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Cultural Diplomacy and Internationalization of Higher Education: The Experience of Three Confucius Institutes in Canada

Abstract This paper is based on a study of three Confucius Institutes in Canada. The research aims to explore the nature of operations at Confucius Institutes, ranging from the selection of partnering Chinese universities, to the program planning at each individual site. Specifically, it focuses on the perceived impacts of the Confucius Institute partnership on the Canadian hosting institutions. Data was collected through interviews with key administrative staff from three Canadian universities. The theoretical framework of constructivism from international relations theory and concepts drawn from the literature on the internationalization of higher education were used to analyze the findings. Key issues revealed from the data include the host's perception of Confucius Institutes as China's cultural diplomacy and soft power strategy, the progression of partnerships between Canada and China over time, and university autonomy.

Keywords Confucius Institute, cultural diplomacy, internationalization of higher education, Chinese-Canadian university partnership

Introduction

The Confucius Institute has been one of China's strategies to re-introduce itself to the world in the 21st century, along with the 2008 Beijing Summer Olympics and the 2010 Shanghai World Expo. It has received much attention in the media, and in political and academic circles. Similar to its European counterparts, the Confucius Institute offers language and cultural education to interested citizens in host countries. However, it also offers various partnership models, one of which involves the linkage of a Chinese university to a host university abroad.

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Little is known about the organizational and administrative structure of these linkages and the expectations of individual host institutions. This study attempts to reveal such information in the Canadian context. A key purpose was to explore the nature of Chinese-Canadian university partnerships as experienced through the Confucius Institute, to clarify the expected outcomes of the host universities and summarize the insights that can be drawn from the Canadian experience.

Cultural Diplomacy, Chinese-Canadian University Partnership, and the Confucius Institute

Diplomacy has existed from the time of ancient civilizations to modern nation states. Its early form includes messengers travelling between kingdoms and other sovereign states for communication on issues such as trade and governance. It has since developed into various forms and with different actors as the political landscape has evolved. Public diplomacy is defined as a nation's effort to influence the actions of a foreign government through influencing the attitudes of its citizens (Signitzer & Coombs, 1992). Furthermore, a country may resort to its arts and culture to make a positive impression upon a foreign population as a strategy of public diplomacy. This is known as cultural diplomacy, a subfield of public diplomacy (Cull, 2008). The establishment of libraries for visiting scholars in Ancient Greece and the education of the sons of "friendly kings" provided by the Romans are early examples of cultural diplomacy. Artists and music troupes accompanied royals on their travels across Europe in the 19th century where they would participate in different activities conducive to diplomacy (Cavaliero, 1986). Recent examples of cultural diplomacy include the creation of American Centers and Information Resources Centers located in American embassies and the BBC World Service which is partly funded by the UK's Foreign and Commonwealth Office. Cultural diplomacy may be employed by a nation as a process of reaching an end goal of increased soft power. Soft power is the ability to sway others through attraction, persuasion, and agenda-setting (Nye, 2011). Interest in cultural diplomacy reached its peak during the Cold War and it has resurged in the early 21st century as countries have struggled to find cost-effective ways to influence one another.

Education is one of the more common tools of public diplomacy. Through student exchange programs, as well as local language and cultural classes, nations are able to gain access to a foreign public, particularly a subgroup that

may be more receptive to different cultural norms and ideologies. One particular approach is the establishment of a nation's cultural and language institutions in foreign countries. France first came up with the concept in the late 19th century as it sought to increase its global presence (Anderson, 1993). Alliance Française, the French cultural and language institution, was established in 1883, and was followed by other European nations such as Italy with its Dante Alighieri and the UK's British Council. The primary purpose of these organizations is to teach the official national language and each location offers accredited language courses and standardized testing for adults as well as language programs for children. The nation's arts and cultural heritage are also showcased through various events and activities.

