Introduction to JCIHE Special Issue

Foreign Interference in Higher Education
Special Editor: Kyle A. Long

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Dear Readers –

Internationalization, along with its goals and outcomes is constantly evolving and resulting objectives and actions are multifaceted and complex. There are many ways of looking at context without presupposing outcomes which can cause intent to not always happen as planned. While such consequences can be a positive response, more often they are examined within the fame of negativity, as something that is not desired (Raby & Kamyab, 2023). The articles in the **JCIHE Special Issue Winter 14(5) 2022: Foreign Interference in Higher Education, edited by Kyle A. Long,** examine the interconnection of intent and outcomes that result from foreign interferences in internationalization of higher education. These interferences are largely seen in the negative and as something that influences higher education in media, government, geopolitics, philanthropy, and other public discourses. In turn, there is also avenues in which higher education is involved in international politics and can even become a focal point for countering foreign interference in higher education. Important for the Special Issue is that it serves as a call to action for scholars of the internationalization of higher education to understand and be actively engaged in the broader discourse around foreign interferences.

The JCIHE 14(5) 2022 issue also includes four Empirical Articles that examine issues of the impact of COVID-19 on the financial and emotional mental health of international students, social media communication styles of international students, correlation of net tuition revenue and enrollment of international undergraduates in USA; and youth experiences in higher education whose parents were imprisoned in Turkey.

The Winter Special Issue 2022 includes articles with author institutional affiliations in five countries: Australia, Canada, China, UK, US. The articles in the Special Issue: **Foreign Interference in Higher Education** explore variations on the main theme of foreign interference

in higher education. Other themes include the positive framing of IHE, negative influence of media and government; national security and public diplomacy relationships; reputation laundering by foreign donations; foreign gifts, racist investigation scheme to label gift-giving as malign; academic espionage.

Kyle A. Long *(Northwestern University, USA)* **& Carly O'Connell** *(The George Washington University, USA).* **Foreign Interference in Higher Education: An International Landscape Analysis**

This article compares alleged foreign interference in universities around the world. The research identifies the alleged perpetrators and victims, the victims' concerns and responses, and the voices shaping the narrative about foreign interference. The article maps the concepts of sharp power and right-wing authoritarianism in news articles and related media sources from 2019-2021. The research helps to bridge the gap between the primarily positive framing of the internationalization of higher education in scholarly discourse and the negative focus on foreign interference in higher education in the media, government, and other public discourse. It also serves as an important introduction to this phenomenon and call to action for scholars of the internationalization of higher education to conduct further research and actively engage in the broader discourse around this topic.

Alexander Cooley *(Barnard College),* **John Heathershaw** *(University of Exeter),* and **Tena Prelec** *(University of Oxford). Foreign Donations in the Higher Education Sector of the United States and the United Kingdom: Pathways for Reputation Laundering*

This article defines and provides examples of reputation laundering conducted by individuals, organizations, and countries to increase reputation by donating to prestigious universities. Higher education institutions are easily manipulated because most do not have clear guidelines for accepting gifts that are legal but still risky. Using publicly available data, these scholars from the United States and United Kingdom highlight the patterns of foreign support of elite institutions. The under-reporting of donations leads to foreign influence in the American and British higher education sectors.

Elise S. Ahn *(University of Wisconsin–Madison).* **Examining the Politicization and Framing of HEA 117 Between 2019 and 2021.**

This article examines the U.S. policy on institutional reporting of foreign gifts and contracts in higher education. Discourse historical analysis explores how the Trump administration framed the issue of under-reporting foreign gifts that lead to 19 investigations of university non-compliance with federal statutes. The analysis reveals a racist and indiscriminate investigation scheme in which the federal government was fishing, looking at all international activity as potentially malign, revealing that it did not understand institutions' commitments to comprehensive internationalization. The article reminds scholars of international education to be vigilant and speak up about the use and abuse of international education, both foreign and domestic.

Roopa Desai-Trilokekar *(York University, Canada)* and **Hani El Masryb** *(University of Waterloo, Canada).* **The Nexus of Public Diplomacy, Soft Power, and National Security: A Comparative Study of International Education in the U.S. and Canada**

This article compares the inter-related concepts of public diplomacy, soft power, and national security vis-à-vis international education in Canada and the United States. The

comparison shows how national security is a prominent rationale for international education at the expense of public diplomacy or soft power. The article provides a theoretical model to understand the relationship between public diplomacy and national security. Finally, the article discusses several challenges for the future, such as diminishing role of the university as a distinct and valued non-state actor, and governments increasingly setting the rules of international academic engagement, pushing academics to the sidelines.

