
Title: The Building of a ‘Harmonious World’ and the Conflict of the Confucius Institute.

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Joshua Reeves

The Confucius Institutes program is a Chinese organization established in 2004 to provide the world with language instruction and increase cultural awareness. The program forms joint venture business models with universities and schools around the world to establish language and culture centers on their school’s campus (“Constitution and By-Laws”). Over the past twelve years, a debate has formed around the purpose of these Institutes and whether they are more beneficial or detrimental to U.S. schools, students, and the broader U.S. community. This analysis examines the argument for and against hosting the Confucius Institutes in the U.S. using theories of national culture characterization, the importance of existing ideology, and a conflict assessment framework. This thesis aims to provide insight for schools and universities in making a decision over whether to adopt, maintain, renegotiate, or shut down their Confucius Institute, ultimately providing suggestions for renegotiation and university conduct to minimize potential risks and concerns associated with the Institutes.
The Building of a ‘Harmonious World’ and the Conflict of the Confucius Institute

by

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I understand that my thesis will become part of the permanent collection of Oregon State University libraries. My signature below authorizes release of my thesis to any reader upon request.

______________________________
Tomena Flatt, Author
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I. Introduction

Alongside the advancement in communication technologies came the rapid globalization of our world. There has been a vast increase in the amount of intercultural and international communication over the past several decades. The ease of communication has allowed for many new relationships to form, between people, companies, and nations. The way international relations have traditionally been formed and maintained are changing. In this digital era, international relations not only change quickly but also have many new factors that may influence or shape the relationship. Because the speed, frequency, and medium of communication has changed, so do our understandings of how communication operates.

A large part of how nations maintain their international relations and influence is through their maintenance of power. Power has been one of the most challenging sociological concepts to define and measure throughout the ages (Duke 41). Traditionally, a nation’s power was thought of as the power gained from their military force and economy, otherwise known as hard power (Nye x). However, in the late 1980s, political scientist Joseph Nye introduced the concept of soft power in understanding a nation’s overall level of attractiveness and influence. Soft power is the attractiveness a nation gains from their culture, political ideals, and policies (Nye x). With higher levels of soft power come higher levels of influence and persuasion. While hard power undoubtedly plays a crucial role in international relations, a nation’s overall influence today is largely determined by their amount of soft power (Nye 5).

China’s government has been focusing on the importance of soft power in their foreign policy strategy for over a decade now. The Council on Foreign Relations reported that “Chinese officials and academics expressed the importance of China’s culture in the 1990s and early 2000s, but soft power was explicitly referenced and recorded in national government policy for
the first time at the Seventeenth National Congress of the Chinese Communist Party in 2007” (Albert). The People’s Republic of China (PRC) has been concerned with increasing their soft power internationally for several decades now. However, in his book *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics*, Nye explains how soft power is generated from civil society, not manufactured by the government. This leads to the question of whether Nye was wrong: can governments, in fact, generate soft power, and if so, how?

One method that the PRC is using in an attempt to increase their soft power internationally is through their establishment and expansion of Confucius Institutes and Classrooms. China’s former Chairman of Foreign Affairs, Zhao Qizheng, explained that through promoting cultural exchanges and developing Chinese language proficiency in other countries, the Confucius Institutes serve to open new channels for public diplomacy and enhance China’s soft power (Du 2). According to the Confucius Institute Headquarters, also known as Hanban, the primary goal of these institutions is to promote Chinese language and culture in foreign countries as well as to establish and maintain harmonious relationships (“International Standards”). These Institutes are set up primarily on university and college campuses, teaching students about Chinese culture, traditions, and language while the Classrooms focus on K-12 schools. These institutions are established as tools for increasing China’s soft power through the promotion of their culture, language, and traditions. There are currently over 530 Confucius Institutes and over 1,000 Confucius Classrooms worldwide; 105 Institutes and 501 Classrooms in the U.S., more than in any other single country (“About Confucius Institute”).

Recently there has been a debate around Confucius Institutes sweeping through the news over whether these institutions are “cultural assets” or “campus threats” (Pong and Feng). This debate is precisely what this thesis will focus on. To provide a general introduction of each side,
first the Institutes are considered beneficial cultural assets because they share Chinese cultural values, traditions, and celebrations as well as providing language instruction with the rest of the world. The Institutes promote cultural awareness and understanding, helping to increase the intercultural communication competence of their students. The Confucius Institute Headquarters promote this purpose, stating:

Hanban/Confucius Institute Headquarters, as a public institution affiliated with the Chinese Ministry of Education, is committed to providing Chinese language and cultural teaching resources and services worldwide, it goes all out in meeting the demands of foreign Chinese learners and contributing to the development of multiculturalism and the building of a harmonious world. (“About Us”) 

Conversely, because these institutions are funded and controlled by Beijing, they have been accused of being a threat, imposing on individual nations’ sovereignty over the education of their people and indoctrinating students to have a favorable bias towards China as a whole. The U.S. National Association of Scholars (NAS) has been a strong opponent to these institutions, demanding that universities shut them down (Redden, “New Scrutiny”). There are many people and organizations concerned with the Confucius Institutes, from congressmen to academics. Faculty members at the University of Chicago were concerned about the role the Confucius Institute Headquarters played in the hiring and training of teachers, claiming that it “subjects the university’s academic program to the political constraints on free speech and belief that are specific to the People’s Republic of China” (qtd. in Redden, “New Scrutiny”). Censorship has been a large concern surrounding these institutions, specifically around the subjects of Taiwan, Tibet, the Tiananmen Massacre, and Falun Gong (a modern Chinese spiritual practice combining qigong exercise with meditation, focusing on truthfulness, compassion, and forbearance)
There are clear benefits to hosting a Confucius Institute, but it also comes with a variety of concerns.

Since Confucius Institutes have been expanding rapidly over the past fifteen years, particularly in the U.S., it is important to analyze their purpose(s) and understand both sides of the debate. Much of the previous literature has focused on whether the Confucius Institutes are effective in increasing China’s soft power. Most of this research is inconclusive. Because there has been an ongoing debate for the past decade, it is important to look into the concerns about the Institutes as well as the benefits they bring. This analysis examines the arguments for and against hosting the Confucius Institutes in the U.S. and aims to provide insight to aid schools and universities in making a decision over whether to adopt, maintain, renegotiate, or shut down their Confucius Institute or Classroom. This thesis aims to answer the question: what is the collaboration potential for addressing concerns about the Confucius Institutes? Additionally, this thesis aims to develop a set of recommendations for addressing key concerns regarding the Confucius Institutes.

II. Literature Review

This section will first discuss previous scholarly research on the Confucius Institute program, then cover U.S. government research on the program. Next, theories of power and the importance of existing ideology will be presented followed by the existing ideologies relevant to the Confucius Institutes program in the U.S.

James F. Paradise has a PhD in Political Science from UCLA and published a research article “China and International Harmony: The Role of Confucius Institutes in Bolstering Beijing's Soft Power” in 2009. Paradise’s curiosity about the Confucius Institutes’ alleged “trojan horse effect” lead him to examine the effects the Confucius Institutes had on China’s soft
power. While direct effects of the Confucius Institutes are nearly impossible to observe, Paradise found that China’s international reputation deteriorated slightly from 2005 to 2007, a decrease in soft power (663). This suggests that the establishment and expansion of Confucius Institutes during this time did not have enough positive influence to significantly impact the China’s overall soft power. Nye warns that “even the best advertising cannot sell an unpopular product, and…policies that appear narrowly self-serving or are arrogantly presented are likely to consume rather than produce soft power” (110). Perhaps this explains part of the decline in China’s global reputation in the first few years following the establishment of the Confucius Institutes.

Paradise suggests that the success of the Confucius Institutes should not lie in increasing China’s soft power, but instead ought to be measured by academic advancement:

The real winners may be China’s universities, which can expand their contacts and exchanges with foreign academic institutions. As China attempts to become an ‘innovation society’ and bolster its scientific capability, increased communication and exchanges with foreign scholars facilitated by the Confucius Institutes could be a huge benefit—especially in a country whose opening to the world is one of the driving forces for its economic development. (Paradise 665)

The Confucius Institutes program provides an opportunity to cultivate mutually beneficial relationships between academic institutions. If the Confucius Institutes are established by China solely to improve the country’s soft power, it appears they are failing miserably. An examination of the program’s success based on academic advancement and collaboration may reach a very different conclusion.

Heather Schmidt published an article examining Otherness in Confucius Institutes in The Canadian Journal of Sociology in 2013. Schmidt criticizes how most other academic scholarship
has focused on the Confucius Institutes in terms of soft power: “the literature on soft power and CIs is seldom based on any empirical evidence of what CIs actually do, nor what influence they actually garner” (“China’s Confucius,” 650). She instead conducts an ethnographic study travelling between a Canadian Confucius Institute in Edmonton and the Confucius Institute Headquarters in Beijing. Her study clarifies how “the interactions between CIs and Canadian audiences are haunted by complex histories of a racialized ‘Oriental Other’ in Canada and ‘Western Other’ in China” (Schmidt, “China’s Confucius” 647). In her research she details how the Confucius Institutes rely on a “Necessary White Body,” and how the cultural experiences in Confucius Institutes “may unintentionally reproduce a social landscape that normalizes whiteness and the consumption of ethnicized Otherness” (Schmidt, “China’s Confucius” 647). In the Canadian Confucius Institute, Schmidt observed two regimes: reorientality, a purposeful recycling of orientalist tropes of China, and reorientalism, an attempt to redefine China on its own terms (“China’s Confucius,” 651)

While the West often views China as a distinct Other, China also views Westerners as an Other. More than half of Confucius Institutes are located in North America, Europe, and Oceana, and the country with the most Institutes is the U.S., indicating that the target audience of Confucius Institutes is the “Western Other” (Schmidt, “China’s Confucius” 653-654). Schmidt argues that this “Western Other” is necessarily imagined as white, “as race plays a critical role in imaginaries of the West,” both by Western Selves and Non-Western Others (“China’s Confucius,” 653). She notes the continuous centrality of white bodies on the front covers of the Confucius Institute magazine, further indicating that the white Western Other is the preferred audience of the Institutes (Schmidt, “China’s Confucius” 654). Schmidt explains that “The non-Chinese body, and specifically the white body, becomes necessary to the CI project as an
exemplar of its whole Mission” and that because of this “we should consider what significance
the Western Other has as that against which the Chinese Self is imagined” (“China’s Confucius,”
654). It is through characterizing others that the self can be compared, reinforced, or redefined.

China has recognized how the world, particularly the West, characterizes the Chinese
Other (Schmidt, “China’s Confucius” 356). China has launched the Confucius Institute program
as an “image management campaign” to combat and redefine the common negative perceptions
of poverty and oppression associated with China as a Communist Other (Schmidt, “China’s
Confucius” 653, 656). Since China is aware of the growing public fear of the “China threat” in
the West, the Confucius Institute program aims to mitigate these concerns. In this project
however, there are competing agendas; “The desire to show China as it is today — to dispel
misunderstandings and stereotypes of China as political other — gets bound up with the
realization that orientalism, as a branding tool, sells” (Schmidt, “China’s Confucius” 659).
Through the program, China aims to destabilize Western representations of the Chinese Other,
however the traditional cultural events and activities the Institutes host “capitalizes on the
marketability of [Chinese] Otherness in the global economy” (Schmidt, “China’s Confucius”
659). Cultural activities hosted by Confucius Institutes typically consist of two parts: first a
teacher demonstration, and second audience participation. The goal of these events “is
not just to inform non-Chinese about Chinese culture, but to get them to experience it on an
emotional level” (Schmidt, “China’s Confucius” 661). Schmidt details the importance of the
white body in the Confucius Institutes program:

In the CI project, the white body in particular becomes necessary to a performative
display of Chineseness, not as a consumer of that display but as the performer
him/herself. Since white Westerners operate as the preferred Other in China, the white
body performing Chinese language and culture becomes the idealized embodiment of China’s global outreach program through CIs. (Schmidt, “China’s Confucius” 663). China hopes that by actively participating in a cultural activity, non-Chinese can embody Chineseness for a moment, and therefore developing affinity towards Chinese culture and China as a whole.

In 2014, Leung Chi-Cheung and Hilary du Cros published their analysis *Confucius Institutes: Multiple Reactions and Interactions*. They explain that “scholars in general are of two different views regarding the soft power of China. Some hold a skeptical view towards it and suggest that China’s soft power rises at America’s expense. Some are even wary of China’s ‘charm’ and call for countermeasures against China’s development in response” while others “hold an optimistic view towards it and see it as a form of ‘non-military competition’ used to project ‘a more benign view of the country’ through peaceful means” (Chi-Cheung and du Cros 69). In order to explore contrasting viewpoints, they distributed an email survey to academics, researchers and Confucius Institute administrators (Chi-Cheung and du Cros 78). Chi-Cheung and du Cros found that most respondents agreed that the Institutes benefited the university, increasing the quality of Chinese language and culture instruction and providing the university with teaching materials (82). They predict that the Confucius Institutes could potentially impact how China is perceived by the world: “with an increased understanding of China’s history, culture and politics, people will be more sympathetic towards China” (Chi-Cheung and du Cros 83). However, they warn that without proper management of the institutes they could have the reverse effect: “quality operation of the Confucius Institutes is an essential aspect to achieving a positive image for China…Arbitrary and assertive strategy could, in the end, damage a good initiative if it is conducted without mutual trust. If that partnership and mutual trust is not well
established, then the operation is not smooth and it might damage the image of China and thwart further efforts” (83). In order to prevent tarnishing China’s reputation, Chi-Cheung and du Cros recommend the institutes offer a standardized approach to teaching as well as focus on building mutual trust between the institute and host university (83). They conclude that the Confucius Institutes could have either a positive or negative impact on China’s world image; that it is too early to tell.

That same year, Hubbert published an ethnographic study examining the representations and perceptions students in a Confucius Institute classroom held about the Chinese state. She first analyzed the political absence and presence in Confucius Institute materials and teaching practices. Much of the texts provided by Hanban portray China through its “historical cultural glories, avant-garde architecture, and endearing zoo animals rather than by its political system that is perceived as antithetical to U.S. ideologies and interests” (Hubbert 334). Hubbert explains that it is through this idealized portrayal of China that the Confucius Institutes aim to serve China’s soft power goals (334). She observed that whenever politically laden topics arose in a classroom, the Chinese instructors “quickly refocused students on language acquisition and cultural activities,” often avoiding discussion of political topics altogether (334). The subjects of Tibet and Taiwan however were often “potential hazards” of conversation: “Lessons on China’s geography, for example, were fraught with potential hazards, as the textbooks’ maps include Taiwan as a province and several disputed islands in the South and East China seas, a show of cartographic hegemony whose specifics are not universally recognized” (Hubbert 334). The One China Policy is clearly portrayed in Confucius Institutes. One student explained how “The teacher definitely counts Tibet as part of China. She just says ‘This is our country’ and moves on. She’s pretty firm about this stuff” (qtd. in Hubbert, 335). Hubbert reports that these
pedagogical practices may not be problematic, as the courses offered at Confucius Institutes are in language and culture, not social science (335).

Interestingly, Hubbert found that the stark avoidance of political topics by Confucius Institute teachers actually reinforced negative perceptions of China rather than positive ones. She attributes this primarily due to the existing ideologies in the U.S. about China, explaining that “While Confucius Institute teachers and Hanban materials were dispatched to the U.S. to dispel images of China as a threat to global well-being, they were received as representatives of a state that was already locally defined by perceptions of human rights violations, authoritarianism, repression, and citizen despondence” (Hubbert 340). Because China is frequently addressed in terms of environmental degradation, political danger and threat, communism, and repression, “the purposefully apolitical nature of its pedagogical materials and classroom practices sometimes served as an impediment to Hanban’s efforts,” reinforcing the image of China as “a state whose power is constructed through censorship and dictatorship” (335). The Confucius Institutes portray an idealized image of China through beautiful geographic scenery, cultural activities and traditions, and traditional architecture styles (Hubbert 334). Students viewed the lack of political discussion and idealized portrayal of China “as the epitome of politics itself, leading the targets of this soft power initiative to interpret political absence as authoritarian presence, thus reinforcing perceptions of a repressive Chinese governmental apparatus” (336). Students view the avoidance of political discussion in Confucius Institutes as evidence that the Chinese state is characterized with censorship, propaganda, and compulsory politics (Hubbert 336). By avoiding discussion of sensitive topics and portraying China in an idealized fashion, Confucius Institute teachers actually reinforce the negative impression of China as authoritative and oppressive. This unintended reinforcement of negative perceptions of China ultimately
contributes to harming China’s reputation and reducing its soft power rather than increasing it, as intended by the PRC.

All of the Confucius Institute teachers interviewed by Hubbert “recognized that Hanban’s pedagogical guidelines and the curriculum designers’ attempts to depoliticize the classroom had this paradoxical effect,” reinforcing negative views of China (336). A strategy some of those teachers adopted to combat this was to ignore the teaching guidelines Hanban provides (Hubbert 336). Hubbert reports that “While Hanban officials, curriculum designers, and teachers may share a normative belief in the value of CI intentions, the teachers—key components of this soft power policy—regularly contested official guidelines” (337). One Confucius Institute teacher Hubbert interviewed exemplified this by disregarding most of the materials Hanban provided, instead adopting a Boston-published Chinese language instruction textbook and using supplemental online resources of her own finding (Hubbert 337). Hubbert’s research indicates that Confucius Institute teachers often have more freedom in their classes than commonly expected.

In 2015, Maddalena Procopio analyzed “the meaning of ‘cultural’ soft power” and attempted “to measure its effectiveness in support of China’s foreign policy aims through the study of Confucius Institutes in South Africa” (98). Through her research, Procopio found the Confucius Institutes to be “only partially effective as a tool providing support for China’s rise. While they are well able to attract institutions and students to respectively set up Confucius Institutes and enroll, the types of behaviour involved vis-à-vis both the executive and the students can, at times, undermine the efforts” (120). She explains that there is confusion and suspicion of the bureaucratic system the institutes are subject to, and because of this a nuanced trust tends to form between the Confucius Institute and host university opposed to a complete
trust (Procopio 120). Procopio explains that while the objective of exposing a large number of students to Chinese language and culture is met, it is not necessarily an effective strategy to increase China’s soft power internationally because “the emphasis is not on how satisfactory and effective the educational experience is, but merely on providing such educational experience, as if the mere provision were sufficient” (Procopio 121). With the minimal exposure students get to Chinese language and culture at the Confucius Institutes, students perhaps have more favorable perceptions of China than before, but not to any significant extent (Procopio 121). She concludes that “while the initiative’s aim of exposing people to China, albeit briefly, is capably fulfilled, the project’s ultimate aim of supporting China’s rise [of soft power] may be more dependent on the type of interaction experience than is currently accounted for” (Procopio 121).

In 2014, Lueck, Pipps, and Lin shifted away from attempting to understand the effectiveness of the institutes and instead analyzed The New York Times’ (NYT) initial coverage of the Confucius Institutes to gain an understanding of how the media shaped their public image. The first New York Times article about the institutes was written in 2006: “The light tone, an informal writing style, and the construction of a disarming persona combined to introduce the Confucius Institute in stark opposition to the pervasive image of China in the U.S. press that emphasized its overt political, economic, and military control” (Lueck et al. 334). Furthermore, this initial article focused primarily on institutes established abroad, distancing “the China threat from its U.S. audience” (Lueck et al. 335). In 2011, The New York Times “came full circle” with a feature article detailing the sudden removal of a statue of Confucius from Tiananmen Square in Beijing (Lueck et al. 335). According to Lueck et al. this illustrated China’s rejection of Confucian principles, which conflict with the communist ideals of Chairman Mao. Lueck, Pipps, and Lin explain:
With the disappearance of the statue, the folklore of the old paradigm [Confucianism] was ridiculed and abandoned. Reaffirmation of China’s rise toward global dominance discounted the counternarrative of a Confucius Institute that symbolized the cultured values of an educated elite. Although a pre-Mao Confucius might ameliorate the threat of a communist Other to the West, he had not been embraced domestically.

By removing the statue of Confucius, China reinforced its tendency to censor and control information to shape the values of its people, becoming less appealing to the majority of the West.

Overall in their analysis, Lueck, Pipps, and Lin found that “each journalistic mention of the institute was coupled with phrasing that defined it as a symbol of China’s 21st-century power” (343). This could contribute to the common concern about the connection between the institutes and China’s goal of increasing their soft power. They continue on to expose the bias in The New York Times, showing that articles published consistently defined the institutes as a mechanism designed to influence American opinion to increase China’s soft power, as well as disregarding or completely failing to mention the contributions the institutes made to Americans’ knowledge of Chinese language and culture (Lueck et al. 344). “Identifying the Confucius Institute with China’s soft power response functioned as media shorthand to stereotype the institute to fit it into the dominant China frame of communist Other in the U.S. press” (Lueck et al. 344). Lueck, Pipps, and Lin explain the context created in The New York Times, and the narrative China responded with:

An oppositional, gendered context was established through the feature articles in order to define the institute as soft power; however, Nye termed soft power as a necessary approach for global influence in the 21st century and traced how far advanced U.S. and
European cultures were in their reach of soft power compared with emerging Eastern nations... The New York Times identified soft power exclusively as a Chinese approach, and as such equated it with the negative connotations of a communist Other. (Lueck et al. 344)

By framing the pursuit of soft power as strictly Chinese, *The New York Times* shaped the public’s understanding of soft power to be negative. Nye however identified soft power as an essential strategy in international relations, advising the U.S. to focus on cultivating it: “the failure to incorporate [soft power] in our national strategy is a series mistake” (x). Lueck, Pipps, and Lin conclude that *The New York Times* not only continued a longstanding tradition of promoting stereotyping and prejudice, and reinforced the idea of China as an Other in the press, but reframed soft power negatively in the eye of the public (346).

The increasing interest in the Confucius Institutes has led the U.S. government to fund research on the institutes as well. The two most recent publications were sponsored by the U.S. Government Accountability Office and the U.S. Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs. This section will provide an overview on these two reports.

The U.S. Government Accountability Office, published a “Report to Congressional Requesters” about the Confucius Institutes in February 2019. They examined 90 agreements between Hanban and U.S. hosting universities as well as interviewed Confucius Institute personnel, representatives from higher education associations, officials that closed or declined to open Confucius Institutes, and officials at the Departments of Education, Defence, and State. Most of the agreements they reviewed showed similarities in activities, funding, and management (Bair 10). The majority of agreements explicated that “Hanban acknowledges that the U.S. school and its faculty ultimately have the right to determine the content of the
curriculum” regardless of Hanban’s recommendations and suggested materials (Bair 14). Less than half of the contracts had language expressing agreement confidentiality, “though school approaches to sharing the agreements vary” (Bair 10). The agreements indicated Confucius Institutes were managed by boards and directors that include hosting university officials (Bair 10). Some schools offered for-credit courses taught by the Confucius Institute teachers, though those curriculums were strictly developed and monitored by host university officials (Bair 14). The majority of schools they examined however did not offer for-credit courses at their Confucius Institutes; the centers were set up as an on-campus resource offering language tutoring and organizing various cultural events (Bair 14).