The internal turmoil that China experienced in the late 19th century and throughout most of the 20th century has delayed its interaction with the rest of the world. Diplomatic relations between Canada and China did not resume until the early 1970s, flourishing after China initiated the Open Door policy in 1978. Part of this relationship has included collaboration between Chinese and Canadian academic institutions. In 1974, the Canada China Scholars Exchange Program was established to facilitate academic visits. The International Development Center (IDRC) and the Social Science and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) provided extra funding so that the program could be extended for research partnerships (Klabunde, 2009). From the 1980s to the mid-1990s, the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) initiated the Canada-China Management Education Program that connected management schools from universities in both countries. CIDA also funded the Canada-China University Linkage Program (CCULP). The legacy of this program was the creation of 31 institutional linkages, ranging from the fields of medicine, agriculture, and engineering to education and other cultural areas. The CCULP was followed by the Special University Linkage Consolidation Program (SULCP). Both programs were co-administered by the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada (AUCC) and the Chinese Ministry of Education, and the Ministry of Foreign Trade and Economic Cooperation (AUCC, 2000). Between 1980 and 2000, approximately 37,000 Chinese scholars, researchers and students received training to become experts in their fields by participating in these linkage programs. Many of these relationships led to more advanced collaboration in the areas of management, environment, health, engineering, agriculture, the sciences, energy and education in the 1990s

(Jackson, 2003). More recently, Canada has negotiated bilateral agreements with countries including China through the International Science and Technology Partnership Program (ISTPP) which hopes to increase the efficiency of cross-border collaboration in research and innovation in science and technology. In a survey conducted by AUCC (2009), China remains the top priority over other developing nations for research collaboration in Canadian universities.

The first Confucius Institute opened in 2004 in Seoul, Republic of Korea. By the end of 2013, this number had grown to over 353 Confucius Institutes and 473 Confucius Classrooms established in 104 countries worldwide (Hanban, n. d.). The Confucius Institute is modeled after its European counterparts such as the aforementioned British Council and Alliance Française. The creation of the Institute is not only the answer to the world's increasing demand for Chinese language learning, but it is also part of the Chinese government's plan to use culture and language to develop friendly relations with other nations. As stated in the 16th National People's Congress, China will help create a fair and rational international order by learning and accepting the cultures of different nations through conducting exchanges and cooperation based "on the principles of independence, equality, mutual respect and noninterference" (Xinhua, 2002, art. ix). This was again reiterated in the 17th National Congress when President Hu Jintao commented on the crucial role culture plays in the rise of the nation's overall strength (Xinhua, 2007).

The Confucius Institutes are non-profit organizations that offer six essential services around the world. They are:

- Chinese language teaching;
- training for Chinese language instructors;
- delivering of Chinese language teaching resources;
- administration of the *Hanyu Shuiping Kaoshi* (HSK Chinese Proficiency Test);
- provision of information and consultative services concerning China's education, culture and other areas; and
- conducting language and cultural exchange activities between China and other countries (Hanban, 2009).

The purpose of the Confucius Institute is to provide Chinese language education around the world, to help foreign citizens understand the Chinese language and culture better, to create better educational and cultural exchanges

and cooperation between China and other countries, while strengthening friendly relationships and promoting multiculturalism in hopes of building a harmonious world (Hanban, n. d.).

The Confucius Institute is a bilateral cooperative venture between China and foreign parties. The partnership can fall into one of the following categories:

- a partnership between a Chinese and a foreign university;
- a partnership between a Chinese and a foreign secondary school (also known as the Confucius Classroom);
- a partnership between a foreign nongovernmental organization and a Chinese university;
- a partnership between a foreign government and the Chinese government; and
- a partnership between an enterprise and a university. (Hanban, 2010)