Ryan M. Allen *(Soka University of America).* **A Bibliometric Exploration into the Global Research Impact of China's Thousand Talents Brand**

This article examines China's Thousand Talents Plan, the controversial recruitment scheme to repatriate Chinese citizens and enlist the services of foreign academics in elite universities to strengthen Chinese universities, especially in the applied sciences. Critics allege that the scheme constitutes abuse of the international education sector's openness norms, and can posit it as a mechanism to facilitate espionage. The article examines the effectiveness on the plan in their bibliometric analysis from 2008-2020. At its height, associated research accounted for only one percent of total Chinese research. While scholarship has dipped in 2020, partnerships between scholars remain. The paucity of publications questions concerns of espionage and technical theft.

JCIHE EMPIRICAL ARTICLES

The JCIHE Issue 5 includes four empirical articles that were submitted through the regular submission process. The Empirical articles separate from the Special Issue include author affiliations in four countries: Australia; China; Turkey, and United States. The broader themes of these articles are international student experiences and youth experiences in higher education. The sub-themes of these articles include the impact of COVID-19 of financial and emotional mental health of international students; social media communication styles of international students to connect with peers in their home country; correlation of net tuition revenue and enrollment of international undergraduates in USA; and youth experiences in higher education whose parents were imprisoned in Turkey.

Hyacinth Udah *(James Cook University, Australia)* **& Abraham Francis** *(James Cook University, Australia).* **Vulnerability and well-being: International students' experience in North Queensland, Australia**

This article examines the impact of COVID-19 on mental health of international students studying in North Queensland, Australia. The article specifically looks at the impact of financial and emotional distress resulting from the pandemic on their learning and engagement experiences. The authors point to the need for higher education institutions to provide tailored programs and services, including nurturing, supportive, responsive, and needs-orientated environment to address the challenges international students face, and the mental health needs posed by the pandemic and beyond.

Kikuko Omori *(California State University, Sacramento, USA)* **& Michael Schwartz** *(St. Cloud State University, USA).* **Acculturation and Social Media: How Do International Students Engage with Facebook While Abroad?**

This article examines the relationship between Facebook use and acculturation by creating a fake face Facebook page to be added to the international students' social network. The major findings of this study include a) the pattern of Facebook postings was the same during the semester, b) international students used convergence communication strategies to better communicate with people in their network, and c) some participants' Facebook postings indicate a strong identification with their home culture.

Seyat Polat *(Independent researcher, Germany).* **The Education Process of Children with Imprisoned Parents After the 15 July 2016 Coup Attempt in Turkey**

This article explores the educational learning of high-school youth transitioning to higher education and higher education youth of parents who were imprisoned following the coup attempt in Turkey in July 2016. Focus is on the psychological problems and changes to moral and universal values, all from the point of view of the parents. The main conclusions seem to be that the majority of students whose parents were imprisoned had to change their schools, their academic success decreased, the students who continued their higher education were prolonged or had to leave their schools, and the majority of them did not have serious psychological problems.

Zongxing Mei *(Central Connecticut State University, USA)* **& Yan Liu** *(University of North Carolina Wilmington, USA).* **From 2000 to 2018: Examining the Relationship Between Net Tuition Revenue and the International Undergraduate Student Enrollment at Public Doctoral Universities**

This article examines the association between net tuition revenue and international undergraduate student enrollment at public doctoral universities through a longitudinal perspective. Informed by Cost-Benefit Analysis (CBA), this study used correlational analysis, One-way ANOVA and Post Hoc tests to examine the relationship from different perspectives. These findings indicated a statistically significant positive correlation between net tuition revenue and international undergraduate student enrollment numbers at public doctoral universities from 2000 and 2018.

About JCIHE

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JCIHE is dependent on the volunteer efforts of many scholars in the field of comparative and international higher education. I want to give special thanks to the JCIHE Peer Reviewers for the Winter Special Issue: Joanna Abdallah: University of Dayton, USA; Prashanti Chennamsetti: Texas A&M University, USA; Lin Ge: University of Regina, Canada; Hari C. Kamali: Far Western University, Nepal; Rachel McGee: Southeastern University, USA; Eduardo Mondlane:

University, Mozambique, and Ricardo Pinto Mario Covele: University of the Western Cape, South Africa. Thank you for the time you give to making sure that the articles are publication ready.

