratification of *Understanding on the Exchange of Students and Scholar* signed in October 1978 by Zhou Peiyuan, acting chairman of the China Science and Technology Association, and Richard Atkinson, Director of the National Science Foundation. This agreement was then included as one of the appendixes to the bilateral diplomatic normalization documents in January 1979, which presented the vision of top political leaders of both countries at the time recognizing the importance of establishing academic and educational relationships between both societies as an anchor of their own diplomatic

policies and strategies. As reflecting George H. W. Bush's political life in the

documentary film *41*, he recalled his conversation with Chinese leader Deng Xiaoping in

the 1970s in the subject of allowing a certain number of Chinese students to study in the

US. Bush envisioned a tough negotiation with a great possibility of encountering an

unwelcoming attitude from his Chinese counterpart based on his previous experience in

dealing with leaders of Soviet Union who have been reluctant in expanding educational

exchanges with the West in the fear of challenging its own ideological control

domestically. To Bush's great surprise, the Chinese leader was not only fully embracing

Bush's suggestion, but also responded with a counterproposal of a much larger scale of

student exchanges (Roth, 2012). Exchanges of students and scholars opened the door of

massive personnel mobility in higher education between the two countries. In 2019,

372,532 Chinese students and 42,863 scholars were studying in the US (IIE, 2020).

Besides personnel exchanges, another important mechanism - the *1979 US.-China*

*Science and Technology Cooperation Agreement*, has facilitated a complex academic

relationship consisting of higher education institutions, governmental agencies,

professional societies, corporates, nongovernmental organizations, and individual

contacts between the two countries. China and the US have become each other's the main

partner in scientific and technological collaborations (Suttmeier, 2014). Enormous

attention and investments have been made to serve as international education destinations

for many students and scholars, and establish collaborative mechanisms to sustain long-

term development. For both the US and China, establishments of institutional

partnerships with colleges and universities of each other have outnumbered those with

other countries. Those bilateral partnerships have bolstered and supported a variety of international joint programs including joint degree and dual-degree programs, joint ventures of branch campuses, and collaborative research projects (Bullock, 2017).

The challenges of, however, establishing and maintaining the US-China academic and educational collaborations in higher education institutions can not be ignored. Those issues including a greatly unbalanced number of students visiting each other – 32:1 was the ratio between Chinese students to the US and American students to China in 2019 (IIE, 2020), a deficit of financial investment to joint efforts, the overwhelming interests in science and technology comparing to humanity subjects have been challenging the healthy and sustainable development of bilateral collaboration in higher education. Besides, there are four aspects posing fundamental threats to the flourishing relationship: limited bilingual communication skills, lack of cross-cultural understandings, incomplete or incompatible administrative and financial structure, and societal and political disrupt.

The deficit of language command between the US and China is enormous. The English language is a required course throughout elementary and secondary schools in China while the majority of American schools do not have any Chinese language offering. Almost all collaborative business in the higher education field between the two countries has been conducted in English. It brings issues for communicating and capturing the subtle messages between the two sides as well as the accuracy of expressions in legal documents.

Cross-cultural competence is crucial for understanding each other's behavior and thinking patterns. One typical example in higher education is to understand Chinese

students in American college classrooms. American instructors often find Chinese students stay quiet in classrooms thus are unsure if they are actively participating in classroom learning activities, while Chinese students have been taught to be quiet in Chinese classrooms as showing respect to their teachers. In higher education administration, cross-cultural understanding is needed in every element of international operation and engagement, from outreach to planning, from scheduling a visit to understanding the power structure, from approval process to program execution. Lack of cross-cultural understanding lessens the effectiveness and efficiency of joint education and research programs, and may cause unnecessary delay and misunderstandings throughout the process.

For US-China higher education exchange programs, the administrative and financial structures between the two sides are greatly different. General speaking, while American higher education is a faculty-driven decentralized managerial structure, Chinese higher education is a policy-driven centralized structure. American colleges and universities tend to engage communities and private sectors for diversifying financial sources, Chinese universities rely on governmental funding. Mitigating the differences and building a functional joint collaborative structure is imperative for long-term sustainable development.

A range of political, social, economic, historical, and ideological issues have complicated the bilateral relationships and exacerbated the public mistrust. The concerns about the higher education exchanges and collaborations between the US and China exist in both societies. In the US, those concerns range from the interference of academic

freedom, censorship of information, intellectual property theft, to the perception of a growing number of Chinese student enrollment taking over opportunities of domestic students. Ironically, Pew Research survey in February 2021 found that although 80% of Americans considered it was good for American higher education institutions to accept international students, but 55% of them supported limits on Chinese students which made the largest component of international students by a wide margin (Silver, Devin, & Huang, 2021). In China, public concerns with the US for higher education exchanges include racism, insufficient public safety, hate crimes, cultural bias against China, visa restrictions on Chinese students and scholars, inconsistency of US international policies, and anxiety and lack of mental support for Chinese individuals using a second language. The recent deterioration of US-China relations exacerbated those concerns and mistrusts. Scholars and practitioners in higher education must carefully review and understand the social and political dynamics not only for higher education exchanges between the US and China, but for all internationalization efforts in every part of the world.

**Section Four: Navigation in External Environment**

In recent time, the patterns of internationalization in higher education encountered political and social challenges in many parts of the world. The political impact on higher education in the United States was exemplified by the repeated undertakes of the Trump administration to impose travel restrictions on citizens from predominantly Muslim countries from entering the border of the United States (so called "Muslim ban 1.0, 2.0, and 3.0") from 2017 to 2018. In Europe, the Brexit Referendum in the United Kingdoms and escalated confrontations along with the terrorist attacks in Manchester and London

between migrant Muslim community and domestic nationalists raised concerns of social tolerance. Nationalist governments in Poland and Hungary demonstrated right-wing politicians taking over the political power. Those developments of polarized ideology which questioned the shared global community concept and its commitment to address major global issues that human being are facing such as poverty, health, climate change, natural disaster, renewable energy, etc., have been challenging the reasons and operations of higher education internationalization. The outbreak of the COVID-19 Coronavirus pandemic in 2020 leading to an unprecedented public health crisis changing the global landscape, has had a drastic impact on virtually every aspect of higher education practice including internationalization and transnational exchanges.

Public trust and confidence in higher education have been eroding in recent years. 2018 Gallup report found that more than half of American adults had lost confidence in higher education, the first time in the US (Jones, 2018). Concerns about ideological influence and costs of higher education drove the decline of public trust (Kanelos, 2018). Distrust and criticisms on higher education in the US are not new. Besides questioning whether academic standards were proper to fulfill the demands of the job market, ideological concern has provoked scrutiny and attacks on higher education. Commentators have criticized the left-wing influence generated and amplified on school campuses since the late1960s (Bok, 2020). Debates regarding the core knowledge structure and relevancy including whether the teaching of Western civilization values should be prevailing and compulsory in American colleges and universities in the late

1980s manifested the dramatic diverging understanding about American higher education.

Against such backdrop, the skepticism about internationalization in higher education reflected the mindset of suspicious and reinforced the view that higher education did not serve the general public (AGB, 2020). The concerns regarding international student recruitment to deprive enrollment opportunities of American students and job placements of American citizens. The general public who was critical of international efforts in higher education also followed the federal government agencies' sentiment that American higher education is vulnerable and naïve on the loss of intellectual property to other countries, particularly China, therefore international connections and partnerships might pose a risk of national security and provide access to universities' protected technologies by foreign forces (AGB, 2020).

While the evidence of internationalization of higher education strengthening universities and bringing benefits to the local communities have been obvious and sufficient, the sentiment of suspicion and contempt against international efforts have been growing deeper. The dividing political views in American society domestically and the rising power of China in the global stage internationally boosted such sentiment and forged an increasingly negative atmosphere of international partnerships in American higher education.

Higher education internationalization is a set of operational programs and efforts in response to the process of globalization. A commitment to global understanding, respect for diverse cultures, and an aspiration to build an open society welcoming

cooperation and partnerships between different political, cultural, economic, and religious partners are embedded in the concept of internationalization (Albach, 2004; Knight, 1999). The anti-global inward-looking populism has claimed that those concepts of the global community are not universally accepted and agreed, which is troubling for higher education.

Global political and social realities are changing the mobility of implementation of internationalization programs. The immigration and travel restrictions by the Trump administration, if these continue under the new administration, will dramatically impact students and faculty mobility from and to Muslim countries, and undermine joint educational and research efforts (NAFSA, 2020). The funding cuts experienced by international collaboration, research, and exploration abroad programs including Title VI and Fulbright-Hays programs threaten the sustainable development of the institutional capacity to deliver global educational offerings and diversity (NHA, 2019). With the rise of these movements and increasingly polarized society, more people may come to believe that global efforts are not safe, appropriate, sustainable, and needed, which may prevent both domestic and foreign individuals from participating in international programs. The anti-global sentiment may be stocked by certain social groups inside the higher education campus and will discourage international students and faculty from coming to the US to study, teach, and conduct research.

Crisis usually presents itself as both challenge and opportunity. The concerns and anxieties related to the sharp opposition between anti-global and pro-global in the society require a careful way to reconcile. Education has proven to be the main element of

successful reconciliation during the course of human history. Internationalization of higher education has an opportunity to serve this role in reconciliation, as the promotion of international solidarity, since people-to-people exchanges and the promotion of mutual respect across communities can deescalate the tension between extremes. For higher education practitioners, sustaining international partnerships has become more important at this critical time. This research aims to discuss the dynamics of international partnerships in higher education when encountering external pressures during crisis situations.

### Section Five: Research Statement

While higher education scholars and practitioners recognize the importance of international partnership as a key element of internationalization strategies, the lack of empirical studies shows a gap in the knowledge. Essentially, international partnership in higher education is about interorganizational relationship building and retaining. It involves multi-level analysis of relationships. Trust is a key attribute of the relationship. Scholars from a variety of disciplines conceptualize trust and conduct research at interpersonal and interorganizational levels. However, there is virtually no study on trust in the higher education context.

As an organization, the higher education institution survives by making sense of and giving sense to its surrounding environment (Sutcliffe, 2001). With a changing environment of polarized social tendency which has been questioning and pressing on the higher education institutions' international efforts, the solidarity and sustainability of international partnerships need to be researched.

The purpose of this research is to offer an examination on international partnerships focusing on a particular type of partnership that has experienced extraordinary negative pressure to disband. The research uses a theoretical framework of organizational trust and communication studies. The case study methodology is utilized to measure the relationship and trust between partner universities of their joint Confucius Institute programs, which in the United States have been under intense political pressure since early 2018. The study assesses the effectiveness of partnerships and collaborative strategies created to respond to the challenging environment.

This research intends to explore the following questions:

1.     How can the individual and organizational relationships involved with the international partnership in higher education be examined?

2.     How is trust of the international partnership related to the institutional internationalization at the higher education institution?

3.     What is the process of trust development between international partners in higher education?

4.     What factors influence the development of trust in international partnerships in higher education?

5.     How is the degree of trust between partners impacted as external scrutiny and challenge intensifies?

6.     How do partners communicate the perspectives and approaches of addressing the external pressure?

7.     How does the trust between partners contribute to respond external pressure?

8.	How do higher education institutions interact with external environment and adjust themselves, particularly with respect to their communication practices?

By exploring these questions, this study provides a foundation for further research in international cooperation and partnerships in higher education.

## Section Six: Significance of the Study

The increasingly anti-global social and political environment is disconcerting for sustaining internationalization efforts in higher education. The research for strategical and practical improvement in building and maintaining international partnership is much needed. However, little empirical scholarship work has been published on this important subject. This study examines the international partnership development and sustainment with intentions to contribute to the body of scholarly work in higher education administration.

In details, the study is meaningful in regard to understanding the experience of the international partnership through the practitioners' angle who have facilitated and implemented the international joint programs on university campuses. The first-person experiences and observations of insiders were recorded and analyzed to develop trustworthy perspectives for exploring best practices and pitfalls during the process of developing and sustaining international partnerships.

In addition, well-utilized trust research framework from the business administration field inspires this study to conceptualize the abstract construct of relationship in higher education and make the in-depth examination possible and logical. This study verifies the adaptability through case studies with a comprehensive

understanding of the attributes of higher education so that the trust study models can be better situated and then employed for higher education research.

Finally, this study recognizes a complex of levels of relationships in international partnership in higher education and synthesizes the cross-level paradigm to understand the dynamics and interactions within the international partnership programs. This effort provides opportunities to analyze the effects of external challenges on international programs at both personal and institutional levels and make sense the reactions and responses of the universities.

Therefore, this study substantially extends the current literature regarding the internationalization of higher education. It is hopeful that the study will be of benefit to educators and researchers by developing meaningful exercises of encouraging, advocating, supporting, protecting, and strengthening higher education internationalization, and fostering a broad scale of consensus both inside and outside of university campuses of cherishing the value of educating global citizens in response to narrow-minded and ill-advised political pressures.

**Section Seven: Overview and Structure of the Dissertation**

In this chapter, the overall background of the research has been provided. The identification of the research problem leads to delineating the purposes of the investigation and the research questions to be addressed in the following chapters.

The dissertation consists of six chapters altogether. This first chapter outlines the context of the research and states the research problem. The second chapter is an overview of literature related to internationalization and international partnership in

higher education and introduction of the theoretical and analytical framework of trust study that is adopted from the organizational study field. The third chapter provides a thorough discussion of research methodology. The fourth chapter elaborates on Confucius Institute programs in the US as the case study of this research is focusing on. The fifth chapter reports the themes and findings from the case study research and responds to the research questions. The sixth chapter finally concludes the overall study with indications, implications, and recommendations.

# CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter presents an academic discussion of relevant literature pertaining to the internationalization conceptions, strategies, and practices in higher education. The review of literature related to internationalization in higher education includes its definition, scope, impact, and expectations. The previous research suggests that international cooperation and partnership as the pillar of the overall strategy of internationalization. The literature review on the subject of international partnership in higher education presents its functions, forms, and types to inform this study for the investigation of the relationship within the international partnership. The concept of trust as a key element of the relationship of partnership development is introduced, which allows the detailed investigation to understand the multiple levels of relationships within the partnerships.

## Section One: Internationalization in Higher Education

The concept of international dimension in higher education has transcended from a marginal component of higher education practice to the internationalization as a strategic and mainstream factor as over the past two decades. Numerous research and reports have been dedicated to the topics of analyzing rational, contexts, effects, factors, and strategies of internationalization, as well as recommending the best practices to improve the approaches and practices of internationalization worldwide (Knight & de Wit, 2018). The literature review in this study begins with definition and terminology to explore the details of internationalization.

**Definition of internationalization**

The term internationalization has been increasingly applied in the higher education community. However, scholars in the field of higher education studies have interpreted internationalization in a variety of ways. For instance, de Wit and Knight (1999) define internationalization as a process at the institutional level that integrates an international dimension into the teaching, research, and service functions. NAFSA: Association of International Educators defines internationalization as "the conscious effort to integrate and infuse international, intercultural, and global dimensions into the ethos and outcomes of postsecondary education" (NAFSA, 2008). More scholars connect the definition of internationalization with the term of globalization. Van der Wende (1997) suggests that internationalization refers to any systematic initiative and effort in higher education in response to the demand and challenge related to globalization. This definition suggests that globalization is a prerequisite position related to internationalization, that internationalization is passively following the pace of globalization. Altbach (2004) defines internationalization as the specific policies and programs that are designed to cope with or to exploit globalization. He differentiates globalization from internationalization in that globalization is to be broad economic, technological, and scientific trends that directly affect higher education and are largely inevitable.

In order to comprehensively conceptualize internationalization, a comparative discussion of globalization needs to be conducted. Internationalization and globalization are different, but closely related terms. A clear distinction between the two in the context

of higher education is necessary to prevent confusion and misunderstanding. Knight

(1997) states that "globalization is the flow of technology, economy, knowledge, people,

values, ideas… and affects each country in a different way"; while "internationalization

of higher education is one of the ways a country responds to the impact of globalization"

(p. 6). Scott (1998) provides three characteristics to differentiate the two terms that

internationalization "presupposes the existence of established nation states" while

globalization does not; internationalization "is most strongly expressed through the 'high'

worlds of diplomacy and culture" while globalization is "in the 'low' worlds of mass

consumerism and global capitalism" (p.37). Scholars argue that globalization challenges

the traditional ways of thinking in higher education particularly based on national

historical and cultural identification and teaching standardization (Scott, 1998; de Wit,

2004). Meanwhile, the impact of globalization forces higher education to better utilize its

"intellectual capital," and accommodate self-improvement and changes (Altbach, 2002;

Magrath, 2000). Internationalization is the initiative reflecting this demand of change in

higher education and has become a strategic high priority for numerous universities

across North America (Bartell, 2003).

**Motivations and benefits of internationalization**

Several factors driving higher education institutions to engage in

internationalization include financial profit from the global market, and enhancement of

knowledge capacity and cultural understanding (Altbach & Knight, 2007; Kreber, 2009).

International students who pay higher tuition and fees become revenue resources from

abroad for higher education institutions, particularly those who are under pressure due to

declining fiscal investment and support from their own governments (Olcott, 2009). Internationalization opens a door to more opportunities to attract grants to support research and creative work from other countries. The educational and academic benefits are also driving higher education institutions to enhance their international dimension. The International Association of Universities (2009) summarizes the benefits of internationalization including international awareness for students, higher level of research and production, cooperation and solidarity, internationalized curriculum, and improved institutional prestige. The demand from an interconnected global market for workforce development creates a demand to expose students to international experiences. Additionally, the widespread use of the English language in international business and commerce also drives higher education institutions from non-native English-speaking countries to collaborate with peers in English speaking countries to prepare students with comprehensive English language programs (Olscott, 2009).

The financial, educational, and academic benefits from international activities motivate higher education institutions to push for internationalization in higher education. While the ultimate purposes of internationalization may not be clear for everyone who is involved in higher education. There are ambivalent visions of what internationalization may eventually accomplish. A goal of combating American parochialism - altering the status that Americans' ignorance and apathy about the world, in general, may emphasize more on world language education and international component to be added across disciplines. Retaining the global dominant power in the global market and economy requires specific efforts in business, science, and engineering programs to include

international learning for those students to be better prepared in professional readiness. The vision of global citizens stresses reshaping the international curriculum and including the major global problems and various cultural perspectives into disciplinary subject matters (Bok, 2020; Hudzik, 2011).

To clarify the sensible purposes and consolidate viable visions of internationalization, a concept of internationalization transformation is developed so that the undertakings, functionality, and goals can be strategically aligned and integrated. In order to understand the extent of internationalization transformation, it is valuable to observe actual organizational structures and behaviors at various levels in higher education institutions (Kogan, 2007). By reviewing an institution's mission statement, planning and review systems, policies and procedures, and hiring and promotion systems for the importance of the international dimension, a clearer picture of whether the international dimension is institutionalized for organizational change can be revealed (Knight, 2004). Leadership of higher education institutions should build and articulate the internationalization strategy in such a way to coherently integrate it into their organizational mission, instead of revenue enhancement focused strategy (Olscott, 2009). The transformation of internationalization in higher education only exists if the institution creates commonly shared values and basic assumptions that acknowledge internationalization as a necessity for archiving institutional missions.

**Transformational for internationalization**

Knight (2004) provides four examples of transformation strategies for internationalization at the institutional level: "governance," including commitment of

29

internationalization by senior leaders, articulation of goals and rationale for internationalization, and recognition of internationalization in mission, strategic plan, and policy statements; "operations," including integration of international demands into institution-wide budget and review systems, appropriate communication and coordination structures, adequate resources allocation system, and balanced decentralized and centralized management for internationalization; "services," including support from administrative, academic, and student support services for promoting and organizing international activities; and "human resources," including recognition and reinforcement of international knowledge and skills in recruitment, selection, reward, and promotion procedures, and offering of professional development to improve international expertise.

Higher education institutions recognized internationalization transformation demanded institutional strategic planning and execution, as well as external cooperation. The strategic goals of internationalization could not be accomplished without directly interacting with international counterparts. Strategies of international outreach, collaboration, and partnership serve as essential elements of internationalization.

## Section Two: International Collaboration and Partnership

The worldwide movement of internationalization in higher education prompted international cooperation among higher education institutions in order to obtain resources and reduce the cost of operation (Altbach & Knight, 2007). It was a commonly acknowledged conviction that higher education institutions must interact and collaborate with international counterparts to achieve the goal of internationalization. The

establishment of academic and educational collaboration with international partners has become a necessity to advance internationalization in higher education.

**International collaboration as a strategy**

International collaboration serves as a fundamental element of internationalization. Higher educational institutions tend to group together to maximize influence and gain visibility and advantage in higher education. Colleges and universities "have more leverage when they address common issues and concerns together" (Neal, 1988). Developing a strategic alliance to utilize resources amongst partner universities is essential for intellectual advancement and impact, and improves competitive advantage (Chan, 2004).

International collaboration enables higher education institutions to improve international educational capacity and so has become an integral part of internationalization. Internationalization could also be thought of as a university's endeavor to reach out "further afield to increase an institution's influence, visibility, and/or market share on the international scene" (Denman, 2002). In this sense, international cooperation is no longer a choice, but a strategical and developmental key in today's global picture of education (Chan, 2004). Students who are equipped with a cross-cultural understanding and global competence will have advantages for job placement in a global society. The capability of offering effective cultural exposure and international awareness will build the reputation and competitiveness for universities and colleges in recruitment.

**International partnership as a path**

International collaboration is usually based on partnerships which are cooperative agreements between one or more entities toward a common goal or completing a joint project with a spirit of cooperation (Kinser & Green, 2009). Higher education institutions often find that taking independent international initiatives overseas without appropriate foreign partners puts them in an unfavorable position. Common misjudgments include underestimating the fixed cost for an international operation and overestimating the availability and effectiveness of foreign faculty with requisite orientations and professional development (Knight, 2006). Thus, developing international expertise for partnership is necessary to provide a win-win situation with possibilities to exploit and leverage facilities and human resources to achieve objectives of internationalization (Green & Gerber, 1997). Engaging sustained global dialogue and network and taking part in the higher education partnership enhance student learning, faculty research, and community service globally and locally. Instead of approaching global education alone, a joint effort in partnership makes more sense (Sutton, 2010).

Sutton (2010) pays attention to the functions and outcomes of partnerships, and considers educational partnership has three phases: exchange partnerships, transactional partnerships, and transformational partnerships. Exchange partnerships are relatively low-key collaborations in terms of breadth, depth, and length, with only a few students and faculty traveling back and forth. This type of partnership is not usually reflected in the institution's mission and strategic planning. Transactional partnerships refer to collaborating by trading resources with focused goals in a product-oriented fashion. They

32

can help to establish a fluid and flexible network to support faculty and units' interests. Transformational partnerships are long-term and relationship-oriented which develop common goals over time with shared resources. This type extends the capacity of internationalization with institutional platforms for joint teaching, research, and community service. Transformational partnerships may begin with specific projects, but they also begin with the understanding and belief that more projects will be generated over time. They are expansive, ever-growing with sustainable communications mechanisms. Partners focus as much on the relationship as on the products of collaboration and are committed to working through differences and offering support in times of crisis.

**Types of International Partnership**

Having recognized the importance of international partnership in higher education, scholars moved forward to analyze the practices and offer a variety of typologies to better understand the forms of international partnership. For example, de Wit (1998) categorizes international partnership into academic association, academic consortia, and international network, based on the characteristics of inter-institutional linkages. Academic association refers to a single organization made up of academic individuals and units for a common goal related to professional development, Academic consortia is a group of academic units bonded for a single purpose with a range of specialized expertise brought together from each other.  International network is a multi-purpose group of academic units.

Green and Gerber (1997) discuss the topology of international cooperation based on the content and participants of international activities, as academic programs, faculty activities, and executive programs. Academic programs are degree-granted integrated educational programs that offer students opportunities to study abroad, as well as hosting international students to earn degree or credits; faculty activities usually refer to teaching, research, and creative activities involving faculty participation from partner universities as joint efforts. Executive programs are partner institutions that contribute resources to offer international executive educational experiences toward professionals. Although different rationale behind typologies leads to various outcomes, scholars of higher education acknowledge that effective international cooperation requires a commitment to sustaining those activities that will maintain the partnership in the long term. The various types of international activities are each the result of complex, sustained interactions that require coordinated actions by multiple partners.

### Section Three: Trust in the Partnership Relation

Many ingredients contribute to international partners to successfully cooperate with each other. Among these are shared mission, vision and goals, right partners with comparable quality of faculty and students, consistent commitment and support from both faculty and administration, investments on time and resources, compatible personalities among the people of coordination, and effective communication (Prichard 1996; van Ginkel, 1998; Green & Gerber, 1997; and de Wit 1998). Scholars recognize that the relationship is the essence of any partnership. In light of maintain collaborative and constructive relationship, Gray (1996) raises attention to organizational culture,

34

consistency of external funding, and transformation from initiators to successors which all affect the success of international cooperation. Green and Gerber (1997) believe that trust on both sides of the relationship is the most salient variable to establish and to maintain a successful partnership in the higher education. Trust as an intangible variable has to be created slowly and carefully. It develops over time and improves from experiences of working together on various projects. Partners should start out building a familiarity with each other and establish a working relationship gradually toward evolution of the joint programs.

Trust is one of the key aspects of any relationship, both interpersonal and interorganizational. It is regarded to be a basic coordination mechanism for effective cooperation (Bachmann & Zaheer, 2008; Obadia, 2008). A lack of trust is a barrier to build a working relationship for effective cooperation.

The establishment and development of trust across cultural and national borders can be difficult. Organizations that are from different countries are likely to be less similar, in terms of differences in the institutions, cultures, and practical norms of their home countries, than organizations that come from the same country (Hofstede, 1991). Partners from different home countries may also differ in their perceived trustworthiness. Different trusting norms in partners' country of origin may result in misunderstandings, unfulfilled potential, and lower cooperation potential (Bachmann & Zaheer, 2008). The difference of institutions' agendas, miscommunication and misinterpretation, and culture can be sources of conflict among partners (Kinser & Green, 2009). In this sense, mutual

understanding and communication are more fundamental to sustain the relationship than the compatibility of resources and academic reputations for higher education institutions.

Although higher education scholars recognize interpersonal relationships and trust as key ingredients contributing to the success of international partnerships, there is virtually no literature in higher education that focuses on trust and how trustworthiness is perceived by international higher education partners. This study adopts the conceptual frame and methods from corporate and organizational studies to examine the perception of trust levels in international higher education partners.

### Section Four: Studies of Trust and Trust Development

The construct of trust has received considerable scholarly attention from various academic fields including psychology, sociology, anthropology, political science, economics, organization studies, business management, and history (Gambetta, 1988; Lewicki & Bunker, 1995; McKnight & Chervany, 1996; Worchel, 1979). The pattern of trust involves the relationship between at least two parties, a trustor and a trustee. It is a dyadic and bidirectional phenomenon (Korsgaard, Brower, & Lester, 2015; Mayer, Davis, & Schoorman, 1995). The trustee receives the benefits of trust from the trustor based on four distinct dimensions -- competent, open, concerned, and reliable -- that the trustor believes the trustee exhibits (Barber, 1983; Luhmann, 1988; Mishra, 1996). Mayer, Davis, and Schoorman (1995) furthermore suggest that three factors of trustees' ability, benevolence, and integrity comprise their trustworthiness perceived by trustor. Meanwhile, trustors' propensity to trust also contributes to the decision of trust. For example, some individuals tend to trust in situations most people would not consider as

warranting trust. Mayer et al (1995) often-cited definition of trust refers to one party's willingness to be vulnerable to another party on the basis of a positive expectation of the actions of the other party. However, this definition is not universally accepted. Other scholars attempt to explain trust with linkages to concepts of expectation (Deutsch, 1958; Hosmer, 1995; Lane & Bachmann, 1996; Worchel, 1979), justice and social order (Deutsch, 1958; Etzioni, 1988; Granovetter, 1985; Zucker, 1986), beliefs (Cummings & Bromiley, 1995; McAllister, 1995; Rotter, 1980), risk (Boon & Holmes, 1991; Coleman, 1994; Luhmann, 1988; Mayer et al., 1995; Williamson, 1993), vulnerability (Baier, 1986; Gambetta, 1988; Mayer et al., 1995; Meyerson, Weick, & Kramer, 1995), transactional cost (Bromiley & Cummings, 1995; Gambetta, 1988; Lorenz, 1992; Tyler & Kramer, 1995), outcomes and effectiveness (Lane & Bachmann, 1998; McAllister, 1995), and trustworthiness (Kautonen, Zolin, Kuckertz, & Viljamaa, 2010; Lewicki & Brinsfield, 2012; Mayer et al., 1995; Nooteboom, 2002). The lack of consensus in defining trust reflects the fact that trust embedded in psychological and social process influences behavior in diverse ways at a variety of levels. To better explain trust requires comprehensive conceptual models that can integrate the context of trust action and relationship of trustor and trustee.