According to the *Constitution and By-Laws of the Confucius Institutes* (Hanban, n. d.), an interested foreign institute must first submit an application to the Confucius Institute Headquarters. The Confucius Institute Headquarters is affiliated with China's Ministry of Education and is governed by the Council of the Confucius Institute Headquarters. The Council is comprised of an executive body and general council members. Representatives from different state ministries and committees such as the Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Culture and Ministry of Commerce, are recommended by the Chinese State Council while general Council members are heads of the board of directors of the overseas Confucius Institutes. The interested host institution must be able to demonstrate significant demands for Chinese language and culture learning at its location, also that there is physical space, personnel and facilities available along with adequate funding for the establishment as part of the application package. Once the application is approved, a cooperative agreement will be signed by both Chinese and foreign parties. The Confucius headquarters will provide a fixed amount of money to fund the initial setup of the Confucius Institute abroad and will match subsequent funding raised by the foreign Confucius Institute at a 1 to 1 ratio. The Confucius Institute Headquarters is also responsible for providing support and resources to each individual Confucius Institute. It will provide guidelines and assess the quality of the programs and activities carried out at each site. In addition, an annual conference is held by the headquarters in Beijing

for all the Institutes to come together to share experiences and to exchange ideas. In return, each site must submit an annual report to the headquarters outlining the tasks achieved in the past year, as well as the next year's plan and budget for approval.

Theoretical Framework for the Study

The theoretical framework adopted for this study is the constructive paradigm from *international relations* theory. In contrast to the traditional theories of realism and liberalism, constructivism emphasizes the importance of intersubjective meanings in international relations. A nation's decisions and actions are based on its perception and interpretation of others' decisions and actions. The interactions between nations become part of the social relationships that consist of shared knowledge, material resources, and practices (Wendt, 1995). These social relationships are also based on actors' identities. These identities are crucial as they provide predictability and order (Hopf, 1998). Identities are created in a feedback loop. Actor A behaves a certain way based on its understanding of the world and this causes a response from Actor B based on its own interpretations of Actor A. In the end, Actor A reacts again to Actor B's actions and thus identities and interests are continually maintained under this process (Zehfuss, 2006). The constructivist paradigm is chosen as a theoretical framework for this research because it can explain the process whereby cultural diplomacy operates. Nations that employ cultural diplomacy often hope to create a positive impression on the public of other nations. Through art exhibits, musical concerts, and language classes, citizens of other countries are exposed to a social and personable representation of the nation. In turn, these foreign citizens will make their own interpretations of these artifacts. These interpretations are the intersubjective meanings to which constructivists refer. If a foreign audience develops a positive interpretation of another nation, then this nation may reap benefits in policy negotiations. The Confucius Institute can be examined under a constructive lens since it is intended as a site where a foreign audience may develop a sense of China's identity.

Various definitions have been proposed for the concept of the internationalization of higher education. For the purpose of this study, internationalization of higher education is taken as a process where by a global and intercultural dimension is added to the purpose, functions and delivery of

higher education at the institutional and national levels (Knight, 2008). Institutions engage in internationalization for multiple reasons, including economic, political, cultural and educational ones (Knight & de Wit, 1995). Knight (2008) has also identified six approaches for institutions to become internationalized. First, institutions can establish activities such as study abroad programs and specific academic programs. Second, institutions can set goals to achieve particular outcomes that are measurable. Third, the internationalization process is driven by rationales such as the ones mentioned above. Fourth, the process of internationalization is embedded within the main operations of higher education, which are teaching and learning, research, and service to society. Next, international and intercultural understandings are encouraged through courses, visits by scholars and community outreach. In the last approach, institutions offer cross-border services through e-learning, face-to-face or distance learning as part of the internationalization process. Concepts associated with the internationalization of higher education have been included in the theoretical framework as they can be used to examine the perspective of the Canadian hosts towards the Confucius Institutes.