Eighty four of the ninety agreements reviewed listed the same five activities Confucius Institutes could conduct, with the other six agreements containing at least two of these five: “(1) teaching Chinese language; (2) training Chinese language instructors; (3) organizing the Hanyu Shuiping Kaoshi exam, a Chinese language proficiency test; (4) providing information and consultation services about Chinese culture or education; and (5) conducting language and cultural exchange activities” (Bair 10-11). Some additional activities Confucius Institutes could often carry out included provided classes and performances in Chinese theatre, art, and music; advise people preparing to travel to China; sponsor fellowships for graduate students; run translation workshops; and support business exchanges (Bair 11). In addition to these activities detailed in the agreements, hosting university officials reported that their Confucius Institutes often also arranged Chinese holiday celebrations, funded and hosted guest speakers, funded China-related research, or hosted workshops related to international business (Bair 11).

In eighty five of the ninety agreements, Hanban was responsible for providing course materials to the host university (Bair 15). However, the Hanban-provided “materials are not used
to support credit courses offered by the school or institute” and instead were often used “as reference materials, texts for non-credit courses, or gifts” (Bair 15). Bair also reported that school officials explained they often relied on Chinese language textbooks developed in the U.S. instead of Hanban’s materials because they also include the traditional Chinese character system instead of only the simplified character system (Bair 15). The materials Hanban provided were often supplementary to Chinese language and culture teaching materials developed in the U.S..

All ninety contracts examined had a funding agreement between Hanban and the hosting university. In all agreements, office or classroom space was to be provided by the hosting university (Bair 19). Eighty nine of the contracts required the host university to provide transitional assistance to Chinese personnel, such as with housing procedures and visa applications (Bair 19). Eighty seven agreements specified that the U.S. school would provide administrative office support (Bair 19). In eighty three agreements, annual funds were to be provided by both the hosting school and Hanban (Bair 19). Eighty one of the agreements required the U.S. school to establish or maintain a bank account or campus accounting line specifically for the institute (Bair 19). Sixty one of the agreements indicated start-up funds would be provided by Hanban, ranging from $50,000 to $150,000 (Bair 19).

In the interview process, “school officials, researchers, and others described benefits and concerns related to Confucius Institutes” (Bair 21). Establishing a Confucius Institute aided U.S. universities with their goal of forging international connections and expanding the global reach of their university (Bair 21). The Institutes helped to do this by providing exchange opportunities for both students and faculty members, as well as assisting with the recruitment of international students from China (Bair 21). Many officials also explained how establishing a Confucius Institute helped launch a partnership with a Chinese university, or strengthened their connection
with an existing Chinese partner university (Bair 21). Another benefit of hosting a Confucius Institute is that they provide resources and opportunities to increase knowledge of and exposure to Chinese language and culture within the school and in the broader community by providing funding for cultural events and activities, research projects, and study abroad scholarships (Bair 21). The Confucius Institute also had connections which allowed the university to host Chinese dance troupes and other performers, and at universities where “funding was otherwise unavailable or limited, officials said that a key reason for establishing the institute was that it would allow them to offer such programs to the campus and the community” (Bair 21). The Confucius Institute brings “much needed diversity,” increasing cultural awareness and intercultural communication competence (Bair 21). Finally, another benefit from establishing a Confucius Institute is the ability to offer classes and programs that otherwise would not have the necessary funding (Bair 22). Several university officials explained that Hanban’s funding allowed them to further develop and expand their Chinese language programs and majors (Bair 22). Even when enrollment was low, because of Hanban’s funding, Chinese language courses could still be offered (Bair 22). There are a wide variety of benefits of hosting a Confucius Institute recognized by university officials.

At the same time, there were also a variety of concerns among university officials about the Confucius Institutes program. Classroom concerns were prevalent among university officials, particularly at schools that rejected establishing a Confucius Institute (Bair 23). Teaching only the simplified character system popular in Mainland China was a primary concern, as it would limit the amount of texts accessible to the reader (Bair 23). Another classroom concern was with the teacher’s self-censorship: “they believed Confucius Institute teachers could deflect answering sensitive questions—such as those relating to controversial
topics in Chinese history—if asked them during class or students could self-censor and choose not to ask such questions” (Bair 23). At schools that did not establish Confucius Institutes, a primary reason was the fear of losing control over the Confucius Institute activities and curriculum to Hanban (Bair 23).

There were also several areas in which officials were divided—some having concern while others did not. Many university faculty expressed “concerns that hosting a Confucius Institute could limit events or activities critical of China,” both within the Confucius Institute and elsewhere on campus (Bair 23). Several university officials could see how a school may choose not to host events on certain controversial topics so as to not offend their Chinese partners (Bair 23). Many university faculty members also indicated uncertainty on whether Hanban would fund research topics that may be critical of China, and one official at a school that closed their Confucius institute reported that “Hanban refused to fund a faculty research proposal in environmental studies as it did not align with Hanban’s vision of Confucius Institute as an organizer and funder of Chinese cultural events” (Bair 23). However, other school officials “indicated that such concerns did not exist with regard to their Confucius Institute,” offering examples of events that Hanban sponsored that could be considered critical of China, as their Confucius Institute hosted “a conference discussing intellectual property in relation to China and events on territorial disputes in the South China Sea, Tibet, and religion in China” (Bair 24). Additionally, more than half of the schools visited reported that having a Confucius Institute on campus did not prevent the school from hosting politically controversial events outside of the institute, covering topics such as Tibet, Taiwan, Tiananmen Square, or presentations by Tibetan monks or the Dalai Lama (Bair 23). They reported that hosting these events did not impact their
relationship with Hanban in any way; funding continued and Hanban refrained from commenting on the events (Bair 23).

Another topic divided in concern was Hanban’s hiring practice. Some university officials were concerned that Hanban could potentially discriminate applicants based on political or religious affiliation (Bair 25). Others were concerned that the quality of teachers recommended by Hanban might not meet their university’s standards, having difficulty with English language proficiency for example (Bair 25). At other schools, officials explained after stressing the importance of English language proficiency, the quality of recommended teachers improved (Bair 26). Other university officials at schools with Confucius Institutes reported no concerns, as Hanban or their Chinese partner university would recommend a pool of instructors for the U.S. university to interview and choose from, these universities were satisfied with the hiring process (Bair 26).

Several school and government officials reported unease about accepting funding from the Chinese government in academic institutions, indicating fear that it may lead to censorship threatening academic freedom (Bair 26). A few university and government officials voiced the opinion that “they did not believe their institution should accept external funding from any source that might limit their activities, including large U.S. corporations, private donors, or any foreign government or outside entity” (Bair 27). However many school officials did not share these concerns, explaining that “school administrators and faculty are not naïve to the potential effects of Chinese or any foreign government influence,” and “that if any academic freedom issues were to arise as a result of having a Confucius Institute, they would take the proper steps to address it” (Bair 27). Other school officials pointed out that the Confucius Institutes are just a small portion of a larger Asian Studies program, and thus “did not have the ability to exert undue
influence” (Bair 27). As scrutiny over the institutes continue to rise, school officials reported often weighing the benefits of having a Confucius Institute with the potential risks. However, “Several of these school officials told us that they believed such criticisms were not backed by evidence or based on specific incidents, but instead were rooted in a lack of understanding about Confucius Institutes” (Bair 28). Regardless of whether the concerns about the institutes are realistic, as the public debate around the Confucius Institute continues to escalate, many university officials are concerned with how their Confucius Institute may impact their school’s reputation negatively (Bair 28).

The U.S. Senate Committee on Homeland Security published a Staff Report following an eight-month long investigation, “China’s Impact on the U.S. Education System.” While this report covers more than just the Confucius Institutes, they devote a large portion to understanding the operations of the Confucius Institutes and developing a set of recommendations regarding the institutes. The report lists several “Findings of Fact,” that the committee uncovered (Portman and Carper 5). Contrary to the findings in the Government Accountability Office’s research, the Senate committee’s report states that “The Chinese government controls nearly every aspect of Confucius Institutes at U.S. schools,” attributing this to Hanban’s role in hiring Chinese instructors, providing teaching materials, and having veto authority over what events their funding can sponsor (Portman and Carper 5). They also report that Hanban “requires Chinese instructors at U.S. schools to ‘conscientiously safeguard national interests’ and terminates if the Chinese instructors ‘violate Chinese law’ or ‘engage in activities detrimental to national interests’” (Portman and Carper 5). Some agreements between Confucius Institutes and hosting universities require the university to repay all foreign investments into the institute if the contract is terminated early, and the typical contract agreement is for five years
Portman and Carper report that “The State Department revoked 32 visas for Confucius Institute exchange visitors” because the Chinese scholars were teaching in Confucius Classrooms but had “asserted they were in the United States conducting research” in their visa application (7). Hanban has sent over $158 million to over one hundred schools with Confucius Institutes in the U.S. since 2006, and “Nearly seventy percent of U.S. schools with a Confucius Institute that received more than $250,000 in one year failed to properly report that information to the Department of Education,” as legally required (Portman and Carper 7). These universities told the committee that the reporting requirements were unclear and confusing (Portman and Carper 7). The Senate committee found this to be because “The Department of Education has not issued guidance on foreign gift reporting by post-secondary schools since 2004” and does nothing to enforce the legal reporting measure, relying solely on universities to self-disclose this information (Portman and Carper 7). In 2010, the U.S. State Department established the American Cultural Center (ACC) program, which funds the creation of an ACC on a Chinese university’s campus promoting partnerships between U.S. and Chinese universities (Portman and Carper 8). However, “The Chinese government fails to provide appropriate reciprocity for U.S. officials and educators in China…Chinese officials routinely cancelled events at ACCs that involved U.S. embassy officials” (Portman and Carper 8). These “Findings of Fact” all contribute to the Senate committee’s development of recommendations for the Confucius Institutes program. Their set of recommendations are as follows:

1. Congress should require all U.S. schools to publish any contracts with foreign governments, including all Confucius Institute contracts, online for students and faculty to review.
2. U.S. schools should ensure that Hanban does not exercise line-item veto authority when approving annual Confucius Institute budgets.

3. U.S. schools should ensure that Hanban’s vetting, screening, and interview processes are aligned with their own hiring procedures and protocols.

4. Congress and state and local education officials should study the need and demand for Chinese language education programming in the United States and consider additional investments where necessary.

5. The Department of Justice should determine if Confucius Institutes engage in activity to influence the U.S. government or public on behalf of foreign principals.

6. The State Department should review all active Confucius Institutes and Confucius Classrooms for compliance with visa regulations, standards, and practices.

7. U.S. schools must comply with the law and properly report foreign gifts to the Department of Education.

8. The Department of Education should update its guidance requiring U.S. schools to report any funds provided by an institution owned or controlled by a foreign source, especially a foreign government.

9. The State Department should demand reciprocal and fair treatment of its diplomats and employees in China.

10. The State Department should remain in close contact with grantees in foreign countries and develop a formal system to collect information about interference, harassment, or questioning by foreign authorities.
11. U.S. schools should continue to partner with Chinese universities. Partnering with foreign universities offers students unique international learning experiences and enhance research opportunities.

12. U.S. schools should demand that Hanban be fully transparent about Confucius Institute hiring practices and provide reciprocity to U.S. school programs at Chinese schools. (Portman and Carper 9-10).

The U.S. Senate committee’s first recommendation insists that universities and Confucius Institutes have clear language protecting academic freedom and avoid provisions that state Chinese laws would have any rule over on-campus situations (Portman and Carper 9). They also state all Confucius Institute sponsored events and activities should have clear disclaimers indicating where the funding originated (Portman and Carper 9). The Senate committee states that hiring procedures be made transparent, and encourages hosting universities to seek Confucius Institute teachers without Hanban’s aid (Portman and Carper 9). Regarding ACCs and other U.S. schools located in China, they maintain that academic freedom is of utmost importance and should never be violated, implying so even if it violates Chinese law in their country: “U.S. schools operating in China should inform students about China’s internet censorship and other relevant constraints” (Portman and Carper 10). Finally, they conclude their recommendations stating “Absent full transparency regarding how Confucius Institutes operate and full reciprocity for U.S. cultural outreach efforts on college campuses in China, Confucius Institutes should not continue in the United States” (Portman and Carper 10). The U.S. Senate committee took issue not only with how the Confucius Institutes operate, but with how China has responded to a the ACC program. If non compliant with their set of recommendations, the Senate committee recommends terminating all ties with the Confucius Institutes.
Understanding Power

Power has been one of the most challenging sociological concepts to define and measure throughout history (Duke 41). This section will provide a deeper understanding of how power is defined and explained in previous scholarship. There are similarities in how power operates in interpersonal contexts versus public contexts, but it is entirely dependent upon the specific context of a situation: “power always depends on the context in which the relationship exists” (Nye 2). Regarding the Confucius Institutes, power plays a role both in interpersonal and public contexts, as negotiations between Hanban and the hosting university involve interpersonal power dynamics that are impacted by the public debate and influential, yet removed, parties.

The relational theory of power described by Wilmot and Hocker explains how, with the exception of physical power, “power is a property of the social relationship rather than a quality of the individual,” meaning that the amount of power someone has is granted to them by both parties (115). Power is seen here as dynamic, fluid, and changing based on the communication relationship between parties (Wilmot & Hocker 115). Sharp has a similar theory of power, maintaining that power is pluralistic, but applies this concept to the larger scale of society (Martin 214). Sharp’s theory is composed of two parts: ruler-subject and consent (Martin 214). He points out that the rulers are not limited to chief executives, but include dominant ruling groups and all bodies in command of the state structure (Martin 214). Second is his concept of consent: “the most important single quality of any government, without which it would not exist, must be the obedience and submission of its subjects. Obedience is at the heart of political power” (qtd. in Martin 214). In order for a government to have power, the majority of its people must individually respect and uphold its rule and law.
Weber defines power as “the probability that one actor within a social relationship will be in a position to carry out his own will despite resistance...The sociological concept of domination must hence be more precise and can only mean the probability that a command will be obeyed” (Duke 40). This touches on Sharp’s theory of consent, however, focuses more on the probability of execution of a party’s desires. Weber explains that in a public context over an extended period of time, conflict “leads to a hierarchical ordering of individuals in the society,” thus creating a system of power differences (Duke 45). While conflict situations are greatly influenced by power, power dynamics are also greatly influenced by conflict situations. There is a complex and intricate relationship between power and conflict that cannot be overlooked.

Nye made a significant contribution to power scholarship that also helps to clarify the above power theories. He explains that power is extremely hard to measure, because “knowing in advance how others would behave in the absence of our commands” or influence is near to impossible (Nye 2). Thus, many political leaders turn to a substandard definition of power reflecting the possession of resources that can influence outcomes (Nye 3). Consequently, a country is considered powerful “if it has a relatively large population and territory, extensive natural resources, economic strength, military force, and social stability” (Nye 3). While this definition makes power more measurable and concrete, it is problematic because this type of power is inconsistent at predicting which entities will achieve their desired outcomes; “converting resources into realized power in the sense of obtaining desired outcomes requires well-designed strategies and skillful leadership” (Nye 3).

This led him to categorize power into two parts: hard and soft power. Hard power references the concrete and measurable resources of power, a country’s military and economy for example (Nye 5). Soft power however “rests on the ability to shape the preferences of others”
Soft power relies on co-opting people rather than coercing them (Nye 5). However, soft power is not merely the same as influence, as influence can stem from hard power (Nye 6). While soft power incorporates persuasion and skillful argumentation, it depends primarily on attraction, for “attraction often leads to acquiescence. Simply put, in behavioral terms soft power is attractive power. In terms of resources, soft-power resources are the assets that produce such attraction” (Nye 6). There are three primary sources of soft power for a nation: (1) culture, in places where it is attractive to others, (2) political values, when they’re consistent domestically and internationally, and viewed positively, and (3) foreign policies, when they’re interpreted as legitimate and having moral authority (Nye 11).

Power dynamics also have unique impacts in intercultural and interracial communication. Schmidt explains that “While concepts of race combine both fixity and fluidity, it has historically been the power of whiteness that has fixed racialized Others in fluid ways. Said calls this ‘flexible positional superiority, which puts the Westerner in a whole series of possible relationships with the Orient without ever losing him the relative upper hand’” (649). The historical development of racialized ideologies and Otherness necessarily impacts power dynamics in interracial communication.

In intercultural communication, culture can have a significant impact on power dynamics. The definition of culture presented earlier in terms of national characterization is limited in its ability to account for intercultural interactions within constraints of historic power relations, so it is necessary to expand upon this definition. Another understanding of culture involves seeing how different cultures are “positioned in relationship to one another within societal structures, material conditions, power relations and as such, culture becomes a field of forces where competing interests vie for dominance and control” (Nakayama & Haluani, 6). This makes
culture a combination of meanings and representations realized through different power interests, a site of “ideological struggle” where people actively participate in “creating and recreating meanings made available to them by competing ideologies” (Nakayama & Haluani, 6). Paying attention to the situated politics and power dynamics at hand is critical to understanding an intercultural conflict:

There is a necessary theoretical move, then from ‘culture’ to ‘ideology,’ or from understanding culture as a neutral, innocent place to one always and already implicated in power relations where differently positioned subjects and social entities compete for advantage and control of the process of meaning production. This entails, too, analyzing cultural meanings and practices in the context of particular subjects’ interests and positionings vis-à-vis the ideological operation of power within a specific given social formation. (Nakayama & Hanualani, 6)

Existing ideology can significantly impact power relations, particularly in intercultural settings, because it necessarily informs meaning production. It is through ideology that hegemony forms; ideology sets up to benefit certain people over others and contributes to determining relational power dynamics.

On an interpersonal level, power can influence how parties in a conflict situation communicate and which conflict management strategies they choose to employ. On a societal level, power can influence how conflict is interpreted and understood, approached, and resolved. Conversely, over time conflict situations can influence power dynamics in a variety of contexts, and in turn, change the influence power has on that same conflict situation.
Importance of Existing Ideology

Existing ideologies significantly impact how rhetoric and propaganda are interpreted and spread. How Confucius Institutes are perceived in the U.S. is dependent upon existing opinions and beliefs about China and the Chinese government within the public. For example, if someone has a longstanding belief that China commonly commits espionage to gain intelligence, they likely would also be suspicious of the Confucius Institutes serving as a medium through which China could conduct said espionage. Popular ideologies often contribute to the formation of popular opinions. This section will first clarify what ideology is, then show how ideology impacts how information and messages are interpreted.

Ideology is a system of ideals or beliefs that produce knowledge and are formed through discourse. As Stuart Hall explains: “A discourse is similar to what sociologists call an ‘ideology’: a set of statements or beliefs which produce knowledge that serves the interests of a particular group or class” (202). A discourse is a multitude of statements that together “provide a language for talking about - i.e. a way of representing - a particular kind of knowledge about a topic. When statements about a topic are made within a particular discourse, the discourse makes it possible to construct the topic in a certain way. It also limits the other ways in which the topic can be constructed” (Hall 201). Ideology is not based on the distinction of thought and action, language and practice, but is about the production of knowledge through language (Hall 201). Ideology is produced by discursive practice - the practice of producing meaning.

How students in Confucius Institutes view the Chinese state depends on their own cultural ideologies at least equally as much as it does on the messages they receive from the Institutes directly. As Hubbert found in her study of Confucius Institutes, how the students “understand the state depends as much, if not more, on the local audience’s cultural practices and
discourses as on the state’s policy intentions” (333). More generally, Bricker’s research in conspiracy rhetoric has shown that “a conspiracy charge will be more likely to resonate if it is consistent with existing ideology,” however this can be extended and applied to propaganda and rhetoric as a whole (228). Messages are more likely to resonate with their audience if they are consistent with existing ideologies. This can be explained by confirmation bias, ideological reasoning, the elaboration likelihood model, and I-Other reasoning.

Confirmation bias is a type of cognitive bias where people tend to favor, search for, interpret, or recall information in a way that reinforces their preexisting beliefs. Behavioral economist Heshmat illustrates how confirmation bias operates: “Once we have formed a view, we embrace information that confirms that view while ignoring, or rejecting, information that casts doubt on it. Confirmation bias suggests that we don’t perceive circumstances objectively. We pick out those bits of data that make us feel good because they confirm our prejudices” (3). Furthermore, confirmation bias is common and widespread. Plous’s behavioral psychology research has shown that “the tendency people have to seek confirming evidence—whether in logical problem solving tasks, job interviews, classroom settings, or otherwise—is widespread and well-established” (238). This can be observed in a large body of English-language scholarship investigating the Confucius Institutes: “English-language scholarship has tended to involve broad generalizations myopically focused on the negative implications of China’s soft power, an assumption which follows a logic that all things democratic are good (as seen in the more positive portrayals of US soft power) and all things nondemocratic are bad” (Schmidt, “China’s Confucius” 650). Much of the scholarship criticizing China’s goal of increasing soft power through their Confucius Institutes program is based on a preexisting ideology or bias that democratic values are right and non-democratic values are wrong. Because of our desire to be
right and this tendency to reinforce or confirm our existing beliefs, our existing ideologies necessarily influence how we interpret and respond to messages.

Ideological reasoning can also help to explain why existing ideologies influence how people react to different rhetorics. It is important to understand that ideologies are “integrated and coherent systems of symbols, values, and beliefs” that are developed through cultural structures of meaning (Hunt 12). Furthermore, “Ideological constructs, which culture not only inspires but also sustains and constrains, serve as a fount for an instructive and reassuring sense of historical place, as an indispensable guide to an infinitely complex and otherwise bewildering present, and as a basis for moral action intended to shape a better future” (Hunt 12). People rely on ideological constructs to navigate the world because it is an easily accessible method of attitude formation. As Kumlin explains:

Citizens regularly face political issues which they know little about and towards which they have no crystallised pre-existing attitudes. Yet if you ask them, people will somehow manage to swiftly form opinions ‘on the spot,’ based only on immediately available information. How do they manage this difficult task? A powerful answer is that they use ideological shortcuts. When forming an opinion, the modern citizen does not collect large amounts of issue-specific information. Rather, she is a ‘cognitive miser’ who extract from the meagre information directly at hand what is implied by a more general ideological orientation. (Kumlin 487).