Organizational studies on trust confirm that trust exists at multiple levels of analysis. At the individual level, Gambetta (1988) believes trust can explain how another person will perform on future occasions based on individualist theory. Organizational trust also originates from the characteristics of a group as a collective perception shared by the members of an organization (Lewicki & Brinsfield, 2012). The level of trust in

organizations affects its structure and processes, and reduces transaction costs (Bromiley and Cummings, 1995). However, the argument of whether organizations are able to trust creates debate (Möllering, Bachmann, & Lee, 2004; Scheer, 2012). The origin of trust studies from psychology posits that only the individual is subject to trust, which is supported by some micro-level organizational research that organizational trust exists because of its members. Meanwhile, macro-level organizational research treats the organization as the agent to carry the trust (Schilke & Cook, 2013). Trust also plays an institutional role of an individual's orientation toward society and toward systems that have social meaning beyond rational considerations of risk and cost (Tyler & Kramer, 1995) for example, the American public's trust in the US political system (Barber, 1983). At the interorganizational level, trust is a key mechanism for keeping relationships and in handling the uncertainty inherited in the interorganizational relationship (Barber, 1983; Rousseau, Sitkin, Burt, & Camerer, 1998; Schilke & Cook, 2013).

The act of trust is aligned with the process of relationship building. Producing trust between trustor and trustee implies the relationship is developing toward the next levels. As an effort to discover the production of trust, Zucker (1986) proposed a conceptual model distinguishing trust as institution-based, characteristic-based, and process-based. Institution-based trust is tied to formal institutional structures, for example, professional associations, accreditation, and certifications. Characteristic-based trust is tied to a person and based on ethnicity, culture, and background, for example, charismatic leaders. Process-based trust is tied to expected or past exchanges, for example, reputation. Zucker's conceptual model looks into the mechanism of how trust is

producing and emerging. However, Zucker's model treats trust as a solid construct after being produced, without taking the process of trust development into consideration.

Lewicki and Bunker (1995) adapt Shapiro, Sheppard and Cheraskin's (1992) three levels model and propose a revised model of trust linked to its sequential development. The first level named calculus-based trust is when individuals develop trust because of the fear of the consequences of violation as well as the values to be derived from preservation. Being trusting brings rewards of reputation, while violating the trust may result in punishments and transactional costs. The growth of calculus-based trust will lead to the next level of trust, knowledge-based. The capacity to predict others' behavior grounds knowledge-based trust. The trustor tends to know the trustee sufficiently and comprehensively in order to well anticipate their behavior and decisions. Trustors gather information and develop knowledge about trustees; they observe and experience trustees in a variety of situations. The familiarity of the others in different contexts allows trustors to determine whether they can work together with trustees well. The third and highest order of trust is based on identification with other's intentions. This identification-based trust exists because each party appreciates the other's wants. Based on mutual understanding and respect, each party behaves in a trustworthy manner toward the other and acts for the other when it is necessary. The group or membership identification enhances the cooperation by encouraging cooperative behavior rather than taking advantage of others to benefit self. Increased identification enables the parties to share the same pattern of assumptions and collective values. Each party learns from others and incorporates some of the others' experiences and ways of thinking into its own

identity. An identification-based trust permits a high level of cooperation and nurtures a healthy and sustainable partnership. The three levels model reveals the stage-by-stage evolutional process of trust development. It provides salient insights into the building, sustaining, and reinforcing of a partnership based on trust development. Today, scholars tend to treat the trust as a fluid construct that is changing and developing over time. It is imperative to regard time as a critical demission for measuring the level of trust change or development.

### Section Five: Theoretical Framework of Partnership Analysis

The existing literature of trust study remains segmental and less-empirical due to the lack of integrative efforts of analysis and less explicit conceptualization (Schilke & Cook, 2013; Zucker, 1988). In order to articulate the dynamics of interorganizational relationships and assess the effectiveness of partnerships, a comprehensive perspective of trust needs to be developed reflecting its fluid process across levels and degree of intensity. Schilke and Cook (2013) propose the cross-level model devoted to integrating varying levels of analysis with specific stages of trust development. Cummings and Bromiley's (1995) Organizational Trust Inventory offers a validated instrument to measure interorganizational trust. The combination of these two models provides a unique approach to analyze trust development and factors between international partners. Organizational communication assessment offers another dimension to gain an understanding of the full landscape of the partnership relationship. By adoption and integration of the cross-level model, the Organizational Trust Inventory, and

organizational communication assessment, it sets the complete theoretical framework to guide this research.

**The cross-level model**

The cross-level model developed by Schilke and Cook (2013) is used to explain that interorganizational trust is related to and develops across various levels of analysis. They articulate four consecutive stages which reveal the trust progression which co-evolves with the partnership building in interorganizational relationships as relationship *initiation, negotiation, formation, and operation.*

Schilke and Cook (2013) introduce and stress the essential role of boundary spanner in interorganizational relationships. Boundary spanners are individuals who are elected or assigned to communicate across organizational boundaries and serve as primary linking mechanisms to connect units internally and externally. Boundary spanners equipped with specialization of both verbal and non-verbal technical language gather and translate the coded message developed by each specialized unit, allow efficient transmission of information, and minimize misunderstandings (March & Simon, 1993; Miles, 1977; Tushman, 1977; Tushman & Scanlan, 1981). In the trust development process, boundary spanners are the focal points. They are the coordinators in charge of the interorganizational interactions, who tend to be more closely involved in these relationships than other members of the organization. In the relationship initiation phase, organizations identify and evaluate potential partners. This initiative process starts from boundary spanners gathering and analyzing relevant information, which serves to develop the basis of individual-organization trust. In the second phase, the boundary spanners

communicate with individual counterparts in the partner organization and negotiation takes place. These negotiations between boundary spanners of each organization craft their understandings and beliefs toward others and develop individual-individual trust - interpersonal level trust. In the third phase, boundary spanners transfer interpersonal level trust with peers to the partner organization as individual-organization trust. This process of individual-organization trust construction aligns with the formation of the organizational partnership. Subsequently, in the fourth stage, a common understanding of the trustworthiness of the partner organization emerges when the relationship goes to the operation stage. The institutionalization of interorganizational trust is achieved. Then, the trust perceptions at an organizational level will provide feedback to the individual level, and affect organizational members including boundary spanners' behaviors and thoughts. The newly developed interorganizational trust has the possibility to impact the boundary spanners' initial trust beliefs pertaining to the partner organization and reshape the individual-organization trust.

The cross-level model offers an integrative perspective recognizing that trust is highly intertwined between levels. Schilke and Cook (2013) suggest that, because of the between-level interactions during the evolution of interorganizational relationships, accurate research of trust should involve investigation of other levels of trust. It requires a simultaneous analysis of multiple levels of variables in the examination of cooperation and partnerships.

**The Organizational Trust Inventory Model**

Cummings and Bromiley (1995) propose the Organizational Trust Inventory (OTI) model with a three-dimensional definition of trust beliefs: individual or organization makes good faith efforts to behave to fulfill commitments; an individual or organization is honest in negotiations; and an individual or organization does not take excessive advantage of another. The authors adopt Crites, Fabrigar, and Petty's (1994) assessment of belief components (i.e., affective state, cognition, and intended behavior) to compile survey items with regard to each dimension of trust. Consequently, the questions for measuring trust tend to specify the way people feel (affect), think (cognitive), and intend to act (intended behavior).

Cummings and Bromiley (1995) also develop a short version of OTI in order to enable the measurement of trust when the sample is quite large. The short list of OTI contains only the top 12 questions with the highest item-to-factor correlations. The overall Bentler's comparative fit index for the short list is 0.98 (p. 319). The measures of three dimensions remain highly correlated with high results of composite reliability.

Cummings and Bromiley (1995) address the question of the measurability of trust with empirical evidence. The in-depth validation analysis brings the significance of this measurement model. In academic and business fields, analysts adopt items of this instrument to assess the degree of trust intensity.

OTI has been widely applied for empirical research on business organizational practice and social understanding. Berry and Rodgers (2003) compare OTI and the World Values Survey on measuring trust and conclude that OTI measures are more powerful

predictors of distress and offer a richer and more precise account of the relationship between trust and distress for rural populations in Australia. Top, Akdere, and Tarcan's (2015) quantitative research with the OTI instrument finds that trust is a significant and direct predictor of organizational commitment for Turkish hospital employees. Vidotto, Vicentini, Argentero, and Bromiley (2008) adapt and translate the OTI into an Italian context. These international studies demonstrate that the OTI framework is stable across different kinds of objects and cross-culturally appropriate.

**Table 1 The Matrix of Trust Study Framework**

| Cross-level Model / OTI Model | Interpersonal | Institutional | Interorganizational |
|---|---|---|---|
| Good Faith | | | |
| Honesty | | | |
| Avoids Taking Excessive Advantage | | | |

The concept of organizational trust has been adapted into the field of higher education and utilized to examine the level of trust within the institution, particularly

among faculty members (Vineburgh, 2010). However, the literature on trust in international partnership in higher education does not exist. The methodologies and outcomes in business and organizational strides are open to adoption. To fill the academic vacancy of trust studies in the field of international partnership in higher education, the researcher adopted the theoretical models from business and organizational theories. The OTI provides an instrument to measure the intensity of trust; while the cross-level model sets the pathway of how to assess the trust in the relationship development process. The researcher integrated these two models together as a multidimensional framework and apply it in a higher educational context to measure the trust in international partnership relationships during the development process of the partnership.

**Organizational Communication in Partnership Relations**

Trust is considered as one of the organizational communication core competencies (Minter, 2010). Meanwhile, effective and efficient communication is demonstrated as a key element of partnership relationship development. For the communication between partners, they are not only sending and receiving information but also building, keeping, or undermining a relationship.

Scholars in organizational communication area have taken efforts to suggest proper approaches to comprehend and evaluate organizational communication from angles of satisfaction, productivity, commitment, authority, and identity (Benoit-Barné & Cooren, 2009; Chaput, Brummans, & Cooren, 2011; Davis, 1953; Downs, 2000; Downs & Adrian, 2004; Downs & Hazen, 1977; Goldhaber & Krivonos, 1978). Communication assessment instruments and tools have been developed and applied in business

consultations and organizational communication audits. In the 1970s, the Organizational

Communication Questionnaire (OCQ) was developed by Roberts and O'Reilly (1973,

1974), the LTT Communication Audit Questionnaire (LTT) was published by Wiio and

Helsila (1974), the Communication Satisfaction Questionnaire (CSQ) was created by

Downs and Hazen (1977), and the International Communication Association (ICA)

questionnaire was introduced by the members of the ICA under the leadership of

Goldhaber (1979). These empirical and quantitative instruments have been widely used in

organizational communication audits for assess, diagnose, and improve organizational

communication (Downs & Adrian, 2004).

Organizational communication studies note the importance of investigating in

depth in order to gain insights into the complex organizations and status of relationships.

Communication relationships are noticeable areas to be assessed in order to examine the

effectiveness of the partnership and organizational relationships. The majority of the

organizational communication literature stress the relationships within an organization

including superior-subordinate relationships, coworker relationships, unit relationships,

and manager relationships (Downs & Adrian, 2004). Organizational communication

scholars and consultants use organizational communication assessment tools to conduct

organizational communication audits for examining effectiveness and efficiency of

interpersonal and inter-unit communication, understanding management-employee

relationship, evaluating the information technology usage, and measuring the public

relations activities of targeted organizations (Ellis et al, 1993; Downs & Adrian, 2004).

Organizational communication assessments as a deeper level of inquiries require the

process of immersion, observation, interview, and content analysis. The researcher needs

to immerse oneself to collect candid, current, and relevant data from members of the

organization, understand members' value, beliefs, needs, and behaviors, and study the

role of each member of the organization and learn about the issues in depth.

Communication audit should be tailored to each organization and relate communication

to organizational functions, programs, and other processes. For the details of each

communication assessment, the researcher should investigate the organizational

functions, logics, and symbols, the impact of task processes on communication, the

contents of communicated messages, the adequacy of information exchanges between

individuals, the direction of information flows within the organizational structure, the

communication channels, medias, and overall organizational strategies and the linkage of

internal communication (Downs & Adrian, 2004; Meyer, 2002). The emphasis

throughout organizational communication assessment has been believed as the

perceptions of and experience of organizational members which provide insights into the

understanding and relationship within the organization (Murphy, Campbell & Land,

2017). In addition, a new tread of organizational communication assessment for

examining organizational relationships is related to compression of how the organization

is made present. Organizational communication scholars develop the notion of

presentification as an approach to study the interaction and communication practices

among individuals or various artifacts in the interaction in order to better understand the

organization beliefs and behaviors (Benoit-Barné & Cooren, 2009; Chaput, Brummans,

& Cooren, 2011; Cooren, 2000). Presentification refers to the ways of speaking and

acting involved in making present that can influence the process of a situation within an organization or between organizations that is taking place and developing (Benoit-Barné & Cooren, 2009). Through analyzing the data of interactions from fieldwork or documentations, researchers can investigate how presentification takes place and allows individuals to act on the organization's behalf to exchange information and negotiate with others. The desire of comprehensive examination of individual-individual and individual-organization interactions within the organization motivates the interpretive methods to be conducted in the organizational communication assessments and audits (Meyer, 2002).

For the purpose of assessing the organizational communication for examining the international partnership in higher education, those existing tools and practices in organizational communication audit may not be directly applied to the case of international partnership which includes multiple levels of relationships within and between organizations. However, the fundamental convictions and concepts of organizational communication assessment can be adapted particularly for understanding the trust relationship. First, organizational communication assessment can be used to investigate interactions among individuals between international partners who are representing their own organizations during information exchange and decision-making processes. Second, organizational communication assessment can provide a lens on the institutional interactions within each partner organization with a spotlight on the boundary spanners to understand the internal dynamics and relationships between boundary spanners and other colleagues as the organizational attitude and climate on the international partnership. Therefore, the adapted organizational communication

assessment can support the trust studies as an in-depth analytical approach on the dynamics of the trust relationship reflected from individuals' experience, views, and perceptions of whom are representing partner organizations.

## Section Six: Summary

This chapter summarizes the previous research in the academic areas grounded and covered by this study. The literature review starts from the discussions of various definitions of internationalization in higher education and the rationale behind those definitions. Special attention is paid to compare the similar terms of globalization and internationalization to better understand the relations and differences between the two. Then the previous academic discussions about the motivations, benefits, and strategies of internationalization in higher education are documented to understand the importance and scale of internationalization development. The previous studies on international collaboration conclude that it is a common strategy to advance internationalization in higher education through collaboration with international partners. Building international partnership as a key pillar of cooperation is then introduced including the functions, forms, and types. Keeping a cooperative and constructive relationship is imperative of the partnership and trust is an essential element of the relationship. The literature review indicates that the vacancy of examining and understanding relationship within the international partnership in higher education research. It is evident that trust study and organizational communication provide theoretical methods and tools to collect and

analyze the empirical data of relationships which is foundational to understand international partnership.

In an organization, trust exists and transcends at multiple levels. Organizational researchers propose paradigms and models to analyze and assess trust within the organization and between organizations. This chapter introduces two research models of trust studies. The cross-level model emphasizes the trust relationship development in both individual and organizational levels in the phases of initiation, negotiation, formation, and operation, with special attention on the roles of boundary spanners. The Organizational Trust Inventory model provides a research instrument to understand the salient variables of constructing and keeping trust and makes the trust assessment possible. In addition to the two models, this chapter suggests that the organizational communication assessment helps understand the trust relationship between international partners and within partner organizations. So that the organizational communication can serve as a lens to in-depth examination to render a well-round trust analysis focusing on the complex interactions through individuals' experience, views, and perceptions.

Those models designed from organizational studies primarily aiming for improving business practices have great potential to be adapted into the research in the higher education field as the theoretical and analytical framework for studying international partnership. The next chapter discusses the research methodology that grounds this study.

# CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

This chapter elaborates on the study's methodological approach and research design. The chapter provides the reviews of the research question, the rationale of the case study design, and preparations of the research including the case selection, the role of the researcher, and ethical considerations. The data collection and analysis including procedures, sources, and methods of data generation are detailed described in this chapter.

## Section One: Research Purposes and Questions

The purpose of this research is to provide an in-depth understanding of the level of trust developed in the effort of building and maintaining international partnerships of higher education, how to assess the relationship in international collaborations, and the strategies and best practices to manage and sustain international partnerships under external pressure. This study aims to address the following research questions:

1.      How can the individual and organizational relationships in the international partnership of higher education be examined?

2.      How is trust of the international partnership related to the institutional internationalization at the higher education institution?

3.      What is the process of trust development between international partners in higher education?

4.      What factors influence the development of trust in international partnerships in higher education?

5.    How is the degree of trust between partners impacted as external scrutiny and challenge intensifies?

6.    How do partners communicate the perspectives and approaches of addressing the external pressure?

7.    How does the trust between partners contribute to respond external pressure?

8.    How do higher education institutions interact with external environment and adjust themselves, particularly with respect to their communication practices?

The theoretical and analytical framework adapted from organizational studies including cross-level model, Organizational Trust Inventory model, and organizational communication assessment lays the foundation. The rest of the chapter is to discuss the research design and methodological approaches for the proper research methods in this study to address those research questions, particularly to articulate the methodological rationale and considerations of utilizing case study methods to collect and analyze data.

## Section Two: Mix Methods Research Design

Research is a process of meaningful, rigorous, and orderly investigation into a problem, a topic, or an issue (Creswell, 2014). The purpose of research is to add to knowledge, suggest solutions to or improvements for practice, or inform policy debates. Higher education is an ever-changing sector affected by an array of social, cultural, economic, technological, and political dynamics. The political and social turmoil align with public health catastrophe during the year 2020 and their drastic impacts on the practices of higher education made it a vivid example of such dynamics. Academic studies in educational administration, programming, and development are thus imperative

to better comprehend these fluctuations and occurrences, and provide valid and reliable information that can be used to guide and improve decisions in higher education institutions.

A researcher should never begin a research project without a method framework that defines features and possibilities for the inquiries toward the research questions (Hancock & Algozzine, 2017). This study will utilize mixed methods case study methodology to research on the listed research questions.

Research methodology scholars generally acknowledge that educational research can fall into two traditions, namely, quantitative and qualitative (Creswell, 2014). The quantitative approach which prevailed mostly in the early last century is also known as the positivist, empirical, or objectivist approach. It addresses a research problem on the basis of trends identified in the field or on the need to explain why certain things happen. The qualitative approach which became prominent in the early 1970s is also described as the interpretive, humanistic, or subjective approach. It deals with those research problems or issues whose variables are not known and thus need to be investigated and explored. Regarding data analysis, the quantitative researcher relies on a statistical analysis of the collected data that are typically numbers or in other numerical forms, whereas the data in qualitative research are not purely statistical, but can include texts, conversations, or images. Nevertheless, as Creswell (2014) pointed out, the quantitative and qualitative approaches should not be viewed as "two end points in a dichotomy, but rather as different points on a continuum" (p. 33). This is because researchers usually combine certain elements from both approaches to systematically discover an educational

problem, despite the fact that their studies tend to lean more towards one approach than the other. A typical case in this point is an influx of mixed methods studies in contemporary educational research, which employ research designs that collect, analyze, and integrate both quantitative and qualitative data in a single or multiphase study (Hesse-Biber, 2010). For each case, a mixed approach of data collection is useful to capture the contextual uniqueness and investigate the relationship of international partners. Multi-methods and multi-dimensional approaches have been used in education studies to develop depth and breadth to elaborate and understand complex problems (Creswell, 2009; McInerney, 2004). Researchers used multi-dimensional quantitative and qualitative research to study the effectiveness of leadership, communication, organization, and relationship (Brown et al, 2003). In this study, the mixed methods are designed for understanding how the relationships have been developed for international partnerships at the Confucius Institute programs.

### Section Three: Case Study Methodological Description and Justification

Researchers are required to consider the methodological credibility when developing the research design and demonstrate rigor through adequate descriptions of methodological foundations. For a case study research, a study published without sufficient detail to understand the study design, and without a rationale for key methodological decisions, may lead to research being interpreted as lacking in quality or credibility (Hallberg, 2013). Thus, conducting a holistic design and providing a detailed delineation of using case study methods are necessary.

**Understand case study methods**

The case study research method is frequently employed in both education and organization study fields. A case study is "an empirical investigation of a contemporary phenomenon within its natural context using multiple sources of evidence" (Yin, 2013). The purpose of a case study is not to generalize the conclusion to a large population but to investigate in-depth a particular issue, event, practice, or phenomenon in an articulated context. The inquiries of individual cases can address a problem with a unique context. The case study usually focuses on an individual representative(s) of a group of people, units, organizations, phenomenon, or activities (Hancock & Algozzine, 2017). Then the knowledge transferred from the case may lead to further process of reflection and thinking (Harland, 2014). It is important to explicit the research's focus and the extent, and explore one or multiple cases as a "bounded system(s)" (Creswell, 2013). Context is imperative in any case study research as it serves as the surrounding of where those cases occur or are situated. A case study may also be descriptive and illustrative as it is grounded in in-depth and varied sources of evidence (Hancock & Algozzine, 2017). Case study research is an interdisciplinary practice based on the collection and analysis of data. The data of case studies can be both qualitative and quantitative collected by approaches including interviews, surveys, observations, and document reviews. The information reflecting the complexity is thoroughly examined in the given case which always has many inherent variables contributing to the research issue. Through the case study method, the researcher answers the what and how questions based on the experience of the participant, and the quantitative research conducted numerical data analysis to explore

the relations between variables within the context of the selected site or sites. The researcher investigates the contextual conditions of the site because the conditions are relevant to the phenomenon of the study.

A case study approach is selected based on its usefulness and appropriateness for this particular study. A case study investigates a contextualized, contemporary phenomenon within a specific boundary (Yin, 2013). The characteristics for this study include examinations of two particular programs on two campuses bound in time and space, descriptions of contextual material about a particular setting, collections of material from multiple sources in order to provide a picture of the case, and utilization of the researcher as an instrument of data collection (Creswell, 2013). The case study method for this research allows for the collection of data to enable the researcher to compare how the selected program team members operate and perform within the international partnership program, shape the value and views of the joint efforts, develop relationships, and communicate between partners for crucial matters under external pressures.

**Qualitative philosophy**

Some researchers consider that case study is essentially a type of qualitative research. Case study methodology maintains deep connections to core values and intentions and is "particularistic, descriptive and heuristic" (Merriam, 2009, p. 46), which is in line with the fundamentals of qualitative methodology. Qualitative case study research, as described by Stake (1995), draws together "naturalistic, holistic, ethnographic, phenomenological, and biographic research methods" in a bricoleur design,

or in his words, "a palette of methods" (Stake, 1995, pp. xi–xii). In this sense, qualitative research is a general term (Lichtman, 2013). It is an inquiry process of understanding based on methodological traditions of investigation that explores a social or human problem. Qualitative research is conducted in a natural setting and seeks to explore human behavior within the context of a bound program (Creswell, 2013)

Lichtman (2013) described as one of the critical elements of qualitative research "the description, understanding and interpretation of human behavior" (p. 17). An interpretive or social constructivist approach to qualitative case study research supports a transactional method of inquiry, where the researcher has a personal interaction with the case. The case is developed in a relationship between the researcher and informants, and presented to engage the reader, inviting them to join in this interaction and in case discovery (Stake, 1995).

As the investigation into the relationship between international partners in higher education under the backdrop of changing social, political, and cultural nature of collaboration, an ontological framework of constructivism is reasonable for consideration. Participants in the international collaboration actively construct their own understanding and meaning from the experiences, and create their own knowledge reflecting the reality. The constructivist position implies that reality is the outcome of a fluid constructive process instead of a sense of absolute (Duffy, 2006).

Although the constructivism framework demonstrates its suitability to be adopted for tackling the issues of relationship, it leaves a gap to be filled for assessing the degree of trust and organizational communication. Quantitative researchers following the

ontology of positivism framework regard the world as being independent of observation as an objective reality. The measurable samples can represent the reality to be used for testing hypotheses among variables. The collection of information is conducted utilizing mathematically based methods including polls and surveys, then processed through mathematical instruments to observe the statistical significance and relations and produce generalizable results. This framework allows the empirical measurement with minimum and controllable influence of subjective specifics. Although the case study designs in the higher education setting predominantly apply qualitative philosophy, the necessity of adapting the quantitative design for measuring trust and organizational communication in this specific study cannot be ignored.

**Strategies and techniques in case study designs**

The case study strategy offers two strengths: the capacity to allow researchers to combine any methods or techniques in research designs; and its flexibility in integrating multiple sources of evidence from documents, artifacts, observations and interviews and analyzing data in a triangular fashion in light of the prior theoretical frameworks. Such unique strengths of the case study design empower researchers to develop proper methods and data collection techniques that best suit the research purpose, providing substantive evidence and robust reasoning for addressing the research questions (Thomas, 2011). Therefore, case studies represent a robust and holistic research design from the philosophy to techniques, from data collections to data analysis (Yin, 2013).

For the purpose of exploring the relationship which is deeply associated with understanding, experiences, and perceptions between partners, the use of qualitative

methods enabled this process. The significant aspects of this study were an in-depth comprehension of how the team members of the program from both partners viewed the organization, operation, and each other through the angles of trust and communication.

Although the personal experiences, perceptions, views, and understandings require in-depth qualitative research, the measurement of the construct of trust and the relations between trust and other variables can only be conducted through quantitative analysis. The quantitative analysis adapting the Organizational Trust Inventory (OTI) and organizational communication assessment were used to study trust and communication for comprehending the relationships of the international partnership. With the development of the cross-level model including adding the inter-personal dimension in the study of trust, multidimensional quantitative research has become the primary research method for assessment of trust (Schilke & Cook, 2013). Organizational communication assessments have a long history of utility in business administration and management studies. The interpretive methodology has been frequently used for obtaining data of employees' experience and perceptions to assess day-to-day organizational communication. The interpretive methodology of organizational communication assessment indicates two directions of analysis. The first is a textual analysis of reviewing documents and transcripts from the organization. The other is an ethnomethodological analysis of understanding how common-sense knowledge was constructed through interactions. For the interpretive communication assessment, the useful data include narratives, metaphors, and the unique vocabulary from organizational members (Meyer, 2002).

The case study design in this study adopts both OTI and organizational communication assessments from organizational studies to conduct an in-depth examination of relationships between international partners in the selected cases with emphasis on participants' experience, perceptions, views, and reflections.

One of the common issues concerning the case study method is that the findings from a specific case may not be rationally generalized (Bryman, 2008). The generalization issue needs to be addressed by well-chosen cases and seeking insights into the phenomenon regardless of the context so that the readers may not find confusion about the intention of the study as induction or testing a hypothesis. Yin (2013) proposes the concept of analytic generalization that a more abstract level of perspectives that the abstract level of findings generated from a set of case studies can pertain to newer situations other than the original case studies. This study adopts Yin's perspective of analytic generation and employs a two-case comparison approach for generating insights beyond the contextual limitation. Therefore, the application of the case study research can go beyond the original scope.

## Section Four: Research Preparations and Considerations

With the discussions of mixed methods case study as the research methods, the rationale of selecting cases of Confucius Institute programs to conduct case studies of international partnership are generally delineated in this section. The considerations of the position, role, and responsibility of the researcher, as well as research ethics, have guided throughout the research procedure and result presentations. Those considerations are reiterated in this section as well.

**Case selections**

The researcher uses Confucius Institute programs as the cases. The Confucius Institute network is an international educational partnership network with sites all across the world, including nearly one hundred sites in the United States (Hanban, 2019). The Confucius Institute is a partnership between educational institutions to promote Chinese language instruction and cultural awareness. Most of the Confucius Institute programs in the United States are hosted by higher education institutions. Each of the American Confucius Institutes has a Chinese university partner (Hanban, 2019). This international partnership of the higher education institutions between the US and China provides a platform for this study on higher education partnership.

Since early 2018, Confucius Institute programs in the US have received a wide range of criticism and challenges mostly from the politicians (Lum, 2019; US. Government Accountability Office, 2019). Congressional members and experts have alleged that Confucius Institutes may be part of China's political strategy to disseminate propaganda, interfere with academic freedom, censor information, and engage in espionage and intellectual property theft (Lum, 2019; US. Senate, 2019). A number of Congressional actions have been taken on limiting Confucius Institutes or increasing the scrutiny on its operations (Lum, 2019). As the result, a large number of American universities have decided to terminate their partnerships with Chinese institutions and end the collaborations for Confucius Institute programs from 2018.

The researcher selects two cases of Confucius Institute collaborations, one that decided to continue the partnership despite dramatically external pressure and one that

chose to sever the partnership. The researcher examines how the two US. universities

reacted and responded to the strong external pressure, how the China-US. partner

institutions communicated and collaborated, the level and type of trust that appeared to

exist between the partners, and how various decisions were made and communicated.