Research Method and Approach

At the time of the study, there were 13 Confucius Institutes across Canada; however, not all Institutes involved university institutions as hosts. Four universities were invited to participate in the study and three responded positively. Open-response, semi-structured interviews were conducted with one to two faculty/staff members at each of the three sites during the period from February to April 2012. Data was collected from a total of four interviewees. Additional information was collected from online and paper sources such as Confucius Institute official websites and news articles. The qualitative case study method was chosen for this study because it allowed the researcher to look at each Confucius Institute holistically, including all administrative and operational matters. The semi-structured interviews provided flexibility for the researcher to include additional questions as they arose while the open responses allowed the participants to express their views without significant limitations. The names of the Canadian and Chinese universities have been withheld to protect the anonymity of the institutions.

Findings of the Study

The data collected from the three sites have been organized as follows: programs available, human resources and support, target clientele, general operational procedures, funding, university autonomy, nature of cross-university collaboration, and factors and issues for facilitating the bilateral university partnership.

All three sites provided similar credit and non-credit language courses, and hosted similar community events such as music performances and art exhibits. One of the sites also offered programs for professionals and entrepreneurs interested in trade with China. Credit courses are available to registered university students while non-credit courses are open to the public. Although the three sites offer similar programs, the clientele targeted by each institute is slightly different. All three sites included their own university community as the major clientele, which is the only group that can take the credit courses. It is important to note that all three Confucius Institutes only play a secondary role in providing resources to the credit courses. Faculty members within specialized departments, such as East Asian Studies and Linguistics, are primarily responsible for the planning and teaching of the syllabi of these credit courses. One institute identified the business community and government workers as one of its clientele. Another included other university groups, the local school communities and local business communities as its clientele. The third institute added local Chinese groups such as the Chinese cultural association and local families with adopted Chinese children to its list of target populations.

As required by the Confucius headquarters, each site submits a year-end report on its budget spent, and the programs and activities held. Representatives from each site are also invited to the annual Confucius Institute Conference in Beijing where they can exchange ideas and share experiences with one another. However, respondents expressed the view that contact with the Chinese university partner and other Canadian Confucius Institutes is what they value the most. Respondents often have to communicate with fellow Canadian Confucius Institute administrators in coordinating cultural events and also in supporting one another. The respondents are primarily faculty members or senior administrators at the Canadian universities and their role at the Confucius Institute is either a reassignment or an additional duty within the university. All three sites have a similar operational structure. The funding for each site aligns with the 1 to 1 ratio

stated in the *Constitution and By-Laws of the Confucius Institutes*. It is publicly known that the Confucius Institute Headquarters provide the initial setup fund for each site and that subsequent financial support is provided on a 1 to 1 ratio. The respondents have stated that the Canadian universities raise the financial support they are responsible for through their advancement department, contributions and support from local communities and other sources.

According to one participant:

They (headquarters) have a protocol and we are going through it right now, where they have what they call a self-assessment process...the kind you would expect from any grant agency toward the end of the period for which funding is provided.

And for the additional funds required,

We would have to go to individuals or businesses, people who might believe that there was value in the Confucius Institute or value in having students able to learn Chinese. For example, we have some private sector supporters who have provided scholarships for students who wanted to study the Chinese language.

The participants were also asked about their perceptions regarding the level of autonomy the Canadian universities have over the programs offered throughout the Confucius Institutes. At all three sites it was affirmed that the Canadian university retains control over program planning and the resources used. As stated by one respondent,

Confucius Institute is part of the Canadian university, so it works within [it]. We work with other faculties, departments from the Canadian university, in terms of programming and course development...we cover the areas of language and culture...we work with the School of Business, International Studies and Linguistics departments.

Another added,

...they are not telling us what we need to do, but they might not give us funding for everything we want to do. So to that extent, do they have influence on what we do? Yes. They never said [no] to us, but if you have the ability to get the funding from somewhere else, we are not saying you can't do it, we are just saying we are not going to pay for it. And I think that's a huge distinction.