Ideological shortcuts are a method of opinion formation that rely on one’s ideological identification and affect as the basis of reasoning. Sniderman, Brody, and Tetlock explained the process of ideological reasoning as it pertains to political judgments: “...feelings may facilitate or reinforce political judgment. In particular, the more consistent those feelings are with ideological
beliefs and the more intensely they are held, the more ideologically coherent may be political reasoning” (141). They clarify a distinct difference between ideological identification and ideological affect; the former being slow and steady in its pattern of change while the latter is volatile and variable (Sniderman et al. 142). One’s ideological positions, or identification, is slow to change, while the intensity of and passion for those identifications varies much more quickly. The intensity of an individual’s ideological feelings impact his or her opinions respectively: “...an individual who identifies with an ideological position and feels strongly about it is more likely to take positions on issues that are consistent with his ideological identification than is an individual who takes the same ideological position but does not feel strongly” (Sniderman et al. 150). While ideological reasoning is certainly not the only method of opinion formation, it “has the advantage of helping make clear how a large fraction of the general public can work out a consistent outlook on politics, without necessarily being exceptionally well informed about politics or uncommonly adept at abstract thinking” (Sniderman et al. 162).

This theory is further supported by Petty and Cacioppo’s Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM). According to the ELM, people are more likely to process information through their peripheral processing route rather than their central processing route (Griffin 177). This means people tend to rely on outside factors to determine the accuracy and reliability of information rather than cognitively analyzing and scrutinizing the contents of a message itself (Griffin 177). The peripheral route is a mental shortcut that relies on irrelevant cues to determine one's acceptance of a message, such as a source’s perceived credibility or number of arguments presented. It takes relatively low effort to process information in this fashion whereas analyzing and critically thinking about a message takes significantly more mental energy. It’s human nature to process the majority of the messages we receive through our peripheral route, in part because
we are continuously presented with an overwhelming amount of information and we simply cannot process everything analytically. Processing messages through our central route requires an interest in the subject, cognitive ability, motivation, and a significant amount of effort (Griffin 177). Information processed through our central route creates lasting changes in attitude and strong reinforcements whereas information processed through our peripheral route creates temporary attitude changes and weak reinforcements (Griffin 178). People tend to prefer processing information in ways that require less cognitive effort; ideological reasoning is one such method.

One method of ideology formation is through the language naming process itself. The naming process “promotes an ontological fixity that complicates discursive relations because those who belong to a speech community are then forced to coalesce around shared meanings in order to communicate” (Jackson & Moshin 348). The connotative meanings we attach to certain words can become problematic when it creates an I-Other dynamic. This is easily illustrated with the examples of how ‘urban’ became a synecdoche for ‘black,’ how ‘Jewed’ replaced phrases like ‘cheated me out of money,’ or when terms like ‘gay’ or ‘retarded’ are used to describe things people do not like, for when these connotative meanings arise we invite potential vulgarity that leads to discrimination (Jackson & Moshin 349). It is by those in power that the Other is created. Foucault, Sartre, and Fanon all support this notion; Foucault maintained that subjects are created through discourse, Sartre’s famous assertion is that it was the anti-Semite who makes the Jew, and Fanon followed suit articulating “it is the racist who creates his inferior” (qtd. in Jackson & Moshin 349).

Jackson and Moshin explain the I-Other dialectic in the terms of sentence structure, with a subject, verb, and object, explaining that marginalized groups are too frequently positioned in
the object space (351). The I-Other dialectic “acknowledges Whiteness as the perpetual subject and non-Whiteness or otherness as the perpetual object. Attempts to contravene this dialectic tend to be squelched” (Jackson & Moshin 351). This dialectic is a distancing device, allowing us to distinguish between things but can be dangerous when used to marginalized others (Jackson & Moshin 356). The concept is a useful construct in demonstrating the etiology of race relations, helping to understand the discursive dynamics leading to negative difference.

However, it would be incorrect to claim the naming process to be inherently bad or damaging, as it also provides us with the things we identify with and belong (Jackson & Moshin, 349). It is through language that people make sense of reality; “it is the process of naming itself that allows us to see and act upon difference, in a myriad of ways” (Jackson & Moshin 349). The naming process is a part of the larger, ideological discursive act that “immediately positions us for or against the Other. In the United States, therefore, our social approach to difference is inherently discriminatory” (Jackson & Moshin 349). Jackson and Moshin also point out a “constant tension between naming of the self and Other” as “it is always both inclusionary and exclusionary, comforting and hurtful, ideological and mundane” (349).

Jackson and Moshin continue on to define intercultural conflict as “the struggle over meaning, of deciding what is appropriate and inappropriate and who is competent and/or incompetent” (Jackson & Moshin, 354). Often in intercultural conflict, it is cultural solidity or one’s way of life, that is perceived to be at stake (Jackson & Moshin 354). Jackson and Moshin continue on to explain that in intercultural conflict situations too often people “have a very limited or distorted understanding of how to relate within and between cultures, and this is only exacerbated when race becomes a marked facet of intercultural discourse” (354).
Existing Ideologies

It is important to examine existing ideologies in order to better understand how the public will respond to China’s Confucius Institutes in the US. The historical racism in the U.S. against people of Chinese descent, the rampant and longstanding anti-communist ideology, and the concept of the ‘China threat’ all inform and impact how U.S. Americans view the activities of Confucius Institutes.

The U.S. has a long history of anti-communist ideology, which can angle people against accepting Chinese operations in America. However anti-communist rhetoric began stagnating and significantly declining in the latter part of the 20th century. Anti-communist ideology has informed how Americans characterize and perceive China, as well as laying a foundation for the pervasive “China threat” rhetoric today. U.S. anti-communism dates back well before the cold war and has shaped much of American ideology in the time since. As professor Robert Frank reported:

On 5 April 1934 the father general of the Society of Jesus in Rome wrote to the fathers provincial in America directing them ‘to organize a plan of concerted action against Communism as it exists and labors in your country.’ The response to Father Ledochowski's request was swift. Under the direction of Father Edmund Walsh of Georgetown University, the Jesuits devised and implemented a fourteen point program of ‘practical and concerted action.’ The Jesuit call-to-arms signaled the beginning of a colossal campaign by American Catholics against communism. (39)

Over the following years, anti-communist rhetoric grew immensely in the American Catholic community, creating an identity between Catholicism and anti-communism: “The louder, the more fervently one proclaimed one's aversion to communism, the stronger, the firmer
It was through their anti-communist rhetoric that this began to take hold; “The terms of secular discourse had to be redefined and properly subjugated to Catholic doctrine...capitalism, socialism, communism, fascism, and democracy...were defined in accordance to their compatibility with Catholic doctrine.” (Frank 57). This strategy of redefinition and linking anti-communist values with Catholicism integrated Catholics into the mainstream American culture. Over time anti-communism was linked with what it means to be American: “To claim to be the champions of anti-communism was to claim to be the guardian of all the values cherished by Americans” (Frank 58). This anti-communist ideology continued well into the mid twentieth century.

In the U.S., Communism was deemed incompatible with Christian values; “editorials from the 1950s through the 1970s regularly linked communism to evil, as in the description of communist propaganda as ‘dedicated to the service of antichrist,’” (Toulouse 263). Professor Toulouse explains that the “anti-communist mindset led to fervent backing of the Vietnam War. As the ‘greatest bastion for freedom,’ America could not avoid intervention...For the most part, editors throughout the 1960s viewed missionary activity and military activity as two sides of the same coin, putting an end to the threat posed by communism” (264). This stark anti-communist ideology continued until it began to shift in 1972 when president Nixon visited China.

In his first campaign for the white house as vice-president to candidate Eisenhauer, Nixon was outspoken about his anti-communist values. In fact, “for twenty-two years—ever since he had entered American politics—Nixon had been a staunch anti-Communist, treating Communists as enemies and rejecting accommodation and compromise with them” (Rzepecka 60). However in the 1968 presidential campaign, Nixon did not rely on anti-communist rhetoric as he had done before. Instead, when speaking of the Soviet Union he expressed the need to improve mutual
relations and reduce tensions, explaining that “after an era of confrontation, the time [had] come for an era of negotiation” (Nixon qtd. in Rzepecka, 59). Despite the strong anti-communist ideology in the US, Nixon visited China in 1972 in hopes of bringing an end to the Vietnam war and developing a trade relationship between the U.S. and China. The U.S. anti-communist ideology was shifting; a 1973 editorial illustrated this shift: “America had ‘learned these important lessons: that great nations have power limitations; that no nation can police the world, or make it safe against Communism; and that no country should resort to war unless its necessity and justification can be made plain and understandable to its people’” (qtd. in Toulouse 264). Once the U.S. accepted that they lacked the power to force the rest of the world to abandon communism, they were able to begin developing more diplomatic relations with China in hopes that their support would encourage China to adopt more liberal policies.

Regardless of the developing relations between the U.S. and China, nearly five decades of strong anti-communist rhetoric has enduring influence on the country. The PRC’s governmental structure, embodying authoritarian, communist and socialist values conflicts with American democratic and anti-communist ideology. This ideological conflict between the U.S. and China causes tension in the relationship. The U.S. thought that if they supported the rise of China’s economy that China would begin to adopt some more liberal policies and practices, but as years passed this hope did not come true. Tension increased throughout the 1990s, when several East Asian countries made progress in democratisation efforts, South Korea, Taiwan, and Indonesia for example. On the other hand, the PRC did and does not share similar interests in political reform: “it refuses to adopt Western democratic values or to share its centrally controlled political power with the people,” disappointing those interested in peaceful political change in China (Yee & Storey 3).
A turning point in Western perspectives of China was the 1989 Tiananmen Massacre. Thousands of students congregated at Beijing’s Tiananmen Square, holding demonstrations “demanding democratic reforms and an end to corruption” (Council on Foreign Relations, 11). The PRC responded by sending in military troops to clear the square, resulting in an estimated 10,000 civilian protester deaths (Cheng 1). Following the massacre, pro-democratic ideology and concerns over human rights in China flooded international news. Numerous “politicians and the general public alike urged their respective governments to adopt a hardline towards Beijing” in an attempt to force the PRC “to liberalise its political system and improve its human rights record” (Yee & Storey 3). U.S. policies regarding China relations became a controversial political issue: “during the 1992 U.S. presidential election, the direction that Washington’s China policy should take became a campaign issue for the first time in two decades” (Yee & Storey 3). Once in office, President Clinton “sought to use China’s access to 'Most Favoured Nation' status in trade as a way of gaining specific progress on human rights issues,” however was ultimately unsuccessful (Frost 6). While much of the West was concerned with China’s governmental structure, despite the large land mass and cultural diversity, provincial governments in China and the People’s Liberation Army felt it in the best interests of the Chinese people for China to remain under the control of a unified, central government (Yee & Storey 3). This ideological conflict between values of U.S. democracy and Chinese authoritarian communism inevitably shapes how Americans view China. This longstanding history of anti-communist ideology has informed US perceptions of China, shaping the Chinese as Others and ultimately contributing towards the development of the ‘China threat’ rhetoric seen today.

More than a century of U.S. stereotyping has characterized China and Chinese people as an Other. The U.S. depiction of what it means to be Chinese influences how Americans perceive
Chinese organizations, such as the Confucius Institutes, as well as the people associated with them. Nineteenth-century Chinese immigrants in the U.S. were described as strangers “in the host society, but never were they of it” (Lyman 159). In the pursuit of gold, many Chinese immigrants migrated to California where they became subject to prejudice, hostility, and discrimination. Nearing the end of the Gold Rush, newspapers greatly contributed to framing the Chinese as Others, calling them “heathen,” describing them as “filthy” and “undesirable,” and using the reason of using their “cheap labor” as an excuse to continue permitting their existence in the U.S. (Lyman 165).

This is similar to the findings of many scholars, as Lueck, Pipp, and Lin explain that “through framing analysis, scholars have discovered a myth in the U.S. press that identifies China as a communist Other” (327). Akhavan-Majid and Ramaprasad are two such scholars who found that anti-communist ideology significantly impacted how the U.S. press portrayed the Fourth United Nations Conference hosted in Beijing in 1995 (144). Their work revealed “a clear underlying emphasis on the familiar themes of oppression and deceitfulness that have long been associated with the coverage of China as a communist country,” describing China as “an oppressive communist nation, characterized by clumsiness and ineptitude” (Akhavan-Majid & Ramaprasad 145). The news coverage they analyzed “was replete with dramatic references to China as a nation with a ‘loathsome human rights record,’ a nation harboring ‘dirty secrets’ and unwilling to submit to ‘a rule of law’” (Akhavan-Majid & Ramaprasad 145). The labels placed on the Chinese in U.S. news following the 1995 UN meeting is not unlike those published in the nineteenth century described by Lyman. Through this process of naming, of labeling, the Chinese have a history of being depicted as a lesser Other in the U.S. press.
This Otherness however is not limited to the press, it is also reflected in U.S. legislation. The U.S. Department of State explains that the strength of anti-Chinese sentiment among working white Americans increased as the numbers of Chinese laborers increased in the mid and late 1800s (“Chinese Immigration…”). Rumors began depicting “Chinatowns as places where large numbers of Chinese men congregated to visit prostitutes, smoke opium, or gamble,” and arguments for anti-Chinese legislation developed, arguing that “admitting Chinese into the United States lowered the cultural and moral standards of American society” and threatened “the integrity of American racial composition” (“Chinese Immigration…”). Continuous framing of the Chinese as immoral, dirty, and lesser Others led to numerous legal repercussions.

In 1882, the U.S. passed the Chinese Exclusion Act, forbidding the emigration from China to the U.S. for ten years. Anti-Chinese legislation escalated when the Scott Act of 1888 was passed, barring reentry to the U.S. after a visit to China even for longterm, legal U.S. residents. These laws significantly strained the relationship between the U.S. and China, but domestic concerns about the Chinese outweighed concerns for their international relationship (“Chinese Immigration…”). In 1892, the U.S. Congress passed the Geary Act, extending Chinese exclusion for another 10 years, and in 1902 expanded it to cover Hawaii and the Philippines. Eventually the U.S. Congress extended the Chinese Exclusion Acts indefinitely. This put immense tension on the relationship between the U.S. and China. In 1905 Chinese merchants responded by uniting in an anti-American boycott, but after five months of strained correspondence between president Roosevelt and the Chinese government the boycott subsided fairly quietly (“Chinese Immigration…”). It was not until nearly four decades had passed when the U.S. sought China as a wartime ally in World War II that the Chinese Exclusion Acts were repealed in 1943 (“Chinese Immigration…”). For more than half a century, U.S. laws supported
categorizing the Chinese not only as Others, but as lesser. Schmidt explains that U.S. “concern over communist influence, or the ‘red peril,’ is entwined with racialized historical fears of a ‘yellow peril,’ a 19th century fear of yellow bodies that embodied multiple anxieties” such as “increased East Asian immigration, military aggression, economic competition, and social degeneration” (“China’s Confucius,” 650). Such a longstanding history of stereotyping the Chinese has influenced how Chinese people, the Chinese government, and Chinese operations such as the Confucius Institutes, are portrayed and perceived in the U.S. today.

This Otherness is not one-sided to how the Chinese are defined in the U.S., however. As previously described, Schmidt explains how the mission of the Confucius Institutes relies on a Western Other. The development of the Western Other in China has changed quite dramatically throughout history, as Schmidt explains:

Wang demonstrates that, whereas prior to the Cultural Revolution China’s historians sought “a demonized Other” (2003:342) “to show the ‘superiority’ of Marxism” (2003:335), after the Cultural Revolution, disillusionment with the recent past caused young historians to turn to the West in search of an other that exemplified the economic development and modernization they desired for China. This use of a dichotomized Western O/other in Chinese intellectual discourse — which is also demonstrated by Chen (1995) in her discussion of official and antiofficial Occidentalisms — shows that, just as in the West, any imaginary about the Other is in fact less about that Other than it is about the Self. (Schmidt, “China’s Confucius” 655)

Historically China has portrayed the West negatively, demonizing democratic values to promote their own ideological bias favoring Marxism. However after the Cultural Revolution, China began to reframe parts of the Western Other, acknowledging attractive qualities that they too
wished to model. The characterization of the Other is more about defining the Self because it is a method of comparing different values in a process of redefining the self, adopting values of the Other that are appealing and rejecting other values that are not.

How people perceive the intentions and influence of the Confucius Institutes is tied to their perceptions of the PRC as a whole, which can be understood through the popular ‘China threat’ rhetoric today. The concern of the ‘China threat’ emerged in the U.S. in early 1993, following the effects of China’s economic reform of the 1970s (Yee & Storey, 2). China had the fastest growing economy in the world in the 1980s and 1990s (Yee & Storey 2). China’s economic boom raised concerns over Chinese competition and military expansion: “Some analysts in the West are unnerved by China’s fast growth rates, believing that the country will one day become a powerful competitor. They also believe that China’s rapid economic growth will quickly translate into increased military power” (Yee & Storey 2). China’s economic boom made them appear as a key economic competitor to the U.S. in the global market, and indeed led to considerable military development. Largely because of ideological differences, China’s economic and military power are seen as a potential threat in the U.S.

As China’s economy has grown, so have their military capabilities. The 2018 US *Worldwide Threat Assessment* described China’s growing military operations succinctly:

The Chinese People’s Liberation Army (PLA) continues to modernize its nuclear missile force by adding more survivable road-mobile systems and enhancing its silo-based systems. This new generation of missiles is intended to ensure the viability of China’s strategic deterrent by providing a second-strike capability. China also has tested a hypersonic glide vehicle. In addition, the PLA Navy continues to develop the JL-2 submarine-launched ballistic missile (SLBM) and might produce additional JIN-class
nuclear-powered ballistic missile submarines. The JIN-class submarines—armed with JL-2 SLBMs—give the PLA Navy its first long-range, sea-based nuclear capability. The Chinese have also publicized their intent to form a triad by developing a nuclear-capable next-generation bomber. (Coats 7)

China has also been developing anti-satellite weapon technologies designed to incapacitate or destroy satellites for strategic military purposes. The report warns: “We assess that, if a future conflict were to occur involving Russia or China, either country would justify attacks against US and allied satellites as necessary to offset any perceived US military advantage derived from military, civil, or commercial space systems” (Coats 13). China’s rapidly advancing military technologies has raised concerns internationally and amplified the perception of China as a threat.

China’s territorial disputes in East Asia are also often interpreted as strategic military expansion and reason for concern (Yee & Storey 4). China’s expansion and establishment of naval and air bases in the South China Seas is one such example. The South China Sea is essential to global commerce and regional stability, with more than half of the world’s merchant fleet tonnage estimated to pass through those waters (Marshalls 52). It “serves as an important transit route and operational theater for the U.S. and other regional military assets between the Pacific to the Indian Ocean regions” (Willett qtd. in Marshall 52). Furthermore, control of the region’s natural resources (oil, natural gas reserves, and rich commercial fishing) further empowers China. The South China Sea is estimated to contain more oil than any other area of the planet except Saudi Arabia, 60 percent of Asia's hydrocarbon resources, and 12 percent of the global fish catch (Marshalls 52). China’s military development and competing territorial claims
in the area have led to the destruction of coral reefs and serious overfishing, inciting further attention and concern and strengthening the ‘China threat’ position.

Gallup, a global analytics and advice firm, has conducted surveys of Americans over the past decade in attempt to better understand if and how the US people perceive China. The previous table, Table 1, shows the majority of US Citizens view China’s economic and military power as an “Important” or “Critical” threat (Gallup 5). With consistent results of over 80% of the US population viewing China’s economic and military power as an important or critical threat since their first survey in 2004, the ‘China threat’ is a real concern for most Americans.

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<th>The military power of China</th>
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With most Americans currently viewing China as an economic and military threat, it is no surprise that there is high suspicion of Chinese activities in the US. The Confucius Institutes are one such activity under scrutinization by the U.S. public and government alike. Because the U.S. typically has a negative perception of China, Americans are more likely to prejudge Chinese operations such as the Confucius Institutes negatively.
III. Method: Conflict Assessment

Through analyzing four different conflict assessment frameworks and influencing factors in conflict situations, several key elements stood out as relevant to the conflict surrounding the Confucius Institutes. There are aspects from Wilmot and Hocker’s conflict assessment guide, Wehr’s conflict mapping guide, Carpenter and Kennedy’s conflict analysis framework, and Daniels and Walker’s progress triangle that all have value in assessing conflict situations. This section will detail each of the key elements I have identified: nature of the conflict, conflict context, involved parties and relationships, assessing collaboration potential, and developing recommendations. Each of these is detailed below.

The first part of a conflict assessment should be a basic description of the conflict. This is reflected in Wilmot and Hocker’s “nature of the conflict” as well as Wehr’s “summary description” section. It is important to use descriptive “no blame” language, as Wilmot and Hocker suggest, in order to avoid triggering a defensive, face-restoring, response (220). It should also use 3rd party language, even if written by an involved party. This makes it easier for an emotionally involved party to use descriptive language. The history of the dispute should also be included in this section in order to provide insight to how the conflict developed over time (Wehr 220). This description should serve as a summary in so far that it would give an outsider the necessary information to understand the basis of the conflict but not too much information to be overwhelmed.

Next, the conflict context should be analyzed. As Wehr describes, “it is important to establish the scope and character of the context, or setting, within which the conflict takes place” as this will influence the nature of the conflict (19). The context should include the scale, place, culture, and time, as well as any other relevant outside factors (such as jurisdiction, language,
geography, social norms, etc) that may be pertinent to the specific conflict under analysis. The context not only impacts the conflict and shapes it, but the conflict itself can shape its context:

Studying...communication in terms of a struggle to mean and to connect meanings, involves a process of rearticulating contexts...The goal is not to situate a phenomenon in a context, but to map a context, mapping the very identity that brings the context into focus – context is not something out there ‘within which practices occur or which influence the development of practices. Rather identities, practices, and effects generally, constitute the very context within which they are practices, identities, or effects.’

(Grossberg qtd. in Nakayama & Halualani, 8)

Culture plays a large role in shaping the context of any communication situation but is particularly influential in intercultural situations.

Assessing the involved parties and their relationships is a necessary part of any conflict analysis. As Walker and Daniels indicate, “progress on [conflict] often hinges on the quality of the relationships that exist among the stakeholders or conflict parties” (Working Through 14). Identifying the stakeholders along with the primary and secondary parties involved is important to understanding the relational dynamics of the situation. It can also be crucial to recognize any interested third parties as they may also hold power in influence or demand consideration for their concerns (Wehr 20). The parties and relationships analysis is the most involved and detailed section of this proposed assessment framework, including sections from existing frameworks as well as incorporating additional concepts. The primary involved parties with direct influence on the situation need identified. Stakeholders and interested third parties should also be identified. After identifying the parties, several aspects need attention: 1) historical and current
First, because relationships change over time it’s important to address the history of relationships between parties as well as their current relationships. Understanding the relationships between the involved parties can help in both determining the collaboration potential and the likelihood of conflict resolution. In societal conflicts, not only examining the history of relationships between involved people and entities but looking at existing biases and ideologies within the society are important as they can also influence how people interpret, respond, and react to different information.