When comparative case studies are designed, the similar types of partnerships of

Confucius Institute programs in different higher education institution can naturally

control a range of variables including nationality, mission, discipline, and programmatic

purposes to compare degrees of trust as the dependent variable related to external

pressure across university partnerships of Confucius Institutes. The detailed information

about Confucius Institute programs in the United States is provided in the next chapter.

**The position and role of the researcher**

In general, the role and responsibilities of the researcher include building a

complex, holistic picture of the topic, analyzing the words shared during the individual

interviews, focus groups, and those printed and posted online about the program,

reporting the views of the participants in a detailed manner, and conducting the study in

the natural setting (Creswell, 2013). The qualitative researcher is the data collection

instrument (Hatch, 2002; Merriam, 1988; Patton, 1990; Yin, 2013). The data collected by

the researcher in this study derived from multiple sources, including the site, individual

interviews associated with the Confucius Institute programs at those universities, and a

review of documents pertaining to programming and partnership development materials

used onsite in establishing and sustaining the Confucius Institute programs. The

researcher is a participant-observer in the study, works at the site, and has direct working

experience as serving in the roles within the Confucius Institute network in the US. The description of the data analysis in this chapter indicates the measures employed to curb bias.

**Research ethics**

The ethics of the researcher has a direct impact on the research process of investigation and presentation of results. It is critical to follow codes of ethics and guidelines that are required by the research institution that the research is affiliated with. This study adhered to ethical protocols required by the Internal Review Board (IRB) of George Mason University.

First, the information in this study obtained from participants was always treated as strictly confidential and not shared with anyone else other than the IRB. When presenting the results, individual names, institutional names, and any other information which might have identified the participants were not included. The researcher recognized the obligation to protect the privacy and security of participants and avoided any possible embarrassment happening to them. Through the use of an identification key, only the researchers will be able to link interview data to participants' identities during the data collection and analysis. A pseudonym was placed on the digital interview and the transcript file, as well as on any other collected data. For any manuscripts resulted from this research, each participant is always given a pseudonym. In addition, as the project crossed the borders of nations, the researcher was aware of cultural and political issues which might influence all those involved and kept conscious of this through the interview process. The researcher made all efforts not to ask questions that might express the

privilege of one culture over another or endanger participants in any way. Those considerations and actions were taken place to ensure there was no harm to the participants in this study.

Participation in the research was on a voluntary basis. Potential participants were given all the information necessary for them to freely make their own decisions about their participation in this study. Those who agreed to participate were asked to complete a consent form. Information was provided as to the nature and purpose of the project through the invitation and the consent form which were parts of the research procedure package reviewed and approved by the IRB.

The researcher paid special attention to ensure the confidentiality and privacy of the participants involved in the study. Participants were not compelled to answer any questions which they personally felt may invade their privacy. No identification was made using the country or university to which the participants belong.

## Section Five: Data Collection

The data collected in this case study include multiple types and formats from multiple sources. This section provides descriptions of the data, sources, and participations. The procedure of data collection is elaborated in detail. The important component of this study is to gain insights from the experiences of individuals within the organizations related to the collaborative relationship with the partner and the external environment. The proper research approaches for this purpose include document reviews, surveys, and interviews.

**Document reviews**

The first source of data used was documents related to the organizational and programmatic information of the CI programs. Document reviews provide a set of qualitative data for analysis. The assessment of documents involved in this study serves as an assessment of the type of information and definitions of CI program operational practices shared online or through printed materials.

The documents for review include the mission statement, program descriptions, promotional materials, evaluation reports, meeting minutes, and news stories from official websites, social media pages, and media press. This study also included an analysis of documents and materials associated with the CI programs in order to better understand the contextual environment of the specific program including the host university, the community, and the local social and political atmosphere where those international collaborations have been taking place. The researcher's purpose in reviewing the materials served as a way to better understand the case site being studied, the purpose of the program, the language used in the materials, and the overall messaging shared with constituents and stakeholders about the programs. Document reviews can explore how each partner described the situations in either similar or different ways, which reflect the shared or unshared beliefs between partners. The document reviews may also illustrate how the organization is made presence through presentification in communications and recorded meetings.

**Survey**

The research uses survey instruments modified from the OTI and organizational communication assessment. The survey's purpose is to answer the research questions based on the perceptions and relationships of participating in the international partnership in higher education.

According to Creswell (2014), survey researchers use "cross-sectional surveys to collect data about current attitudes, opinions, or beliefs" (p. 355). Creswell (2014) also stated that cross-sectional survey design could also determine "community needs of educational services as it relates to programs and evaluate programs" (p. 356). Surveys express trends, reveal opinions, recognize critical beliefs and feelings of individuals, and offer practical information to assess programs (Creswell, 2014). Even though there are disadvantages to using a survey as a data-collection tool, Creswell (2009) stated the advantage of using a survey is because it is an inexpensive design, and it is a speedy manner of acquiring responses from participants.

The survey instrument of this study is adapted from OTI and organizational communication audit with throughout considerations of the context of higher education. The questionnaire includes sets of questions aiming to comprehend trust status, the development of the CI partnership, the efficiency and effectiveness of organizational communication within and between partners, and the perceptions and reactions to external pressures.

**Interviews**

       Interview is a commonly used tool to collect qualitative data. Through well

designed and executed interviews, researchers can gather specific information needed for

an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon under study, especially when other

methods such as field observation are not available or possible (Creswell, 2014).

Interviews can be conducted as highly structured, semi-structured, or as free flowing

conversations, depending on the extent to which interview questions are determined or

standardized beforehand (Merriam, 2009). As the purpose of obtaining the knowledge

and experiences from the interviewees who are the individuals familiar with the research

issues, the interview is not only a process of transferring information but also allows the

construction of knowledge to occur during the process. For the research of examining

partnership, it is imperative to encourage interviewees to define and reveal what they

value as members of the organization to a better understanding of how and why the

organization react to the environment and interact with the partner organization. In this

study, a comparatively detailed list of major topic issues and questions in the interview

protocol was carefully developed and justified in accordance with research questions as

well as the analytical framework.

       As the COVID-19 pandemic, all the interviews were conducted through an online

live video conference platform. The interview protocol ensured consistency throughout

the data gathering process. The interview protocol required logistical work beforehand

and included explaining the purpose of the study, reviewing the consent document,

explaining and securing consent from participants, online interview technology review,

and securing a quiet and comfortable space with minimal to no distractions. At the time of the interview, the researcher briefly described the project again and reviewed the consent form with the participant one-on-one. The researcher acquired permission from the participant to conduct the interview. The researcher documented the time, date, and location of the interview, numbered the interviewee in order to maintain the confidentiality of the participant, noted the interviewer, and proceeded through the interview questions (Creswell, 2013).

Four main categories of questions are included in the interviews: experience/behavior questions, knowledge questions, opinion/value questions, and hypothetic questions (Merriam, 2009). The main purpose of this protocol was to guide the researcher to conduct open-ended questions on how the interviewees experience their work at the Confucius Institute, how they communicate and interact with counterparts, and how they comprehend the situations and reactions under external pressures.

The team members of Confucius Institute programs from both China and the US, including administrators and teachers participated in one-on-one online interviews. Those interviews with CI program team members investigated the program mission, structure, operation, programming process, internal communication, interorganizational communication, and reaction to external pressure. The researcher engaged with the participants through reflective interviewing with open-ended questions during the actual interviews. Reflective interviewing connected the researcher's theoretical concept of the interview, the researcher's topics and position in regard to the participants and the topics, and the method used through questioning to dive deep through the human interaction

between the researcher and participant in order to gather rich data. In short, the underlying method of reflective questions asked meaningful questions with willing participants and sought data purposefully related to the research questions (Roulston, 2010).

The research has given special consideration to the possibility of language issues which may affect the accuracy and quality of data. All the Chinese participants have been working and living in the US for more than two years and possessed high levels of English proficiency. Thus, the full interviews were conducted in English with explanations and clarifications offered in the Chinese language as the researcher is a native Chinese speaker, which helped participants fully express themselves.

**Participants**

The participants for the study were designated as members of Confucius Institute programs at two universities as either American administrators or Chinese teachers who have been engaged in the program from no later than 2017 for more than two years to ensure every participant has direct experience during the external pressure. The researcher obtained the contact information of each participant through personal connection, introduction, and online website research. The participants were asked to participate through email, telephone, and online communication tools. A total of 14 individuals participated in this study through an individual online video interview and an online survey.

Among all 14 participants, eight of them were from Chinese partner universities; and six of them were from American host universities. The detailed information of their participation in this study is listed below.

**Table 2 Participant Information List**

| Participants | Institutions | US or Chinese schools | Interview date | Length | Survey Participation |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | B | China | October 29 | 1:34 | Yes |
| 2 | A | US | November 25 | 1:41 | Yes |
| 3 | A | US | November 23 | 1:28 | Yes |
| 4 | B | China | October 30 | 1:26 | Yes |
| 5 | A | China | November 11 | 1:28 | Yes |
| 6 | A | China | November 12 | 1:42 | Yes |
| 7 | B | US | November 24 | 1:45 | Yes |
| 8 | A | China | November 2 | 1:48 | Yes |
| 9 | A | US | November 2 | 1:48 | Yes |
| 10 | B | China | October 31 | 1:27 | Yes |
| 11 | B | China | October 31 | 1:25 | Yes |
| 12 | A | China | November 10 | 1:31 | Yes |
| 13 | B | US | November 1 | 1:29 | Yes |
| 14 | B | US | November 1 | 1:24 | Yes |

The participants were informed that they were able to end the interview at any time and with no repercussions. The data in this study has been kept confidential. A pseudonym was placed on the digital interview file and the transcript file as well as on any other collected data. For any manuscripts that may result from this research, each

participant was given a pseudonym. Through using an identification key, only the researcher was able to link interview data to the participant's identity for the analysis purpose. The identification key was dissolved when the analysis was completed to ensure the security of the data.

The online surveys were conducted separately from the interviews. The participants of the online survey remained anonymous without indicating their name or affiliated institution. The survey is not linked to the interview. All participants filled out the online surveys and completed all the questions.

### Section Six: Data Analysis

Data analysis involves organizing the data to verify responses in order to summarize the information (Creswell, 2014). Creswell (2014) stated that to analyze a set of data, the researcher must identify participants' responses and biases, descriptively examine the information to distinguish specific trends, and write a report representing the descriptive outcomes or use of statistics.

In this study, the qualitative data collected from the document reviews, survey results, and individual interviews are analyzed through several steps including developing categories through sorting, then coding and transcribing the raw data through content review and analysis procedure. The sorting procedure is for summarizing and then categorizing data to build a conceptual framework. The content analysis procedure illustrates the frequency and significance of categories to explore the shared views and understandings of the circumstance and issue. The common themes are revealed from the content review and analysis to lead the findings to address the research questions.

## Section Seven: Summary

This study explores the international partnership in higher education institutions through case study methods. Confucius Institute programs as cases were selected to examine the relationship between the American host universities and Chinese partner universities in cooperation and communication with each other, particularly how they operated and sustained the joint educational efforts under pressing external environments. The research questions include: 1. How can the individual and organizational relationships in the international partnership of higher education be examined?  2. How is trust of the international partnership related to the institutional internationalization at the higher education institution? 3. What is the process of trust development between international partners in higher education? 4. What factors influence the development of trust in international partnerships in higher education? 5. How is the degree of trust between partners impacted as external scrutiny and challenge intensifies? 6. How do partners communicate the perspectives and approaches of addressing the external pressure? 7. How does the trust between partners contribute to respond external pressure? 8. How do higher education institutions interact with external environment and adjust themselves, particularly with respect to their communication practices?

This study used qualitative case studies methods and included surveys, document reviews, and individual interviews. The findings from the study include sets of frequently repeated themes and subthemes that emerged from the data related to the research questions. The themes and subthemes were synthesized through hand coding by the

researcher for the individual interviews and the documents in order to answer the research questions.

This chapter briefly mentions the case selection that the Confucius Institute as the international collaborative programs are selected for the case studies. In the next chapter, the details about Confucius Institute programs in the US are presented.

**CHAPTER FOUR: CONFUCIUS INSTITUTE FOR THE CASE STUDY**

This research uses Confucius Institute programs for case studies to examine international partnership in higher education and explore answers for the research questions. Confucius Institutes (CIs) are entities that seek to promote Chinese language and culture in the world with the headquarters named the Office of Chinese Language Council International, commonly referred to as Confucius Institute Headquarters or Hanban (CIHQ) in Beijing, China, which is affiliated with the Chinese government's Ministry of Education (US. Government Accountability Office, 2019). The CI network is an international educational partnership network with sites across the world, including near 100 sites in the United States by the year 2018 (Hanban, 2019). The CI program is a partnership between educational institutions to promote Chinese language instruction and cultural awareness. Most of the CI programs in the United States are hosted by higher education institutions. Each American CIs has a Chinese partner which is usually a university or other type of educational institution in China (Hanban, 2019). The CI programs serve as cases of international partnerships of the higher education institutions between the US and China.

### Section One: General Introduction of American Confucius Institutes

The first CI program in the US opened in 2004 on the campus of University of Maryland with its Chinese partner the Nankai University in Tianjin, China. Since then, these Chinese language and culture programs have grown rapidly both across the US and around the world. By the end of 2017, there were over 110 CIs in the US, and over 520 in

the world (Hanban, 2018). American CIs were hosted by higher education institutions and K-12 school districts in 47 states and District of Columbia, with the only exceptions of North Dakota, Mississippi, and Wyoming.  The majority of the US. host institutions were public. As Government Accountability Office's investigation on CIs in 2018, out of 92 colleges and universities hosting CIs 82 were public institutions and 14 were private (US. Government Accountability Office, 2019).

While the expanding of CI network has been pacing steadily worldwide, the amount of American CI programs were decreasing significantly beginning from 2018 as the political environment in the US became antagonistic toward China related exchange efforts including CIs. Today, although there is no confirmed number of existing CIs in a public document, it is very likely that only less than 60 CIs are still functioning on American campuses as half of the CIs have been terminated.

**Operation**

Nearly all CI programs across the US. focus instruction on the Chinese language at the beginner's level as noncredit courses to the public (Lum, 2019). American students may obtain scholarships or attend short-term study abroad in China programs sponsored by CIs to visit and study in China (Hanban, 2019). Beside those educational offering, CIs conduct a variety of activities generally oriented towards Chinese language and culture based on the demands of local audience and the expertise of the educators of the individual program. Examples of such activities at CIs include Chinese cultural performances and demonstrations for the campus and the local community; sponsorship of and invitation to speakers to lecture on campus; organizing conferences and workshops

on Chinese history, literature, food, geography, or other China-related topics; supporting

academic collaboration and associated travel for American faculty to visit China;

providing Chinese teaching and cultural resources to public schools; and connecting with

the business community about doing business in China (US. Government Accountability

Office, 2019).

The expectation of the CI partnership is that the host universities provide space

free of charge for them to operate, saving them the expense in capital and human

resources of securing a location, as well as the administrative support. The Chinese

partner universities provide faculty members to serve as the liaisons and teaching staff, as

well as the consultants to host universities to propose resources for sustaining the CI

programs including applying financial resource from the CIHQ. The CIHQ provides

operational funding based on the requests from CI programs and requests the host

universities to match the funding directly or in-kind.

**Structure**

Management of the CI programs vary from university to university.

Organizationally, CIs are part of an academic department or an administrative office of

the American host university. CI staff team generally consists of a CI director or

directors, CI teachers, and a board of directors. Some university also have a US. assistant

director.

The CI director is a US. host university employee—either a school administrator,

faculty member, or professional hired to manage the CI program. CI teachers can either

be hired locally or be requested by the American host universities to be provided by the

Chinese partner universities. Candidates from China who best match the qualifications

that the US. university requests serve as visiting scholars at the US. host university. They

hold J-1 visiting scholar visas for their academic and educational exchange efforts

sponsored by the US. host universities for a term of 2-5 years. Those visiting teachers

from China are not American university employees and receive no compensation from

the host universities. In addition to visiting scholar instructors, CIs may hire qualified

local administrators and instructors. Local instructors are the US citizens or permanent

residents; their agreements adhere to American labor laws and are decided by the

American host institutions and administrators.
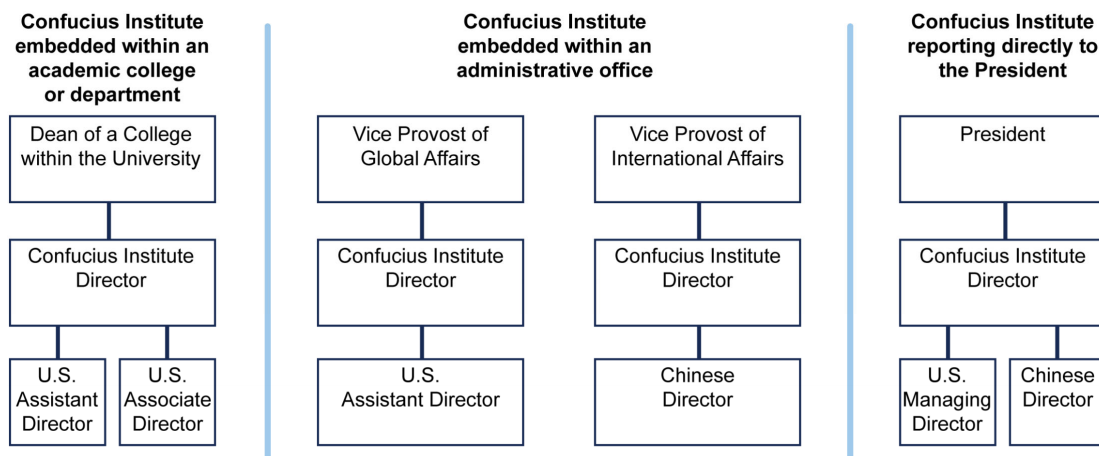
Source: US Government Accountability Office, 2019

**Figure 1 Examples of Organizational Structures of American CI Programs**

CIs adhere to the same principles of governance and accounting as any other institute or department in the university. CI's board of directors usually composited by senior administrators of both American host university and Chinese partner university oversees the development plans for the CI program, and offers advises on, approves, or makes decisions on major issues, such as teaching, research, or operations of the program (US. Government Accountability Office, 2019). The following figure provides several examples of how Confucius Institutes are structured, and where they are located within US. schools' organizational structure.

**Values and contributions**

Many American experts and educators who involved with Confucius Institute operations reiterate that American CI programs have provided the Chinese language learning and cultural awareness programs that benefit students, universities, and local communities. Some note that in some US. colleges and universities, Chinese language instruction is only available through the CIs in those regions (Lum, 2019). From the national interest perspective, CIs have served the mutually beneficial purpose of helping Americans learn Mandarin Chinese which is aligned with the goal stated by the US government but has not been achieved as no sufficient supporting resources have been allocated and deployed by US government agencies. In contrast, CIs provide much needed resources to universities and K-12 schools to teach the Chinese language which has enabled a large number of American students, teachers and administrators from universities and K-12 schools across the US to visit and study in China for periods ranging from a couple of weeks to a full year (Bell, 2018). According to the Modern

Language Association of America's report, the total enrollments in languages other than English in the US higher education institutions have been heading in the downward trend and Chinese language enrollments in 2016 dropped 13.1% from the last survey in 2013 (Looney & Lusin, 2019). The CI's Chinese language education programs have served as an accessible avenue to offer Chinese language learning opportunities to American students and community members.

Experts also argue that the nature of educational partnership improves the ability to cooperate cross-culturally and enhance the interpersonal and inter-organizational connections to lay a foundation on furthering the partnerships in other areas of teaching and scholarship. Thousands of personal friendships between Americans and Chinese have been formed because of the mission of CIs to provide opportunities for Chinese and Americans to understand each other in deep, meaningful, and long-lasting ways that positively inform the attitudes of people in both countries. Some former CI teachers originally from Chinese universities have decided to return to the US to study, work, and make a life here, and contribute to making the US a better and more diverse country (Bell, 2018). Those benefits reflect the fundamental meaningfulness of people-to-people exchanges between countries through the joint efforts of international education programs.

### Section Two: Soft Power and Public Diplomacy

Although the Confucius Institute has been serving as a large scale international educational partnership, it began to draw scholastic interests as a possible case for China attempting to grow its "soft power". Joseph Nye's soft power theory propels the concept

to the center of academic and international political discussions. He defines soft power as the ability to shape interests and desires and achieve goals through attraction instead of coercion or force (Nye 1990b). Nye's work on soft power quickly found its way into Chinese academic and policy discourse and evolved as Chinese scholars reinterpreted it. Wang Huning (1993) emphasizes that, of the sources of influence outlined by Nye, culture played a particularly important role for China. The early discussions of soft power in China coincide with programs and events abroad that precipitated the promotion of Chinese language learning, which later leads to the Confucius Institute. While Chinese scholars start to consider soft power as it might pertain to China for its peaceful rise, there was an increase in foreign students coming to China to study Chinese. The CI is considered as a typical public diplomatic effort to provide direct access for participants to connect with Chinese nationals as instructors. The events and programs put on by the CIs allow for a great deal of interaction outside of a traditional classroom setting. In a way, the CIs allow willing participants to benefit from a local based exchange program without traveling abroad. This line of research is valuable to evaluate the possibility of programs like the Confucius Institute influencing participants' perspectives and prompting their attitudinal and perceptual change.

The soft power discussion in the context of CI invites confusions and ambiguity about its true mission, particularly the underlying purpose of the involvement of the Chinese government. Marshall Sahlins challenged the University of Chicago's decision of sponsoring a CI program and argued that "[a]lthough there appears to be no statement of the specific "soft power" aims of the Confucius Institute program in its governing

texts, there is a seemingly innocuous clause that amounts to a Trojan horse" (Sahlins, 2013). National Association of Scholars, a political advocacy organization criticizes CI programs as "tend to present China in a positive light and to focus on anodyne aspects of Chinese culture" and this relationship with major American universities "boosts China's image on the world stage" (Peterson, 2017, p. 20-21). US. Senator Marco Rubio (R-FL) has labeled CI as a Chinese government initiative to "exploit America's academic freedom to instill in the minds of future leaders a pro-China viewpoint" (Stewart, 2018).

However, the academic research tells a different story regarding the Confucius Institute as the Chinese government's soft power image-building campaign. In a quantitative research study of what American high school students have learned from Confucius Classrooms (CI sponsored educational programs at local K-12 schools) by Naima Green-Riley, the results reveal that Confucius Classrooms did not produce the "pro-China" viewpoints that many critics have concerned about. Although students at the Confucius Classrooms praised Chinese culture, they developed less favorable views on current events politically from news reports and other information. Green-Riley suggests that studying Chinese in Confucius Classrooms stimulates students' curiosity about China, thus they are more intriguing to seek information about China from channels and sources of information out of the class and build their own perspectives. It is unlikely that students are indoctrinated by the Chinese Communist Party (Green-Riley, 2020). Also, the validity of the criticism on CI as a Chinese government originated soft power operation was rebutted by the CI supporters and participants. Based on their observations, while the CI project is an initiative supported by Chinese government, it has been set up

to act as a joint venture between partnering institutions and to leverage the talents of Chinese language teachers who inherently appreciate foreign language and culture. Randy Kluver who used to be the director of the Confucius Institute at Texas A&M University, argued that Confucius Institute as bringing Chinese cultural resources into a global conversation should be analyzed within a communicative paradigm instead of a soft power paradigm (Kluver, 2014). While the government's support is one of the main pillars of the program, its success is reliant on the Chinese individuals who travel abroad to "teach about language and culture and not indoctrinate Americans about the positions of the Chinese government" (Bell, 2018).

It is not difficult to understand that a certain government supported program would include a goal of promoting a positive image of that country. The core issue embedded in the soft power discussion on Confucius Institute is about the role of the Chinese government and the compatibility of the Chinese government's support in American higher education, which reflects a much broader question that how much trust there can be when an international partnership of higher education encounters a divergent and unfamiliar structure – it is in this case that allowing Chinese government which has been labeled by many Americans as totalitarian authority attempting to undermine the democratic political system and individualism lifestyles of the free world and challenge the US. dominance in economics, science, and technology, to engage with American college campuses may pose a threat to the US interests. Such suspicion has caused controversies during the trajectory of Confucius Institute in the US.

**Section Three: Controversies**

The concerns of academic freedom interference have been associated with Confucius Institute for a long time. Critics question universities' programmatic autonomy relates tangentially to accusations and reports about CIs, specifically with regard to the curtailment of academic freedom and influence on the curriculum in a manner that somehow favors China. CIs were described by American Association of University Professors as "as an arm of the Chinese state and are allowed to ignore academic freedom" so that American colleges and universities "sacrificed the integrity of the university and its academic staff" by hosting CI programs (AAUP, 2014). National Association of Scholars asserts that "Chinese teachers hired, paid by, and accountable to the Chinese government face pressures to avoid sensitive topics, and American professors report pressure to self-censor" (Peterson, 2017). The stories of American universities' decisions related to censor speakers or restrict topics that are sensitive to the Chinese government were also circulated (Lum, 2018; Parello-Plesner & Li, 2018; Peterson, 2017; Sahlins, 2013), amid the wave of debates in the American higher education between left and right wings on lecture events on campuses featuring ideologically controversial public figures. Perhaps the most publicized of which was that the exiled Tibetan spiritual leader Dalai Lama's planned visit was canceled by North Carolina State University where a CI program was hosted on its campus at that time (Parello-Plesner & Li, 2018).

The accusations of academic freedom issues were considered driven by ideologies driven and short on actual evidence by CI host universities. There has been no evidence

reported that the CI was influencing curriculum or academic policies in ways advantageous to China's political system. CI's "classes in Mandarin and Chinese culture… are under the control of the director, who is an employee of the university" instead of visitors from China (Bell, 2018). The Government Accountability Office's report found no university administrators felt that they did not have full control over their curriculum (US. Government Accountability Office, 2019). US directors appointed by the US university had signatory authority for programming, finances, and employment, while the Chinese staff members were not employees of the US host university thus did not have faculty status on campuses. Therefore, if any academic freedom issues were to arise by having a Confucius Institute, American university employees who oversee and manage the programs would take the proper steps to address it (US. Government Accountability Office, 2019). The fact that the funding provided for Confucius Institutes was a small proportion of a larger budget related to Asian studies and/or Chinese language implies that this partnership may not have the ability to exert undue influence (US. Government Accountability Office, 2019). Even the most vocal critic the National Association of Scholars admits that some teachers and professors within Confucius Institutes who they visited and interviewed have "claimed complete freedom to express themselves" (Peterson, 2017). University administrators have firmly denied the imposed censorship possibly associated with CI programs. Regarding the sensitive political issue, it was argued that CI program played no role in Dalai Lama's canceled visit at North Carolina State University and furthermore, "at least three US. universities with Confucius Institutes have accepted visits by … the Dalai Lama" (Lum, 2019).

Interestingly, the critics against CI programs have shown remarkable divergence in terms of the uniqueness of Chinese government funding. Some critics appear to be geopolitically oriented and only target China. However, the concerns raised by AAUP and shared by some higher education scholars over collaborating with foreign government in global education efforts in the higher education are not unique to Confucius Institutes. Universities administrators who oversee CI programs on their campuses indicated that concerns with foreign government funding were not only about the case of China but with all foreign governments (US. Government Accountability Office, 2019). Faculty members and others "stated they did not believe their institution should accept external funding from any source that might limit their activities, including large US corporations, private donors, or any foreign government or outside entity" (US. Government Accountability Office, 2019). In a case of Australian university, interestingly, when faculty members from University of Sydney protested the university's reception of external funding from the conservative Ramsay Centre for Western Civilization, the practice of its CI program was mentioned as a positive example to demonstrate how higher education institution can maintain its academic freedom, autonomy, and independence in the collaboration with external sponsors, as "[t]he most obvious point of comparison to the Ramsay Centre, the university's Confucius Institute, places no constraints of this kind on undergraduate education, which it has no capacity to influence by either imposing or excluding particular lines of study" (University of Sydney Academics, 2018).

Beside the issues related to academic freedom, the controversies of Confucius Institute in the US. mostly related to transparency and jurisdiction applied in the establishing agreements (Peterson, 2017) have been addressed through publishing CIs' organizational documents including program reports and legal contracts on the websites which were rarely seen at educational institutions, and restructuring CI agreements with CIHQ to affirm the academic freedom and complete control of the US host university as well as setting the US. governing law  prevails in CI activities on US university campuses. However, those measures to protect the public reputation of the joint educational efforts and sustain the international partnerships with Chinese partners were not effective. The external challenges and pressures on the Confucius Institute reached a new level of intensity as the US administration dramatically raised the tone against China and labeled the Chinese government as the biggest adversary in the world. As a result, the tension between the US and China has been escalated in almost every field of bilateral exchanges, including higher education.