All three sites have pre-existing collaborations with different Chinese

institutions and have selected a Chinese university from this group. All respondents have stated that previous experience with a particular Chinese institution provided an advantage in the application process. At one of the Canadian universities, the cross-border relationship first began as a project funded by CIDA (Canadian International Development Agency) nearly 20 years ago.

The respondents were also asked about the nature of the university partnership specifically through the Confucius Institute. There are multiple levels of collaboration at work within each site. First, interested Canadian students are encouraged to study the Chinese language at the partner institution through the summer exchange program and the Confucius Institute Scholarship program. Second, the Chinese university partners provide both material and human resources for the instructional courses upon request by the Canadian sites. At the faculty level, there are cross-border collaborations from different departments. For example,

my colleagues from the international relations department, school of linguistics, we worked with the professors and faculty from our Chinese partner university to discuss what will be the suitable courses or programs for the institute...we [borrow] from their network and make it very customized for us.

...resources, books, we are looking to offer non-credit courses for Chinese language for individuals within the university and the broader community...those instructors are hosted by the Canadian university but provided by the Chinese university.

At the administrative level, members from the Chinese university are part of the board of directors at one of the sites. It is interesting to note that three sites have stated that cross-border collaborations had been ongoing with various Chinese institutions before the establishment of the Confucius Institutes.

Several elements can be observed in the perceived benefits of hosting the Confucius Institutes as reported by the interviewees. One respondent indicated that the students at the Canadian university are the primary beneficiary as the program offered by the institute can prepare them for the “new global economy” after graduation. Another respondent stated the Confucius Institute helps to fulfill the internationalization mandate of the university. It also increases the Canadian university’s reputation as visitors make a point to visit the campus due to the presence of the Confucius Institute. The respondent from the third site added that

the partnership provides additional resources which allow some departments to run courses that would otherwise be cancelled.

There is a clear consensus that mutual understanding, respect, and a previous working relationship, are important factors for facilitating a successful bi-lateral partnership through the Confucius Institute. As one respondent put it,

I really do believe that one of the things that allows this relationship to flourish has been a long term relationship where people have come to know each other and be open and candid and honest with each other.

In addition to asking the respondents about what they perceived as essential factors for fostering a good working relationship, they were also asked about the improvements needed and future directions. No serious issues have been reported by the respondents as most Canadian Confucius Institutes are approaching the end of their five-year contract. Increasing course enrollments and being able to renew the contract with the headquarters for the second term are some of the common goals from the three sites in this study.

The last question that was asked in the interview had to do with issues of political sensitivity and related concerns that have arisen in the media and other public domains. The following are some of the responses taken from the participants at the three sites:

I think our Confucius Institute has been dealing with the situation quite admirably because we always tell people that our mission is to promote Chinese culture and language so the Confucius Institute is a non-political, non-religious organization and as such we just want to stay within our mission and promote Chinese language and culture.

For more sensitive political and religious issues, we just tell people that it is not within the jurisdiction of the Confucius Institute. We are aware of possible issues at other Confucius Institutes.

One respondent has acknowledged that the Confucius Institute is one of China's soft power strategies, stating:

I think we are trying to gain friends and influence hearts toward our country and I think they are doing the same thing by creating an institute where people can learn more about the Chinese language and learn about their country.

All respondents are aware of the issues and controversies of the Confucius Institute in the media. They also understand the creation of the institute is one of China's cultural diplomacy strategies. However, it has been expressed by each site that its goal lies only in the transmission of Chinese language and culture through the exchange of both Canadian and Chinese universities.