Second, Walker and Daniels emphasize “the importance of meaningful, open discourse” in collaboration (Assessing the Potential 4). Understanding each party’s thoughts and feelings about each other is key to understanding their communication styles, the potential for meaningful, open discourse, and ultimately their collaboration potential. Trust, interdependence, and respect are necessary ingredients for resolving a conflict collaboratively.

Third, power can play a huge role in conflict situations. Identifying not only which parties have direct decision-making power, but any existing positions of authority and privilege aids in understanding the relationship dynamics and potential for open communication. It is also important to determine the level of power that any interested 3rd parties hold in the situation. Power is a complex topic with a great amount of theoretical scholarship done on it, some of which is detailed above.

Fourth, according to Carpenter and Kennedy, value differences between parties can significantly influence the dynamics of a conflict situation (86). Stuart Hall explained in 1995 that “most social scientists now accept that our values enter into all our descriptions of the social
world” and therefore influence our understanding of truth and reality (203). It is important to note any existing and relevant value differences between conflict parties, as well as identifying if they are the focal point for the conflict or if they are important factors in the debate but not the central issue (Carpenter & Kennedy 89).

Finally, understanding the interests of each party is essential in resolving the conflict. Wehr breaks down issues based upon their basis in fact, value, or interests, as well as recognizing non-realistic interests. Each party must have concern or interest in the issue, or otherwise the conflict situation would not have arisen. Recognizing all of these concerns and interests is necessary before searching for a solution if maximum satisfaction is the goal. Daniels and Walker state that “collaboration is fundamentally a process in which interdependent parties work together to affect the future of an issue of shared interests” (57). They continue on to quote Gray’s definition of collaboration as “the pooling of appreciations and/or tangible concerns, e.g., information, money, labor, etc., by two or more stakeholders to solve a set of problems which neither can solve individually” (qtd. in Daniels & Walker 57). Recognizing each party’s interests is essential for the collaboration process to succeed.

Now that the involved parties and their relationships have been examined, determining the collaboration potential — or determining if another conflict management strategy or style would be more fitting — is the next step of a conflict assessment. Collaboration potential is “the degree to which parties can work together assertively in order to make meaningful progress in the management of a controversial, complex, and conflict-laden policy situation” (Walker et al. 200). Collaboration potential is based on three factors: the level of need for collaboration, the possibility of meaningful and respectful communication, and the possibility of mutual
satisfaction (Walker and Daniels, *Assessing the Potential* 3). Walker and Daniels also clarify eight key aspects of collaboration:

(1) It is less competitive, (2) it features mutual learning and fact-finding; (3) it allows underlying value differences to be explored, (4) it resembles principled negotiation, focusing on interests rather than positions, (5) it allocates the responsibility for implementation across many parties, (6) its conclusions are generated by participants through an interactive, iterative, and reflexive process, (7) it is often an ongoing process, and (8) it has the potential to build individual and community capacity in such areas as conflict management, leadership, decision making, and communication. (*Assessing the Potential* 4)

If there is no pressing need for collaboration, another method typically will suffice. Clear, honest, and open communication is essential to collaboration and must be possible in order for it to succeed. Finally, there must be some type of “mutual gain or integrative outcome” that is possible that benefits both or all parties involved more than they could benefit from another method of resolution (Walker & Daniels 3). Based on the previous information laid out from this assessment, it should be possible to determine which style(s) of conflict resolution would be most effective for the situation.

The final step of a conflict assessment is developing recommendations. Based on the collaboration potential between necessary parties, a conflict management strategy should be developed. Addressing each concern is the primary goal of developing specific recommendations. Recommendations should also include a plan for fostering constructive communication between the primary involved parties. These recommendations are typically shared with the involved parties after the assessment is conducted.
IV. Assessment of the Confucius Institute Conflict

Before any recommendations can be made, a thorough understanding of the conflict surrounding the Confucius Institutes is necessary. This section will first provide a brief overview of the nature of the conflict, then it will cover the history of the dispute. Next, the conflict context will be examined, including existing ideologies, U.S.-China relations, and university funding. The detailed overview of the involved parties and their interests and concerns about the Confucius Institutes will come next. In order to get information about the various involved parties, data will be collected from various types of publications, books, newspaper articles, opinion editorials, government websites and publications, and organization or company publications. The final section of the assessment includes the analysis, collaboration potential assessment, a plan to foster constructive communication, and my original recommendations on how to address the concerns surrounding the Confucius Institutes.

Nature of the Conflict

There is a wide variety of concerns regarding the Confucius Institutes, from how they impact academic freedom to how they hire teachers. Their transparency of operations, portrayal of China, and censorship and political influence are other common concerns. Huang reported that “some professors fear that China will try to silence other viewpoints taught on campus” (18). One of the first U.S. professors to publicly voice these concerns was Ms. Gerbert from the University of Kansas, who warned that it was important to keep Confucius Institutes and China and East Asian Studies programs separate in order to to avoid any academic interference with research on sensitive topics (Huang 18). Similar fears of the Confucius Institutes infringing upon academic freedom has been repeated throughout the US, as well as in other nations. The promotion of China’s culture and language to increase China’s overall soft power has been
another concern. Professor Jocelyn Chey, a former China specialist in the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade in Australia, warns that “the institutes were part of a diplomatic strategy to gain influence through education and culture” and that they “risk ‘dumbing down’ research and producing propaganda” through inaccurate portrayals of China (Hyland 15). These concerns have spread throughout a variety of interest groups as well as through the media.

A 2017 report by the National Association of Scholars (NAS) recommended U.S. Confucius Institutes be discontinued and shut down, but no hard evidence of promoting Chinese communist propaganda was presented: “In our research, we found no evidence that Chinese teachers in Confucius Institutes act as automaton promoters of the Chinese government or the Chinese Communist Party” (Peterson 44). The NAS also reports that the director of the Confucius Institute at Texas A&M University, “Kluver acknowledged that he asks every teacher at his Confucius Institute whether they received political training, and ‘To a number, they all say, ‘[Hanban] say do not talk about politics’” (Peterson 44). The NAS interpreted this to mean Hanban “does appear to pressure teachers to behave as representatives of the state and to refrain from criticizing the state, usually by avoiding all political talk” (Peterson 44). However, the purpose of avoiding political talk may not be representing the state, but a matter of expertise. Kluver continued on to explain that the reluctance to discuss politics stems from “disciplinary humility rather than censorship. Linguists are not experts in politics...and [they] don’t care to proffer their opinions in public” (Peterson 45). They continue on to point out several instances that infringed upon academic freedom, however, the majority of examples are results of University decisions rather than of actions taken by the Confucius Institute: “China exerts its pressure more indirectly, by gently pressing the American university itself to become the enforcer of Chinese codes … to compel university administrators to favor the Hanban with
selective presentations of Chinese culture and history” (Peterson 82). It is unclear how much involvement the Confucius Institutes directly have with limiting academic freedom, and thus the scrutiny over their influence continues.

The controversy over the Confucius Institutes goes back much further, however. The initiative that would become the Confucius Institutes began with a pilot program in Tashkent, Uzbekistan, in June of 2004. The first official Confucius Institute, organized and operated by the Hanban, was established in 2004, in Seoul, South Korea (“Frequently Asked”). It was widely regarded as a great success, and the second institute was opened only a few months later in November of 2004 at the University of Maryland (“Frequently Asked”). Following this initial success, in early 2006 the Chief of the National Office for Teaching Chinese as a Foreign Language, Xu Lin, outlined the Ministry of Education’s ambitious plan for the Institutes; to establish 100 Confucius Institutes by the end of 2006 and 1,000 by 2020 (Letian). At the time of writing, they had more than succeeded in the first half of this goal and were in line with projections to achieve the second by 2020.

In 2007, the first major statements of caution and criticism against the Confucius Institutes was made public online. In December of that year, the University of Sydney professor and former Australian Consul-General in Hong Kong, Jocelyn Chey, cautioned academics to be aware of potential bias when Confucius Institutes teach or lead research, explaining that the Institutes’ connection with the Chinese government and CCP could lead to a “dumbing down” of research (qtd. in Maslen). While somewhat accusatory, the article largely confined itself to urging caution regarding Chinese attempts at improving their international and domestic perception with patriotic dogma. The same cannot be said of the criticism that followed.
In April of 2008, the *Vancouver Sun* released an article that has been frequently-cited in analyses of the institutes, titled “Has BCIT sold out to Chinese propaganda?” (Steffenhagen). The article nominally presents both sides, including a statement from the British Columbia Institute of Technology (BCIT) vice-president Jim Reichert saying that “The real purpose of the Confucius Institute is to build bridges between the host country, the host institution and China … It creates a mechanism whereby people can learn about China — the culture, the basics of the language, the business structures and other things that make building that bridge easier” (Steffenhagen). However, the majority of the article revolved around the statements of local lawyers deriding the BCIT Confucius Institute as “a vehicle that the Chinese government uses to basically intimidate the academic institutions to run according to their guise and also as a vehicle for infiltration and spying into the campuses to find out what's going on hostile to their interest” (Staffenhagen). One such lawyer went so far as to say that “This is part of a very, very overwhelming campaign that a lot of people call soft power that China is using to penetrate virtually every institution and every level of western society” (qtd. in Staffenhagen). Despite these accusations, the BCIT Confucius Institute remains fully active to this day.

That same year, Tel Aviv University’s Dean of Students cancelled an art exhibit showcasing the PRC’s oppression of falun gong (Sahlins, *Confucius Institutes* 22). The organizers of the exhibit filed a lawsuit, and the Israel District Court ruled the cancellation as a violation of student’s freedom of expression and “ordered the university to remount the show and pay the organizers 45,000 shekels (about $11,000)” (Stavrou). This incident is often cited in arguments against the Confucius Institutes, claiming that the Institutes pressure universities to censor topics and information on campus, such as in Marshall Sahins’ book *Confucius Institutes Academic Malware*. However, the *Epoch Times* as well as the online edition of *Haaretz*
Newspaper reported that the Chinese Embassy in Israel pressured the university to shut down the exhibit and university officials, not the school’s Confucius Institute (“Tel Aviv University”; Stavrou).

More serious opposition and scrutiny came in 2009. In a piece for The Economist, party boss Li Changchun was quoted as saying that the Confucius Institutes were “an important part of China's overseas propaganda set-up,” a statement that was met with derision and controversy (“A Message”). The article itself takes the stance that such an overt statement of political purpose is functionally an admission that modern Chinese-style communism lacks cultural power (“A Message”). A book released later that same year by Fabrice de Pierrebourg and Michel Juneau-Katsuya, however, takes the opposite stance. Nest of Spies: The Startling Truth About Foreign Agents at Work Within Canada's Borders is an exploration of various declassified government data concerning espionage activities in Canada (Mandel-Campbell 6). Although not solely focused on China, the book specifically names the Confucius Institutes as a show of and grab for cultural strength, with a clear secondary goal of creating convenient platforms for espionage activities (Mandel-Campbell 6).

Not all of the commentary on the Institutes was negative this year, however. Both Paradise and Don Starr published frequently-cited, peer-reviewed articles analyzing the institutes and their actions, the latter specifically in Europe and the former more generally. They both concluded that while there may be some risk, there was little actual evidence of any of the propagandizing or espionage activities they had been accused of (Paradise; Starr). Starr even went so far as to suggest that any propaganda at play was more focused on the Chinese people than the world at large; he argued that the “expansion of soft power” arguments were actually an
attempt to sell the utility of the project to the Chinese population themselves, while increasing national pride and expanding the availability and utility of the Chinese language (66).

These defenses only served to slow the rising tide of controversy surrounding the Institutes. Japan's Osaka Sangyo University was having problems in assets operation and asked the Confucius Institute to relocate to another campus of the university in an attempt to solve some of the problems, but eventually sent a notice to the Institute stating “We have no choice but to abolish Confucius Institute” (qtd. in Ye). A month later at a consultation, Toshiyuku, the director of the university affairs board exclaimed: “Although the Confucius Institute is not an invasion by the Chinese government, it can be seen as a 'soft landing' for China's expansionism … We should recognize Hanban as a cultural spy department and should not cooperate with it” (qtd. in Ye). The university promptly asked Toshiyuki to resign and issued an official apology in hopes that Toshiyuki’s comments would not affect the school’s relationships with China (Ye). Even with the formal apology and lack of evidence of espionage, this incident incited further concerns of espionage in the Confucius Institute program.

The following year would began with several positive events. In January 2011, China’s President Hu Jintao visited a school in Chicago that had a Confucius Institute (J.M.). When questioned, officials said that an important goal of the institutes is to give the world an accurate understanding of China and its culture (J.M.). The Economist published that his visit was well-received and that “China has been careful not to encourage these language centres to act as overt purveyors of the party's political viewpoints, and little suggests they are doing so” (J.M.). In March 2011, The Diplomat wrote an article following a series of in-depth interviews and surveys that concluded the accusations of espionage and academic influence-gathering were largely unfounded, despite their curriculums still toeing the party line on sensitive subjects (Nakagawa).
However the good press was not to last. In May of 2011, a Taiwanese independence activist and politician published in the *Taipei Times* that colleges and universities have to sign a contract in which they declare their support for Beijing's “One China” policy when establishing a Confucius Institute (Peng). As a result, he said, both Taiwanese and Tibetan independence become taboo topics at the Institutes (Peng). The criticism kept flowing; many severely critical articles and books continued to be released that year, with subjects ranging from accusing the Institutes of “importing discrimination,” breaking human rights law, and serving as a tool of state propaganda and influence (Robertson; Maclean’s; Brady).

A new form of opposition arose in 2012. In March of that year, professor of international relations at the University of Pennsylvania Arthur Waldron ignored the strategic and political criticisms, instead stating that the key issue was academic independence: “Once you have a Confucius Institute on campus, you have a second source of opinions and authority that is ultimately answerable to the Chinese Communist Party and which is not subject to scholarly review” (qtd. in Guttenplan). This would continue to be a theme particularly in academic criticism of the Institutes in the following years; the Institutes answer to the Chinese government rather than academic scrutiny.

In 2013, the news for the Institutes was both good and bad. February brought the closure of the Institute at McMaster University in Canada, the second such closure. Sonia Zhao, a former Confucius Institute teacher at McMaster University was “forced to hide her belief in Falun Gong,” a spiritual meditation practice illegal in China, because Hanban previously banned Confucius Institute employees from joining “illegal organizations such as Falun Gong” (Sahlins, *Confucius Institutes* 30). McMaster University terminated their contract with Hanban following this scenario, and Hanban removed the explicit provision banning Falun Gong practitioners from
working at Confucius Institutes, though it remains an illegal practice in China (Sahlins, *Confucius Institutes* 30). Just two months later in April, the first Institute in Washington DC opened at George Washington University (“Steven Knapp”). Establishing an Institute in the U.S. capital was deemed a landmark success and was swiftly followed with the naming of George Washington University President, Steven Knapp, to the Council of the Confucius Institute Headquarters, the governing body of Confucius Institutes worldwide (“Steven Knapp”).

Late in the same year, “China's vice premier Liu Yandong called for further development of the Confucius Institute to promote cross-border cultural exchanges” at an annual conference for the Institutes (Xinhua). She explained that the Confucius Institute program is essential to developing cultural exchange and friendship between Chinese people and people from foreign countries (Xinhua). Liu also said the primary goal for the Institutes is to increase fluency in the Chinese language worldwide (Xinhua). Liu promoted cooperation in the program and “urged it to show the world the real picture of China and promote inclusiveness and mutual understanding of different civilizations” (Xinhua). Through the teaching of the Chinese language, the Confucius Institutes aim not only to spread Chinese language use and increase fluency, but to improve intercultural understanding and develop a common understanding of “the real” China internationally (Xinhua).

By 2014, Hanban had expanded their operation and reached over 480 Confucius Institutes in dozens of countries on six continents, far exceeding their original goal and well on the way to accomplishing their planned expansion of 1,000 Institutes by 2020 (“Confucius Institutes Worldwide”). However, the scrutiny regarding the Confucius Institutes skyrocketed after an incident occurred at the European Association for Chinese Studies (EACS) Conference. The EACS Conference was funded in part by the Confucius China Studies Program (CCSP), and
the international grant between the EACS and CCSP specified that “The conference is regulated by the laws and decrees of both China and the host country, and will not carry out any activities which are deemed to be adverse to the social order” (qtd. in “Report: The Deletion” 2). The CCSP is a scholarship funding program for foreign graduate and PhD students developed by Hanban, separate from the Confucius Institute program but often marketed to students through Confucius Institutes (“China Studies Program”). Upon arriving to the conference July 22nd, Xu Lin, Director-General of Hanban and Chief Executive of the Confucius Institutes program at the time, received the programme and complete list of conference abstracts. She “pointed out that there were some abstracts whose contents were contrary to Chinese regulations, and issued a mandatory request that mention of the support of the CCSP be removed from the Conference Abstracts” (“Report: The Deletion”). This resulted in the Conference Programme not being distributed to the conference participants on July 23rd as planned (“Report: The Deletion”). Four pages were removed from the Conference Abstracts as well (“Report: The Deletion”). During the conference Xu Lin and the EACS Conference co-organizer eventually agreed that “On the condition that all the funding received from the CCSP would be returned to the CCSP, the [Confucius Institute Headquarters] permitted the Conference Abstracts to be distributed to conference participants” (“Report: The Deletion”). Ultimately, because there were unexpected sensitive issues being studied (such as Taiwan and Tibet), the CCSP revoked its funding and approval. Unsurprisingly, negative publicity about the Confucius Institutes immediately followed this incident.

October of 2014 brought another closure: the Institute at the University of Chicago. Over one hundred faculty at the University of Chicago signed a petition against their Confucius Institute (Chen, 2). The official statement from the university reads:
Since 2009 the University of Chicago and Hanban have worked in partnership to develop the CIUC (Confucius Institute of the University of Chicago), which has benefited research on China and collaboration between the University of Chicago and academic institutions in China…However, recently published comments about UChicago in an article about the director-general of Hanban are incompatible with a continued equal partnership” (“Statement…” 2).

Sahlins explains that the published comments the university referred to was published “in a Chinese language online site (blog.sina.com) and were clearly intended for domestic consumption … The passage in question related how with one sentence Madame Xu was able to intimidate the president of the University of Chicago over the issue of a protest of the CIUC by members of his faculty” (Confucius Institutes, 64). This reporting of how Madame Xu Lin, the Director-General of Hanban at the time, manipulated and subdued the president of the University of Chicago was publicly embarrassing and insulting to the university’s president, ultimately destroying their chances of continuing a friendly relationship.

Later, in December that year, the U.S. House Committee on Foreign Affairs held a hearing concerning the Confucius Institutes titled Is Academic Freedom Threatened by China's Influence on U.S. Universities?. It’s chairman Chris Smith stated that “U.S. colleges and universities should not be outsourcing academic control, faculty and student oversight or curriculum to a foreign government” (113 Congress). The committee eventually decided to call for the Government Accountability Office to study the specific agreements between U.S. universities and the Confucius Institutes.

In April of 2017, a frequently cited and heavily researched report on the Confucius Institutes was released by the National Association of Scholars (NAS), Outsourced to China. In
the executive summary, the author states that they found “few smoking guns, and no evidence of outright policies banning certain topics from discussion, but reasons for concern nonetheless” (Peterson 85). The report takes a largely negative view of the institutes and advises universities to close their institutes. Despite this, the report has been frequently cited by supporters of the institutes, because in its 183 pages of researched analysis it finds essentially no evidence of actual wrongdoing, at worse suggesting that “universities have made improper concessions that may jeopardize academic freedom and institutional autonomy” (Peterson 17). This soft criticism barely slowed the expansion of the institutes; by October of 2017 a total of 516 Confucius Institutes and 1,076 Confucius Classrooms had been established in 142 countries and regions (Xinhua, Pars. 1-3).

The following year brought significantly increased scrutiny and controversy to the Confucius Institutes, especially in the U.S.. In a February Senate Intelligence Committee hearing, FBI director Christopher Wray raised public concerns about the Confucius Institutes: “The use of nontraditional [intelligence] collectors [by China], especially in the academic setting, [is seen] in almost every field office that the FBI has around the country. It’s not just in major cities. It’s in small ones as well. It’s across basically every discipline” (Redden, “The Chinese”). While his comments were given only after directly prompted by Senator Rubio, they have remained a primary source of concern of the institutes ever since (Redden, “The Chinese”). That same year Politico Magazine published an aggressive criticism of the institutes, suggesting they were an act of cultural conquest (Epstein). More nuanced views were becoming prevalent however; in April, Deutsche Welle published an article urging caution regarding the Institutes’ control over academic funding usually held by teachers (Rahn). It also questioned the degree to which the Institutes were being criticized as a tool of international politics (Rahn). Muddling the
current perception of the institutes even further, in July the Washington Post published an article insisting that the common criticisms of the Confucius Institutes; conflicting interests in academic funding and academic freedom, the propagandizing of American students, the disempowering of American teachers at their own schools; were not major concerns. The author, John Pomfret instead suggests that treating the institutes and by extension the Hanban as academic boogeymen, the U.S. is going after a relatively harmless academic program while ignoring more traditional Chinese intelligence threats (Pomfret).

The mixed and controversial reception of the Confucius Institutes continues in 2019. In February, Leiden University closed its long-running Confucius Institute, citing that the “Institute’s activities no longer align with the University’s China strategy and the direction this has taken in recent years” (“Leiden University”). At the end of that same month, the fervor surrounding the institutes reached new heights as Time Magazine reviewed the Senate report, covered previously, on China’s impact on the US educational system (Gunia). While neither the Senate report nor Time Magazine’s review offer new information, they both reach largely negative conclusions along the same lines as previous criticism; that the Confucius Institutes funding for universities creates a conflict of interest, along with more vague accusations of a lack of transparency (Gunia; Portman and Carper 10).

Conflict Context

The existing ideologies detailed previously in the Literature Review have significantly impacted the relationship between the U.S. and China. The Confucius Institute program has developed over a period where country relations have steadily become more strained and complex. This relationship impacts the relationship between U.S. institutions and Chinese businesses, as they are now operating within a context of uncertainty and tension. The Confucius
Institutes program can serve to reduce said tension through the development of mutually
beneficial, academic relationships. However, the scrutiny the program has attracted also puts
additional strain on the relationship between academic institutions as well as on a broader
country level. The larger context of U.S.-China relations both informs and shapes the debate
surrounding the Institutes as well as being impacted and shaped by the discourse about the
Confucius Institutes program. The more tension in the overarching relationship between the U.S.
and China, the more scrutiny is likely to develop over the Confucius Institutes.