### Section Four: Political Pressure

Since early 2018, Confucius Institute programs in the US have received a wide range of criticism and challenges mostly from the politicians (Lum, 2019; US. Government Accountability Office, 2019). In February 2018, Senator Rubio sent a letter to five universities in Florida, urging them to cancel their Confucius Institute agreements with claims of "mounting concern about the Chinese government's increasingly aggressive attempts to use 'Confucius Institutes' and other means to influence foreign academic institutions and critical analysis of China's past history and present policies"

(Ducassi, 2018). In a Senate Intelligence Committee hearing on the worldwide threats on February 13, 2018, during the questioning to FBI director Christopher Wray he continued to raise the same concern of "Confucius Institute as a tool of that whole of society effort and as a way to exploit the sort of naïve view among some in the academic circles", and received a positive response from Wray as "it is something that we are watching warily and in certain instances have developed appropriate investigative steps" (US. Senate, 2018).  Even though no unambiguous evidence was presented, this exchange in this high-profile political venue brought Confucius Institute under the spotlight and drew a wave of national media interests in a negative manner. Representatives Seth Moulton (D-MA), Michael McCaul (R-TX), and Henry Cuellar (D-TX) followed suit and sent letters to universities and colleges in their respective districts, urging them to halt their partnerships for Confucius Institutes (Foster-Frau, 2018).

This type of criticism from political figures in the national stage was unprecedented to American CIs. The contents of the accusations went beyond the controversies of the academic freedom issue but reached the realm of national security. Politicians alleged CI is not only a part of China's political strategy to disseminate propaganda, but also engage in espionage and intellectual property theft (Foster-Frau, 2018; Lum, 2019; Parello-Plesner & Li, 2018; US. Senate, 2019). Interestingly, when responding to the question from local news media regarding the evidence to back up the claims, Lizzie Litzow who is the communications director for Rep. McCaul, acknowledged that both McCaul and Rep. Cuellar "have no examples or specific evidence that the institute at UTSA [University of Texas at San Antonio] — or any other

Texas university - was generating propaganda or pushing China's interests. But its funding by the Chinese government was evidence enough" (Foster-Frau, 2018). Since then, congressional members including Senators John Cornyn (R-TX), Ted Cruz (R-TX), Chuck Grassley (R-IA), Tom Cotton (R-AR), Rob Portman (R-OH), John Kennedy (R-LA), Josh Hawley (R-MO), Mitt Romney (R-UT), and Marsha Blackburn (R-TN); Representatives Chris Smith (R-NJ), Frank Wolf (R-VA), Joe Wilson (R-SC), Sheila Jackson Lee (D-TX), and Mark Gallagher (R-WI) have attacked Confucius Institute programs and pressed universities to withdraw from the partnerships. At the beginning, most of the American host universities stood firmly with their partnerships. Miami Dade University and University of South Florida directly responded to Rubio's inquiries and dismissed his allegations (Ducassi, 2018; Zhao, 2018). University of Missouri and Webster University pushed back the accusations from Sen. Hawley and stated no evidence was found against CI programs (Benevento, 2018; Keller, 2018).

As the political pressures heightened, congressional actions were taken on Confucius Institutes. According to congressional records, Rubio and Rep. Wilson have introduced legislations (S. 2583 H.R. 5336 in 115th Congress; S. 3313 and H.R. 7063 in 116th Congress) to require Confucius Institutes to register under Foreign Agents Registration Act of 1938; Rubio and Rep. Smith introduced S. 480 and H.R. 1811 respectively in 116th Congress to include Confucius Institutes as part of the Chinese government's political influence operations and seek counteractions; Sen. Blackburn and Rep. Roy Chip (R-TX) introduced S. 3453 and H.R. 7138 respectively in 116th Congress to require amendment of CI agreements; Sen. Kennedy and Rep. Donna Shalala (D-FL)

introduced S. 939 and H.R. 7601 respectively in 116<sup>th</sup> Congress titled "The Confucius Act" directly targeted on CI establishments and attempted to restrict CI agreements with risk of jeopardizing federal funds from the Department of Education as an enforcement. This bill passed the Senate by unanimous consent in June 2020, but didn't reach to the House floor for a vote before the adjourn of 116<sup>th</sup> Congress. None of those proposed legislation passed congress and was written into the law.

Smith also requested the Government Accountability Office to conduct a thorough investigation on American CIs even though final results published in February 2019 found no wrongdoing at any CI in the US. Meanwhile, Sen. Portman the chairperson of Senate Permanent Committee of Investigation initiated a congressional study on CIs and called a Senate hearing in February 2019 with the report presented. The key findings of the study and hearing have been mostly focusing on the reciprocity issue that the Chinese government should give American programs more favorable treatment in China with flexibility and openness as Confucius Institutes have received in the US, even though Confucius Institutes in the US are in fact programs belonging to the American host universities and not to China whereas the American programs in China still belong to American universities and organizations, therefore the reciprocity loses its ground.

The most devastating congressional action on Confucius Institute was the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2019 (NDAA FY2019). This appropriation act authorized over $700 billion for the national defense budget in record-breaking speed to pass the congress and was enacted after being signed by President Trump in August 2018. Section 1091 of NDAA FY 2019 titled "Prohibition of Funds for

Chinese Language Instruction Provided by a Confucius Institute" prohibits the use of Department of Defense funds for Chinese language instruction provided by a Confucius Institute or to support a Chinese language program at an institution of higher education that hosts a Confucius Institute. This section was added to the full appropriation legislation by Sen. Cruz as an amendment in Senate review. Although the section allows higher education institution to apply for a waiver to the Under Secretary of Defense if they can demonstrate the complete separation between Confucius Institute program and the Department of Defense supported language instruction program, it turned out that all the waiver applications were eventually denied even though such separation has been the case from the beginning. As the result, all colleges and universities including Arizona State University, Indiana University at Indianapolis, University of Hawaii at Manoa, University of Michigan, University of Minnesota, University of Oregon, Rhode Island University, San Francisco State University, and Western Kentucky University which have hosted CIs and received Defense funds for university Chinese language flagship programs terminated their CI programs (Atack, 2019; Redden, 2019). The University of Oregon's vice provost Dennis Galvan said the closure was a "regret", and the University was forced to choose between the two programs as the wavier was denied by the Department of Defense (Atack, 2019). As Galvan expressed, "[o]ur Confucius Institute, launched by our own China-engaged faculty, has been a marvelous academic asset on our campus. It has helped us campus-wide to foster mutual understanding, constructive dialogue and evidence-based comprehension of China, its global emergence, its culture and its people. We would have very much preferred to retain both programs. But closing

the Confucius Institute was necessary in order to protect the funding for the Chinese

Flagship program. We regret having had to make such a choice" (UO Confucius Institute

to close, 2019).  Under the scrutiny and pressures, those closures of CIs, particularly as

major public land grant universities being the hosts, caused a snowball effect that more

universities have followed the path including the ones that have been openly and strongly

defending their CI programs. However, the toughest challenge from congressional action

has yet to come. The newly passed National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year

2021 (NDAA FY2021) included a section titled "Limitation on Provision of Funds to

Institutions of Higher Education Hosting Confucius Institutes" which prevents any funds

from Department of Defense of any fiscal year to higher education institutions hosting

Confucius Institutes unless waivers can be granted by the Secretary of Defense. This act

will not only bring a catastrophic crash on American CI programs, but also has a noxious

impact on CI programs in many other countries as the term "Institutions of Higher

Education" is broadly defined in this act and can be applied to a global scale.

　　While the congressional actions have directly threatened the American host

universities to seriously evaluate if their CI programs can continue to exist and function

on their campuses, the administration has also been taking aims on CIs. Secretary of State

Mike Pompeo repeatedly accused Confucius Institutes "working to recruit spies and

collaborators at US. colleges" and specifically expressed that he was hopeful that CIs

would all be gone by the end of 2020 (Reuters, 2020). In light of such rhetoric, the

Department of State has designated the Confucius Institute U.S. Center which has no

relations with any American universities and CIs as a foreign mission (CIUS, 2020), and

issued letters to university leadership and state commissions of education across the country (Binkley, 2020).

The political pressure has challenged the foundation of international partnerships for Confucius Institutes in the US. Academics who have engaged in the debate about CI in American campuses from both sides expressed dismay. Edward McCord from George Washington University states that the US government had wrong rationale and "had no proof whatsoever" (Shenoy, 2020). Marshall Sahlins from University of Chicago, one of the earliest critics against CI regards the current political pressure as essentially the interference from the American government into American universities' curriculum which is "exactly the same kind of totalitarian relationship of the state to the institutions that the Chinese have" (Shenoy, 2020). Regardless of the protests from the academics, the decline of American CI has been trending downward under the pressure. As of today, it is believed that near half of the total 110 Confucius Institutes have been closed or in the process of closing since 2018.

The severe external pressure provides an opportunity to evaluate the trust within the international partnerships. Even though a high degree of trust may exist, the university may not be able to effectively resist the external political challenges and sustain the trajectory of the individual CI program. However, trust is a unique angle to gain a full picture of interpersonal and interorganizational relationships. "Pure gold does not fear the flame" – interestingly this proverb exists in both English and Chinese language with exactly the same expression and meaning. Two cases of CI programs, one that decided to continue the partnership despite significant external pressure and the other

that chose to sever the partnership provides a perspective to illuminate the core issue of trust under external pressure.

## Section Five: Case Descriptions

This study adopted case study methods to investigate two Confucius Institute programs and collect data from both American and Chinese personnel involved in these two CI programs. The CI programs in this study were hosted by two different higher education institutions in the US. The comparative case studies examined degrees of trust in the international partnerships of Confucius Institute programs on different campuses.

### Confucius Institute program A

The Confucius Institute program A investigated in this case study research was hosted by a large public university located in a suburban area. The host university has been considered as the largest public institution in the state where it locates, with more than 30,000 full time and part time students. The university is a major research institution with a large amount of sponsored research projects annually. Based on the website review, those research funding has been sponsored by a variety of agencies including primary federal agencies for public research such as the Department of Defense, Department of Commerce, Department of Health and Human Services, National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA), National Science Foundation (NSF), and National Institutes of Health (NIH), which have been crucial to develop the academic capacity and reputation of the university.

Based on the website and document reviews, the university has been emphasizing global outreach and cooperation since the mid-2000s. Its global strategy considered that

global should be part of the university identity and fostering global citizenship should be an educational goal. As a result, the university has committed to the cultivation of global collaborations and partnerships. Its Confucius Institute program has been developed against such backdrop of global vision.

The Confucius Institute program A was established in late 2000s as the first one in the state where the university is located. The diversity of student bodies including an increasing number of Chinese students, the vibrant Chinese community nearby, and a number of faculty members who have direct connections personally and academically with China became immediate resources of the program. Its Chinese partner for CI was a relatively long-term partner for cultural immersion and study abroad programs. The working relationship has been existing before the establishment of the CI program. The Chinese partner university was located in a major city in China. It was not a renowned research institution, but the expertise of linguistics and language teaching has been reckoned an invaluable asset for the CI program.

The CI program was initially hosted by academic units of the American host university, then moved to administrative structure as part of the American host university's global strategy. The top leadership of the host university appointed senior administrators to oversee and provide guidance on the development of the CI program. The American team of the partnership in most of the time included a director, a deputy director, and a student intern. The individuals who served in the position of directorship were teaching faculty member and then administrative faculty member respectively, who could speak the Chinese language. The Chinese team had a Chinese leader, two to three

teachers, and two graduate students serving as volunteer teachers. The Chinese team leader served in the term between two and five years. Teachers served for two or three years. Graduate students usually stayed for one year. English language skill was one of the requirements for Chinese individuals to apply the positions in this CI program.

According to the documents, the CI program has been focusing on the Chinese language teaching and cross-cultural learning activities across the university campus, teacher's professional development and resources at K-12 public schools, and cultural awareness events at the local community. The local community surrounding the program had multicultural and well-educated demography. The cultural and language resources were not scarce. Therefore, the CI program was positioned to build connections to coordinate and leverage the existing resources. One example was its teacher training programs. It was a conviction that the local K-12 schools demanded high-level Chinese language teaching, but not necessarily need teachers or curriculum from China directly to the local classrooms. Thus, the teacher training program by the visiting Chinese teachers organized by the CI program made better sense to address the local needs and leverage its own strengths of the resource.

Based on the annual reports, the relationship between the partners has been increased since the development of the CI program and expanded to other academic programs for explorations of joint educational programs. The numbers of students at American host university who have awarded Confucius Institute scholarships to study in China based in the Chinese partner university were also increased. Each year, both sides

attended the annual board meeting of the CI program either in person or virtually. The senior leaders visited each other every year.

At the time of this study, the American host university already announced the termination of the CI due to the political pressure, particularly the risk of jeopardizing federal research funding. The CI program was suspended. All Chinese personnel has left the campus.

**Confucius Institute program B**

The Confucius Institute program B was hosted by a small private university in an urban area. The host university is one of Historical Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU) with about three thousand students. It is considered as a small size regional teaching university. The university has received research funding sponsored by federal agencies such as the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) and National Institutes of Health (NIH).

According to the website and document reviews, the university's development of global efforts started relatively late comparing with the host university in the first case. However, the university recognized the importance of global learning as a way to fulfill its promise of preparing students to serve in a global society. Providing international education programs became essential to cultivate cross-cultural competence and global skills. The university has not had many international partnerships, and the international composition of the overall student population has been limited. Therefore, the university had to develop the international collaboration and partnership from scratch step by step.

The Confucius Institute program B was established in the early 2010s as the only CI in the state that the university is located. As the constituencies of the university community were mostly from the underserved population, the global educational and cultural resources have been significantly insufficient. The Confucius Institute program has become the initiative to drive the momentum of international education across the campus and contributed to the development of Chinese language teaching program and other global studies programs. Its Chinese partner university was a regional comprehensive university. The CI program B was the second CI program that this Chinese university that has been involved, and the only one in the US. There was no previous relationship between the American host university and Chinese partner university before the establishment of the CI program.

The CI program was within the administrative structure and received support from the president's office as part of the international and intercultural strategy. The American team included a director, a full time coordinator, and student assistants. The director was the tenured faculty member serving in the international office. The Chinese team included a team leader and 12 teachers. Most of those teachers were deployed outside of the host university campus to teach Chinese language programs across the community. They were not from the Chinese partner university but selected from across China based on the qualification of Chinese language teaching experiences and skills.

The CI program has been focusing on building the structure of Chinese language education within the campus, raising the interests of participating in global studies around the university community, and creating and sustaining language teaching offerings for the

region. According to the documents, the CI program's efforts paved the way for the creation of Chinese language minor program at the university. Beyond the campus, the CI program has constructed and sponsored seven Chinese language teaching programs around local schools and provided Chinese language instructions to more than 6,000 students altogether. Selecting and placing native Chinese speaking teachers from China has been necessary to address the local demand. To many students, those services and resources directly from China became the only global educational experiences they have had. As an educational instructional content provider, the number of students registered in the classes and the assessment of students' learning outcomes were important benchmarks of demonstrating the accomplishments.

Similar to the first case, the relationship between the two partners of the CI program transcends to a broad scale. The faculty exchanges have been expedited for guest lectures and academic collaborations. The senior administrators visited each other once in a couple of years besides attending the CI board meeting and international CI conferences. Currently, the CI program B was still functioning when this study was conducted.

### Section Six: Summary

For answering the research questions related to international partnership, this research uses Confucius Institutes for case studies. This chapter summarizes the Confucius Institutes' operations and contributions as joint educational programs between American host universities and Chinese partner universities. The academic discussions about Confucius Institute as a public diplomatic effort and controversies around

Confucius Institute related to the concept of foreign government sponsored programs within American campuses are synthesized. The chapter underlines the criticism and pressures from politicians which differs from the academic critics in terms of the contents, purposes, and effects. The increasing political scrutiny and pressure in light of the deteriorating bilateral relations between the US and China have acutely challenged the sustainability of Confucius Institute programs on American campuses. The chapter introduced two cases of Confucius Institute programs and their host universities. The case study research results about the trust status, process of development, and dynamics under external pressures are presented in the following chapter.

**CHAPTER FIVE: ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS**

This chapter presents the findings from the case studies of the Confucius Institute programs including reviews the operations and collaborations at two campuses, the relationship between team members from the United States and China, understandings and measurements of trust as a core element of partnership between partners, and organizational communication practices of the partnership programs. The Confucius Institute programs as international partnerships in higher education have encountered enormous external pressures in the United States. In the findings, the researcher presents the levels of trust, trust development, influences of external pressure on the partnership, and degree of trust in response to external pressure in higher education. The research questions are addressed in the presentation of findings.

## Section One: Levels of Trust

This research adopts the cross-level framework to explore the dynamics inside of the multi-level complex relationships. Delving into the individual and organizational levels of analysis, the researcher recognizes three categorically distinct trust relations as relevant to trust in the partnership: individual–organization *institutional* trust, individual–individual *interpersonal* trust, and organization–organization *interorganizational* trust, which are the key fundamentals of the cross-level model of trust analysis (Schilke & Cook, 2013). From the cross-level analysis, the Research Question 1 *how can the individual and organizational relationships in the international partnership of higher education be examined,* and the Research Question *2 how is trust of the international*

*partnership related to the institutional internationalization at the higher education institution* are addressed from the trust analysis in the interpersonal, institutional, and interorganizational level.
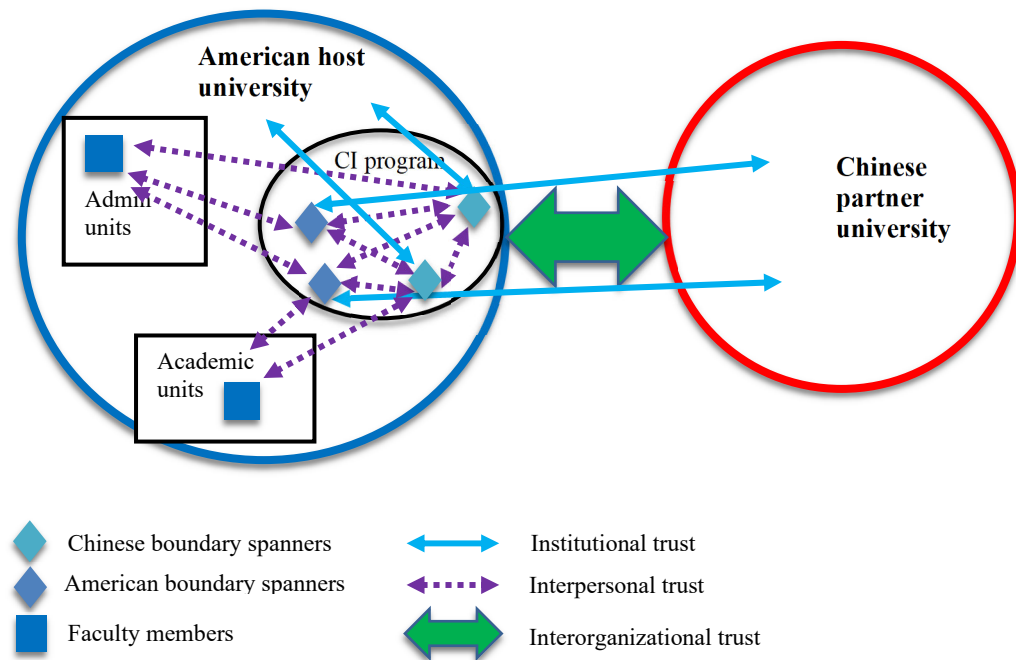


**Figure 2 Levels of Trust in CI Partnerships**

## Interpersonal trust

In organization studies, the interpersonal trust analysis is dealing with interpersonal interactions and relations within the organization or between organizations (Mayer et al, 1995). Interpersonal trust between a trustor – the trusting party and a trustee

– the trusted object, can be the trust in supervisors, trust in co-workers, or trust in boundary spanners. The majority of organizational studies in the corporate world either focus on interpersonal trust within the focal organization in terms of the relationship among organizational members, or only focus on interpersonal trust between organizations in term of the relationship between contact persons or negotiators representing each of the organization involving in the partnership or negotiation. As targeting on the international partnership in higher education, this study presumed the interpersonal trust between organizations as the focal point. However, the results indicated that the interpersonal trust between-organization and within-organization is equally remarkable.

*The between-organization interpersonal trust.* The between-organization interpersonal trust occurs between American personnel and Chinese personnel who joined together to form the Confucius Institute team on the American host universities' campuses. The American personnel was hired by the American host universities. They were usually the faculty members, professional staff members, and student staffs appointed by the American host universities to join the Confucius Institute team and led by the American Directors who are faculty members or administrators. In this study, all of the American personnel on both campuses worked on Confucius Institute programs in part time manner. None of those appointments of American personnel involved any approval and consultation of Chinese partner universities as "CI is essentially a part of American host university" (Interview 9, November 2020). Chinese personnel was usually teaching faculty members and graduate students from Chinese partner universities who

102

were invited by American host universities for the terms of stay between two and four years. They were "interviewed, vetted, and selected" by American personnel before being invited to the American campuses and then sponsored for the J-1 visiting scholar visas by the American universities (Interview 7, November 2020; Interview 9, November 2020). They were considered as "guests and helpers" beside partners and co-workers by American team members (Interview 2, November 2020; Interview 3, November 2020; Interview 7, November 2020; Interview 9, November 2020; Interview 14, November 2020). As visiting scholars on American campuses, those Chinese personnel did not have employment relationships with American host universities, thus did not have authorities to involve in managerial procedures; instead, they obtained American universities' digital identifications for their email accounts and resources benefits such as library accesses and meal plans. Among Chinese personnel, one individual was considered as the team leader who used to wear a title as "Chinese Director" or "Chinese Associate/Resident Director". All Chinese personnel at both Confucius Institute programs worked full time. Those procedures and arrangements indicated the unbalanced power structure in these partnerships due to the nature of the residency and guiding policies. The CI program team members from the US and China were not only co-workers but also served as the boundary spanners from each side, particularly for the team members involving in programming and communications. They are the individuals carrying forward and managing the relationship on the behalf of each partner through the direct communications (Cook & Schilke, 2013).

Based on the survey results, team members from both sides possessed a high level of interpersonal trust in other members from the counterparts. 100% of American personnel feel the Chinese partners are honest (66.67% strongly agreed and 33.33% agreed), reliable (50% strongly agreed and 50% agreed), and dependable (33.33% strongly agreed and 66.67% agreed); 100% of American personnel think that Chinese team members would always honor their commitment (66.67% strongly agreed and 33.33% agreed). The Chinese side shared a similar sense toward their American counterparts. The majority of them feel the American partners are honest (50% strongly agreed, 37.50% agreed, and 12.50% neither agreed nor disagreed) and reliable (62.50% strongly agreed, 12.50% agreed, and 25% neither agreed nor disagreed). They expressed a great deal of respect to their foreign team members in the interviews and repeatedly described them as "hard working", "tireless", and "relentless". In addition, interviewees from China frequently used the words "nice", "warm", "friendly", "hospitable", and "caring" to describe American personnel in the same team; while American interviewees regarded Chinese personnel as "bravely" challenged themselves to overcome cross-cultural difficulties. Considering that Chinese personnel who have traveled far away from home to work and live in a different country while American personnel served as hosts to provide logistical and mental supports, it is obvious that the interpersonal relationships could be established in a positive and rapid manner when they were bound together from the very beginning, particularly during the process of settling down which was outside of the workspace. Several Chinese interviewees expressed their gratitude to American personnel as they helped picked them up from the airport and arranged housing for them

to settle. At that moment, American personnel were seen as "shelters" and "guiders" to support the Chinese visitors to get familiar with the journeys of temporary American lives at the beginning when they feel the most vulnerable. American interviewees considered Chinese teachers' skills of teaching Chinese language, ability to learn and adapt to new environment, and patience were "outstanding" and "superb". Those qualities have become great assets for the establishments and developments of educational programs which benefit American students on campuses and around the communities. As multiple American interviewees said that "without Chinese teachers, our [teaching programs] would never be developed so fast". The Chinese personnel's professional attributes were appreciated and trusted.

The interpersonal communication between American and Chinese team members at CI programs was demonstrated as a unique function of organizational communication in the purpose of relationship building in international partnership. As the Chinese personnel visiting from China and staying in the US for a year or longer, they had to make necessary adjustments to immerse themselves into American life and work environment which is based on a different culture and language. For every interviewee from Chinese partner universities in this study, only one has been to the US before their tenures at CI programs. The transfer of knowledge and information of basic procedures at work and life required plenty of communications from American team members to Chinese team members particularly during the first several months. Those communications including the instructions of operating office equipment, the guidance of using campus facilities and services, the advice on email etiquette, and the directions of

taking public transportations and grocery shopping were essential of the functional partnership programs even though they were not directly connected to the core educational programming. The directions of communication flow were naturally generated from the American team members as the source of the information who moved to the upper position of the communication flow superior to their Chinese colleagues who were the recipients of the information, although they might all be in the same rank on the organizational chart. Several interviewees shared their feelings that they considered their American colleagues as not only "helpers" but also "teachers" in terms of communicating and educating about the daily practices and adjustments as working in the US. The traditional Chinese notion of "treating teachers the same way as treating parents" was embraced by Chinese team members to cultivate the sense of special respect to American counterparts, which help develop interpersonal trust at the beginning.

Working on American campuses, the English language is the common language for daily communication. Chinese personnel at CI programs whose first language is Chinese had to spend an amount of time to improve their proficiency in English to the level of handling work related communication. According to the interviewees, during the time of enhancing the command of the English language, their communication in English with American colleagues tended to be informal. To a certain degree, the acts of speaking English with American team members were indeed language practices. The questions and explanations related to unfamiliar vocabulary and idioms frequently occurred in daily

communication at the workplace. Informal and frequent interpersonal communication is important to connect people closely and expedite relationship building.

On the American side, patient and caring were recognized as the most demanded personal characteristics to communicate with Chinese partners (Interview 3, November 2020; Interview 7, November 2020). American personnel must be able to comfortably tolerate Chinese counterparts' operational flaws during daily work and unsophisticated English communication skills and take those moments of errors as the opportunity to communicate for help rather than blame. "We must understand that both of us are facing cultural differences and they are trying to overcome them as well" (Interview 2, November 2020). "It is important to develop empathy toward Chinese visitors who have left their home to work with us for a long time" (Interview 14, November 2020). Cultural awareness, intercultural understanding, and personal empathy helped American personnel develop appreciation toward Chinese colleagues. Those individuals who have had more experience and knowledge socially and culturally toward the counterpart might have better preparations for a smooth starter of interpersonal trust development. Similar to any personal relationship, respect, connection, patience, caring, and empathy lay the foundation of trust in international partnership programs in higher education.

Although both American and Chinese team members showed strong respect for each other within and outside of the workspace, there were variances of understanding

each other and making decisions which occurred during communicating about the strategic priorities and responses to the external pressures.

   ***The within-organization interpersonal trust.*** Organizational research on partnership, in general, reiterates the importance of between-organization interpersonal relationship. This study finds that the within-organization interpersonal trust of each side is equally imperative, which has not drawn the same level of attention and emphasis among organizational study literature comparing between-organizational relationship.

   In this study, the researcher found that the dynamics among Chinese team members had great chances to be turned into a distractive and disruptive force. As Chinese personnel worked and lived together, the incompatibility of individual personalities could be exposed soon. It could be observed as a pattern that Chinese persons were bound closely together during the first couple of months after arrival on the American campuses, but then distanced themselves from others who they might not be fond of. "It is like any other personal relationships, like friendships or even marriages, the longer you stayed together the more problems you found, then you realized they were not the ones you really liked. It's all personal." (Interview 12, November 2020). The issue of dependents added another layer of complications. Some Chinese personnel decided to bring their children with them. The time of taking care of school age children might sometimes become a conflict of schedule with irregular work hours at CI programs, which might cause uncomfortable and disdained sentiments within the team. Their commitments and reliabilities were in question from other team members' perspectives (Interview 1, October 2020; Interview 5, November 2020; Interview 8, November 2020;

Interview 11, November 2020; Interview 13, November 2020). The fact of multiple informal communication channels and sources being used simultaneously among Chinese team members added the complication to the issue. They might receive information from previous team members who completed the services or friends who were placed in other CI programs. CI programs as newly invented collaborative efforts might not be equipped with adequate regulations and protocols effectively addressing all interculturally perceived issues, which left space for personal experience heard from others to prevail the official information and proliferate the tension.