Perspectives on the Value of the Confucius Institutes from Three Canadian Cases

As previously noted, the Confucius Institute can be analyzed through the constructivist framework from the field of international relations. China attempts to create a positive image of itself to the students and general public of the host country through courses and activities at the Confucius Institute. The goal is to foster a better relation between nations so that the foreign public perceives China as sharing similar goals, values and understandings. However, the Confucius Institute is different from the British Council, Alliance Française, and other parallel institutions in that it has a more direct involvement with local institutions. The three sites in this study have initiated the partnership by submitting an application to the Confucius Institute Headquarters, which can be understood as their willingness to operate a form of Chinese cultural diplomacy on their campuses. If the positive opinion of a foreign citizen is used as one of the criteria to determine the success of a nation's public diplomacy, then the success of the Confucius Institute may not only lie in the students and the general public who have participated in its programs. It is also seen in the attitudes of the Canadian faculty and senior administrators who are in charge of operations at the institute. These individuals must believe in the goals of the Confucius Institute and the value of having it on their campus. One respondent commented that the Confucius Institutes are similar to the developmental work of the Canadian government, in that both attempt to "gain friends and influence hearts" of other nations.

Although cultural diplomacy is traditionally seen as a unilateral gain for the source nation, different Canadian communities may also benefit. As China is one of the key trading partners with Canada, many businesses are interested in continuing or starting trade relations with their Chinese counterparts. This is evident in the trade tours led by Canadian prime ministers over the years. Respondents have explained that some of their general programs are tailored

towards the business communities, such as courses in basic language, cultural and business etiquette. Academic courses and exchange programs that are offered to university students are promoted as a potential employment booster since having knowledge of the official Chinese language and experience living in China may provide an advantage when graduates search for jobs.

It is interesting to note that none of the three sites offer courses on Confucian teachings. However, some Confucian beliefs can be observed in the goals and operations of the institutes. The concept of harmony, according to Confucius, is achieved through the mutual benefits and constraints of all parties involved. From the official documents and responses from the three sites, benefits are gained through increased capacity and funding for Chinese language education, increased exposure to Chinese culture, and a growing international reputation for the Canadian institutions. However, there are constraints experienced by both parties, as they have to abide by the rules and regulations as stated in the Confucius Institute *Constitution and By-Laws*, and those of the Canadian universities.

The three Confucius Institutes in this study are joint ventures between Chinese and Canadian academic institutions with funding and support of the Chinese government. For the purpose of this paper, university partnership can be defined as the working relationship between two academic institutions, where benefits may flow unilaterally or bilaterally. Chinese-Canadian university partnerships began in the 1970s and the nature of the partnership has changed drastically as China emerged from being a developing nation to become an economic powerhouse (Hayhoe, Pan, & Zha, 2013). It has evolved from Canada being the primary donor in providing training in the fields of agriculture, engineering and education, to China becoming more of an equal partner in educational research and collaboration. The Confucius Institute can then be seen as part of this progression in the university partnership. With the continuing renewal of five-year contracts, each Confucius Institute may provide a more permanent conduit for communication between Chinese and Canadian academic institutions. This is especially important for social sciences and humanities departments, where bilateral collaborations were not common in earlier times. All three sites interviewed in this project had previous working relationships and participants have expressed that this was a crucial factor in running a successful Confucius Institute, ranging from having the application accepted by the *Hanban* to having productive collaboration between institutions.

By establishing the Confucius Institutes, the Canadian universities are fulfilling the mandate of internationalization on their campuses. According to the definition of internationalization used in this study, the Confucius Institute can be seen as an added global dimension to the delivery of higher education at the level of individual institutions. The perceived benefits of hosting the Confucius Institute on the Canadian campus can be seen to relate to the four rationales for internationalization which were previously mentioned. On the economic front, the funding formula provides significant economic support for the internationalization of higher education. The Canadian universities only need to raise half the operational funds for social science and humanities programs related to Chinese language and culture. This is especially appealing to smaller academic institutions where endowments and other financial support are limited. One of the respondents has commented that people from other countries come to this particular university due to its Confucius Institute. This increased awareness on the global scale can potentially increase the recruitment of international students. In addition, all respondents have emphasized that the goal of hosting the Confucius Institute is to promote intercultural understanding and to facilitate communication between scholars of both nations, another reason for internationalization.