Since the start of the Confucius Institutes program in 2004, the relationship between the
U.S. and China has shifted and developed into what it is today. In 2005, U.S. Deputy Secretary
of State Robert B. Zoellick recognized China as an emerging power and called upon them to
influence other nations, including Sudan, North Korea, and Iran, to join the international system
(“U.S. Relations with China”). In 2006 after North Korea conducted its first nuclear test, China
served as a mediator attempting to bring Pyongyang back to the negotiation table to discuss their
nuclear ambitions (“U.S. Relations with China”).

China announced an 18% budget increase for military spending in 2007 to provide better
training and pay for their soldiers (“U.S. Relations with China”). U.S. Vice President Dick
Cheney exclaimed that China’s increase in military spending was “not consistent” with their goal
of a “peaceful rise” (qtd. in “U.S. Relations”). China’s growing military power has also
contributed to the “China threat” concerns detailed previously.

China and the U.S. have a long history of pursuing mutual economic interests. In 2008,
China surpassed Japan in becoming the largest U.S. foreign creditor, holding around $600 billion
in U.S. debt at the time (“U.S. Relations with China”). Concerns in the U.S. over U.S.-China
economic imbalances grew as the countries’ economies became increasingly interdependent
In 2010, China’s economy grew to be the second-largest in the world, and according to Goldman Sachs chief economist Jim O’Neill, it is estimated to surpass the U.S. economy by 2027 (“U.S. Relations with China”). In 2011, soon after Hillary Clinton called for increased investment in the Asia-Pacific region, U.S. President Barack Obama announced that the U.S. and eight other nations (not including China) had “reached an agreement on the Trans-Pacific Partnership—a multinational free trade agreement” that developed rules surrounding many aspects of global trade (“U.S. Relations with China”). President Obama explained that this agreement was intended to ensure that “the United States — and not countries like China — is the one writing this century's rules for the world's economy” (qtd. in Somander).

While the U.S. economy and China’s economy became increasingly intertwined and interdependent, the control over trade regulations desired by the U.S. put additional strain on the relationship between them and China.

Trade tensions continued to rise in 2012 when the U.S., Japan, and the E.U. claimed that China’s export regulations on rare earth metals violated the regulations of the World Trade Organization (WTO) (Alessi & Economy). Rare earth metals are used in the production of a lot of new technologies, such as smartphones, hybrid cars, wind turbines, and advanced military technologies. Rare earth metals are moderately abundant on the planet but are dangerous to mine and extremely difficult to extract because they do not clump together like other elements such as gold, silver, or copper (Vincent). Roughly ninety of the world’s rare earth metals are supplied by China (Vincent). Leading up to 2012, China had “progressively cut its exports of rare earths, citing concerns over long-term supply and the environmental ramifications of the rare earth mining. Many in the international community believe, however, that China is attempting to use its dominance as a rare earth supplier to force companies that need rare earths to manufacture in
China” (Alessi & Economy). The New China News Agency published that “It is rash and unfair for the United States to put forward a lawsuit against China before the WTO,” and that “China will make no hesitation in defending its legitimate rights in trade disputes” (qtd. in Lee and Parsons). However in 2014, the WTO ruled against China’s rare earth export regulations and by 2015 China adjusted them accordingly. While the case was focused on the WTO rules, it created tension in the trade relations between the U.S. and China for several years.

China experienced a large shift in government in 2012 when Xi Jinping replaced Hu Jintao as president and about 70% of government and leadership members were replaced (“U.S. Relations with China”). The following year, President Obama hosted President Xi in California in attempts “to build a personal rapport with his counterpart and ease tense U.S.-China relations” (“U.S. Relations with China”). This meeting was successful in reducing some of the tension, as both presidents pledged on developing a “new model” of cooperation between their nations (qtd. in Ng). While the presidents discussed concerns of cybersecurity and Chinese hacking, a large concern in the U.S. at the time, they focused more on their aligned goals: the denuclearization of North Korea and developing a joint effort to combat climate change (Ng). The next year, in 2014, President Obama and President Xi issued a joint statement pledging to reduce carbon emissions, stirring hope “among some experts that they would boost momentum for global negotiations ahead of the 2015 UN-led Climate Change Conference in Paris” (“U.S. Relations with China”). The newfound, easy communication between presidents continued throughout Obama’s administration and smoothed out some of the overarching tension between the U.S. and China.

However, despite the increased communication between President Obama and President Xi, there were still several conflicts between the countries during Obama’s administration. US
Defense Secretary Ashton Carter called for an “immediate and lasting halt” to China’s disputed land reclamations in the South China Seas, deeming China’s actions “out of step” with international water laws (qtd. in “US Calls For”). The U.S. officially opposed “any further militarization” of the disputed area and reported through naval surveillance that China was “placing military equipment on a chain of artificial islands, despite Beijing's claims that construction is mainly for civilian purposes” (“U.S. Relations with China”). China’s continued development of the South China Seas and the U.S.’s continued disapproval put additional strain on the relationship between the U.S. and China.

When U.S. President Trump took office after Obama’s administration, the dynamic between the U.S. and China began to shift. The U.S. official position has accepted China’s “one China” policy for nearly four decades, recognizing Taiwan and Tibet to be a part of China (“U.S. Relations with China”). However, after his election, U.S. President-elect Trump accepted a phone call from Taiwan’s president (Bohan and Brunnstrom). Reuters reports that President-elect Trump “said the United States did not necessarily have to stick to its long-standing position that Taiwan is part of ‘one China,’ questioning nearly four decades of policy in a move likely to antagonize Beijing” (Bohan and Brunnstrom). The Obama administration, in its last month in power, “said senior White House aides had spoken with Chinese officials to insist that Washington’s ‘one China’ policy remained intact” as well as “warned that progress made in the U.S. relationship with China could be undermined by a ‘flaring up’ of the Taiwan issue” (Bohan and Brunnstrom). This set the tone for the U.S.-China relations during the era of the Trump administration.

Further exacerbating the relationship between the U.S. and China, in 2018 the U.S. launched extensive tariffs aimed directly at China (Thomas & Wiseman). AP News reported that
President Trump “Primed for economic combat … set in motion tariffs on as much as $60 billion in Chinese imports to the U.S. … and accused the Chinese of high-tech thievery, picking a fight that could push the global heavyweights into a trade war” (Thomas & Wiseman). These initial tariffs were enacted in 2018. The U.S. has since placed tariffs on “$250 billion worth of Chinese product, and has threatened tariffs on $325 billion more” (Wong & Koty). China has retaliated by imposing tariffs on over 500 U.S. products (“U.S. Relations with China”). There have been several attempts to work out some type of arrangement, however all such negotiation attempts have failed to result in an agreement between the countries (Xin). Since China introduced these tariffs on U.S. goods, the U.S. has both increased and introduced new tariffs on Chinese products, most recently announcing an increase in May of 2019 (Wong & Koty). China in turn has continued to increase theirs as well, also announcing in May of 2019, that as of June 1st additional and increased tariffs on $60 billion of U.S. goods (Wong & Koty). In a national speech, President Xi referred to the U.S.-China trade war as “a new Long March,” referencing a historical series of marches the Communist Party’s Red Army had to make north in the 1930s to escape the pursuing Kuomintang army (Xin). This reference conveys the seriousness and significance of the trade war to the Chinese people. The South China Morning Post reports that President Xi’s “comments come amid an increasingly sour mood in official Chinese media, which have become more forceful in anti-US rhetoric since trade war talks collapsed” (Xin). President Xi’s speech indicates that China has given up on reaching trade agreements with the U.S. (Xin). Currently, “economists expect the trade war between the world’s two largest economies to get worse before it gets better” (“Trade War”). Neither the U.S. or China maintains power through this trade war; it is continually shifting from one country to the other with each of
their responses and reactions. The intensifying trade war between the countries has become the pinnacle of tension in the modern relationship between U.S. and China.

Further escalating the tension between the U.S. and China is the emergence of a recent “visa war” between governments. In June 2018, the U.S. Department of State implemented a new policy that shortened the duration of visas of Chinese graduate students studying sensitive fields from 5 years to 1 year (Mervis 1). The U.S. government’s revocation of multi-year and multiple-entry visas for well-known Chinese scholars was matched by the Chinese embassy’s rejection of visa applications for President Trump’s China adviser Michael Pillsbury and former deputy special trade representative Wendy Cutler, preventing them from attending a conference in Beijing (Shambaugh 1). Shambaugh criticizes this “visa war,” as it prevents critical dialogue: “At this time of significant stress in US-China relations, it is precisely the time when we need to have as much dialogue among academic experts as possible” (2). Largely because of the FBI’s concerns with Chinese espionage, new Chinese visa policies were implemented in the U.S. This put strain and tension on the relationship between the countries, inspiring China to implement stricter visa practices on the U.S. too. The resulting decreased travel between countries not only negatively impacted U.S. universities and international students, but has reduced both political, diplomatic communication and academic collaboration between the U.S. and China.

Another aggravator of U.S.-China relations is an act aimed directly at China’s Confucius Institutes and University funding for Chinese studies programs. John McCain’s National Defense Authorization Act of 2018, signed by President Trump, introduced a new prohibition and limitation for U.S. funding Chinese language programs at establishments of higher education that also have a Confucius Institute. This bill gave power to the U.S. government in influencing, reducing, what programs are developed and offered at universities across the country. It without
exception prohibits U.S. funding of “Chinese language instruction provided by a Confucius Institute” and, with exception, prevents U.S. funding of “Chinese language program[s] at an institution of higher education that hosts a Confucius Institute” (Title 10, Subtitle B, Sec. 1091, b). The latter can be overruled by an official waiver approved by the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness if specific conditions are met (Title 10, Subtitle B, Sec. 1091, c). On top of the concerns over academic freedom and promoting communist values, this bill served as a turning point in the situation, prompting several universities to evaluate their funding needs and reconsider their ties with their Confucius Institutes.

The Confucius Institutes also operate now during a time where U.S. universities are facing numerous budget cuts. Since the 2008 recession, states have significantly reduced their university funding. The Center on Budget and Policy Priorities reported in 2017 that “overall state funding for public two- and four-year colleges in the 2017 school year was nearly $9 billion below its 2008 level, after adjusting for inflation” (Mitchell et al. 1). This has led to reduced academic opportunities and student services as well as a 35% increase in tuition rates since 2008 (Mitchell et al. 3). The budget cuts could serve as a motivator for universities to establish relations with Hanban and host a Confucius Institute in order to provide students with more academic opportunities and services as well as securing an additional funding source. While universities have faced these dramatic budget cuts over the past decade, the public largely remains unaware. According to a survey from APM Research Lab, “27 percent of American adults thought government spending for colleges had increased and 34 percent thought it had remained steady” since 2008 (Baumhart & Julin). Previously, tuition covered roughly one third of a university’s costs, while now it covers approximately half of the school’s costs (Baumhart & Julin). Jon Marcus, higher education editor at The Hechinger Report, explains that most people
blame increased tuition on colleges and universities instead of the governor or legislature (Baumhart & Julin). Universities are increasingly criticized for having high tuition prices, and this too could serve as a motivator to find other sources of funding, such as from establishing a Confucius Institute.

**Involved Parties, Interests, & Concerns**

There are a wide variety of people, groups, and organizations interested in the debate about the Confucius Institutes. This section will provide details of the different involved parties, stakeholders, and interested third parties, exploring their interests and concerns about the Confucius Institutes program. This information will be used in the upcoming analysis section addressing the various concerns and recommendations. The primary parties involved are individual universities and Hanban, as they are the two parties that have direct power in establishing, maintaining, changing, or terminating a Confucius Institute. The National Association of Scholars (NAS), the director of the FBI, several members of Congress and other politicians, as well as university officials and a variety of scholars have all expressed interest or concern with the Confucius Institutes as well.

As worldwide concerns about freedom of speech, censorship, and foreign government control of education rose, Hanban developed a response strategy to entirely separate the Confucius Institutes from politics and further cement their apolitical nature: “Marketing it as wholly academic, as many Chinese educators seem to see it, is likely a better approach than associating it with a soft power offensive or conscious projection of Chinese interests, which are both political considerations” (Paradise 662). This new rebranding strategy included changing the English name from “The China National Office for Teaching Chinese as a Foreign Language” to “The Office of Chinese Language Council International,” dropping “National”
from its title (Paradise 662). This aimed to further separate the Confucius Institute program from China’s governmental agenda. However, the Confucius Institute Headquarters’ strategy backfired as China’s pursuit of soft power had already been linked to the expansion of the Confucius Institutes in the public eye. In trying to further separate the two, Hanban created the impression that the Confucius Institute project had a hidden motive to increase China’s soft power. Ulterior motives and hidden agendas incite suspicion because of their deceptive nature and their tendency to hinder and cause detriment to the deceived parties. By not trying to reframe it in a positive light, the Confucius Institutes program appeared to lacked transparency and cultivated greater public suspicion.

In addition to the suspicion caused by a perceived hidden motive, the explicit goal of increasing China’s soft power can be intimidating to foreigners in itself. As Lueck et al. described earlier, ‘soft power’ has become associated with the negative connotations that the U.S. holds about China. The conflicting political values (on communism, human rights, free speech, government control, censorship, etc.) between the PRC and that of most western countries causes concern of what China may choose to do with its growing power. Furthermore, with China recently emerging as an economic and military superpower, and an increasing number of people viewing China as a potential threat, China’s pursuit of even more power is often portrayed as direct evidence of their threat. Effectively reframing the pursuit of soft power as non-threatening would be necessary for China to actually achieve their goal of increasing their soft power.

China increasing their soft power may not be as much a threat as often perceived by non-Chinese. Following their rapid economic and military growth, there is a lot of concern and suspicion of China worldwide. It should come with little surprise that China would want to
rectify this perception to reduce tension in international relations. The Confucius Institute project is one method through which China aims to improve their international reputation. Paradise explains:

Maybe the best way to think of the Confucius Institute project is as a type of impression management, an effort by China to craft a positive image of itself in a world fraught with danger. Faced with tremendous anxiety about China in the U.S. and other major trading partners, Confucius Institutes help create the impression of a kinder and gentler China. In this respect, the Confucius Institute project fits in well with the notion of China’s peaceful development. (Paradise 662)

Through establishing language and culture institutes encouraging academic collaboration and intercultural exchange, mutually beneficial relationships are formed. China’s goal of “increasing soft power” is less about gaining control over other countries than it is about improving relationships with those countries.

The two explicit goals the Confucius Institute program has are to increase Chinese language proficiency and to build relationships around the world. Hanban’s website indicates that the Institute program was established to meet the world’s growing demand for Chinese language learning (“About Confucius Institute”). In the English-translated Chinese language version of the site, Hanban explains the purpose of the Institutes:

[The Confucius Institute] is committed to adapting to the needs of people from all over the world (regions) for Chinese language learning, enhancing the understanding of Chinese language and culture among people from all over the world, and strengthening educational and cultural exchanges between China and the rest of the world. Cooperation,
develop friendly relations between China and foreign countries, promote the development of multiculturalism in the world, and build a harmonious world. (‘关于孔子学院’)

The Confucius Institutes are part of China’s larger goal of improving their country’s public image, reputation, and international relationships. The importance China places on its relationships with other nations is reflective of its language: in China, family relations are analogous to relationships of the state; the word for state or nation, guójiā, is a compound word joining ‘state’ and ‘family,’ implying that relationships of the state are as important to the nation as family relations are to the person (Lyon 52). At an institutional level, Hanban expresses greater concern for developing international relationships through its language and culture program that it does on teaching language and culture abroad. This is consistent with the Chinese concept of guānxì, as developing good relationships is considered highly important and valuable. This also falls in line with the values that are common in collectivistic societies, as higher value is placed on groups and relationships than on individual gains or desires. Hanban’s primary goal is to develop mutually beneficial, harmonious friendships with foreign academic institutions.

The National Association of Scholars (NAS), mentioned previously, is an organization that has been adamantly against the Confucius Institutes. The NAS is a scholars and citizens network that is united by a “commitment to academic freedom, disinterested scholarship, and excellence in American higher education” (“NAS Overview”). They publish a quarterly journal, conduct studies examining curricula and other aspects of higher education policy and practice, and have numerous state and regional affiliates (“NAS Overview”). Their mission is to uphold “the standards of a liberal arts education that fosters intellectual freedom, searches for the truth, and promotes virtuous citizenship” (“NAS Overview”). Other sources describe the NAS in a variety of ways. Source Watch, a heavily left-biased organization, describes the NAS as an
organization that “opposes multiculturalism and affirmative action and seeks to counter what it considers a ‘liberal bias’ in academia” (“National Association…” 1). *The Chronicle of Higher Education* reported that the NAS had their peak in the 1990s and has slowly been losing members and declining in influence since (Schmidt, “National Scholars”). While the NAS may not be as influential as they once were, they are still quite active in research and publishing. The NAS is an academic research organization with a slightly conservative bias that is interested in preserving the meritocracy and integrity of collegiate institutions.

The NAS published the report *Outsourced to China* in 2017, examining the hiring policies, formal protections for academic freedom, textbooks, course offerings, funding policies, and formal and informal speech codes from ten Confucius Institutes in New York and two in New Jersey (Peterson 17). The report expresses concern in four areas: intellectual freedom, transparency, entanglement, and soft power (Peterson 17-21). Some of the teachers and professors at Confucius Institutes “claimed complete freedom to express themselves,” while others “felt pressured to self-censor” in order to maintain a friendly relationship with Hanban or to protect the Confucius Institute’s reputation (Peterson 18). Furthermore, there was no official, formal protection for the academic freedom of Chinese teachers in any the Confucius Institutes they examined (Peterson 18). Peterson explained that this was potentially problematic because the Confucius Institute teachers “are hired by, paid by, and report to the Hanban, which reserves the right to remove teachers who violate Chinese law—including speech codes” (Peterson 18).

However, the NAS did not find any explicit examples of censorship or infringement upon academic freedom that occurred in any of these institutes. This is consistent with national culture characterization research, as people from the U.S. tend to place a higher value on written details and less value on trust in the relationship. The NAS does not trust Hanban not to misuse the
written agreement to enforce Chinese speech code laws on Confucius Institute teachers working in the U.S. and therefore is greatly concerned with the lack of explicit protection of academic freedom in the contracts. This also relates to the research on uncertainty avoidance; Hanban is more likely to accept ambiguous language in the contracts while the U.S. counterpart, and U.S. third parties such as the NAS, are more likely to be uncomfortable with ambiguity.

The second area the NAS found issue with was in transparency. From the institutes they examined, none publicly disclosed the contract between Hanban and the university, the budget, or funding arrangements (Peterson 18). Many of these contracts contain non-disclosure agreements, instructing the university not to share details of the contract without written consent from Hanban (Peterson 18). In order to access contracts, the NAS had to file requests under the Freedom of Information Law, which granted them access to contracts at eight of the twelve universities they were examining (Peterson 18). Furthermore, the universities were reluctant to provide the NAS with any information regarding the institutes, some going to extraordinary measures to maintain privacy:

At only two of the 12 institutes did the director agree to speak to us…but cancelled at the last minute. At Binghamton University, director Zu-yan Chen also cancelled our meetings with members of the Confucius Institute staff. The Alfred University provost, upon learning that Rachelle Peterson had secured permission from a Confucius Institute teacher to visit her course, interrupted the class to eject Rachelle and forbid her from returning to campus. (Peterson 18-19)

This clear desire to keep information private regarding Confucius Institute contracts, budget, curriculum, and teaching practices evoked suspicion from the NAS; what must they be hiding? The NAS stands that all Confucius Institute contracts, hiring policies, and funding arrangements
ought to be publicly available (Peterson 18). This also maintains continuity with the culture research on uncertainty avoidance. Having access to information, such as the contract agreements between Hanban and a hosting university, reduces one’s level of uncertainty about the arrangement. The NAS’s uncomfortability with uncertainty motivates their concern of the confidentiality of Confucius Institute agreements.

The third concern with the Confucius Institutes that the NAS details is entanglement. Entanglement here refers to the complex system of relationships that Confucius Institutes have and develop. Peterson notes that the funding from Hanban comes at a time with universities are facing numerous budget cuts, making the Confucius Institute program and increase in international student enrollment more appealing to universities (19). The Confucius Institutes have become a “central node of US-Chinese academic exchanges,” attracting tuition-paying international Chinese students, funding scholarships for U.S. students to study abroad, and organizing faculty exchanges (Peterson 20). Hanban’s goal of fostering relationships, or guānxì, is illustrated through these connections that they have developed and funded. The NAS is concerned that this is “making it increasingly difficult for universities to withdraw from Confucius Institutes without jeopardizing other financial relationships” (Peterson 20). The NAS stays weary with uncertainty, but does acknowledge that there are clear benefits from this complex entanglement of relationships too, primarily the increased opportunity for intercultural experiences, student and faculty exchanges, and academic collaboration (Peterson 19).

The final area of concern the NAS has with the Confucius Institutes is with soft power motivation. They are worried that the Confucius Institutes are set up in order to portray China in a positive light, censoring out all negative history (Peterson 20). Peterson claims that “students who attend Confucius Institutes will develop a natural interest in building professional
relationships with those in China” (20). With the goal of building friendly relationships, Hanban probably would like to inspire foreigners to also be interested in developing international relationships. However, the report provides no evidence that Confucius Institutes actually do inspire an interest to building relationships with Chinese people. It also never explains why increasing professional relationships between people from the U.S. and China would be bad. The NAS is concerned that if the Confucius Institutes censor sensitive or controversial topics like China’s political history, human rights abuse, the Tiananmen Massacre, Falun Gong, Tibet, and Taiwan, that an entire “generation of American students with selective knowledge of a major country” will develop, forming a favorable bias towards China (Peterson 20). This assumes that students that attend Confucius Institute programs will form an opinion about the entire country based solely on the information provided by the institute. The report does not provide evidence of student opinions being shaped in this way, but rather implies that this would be an inevitable result of a biased portrayal of Chinese history. However, Hubbert’s research (detailed previously) indicates the opposite effect; student opinions of China became more negative because of the Institutes’ idealized portrayal of China (335). The institutes are set up to teach Chinese language and culture and to foster collaborative relationships abroad, not to teach Chinese history or political ideology (Confucius Institute Headquarters, 10971). While the issue of censorship directly opposes the value of academic and intellectual freedom and ought to be addressed, the presumption that censorship in the institutes will create an entire generation with only selective knowledge of China is a hasty generalization. Despite no clear evidence of wrongdoing, the NAS still supports terminating the Confucius Institute program: “We recommend that all universities close their Confucius Institutes” (Peterson 10). However, in the case that “a college or university refuses to close its Confucius Institute”, the NAS recommends
that “faculty members and administrators push for” various reforms (Peterson 10). These recommended reforms will be examined in the upcoming Analysis section.