American co-workers were often time aware of those dynamics among Chinese team members but relied on the Chinese team leaders (directors) to deal with them without a direct engagement (Interview 1, October 2020; Interview 8, November 2020; Interview 9, November 2020). It turned out that the designated Chinese team leaders and other team members were usually from different departments and offices within the Chinese partner universities and might not know each other before joining the CI programs. After the completion of their tenures at CI programs, they returned to their home departments and were very likely no longer associated with each other professionally. There is no substantial command chain or hierarchical ranking structure to enforce the leadership role of the Chinese team leader. Therefore, the intervention from the Chinese team leader might not solve the problem, but quite possibly further complicate the relations and put the team leader into an uncomfortable hotspot. For the communication aiming to address the personal issues, the trustworthy information hub was needed but often time missed in the cases of CI because of the Chinese team leader's

lack of willingness and their far distance from the information authority at home institutions. The fact that Chinese team members might question other colleagues' commitment and reliability, and even the professionalism, indicates that the levels of interpersonal trust within the team were relatively modest. This was perceived as a negative factor impacting the effectiveness of team performance (Interview 4, October 2020; Interview 6, November 2020; Interview 11, October 2020; Interview 12, November 2020).

On the American side, the challenges of interpersonal trust came from the various campus silos. In the case of CI program A, the organizational structure altered from academic department to administrative offices then returned to academic. As a relatively "unknown" or "hidden" office, CI's American personnel had to navigate the bureaucratic systems and attract attention from faculty and administrators across the campus (Interview 2, November 2020; Interview 3, November 2020; Interview 8, November 2020). The perceived distrust from other teaching faculty member in the field of world language education toward newly arriving Chinese teachers and apathy of general cross-cultural interests from other units became barriers to building substantial interpersonal relationships between American CI staff and other colleagues on campus (Interview 6, November 2020; Interview 8, November 2020). For CI program B, as the host university is a small size teaching institution, the overall international programming had been underdeveloped and no structure and resource for China strategies had yet been developed at the time of the establishment of the CI program. The CI program which was located under the international office became the liaison between the university and

China. The American personnel at the CI has been overwhelmed with creating the university level of international operations while juggling with demands of resources from teaching units. The issue of insufficient support and time limited the ability to capitalize the CI program's role as a central position within the international operation and underpin meaningful interpersonal trust (Interview 7, November 2020; Interview 13, November 2020; Interview 14, November 2020).

American higher education institutions are multi-mission and multi-function complex enterprises (Bess & Dee, 2008). The motivation of faculty members to explore new areas of interests particularly out of their academic and cultural realm is relatively low as they are buried in a variety of academic, educational, and professional tasks, even the institutional incentive may be offered. Meanwhile, for those faculty members who already possessed professional and personal knowledge, familiarity, and interest related to China, the interpersonal relationship with CI staff could be quickly built and transformed into interorganizational relationships for exploring academic exchanges through the CI program. American interviewees also recognized the potential challenges of campus leadership changes, as the most supportive campus leaders' departure could drastically setback the interpersonal trust between other colleagues and CI staff (Interview 2, November 2020; Interview 3, November 2020; Interview 7, November 2020).

Another aspect of the difficulties with respect to building interpersonal trust with colleagues within the university campuses was the unfamiliarity and incompatibility of communication patterns. Organizational members usually form a variety of formal and

informal groups serving as covert components of the overall organizational system (Bess & Dee, 2008). On university campuses, faculty and staff may informally group together for their interests of research, teaching, community service, professional development, collective governance, political learning, and personal preference. Both formal and informal groups generate norms and patterns. Communication between group members may appear in patterned order and style reflecting the interpersonal liking (Bess & Dee, 2008). Sophistication in communication patterns used in that specific group help effectively participate in the group interactions thus efficiently build interpersonal relationships across academic departments and administrative offices. For CI team members who were mostly specialized in a narrow slice of a single discipline of language education with similar China-related professional interest and relatively new to the universities for a long time, it was challenging to assimilate various communication patterns to penetrate different groups. As shared by American interviewees, "sometimes it is not easy to draw the conversation with people from departments I am not familiar with. The reactions to our outreach can be very different, nevertheless the follow-ups" (Interview 9, November 2020). The levels of difficulty vary in terms of the disciplinary differences and familiarity with China in general. The higher relevancy with CI program contents made the communication easier since the potential of collaboration might emerge. For the faculty members who were more familiar with China, the conversation was less obscure to begin with, although the chance of reaching positive outcomes was not higher than others due to personal interests and academic plans. Overall, the communication pattern issue was not anticipated in the relationship building within the

organization. As the result, the sluggish development of broader interpersonal relationships within the university campuses had made the CI partnership program relatively unknown and delayed the partnership to reach the strategic goals for internationalization.

In summary, while the between-organization interpersonal trust at CI programs is relatively well maintained, the within-organization interpersonal trust needs careful attention. The very first incidence of closure of American CI – the CI at University of Chicago was triggered by the protest from one faculty member regarding the concern of academic freedom, yet he had never visited the CI program on campus. This phenomenon that between-organization interpersonal trust is better developed than within-organization interpersonal trust in the partnership has been rarely discussed in organizational studies since there are based on corporate world experiences. It reflects the uniqueness of higher education institutions and the nature of international partnership development.

**Institutional trust**

In organizational studies, institutional trust is referred to the individual's level of trust on the collective entity (Gambetta, 1988; Luhman, 1988; Mayer & Schoorman, 1998). In the analysis of institutional trust, the trustors are individuals; and the organization that is in relation with individuals is the trustee. The experiences and perspectives about the trustee contributing to shaping the institutional trust may be based on the brand, reputation, organizational culture, and people who represent the organization (Mayer & Schoorman, 1998). As an international partnership of higher education, there are two dimensions of institutional trust embedded within the CI

113

programs: their American personnel' trust in the Chinese partner university and their Chinese personnel's trust in the American host university.

The levels of institutional trust, both American personnel toward Chinese university and Chinese personnel toward American university, had consistently improved during the span of the individual's engagement in the CI programs until the external pressure threatened the existence of CI programs. In general, the longer they involved in the program and the more familiar they were with their counterparts, the higher the level of institutional trust was experienced.

American personnel were usually involved in the CI programs because of their own passion for global experience, international exchange, Chinese language, culture, and society as a whole. Their knowledge and familiarity with the Chinese partner universities might not be sufficient to construct a sense of trust at the very beginning, even though those preexisting knowledge and familiarity helped begin a constructive conversation. With the accumulated experiences of communicating and working together, particularly the successful experience of accomplishing projects and solving issues, understanding and appreciation increased, which led to a feeling of comfortability, confidence, dependence, and trustworthiness toward the Chinese partner universities (Interview 9, November 2020; Interview 13, November 2020; Interview 14, November 2020). "When we knew what they can do and what they cannot do, we understood them better and had more realistic expectations of them. Then we found they had been very

consistent with the promises and commitment as a true partner" (Interview 9, November 2020).

Lacking cross-cultural communication and understanding was recognized by the interviewees as an obstacle to institutional trust during the early phase of the partnership, as Americans tend to go straight into the substance while Chinese emphasize formality and subtle gestures. This mismatch of cultural behaviors and mentalities might make American personnel uncomfortable and confused while cause a perception of disrespect on the Chinese side. The cross-cultural issue was manifested by the communication media and styles that each side preferred. Often time, the Chinese side preferred to write an email even for simple and non-essential matters to American counterparts. They usually included lengthy courtesy and greetings and were euphemistic to express opinions. While American team members might "just pick up a phone and make a very quick call" (Interview 7, November 2020). The cultural consideration was also embedded in direction of communications. As interviewees shared, China side showed more seriousness and responsiveness to address top-down communication from American counterparts in senior administrative positions than others. "If we ran into certain issue demanding a timely response, our secret strategy is to ask our senior leaders to write a note, then the China side would take it much more serious" (Interview 7, November 2020). While on the American side, the communicators' administrative ranking within the organizational structure didn't matter much in terms of how the communication was received and handled. Communication theory can be used to rationalize this cultural difference as the influence of decision-making is associated with the authorization to

represent the organization. At Chinese universities, the top-down centralized decision-making governance structure grants higher administrative positions with more authorization to represent the organization. At American universities, the shared governance among faculty decentralized the power of decision-making, therefore the presence of the organization is relatively more evenly distributed. However, it was just a matter of time before overcoming the cultural gaps. The experience of communications and interactions played a role in facilitating cross-cultural reconciliation. The institutional communication for the partnership programs reflected the process of cross-cultural learning which contributed to develop a higher level of institutional trust and relationship if treated properly (Interview 3, November 2020; Interview 8, November 2020; Interview 9, November 2020; Interview 14, November 2020).

From the interviews, Chinese personnel appeared to possess a better knowledge of American universities and higher level of wiliness to learn and follow before joining the programs. A number of Chinese personnel in both cases had study and scholarly visiting experience at higher education institutions in the US and other similar Western countries. The prestige of American higher education has always been an attraction for Chinese visitors to American campuses. In addition, completing the intricate processes of selection and visa application and successfully settling down with support from American personnel constituted a sense of excitement for Chinese staff members to begin with. The professionalism, dedication, and friendly attitudes of American campus staff greatly increased the institutional trust (Interview 1, November 2020; Interview 4, October 2020; Interview 5, November 2020; Interview 11, October 2020). "Everyone [at the university

campus] has been so nice to me. I can feel their respect, sincerity, and warmth. They are honest to me and I can be honest with them" (Interview 4, November 2020). On the other hand, Chinese visitors had to depend on American personnel's introductions and guidance of the norms, regulations, and procedures for the daily educational and cultural activities. The advice of how to "do it right and do it well" based on the cultures of the university and local community, or "in an American way" from American personnel was important for Chinese personnel to thrive at CI programs (Interview 5, November 2020; Interview 10, October 2020; Interview 12, November 2020). These work-related interactions and work performance satisfaction based on the guidance from the American side reinforced Chinese team members' institutional trust in American host universities.

The levels of institutional trust between both sides continued to grow as the partnership moved forward. However, the reactions to the external pressure dramatically impacted the institutional trust. The details in this matter are discussed in Chapter Eight.

**Interorganizational trust**

The interorganizational relationship is demonstrated from individual relations, collective groups, and institutional actions (Currall and Inkpen, 2002). In this study, the interorganizational trust was analyzed from partners' recognition and understanding toward each other regarding the roles, responsibilities, contributions, and specialties in partnerships; the development of faculty members' relationship between partner universities; as well as the reviews of program documents regarding the university leadership's expectations and considerations.

*Recognition of partners.* At both CI programs, the American directors and Chinese team leaders recognized the values and functions of each other. The CI programs as parts of American host universities have been fully under the controls of their American host universities. The Chinese partners provided resources, support, and consultations based on the joint discussions and requests. It has been a general consensus that the American universities were in the leading roles in these partnerships particularly in terms of the directions and strategies with the supplemental support from the Chinese universities in operations. When the roles and responsibilities were clearly received and understood, the work relations and trust could remain solid, and the cooperation can be followed up smoothly. It might take some time for both sides to fully comprehend such relations but the longer they worked together the clearer the understandings would be (Interview 1, October 2020; Interview 3, October 2020; Interview 4, November 2020; Interview 5 November 2020; Interview 6, November 2020; Interview 10, October 2020; Interview 12, November 2020). One case in that point was related to the request an invitation of visiting Chinese instructors rendered by the American universities. The qualifications, responsibilities, and working environments might not be fully understood by the Chinese universities at the early phase of the programs. As the program developed and an increasing number of visiting instructors had in-person experiences, the demands and arrangements were better received even though the information remained the same (Interview 1, October 2020; Interview 8, November 2020; Interview 11, October 2020). As demands were fulfilled, the degree of appreciation and trust between partners kept growing. However, misunderstandings on the exact roles might still occur. From the

survey data, 16.67% of American participants considered Chinese partner may step on others while 33.33% disagreed. On the other hand, 25% of Chinese participants considered American partners may step on others while 37.50% disagreed. The perceptions of "stepping on others" reflected the misinterpretations of the roles, responsibilities, and positions within the partnerships during programming and implementation. An essential cause of such misinterpretation was rooted in the miscommunication between partner organizations and the misunderstanding was not clarified and solved in a timely manner. The cross-cultural misunderstanding of roles and responsibilities was likely to be a negative factor with respect to interorganizational trust.

The growth of the reputation of the partner perceived by the counterpart is another demonstration of stable level of interorganizational trust. Such reputation could be indicated by the informal communications on the campus of each side, such as "the name of [the Chinese partner university] was mentioned very positively as an example or reference as a good partner by colleagues on many other occasions when discussing university's international strategies and operations" (Interview 9, November 2020); and "we heard a lot of good things about [the American host university] back at home" (Interview 12, November 2020). It can also be presented in a more formal manner. Interviewees said that they had read the university public statements of international strategies and relations with a positive emphasis of the CI partners (Interview 11, October

2020). The annual CI board meeting minutes also contained specific texts acknowledging and appreciating the contributions of partners on both cases.

Both American host universities and Chinese partner universities were hoping to expand the partnerships from the CI programs to other educational and academic collaborations including faculty and student exchanges (Interview 1, October 2020; Interview 7, November 2020; Interview 8, November 2020; Interview 9, November 2020; Interview 12, November 2020). At Confucius Institute program A, the American host university has considered using CI as an "international educational and cultural resources for the campus life" and "energizing faculty's academic interests on China" (Interview 9, November 2020). The Chinese partner university would like to give their instructional faculty and graduate students more practical opportunities in teaching the Chinese language in the US and "establish the dual degree joint educational programs" (Interview 5, November 2020; Interview 6, November 2020; Interview 12, November 2020). Clearly, the goals of the two sides overlapped, but the American university has been emphasizing on the strategical internationalization benefits at the institutional level, the Chinese university has been more specific at the programming level. At Confucius Institute program B, the American host university has been interested in the student learning benefits from world language and culture exposure and the community impact by the international partnership (Interview 7, November 2020; Interview 13, November 2020). The Chinese partner university has been exploring the possibility of increasing cross-disciplinary faculty mobility of campus visits and joint research programs (Interview 1, October 2020; Interview 7, November 2020). The Confucius Institute

program as a coordinating hub has been the vehicle to move forward the initiatives from both sides. In addition, because of the increasing communications through the CI programs, both sides could adjust their expectations and strategies based on the more accurate assessments on each other. The American host university of Confucius Institute program A recognized the strengths of Chinese partner in the area of teaching capability while lacking robust multidisciplinary research qualities, so that American university maneuvered toward forming educational efforts instead of seeking research opportunities (Interview 8, November 2020; Interview 9, November 2020). A similar situation occurred at the Chinese partner university of Confucius Institute program B. When they understood that the American host university didn't have the interests and readiness for a joint research program in STEM areas, they adjusted the suggestions to increase the faculty exchanges in general rather than setting up research collaborative infrastructure (Interview 1, October 2020; Interview 7, November 2020). Besides, recognition of partner university's need during a difficult time with material and emotional support is significant too. For instance, as the COVID-19 outbreak in the US, the Chinese partner university donated a large amount of personal protective equipment supplies to the American counterpart when the pandemic accelerated in April. This humanitarian action has received great appreciation and respect on American campus (Interview 7, November 2020).

*Development of faculty relationship.* It is believed that the joint educational efforts contributed by both sides of the university partners generate opportunities and momentums for advancing broad connections and relationships of faculty members

(Green & Gerber, 1997). This was demonstrated by the cases of both CI programs. With the increasing number of individual presences on campuses of each other, the growing familiarity and opportunities of faculty exchanges helped develop the relationship of faculty members between the partner universities.

Name recognition is the first step of relationship development. As Chinese visiting teachers at Program A recalled, "at the beginning of the CI program, most of the professors I encountered around campuses have never heard of my university. Now people can recognize where we are from" (Interview 8, November 2020; Interview 12, November 2020). Not only those boundary spanners at the CI programs have served as ambassadors representing and introducing their home universities to the partner university communities, but faculty members and students who have participated in the previous exchange activities organized by CI programs have also become advertisers of the universities they visited. For their annual summer short-term study programs of CI Program B, it has been revealed that new attendees were friends of previous years' participants or students of chaperon professors (Interview 10, October 2020). Word of mouth marketing has been demonstrated as more effective and convincing for study abroad programs than conventional institutional promotional approaches because it was much more personal (Interview 14, November 2020). With increasing personnel mobility and exposure, the joint programs become more visible and capable to connect faculty members together.

At each partner university, there have been faculty members who already possessed personal and professional ties with the counterparts or the abundant general

knowledge about the other country. The joint programs have served as hubs for those faculty members to reflect on their personal experiences and knowledge or simply an interesting social spot for connections. It is particularly valuable for the joint programs to expand their outreach to the broader university community and build academic and scholarly connections for faculty members from both sides. Those faculty connections are important for the programs' publicity and reputation, but also enhancing the interorganizational trust between universities.

The challenge to faculty relationship building came from the disciplinary boundary. As the CI programs were usually associated with Chinese language teaching, the early outreach and engagement between faculty members were mostly around world language and education pedagogy study fields. The efforts to penetrating the departmental wall for broader interdisciplinary connections were encouraged but not moving as quickly as hoped, because the conjunction of educational and academic interests between the two sides were not easy to find and intrinsic motivation was not clear. It is a very similar issue as many other interdisciplinary initiatives in higher education institutions have been facing which demands holistic institutional plan and implementation to properly address.

***Relationship between partner universities' leadership.*** University leadership plays an exceptionally important role during the establishment and operation of partnership programs. The relationship between university leaderships is not only a factor of the partnership development but also an indicator of interorganizational trust to be reckoned with. In the case of CI partnerships, the relationship between senior leaders of

partner universities had been growing since the establishment of the CI programs. Particularly, during the moments that both sides worked together to reconcile structural differences and seek common ground to mitigate the internal challenges, the relationship was enhanced. "There were several cases in the past about CI cooperation when we had to sit down side-by-side to figure out what's going on and how to deal with it. We knew that their advice was important to find out the right solution" (Interview 13, November 2020). At the time two sides acknowledged that they must develop a collegial attitude and communicational mechanism when fighting in the same battle. The guidance from leadership and the direct communication between senior decision-makers supported and guarded the process of collaboration. Meanwhile, the senior leaders improved their familiarities with the substances of partnership programs as well as their counterparts. The process of working together to solve problems acted as relationship building between leaders, and trust level was raised swiftly (Interview 3, November 2020; Interview 10, October 2020; Interview 13, November 2020).

Another dimension of interorganizational trust is the personal relationship between the leadership. Although no senior administrators (presidents, provosts, vice presidents, and deans) of universities has participated in this study, the dynamics of the high rank personal relationships could be revealed through the document reviews of direct communications, meeting minutes, and interviews of boundary spanners – CI staff who had interactions with senior decision-makers on campuses. The developments of personal relations among the leaderships were directly associated with the CI programs. No senior administrator on either side had known individual decision-makers at the

partner university before the establishment of CI programs. By the time of this study, there were in-depth understanding and familiarity of each other in terms of perspectives, skills, and personalities among the leadership of each side. The in-person visits and meetings were unanimously recognized as the most effective communication channel and most remarkable relationship developing activities. A direct benefit from in-person visits was to strengthen familiarities between communicators and refresh the communication channels as the clear expectations of follow-up from the in-person meetings or assigned from the senior leaders during the visits added perceived importance of communicative actions. According to the document reviews and interviews, both sides regarded the leadership of the partner university as effective and trustworthy. They were open to sharing their thoughts of global strategies beyond the operations of CIs during the direct communications (Interview 7, November 2020; Interview 8, November 2020; Interview 9, November 2020). These Confucius Institute programs provided a practical channel of gaining experience and perspectives about global strategies and programs from international partners and broke ground for the institutional internationalization development collectively.

### Section Two: Trust Development Process

The specification and identification of the temporal sequence of separable stages and transitions between these stages is important to comprehend the trust development, consisting of explanations of how, why, and in what sequence a process unfolds over time. The cross-level model explains the process of trust development including the stages of initiation – developing individual to organization trust, negotiation – developing

individual to individual trust, formation– developing individual to organization trust, and

operation – developing organization to organization trust.

In this study, the researcher explores the evolutions of the relationship and

understand the international partnership not as a fixed state but a fluid process. This

section discusses which factors impacted the development of trust (relationship) in each

successive phase at the Confucius Institute programs as an international partnership at a

higher education institution. Inspired from the cross-level framework of corporate

studies, the findings of the trust development process in higher education with the

synthesis of characterizations of relationships in sequence are presented to answer the

Research Question 3 *What is the process of trust development between international*

*partners in higher education* and the Research Question 4 *what factors influence the development of trust in international partnerships in higher education.*

| Initiation | Formation | Operation | Transformation |
|:---:|:---:|:---:|:---:|
| indv.- org.<br>indv.- indv. | indv.- org.<br>org.- org. | org.- org. | indv.- indv.<br>org.- indv. |
| Assemble internal trusts and raise to organization | Solidate interpersonal trust between boundary spanners | Institutionalize inter-organizational trust | Revisit and expand trusts |
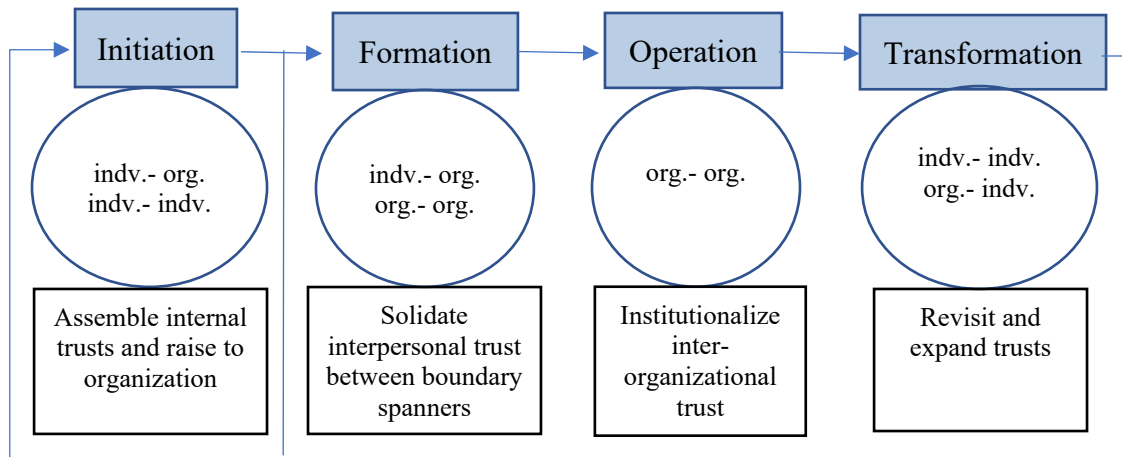
**Figure 3 Trust Development in International Partnerships**

**Initiation**

Compared to joint venture corporate studies, the initiation phase of the partnership relations in higher education is more complicated. The studies of joint venture relations focus on individual to (counterpart) organization trust building during general reputations, knowledge, and previous interactions (Schilke & Cook, 2013). While in higher education, initiating an interorganizational relationship itself would involve multiple units and individuals from both academic and administrative functions and go through several decision-making processes.

The fundamental difference compared with corporate decision making is the complexity of purpose, as the for-profit sector has a straightforward fundamental purpose which is revenue generation, while colleges and universities as most non-for-profit organizations have multiple missions to advance at the same time. International partnerships could be driven by a variety of purposes including but not limited to increasing student recruitment, domestic students' global exposures, faculty international exchanges, expansions of academic horizontals, increasing of research capacity, and generation of contributed incomes. Each of the purposes might be considered as crucial to the organizational missions of specific units and individuals. Meanwhile, such decision of an international partnership decision could stimulate skepticism and resistance from others who might see it as a competition or challenge to their understandings of how organizational missions should be achieved. Therefore, the initiation phase of higher education partnership involved individual to organization and individual to individual trust within the organization as the potential partnering party before the decisions were made. When the internal consensus was reached, it was assumed that the trust levels within the organization might be satisfied to move forward. Then the cross-organization interactions were created to suggest and evaluate the possibility of the partnership from each side.

Another different condition in higher education institutions compared with corporations is the multidimension connections and communications in the higher education network. Decision-makers and boundary spanners at higher education institutions might already have had various academic, educational, and other professional

connections personnel or departments in the proposed partner institution. The official establishment of the CI partnerships is very likely not the initiation of interpersonal and interorganizational trust between partners. In the case of the Confucius Institute program A, the American host university's study abroad program had collaborated with the Chinese partner university for years before the establishment of the CI program. The initiation phase of the trust development cycle of the CI partnership was the time to collect the information, assemble the resources, formalize the existing connections, and raise to the next level as the partnership was formed. In the case of Confucius Institute program B, the American host university and Chinese partner university did not have connections before the CI partnership was built. During the initiation phase, the university has been strategizing the global visions into programming level and soliciting information, resources, and support across the campus to ensure the new international partnership program can maximize its contribution to broader campus development so that the trust is in place toward the new international partner, meanwhile testing water with the potential partner through early-phase communication and get familiar with the persons and structure that may potentially play important roles in the partnership. Through pre-existing relationship and early-phase communication, the internal readiness and external trustworthiness were examined. It was also the time to construct the communication channels and information processing mechanism for the next steps of communication between partners. Therefore, the initiation of international trust was a process to consolidate the internal trust, transfer the existing relationship among specific

units and individuals to the entire organization as a whole, and initiate the development of cross-boundary trust in both interpersonal and interorganizational levels.

The boundary spanners usually were not the decision-makers within the organization establishing the partnership. They might or might not be involved in the negotiation and preparations. In both cases, neither of the interviewees participated in the communication and decision-making process in the initiation phase. They were assigned and delegated by the decision-makers during or after the initiation stage to execute the strategies that had already been set and communicated with counterparts. They were selected by each partner to act in a primary role as interorganizational relationship manager for the partnerships.

**Formation**

The negotiation of partnership in higher education might take significantly less time and efforts comparing with corporations as the purposes underpinned by each party could be highly compatible and the risks of tangible damage could be perceived as low given the nature of multi-mission at higher education institutions. However, the formation phase might take much more time and efforts in higher education.

During the formation phase, the recognition and reconciliation of systematic operational differences was the highest priority, particularly for the international partnerships. "Almost everything was different, and we all knew that" (Interview 1, October 2020; Interview 5, November 2020). In the Confucius Institute program A, it takes over two years and involved a great deal of administrator expertise to figure out the suitable budgetary structure that could work for the systems of both sides. The "most

important but also most difficult" part during this reconciliation was to "understand why it has to be like this in their system so that we could figure out how we can propose a new way which could be acceptable for both" (Interview 9, November 2020; interview 14, November 2020). Those "why" questions were "tough to answer because even people who have done this for many years might not know why to do them in this way" (Interview 6, November 2020; Interview 14, November 2020). The tension between administrative units with academic silos might bring in additional challenges as the technical know-how had not been transferred to academic faculty that consisted the majority of the boundary spanners and the gap between strategical ideal and technical reality could not be filled quickly. "Even those people who have been teaching here for decades may not know how the reimbursement paperwork should be properly done in the system. Now we are talking about international processing…" (Interview 3, November 2020). The relationship between boundary spanners became a channel of information exchanges between the administrative systems for consistent proposing, testing, evaluating, and investigating. The communication structures that were set up in the initiation phase were examined when they were placed in function to exchange information between both sides. Boundary spanners of each side served as the knowledge hub to collect procedural and protocol practices and instructions within the system and process them as the interorganizational communications were undertaken. Getting familiar and comfortable with each other's working and talking styles was the first step of the interpersonal relationship. "I have worked with three Chinese directors from the Chinese partner university, each of them had a very different style. At the end of the day,

we still managed to build a good relationship because we all knew this healthy relationship was the backbone of the program" (Interview 9, November 2020). Boundary spanners who were serving as communicators tested out the communication mechanism constructed by decision-makers in the initiation phase and suggested how to improve from personal experience and perspectives. Adjustment and reconciliation of communication mechanism became crucial for the success in the formation phase. In reality, the requisite knowledge and understandings might be far beyond the scope of expertise of the boundary spanners. Therefore, this process prompted boundary spanners to build interactions and relationship an interpersonal level with the counterparts, ally with both academic and administrative units across campuses, actively learn of know-hows to expand knowledge and expertise, as well as provide feedback and recommendations for operational adjustment.

The formation phase might last much longer if the reconciliation could not be seamlessly done or was blocked by unsolved technical problems. Therefore, guidance and support from the campus leaders were vital to navigate through the challenges. In the two CI programs, both American and Chinese participants who were involved in the early development of the programs highly acknowledged the importance of universities' senior administrators' supports and involvements as "a reason we can finally work well" (Interview 1, October 2020; Interview 2, November 2020 ; Interview 7, November 2020; Interview 8, November 2020; Interview 9, November 2020; Interview 11, October 2020). Leaderships' supports also helped the development of interpersonal trust building for the boundary spanner of the partnerships within the organization from the top. Such top-

down helps on internal trust had more significant effects in China than the US as the "Chinese cultural of respecting the tops in the ranking or chain of command" (Interview 1, October 2020; Interview 9, November 2020; Interview 10, October 2020).