Two other themes also emerge from the findings. First, the Confucius Institute acts as a new venue for Canadian universities to conduct local outreach and inter-university communication. All participants have listed various activities and events hosted by the Confucius Institute that serve the local Chinese and non-Chinese communities. For example, one site offers resources and teacher training to Chinese language teachers in both public and Catholic school boards. Another site maintains contact with non-Chinese families of children adopted from China. These programs allow the university to come in contact with different demographics in their area in addition to the previously mentioned business and academic communities. This may prove to be advantageous for the university, as increased exposure to the local communities may bring additional interest and support to the campus in the form of donations and student enrollment. Second, the respondents have also reported the informal and formal communication that takes place among the different Canadian Confucius Institutes. The formal channel of communication includes the annual Confucius Institute Conference in Beijing every December, where representatives from all the sites around the world gather to exchange information. The informal communication between staff and faculties includes events such as the Chinese

Bridge competition and other cultural events where some coordination is required between different sites. Since the majority of staff at the institutes also hold faculty positions within the university, these channels of communications may potentially become new opportunities for scholars from different Canadian institutions to exchange ideas and experiences.

One of the most contentious issues associated with the Confucius Institute involves the fear of interference by the Chinese government into the autonomy of the host universities. Numerous sources have expressed concern that due to the funding formula and the operational structure of the institute, the academic freedom of the host university may be compromised. However, participants have felt the working relationships with their Chinese university partner and the *Hanban* have been smooth except for minor logistical and administrative issues. They have all credited the success to prior collaboration and experience working with Chinese institutions. One participant emphasized that the Confucius Institute is a non-political and non-religious organization, which seems to resonate with the *Constitution and By-Law* established by *Hanban*. The participants have stated that the Canadian institutions retain the final authority over the programming and resources used for their sites. It was added that if a proposed plan is not deemed favourable by headquarters, funding may be reduced or not given at all. The Canadian Confucius Institute essentially operates under the Canadian universities with the licensing and financial subsidy coming from *Hanban*. The partnership between *Hanban* and each site operates on a five-year cycle. Each year, the local institution reports to *Hanban* details of the fiscal budget and past activities. In the fifth year, the local institution must decide whether to reapply for a new cycle, and when it does, it must submit a new proposal to *Hanban*. It was noted in the findings that when either party does not feel a new contract is worth pursuing, the partnership may cease. This is seen in the case of one Canadian Confucius Institute which has closed at the end of its five-year term in July 2013. The reason for discontinuing the contract in this case involved hiring practices rather than the choice of programs and resources (Bradshaw & Freeze, 2013). This demonstrates that the Confucius Institute is not a permanent establishment on campus but is subject to contractual terms as agreed by both the Canadian institution and *Hanban*.

Conclusion

The findings for this research have been garnered from three Canadian Confucius

Institutes. Therefore, the results cannot represent the other ten sites across the country as each site is located within a distinctive geographical and institutional context. Another limitation to the study is the potential response bias from participants. Since the data was collected through interviews, the participants may have misinterpreted some questions or they may have felt the need to answer the questions in a way that would project a certain image of the Institute. Despite these limitations, this study has provided significant insights into the perspectives of some Canadian administrators on the mission and operations of the Confucius Institute. Most literature has focused on the nation that uses cultural diplomacy and the effectiveness of its efforts to have an influence on foreign audiences. From this study, it can be observed that the local administrators believe there are benefits to being a host and such bilateral partnership proves to be a kind of symbiotic relationship. Future research may include a larger sample of Confucius Institutes to provide a better understanding of the Canadian context, and also to include the perspectives of involved faculty and staff in the Chinese partner universities. A longitudinal study would also be a good way of determining the sustainability of the university partnership through the Confucius Institute. This Chinese cultural and language institution is a relatively new phenomenon compared to its European counterparts. Therefore, it will be of interest to observe whether *Hanban* will make changes to the operational structure of the Confucius Institute to ensure renewals of contracts with foreign institutions.

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