In February of 2018, the director of the FBI, Christopher Wray, made public the FBI’s interest in the Confucius Institutes program in a meeting with the Senate Intelligence Committee. According to The Washington Times, he explained that the FBI was investigating several Confucius Institutes around the U.S., responding to concerns of covert spying and influence operations (Gertz 1). Inkstone News reported that at that same meeting, Wray exclaimed “One of the things we’re trying to do is view the China threat as not just a whole-of-government threat but a whole-of-society threat” (qtd. in Gan & Churchill, 14). Wray’s position in the FBI has helped him to perpetuate the “China threat” rhetoric. In a meeting with the president of the Council on Foreign Relations, Richard Haass, Wray detailed the “multi-layered threat posed by China,” arguing that China has pioneered a “societal approach” to stealing innovation from universities, businesses, and organizations, by attempting to “steal its way up the economic ladder” (Wray qtd. in O’Malley). While he states concern for the role Confucius Institutes could play in Chinese espionage in the academic sector, Wray expresses more concern for individual graduate students and researchers working on behalf of China to get information on cutting-edge research, advanced technology, and world-class equipment and expertise (O’Malley, 8).

University World News reported that “When Haass raised the issue of visa decisions involving academics and researchers from China who are not in artificial intelligence, but rather things like international relations, Wray said he has seen ‘many instances’ in which the visa process … is being ‘abused and exploited’” (O’Malley 20). These concerns have greatly impacted visa regulations and practices, affecting universities and Chinese international students, graduates, and employees, as well as adding tension to the U.S.-China relationship.
Many congressmen and other politicians have been expressing concerns similar to those of Wray and the FBI. The Dallas Morning News reported that in 2018, two Texas congressmen, McCaul and Cuellar, pleaded to Texas universities through various letters to cut their ties with Confucius Institutes because of concerns regarding Chinese intelligence collection and political influence (J. Wang). Florida Senator Rubio similarly urged schools in Florida to close their institutes, writing that the Confucius Institutes serve as a Chinese soft power tool, restrict academic freedom, and have unclear hiring practices (“Rubio warns…”). The Shorthorn reported that “Rubio said the institutes are part of a long-term strategy by China to replace the U.S. as the most powerful and influential country on Earth” (Oxner). Similar actions were taken by Massachusetts Representative Moulton, as The Washington Post reports that he called on the forty colleges and universities in Massachusetts to either terminate or pledge never to enter into agreements with Confucius Institutes (Pomfret 2). Senator Cruz also “alleged that Confucius Institutes are linked to espionage on U.S. universities and introduced legislation — the Stop Higher Education Espionage and Theft Act — in an effort to help the FBI to monitor the institutes” (Pomfret 2). Concerns of intellectual espionage, political propaganda influence, and academic censorship are prominent among U.S. government officials and politicians. Several universities have terminated agreements with Confucius Institutes following the recommendations of congressmen and other politicians. Others that refrain from cutting ties with their institutes have announced that they are taking investigative and precautionary actions in response to the congressmen’s concerns (J. Wang). Politician influence on local universities and in legislation, such as in the passing of McCain’s National Defense Authorization Act, has significantly influenced public opinion as well as impacting how universities handle and navigate their relationship with Hanban and their Confucius Institute.
International Chinese students in the U.S. are becoming increasingly concerned that they are unable to find jobs in the U.S. after graduation. *Inkstone News* explains that “Chinese tech students in US colleges, especially those majoring in robotics, aviation, engineering and hi-tech manufacturing, say they have become collateral damage as Washington has increasingly painted Chinese nationals as potential threats” (Jing and Chen 3). This developing stigma around Chinese students studying in the U.S. has caused many concerns across the country. David Yu, who has a doctorate in aerospace materials engineering, explained at a Harvard University job fair that “being Chinese with a degree in sensitive areas in the US almost equals to being rejected even before application. I have already given up hope of finding jobs in the US that match my skills” (qtd. in Jing & Chen, 5). *The Shorthorn* showed how numerous Chinese students are echoing these concerns, regardless of their field of study: “Chinese students have expressed concern about how these comments [about the Confucius Institutes and China] could create negative stigmas and negatively affect their careers” (Oxner). The increasing discriminatory hiring practices in the U.S. against people from China are not only unethical but also illegal, and contributes to the bigger problem of systematic racism in the U.S.. The increased difficulty for Chinese students to find work in the U.S. after graduation encourages them to bring their knowledge and skill set back to China, directly contributing to China’s technological advancement instead of U.S. technological advancement.

Racism and discrimination both within and outside of hiring practices continue to be a rising concern for Chinese students and immigrants in the U.S.. University of Texas at Arlington’s nursing associate professor Zui Pan “said [FBI Director] Wray’s comments were generalizations and could mistakenly be applied to any Chinese student or educator. She said this could unnecessarily create problems and distrust” (Oxner). Wray has a lot of power from his
position in the FBI and can significantly impact opinions of congressmen and politicians as well as opinions of the public. UT Arlington’s marketing associate professor Zhiyong Yang commented on the topic, warning that “Broad statements like these are dangerous and can legitimize racist actions” (Oxner). Others are concerned about the impact this progression can have on Chinese Americans as well as actual Chinese citizens in the U.S., emphasizing “it is imperative that Chinese Americans—who feel the same pride in American citizenship as do other American ethnic communities—not be subjected to the kind of generalized suspicion or stigmatization that could lead to racial profiling or a new era of McCarthyism” (Diamond & Schell, 6). This is referencing the prejudice and discrimination against Chinese Americans that developed during the 1950s when Senator McCarthy led a campaign against alleged communists in government and industry positions. Concerns over racial stigmas have been rising alongside tension between the U.S. and China as well as with concerns over the Confucius Institutes.

The widespread controversy over Confucius Institutes seen in public opinions of politicians and news reports has also gained the attention of and prompted numerous analyses and responses from a variety of scholars and academics. Several scholars have determined that the scrutiny over the Confucius Institutes is largely politically motivated rather than evidence based. John Pomfret, an American journalist with a B.A. and M.A. in East Asian Studies from Stanford University, publicly weighed in on the furor surrounding the Confucius Institutes in *The Washington Times*. He explained that there are serious issues that Congress is worried about including censorship and lack of transparency that hosting universities need to investigate and handle individually (Pomfret 3). However, Pomfret argues that Congress’ incessant criticism of the Confucius Institutes is largely because the U.S. failed to liberalize China’s practices and values over time:
For decades, the U.S. approach to China was premised on the assumption that, over time, China would become more liberal as long as the United States supported its rise. As that assumption has proved false, American politicians seem desperate to try to roll back China’s influence in America and are aiming at Confucius Institutes as the thin edge of this wedge. Congressional action to shut Confucius Institutes is foolish, and will do nothing to deal with the challenges presented by the People’s Republic of China.

(Pomfret 4)

Pomfret asserts the the congressional campaign against the Confucius Institutes is “more politically inspired than based on any real threat emanating from the institutes themselves” (Pomfret 7). Similar sentiments are mirrored by other scholars too; in the Canadian Journal of Sociology, Schmidt’s research found that suspicions of the Institutes are attributed to an ideological positioning against the Chinese rather than “on any empirical evidence of what CIs actually do” (“China’s Confucius” 650). She continued to explain that “The existence of apprehensions over Confucius Institutes rests on a politicized othering of China in which the communist Other is imagined as a foil to the democratic Self” (“China’s Confucius” 650). Much of the concern around the Confucius Institutes appears to be politically inspired.

Responding to concerns that students will form ignorantly favorable views towards China, Pomfret explains first that biased books and teaching curricula aren’t enough to indoctrinate students into blindly liking China (7). Second, he argues that while Chinese espionage is a real concern, there has been no evidence to suggest that China is using the Confucius Institutes to gain access to steal information and to assume otherwise goes against the fundamental premise of the U.S.’s entire justice system (Pomfret 7). Furthermore, Pomfret blames FBI Director Wray for causing unnecessary panic over the Confucius Institutes program.
within Congress: “Wray veered from his talking points in February when he told Congress that the FBI was looking into Confucius Institutes. Subsequent conversations with senior counterintelligence officials have confirmed that Confucius Institutes are not considered a threat to national security” (9). Pomfret concludes his critique by explaining that this focus on the Confucius Institutes is wasting precious resources that could be spent actually protecting the U.S. from espionage and other security threats: “Instead of clarifying the challenge from China, those jumping on the congressional bandwagon have muddied it. In their eagerness to ‘do something’ about China, they are doing the wrong thing: going after a relatively harmless language-training program while more serious intelligence breaches occur elsewhere” (Pomfret 12). According to Pomfret, the Confucius Institutes essentially serve as a red herring, distracting U.S. Intelligence from investigating actual national security threats.

However, other academics have reinforced the concerns surrounding the institutes. One professor at the University of Chicago, Marshall Sahlins, has been particularly outspoken on the issue. In the year leading up to the closure of Chicago’s institute, Sahlins published an article criticizing the institutes in *The Nation*, stating that “by hosting a Confucius Institute, [universities] have become engaged in the political and propaganda efforts of a foreign government in a way that contradicts the values of free inquiry and human welfare to which they are otherwise committed” (41). Sahlins explained that because the institutes are managed by the Chinese government, they reflect the PRC’s political values, specifically those on freedom of speech and censorship (“China U” 3). Similar to the NAS, Sahlins took issue with the privacy of contract agreements between universities and Hanban as well as the requirement for Confucius Institute activities to “conform to the customs, laws and regulations of China as well as those of the host institution’s country,” as the U.S.’s freedom of speech and China’s speech code law
directly oppose each other (Sahlins, “China U” 7). Chinese control, censorship, transparency, soft power, hiring practices, and university reliance on Chinese money were the primary issues brought up in Sahlin’s 2013 article (“China U”).

In 2015, Sahlins published the book *Confucius Institutes: Academic Malware*, further detailing the challenges Confucius Institutes pose to academic freedom and integrity. The first problem with the Confucius Institutes that Sahlins explains is that they are ruled by the PRC: “what cannot be publically found, at least not easily, is the shadow Party organization that sits above Hanban and its Governing Council, setting its policies, funding its operations, and otherwise supervising it” (Sahlins, *Confucius Institutes*... 10). He claims that “the Ministry of Education is just a laundering front for the CCP’s External Propaganda Group” (Sahlins, *Confucius Institutes*... 12). This is problematic because because it allows Chinese Communist Party (CCP) policies to be transmitted into the Confucius Institutes (Sahlins, *Confucius Institutes*... 11). The CCP policies threatening U.S. universities are oriented around four primary missions: (1) to share China’s story, publicizing government policies and promoting Chinese culture, (2) to reduce the perception of hostile foreign propaganda and the “China Threat,” (3) to stop Taiwan independence proclivities, and (4) to propagate China’s foreign policy (Sahlins, *Confucius Institutes*... 12). Sahlins argues that because the Confucius Institutes reflect the policy directives of the CCP they serve as soft power tools for China, spreading propaganda internationally.

To show that the Confucius Institutes aim to increase China’s soft power, Sahlins quotes several Chinese government officials. Sahlins writes that “Hanban wants the Confucius Institutes to hold events and offer instruction under the aegis of host universities that put the PRC in a good light—thus confirming the oft-quoted remark of Politburo member Li Changchun that the
Confucius Institutes are ‘an important part of China’s overseas propaganda set-up’” (Sahlins, “China U”). The Confucius Institutes are no question a part of China’s strategy to improve their reputation internationally. Chinese scholar Xu Shipi explained “If we organize government-sponsored activities, foreigners might be on high alert…Many of our cultural products have an intense ideological overtone…The Confucius Institute is semi-official…It will be useful to expand China’s influence abroad” (qtd. in Sahlins, Confucius Institutes 7). At a Special Topic Conference, Sahlins refers to Du Junling’s report expressing how China’s former Chairman of Foreign Affairs, Zhao Qizheng, “believes that the flourishing development of the Confucius Institute has established a nursery for the development of Chinese culture in foreign countries and is a successful case,” having contributed “to promoting cultural exchanges between China and foreign countries, opening up new channels for China's public diplomacy, and enhancing national soft power” (Du 2). Cultural attractiveness is a key part of increasing a nation’s soft power, and something China’s international cultural initiatives have been focused on doing.

However, as Nye explains, political values and foreign policy also greatly impact a country’s soft power (11). Sahlins acknowledges this, explaining that “Despite its global reach, the CI program is apparently not achieving the political objectives of burnishing the image and increasing the influence of the People’s Republic…the current Chinese regime is a hard sell” (“China U” 5). Despite the lack of success in increasing China’s soft power through the Confucius Institutes, Sahlins warns that Chinese instructors hired in the institutes are being instructed to promote China’s desired global image. Liu Yunshan, China’s Minister of Propaganda voiced the importance of connecting cultural initiatives with the CCP’s values when he said to “Make sure that all cultural battlegrounds, cultural products, and cultural activities reflect and conform to the socialist core values and requirement” (qtd. in Sahlins, Confucius Institutes 6). Sahlins also
quotes the Association for China’s Peaceful Unification’s instructions: “We require from you, Chinese residents, staff at Chinese enterprises, faculty of Confucius Institutes, and Chinese students in Kyrgyzstan, that no matter what work you do in a foreign country, keep China’s peaceful unification in your mind” (qtd. in Sahlins 9). The variety of quotes Sahlins provides illustrate that Confucius Institutes are intended to operate at least in part as tools to increase China’s soft power, and that the Chinese teachers and faculty employed at them are instructed to represent China in a positive light.

The following chapter in Sahlin’s book attempts to expose censorship in Confucius Institutes. University professors and faculty report feeling the need to self-censor sensitive topics in Confucius Institutes, but explain that those topics can be explored and discussed extensively in their CEAS (Sahlins, Confucius Institutes 18-19). For example, the University of Chicago might hang a photo of the Dalai Lama in the Center for East Asian Studies (CEAS) department but would not in the precincts of their Confucius Institute (Sahlins, Confucius Institutes 15). Sahlins describes how North Carolina State University cancelled a visit by the Dalai Lama in 2009, “ostensibly because there had been insufficient time to prepare for such an august guest,” but suspects that it was more due to pressure to maintain friendly relations with their Confucius Institute (Confucius Institutes..., 14). In 2013, Sydney University cancelled a speech by the Dalai Lama explicitly because they wanted to prevent damaging their ties to China through their Confucius Institute (Sahlins, Confucius Institutes 14). However, a large protest ensued and the Dalai Lama spoke on Sydney’s campus as scheduled (Sahlins, Confucius Institutes 14). Both of these Dalai Lama visit cancellations were organized by the hosting university, not at a request from their Confucius Institutes. The dean of students at Tel Aviv University cancelled a student art exhibit depicting the PRC’s oppression of Falun Gong due to the fear that it would jeopardize
China’s support for their Confucius Institute, but a District Court judge ruled this as a violation of the students’ freedom of expression (Sahlins, *Confucius Institutes* 22). Each of these examples illustrate self-censorship by people outside of the university’s Confucius Institute rather than direct censorship within one. The primary example that could be interpreted as a more direct type of censorship is the portrayal of Taiwan as a part of China. Early agreements between Hanban and universities called for acceptance of the PRC’s “One China Policy,” stating that Taiwan is a part of China (Sahlins, “China U” 15). However, due to university pushback, Hanban quickly dropped this clause from their contracts, though they still describe Taiwan as “China’s largest island” on their website (Sahlins, “China U” 15). On the issue of Taiwan being part of China, while certainly debated by many, the official position of the U.S. established in the 1979 U.S.-P.R.C. Joint Communique maintains that “there is but one China and Taiwan is part of China” (“U.S. Relations with Taiwan”). While Sahlins failed to describe acts of censorship conducted by Confucius Institutes directly, admitting that “direct evidence of restraints on academic discourse is not easy to come by,” he maintains that it is unethical to permit any censorship, even self-censorship inspired by the institutes, anywhere within a university (Sahlins, “China U” 15).

Hiring methods for Confucius Institute teachers has been a common area of concern. Sahlins refers to the 2012 McMaster University case, detailed previously, to exemplify how Confucius Institutes partake in discriminatory hiring (*Confucius Institutes* 30). Sahlins explains that the contract between Hanban and local universities are contradictory, requiring “that the laws and regulations of both China and the host country are in force. The effect is an endemic contradiction that condemns the host universities to complicity in discriminatory hiring, inasmuch as beliefs and practices deemed illegal in China and thus disqualifying otherwise competent teachers” (Sahlins, *Confucius Institutes* 31). This example shows the hiring practices
of Confucius Institute teachers to be problematic. Hiring practice laws between China and other countries, in this case Canada, may differ to the point of contradiction. Canada has clear laws against discriminatory hiring practices, while Chinese hiring customs favor discriminating between candidates to find those that best represent the CCP’s values.

Sahlins contributes a more unique critique of the Confucius Institutes in analyzing their language instruction. The materials provided by Hanban are all teaching the simplified Chinese character system rather than traditional character system (Sahlins, *Confucius Institutes* 26). However, as the U.S. Government Accountability Office’s report in 2019 indicated, many Confucius Institute teachers used U.S.-developed materials that also included the traditional writing system (Bair 15). The traditional characters were used in Mainland China for millennia, and are still being used in Taiwan, Hong Kong, Malaysia, and other Chinese diaspora communities (Sahlins, *Confucius Institute* 26). Mainland China however adapted a new simplified character system starting in the 1950s (E. Wang). The reform was greatly beneficial for increasing Chinese literacy, administrative efficiency, and ease of communication (Chow 1). The simplification of “traditional Chinese characters was a linguistic democratization and one of China’s most successful progressive programs in the 1950s…Literacy had long remained a privilege and a source of power wielded by the elitist few” (E. Wang). Before the simplification reforms in 1949, 80% of the Chinese population was illiterate (“Historic Achievements…” 2). After adopting the reforms literacy rates began improving, and by 2008, China’s illiteracy rate was down to 3.58% (“Historic Achievements…” 2). The problem with only understanding simplified Chinese characters is that it greatly limits the texts that are accessible: “the inability to read traditional characters is to close oneself off to much of the Chinese cultural legacy — its history and arts — before the 1950s” (Chow 2). This gives the CCP power to control what
information is translated from traditional characters and aids in their censorship efforts. By only understanding simplified Chinese characters, the number of texts that are accessible is greatly reduced, enhancing the PRC’s ability to control and censor what information is accessible.

Matloff brings up an interesting question regarding the simplified and traditional character systems: “The original rationale for simplification was to accelerate the learning process. But is this necessary today, given China’s much improved economic and social conditions?” (1). While China’s literacy rates have improved significantly since implementing the simplification reforms, with China’s universal education system today the simplified characters may no longer affect literacy rates. However, the simplified system has been adopted and implemented across Mainland China and would be highly expensive to transition back to the traditional character system. While Sahlins emphasizes how understanding only the simplified character system was problematic, cutting one off from large volumes of historical and cultural texts prior to the CCP’s rule, there is a lot of overlap between the simplified character system and the traditional one, with many characters remaining unchanged:

Advocates for reinstating traditional characters exaggerate the break of the simplified system from the traditional orthography. Simplified characters still retain the basic structure of traditional ideographs. The structural continuity makes the switch between them easy and smooth, a skill any educated person can quickly acquire. Many of the simplified characters had been in existence for more than a millennium. Manuscripts unearthed from ancient tombs and medieval caves suggest that some simplified characters now used were already in currency then. The reform in the 1950s only officially legitimated these underground “outlaw” vernacular characters. (E. Wang)
With the transition between the simplified character system and the traditional one not being as difficult as Sahlins portrayed, with enough effort (not to mention with the aid of modern translation software technology) the traditional texts would become accessible to someone fluent in reading the simplified character system. With how prevalent the simplified system has become in the past sixty years, knowledge of both the simplified and traditional character systems would be most beneficial. With the simplified character system being commonplace in Mainland China today, it makes sense that China’s Confucius Institutes program would teach the written language system most utilized there.

The George Washington University professor, Edward McCord, who specializes in Chinese history, has a correspondence of refutations back and forth with Sahlins, refuting several criticisms of the institutes. McCord’s first article refutes the criticisms that the institutes are controlled by the PRC and are tools for Chinese political propaganda, that the contracts are confidential, accusations of violating academic freedom, and claims of discriminatory hiring practices. McCord starts out by prefacing that most of the criticism facing the Confucius Institutes leaps from suspicions and concerns to conclusions of fact without sufficient evidence (“Confucius Institutes…” 2). Such concern may have been appropriate in 2004 when the first Confucius Institutes were established, but with over 100 institutes operating in the U.S. now, “there is sufficient experience on which to evaluate how these organizations have interacted in practice with American academia. In the absence of reports of widespread problems or abuses, it seem that the main worries about Confucius Institutes have not been substantiated” (McCord, “Confucius Institutes…” 2). Because these institutes have been operating in the U.S. for over a decade without serious incidents indicates that the accusations against the Confucius Institutes lack strong supporting evidence.
The first criticism McCord refutes is regarding the PRC’s influence over the institutes. He first explains that the Chinese government’s role in Hanban is clearly explained in their “Constitution and By-Laws of the Confucius Institutes” posted publicly on their website: candidates for the positions in the Governing Council overseeing the Confucius Institute Headquarters “shall be recommended by the education administrative agency of the Chinese State Council and approved by the State Council” (Confucius Institute Headquarters, 7880). This explicit relationship between the Confucius Institutes and the Chinese government should come at no surprise, as “all educational enterprises in Communist China operate under such state control” (McCord, “Confucius Institutes…” 3). The ties between Hanban and China’s government is clear, but McCord does not find this problematic in itself. McCord explains that:

If one believes, perhaps out of antipathy to China’s authoritarian government, that no collaboration between American universities and Chinese educational organizations should be allowed, then this is an issue that could be debated. Meanwhile, numerous American universities have moved ahead in pursuing a wide range of joint programs with Chinese educational partners. In these cases, the main question for U.S. schools has been whether these programs can be arranged in way to produce mutual benefits for both parties without harming their academic mission (including academic freedom). The successful proliferation of such programs suggests a positive answer. (McCord, “Confucius Institutes…” 3)

McCord argues that oversight from the Chinese government is not problematic in itself. Collaboration between U.S. and Chinese educational institutions has predominantly been seen as productive and mutually beneficial, as in the cases of many Confucius Institutes.
Another criticism of Confucius Institutes that McCord refutes is that they serve as a propaganda tool to increase China’s soft power. First, McCord explains that the quotes from Chinese officials that Sahlins often cites may have a different meaning before they were translated into English from Chinese. For example, the Chinese term for ‘propaganda,’ ‘xuānchuán’ (‘宣傳’ in simplified characters or ‘宣傳’ in traditional), has no negative connotation like the English translation does (McCord, “Confucius Institutes…” 5). In response to Sahlins’ citation of Li Changchun’s exclamation that the Confucius Institutes are “an important part of China’s overseas propaganda set-up,” McCord provides more of the context in which Li spoke: “The establishment of Confucius Institutes quickens the international popularization of the Chinese language and strengthens cultural exchanges with various peoples of the world, benefiting China’s move toward the world and the world’s better understanding of China” (Li qtd. in McCord, “Confucius Institutes…” 5). With his explanation of how the Confucius Institutes serve as propaganda (increasing intercultural understanding through communication and exchange), there is no evidence of deceitful or malicious tactics often associated with the English term ‘propaganda’ being used in Confucius Institutes.