The internal glitches or difficulties which might delay the internal interpersonal trust of boundary spanners with campus colleagues could influence the interorganizational trust in the phase as each side closely monitored the process. "I felt the strong pressure internally came from the situations that we couldn't solve problems with other offices, because they will feel that if we are not respected by our own university, how can they?" (Interview 6, November 2020; Interview 13, November 2020). In this sense, the primary relationship during this phase has transformed from the interpersonal trust between boundary spanners from both sides to the institutional trust between each boundary spanner and his or her own university. For this relationship, those individuals who were working at various departments and offices of the home university of the boundary spanners were considered as "others" representing the home organization as an entirety, while the other boundary spanners from international counterparts serving at the CI partnership programs were considered as "us" in the same team. This was an interesting identity switch expressed in communication in an unconscious manner. During the interviews, two American participants shared their stories of furiously arguing with other campus offices on behalf of Chinese team members when they just arrived at the team. "I felt bad if they came to our campuses but weren't treated well. It's like an insult on me" (Interview 13, November 2020). The same sentiment was shared by Chinese interviewees. They expressed that they began to "feel like I were not only a staff

or teacher at CI, but a member of the American host universities, that's how I introduce myself to others" (Interview 4, October 2020; Interview 11, October 2020). There were stories shared during the interviewees by Chinese interviewees about educating their "bosses" back in China about "how things work in America", particularly the issue of short notice prior to certain actions. "In China, it is not unusual to have a last minute decision which needs to be accommodation by constituencies to work overtime. It is just a type of work. But we found out last-minute notice was treated as disrespect by my American colleagues, so I felt it was my responsibility to let my boss in China know that." (Interview 6, November 2020; Interview 8, November 2020). The changes of positions, and sometimes the styles, of their communications along with their cross-cultural competence improvement in new work environment demonstrated from those personal experience and stories symbolized a healthy interpersonal and institutional trust between boundary spanners from both sides. Boundary spanners with growing cultural knowledge had gradually begun to serve as a force to promote interorganizational trust and intercultural understanding as a valuable part of the institutional internationalization strategy, even though the collegial connections might still be underdeveloped within the campus, which reflected the trust development process in the formation phase.

**Operation**

In organizational studies, the operation phase is the time an increasing number of employees become involved in the relationship with partners and interorganizational trust became institutionalized. In this study, the institutionalization of trust involved several levels of actions and players.

The joint operation at the partnership programs required a common understanding of visions and goals. This common understanding allowed team members, particularly from the counterparts, to comprehend the behaviors of those within the organization, to recognize relationships among components of the environment, to construct expectations for what is likely to occur next, and to evaluate their own actions with a commonly accepted set of standards shaped before and during the operation stage of interorganizational partnerships. In the cases of Confucius Institute programs, the development of common understandings occurred in the interactions both within and outside of the workplace between team members.

The workplace interactions included training for the familiarity of systems, procedures, protocols, mechanisms, resources, and educational programming-related professional discussions. Since the Chinese team members arrived as visitors to the American campuses, the early workplace communications and interactions usually began with introductory and instructive information from American team members to Chinese team members as one-way direction (Interview 3, November 2020; Interview 4, October 2020; Interview 5, November 2020; Interview 10, November 2020). As Chinese interviewees stated, they were "like students" coming to "American campuses to learn" (Interview 4, October 2020; Interview 10, October 2020). This type of interaction provided chances to communicate assumptions and expectations at the institutional level. "One of the discussions we had for the newcomers was about what success is at our CI. It was important for us to be on the same page to understand what our goals were and why we had those goals" (Interview 9, November 2020; Interview 10, November 2020). With

the familiarity of the working environment and proficiency of the English language gained, the accuracy and efficiency of communication were improved. The substance of programs and projects became the priority of the workplace interactions. As CI teachers dealt with both credit bearing courses and non-credit courses at both programs which were unique from their previous professional knowledge, the best practices had to be developed from scratch. "Each classroom is different. Each student is different. We have to create plans for each of them" (Interview 5, November 2020; Interview 8, November 2020; Interview 11, October 2020). The conversations on educational best practices not only communicated the shared goals and meanings, but also became professional development opportunities, which were better received by the team members from both sides. Outside of the workplace, Chinese team members were observing and experiencing American life and value as visitors every day. The dialogues about their reflections and inquires helped recognize and comprehend the working culture on campuses and common understandings of visions and goals of the partnership programs, and build confidence to communicate with others as acting as main contributors to the partnerships, particularly for those of which who served as boundary spanners.

Organizational communication including dialogues and interactions developed a collective pattern of thinking and acting between partners which drove the interpersonal trust among team members. During various conversations, team members conveyed their expectations, values, beliefs, and assumptions to other members, resulting in a diffusion of interpretations throughout the organization consciously and unconsciously. Specific stories and ideas told by individuals evolved into a repository of information that formed

part of the collective memory (Schilke & Cook, 2013). Organizational communication mechanisms of both sides which had been reconciled in the formation phase were restructured into their new patterns to be suitable for the partnership operation which might develop its own sub-organizational culture in the phase of operation. Communicating the common understandings in a commonly used pattern built the trustworthiness between individuals and organizations. The sense of trust could spread beyond the boundary spanners to fellow organizational members in day-to-day work. In addition, as the partnership programs on higher education campuses, individual boundary spanners had multiple responsibilities and affiliations within their universities both academically, administratively, and educationally. These connections and the social networks that they constituted exposed them to a variety of professional and social interactions and served as useful communication channels through which the trustworthiness of the partner organization could be disseminated. The behaviors of the visitors (both Chinese team members stayed on American campuses and American team members visited Chinese universities) could also passively spread the trustworthiness and influenced the perceptions of counterparts. The program members gradually took part in the overall organizational communication network on campuses. As various team members communicated across the organization during the operation stage, the information was aggregated, and a sense of trust was disseminated which triggered the progress of interorganizational and interpersonal trust.

**Transformation**

The trust development process theory in organizational studies regards the operational phase as the last section of the loop as the existing organizational trust may inform the individual to organization trust for new relationships through a feedback process (Schilke & Cook, 2013). This study revealed that the relationship development in a higher education partnership included another noticeable stage after the operational stage. In this stage, the relationship might transform into a new level as the expectations from both sides are adjusted according to the familiarity of the reality and counterparts. The ever-changing environment of higher education might also demand revisions and amendments of the partnership in order to be suitable for the new developments. The transformation phase occurred after the partnership programs had been functioning for a while and the team members had gained a high level of familiarity with the programming and the counterparts. The transformation might take place because the routing operations and offerings reached a limit to growth and a new strategy became necessary. For CI programs that were set up for Chinese language education, an obvious indicator to measure effectiveness was the number of students registration and retention (Interview 2, November 2020; Interview 7, November 2020; Interview 8, November 2020). The increasing number of students at the beginning was likely due to unmet needs for non-credit Chinese language instruction and marketing efforts. Then student numbers went down dramatically. "It is not hard to understand as people who had interests to learn Chinese might already sign up, then we don't have new students" (Interview 12, November 2020). It reflected the common situation shared at almost every organization

that the early routines which used to be effective did no longer meet the changing environment. A new set of operational and communication mechanisms became necessary.

Another common cause of the operational and communication changes came from institutional reorganization and leadership changes. As CI programs in both cases had more than seven years of history, both programs experienced more than one time of leadership change or reorganization on both China and the US side. Three interview participants expressed their concerns that leadership change was one of the biggest uncertainties and challenges for CIs' sustainability. The new leaders' perspectives on global strategies and priorities might be dramatically different from the predecessors which would inevitably impact international programs including CIs. Changes in administrative structure also influenced CI programs' surrounding operational approaches as well as both upward and downward communication channels for information exchanges and decision makings(Interview 2, November 2020; Interview 7, November 2020; Interview 9, November 2020). Therefore, university leadership changes impacted everyday work at CI programs.

From the perspective of interorganizational relationships, revisions of international strategies, operational routines, and communication mechanisms were associated with both interorganizational and interpersonal trust in the transformation phase. The alternation of international strategies might impact on design and implementation of the overall developmental plan of and beyond the partnership program involved the organizational and personal investment of efforts and resources. The

revision of program operational routines was essentially the process of reconfirming and

reclaiming the program values based on the institutional priorities. New practices in

communication mechanisms required additional time to accommodate and adjust from

both sides, while all of those changes must be accurately communicated to keep an

orderly transition without stirring the negative reaction from the other side. In both cases

of CI programs, the experience and familiarity with each other, effective communication,

and interpersonal trust accumulated from previous phases of development helped

facilitate seamless transitions and seek common grounds of enhancing the partnership

relationship. For example, increasing interdisciplinary program offerings toward

university members including faculty, students, and staff as a result of reorganization

occurred at both CI programs. This new development helped expand the outreach and

visibility and create more on-campus connections (Interview 8, November 2020;

Interview 9, November 2020).

Reorganization and leadership changes usually lead to loss of relationships and

the need to rebuild interpersonal trust. This process may cause turbulence as the departure

of powerful high-rank supporters leaves gaps in leadership and guidance. It may also

become an opportunity, though, to establish new relationships and trust with more

stakeholders and units. The CI program B transitioned into the international relations

office and began to directly report to the president's office several years ago when the

new leadership came on board. The new relationship and trust that have been built since

then raised CI program's importance within the university's overall international strategy.

"Senior leaders changed a couple of times here and at Chinese partners as well. It was a

challenge! But eventually the new people were quite supportive of the program and provided helpful directions and new ideas from different angels" (Interview 7, November 2020). In both cases, when the new senior administrators took the posts, gracious congratulatory letters were delivered immediately from the equivalent counterparts at the partner universities. Although these actions were ceremonial rather than substantial, they signaled good faiths to be poised to cultivate the new relationship regardless of the changes. Changes in other key positions particularly the boundary spanners also impacted the procession of the trust development. But compared with leadership changes, the impact of boundary spanner replacements was mostly around the information transition, communication style, and programming practice instead of interorganizational trust (Interview 3, November 2020; Interview 6, November 2020; Interview 11, October 2020).

The transformation phase was the time of revisiting the individual visions and commitments that had been shared from the previous leadership and boundary spanners, then institutionalizing the visions and commitments that should last and integrating the new commitments, so that the sense of trust could be upgraded across the organization. The sub-organizational culture of collaboration became incarnate to communication patterns and programming procedures regardless of the individual changes. Even when the new personal preference would suggest an alternative course of action, organizational members were committed to a shared vision reflecting the organization's trust in the partners. As more people became involved in the interorganizational relationship, they became socialized into the prevalent behavioral expectations and norms. Similarly, when

particular individuals left the organization, the nature of the trust was not necessarily altered. Trust perceptions were embedded in the structure of the organization, making them largely independent of individuals. Then depending on the specific situation, the process might continue to develop in the operational phase and accelerate the relationship building. In the situation of large-scale reorganization, it is possible that the transformation phase is succeeded by the formation phase when an overall rebuilding of the partnership structure may take place. Based on the cross-level trust development theory, the perceptions of trust and experiences of relationship building through the development cycle may substantially affect the decision-making process of selecting a new partner and forming a new partnership, and improve the efficiency of resource and expertise assembly in the initiation phase of the new cycle of partnership (Schilke & Cook, 2013). A complete cycle of trust development for international partnership is essentially the progress of global competence building within the organization for effective institutional internationalization.

## Section Three: Trust under External Pressure

Trust research in organizational studies rarely reckons external political pressure as a crucial factor in sustaining partnership relations. In higher education, the external environment influences the operation and decision-making process, particularly with respect to international collaborations. The Confucius Institute programs as international partnerships in higher education have encountered enormous external pressures in the United States. In the findings, the researcher explores the influence of external pressure on the partnership and the level of trust in resistance to external pressure, and address the

142

Research Question 5 *how is the degree of trust between partners impacted as external scrutiny and challenge intensifies*, Research Question 6 *how do partners communicate the perspectives and approaches of addressing the external pressure*, Research Question 7 *how does the trust between partners contribute to respond external pressure*, and Research Question 8 *how do higher education institutions interact with external environment and adjust themselves, particularly with respect to their communication practices*.

**External pressure impacting trust**

In general, the external pressure was usually initiated on one side of the partnership. Such pressure might or might not be transmitted to the other side of the partnership depending on the scope and scale of the pressure as well as the resistance capacity of the impacted party.

As the CI program cases, at first, the external pressure generated from academics regarding the concerns of academic freedom has been initiated in the US side since 2012. This pressure had limited influence on Chinese counterparts. One of the Chinese team members responded as "it is an American issue". "We understand those complaints but there's nothing we did wrong, so it doesn't make any difference on us." Similarly, the external pressure in China about overspending and "wasting money oversea" (Ruan, 2014) was not a factor on the American side. Some Chinese interviewees referred to those concerns as "ridiculous" without any merit to be taken seriously; while the majority of American interviewees hadn't heard about it or did not think it was a real concern (Interview 1, October 2020; Interview 3, November 2020; Interview 5, November 2020;

Interview 6, November 2020; Interview 8, November 2020; Interview 9, November 2020; Interview 10, October 2020; Interview 12, November 2020; Interview 13, November 2020; Interview 14, November 2020). Those external pressures did not challenge the operation and relationship of the partnerships because organizations and individuals had sufficient confidence and capability to address the external environment and shield the programs without being substantially impacted.

However, when the external pressures were aggregated into a higher level of intensity and impact, the reactions from the partnership became different. Since late 2017, the external environment of bilateral relations between the US and China has been deteriorating consistently. In the beginning, the frictions were mostly in the field of trade, commerce, economy, and technology. As the disputes of trade and economic policies later were escalated to the "trade war", the bilateral clashes were expanded to almost every aspect of the US-China relations including higher education. The Confucius Institute as a bilateral partnership in higher education was under the spotlight of hawkish politicians in the US. The political pressures of scrutiny and hostility on CI programs threatened the existence of those international partnerships and changed the dynamics of relationships between the partners.

There was the sentiment of suspicion from the university community as the external pressure grew. Two interviewees reported personal experiences when they were approached and questioned unfriendly about their intention during their campus events. "Some people already had misunderstandings about China or disagreement with the Chinese government, now with the impact from the media, the false assumption about CI

was made". Those experiences raised uncertainty of perceived institutional trust and unstable mentality regarding the meaningfulness of the program (Interview 2, November 2020; Interview 6, November 2020).

An increasing number of media reports of Confucius Institutes coming under the criticism and scrutiny of high-profile politicians, the pressures were clearly perceived on both sides of the partnership. The OTI model suggests that the degree of trust is reflected from the dimensions of good faith, honesty, and not taking advantage of others. Accordingly, individuals' experiences, views, and perceptions on the aspects of internal communication about the challenges and decision-making process were collected and examined to understand the dynamics of trust under external challenges.

***Internal communication and evaluation to address challenge.*** When the external environment had become a pressing challenge threatening the sustainability of CI program, the communication between partners was necessary to update the information and discuss the response. As the political pressures in the US targeted American host universities, the direction of communication to understand the situations between the partners was usually from American partners to Chinese partners. In the survey, when being asked to indicate how much they agreed with the statement of "as the external environment has been tough on CI program, we intend to share information cautiously with the China partner about those external pressures to avoid complication", 50% of American participants agreed, 16.67% neither agreed nor disagreed, and 33.33% disagreed. Similarly, regarding the statement of "Chinese partner knows everything we know about the situation of the CI program", it was an even proportion of responses

(33.33%) of all agreement, disagreement, and neither agreement nor disagreement. The results showed American partners attempted to provide necessary information regarding the current situations with a certain level of reservation to the Chinese side. This was aligned with the results from Chinese participants of the survey. 37.50% of Chinese participants either strongly agreed or agreed that "American partner told everything they knew", while 37.50% of them disagreed. About the statement of "American partner has fully explained to us the issue and circumstance in the US", 12.50% and 50% of Chinese participants strongly agreed and agreed, respectively; while 25% and 12.50% strongly disagreed and disagreed, respectively. Compared with the normal situation before, the level of transparency in internal communication under the pressure was notably lower.

The communications within the CI team regarding the situations were mostly informal and limited (Interview 2, November 2020; Interview 7, November 2020; Interview 14, November 2020). One of the concerns were based on the mismatch of knowledge. As an American interviewee elaborated, "I'm not sure if they knew much about the political system. So they might process it in a wrong way and make more troubles". Those concerns were not made up without foundation. As multiple federal administrative agencies and legislative bodies involved in investigating and criticizing CI programs on American campuses including the Department of Justice and Federal Investigation Bureau, Department of State, Government Accountability Office, Senate Permanent Subcommittee of Investigation, and a number of congressional members, some Chinese personnel might find it confusing, particularly when they talked with other personnel from different CI programs and brought back inaccurate information, which

complicated their assimilations of the situation. "At the beginning, we felt that it's a good idea to ask around and check if other CIs had the same situation, but we found out what they talked about had so many flaws and didn't make a lot of sense". "We can't evaluate the situation based on rumors" (Interview 13, November 2020; November 14, November 2020). Although the transparency and openness of sharing information within the team was questionable, neither side sensed doubts regarding each other at either personal or organizational level.

With limited information shared, it was difficult for boundary spanners to undertake interorganizational communication and facilitate information sharing. In addition, the individuals' competence of processing key information without misunderstanding and acting sensibly without inflaming the fire was reevaluated. About the statement of "we are concerned that individuals from Chinese partner may not be sensitive enough", 33.33% of American participants agreed and 66.67% disagreed. For the same statement regarding the sensitivity of American personnel, 25% of Chinese participants agreed and 75% disagreed or strongly disagreed. In general, most of the team members considered others are sensitive. For the boundary spanners' unique responsibility of communicating information between the organizations, only half of the American participants considered boundary spanners from China had abilities to accurately describe the full picture back to China, while a majority of 78.5% of Chinese participants considered so. During the normal cycle of the trust development process, it was believed that communication skills and cross-cultural competence of team members had been increasing step by step during the partnership moving forward. However, in the

situation of facing acute external pressure, the level of confidence on the other side to implement crucial and sensible communication was in question.

Although the communications for sharing information, updating and understanding situations, was not sufficient, both sides acknowledged the counterparts had been trying to be helpful and willing to maintain the good relationships (Interview 2, November 2020; Interview 3, November 2020; Interview 7, November 2020; Interview 10, October 2020). Overall, external political pressure challenged communication mechanism and confidence of partners, and caused confusion toward each other. However, the intention of sustaining positive relationships was not changed.

***Decision making in response to external challenge.*** Direct communication for decision making in response to external challenge was lacking, as it was clearly a unilateral decision-making process in American host universities without communicating to ask for inputs and comments from Chinese partners. In response to the scrutiny, the actions including changing the title of Chinese team leader, canceling the teaching work involving credit bearing courses, no response to media inquiries were decided by the American host universities who then requested the Chinese personnel to follow. Although Chinese team members fully understood and complied with the decisions, they were not consulted during the process (Interview 1, October 2020; Interview 6, November 2020; Interview 7, November 2020; Interview 12, November 2020). American participants' responses to the survey questions related to the perceptions of "Chinese partner's involvement for making a crucial decision is helpful" and "Chinese partners have provided good ideas and advice in dealing with external pressures" were resulted in an

exact half-half split. While more Chinese participants agreed (25% strongly agreed and 37.50% agreed) that "American partner has provided good ideas and advice in dealing with external pressures" than the ones with disagreements (12.50% strongly disagreed and 12.50% disagreed). Also, more Chinese participants agreed (50%) that their "involvement for making a crucial decision under pressure is helpful" than the ones disagreed (12.50%). These survey results showed that Chinese personnel trusted American partners to make appropriate decisions although they did consider their participations would be helpful. One of the reasons to keep Chinese personnel out of the decision process was for better protection of them. "We had no intention to hide information or make a unilateral decision, instead, we tried to protect the relationship and the people involved in the CI. Not involving Chinese personnel can avoid political problems for the university and for Chinese personnel themselves" (Interview 2, November 2020). From this perspective, keeping partners away from the turbulence particularly the political troubles justified the decision-making process without involving the partners.

The unilateral decision-making process was also related to a lack of effective communication channels and media. American side explicated the necessity of using in-person communication tools such as face-to-face meetings and phone calls so that the information could be shared in a detailed, comprehensive, direct, and accurate manner. It was also imperative not to leave too much paper trails which might cause unnecessary complication to fuel the flames as federal government agencies had requested complete documents and communications with China to be reviewed (Interview 9, November

2020). The Chinese side seemed either incapable to handle sensitive topics in verbal communication or did not have meaningful inputs to contribute to this situation other than expressing moral support and reliance on the American side (Interview 1, October 2020). Therefore, the decisions of shaping strategy and approaches in response of external political challenges were rendered solely in American host universities' hands.

In terms of the perceptions toward American partners' strategy and approach in responding the external pressure, Chinese participants expressed an ambivalent feeling. The rationale of the strategy and approach seemed to be informally communicated explicitly among the team members (Interview 1, October 2020; Interview 2, November 2020; Interview 6, November 2020; Interview 7, November 2020). As observing the development of the external challenges, Chinese personnel understood that they had to fully rely on American partners' shelter and support to resist the pressure. However, they did worry about the ability, particularly as the pressure coming from the top. "I knew those were powerful people so I didn't know how much the university could do", "I don't think a university can fight against the nation's government". The Chinese social culture of obedience in the top-down bureaucratic structure made them more worrisome (Interview 1, October 2020; Interview 11, October 2020; Interview 12, November 2020).

Even though Chinese team members might not have full confidence in American host universities' capability of resistance, all participants were aware of the sincere and positive attitudes to support them under pressure. One Chinese interviewee mentioned that "I felt the individuals from other departments who I worked with before were more

friendly and engaging with me, although I don't know whether the external situation was a factor. At least it made me feel that I was safe" (Interview 10, October 2020).

In summary, direct communication for decision-making in response to external challenges was lacking. It was clearly a unilateral decision-making process in American host universities without communication and involvement with Chinese partners. Nevertheless, no evidence showed the degree of interpersonal trust and interorganizational trust was acutely damaged as the three dimensions of trust composition – honesty, good faith, not taking advantage of others seemed all remain the similar levels. Each side of the partnership did not change their perception of trustworthiness in others, although some of them – specifically the Chinese side expressed concerns about whether they were fully trusted. It is fair to conclude that the external pressure did not change the fundamentals of trust development but did expose the vulnerabilities of the partnership mentality and cause more complications of the collaborative relationships.

**Trust to resist pressure**

In both cases of this study, Confucius Institute programs had been developed for over seven years at the time of research. The CI teams had experienced the complete cycle of the trust development process and maintained relatively high levels of trust in both individual and organizational levels. The CI program A had been operating for over eleven years since its inception but was eventually terminated in 2020. The CI program B was established over seven years ago and has been still actively operating on the host university's campus until the time of this research. This study analyzed the comparison of

these two cases in terms of the trust development within the partnership to resist the external pressure and sustain the programs.

In the case of CI program A, all interviewees from both American and Chinese sides indicated that it was not a surprise decision. As a comprehensive public research institution, the federal research grants are crucial for the university's research capacity, financial wellbeing, and public reputation. As American participants recognized that the university would not be able to protect CI anymore if the federal funding is in jeopardy because of CI. "If any perception about CI's existence may be an issue to obtain research grants has ever been built on campus, even without any possible evidence to back up, then CI is done". Therefore, the strategy to respond to the challenges was to keep "their heads down" and avoid any public attention in hoping the turbulence at the national level might eventually go away (Interview 2, November 2020; Interview 9, November 2020). While American team members' concerns were based on the institutional condition, Chinese team members were worried about the overall bilateral relations which had been sinking downwards. From the interviews, Chinese participants stated that they were aware of the situations and rationale behind the University's strategy, but they did not have much expectation that the strategy could save CI. "Hiding ourselves is not a solution, they will find out as we are on the list (of CIs) anyway", and "they were too powerful. We don't stand a chance. It is beyond what a university can do". As more and more American CIs have been closed, they felt that the same thing would eventually happen to their CI inevitably (Interview 4, November 2020; Interview 5, November 2020; Interview 12, November 2020). The frustration of helpless was shared among both sides

152

of the team members. "The clock was ticking, as soon as we were approached for the federal agency's investigation", even though both sides have shown that the value of this partnership was still highly appreciated and the efforts of each individual team member were respected (Interview 2, November 2020; Interview 3, November 2020; Interview 8, November 2020). The trust between the partners was considered useful to make the smooth termination process rather than resisting the challenge and changing the course of the trajectory.

In the case of CI program B, the American host university is a small-size private teaching institution that has less dependence on federal research grants. Also, the university has a proud history of standing for spiritual values during the struggles for civil rights and racial justice. The CI program has been seen as a unique international educational service to the underprivileged student populations lined up with the spiritual value of the university leadership (Interview 7, November 2020; November 13, November 2020). Although the external pressures have been high particularly from the congressional delegation from the state where the host university is located, the university leadership has been standing firm with the CI program all the time. Since 2018, the American partner has conducted several evaluations and reviews to ensure that the CI program has been complying with the regulations and rules as well as the values that the program has created for the university and surrounding community. The review results furtherly enhanced the confidence of the leadership for the CI program. Interviewees from both sides agreed that "the president and other campus leaders fully supported the program and recognized the value" which was the key to sustain the

program against external pressure. Although the program was safe at the moment, the sentiment of uncertainty and anxiety was shared in the team. "It is something not controllable, the environment is very toxic." The procedural to handle the possible closure was also discussed in case it would happen eventually (Interview 7, November 2020; Interview 14, November 2020). Based on the interviews, the levels of trust of the partnership were not relevant to the reactions to the current situation as it came from a much larger geopolitical issue. The team members shared the same concern and did not consider anything that could be done from the partnership to release the tension in their levels.

The comparison of the two cases found out that the decisions of maintaining or terminating the CI partnership programs were at the discretion of the American host universities. The relationship between the partners as well as the support and contribution from the counterpart and the overall performance of the program was not the major factor to resist the external political pressure. As the phrase "all politics is local" indicates, the strategy of response and the process of making decisions to address political challenges in the US are conducted locally even for the international program. The partners from abroad have limited ability to involve and influence the final decisions.

### Section Four: Summary

This chapter discusses the findings of case studies of Confucius Institute programs and addresses the research questions. The cross-level trust analysis finds out that interpersonal trust exists both between partner organizations and within the home organization. While interpersonal trust between team members from American and

Chinese partner universities has been recognized and maintained, the level of trust between individuals at CI programs and the individuals from other academic and administrative units within the organization requires more attention. Institutional trust refers to the sense of trust possessed by individuals toward a group of people or an organization collectively. The level of institutional trust at CI programs is related to cross-cultural understanding, the knowledge about the partner organizations, and the perceived respect from the actions, language, and treatments by each other. Interorganizational trust has been underpinned by the compatible recognitions of the roles, values, and goals of the partners. Interorganizational relationships can be strengthened during the progress of the recognition of each other and interpersonal relationships. The relationships between individuals related to the partnership programs are influenced by empathy and care at the interpersonal level and communication patterns and disciplinary familiarity at the institutional level. Those relationships and experiences of individuals can trigger a deep level and large scale of actions and reactions in the organizational level to advance internationalization process.

The investigation of interpersonal and interorganizational relationships of international partnership in higher education illuminates the process of trust development. The trust development has traversed successive phases, each of which involves a variety of levels of trust building situations, actions, and relations. This study finds four phases of development as initiation, formation, operation, and transformation. The nature of the multi-mission complex of higher education institutions creates uniqueness and demanded additional attention on the experiences, views, and perceptions of individuals working at

155

the partnership program in terms of common understanding, communication patterns, and relationship building, all of which are important factors to influence the process of trust development in international partnerships of higher education.

Under external pressure, the environments and conditions of the partnership have been substantially changed. In the case studies, the interactions between the partnership relationship and decisions related to external pressures of the two CI programs are compared – one was ended and the other reminds open. The research finds that the external pressure has not significantly impacted the trust development within the partnership either the individual or the organizational level. But the external pressure has indeed created serious issues related to sustaining the partnership. Those issues include ineffective international communication, limited confidence in each other, and Chinese team members' mental anxiety and stress, which challenges the stability and sustainability of the partnership even though each side maintained the interest and wiliness to continue the relationship. The study reveals that when the external scrutiny and pressure have grown into a high level of intensity and strength, trust is no longer a key factor as before to sustain the partnership against the pressure, because the level of trust of partnership and the effectiveness of the educational effort may not impact the surrounding political consideration and decision-making. It is an example that the operation of educational programs has been politicized and tied to certain political agendas. The next chapter provides the conclusions and recommendations based on the findings of the research.

# CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSIONS

This chapter provides a summary of findings from the case study then consolidates the threads and themes of this study to draw provisional conclusions. The chapter includes the limitations of the research and a discussion of the implications resulting from the analysis with suggestions for further research related to international partnership in higher education.

## Section One: Summary of Findings

This study utilizes case study methods to collect and analyze data of individuals' experience, views, and perceptions during their work at the cases related to international partnership programs in higher education under the framework adapted from trust study models and organizational communication assessment, and explore answers of research questions. The findings from the case study research were synthesized and presented in the previous chapters.

The trust of the international partnership exists at interpersonal, institutional, and interorganizational levels. The research studies the status and aspects related to interpersonal trust both between partner organizations and within the home organization. While interpersonal trust between staff and teachers from American and Chinese partner universities has been recognized and maintained, the level of trust between individuals at CI programs and the individuals from other academic and administrative units within the organization requires more attention. Institutional trust refers to the sense of trust possessed by individuals toward a group of people or an organization collectively. This

study reveals the factors related to the development of institutional trust at CI programs as international partnership efforts. Interorganizational trust has been underpinned by the compatible recognitions of the roles, values, and goals of the partners. Interorganizational relationships can be strengthened during the progress of the partnership programs.

This study examines the process of trust development in four phases – initiation, formation, operation, and transformation. These relationships related to international partnership programs go through successive phases, each of which involves distinct levels of trust building situations, actions, and relations, as well as the development of suitable communication mechanisms and patterns. The nature of multi-mission complex of higher education institution creates uniqueness and demanded additional attention on the relationship between individuals working at the partnership and fellow colleagues at other units within the organization.

Under external pressure, the environments and conditions of the partnership have been substantially impacted. This study analyzes communications and interactions between the partnership relationship with respect to understanding situations and making decisions under external pressures. Through the case studies of CI programs, the research finds that external pressure did not significantly impact trust development within the partnership either at the individual or organizational level. The major impact of the external scrutiny and pressure was causing anxiety, stress, and the sense of unsecured to the international team members. The perceived issues of transparency, insufficient communication skills, and lacking confidence between partners to handle external pressures challenged the stability of the relationship moving forward. When the external

scrutiny and pressure grows into a high level of intensity and strength, the relationship with international partners was no longer an important factor to sustain the partnership against the pressure. The level of trust and the quality of educational effort may not be a factor for local politics.

By addressing the research questions through case studies, this research reveals the interpersonal and interorganizational relationships, trust development, and dynamics under external pressures in international partnerships of higher education. Based on the findings, the following topics related to building trust relationship in higher education, sustaining international partnership, and the overall global dynamics impacting higher education are discussed.

### Section Two: Trust in Higher Education

This study applies to higher education the concept of trust in the corporate research field. Trust is a key element reflecting the state of the relationship. The cross-level trust analysis reveals the trust dynamics in interpersonal, institutional, and interorganizational levels and how the interactions function across the levels. The trust development process theory helps comprehend the temporal order of the phases and the factors and activities that may impact the trust development in each phase. This exercise of adaption from corporate organization studies to higher education makes good sense to understand the relationship within and beyond the partnership. Of course, the special character of higher education institutions must be recognized and taken into account in the research. Compared to corporations, higher education institutions have two fundamental distinctions – multiple missions and decentralized structure. The nature of

higher education institutions adds significant complications and distinctions of analyzing trust for higher educational partnership. Understanding those distinctions is imperative to examine the relationship of partnership in the higher education field.

**Per-existing relationship**

Higher education is a field of multi-dimensional networks. Administrators and scholars working at higher education institutions possess many direct and indirect connections with individuals from other institutions including educational affiliations and academic disciplinary interactions. Higher education offers numerous professional connection opportunities such as academic conferences, research collaborations, visiting teaching and lecturing exchanges, interorganizational and cross-organizational reviews and evaluations, academic and professional associations, collegiate athletic events, and regional and international consortiums. It is highly likely that the certain level of interpersonal relationships exist before the formal partnership is formed between two higher education institutions.

Those pre-existing relationship may or may not influence the decision-making of the establishment of partnership. Those relationships and the individuals who have been involved in those pre-existing relationship can significantly impact the function of partnership programming and the trust development process at both the individual and institutional levels. The information gathered and knowledge generated through previous interactions can be of great help for each organization to better understand the partner organization particularly the working styles, bureaucratic power structure, organizational and sub-organizational culture, and interpersonal dynamics, which are hardly obtained

160

through public information. If the existing relationships involve high ranking administrators, key stakeholders, or boundary spanners of partnerships, it is surely beneficial to leverage those relationships for accelerating the trust building process for the newly established partnership.

On the other hand, the pre-existing relationships may cause confusion. There is a chance that the information collected from the previous interactions is outdated and no longer accurate. Those pre-existing relationships are very likely created for purposes not relevant to the new partnership, and the individuals may not be asked to involve with the new partnership. Then, they may misunderstand the new purposes of the partnership and could become a source of the negative impact of the interpersonal trust about this new partnership. In addition, the pre-existing relationships may allow multiple channels of interorganizational communication to function other than the boundary spanners within the partnership programs. The possibility of distrust grows as the ambivalent and even contradicting information flowing back and forth. These situations and issues reflect the multi-functioning nature of higher education institutions.

**Within-organization dynamics**

Higher education institution is a multi-mission, multi-functional, decentralized enterprise. The trustors and trustees in the institutional trust are involved with very different scenarios at higher education institutions compared to corporations. The motivations and values of new educational initiatives are framed with the interpretations of the current priorities to advance institutional missions. The various perspectives and options either agreeing or disagreeing on the initiatives can be justified with the different

understandings of the same missions particularly between academic and administrative systems. Essentially, developing the institutional trust of the international partnership involves developing interpersonal trust with a variety of units and individuals who may have very different opinions and interpretations about the priorities across the institution. In addition, as the decentralization of higher education in structure, information and knowledge are not equally distributed and possessed across the institution, which increases the difficulty of internal communication for understanding the program value and reaching consensus.

The other challenge for building internal trust is related to the apathy of sincere academic interest in international partnership. While faculty members welcome the internalization in general and many of them have participated in international programs occasionally, the commitment to working with international counterparts with investments of time and other personal and institutional resources is limited. With the growing demands on scholarly and teaching tasks and concrete scheduling of the academic calendar, it is unrealistic to improve the commitment and consistency from faculty on international programs and efforts in a short time. For many American students enrolling in higher education institutions, seriously exploring a country or countries that they were not familiar with was not a practical option. For the case of Confucius Institute programs, serving as a cultural resource available to the college students with the expectation that more students would be inspired to further commit to participating in more systematic international educational offering is ideal but may not be fulfilled immediately. Instead, a direct outreach to K-12 schools near the campus and encouraging

younger learners to engage in global learning is much more sustainable for the sake of international education itself. However, this approach invites a new challenge from the disconnection between post-secondary education and K-12 schools. For Confucius Institute programs, their contributions and values for primary and secondary schools in local surrounding communities were not well communicated and appreciated within the host universities, and not helpful to develop institutional trust.

The challenges of institutional trust within the higher education institution increase the vulnerability of the international partnership programs. The support from the top of the organizational chart becomes more remarkable not only for providing necessary tangible resources and mental support, but also for the direction and guidance to navigate the structure, clarify the overarching institutional strategy, increase campus visibility, and build internal alliances. It is a similar dilemma of overall internationalization strategy that while the visions and demands are shared between the leadership and institutional constituencies across the campus, the operational priority and emphasis are usually not compatible between top-down and bottom-up ways of work. The divergent mentality and basis of consideration between faculty and administration amplify the operational difficulty. The typical mitigation approaches including faculty task forces and townhall meetings are time consuming. Meanwhile, the decisions and correspondence in international cooperation may need fast responses and reactions. Therefore, the top-down processing with the benefits of efficiency becomes the convention.

Underdeveloped institutional relationship and apathy of interest in participating international programs within campuses manifested a common issue of internationalization in higher education that is the disconnection between commitment and action. Although the majority of administrators and faculty campus-wide have reached a consensus of the commitment to developing global awareness and intercultural competence has become by, the responsibility of conducting and participating in international teaching and learning often time falls into specific units such as study abroad offices and international affairs departments (Holland &Schneider, 2011). The coherence of understanding and undertaking is desired so that the internationalization can be fully implemented.

**Organizational communication of the partnership program**

The study revealed that organizational communication had been serving as an important dimension of relationship development of international partnership in higher education. The communication mechanisms had been established according to the international strategy and goals by each partner, tested and evaluated by the boundary spanners when the partnership started to function, adjusted and reconciled to accommodate the demands and functions of partnership programs, and redeveloped to generate suitable communication patterns in order to match the unique sub-organizational culture. This development process was aligned with the trust development cycle of partnerships.

When confronting external challenges, organizational communication is supposed to be a crucial element in the problem-solving and decision-making process for

international partnership. In this study, for a variety of reasons organizational communication was not a factor in both cases and major decisions about the future of the programs was rendered unilaterally. It was not clear whether effective communication between partners might make the situation better. But from the case study, it was fair to conclude that the required quality of interorganizational communication channels, media, and skills would be in a much higher level for dealing with challenges than regular times which might need greater involvement and investment from partner organizations.

Boundary spanners had been playing a vital role in the organizational communication of the partnership programs. Organizational communication functions were mostly implemented by boundary spanners at both interpersonal and interorganizational levels. Their growth in communication skills, cultural competence, institutional understanding, and international programming knowledge, as well as the respect and appreciation to the colleagues and partner organizations reflected the professional and personal development throughout the progress of partnerships. During their professional and social interactions within the organization, they might transfer their knowledge and experience to institution-wide colleagues. In that sense, they became promoters of international efforts and valuable resources of expertise for internationalization strategy. According to the study, however, none of interviewees had possessed educational background or received any training in the field of organizational communication. Providing communication training for team members from both sides and involving them further in the design of communication mechanisms can be an effective approach to improve communication performance in partnership.

**Leadership change**

From the case studies and general knowledge, leaderships of universities that participate in the international partnership usually has great faith in the international exchanges and collaborations. They sincerely believe in international partnership with global counterparts. Their appreciation of international experience and cross-cultural competence to students and faculty as well as their institutional knowledge is the most fundamental asset to push forward the international endeavors.

As the support of leadership becomes a foundation of both institutional trust and interorganizational trust, the partnership is relying on the blessing from the top. If the senior leadership is stable and secure, the international partnership grows concretely with more ability to be buffered from negative attitudes internally and externally. With leadership changes, the international program may lose the most visible institutional asset and setback the degree of institutional trust and possibly the interorganizational trust.

Leadership change causes a series of organizational changes and actions, including the switching strategic priorities, new appointments on key positions, and different organizational communication preference and pattern. Those changes may impact the partnership programs in terms of taking additional time and efforts to comprehend and adjust. For the interorganizational relationship, it may be a new beginning to start the interpersonal relationship between the partner universities' leaderships, but also there is a chance to refresh the relationship as they may find more individual similarities or connections in academic, professional, and personal backgrounds and interests.

For the sustainability of the cooperation and relationship, it is necessary to foster an institutional belief and norm to value international program and transcend the support from senior leaders to broad campus stakeholders and from generation to next generation of leadership. It is reasonable to consider the institutional belief and value about internationalization as a key variable to evaluate the effectiveness and sustainability of any international program and partnership.

**Unbalanced powers between partners**

The organizational studies on trust usually tend to neglect the power balance between the partnering corporations, as the scenario of issues at an joint venture (in contrast with merging) caused by unbalanced power is rare. In higher education, however, unbalanced power can not be ignored in analyzing trust development and relationship. Each higher education institution has a uniquely complex power system as the organizational missions, goals, values, and resources are all in a multi-dimensional fluid state. For partnership in higher education, the complication is doubled as the two partners have to assimilate each other on top of articulating themselves. When it is international related, an imbalance of power exists in almost all cases of partnership. The imbalance is due to the differences in academic reputation and prestige, financial contributions, social conventions, cultural patterns, scarce resources distribution, influence and control of rewards, possessions of information and expertise, and political and regulatory authority.

In the cases of Confucius Institutes in the US, the sources of powers were highly skewed toward the American host universities. Meanwhile, Confucius Institute programs

in other continents were much more balanced. Although the unbalanced power did not bring issues and challenges of trust development in both cases of study as the boundary spanners have been sensitive and attentive to maintain the interpersonal trust, a couple of interviewees did share the stories they heard from other CI programs in the US that negative interpersonal relations and even situations of conflict were not uncommon, and that unbalanced power was involved in those conflicts.

Nevertheless, this explorative study finds limitations of current literature in the power balance issue between higher education partnerships. Further research on this issue from the organizational and political frame is recommended.

In conclusion, this study attempts to expand the horizon of the research in higher education administration by adopting conceptual framework from other academic disciplines and demonstrates the viability and effectiveness with ensuring the higher education characteristics are fully incorporated. It is imperative for higher education researchers and administrators to keep an open mind and be prepared to absorb ideas and best practices from other realms, and stimulate a vibrant learning community of higher education researchers. It propels higher education administration to keep learning from other sectors and organizations to actively develop and improve competencies and skills. International partnership consistently provides such learning opportunities.

## Section Three: International Partnership Development

As a systematic examination on international partnership, this study attempts to reveal the patterns of international partnership development from the case studies and suggests the potential best practices of maintaining a functional partnership.

**Effectively articulate the value of international partnership**

Each program was built for a reason. The issue of not enough support was not about the reason or the value of the program, but such value was not articulated and communicated well enough to convince the audience. In the case studies, the missions and values of CI programs have been acknowledged and captured within the partnership teams. The challenge was how to communicate with fellow organizational members outside of the partnership. Relying on the leaders who understand the value and overarching strategy of internationalization helped but was not enough. Team members particularly the boundary spanners must be skillful at articulating the value of the program and customizing the communication according to the audience and occasions.

For example, increasing the number of American students who can speak the Chinese language is one of the most fundamental missions of any CI program. There is hardly anyone who would disagree with the value of acquiring the skill of Chinese language, or any foreign language. However, this simple and generic value statement may not resonate with an individual's personal preference and the unit's institutional priority. Effectively communicating the value requires institutional insight into the organizational culture, climate, strategy, and individual interests. A case in that point was CI Program B where it was clear that offering Chinese language learning opportunities to students from underprivileged and underserved populations was aligned and consistent with the Historical Black College and University's emphasis on social justice. Therefore, supporting the CI program against unfounded external political attacks was not only based on programming benefits but also a moral stance.

169

Having the knowledge and skills to adjust the communication of values and goals depending on the audience increases the chance of finding common ground for the discussions for expanding collaborations and building coalitions. For the audience from the admission unit, the value of reaching out to a large number of K-12 students may be the highlight; for the teaching units with an increasing number of Chinese students, the basic language skills and cultural understandings for interacting with Chinese students such as learning to pronounce their names and encouraging them to actively participate in class discussions would be appreciated. Customization of value statement is not about revising the programming priority since revisions in priorities should be based on the mission and strategy. Rather, it is a matter of improving institutional knowledge and communication competence.

**Improve skills on cross-cultural understanding**

A common goal of international partnership in higher education is to provide educational efforts for students and faculty to develop their cross-cultural competence. Meanwhile, the process of building an effective international partnership itself requires the cross-cultural understanding and communication skills. As one interviewee elaborated "sometimes even though the words are written clearly on the paper, people may still have different interpretations. That happened more often in the cross-cultural environment because there is a level of cultural interpretation on top of literal interpretation" (Interview 8, November 2020). Other interviewees shared that there have been multiple times that participants of bilateral official meetings did not understand what exactly has been discussed even though every word has been translated correctly. The internal

briefing meetings then became meaningful to make sense of the discussions. Another example was the board meetings for CI programs. Prior to the formal meetings, the boundary spanners thoroughly discussed, differences resolved, and agreement reached on the substantial Board agenda items. The board meetings served more as occasions of social and ceremonial gathering for board members to get together; often thoughtful perspectives and innovative ideas were generated from the delightful conversations at these Board meetings. This is an example of integrating preferences of "saving face" from Chinese culture and social constructions in the "happy hour" format from American culture.

In this sense, the international partnership is an experiment of cooperation and a series of training exercises to equip individuals including team members, supervisors, and other personnel with cross-cultural expertise which can be applied to other international endeavors of the universities. Boundary spanners and other individuals who involved in international partnership programs have the first-hand experience and knowledge of cross-cultural exchanges and are directly benefited for professional and personal development. They become an important asset of human skills for the further internationalization of home institutions. In the future, it would be interesting to expand the research by systematically observing and measuring the individual's professional development on cross-cultural competence through working in international partnership programs, identifying the variables related to cross-cultural development, and recommending best practices to improve training and other professional development practices in higher education.

**Focus on human level relationship beyond the interorganizational partnership**

International partnership program in higher education is all about human connections. The trust of the partnership is established upon the initiative of human connections between individuals representing each partner and gradually developed by the increasing human interactions between and within partners. Those human connections and interactions occur with students or participants of the programs as well as practitioners or team members of the programs. For the international partnership program, the people who have been participating in and benefited from the program and people who have been working at the program are equally important to represent the program.

As an educational program, its students are the "products" to showcase the accomplishments and values and evaluate the effectiveness of the teaching efforts. For the purpose of increasing visibility and encouraging participation, individual stories and relationships which help build personal connections are more effective and potentially gain community support. Particularly in the situation of promoting the consensus of the international operation, successful stories from fellow faculty members and students can be exceptionally inspirational and informative that the audience can not only make sense of the program but relate its value to themselves. Those previous participants who understood the value of the program can also be encouraged to bring in more participants through personal connections and thus enlarge the overall personal networks of the programs. When the external pressure emerges, the personal stories of international learning are more powerful to debunk the misinformation and people with personal and

emotional connections with international programs are more motivated to offer support

for sustaining the partnership.

The other key indicator of program value is the team members of the international

programs. Their contributions and professional endeavors associated with the programs

can present the shared belief and collective professionalism of the programs. Further,

those international visiting staff from different countries serve as educational

ambassadors of the international counterparts and the countries they were from. The

Confucius Institute programs have been examples of putting human faces in a vast

country that is very far away. The existence of Chinese visiting teachers working on

American campuses helped reduce the distance and introduce another culture as a real

person. Interviewees from both teams reflected that through people-to-people direct

interactions during the tenure at CI programs they gained more respect and appreciation

from local citizens, and understand more with empathy about the issues that they are

facing. The stereotypes and the misconceptions related to each other were corrected, and

the perspectives to treat each other not as a part of government policies or an image from

history books, but as a real human being were established (Interview 3, November 2020;

Interview 4, November 2020; Interview 8, November 2020; Interview 9, November 2020;

Interview 10, October 2020; Interview 14, November 2020). Even in the case of the

university that decided to terminate its CI program, the interorganizational and

interpersonal relationships between the former partners still continues.

Traveling to another country changes one's world view; receiving visitors from

another country changes one's world view as well. Confucius once said that it is joyful to

receive friends from afar. That reflects the fundamental contribution of Confucius Institute programs and many other international partnerships. Participants have been stimulated and inspired to continue the inquiry and exploration about the world through their own observation and thinking. These international relationships formed from the working and living experiences demonstrate the value of global learning and international exchanges which ultimately contribute to building a world of humanity.

**International partnership under political dynamics**

Internationalization in higher education has been tied to the global dynamics of geopolitics, economics, and technology. As discussed in Chapter One, many scholars consider internationalization as an organizational response to globalization and the demand of students for readiness in competing in the global market. International partnerships have been put into place as programming initiatives to advance internationalization.

In recent years, the patterns of internationalization in higher education have encountered political and social challenges. The development of intense opposition to the concept of the shared global community substantially decreased the collective commitment to addressing major global issues that the human race is facing. These anti-globalization movements challenge the operation of higher education internationalization and international partnership. This specific case of Confucius Institute involves a grand landscape of US-China relations which is considered as the most important and dynamic bilateral geopolitical relations of the world in the last decade. Its rapid growth and dramatic setback have been directly associated with the dynamics of international

relations. Interviewees consider that CI programs which "belong to both American and Chinese" have become the "hostages" of the deteriorated bilateral relations. They have been witnessing public attitudes and climate about CI programs turning from friendly and popular to suspicious, eventually as a political liability of the host university under external pressure, which is consistent with the trajectory of US-China relations in this decade.

The animosity toward China as a government or a society with different ideology in governmental relations can quickly trickle down to public perception through information, sometimes misinformation, campaigns. New information technology and social media have expedited the information broadcasting and prompted the tendency of eye-catching and sensation-driven story sharing, causing the dissemination of misleading or biased information among the general public and it is difficult to correct the records based on facts. It is higher education's responsibility to inform the public with accurate knowledge and shape the attitudes of openness, diversity, and inclusion. International programs and efforts which are supposed to serve on this mission found themselves in the middle of the conflict as one of the easy targets. Tensions between international educators and political ideologues are combined with increasing public mistrust in higher education, which negatively influenced higher education institutions' determination and choice to defend their international programs.

The external political pressure disrupts the trust development cycle of international partnerships of higher education and challenged the states of partnership program practitioners. International visiting group members may sense an unwelcome

environment and concern about the well-being of themselves and their family members. Their trusts in the host institutions are no longer only for the professional conduct and organizational goals, but for their personal safety.

To address the public mistrust and confusions and its impact on international partnership as external pressure, each higher education institution needs to articulate the value and vision of internationalization to the students and communities it serves and does it in such a way that is meaningful to those communities, and demonstrate its institutional regulations and competencies to safeguard national interests during the international interactions. It requires clarifications of purposes, and the core value of internationalization at a philosophical level rather than the programing level.

### Section Four: Limitations

The conclusions drawn from the present study need to be considered in relation to the following limitations. The first limitation is inherent in the research activity itself. The best outcome of any investigation may only render an attempt of the closest approximation of what is truly happening in reality which is socially constructed and not completely free from bias and subjectivity. Despite the incorporation of scholarly rigor and research techniques in the best attempt, the researcher acknowledges that the data reported by the participants and interpreted by the researcher are only partial accounts of reality.

The second limitation is inherent in this study's case study design. Methodological scholars illustrate that a case study design inevitably limits the understanding of a central phenomenon based on a few cases that are purposefully

selected for the investigation (Yin, 2009). In this study, two cases of Confucius Institute programs were selected. It is unknown whether a different sample of Confucius Institute programs located in other higher education institutions in the US, or other data collection methods might yield different data. For instance, the findings indicate that the degree of interpersonal trust remained high among staff members, but interviewees revealed that according to their knowledge unpleasant and even confrontational interpersonal relations at other programs were not uncommon. While recognizing the issue of specification and generalization embedded in case study design, this study intends to explore the variables and dynamics behind the phenomenon in personal, institutional, and interorganizational levels for the specific situation. Therefore, the limitation of samples does not cause the validity issue rather it recommends further research to enrich the knowledge.

The third limitation is related to the limited resources and availabilities of data collection to allow for a higher level of saturation and a greater range of application of the findings. Particularly, the restrictions of travel and visit, the evacuations of Chinese teachers from American schools, and closures of higher education campuses due to the COVID-19 pandemic, did not allow the original data collection plans to be implemented including campus visits and observations, and a larger number of in-person interviews. The research could have included more stakeholders related to the Confucius Institute programs including university senior administrators, faculty members, students, and community participants if available for informing more detailed institutional and community dynamics. Nevertheless, this study aims to fill the gap of the theoretical

frame to examine the partnership in cross-level views and serves as a starting point for future research in higher education analysis.

Based on the above-mentioned implications and limitations, the present study calls for continuing inquiries in several areas. First, the findings reveal that the cross-level trust analysis frame adapted from organization studies does contribute to examining the relationship in higher education partnership. This cross-disciplinary effort can be expanded further to enhance the research on higher education organizational research. Second, this study finds that the unique characteristics of higher education impact every level of internationalization and partnership efforts. Therefore, the feasibility and potential of developing a paradigm of evaluating relationship exists. Third, this study finds the partnership development in higher education involving evaluation and re-evaluation on partnership from each other. Although the evaluations show positive results in the case studies of this research, the perception of caution and untrustworthiness on partners possibly exists in some international partnership programs. The theories related to organizational distrust may be useful to further explore the full picture of the dynamics of attitudes and perceptions between partners. Fourth, this study reveals the unbalanced power within higher education partnerships. Thus, the power and political frames can provide meaningful angles to examine internationalization in higher education. Fifth, in this study, the role of senior administrators of partner universities is recognized to sustain the partnership and resist external challenges. It leaves potential to apply organizational leadership studies for better understanding the dynamics and development within the partnership structures. Sixth, this study recommends more research on the subject of

cross-cultural competence readiness, development, and evaluation of individuals working at the international partnership program to enrich the literature on partnership and inform the best practices of professional development.

### Section Five: Concluding Remarks

This study focuses the international partnership in higher education institution through case study methodology. The cross-level trust analysis based on trust studies and organizational communication has been adapted and implemented to examine the relationship dynamics and development on the cases of Confucius Institute programs. This study adopts corporate study models integrating nature and characteristics of higher education. The case study research obtains insights from rich data of organizational members' personal experience, views, understandings, and perceptions related to the partner relationship and organizational communication, and illustrates the states of trust at the interpersonal, institutional, and interorganizational level, the process of trust development in the initiation, formation, operation, and transformation phases, particularly under external pressure. This study offers the practical and scholarly implications and recommendations to develop, maintain, support, and enhance international cooperation partnerships at higher education institutions specifically during challenging and turbulent times.

The core values of higher education for justice, equity, and humanity should be always remembered and kept during this special period of time, which are the exact ingredients values to promote healing and reconciliation. The role of international cooperation and partnership in higher education for bridging cultural gaps and cultivating

179

global citizenship should be acknowledged and strengthened. The realities of dealing with external pressures against international efforts may frustrate and exhaust the higher education institutions, but for the mission of seeking truth and the faith of humanity educators and practitioners must stand up and carry forward the responsibilities for the betterment of the global community with belief, integrity, resilience, and determination.

CI Partnership Trust Survey

Please select the proper answer related your work assignment at the Confucius Institute programs.

Q1. I have worked at the Confucius Institute at_____.

Q2. During the time when I worked at the Confucius Institute, I represented/was employed by:        A. the US host university;        B. Chinese partner university

Strongly Disagree: 1;  Disagree: 2; Neither Agree nor Disagree: 3; Agree: 4; Strongly agree: 5

For American respondents (who answered A in Q2):

Q3. We think that individuals from the Chinese partner tells exactly what they are considering.

Q4. We think that the Chinese partner is reliable.

Q5. We think the individuals from the Chinese partner may step on other people.

Q6. We feel the Chinese partner communicates with us honestly.

Q7. We think the information from the Chinese partner does not mislead us.

Q8. We feel we can depend on the Chinese partner to move on the joint effort forward.

Q9. We think the Chinese partner has been keeping their promises.

Q10. We think that commitments made to us will be honored by the individuals sent from the Chinese partner.

Q11. As the external environment has been tough on the CI program, we intend to share information cautiously with the China partner about those external pressures to avoid complication.

Q12. We feel that the Chinese partner's involvement in making a crucial decision under pressure is helpful.

Q13. We think the Chinese partner fully understands the issue and circumstance in the US.

Q14. We think individuals from the Chinese partner may not be able to describe the full picture back to China.

Q15. Individuals from the Chinese partner have provided good ideas and advice in dealing with external pressures.

Q16. We are concerned that individuals from the Chinese partner may not be sensitive enough.

Q17. We think the Chinese partner knows everything we know about the situation of the CI program.

For Chinese respondents (who answered B in Q2)

Q18. We think the people from the American host university tell exactly what they are considering.

Q19. We think that the American university is reliable.

Q20. We think the individuals from the American university may step on other people.

Q21. We feel the American partner communicates with us honestly.

Q22. We think the information from the American partner does not mislead us.

Q23. We feel we can depend on the American partner to move on the joint effort forward.

Q24. We think that the American partner has been keeping their promises.

Q25. We think that commitments made to us will be honored by the American partner.

Q26. As the external climate has been tough on the CI, we intend to share information cautiously with the American partner about the pressure to avoid complications.

Q27. We feel that our involvement in making a crucial decision under pressure is helpful.

Q28. We think the American partner has fully explained to us the issue and circumstance in the US.

Q29. We have described the full picture back to China.

Q30. The American partner has provided good ideas and advice in dealing with external pressures.

Q31. We are concerned that individuals from the American partner might not be sensitive enough.

Q32. We think the American partner told us everything they knew about the joint program.

**APPENDIX II: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS**

CI Partnership Interview Questions:

I. General Understanding

      1. What is the mission of the CI at your campus?

      2. How do you know you are fulfilling the mission? What evidence do you use and how is it collected?

      3. What is the value of having this CI on campus?

      4. What are the biggest challenges faced by the CI on this campus?

      5. How do you measure or assess "success" in programs or events or activities at this CI?

      6. In what forums or settings is the programmatic information about your CI discussed?

      7. How does the CI interface with other campus offices, for example the Office of the Provost or President?

      8. How much benefits, influence, or input does your Chinese partner institution (American host institution*)?

II. Communication and Relationship

      1. How are CI activities and information communicated to the campus, to the community, and to your partner institution in China (your home institution*)?