McCord further argues that cultural exchange programs sponsored by foreign states intending to increase soft power should not be a “cause for alarm” (“Confucius Institutes…” 6). He explains that despite the growth in number of Confucius Institutes across the U.S., “the percentage of Americans with favorable views of China has actually declined by 5 percent over the past seven years. Thus it seems that the American public has no difficulty distinguishing between Chinese language and culture, aspects of which they may admire, and the nature of the Chinese Communist regime” (McCord, “Confucius Institutes…” 6). Because public opinion on China has become less favorable during the time the Confucius Institutes have been operational,
it appears that the institutes have been ineffective and insignificant in increasing China’s reputation in the U.S. Regardless of whether the Confucius Institutes are set up in attempt to increase China’s soft power, it does not appear that they are doing so to any significant degree. As Paradise noted in his research, instead of increasing the favorability and soft power of China, the institutes increase academic collaboration and communication between Chinese scholars and those of the host country (665).

McCord also isn’t concerned about the confidentiality of contracts between Hanban and the hosting university. Critics are concerned that special concessions violating academic freedom, such as giving Hanban control over academic programs, may have been made in the confidential agreements between Hanban and host universities (McCord, “Confucius Institutes”). However the model for all such agreements is publicly available on Hanban’s website and no such conditions are indicated (McCord, “Confucius Institutes”). Early agreements required the acceptance of China’s “one China Principle’ however McCord argues that the public knowledge of this case “shows not only the extent to which the Chinese have been willing to accommodate themselves to foreign objections but how difficult it would be to keep concessions secret” (McCord, “Confucius Institutes”). Even if some agreements were less diligent in protecting academic freedom than others, “it is another thing to assume a vast conspiracy of silence by faculty and administrators across the country in nearly 100 institutions” (McCord, “Confucius Institutes”). The likelihood of there still being problematic clauses in Confucius Institute agreements now, fifteen years after the program began, is highly unlikely.

Discriminatory hiring practices of Chinese teachers has been a large concern surrounding the Confucius Institutes. On the basis of Chinese law and hiring customs, critics claim that teachers hired by Hanban are subject to discriminatory hiring practices (Sahlins, “China U”).
However, the hiring practices for Confucius Institute teachers are subject to U.S. law, “under a regular exchange program for foreign visiting faculty created by the U.S. State Department,” to which all foreign faculty instructors are subject (McCord, “A Rejoinder” 15). The oft-cited example used to portray discriminatory hiring in Confucius Institutes is the case of Zhao at McMaster University in Toronto, detailed previously. It is true that teachers hired for Confucius Institutes have to swear no membership to illegal organizations, such as Falun Gong (McCord, “A Rejoinder” 9). However, all people in China are subject to Chinese law. Laws that often are interpreted as discriminatory in the U.S., like the forbiddance of Falun Gong, are beyond the scope of hiring practices within the Confucius Institutes program. McCord explains that because Sahlins “does not understand the actual process by which visiting foreign scholars come to American universities, he also dismisses my assertion that all such exchange programs would be threatened by an insistence that the universities where these faculty come from follow American hiring standards” (“A Rejoinder” 9). Visiting faculty enter the U.S. with visas issued under the Department of State’s “Exchange Visitor Program,” allowing faculty from foreign universities to consult, observe, lecture, teach, or conduct research at schools in the U.S. (McCord, “A Rejoinder” 9). These scholars and teachers remain employees of the institution in their home countries, as they cannot legally be employees hired by the hosting university under this visa (McCord, “A Rejoinder” 9). It would be unethical for universities to insist that Confucius Institute teachers and faculty hiring practice must be in accordance with all U.S. anti-discriminatory hiring policies without requiring the same for all of their faculty members. If all foreign exchange faculty were subject to the anti-discriminatory hiring laws in the U.S., many problems would arise as most universities would be unable “to show that their [foreign] faculty hiring practice fulfilled D.C.’s fairly extensive anti-discriminatory requirements” (McCord, “A
Narrowing it down to only Chinese exchange faculty would still be problematic, as imposing additional hiring requirements on people from China is in itself a type of discriminatory hiring; the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission’s EEOC Enforcement Guidance on National Origin Discrimination prohibits employment discrimination based on a person’s nationality or place of origin (“EEOC Enforcement”). If a person is subject to discriminatory hiring practices in their country of origin, it is not within the power of U.S. universities to prevent or stop the discriminatory hiring system from operating in another country; they can only accept or reject potential candidates from working at their university.

More on this, the Confucius Institute hiring practices are also often criticized for being controlled by Hanban rather than the hosting universities. Concerns that Hanban only recommends people who are members of the CCP and act in accordance with its policies and regulations are prevalent among Confucius Institute critics (Sahlins, “China U”). McCord explains that detractors criticize that “conditions that gave Hanban the ‘right’ determine the ‘trained teachers,’ the teaching materials, and the curriculum of for-credit courses to be taught in the University. But a reading of these conditions shows rather an obligation of Hanban to provide teachers and teaching materials, not that the University is forced to accept these teachers or materials” (“A Rejoinder,” 15). In establishing the joint venture of the Confucius Institute, Hanban is obligated to recommend qualified Chinese teachers who hold advanced degrees in Chinese language, are proficient in English, and experienced in teaching Chinese language to foreigners (Sahlins, “China U”). Critics such as Sahlins point out that while the host universities have the ability to reject potential candidates recommended by Hanban, they rarely do (Sahlins, “China U”). McCord attributes this low rejection rate to the high quality of teachers recommended by Hanban (“A Rejoinder,” 8). Detractors also often worry that Hanban is training
teachers on how to respond to questions regarding sensitive political topics (Sahlins, “China U”). McCord agrees that “This is not unlikely. Most Chinese are not comfortable talking about political issues, particularly with foreigners, so I would not be at all surprised if this question is addressed in Confucius Institute departure programs” (“A Rejoinder,” 12). Critics are concerned that this training translates into the avoidance of political topics within the institutes, another concern McCord addresses in his refutation.

Claims that Confucius Institutes oppose academic freedom largely stem from arguments that they either (1) avoid political topics, censoring information presented to students, or (2) promote the official ideology of the PRC (McCord, “Confucius Institutes”). McCord however, argues that neither of these issues threaten academic freedom. First, the Confucius Institutes are set up with the mission to teach Chinese language and culture; focusing on political controversies in a language or culture class would be inappropriate for the setting (McCord, “Confucius Institutes”). Academic freedom in the U.S. asserts “that it is the instructors right to determine what specific topics will be introduced or discussed in her/his class, depending on what the instructor sees as most fitting to the class’ pedagogical goals” (McCord, “A Rejoinder” 14). Not discussing topics that a teacher deems inconsistent with the goals of their class hardly seems threatening to academic freedom. Furthermore, McCord cites Hubbert’s ethnographic research, detailed previously, that observed that avoiding sensitive political topics in Confucius Institutes reinforced negative perceptions of China, and that some teachers “found that opening up more fully to their students had better results” (McCord, “A Rejoinder” 13). Second, the freedom of speech is essential in supporting academic freedom, as the expression of one’s thoughts and opinions are necessary to contribute to the development of an intellectual discussion. McCord contests:
What is more troubling in arguments supposedly made in the defense of the freedom of speech, though, is the implication that some views, such as support for Chinese positions on Taiwan or Tibet, should not be allowed in our classrooms. One of the uncomfortable principles of academic freedom is that all viewpoints can be expressed. Is this principle to be withdrawn in the case of visiting Chinese professors? Or only when their views happen to coincide with the official line of the Chinese government? (McCord, “Confucius Institutes”)

Sahlins responded to McCord’s above comment, exclaiming that censorship is what he and other critics “seek to exclude from the precincts of the university, precisely on the grounds of academic freedom. They are not objecting to visiting Chinese professors expressing their own views; they are objecting to them preventing the expression of other views” (Sahlins, “On the Defense” 14). Sahlins however did not report any cases where Confucius Institute instructors actually suppressed the views of others; teachers only shifted topics of conversation back to what was fitting for their class subject. McCord explains that Sahlins instead shifted the debate, focusing “not on the actual prevention of speech but on calls by CI staff to block speeches by the Dalai Lama” (McCord, “A Rejoinder” 15). In the two examples of North Carolina University and Sydney University that Sahlins cites, it was ultimately the decision of the University administration to cancel the Dalai Lama’s speeches. McCord argues that the teachers at the Confucius Institutes have the right to freely express their opinions on the Dalai Lama, and that Sahlins’ argument regarding the Dalai Lama’s right to free speech is “a classic illiberal rhetorical ploy to tar those who defend the right to speak in favor of unpopular positions as a defense of that unpopular position” (McCord, “A Rejoinder” 15). Calls to cancel a speech is not equivalent to an actual ban on free speech; “the involvement of CI personnel in calls to block appearances
of the Dalai Lama is not evidence that they are actually ‘preventing the speech of others.’ As in all calls for speech bans, the proper response is not to ban their proponents but to reject their demands” (McCord, “A Rejoinder” 15). Freedom of speech and academic freedom are crucial values of universities in the U.S. that need to be protected. It needs to be recognized that this includes protecting the rights of visiting foreign instructors too, even if their opinions coincide with those of the PRC.

Universities across the U.S. have a wide variety of opinions about the Confucius Institutes. There are many benefits yet also many concerns for universities when it comes to hosting a Confucius Institute. Universities have various concerns, such as their public image, reputation, integrity, identity, and status as well as a variety of other concerns including employee satisfaction, student enrollment rates, alumni and donor opinions and influence, program funding, and academic integrity and freedom. All of these interests can influence how universities approach the Confucius Institutes program. As the Confucius Institutes continue to attract scrutiny and negative attention, universities are becoming increasingly concerned with how having an institute impacts their public image and reputation, ultimately impacting enrollment rates and donor actions (Bair 28). The effect of Confucius Institutes on enrollment rates is an interesting topic; while some universities are concerned that they may impact U.S. student enrollment negatively, the general consensus is that they primarily serve to increase overall student enrollment by attracting Chinese international students to the hosting university (Peterson 19). Funding has also been a high concern for universities particularly after McCain’s National Defense Authorization Act, described previously, was passed in 2018. One reason that reassures university officials that Confucius Institutes do not have undue influence on campus is because it comprises only a small portion of larger Chinese and East Asian Studies programs
offered (Bair 27). However, the National Defense Authorization Act has revoked U.S. funding for Chinese studies programs at universities that also host a Confucius Institute, forcing many universities to reconsider their program offerings and funding sources. The role of values also are significant in shaping how universities approach Confucius Institutes. Academic integrity and freedom are two values that are extremely important in U.S. education systems that are not equally valued in the Chinese education system, which causes speculation and concern over how academic integrity and freedom are maintained in Confucius Institutes in the U.S. (McCord, “Confucius Institutes”). These interests, values, and concerns all impact the decision-making process universities undergo when deciding whether to establish, maintain, renegotiate, or terminate relations with Hanban.

In January of 2019, Radio Free Asia reported that by the end of 2018 “at least 25 universities and school district committees around the world had terminated their cooperation with the Confucius Institute” and ten Confucius Institutes in the U.S. had either closed or announced their upcoming closure that year while three had already closed in previous years (Shen). By the end of 2018, a total of thirteen Confucius Institutes in the U.S. had closed or announced their closure, while 105 remained active in operation.

One university that closed their Confucius Institute in 2018 is Texas A&M University. They were a recipient of the letters sent out by congressmen McCaul and Cuellar, calling for the closure of all Confucius Institutes (J. Wang). The only explanation offered by Texas A&M University was given by the university Chancellor, John Sharp, who explained that he trusted the advice of the congressmen: “I don't question their judgment, nor their patriotism … In addition, they have access to classified information we do not have. We are terminating the contract as
they suggested.” (qtd. in J. Wang). This is just one example demonstrating the power of
influence that congressmen can have over universities.

Another university that recently announced the upcoming closure of their Confucius
Institute is Western Kentucky University. WKU Public Radio reported that the university’s
president, Timothy Caboni, announced that they were closing the institute because of funding
barriers caused by the National Defense Authorization Act passed last year (Willis). President
Caboni explained that the U.S. Department of Defense denied their waiver application that
would have allowed them to maintain their Chinese Flagship Program while also continuing to
operate their Confucius Institute (Willis). Due to the denied waiver, President Caboni was forced
to choose between U.S. funding for their school’s Chinese Flagship Program and Hanban’s
funding of their Confucius Institute. President Caboni expressed concern and interest in
maintaining good relations with their Chinese partner university despite the Institute’s closure:
“Though activities will phase out over the next several weeks, we will continue our dialogue
with key partners to work toward a solution that allows WKU to continue our programming …
We hope to strengthen, deepen and broaden our relationships with partner institutions in China
throughout this process” (qtd. in Willis). Western Kentucky University is not the first to
announce the closing of their Institute because of funding issues from the U.S. Department of
Defense; six other universities have already closed their Confucius Institutes because funding has
been denied for their Chinese Flagship Programs (Willis).

However there are still many Confucius Institutes operating the U.S. today, indicating
that other universities continue to see the benefits outweigh any detriments the Institutes bring.
Stanford University’s Hoover Institute, a public policy think tank, published that “It is important
not to exaggerate the threat of these new Chinese initiatives … For all the tensions in the
relationship, there are deep historical bonds of friendship, cultural exchange, and mutual inspiration between the two societies, which we celebrate and wish to nurture” (Diamond & Schell, 6). Despite receiving the same congressmen’s letters as Texas A&M University, the University of Texas at Dallas chose to continue operating their Confucius Institute. *The Mercury* reported their Arts and Humanities Dean, Dennis Kratz, said that the suspicions surrounding the Institutes were unfounded:

> We have never [worried] about our relationship with CI influencing or guiding what we do … We invite who we want to speak, we approach the topics we’re interested in … there’s never been any kind of influence from China on what we do. Nothing but support for us … I was asked by the FBI agent about eight years ago, do I think the CI is using me to meet powerful people? … But I said no … When I go to China, to the annual conference, what you meet are educators genuinely interested in promoting cultural interaction and international understanding. (qtd. in Seamans)

The director of the Confucius Institute at the University of Texas at Dallas, Ming Gu, explained he did not understand how the Institutes could be related to politics (Seamans). He explained that “From the very beginning, I tried to avoid any political involvement in the running of the Confucius Institute. Again and again, I’ve said to my staff members or to the outside world, I’ve said we are an educational institution devotes to teaching Chinese language and culture and promoting scholarship. That’s our main purpose” (qtd. in Seamans). With the focus on language instruction and cultural activities, university officials at the University of Texas at Dallas have no concerns with their Confucius Institute.

The University of California at Los Angeles similarly continues to operate their Confucius Institute despite federal concerns. UCLA’s Associate Director of Media Relations,
Ricardo Vazquez, explained to Daily Bruin that the UCLA Confucius Institute serves a vital role in the community, providing instruction for students and public community members who want to learn about Chinese culture or to become proficient in the Chinese language, as well as providing training for K-12 Mandarin-language teachers in schools across California (Said). Vazquez emphasized that “This is especially important in a city like Los Angeles, which is home to the largest Chinese immigrant community in the United States, and also in a global economy where knowledge of Chinese language and culture can offer professional opportunities” (qtd. in Said). A UCLA political science professor who studies Chinese politics, James Tong, explained how their Institute focuses on language and cultural events and activities, that “It’s never political … there’s no political or Chinese control” (qtd. in Said). Most officials at UCLA agree that there are no concerns regarding their Confucius Institute, but do acknowledge that Institutes established at other universities could have potential issues as each have unique agreements and obligations.

The University of Memphis and the Middle Tennessee State University have also been clear about maintaining relations with their Confucius Institutes. Local paper, The Daily Memphian, reported that University of Memphis Provost, Tom Nenon, explained that their Confucius Institute is under close oversight to ensure transparency in all finances and activities, enabling them to “remain vigilant that the Confucius Institute at the University of Memphis remains aligned with out university values including academic freedom and objectivity in all of our teaching and research” (qtd. in Stockard). Middle Tennessee State University President Sidney McPhee explained how their Institute benefited their school and surrounding community, focusing “almost exclusively” on language, arts, and culture, botanical and agricultural research (some of which benefiting Tennessee farmers), and academic relationships between the U.S. and
China (Stockard). President McPhee explained that over the years, Middle Tennessee State University “has more narrowly defined its relationship with the institute and established protocols that strictly maintain the university’s academic freedom … We even utilize the Tennessee Department of Education to properly vet the visas of visiting institute interns who are placed in area schools” (qtd. in Stockard). These Tennessee schools have taken care to ensure academic freedom is protected in their universities while still benefiting from their Confucius Institute operations on campus.

**Analysis**

This section will focus primarily on assessing the collaboration potential between the two parties with direct influence on establishing Confucius Institutes: Hanban and U.S. universities. First, the motivation for the two parties to work together will be analyzed. Next, each concern will be briefly detailed before assessing the collaboration potential regarding that particular concern. Recommendations for addressing each concern will be presented following the specific collaboration potential assessments.

The collaboration potential between U.S. universities and Hanban varies between individual universities, however a generalization of U.S. universities allows for an analysis of potential for mutual benefit. Universities are interested in providing quality education opportunities for students, conducting quality research, and fostering academic collaboration. American universities value academic freedom, integrity, and diversity and are typically concerned with their school’s public reputation, global outreach, student enrollment rate, funding and resources. The Confucius Institutes provide funding for universities to create additional educational opportunities and services for their students. The Confucius Institutes also provide research scholarships and funding as well as cultivating the hosting university’s professional
relationships, fostering academic collaboration as well as increasing the international student enrollment rate at the hosting school. With the benefits the Confucius Institute program provides to hosting universities, it is unsurprising that so many universities have established an Institute.

Hanban is interested in managing and expanding the Confucius Institute program and its reputation. Hanban has an explicit goal of fostering “friendly relations between China and foreign countries,” indicating that they would be open to negotiations on Confucius Institute agreements in order to maintain the hosting university’s satisfaction with their Institute (“关于孔子学院/课堂”). Additionally, Chinese negotiators typically prefer to avoid conflict and are more open to compromise than U.S. negotiators, further indicating that Hanban officials will likely be open to negotiation suggestions from hosting universities (Kam-Hon Lee et al. 626). This has been shown to be true as numerous universities have amended and renegotiated their Confucius Institute agreements throughout the past decade. There is a clear potential for mutual benefit between Hanban and U.S. universities in the Confucius Institute program. However, the public scrutiny over the Confucius Institutes as well as McCain’s NDAA are both obstacles to collaboration. In situations where universities are legally forced to choose between U.S. Department of Defense funding for Chinese studies programs and Hanban funding for a Confucius Institute, unless the funding amount is largely disproportionate, it is likely U.S. universities will favor U.S. government funding over foreign State funding for providing Chinese studies programs, indicating a low collaboration potential. However, for schools that do not receive Chinese studies funding from the U.S. Department of Defense, there is a high collaboration potential for addressing concerns about the Institutes.

There are a variety of concerns with the contract agreements made between Hanban and the hosting university. The key concerns regarding Confucius Institutes include academic
freedom, self-censorship, confidentiality requirements, governing law contradictions, foreign control in U.S. education, discriminatory hiring practices, increasing China’s soft power, and portraying an idealized, biased view of China. This subsection will briefly detail the concern without attribution, assess the collaboration potential on that concern, suggest a recommended strategy for addressing that concern, and repeat for each of the remaining concerns. Lastly, recommendations from others that do not pertain to these specific concerns will be examined.

Infringements on academic freedom has been a large concern surrounding the Confucius Institutes. As a reminder, academic freedom entails: (1) teachers’ rights to research and publish without restriction from their institution, (2) teachers’ rights to determine what are appropriate topics of discussion for their class subjects, and (3) teachers’ right to exercise their freedom of speech outside of the classroom (“1940 Statement”). Academic freedom is valued highly in the U.S. while it is seen as unimportant in China (Altbach 2, 3). Hanban likely does not value academic freedom like U.S. universities do. Even though Hanban likely does not place value academic freedom, they have accepted and signed explicit protections for the academic freedom of Confucius Institute instructors in official contracts: the U.S. Government Accountability Office’s examination found that ten of the ninety agreements they reviewed “contained language indicating that U.S. school policies applied to the operation of the Confucius Institute and/or its activities,” including policies protecting academic freedom (Bair 13). One agreement explicitly stated “that nothing in the agreement shall be construed to limit the academic freedom of faculty or academic programs at the school” (Bair 13). Hanban has already accepted clauses in Confucius Institute agreements protecting academic freedom of teachers in the past. They likely will continue to sign agreements that protect academic freedom in order to continue operating
Confucius Institutes. The collaboration potential on protecting Confucius Institute teachers’ academic freedom is high.

I recommend explicitly protecting academic freedom of all Confucius Institute employees in the contracts between hosting universities and Hanban as well addressing academic freedom rights with Confucius Institute teachers. The NAS similarly recommended for cases where a hosting university refuses to terminate their Confucius Institute to: “Include in orientation for every Confucius Institute teacher and Chinese director the university’s policies on academic freedom” (Peterson 11). This is an excellent way to ensure that Confucius Institute teachers understand their academic freedom rights. However this recommendation is limited in that it does not offer official protection of academic freedom in their contract. In the Confucius Institute contracts, explicit protection for instructors’ academic freedom should be made. This should help reassure Confucius Institute instructors of their right to academic freedom while remaining an employee of Hanban. All universities hosting an Institute ought to establish explicit written protection for academic freedom in their agreement with Hanban as well as inform their Confucius Institute instructors what their academic freedom rights include.