      2.How have the goals and objectives of your Chinese partner institution (your home institution*) been shared with you?

      3. Who have you been mostly communicating with for CI related matters in a daily basis, for decision making, and under external pressure? How were your experiences in those communications-circumstances, outcomes, and effectiveness?

4. How do you maintain a relationship with the leadership at your Chinese partner institution (American host institution*)?

5. How were the CI related decisions made and how were the decisions communicated to the team members of both sides?

6. What are the issues attendant to these relationships?

7. What are the shortcomings of the two sides?

8. Can you share an example of issue or challenge? How did it happen? How did team members communicate about it? How was it solved?


III. Under Pressures

1. How do you react to the closure of CI's on other campuses?

2. How were the discussions on this matter (closures at other locales) made?

3. How do you sense the states or changes of the relationship with your partner since then?

4. Have you had to justify the CI with any internal or external groups regarding this issue?

5. What was the response from the leadership of both universities?

6. How did the two universities communicate regarding the external pressure?

7. How did the CI team members communicate during the decision-making process under external pressure?

8. How did the strategy and approach of response work from your perspective?

# REFERENCES

AAUP. (2014). *On Partnerships with Foreign Governments: The Case of Confucius Institutes*. https://www.aaup.org/report/confucius-institutes. Washington, DC: American Association of University Professors.

AGB. (2020). *The International Dimension of Higher Education. The Guardians Initiative: reclaiming the public trust*. https://agb.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/The-International-Dimensions.pdf. Washington, DC: Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges.

Altbach, P. G. (2002). Perspectives on international higher education. *Change*, *34*(5), 29–31. http://doi.org/10.1080/00091380209601852

Altbach, P. G. (2004). Globalisation and the university: Myths and realities in an unequal world. *Tertiary Education and Management*, *10*(1), 3–25. http://doi.org/10.1080/13583883.2004.9967114

Altbach, P. G., & Knight, J. (2007). The internationalization of higher Education: Motivations and realities. *Journal of Studies in International Education*, *11*(3-4), 290–305. http://doi.org/10.1177/1028315307303542

Atack, P. (2019, May 10). US: Three more Confucius Institutes closed. *The Pie News*. Retrieved from https://thepienews.com/news/us-three-more-confucius-institutes-close-under-pressure/

Bachmann, R., & Zaheer, A. (2008). Perception of cooperation and trust in international cooperation. Retrieved from http://eds.a.ebscohost.com/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?sid=eb398e41-b94b-4ce0-80a1-8278a0e5b0f7%40sessionmgr4002&vid=1&hid=4205

Baier, A. (1986). Trust and antitrust. *Ethics*, *96*(2), 231–260.

Barber. (1983). *The logic and limits of trust*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.

Bartell, M. (2003). Internationalization of universities: A university culture-based framework. *Higher Education*, *45*(1), 43–70.

Benevento, M. (2019, Sep 26). UM President Mun Choi stands by Confucius Institute despite Sen. Josh Hawley's opposition. *The Columbia Missourian*. Retrieved from https://www.columbiamissourian.com/news/higher_education/um-president-mun-

choi-stands-by-confucius-institute-despite-sen/article_6f285b9a-e0a1-11e9-9c55-df3a853ea13c.html

Bell, P. (2018). *The Case for and against Confucius Institute*. Unpublished manuscript.

Benoit-Barné, C., & Cooren, F. (2009). The accomplishment of authority through presentification: How authority is distributed among and negotiated by organizational members. *Management Communication Quarterly, 23*(1), 5–31. https://doi.org/10.1177/0893318909335414

Berry, H., & Rodgers, B. (2003). Rural and remote populations trust and distress in three generations of rural Australians. *Australasian Psychiatry*, *11*, S131. http://doi.org/10.1046/j.1038-5282.2003.02000.x

Bess, J. L., & Dee, J. R. (2008). *Understanding College and University Organization: Theories for Effective Policy and Practice*. Sterling, VA: Stylus.

Binkley, C. (2020, October 9). US sees 'malign influence' in China-backed school program. *Associated Press News*. Retrieved from https://apnews.com/article/politics-mike-pompeo-betsy-devos-china-083992e3357b580a7cc7b2bb81121fc7

Bok, D. (2020). *Higher Expectations: Can Colleges Teach Students What They Need to Know in the 21st Century?* Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Bolman, L. G., & Deal, T. E. (2013). *Reframing organizations: Artistry, choice, and leadership*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Boon, D., & Holmes, G. (1991). The dynamics of interpersonal trust: Resolving uncertainty in the face of risk. In R. A. Hinde & J. Groebel (Eds.), *Cooperation and Prosocial Behaviour*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Bond, S. (2003). Engaging educators: Bringing the world into the classroom. *Guidelines for Practice*. Canadian Bureau for International Education (CBIE) / Bureau Canadien de l'éducation Internationale (BCEI). Retrieved from http://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED549850

Bromiley, P., & Cummings, L. L. (1995). Transactions costs in organizations with trust. *Research on Negotiation in Organizations*, *5*, 219–250.

Brown, S., Claudet, J., & Olivarez, A. (2003). Investigating organizational dimensions of middle school curricular leadership: Linkages to school effectiveness. *Research in Middle Level Education* Quarterly, 26(1).

Bryman, A. (2008). *Social Research Methods (3rd ed.)*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

Bullock, M. B. (2017). U.S. – China Education Relations: past, present, and future. *China Currents. 16*(2). https://www.chinacenter.net/2017/china_currents/16-2/u-s-china-education-relations-past-present-future/

Callan, H. (2000). The international vision in practice: A decade of evolution. *Higher Education in Europe, 25*(1), 15–23.

Chan, W. Y. (2004). International cooperation in higher education: Theory and practice. *Journal of Studies in International Education*, *8*(1), 32–55. http://doi.org/10.1177/1028315303254429

Clinton, W. J. (2000). International education policy. *Memorandum from US President William J. Clinton for the Heads of Executive Departments and Agencies*. Office of the Press Secretary, The White House.

Creswell, J. W. (2009). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches*. Los Angeles, CA: Sage.

Creswell, J. W. (2013). *Qualitative Inquiry & Research Design: Choosing Among Five Approaches.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Creswell, J. W. (2014). *Educational research: Planning, conducting and evaluating quantitative and qualitative Research (4th ed.)*. Harlow, Essex: Pearson Education.

Crites, S. L., Fabrigar, L. R., & Petty, R. E. (1994). Measuring the affective and cognitive properties of attitudes: Conceptual and methodological issues. Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, *20*(6), 619–634. http://doi.org/10.1177/0146167294206001

Coleman, J. S. (1994). *Foundations of social theory*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Council on Foreign Relations. (2016). *What College-aged students know about the world: A survey on global literacy.* https://www.cfr.org/global-literacy-survey

Cummings, L. L., & Bromiley, P. (1995). The organizational trust inventory (OTI): development and validation. In R. M. Kramer & T. R. Tyler (Eds.), *Trust in organizations: Frontiers of theory and research* (pp. 302–330). SAGE Publications.

Cunningham, J. B. (2001). Research Organizational Values and Beliefs: The Echo Approach. Westport, CT: Quorum Books.

Currall, S. C., & Inkpen, A. C. (2002) "A Multilevel Approach to Trust in Joint Ventures," *Journal of International Business Studies 33*(3): 479–9.

Davis, K. (1953). A method of studying communication patterns in organization. *Personnel Psychology, 6,* 301-312.

Delgado-Márquez, B. L., Hurtado-Torres, N. E., & Bondar, Y. (2011). Internationalization of higher education: Theoretical and empirical investigation of its influence on university institution rankings. *La Internacionalización En La Enseñanza Superior: Investigación Teórica Y Empírica Sobre Su Influencia En Las Clasificaciones de Las Instituciones Universitarias.*, *8*(2), 265–284.

Denman, B. (2002). *Globalisation and its impact on international university cooperation.* Retrieved March 13, 2015, from http://scholar.google.com/scholar?q=Globalisation+and+its+impact+on+international+university+cooperation&btnG=&hl=en&as_sdt=0%2C47

Deutsch, M. (1958). Trust and suspicion. *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, *2*(4), 265–279. http://doi.org/10.1177/002200275800200401

de Wit, H. (2002). *Internationalization of higher education in the United States of America and Europe: A historical, comparative, and conceptual analysis*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press.

de Witt, H. (2009). Measuring success in the internationalisation of higher education: An introduction. In H. de Witt (Ed.), *Measuring success in the internationalisation of higher education* (EAIE Occasional Paper 22; pp. 1–8). Amsterdam, The Netherlands: European Association for International Education.

de Wit, H. (2011). Globalisation and internationalisation of higher education. *RUSC: Revista De Universidad y Sociedad Del Conocimiento, 8*(2), 241-248.

Downs, C. (2000). *Communication styles inventory*. Lawrence, KS: Communication Management, Inc.

Downs, C. & Adrian, A. (2004). *Assessing* organizational communication: Strategic communication audits. New York, NY: The Guilford Press.

Downs, C. & Hazen, M. (1977). A factor analysis of communication satisfaction. *Journal of Business Communication, 14*, 63-74.

Ducassi, D. (2018, May 9). Rubio challenges Florida schools with Confucius institutes. Politico. Retrieved from https://www.politico.com/states/florida/story/2018/05/09/rubio-challenges-florida-schools-with-confucius-institutes-407153

Duffy, T.M. (2006). *Constructivism: Implications for the Design and Delivery of Instruction.* Indianapolis, IN: Indiana University

Ellis, D., Barker, R., Potter, S., & Pridgeon, C. (1993). Information audits, communication audits and information mapping: A review and survey. *International Journal of Information Management, 13*, 134–151.

Etzioni, A. (1988). Normative-affective factors: Toward a new decision-making model. Journal of Economic Psychology, *9*(2), 125–150. http://doi.org/10.1016/0167-4870(88)90048-7

Feast, V., & Bretag, T. (2005). Responding to crises in transnational education: new challenges for higher education. *Higher Education Research & Development*, *24*(1), 63–78. http://doi.org/10.1080/0729436052000318578

Foster-Frau, S. (2018, April 7). Congressmen call UTSA's small China studies program a national threat. *San Antonio Express News.* Retrieved from https://www.expressnews.com/news/education/article/Congressmen-call-UTSA-s-small-China-studies-12815087.php

Gambetta, D. (1988). *Trust: Making and breaking cooperative relations* (Vol. 52). Hoboken, NJ: Blackwell.

Goldhaber, G., & Krivonos, P. (1978). The ICA communication audit: Process, status, and critique. *Journal of Business Communication Systems, 15*, 41-55.

Goodwin, C. D., & Nacht, M. (2009). *Missing the boat: The failure to internationalize American higher education*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Granovetter, M. (1985). Economic action and social structure: The problem of embeddedness. *American Journal of Sociology*, *91*(3), 481–510.

Green, R. T., & Gerber, L. (1997). Toward global education: Strategic partnerships with overseas institutions. *Selections*, 32.

Green-Riley, N. (2020, August 25). The State Department labeled China's Confucius programs a bad influence on U.S. students. What's the story? *The Washington Post.* Retrieved from https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2020/08/24/state-

department-labeled-chinas-confucius-programs-bad-influence-us-students-whats-story/

Hallberg L. (2013). Quality criteria and generalization of results from qualitative studies. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies on Health and Wellbeing.8*(1). http://doi.org/10.3402/qhw.v8i0.20647.

Hanban. (2019). *About us*. Retrieved from http://english.hanban.org/node_7719.htm

Hancock, D. R., & Algozzine, R. (2017). *Doing case study research: A practical guide for beginning researchers* (3rd ed.). New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

Harland, T. (2014). Learning about case study methodology to research higher education. *Higher Education Research & Development, 33*(6), 1113-1122.

Hesse-Biber, S. N. (2010). *Mixed methods research: Merging theory with practice.* New York, NY: The Guilford Press.

Hofstede, G. H. (1991). *Culture and organizations: software of the mind.* New York, NY: McGraw-Hill.

Hosmer, L. T. (2011). *The ethics of management*. New York, NY: McGraw-Hill.

Hudzik, K. J. (2011). *Comprehensive internationalization: From concept to action*. Washington, DC: NAFSA: Association of International Educators.

IIE. (2020). *Open doors 2019: Report on international educational exchange*. New York, NY: Institute of International Education.

Jones, J. (2018, October 9). Confidence in Higher Education Down Since 2015. *The Gallup Blog.* Retrieved from: https://news.gallup.com/opinion/gallup/242441/confidence-higher-education-down-2015.aspx?g_source=link_NEWSV9&g_medium=TOPIC&g_campaign=item_&g_content=Confidence%2520in%2520Higher%2520Education%2520Down%2520Since%25202015

Kanelos, P. (2018, October 19). The public is losing confidence in higher ed — here's why. *The Hill.* Retrieved from https://thehill.com/opinion/education/411924-the-public-is-losing-confidence-in-higher-ed-heres-why#bottom-story-socials

Kautonen, T., Zolin, R., Kuckertz, A., & Viljamaa, A. (2010). Ties that blind? How strong ties affect small business owner-managers' perceived trustworthiness of

their advisors. *Entrepreneurship & Regional Development*, *22*(2), 189–209. http://doi.org/10.1080/08985620903168265

Keller, R. (2019, July 25). Webster U. defends Confucius Institute against Hawley. *The Columbia Daily Tribune*. Retrieved from https://www.columbiatribune.com/news/20190725/webster-u-defends-confucius-institute-against-hawley

Kerr, C. (1991). *The great transformation in higher education, 1960-1980*. Albany, NY: SUNY Press.

Kinser, K., & Green, M. F. (2009). *The power of partnerships: A transatlantic dialogue*. Washington, DC: American Council on Education.

Kluver, R. (2014).  The sage as strategy: Nodes, networks, and the quest for geopolitical power in the Confucius Institute. *Communication, Culture & Critique, 7*(2).

Knight, J. (2004). Internationalization remodeled: Definition, approaches, and rationales. *Journal of Studies in International Education, 8*(1), 5–31. http://doi.org/10.1177/1028315303260832

Knight, J. (2006). *Cross-border education: Conceptual confusion and data deficits : research article*. Retrieved from http://reference.sabinet.co.za/sa_epublication_article/persed_v24_n4_a3

Knight, J. (2013). The changing landscape of higher education internationalisation – for better or worse? *Perspectives: Policy and Practice in Higher Education, 17*(3), 84-90. http://doi.org/10.1080/13603108.2012.753957

Knight, J., & de Wit, H. (1997). *Internationalisation of higher education in Asia Pacific countries.* Amsterdam, The Netherlands: European Association for International Education.

Knight, J., & de Wit, H. (2018). Internationalization of higher education: Past and future. *International Higher Education, 95*, 2-4. http://doi.org/10.6017/ihe.2018.95.10679

Kogan, M. (2007). *Transforming higher education: A comparative study*. New York, NY: Springer Science & Business Media.

Korsgaard, M. A., Brower, H. H., & Lester, S. W. (2015). It isn't always mutual a critical review of dyadic trust. *Journal of Management*, *41*(1), 47–70. http://doi.org/10.1177/0149206314547521

Kreber, C. (2009). Different perspectives on internationalization in higher education. *New Directions for Teaching & Learning*, *2009*(118), 1–14. http://doi.org/10.1002/tl.348

Lane, C., & Bachmann, R. (1996). The social constitution of trust: Supplier relations in Britain and Germany. *Organization Studies*, *17*(3), 365–395. http://doi.org/10.1177/017084069601700302

Lane, C., & Bachmann, R. (1998). *Trust within and between organizations: Conceptual issues and empirical applications*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

Lewicki, R. J., & Brinsfield, C. (2012). In F. Lyon, G. Möllering, & M. Saunders (Eds.), *Handbook of research methods on trust* (pp. 29–39). Cheltenham, UK: Edward Elgar Publishing.

Lewicki, R. J., & Bunker, B. B. (1995). Trust in relationships: A model of development and decline. In B. B. Bunker & J. Z. Rubin (Eds.), *Conflict, cooperation, and justice: Essays inspired by the work of Morton Deutsch* (pp. 133–173). San Francisco, CA, US: Jossey-Bass.

Lichtman, M. (2013). *Qualitative research in education: a user's guide (3rd ed.)*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.

Looney, D., & Lusin, N. (2019). *Enrollments in Languages Other Than English in United States Institutions of Higher Education, Summer 2016 and Fall 2016: Final Report*. New York, NY: Modern Language Association of America. https://www.mla.org/content/download/110154/2406932/2016-Enrollments-Final-Report.pdf

Lorenz, E. H. (1992). Trust and the flexible firm: International comparisons. Industrial Relations: *A Journal of Economy and Society, 31*(3), 455–472. http://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-232X.1992.tb00320.x

Luhmann, N. (1988). Familiarity, confidence, trust: Problems and alternatives. In D. Gambetta, *Trust* (pp. 94–107). New York: Basil Blackwell.

Lum, T. (2019). *Confucius Institutes in the United States: Selected issues.* Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service.

March, J. G., & Simon, H. A. (1993). *Organizations*. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley.

Mayer, R. C., Davis, J. H., & Schoorman, F. D. (1995). An integrative model of organizational trust. *Academy of Management Review*, *20*(3), 709–734. http://doi.org/10.5465/AMR.1995.9508080335

McAllister, D. J. (1995). Affect- and cognition-based trust as foundations for interpersonal cooperation in organizations. *Academy of Management Journal*, *38*(1), 24–59. http://doi.org/10.2307/256727

McBurnie, G., & Ziguras, C. (2006). *Transnational education: Issues and trends in offshore higher education*. Routledge.

McDonald, J.H. (2009). *Handbook of biological statistics* (2nd ed.). Baltimore, MD: Sparky House Publishing.

Mcknight, D. H., & Chervany, N. L. (1996). *The meanings of trust*. Minneapolis, Minn.: Carlson School of Management, University of Minnesota.

McInerney, V., Marsh, H., & McInerney, D. (1999). The designing of the computer anxiety and learning measure (CALM): Validation of scores on a multidimensional measure of anxiety and cognitions relating to adult learning of computing skills using structural equation modeling. *Educational and Psychological Measurement*, 59(3), 451-470.

Menstenhauser, J. (2002). In search of a comprehensive approach to international education: a systems perspective. In W. Grunzweig and N. Rinehart (Ed.), *Rockin'in Red Square: Critical approaches to international education in the age of cyberculture* (pp. 165–202). London: Vit Verlag.

Merriam, S. B. (1988). *Case study research in education: A qualitative approach*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Merriam S. B. (2009). *Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation (3rd ed)*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Meyer, J. C. (2002). Organizational communication assessment. *Management Communication Quarterly, 15*(3). 472-479.

Meyers, L. S., Gamst, G., & Guarino, A. J. (2006). *Applied multivariate research: Design and interpretation*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Meyerson, D., Weick, K. E., & Kramer, R. M. (1995). Swift trust and temporary groups. In R. M. Kramer & T. R. Tyler (Eds.), *Trust in organizations: Frontiers of theory and research* (pp. 166–195). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Miles, R. H. (1977). Role-set configuration as a predictor of role conflict and ambiguity in complex organizations. *Sociometry*, *40*(1), 21–34. http://doi.org/10.2307/3033542

Minter, R. L. (2010). Organizational communication audits: Assessing core communication competencies within the organization. *International Journal of Management & Information Systems, 14*(5). https://doi.org/10.19030/ijmis.v14i5.18

Mishra, A. (1996). Organizational responses to crisis. In R. M. Kramer & T. R. Tyler (Eds.), *Trust in organizations: Frontiers of theory and research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Ministry of Education. (2020). *National Education Statistics Data 2019*. http://www.moe.gov.cn/s78/A03/moe_560/jytjsj_2019/qg/

Möllering, G., Bachmann, R., & Lee, S. H. (2004). Introduction: Understanding organizational trust: Foundations, constellations, and issues of operationalisation. *Journal of Managerial Psychology*, *19*(6), 556–570. http://doi.org/10.1108/02683940410551480

Murphy, M. E, Campbell, D. G, & Land, D. L. (2017). Internal strategies for assessing organizational communication channel effectiveness. *International Journal of Applied Management and Technology, 16*(1). 123-132. http://doi.org/10.5590/IJAMT.2017.16.1.08

NAFSA. (2020). *Travel Ban: NAFSA Resources*. Washington, DC: NAFSA: Association of International Educators.

NCES. (2019). *Digest of Education Statistics*. Table 317.40. Number of degree-granting postsecondary institutions and enrollment in these institutions, by enrollment size, control, and classification of institution: Fall 2018. Washington DC: National Center for Education Statistics. https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d19/tables/dt19_317.40.asp

Neal, D. C. (1988). *Consortia and inter-institutional cooperation*. Washington, DC: American Council on Education and Macmillan.

NHA. (2019). *International education: Title VI and Fulbright-Hays.* Washington, DC: National Humanities Alliance. *https://d3n8a8pro7vhmx.cloudfront.net/nhalliance/pages/78/attachments/original/1458928665/NHA_TitleVI_FY17.pdf?1458928665*

Nooteboom, B. (2002). *Trust: Forms, foundations, functions, failures and figures*. Edward Elgar Publishing.

Nussbaum, M. (2006). Education and democratic citizenship: Capabilities and quality education. *Journal of Human Development, 7*, 385-395.

Obadia, C. (2008). Cross-border interfirm cooperation: the influence of the performance context. *International Marketing Review*, *25*(6), 634–650. http://doi.org/10.1108/02651330810915565

Patton, M. Q. (2015). *Qualitative research and evaluation methods (4th ed.*). London: SAGE Publications.

Parello-Plesner, J. & Li, B. (2018). *The Chinese Communist Party's Foreign Interference Operations: How the U.S. and Other Democracies Should Respond*. Washington, DC: Hudson Institute.

Peterson, R. (2017). *Outsourced to China: Confucius Institutes and soft power in American higher education.* National Association of Scholars.

Redden, E. (2019, May 1). 3 More Universities Close Confucius Institutes. *Inside Higher Ed*. Retrieved from https://www.insidehighered.com/quicktakes/2019/05/01/3-more-universities-close-confucius-institutes

Reuters. (2020, September 1). Pompeo hopeful China's Confucius Institutes will be gone from U.S. by year-end. *Reuters.* Retrieved from https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-china-pompeo/pompeo-hopeful-chinas-confucius-institutes-will-be-gone-from-u-s-by-year-end-idUSKBN25S6AV

Rizvi, F. (2008). Epistemic Virtues and Cosmopolitan Learning. *Australian Education Researcher, 35*(1), 17-35.

Rotter, J. B. (1980). Interpersonal trust, trustworthiness, and gullibility. *American Psychologist, 35*(1), 1–7. http://doi.org/10.1037/0003-066X.35.1.1

Rousseau, D. M., Sitkin, S. B., Burt, R. S., & Camerer, C. (1998). Not so different after all: A cross-discipline view of trust. Academy of Management Review, 23(3), 393–404. http://doi.org/10.5465/AMR.1998.926617

Roulston, K. (2010). *Reflective interviewing: A guide to theory and practice*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Roth, J. (Director). (2012). *41* [Film]. Playground Productions.

Ruan, L. (2014, October 17). Chinese Doubt Their Own Soft Power Venture. Foreign Policy. Retrieved from https://foreignpolicy.com/2014/10/17/chinese-doubt-their-own-soft-power-venture/

Saiya, L., & Hayward, F. M. (2013). Mapping internationalization on US campuses. Washington, DC: American Council on Education.

Sahlins, M. (2013, October 30). China U. *The Nation*. Retrieved from
https://www.thenation.com/article/archive/china-u/

Scheer, L. (2012). Trust, distrust and confidence in B2B relationships. In G. L. Lilien &
R. Grewal (Eds.), Handbook on business to business marketing (pp. 332–347).
Edward Elgar Publishing.

Schilke, O., & Cook, K. S. (2013). A cross-level process theory of trust development in
interorganizational relationships. *Strategic Organization*, *11*(3), 281–303.
http://doi.org/10.1177/1476127012472096

Holland, K., & Schneider, C. G. (2011). Deepening the connections: Liberal education
and global learning in college. *About Campus*, *16*(5), 2-8.
https://doi.org/10.1002/abc.20074.

Scott, P. (1998). *The globalization of higher education*. Society for Research into Higher
Education & Open University Press.

Shenoy, R. (2020, September 10). Confucius Institutes push back against Pompeo's
assertion they should close. *Public Radio International: The World*. Retrieved
from https://www.pri.org/stories/2020-09-10/confucius-institutes-push-back-
against-pompeo-s-assertion-they-should-close

Silver, L., Devin, K., & Huang, C. (2021). *Most Americans Support Tough Stance
Toward China on Human Rights, Economic Issues.* Washington DC: Pew
Research Center. https://www.pewresearch.org/global/wp-
content/uploads/sites/2/2021/03/PG_2021.03.04_US-Views-on-
China_FINAL.pdf

Spector, H. (2015). The Who and the What of Educational Cosmopolitanism. *Studies in
Philosophy & Education, 34*(4), 423–440.

Stake R. E. (1995). *The art of case study research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage

Sutciliffe, K. M. (2001). Organizational environments and organizational information
processing. In F. M. Jablin & L. L. Putman (Eds.), *The new handbook of
organizational communication: Advances in theory research, and methods* (pp.
197-230). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.

Suttmeier, R. P. (2014). *Trends in U.S. – China science and technology cooperation:
Collaborative knowledge production for the twenty-first century*. The U.S.–China
Economic and Security Review Commission.
https://www.uscc.gov/sites/default/files/Research/Trends%20in%20US-
China%20Science%20and%20Technology%20Cooperation.pdf

Sutton, S. B. (2010). Transforming internationalization through partnerships. *International* Educator (1059-4221), 19(1), 60–63.

Thomas, G. (2011). *How to do your case study: A guide for students and researchers*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.

Top, M., Akdere, M., & Tarcan, M. (2015). Examining transformational leadership, job satisfaction, organizational commitment and organizational trust in Turkish hospitals: public servants versus private sector employees. International Journal of Human Resource Management, 26(9), 1259–1282. http://doi.org/10.1080/09585192.2014.939987

Tushman, M. L. (1977). Special boundary roles in the innovation process. Administrative Science Quarterly, 22(4), 587–605. http://doi.org/10.2307/2392402

Tushman, M. L., & Scanlan, T. J. (1981). Boundary spanning individuals: Their role in information transfer and their antecedents. *Academy of Management Journal*, *24*(2), 289–305. http://doi.org/10.2307/255842

Tyler, T. R., & Kramer, R. M. (1995). Whither trust. In R. M. Kramer & T. R. Tyler (Eds.), *Trust in organizations: Frontiers of theory and research* (pp. 1–15). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.

University of Sydney Academics. (2018). *Staff against the Ramsay Centre*. Retrieved from http://ramsayoffcampus.org/open-letter/

U.S. Government Accountability Office. (2019). *Agreements Establishing Confucius Institutes at U.S. Universities Are Similar, but Institute Operations Vary.* https://www.gao.gov/assets/gao-19-278.pdf

U.S. Senate Permanent Subcommittee on Investigation. (2019). *China's Impact on the U.S. Education System.* https://www.hsgac.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/PSI%20Report%20China's%20Impact%20on%20the%20US%20Education%20System.pdf

UO Confucius Institute to Close. (2019, April 29). *Around the O.* Retrieved from https://around.uoregon.edu/content/uo-confucius-institute-close

Van Selm, M., & Jankowski, N. W. (2006). Conducting online surveys. *Quality & Quantity*, 40, 435-456.

Vidotto, G., Vicentini, M., Argentero, P., & Bromiley, P. (2008). Assessment of organizational trust: Italian adaptation and factorial validity of the organizational trust inventory. *Social Indicators Research*, *88*(3), 563–575.

Wiley, D., & Root, C. (2003). *Educational partnerships with foreign institutions for increasing the quality of international education in the United States.* Presented at the global challenges and U.S. higher education: National needs and policy implications.

Williamson, O. E. (1993). Calculativeness, trust, and economic organization. *Journal of Law and Economics*, *36*(1), 453–486.

Worchel, P. (1979). Trust and distrust. In P. Worchel (Ed.), *The social psychology of intergroup relations* (Vol. 174–187). Monterey, CA: Brooks/Cole Publishing.

Yin, R. (2013). *Case study research: Design and methods* (5th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Zhao, H. (2018, February 27). Confucius Institute criticism "groundless". *China Daily*. Retrieved from http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/a/201802/27/WS5a949617a3106e7dcc13e32b.html

Zucker, L. G. (1986). Production of trust: Institutional sources of economic structure, 1840–1920. *Research in Organizational Behavior*, *8*, 53–111.

## BIOGRAPHY

Qing Gao received his Bachelor of Management from Fudan University, Shanghai, China in 2005, and Master of Science in Conflict Analysis and Resolution from George Mason University in 2007.