In addition to explicit protection for Confucius Institute instructors’ academic freedom, universities need to ensure that their administrators, faculty, and other employees understand and respect the academic freedom of Confucius Institute teachers. The Confucius Institute teachers’ right to determine what topics can be discussed in their classes needs to be respected; it is reasonable that many political or sensitive topics concerning China are irrelevant to learning the Chinese language. Universities should ensure that Confucius Institute teachers do not feel pressured by the university to discuss topics that they deem irrelevant to the course subject. Secondly, universities should ensure that their faculty, staff, and administrators respect
Confucius Institute teachers’ right to express their own opinions. This importance is emphasized by McCord when he discusses how Confucius Institute teachers have spoken out against having the Dalai Lama come to speak at their hosting university, explaining the appropriate response from the university is not to ban their freedom of speech but to reject their demands (“A Rejoinder” 15). Even if their opinions happen to be unpopular or if they happen to align with the official opinions of the PRC, Confucius Institute teachers still have the right to express their opinions and should not be silenced by their hosting universities.

Self-censorship has also been a primary concern regarding Confucius Institutes. Most concerns of self-censorship are either of Confucius Institute teachers avoiding controversial topics that contradict the PRC’s official positions, or of university faculty, staff, and event-coordinators self-censoring sensitive topics in attempts to maintain friendly relations with Hanban. The first concern regarding avoidance of sensitive topics within Confucius Institute programs is moot; the Institutes focus solely on language and cultural traditions, and it is within the instructor’s right of academic freedom to choose which topics are applicable to the course subject (“1940 Statement,” 14). It is common for Confucius Institute teachers to avoid discussing sensitive China topics in class that are not pertinent to the course subject. It is reasonable to assess that discussing Tibetan independence, for example, is tangential and irrelevant to learning the Chinese language.

The concern of self-censorship on the university’s behalf, however, has a more realistic basis. A few universities have cancelled events and some university faculty report feeling pressured to censor themselves in order to maintain positive relations with Hanban (Sahlins, “China U”; Peterson 18). It is important that universities remain diligent to ensure that they do not self-censor their courses, research, events, publications, and other actions. Cancelling events,
such as a presentation by the Dalai Lama, because the university is afraid to offend their Chinese partners is unjust and unfair to faculty, students, and the surrounding community alike. Every university in the U.S. has a responsibility to maintain their academic integrity and should take the necessary measures to insure it.

While maintaining a trustworthy friendship is important to both Hanban and hosting universities, if a university offers courses and events outside of the Confucius Institute that cover sensitive topics related to China, Hanban will not attempt to intervene nor will they rescind on their contract. Several universities currently hosting Confucius Institutes have hosted events covering controversial topics such as the Tiananmen Massacre, Tibet, Taiwan, or intellectual property rights in China, and report that the events did not impact their relationship with Hanban in any way (Bair 23). People are entirely capable of maintaining good relationships even through disagreements, as are U.S. universities and Hanban. Hanban is not concerned with university activities that are not directly affiliated with or sponsored by a Confucius Institute.

In order to ensure that university faculty and event organizers do not censor information presented to students and the campus community, universities need to take necessary measures. Universities with a Confucius Institute should first reassure all their faculty and staff that they should not feel any pressure to censor information. They should clarify to their employees that Hanban is only interested in activities and classes that are directly affiliated with the Confucius Institute and that they should not change their own teaching or event-planning behaviors. Secondly, universities ought to develop and implement a checks and balances system unique to their institution to ensure that potential events are not being screened and censored for sensitive China topics in order to maintain positive relations with Hanban. Universities need to take
By 2019, it is estimated that just under half of Confucius Institutes agreements in the U.S. have some type of confidentiality clause (Bair 10). Confidentiality clauses and non-disclosure agreements in Confucius Institute contracts provoke the concern that universities may have made unethical concessions to Hanban in the private contracts (Sahlin, “China U”). However, Hanban has already signed numerous Confucius Institute contracts that do not have confidentiality clauses; some universities such as UC Davis and Michigan State already have chosen to post their agreement with Hanban online for public access (“Agreements and Funding”; “CIMSU”). Because neither hosting universities nor Hanban wish to evoke unnecessary suspicion regarding their operations, there is a high collaboration potential on this topic.

The first step in addressing this concern is to revoke all confidentiality clauses from Confucius Institute agreements. Revoking confidentiality clauses from these contracts will relieve the suspicion caused by the uncertainty in not knowing the contractual requirements. While the Portland State University chapter of the American Association of University Professors recommends that all Confucius Institute agreements between U.S. universities and Hanban be “made available to all members of the university community,” I recommend that the agreements be made accessible for the general public as well (Padin). The Senate Committee on Homeland Security recommended that “Congress should require all U.S. schools to publish any contracts with foreign governments, including all Confucius Institute contracts, online for students and faculty to review” (Portman and Carper 9). Regardless of what Congress should do or does, universities should make their Confucius Institute agreements available and accessible to the general public in order to reduce public suspicion about their arrangement with Hanban.
order to reduce the community’s concerns about a specific Confucius Institute, the hosting university should make its operations as transparent as possible, including making their agreement publicly accessible.

Some of the criticism of the Confucius Institutes stems from the contracts requiring the Institutes to operate under both U.S. and Chinese law, with the primary concern in the U.S. regarding contradictions between the U.S.’s freedom of speech and China’s speech code laws. Because Confucius Institute contracts require the operation to adhere to both the host country law and Chinese law, some are concerned that this could lead to Hanban attempting to enforce Chinese law on U.S. soil (Peterson 18). However, the clause requiring both country laws to be followed likely has no legal standing because a business cannot operate under two different sets of laws. No Confucius Institute contract exists without this clause so another solution is necessary to alleviate this concern, indicating a moderate collaboration potential on this point.

The collaboration potential on this concern, however, is actually fairly high. Hanban is interested in maintaining the host university’s satisfaction with the Confucius Institute program and would likely be willing to collaborate on this subject. There have been no incidents where Hanban has attempted to overrule a host country’s law or enforce Chinese law in a Confucius Institute abroad (McCord, “A Rejoinder” 10). Hanban has also already collaborated with host universities on this specific concern, explicitly prioritizing host country laws over Chinese law in the case of conflict:

One agreement noted that the activities of the Confucius Institute would be conducted generally in accordance with the Confucius Institute Constitution and Bylaws, as well as the regulations, policies, and practices of the U.S. school, cultural customs in the United States and China, and the laws and regulations of both countries. However, this
agreement also noted that the parties agreed that federal, state, and local laws of the United States, as well as the U.S. school’s regulations, policies, and practices (including principles such as academic freedom and non-discrimination), would prevail in the event of a conflict. (Bair 13)

Explicitly prioritizing the rule of U.S. law and hosting university policy over Chinese law in Confucius Institute agreements on points of contradiction and during instances of conflict is an effective strategy for addressing this concern that should be well received by Hanban.

The influence that Hanban has over Confucius Institute curriculum has also been a major concern because Hanban provides host universities with course materials and suggested curriculums. This concern is heightened in part because Hanban is subject to the PRC’s Ministry of Education, so Hanban funding comes indirectly from the PRC. People are concerned that China’s government money comes with strings attached (Peterson 19). While Hanban sends recommended course materials to Confucius Institutes, the host university ultimately has control over the curriculum, choosing whether to use Hanban’s materials and suggestions or opting to find or develop others. The majority of U.S. Confucius Institutes already have explicit contract clauses giving the hosting university control over materials and curriculum (Bair, 14). Hanban has veto power over what Confucius Institute money can be used for, as they are only interested in funding research, events, and courses relating to Chinese language and culture (not politics or history). In addition to hosting universities having control over the Confucius Institute curriculums, Confucius Institute instructors are free to disregard Hanban’s supplied materials and curriculum suggestions (Peterson 18; Bair 15; Hubbert 337). This indicates that Hanban is willing to work with hosting universities to help alleviate concerns of their control on Confucius Institute curriculums.
In order to address this concern, first Confucius Institute agreements ought to explicitly state that the university has control over Confucius Institute materials and curriculum so long as it focuses on Chinese language and culture. Accessible contracts (without non-disclosure agreements) should also help to alleviate this concern once the hosting university’s control is clarified in the agreement. Many U.S. Confucius Institute teachers already are using U.S.-developed materials instead of those sent by Hanban, largely because they include both simplified and traditional character systems instead of solely the simplified system (Bair 15; Hubbert 337). I recommend that language instruction materials that include both simplified and traditional character writing systems be adopted in Confucius Institutes in order to alleviate concerns about Hanban’s control as well as alleviating concerns over teaching only the simplified system. Another critical aspect of addressing the concern of Hanban’s control on curriculum is establishing regular oversight of the Confucius Institute program. Regular oversight of the Confucius Institutes will also serve to alleviate another concern: espionage. While there has been no evidence of espionage through Confucius Institutes, this concern continues to be promoted and spread by politicians and in various newspaper articles (Shawn; Lee; Derby). Regular university oversight of Confucius Institute activity would help alleviate concerns of espionage insofar that it would further aid university officials in catching potential espionage attacks. Universities need to implement regular oversight of their Confucius Institutes to continuously ensure that its activities, curriculum, and operation is aligned with university policy, mission, and goals.

Regular oversight of a school’s Confucius Institute program to ensure that its operations align with the school’s policies and goals should be the job of the school’s Confucius Institute director if it is not already. The NAS recommends making “the Confucius Institute director’s
position a voluntary service position, with no additional pay” in order to reduce “financial pressures for CI directors to cater to the Hanban’s preferences” (Peterson 11). However, Confucius Institute directors are “U.S. school employee[s]—either a school administrator, faculty member, or professional hired to manage the Confucius Institute” (Bair 7). Changing the director position from paid to voluntary would be extremely problematic for implementing consistent, high quality oversight of the program. By making the director position voluntary rather than paid, the financial motivation for the director to work hard to provide quality oversight of the Confucius Institute program is removed. This is an important job that deserves appropriate compensation to motivate quality work.

Universities also ought to have all the Confucius Institute courses be non-credit options to further address concerns of Hanban’s control of curriculum. I agree with the NAS’s recommendation to “Cease outsourcing for-credit courses to the Hanban” (Peterson 10). This should be of no contest for Hanban to agree, as no agreements specifically indicate that Confucius Institute courses would be for school credit and others even explicitly forbid Confucius Institute courses from offering school credit (Bair 14). By having the Confucius Institute classes only be non-credit courses, all official, for-credit Chinese studies classes would be entirely controlled by the university faculty rather than Confucius Institute instructors. This further limits the amount of control Hanban has in U.S. classrooms.

The process of hiring Confucius Institute teachers has also attracted scrutiny. Typically, Hanban or a partnered Chinese university will provide the hosting U.S. university with a pool of teacher recommendations from which the hosting university chooses (Bair 26). Hanban is contractually obligated to provide qualified language instructors to most Confucius Institutes established abroad (Sahlin, “China U”). Most Confucius Institute instructors are university-level
Chinese language professors in China who have experience teaching foreigners the language before they travel abroad to teach at a Confucius Institute (Sahlins, “China U”).

However, concern over discriminatory hiring methods for Confucius Institute teachers skyrocketed after the McMaster University case with Sonia Zhao. The National Association of Scholars recommended that hosting universities should “Formally ask the Hanban if its hiring process complies with American nondiscrimination policies” (Peterson 10). Similarly, the U.S. Senate Committee on Homeland Security also recommended that “U.S. schools should ensure that Hanban’s vetting, screening, and interview processes are aligned with their own hiring procedures and protocols” (Portman and Carper 9)

This however is problematic, because as detailed previously, universities cannot legally hold Hanban to U.S. anti-discriminatory hiring standards (McCord “A Rejoinder” 9). The U.S. Department of Defense’s “Exchange Visitor Program” outlines the rules and regulations foreign visiting faculty must meet in order to be able to work at a U.S. University. Confucius Institute teachers are subject to these same regulations. Targeting only Confucius Institute teacher hiring methods but disregarding hiring methods of all other visiting faculty members directly violates U.S. anti-discriminatory hiring laws by discriminating against persons based solely on their country of origin (“EEOC Enforcement”). U.S. Universities lack the jurisdiction to be able to demand adherence to U.S. hiring standards. Several Chinese laws are deemed discriminatory by U.S. standards, such as the outlaw of falun gong. This laws inevitably overlap into all of China’s government program hiring practices, including Hanban’s, because job candidates are not allowed to belong to any illegal organizations. Discriminatory hiring practices in China is a larger problem than just within the Confucius Institute program. This indicates that the collaboration potential on this concern is moderately low compared to the others.
In order to minimize the concern of discriminatory hiring practices within the Confucius Institute program, several steps ought to be taken. First, Hanban should increase the transparency of their hiring process. The Senate Committee on Homeland Security has made this same recommendation previously, however they did not detail what transparent hiring practices actually are (Portman and Carper 9) All applicants for a Confucius Institute teaching position should be available to hosting universities, each accompanied by Hanban’s reason for recommending or rejecting them for the position. This way hosting universities could have more insight into the hiring process, better understanding why some candidates are recommended over others. Additionally, it should be added in all Confucius Institute contracts that universities are able to recruit and choose their Confucius Institute instructors without Hanban’s prior recommendation, so long as they meet the same position requirements such as Chinese language teaching and English language proficiency standards. This would allow hosting universities to control how their Confucius Institute positions are filled, preventing Hanban from using potentially discriminatory hiring methods.

The concern that the Confucius Institute program is set up to increase China’s overall soft power overlaps with the concern that the Institutes convey an idealized portrayal of China. Confucius Institutes focus only on teaching language and culture, portraying an idealized view of China and avoiding sensitive political topics and unfavorable Chinese history (Hubbert 334). Because soft power consists of the attractiveness of a nation’s culture, politics, and foreign policy, the Confucius Institutes are only able to impact China’s soft power through their portrayal of Chinese culture as attractive and appealing. Thus, concerns of soft power and of idealized portrayals of China overlap. This concern is succinctly described by the NAS: Confucius Institutes “avoid Chinese political history and human rights abuses, present Taiwan
and Tibet as undisputed territories of China, and develop a generation of American students with selective knowledge of a major country” (Peterson 20). The concern is that because China is portrayed favorably in Confucius Institutes, students will develop an ignorant favorable bias towards China as a whole. Despite ethnographic research providing evidence of the contrary, that U.S. students’ negative perceptions of China are actually reinforced by the idealized portrayal of China in Confucius Institutes, concern continues (Hubbert 336; “China’s $10bn”). Regardless of the concerns, Hanban is not open to changing the Confucius Institute program’s focus from solely language and culture. There is no collaboration potential on this concern between Hanban and hosting universities.

This is why the NAS’s recommendation to “Require that all Confucius Institutes offer at least one public lecture or class each year on topics that are important to Chinese history but are currently neglected, such as the Tiananmen Square protests or the Dalai Lama’s views on Tibet” would likely not be accepted by Hanban (Peterson 11). The Confucius Institute is “an inappropriate venue to host political discussions and other sensitive topics given its focus on Chinese language and culture” (Bair 23). Trying to require Hanban to fund education on sensitive China topics likely would be a futile fight between host university and Hanban because those topics are not aligned with the Confucius Institute program’s mission to teach language and culture. Additionally, forcing Confucius Institutes to address sensitive China topics in their classes would violate the Confucius Institute instructors’ right to academic freedom, their right to choose what topics are appropriate for their course subjects. With the Confucius Institute’s focus solely on teaching language and cultural traditions, Hanban is expected to reject funding for events outside of this scope. Instead of futilely fighting with Hanban in attempt to get their funding approval for events covering sensitive China topics, I recommend that the hosting
university takes on the responsibility to ensure that sensitive China topics are addressed with their students and campus community outside of their Confucius Institute operation.

The Senate Committee on Homeland Security’s recommendation that “U.S. schools should ensure that Hanban does not exercise line-item veto authority when approving annual Confucius Institute budgets” would also likely not be approved by Hanban (Portman and Carper 9). By providing funding for the Confucius Institute program, Hanban has the right to reject program, course, and event proposals that do not align with the Confucius Institute program’s purpose of teaching Chinese language and culture. Hanban desires a partnership with a hosting university where both host university officials and Hanban officials work together to develop the specific operations and activities of the Institute (“Constitution and By-Laws”). By relinquishing their veto power, Hanban would no longer have any influence over ensuring Confucius Institute activities align with the program’s mission and purpose. This is very likely something Hanban would never agree to doing.

University officials typically expect Hanban to reject funding proposals for sensitive China topics (Bair 23). However, the U.S. Government Accountability Office found that Hanban has actually approved funding for events covering sensitive China topics in the past:

Officials at some case study schools offered examples of events and activities their Confucius Institute had sponsored that addressed topics that could be considered critical of China. Specifically, they reported hosting a conference discussing intellectual property in relation to China and events on territorial disputes in the South China Sea, Tibet, and religion in China. (Bair 24).

While Hanban may actually approve some funding for controversial topics, because they typically they are expected to reject funding for events that may be critical of China, university
officials rarely propose such topics to be funded by their Confucius Institute (Bair 24). More importantly however, “having a Confucius Institute on campus [does] not preclude the school from hosting controversial events on campus that take place outside of the institute” (Bair 24). Regardless of whether the Confucius Institute will fund events covering sensitive China topics, I suggest that it is ultimately the hosting university’s responsibility to ensure that these topics are approached with students and the campus community even if they need to rebudget non-Confucius Institute funding in order to develop such events, activities, and programs.

Universities hosting Confucius Institutes need to take it upon themselves to ensure that students are provided with more information about China, particularly sensitive controversial China topics. First and foremost, a Confucius Institute should not constitute the entirety of Chinese Studies offered at any school. Having additional Chinese studies courses available at the school is necessary to provide additional information about China to students. Chinese history or politics courses could be a good addition to schools with Confucius Institutes to ensure that the topics not discussed within Confucius Institutes are still addressed with students on campus. Confucius Institutes serve as an addition to a school’s Chinese Studies programs, not a replacement for them.

For universities that do not have an official Chinese Studies program that have established Confucius Institutes as a method of increasing their student resources and their campus’s cultural diversity, it is crucial that events, publications, and/or other measures are taken to address and discuss topics generally avoided by the Confucius Institute. Painting only an idealized picture of China at the university level is not conducive to developing students’ critical thinking, problem solving, or ethical reasoning skills, three goals of higher education (Sutton). Part of academic integrity includes presenting students with realistic portrayals of the world in
which we live. Universities with Confucius Institutes that lack any other Chinese studies programs ought to take on additional measures to ensure that their students and campus community are provided with additional information about, and additional opportunities to discuss, contemporary China and sensitive China topics. By ensuring that universities have space to discuss sensitive topics relating to China, the general avoidance of those topics in Confucius Institute courses is no longer problematic.

John McCain’s National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) is extremely problematic because it is important for universities to maintain high quality Chinese Studies courses outside of their Confucius Institute. The NDAA encourages schools to choose between their U.S. government-funded Chinese studies programs and their Confucius Institute program. These two programs ought to benefit and complement each other, enriching students and the community by offering a wide variety of information and experiences. Forcing schools to choose between continuing to host their Confucius Institute losing U.S. government funding, or continuing U.S. government funding and losing their Confucius Institute support, only serves to deplete universities of their resources. This causes universities to reduce the size of their Chinese Studies programs to accommodate for the sudden reduction in funding, ultimately reducing the quality of their students’ education and experience. For universities with a Confucius Institute that also receive funding from the U.S. Department of Defense, it is important to carefully draft an application for an exception in attempt to preserve both funding sources and protect the quality and diversity of Chinese studies programs offered to students and local community.
V. Conclusion

This thesis has served to create a greater understanding of the Confucius Institute dispute, assess collaboration potential between Hanban and hosting universities, and develop a set of recommendations for addressing the various concerns. This report took a macro-level approach to understanding the conflict rather than examining a conflict at a specific Confucius Institute. While this can be seen as a limitation, it also was beneficial to developing a set of recommendations that may better apply to any Confucius Institute across the nation. There are more public concerns expressed about the Confucius Institutes in general than there are about any single Confucius Institute. While the type of concerns overlap, the list of concerns expressed about any one Confucius Institute are shorter than those expressed about the Institutes in general. By exploring concerns expressed from individuals, universities, and a variety of organizations from across the country, a wider variety of perspectives are examined and understood than would be the case in examining the dispute over a specific Confucius Institute. It is important to explore all of the concerns about the program, not just those associated with a single Institute.

Another reason for taking this macro-level approach to addressing the conflict of the Confucius Institutes instead of looking at the conflict within a single Confucius Institute is the accessibility of information. Many universities that have or have had a Confucius Institute refrain from publicly sharing or publishing details about their Confucius Institute and any concerns it has or had faced. Instead of relying on publicly available information, visiting a Confucius Institute and hosting university to interview administrators, faculty, and other officials to learn this information also has shown to be particularly challenging in the past; the NAS “found Confucius Institutes suspicious of outsiders and extremely hesitant to speak to external researchers. When [the NAS] tried to arrange interviews with directors of Confucius Institutes,
they frequently refused, failed to respond, or else initially agreed but repeatedly rescheduled or
canceled” (Peterson 73-74). Few private researchers in the U.S. have been successful at getting
enough details from specific Institutes and universities needed for an effective conflict
assessment. Government researchers however have had more success in gathering information
through interviews.

This thesis hopes to inspire future research for university officials to investigate and
conduct a conflict assessment of their own Confucius Institute. With public concerns of
Confucius Institutes high, universities need to consider the different concerns when deciding
whether to establish, maintain, renegotiate, or terminate an Institute. Furthermore, universities
that wish to establish or continue operating a Confucius Institute ought to address each of the
corns to the best of their ability. In order to do so, university officials need to develop a
detailed and comprehensive understanding of the dispute, publically and specifically. Specific
people and their unique interests, concerns, and biases impact how the conflict of the Confucius
Institutes develops about a specific Institute and school. Administrators and faculty of a
university can have significant influence on their university’s agreement with Hanban, as was the
case of Marshall Sahlins and the University of Chicago. It is important for university officials to
understand the specific concerns surrounding their own Confucius Institute as well as the general
corns detailed in this thesis in order to conduct a well-informed decision-making process.

Future research investigating each of the concerns surrounding the program within active
Confucius Institute operations should also continue. Several scholars have argued that the
primary motivation behind many of the accusations and concerns about the Confucius Institutes
are not actually based on what occurs within the Institutes (Pomfret; Schmidt “China’s
Confucius”). While often difficult for outsiders to gain inside access, this research is essential to
determining the validity of concerns. University professors, faculty, and students at schools that host a Confucius Institute are in a prime position to be able to conduct this type of research. It is imperative that actual Confucius Institute activities, operations, and students are studied, examined, and interviewed firsthand in order to get a true understanding of whether there is reason for concern.
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