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Introduction to Special Issue on
Foreign Interference in Higher Education

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Higher education is intertwined with geopolitics. Russia's war in Ukraine provides numerous examples. Governments and universities allied with Ukraine have offered refuge to the invaded country's students and scholars while suspending international research and study programs with Russian partners. Two members of the United States Congress even called for the expulsion of all Russian students in American universities. Meanwhile, Russian officials, who have attempted to repatriate their students abroad for years, have renewed their pleas for students to come home. These few examples illustrate how national political responses to regional conflicts can impact higher learning globally.

Fortunately, geopolitical analysis is a familiar endeavor to scholars of international higher education. The legacies of colonialism, the Cold War, and Covid-19 are common concerns. Still, analysts have begun to recognize a shift in how higher education is involved in today's international politics. The increased

volume of international student mobility, the amplified impact of university-based research, and the growing prestige and profits associated with world-class universities combine to make students, scholars, and institutions significant variables in policymakers' geopolitical calculations. Some scholars therefore see international higher education entering an era of "new geopolitics" (Sabzalieva et al., 2021; Trilokekar, 2022). This era is characterized by the rise of China, the resurgence of Russia, and a general de-Westernization of world order.

The new geopolitics is fundamentally changing our idea of international education. The internationalization of higher education promotes intercultural understanding and prepares graduates for a global workforce. Until recently, these noble rationales have often obscured more nefarious ones. Lee (2021) observes that "international education tends to be narrowly understood by universities and professional associations as an educational rather than a geopolitical endeavor" (10). Of course, governments and private actors have long exploited international education for political or financial gain. Nearly nine decades ago, Josef Stalin explained, "Education is a weapon the effect of which is determined by the hands which wield it, by who is to be struck down" (Wells, 1934/2014). Indeed, during the half century that followed, the Soviet regime used international education as a key instrument to advance the Communist ideology abroad. Of course, the American government concurrently developed study programs for foreign nationals that it hoped would foster an appreciation for democratic capitalism (Tsvetkova, 2008). The ongoing decline of liberal democracy and ascent of authoritarianism is once again challenging international education by stoking fears about foreigners compromising national defense, meddling in domestic political processes, and displacing cultural heritage.

An important aspect of the new geopolitics is foreign interference in national affairs. The latest re-ordering of world power has set the West's teeth on edge. In the United States, especially since 2016, fears of injurious foreign interference have prompted government officials to impose policies that impact faculty, students, and administrators. The Department of Justice brought charges against American citizens for failing to disclose foreign research partnerships. The Department of State cancelled visas of international students with ties to

military-affiliated universities in their home countries. The Department of Education probed into universities' under-reported foreign donations. The Department of Defense rendered ineligible for funding any university that hosts a Confucius Institute. Indeed, many recent U.S. policies are responses to fears about China, specifically (viz., the China Initiative), but they could have a chilling effect on international education more broadly. Federal and state legislatures have introduced bills with bi-partisan support in response to perceived malign foreign influence on American higher education.

This phenomenon extends beyond the United States. The United Kingdom and Australia have also set up task forces to counter foreign interference in higher education. The European Union introduced a toolkit for member states to mitigate foreign interference in university-based research. India, Japan, Singapore, and other Asian nations have adopted foreign interference policies, too. In authoritarian regimes, where international higher education has been perceived as a threat to sovereignty, the consequences of perceived interference can be swift and substantial. Hungarian authorities, for example, forced Central European University out of the country by stripping it of its license to issue degrees. The American University of Afghanistan fled from the Taliban and now operates in exile as well.

Scholarship in this special issue highlights the apprehensions and actions of government leaders, policymakers, educators, and/or other key stakeholders about actual or perceived interference into their country's educational systems or institutions. Authors address a wide range of topics including news media coverage of foreign interference, international philanthropy, international research collaborations, and national security policy. When read together, they present a picture not often seen in international education research. Cross-cutting themes involve exploitation, vulnerability, and anxiety.

Kyle Long and Carly O'Connell map the international landscape of foreign interference in higher education by focusing on news coverage and policy formation. They bring together the concepts of sharp power and right-wing authoritarianism to inform a discourse analysis and comparative policy analysis of a data set of news articles and related media sources between 2019-2021. The

authors highlight how government actors within the United States and Australia are driving the international English-language discourse about Chinese foreign interference in a polarized media environment. Long & O'Connell observe well-founded fears of China's exploitation of international students and research collaborations to the detriment of national security. At the same time, a resurgent worldwide authoritarian movement is also exploiting these concerns to augment long-standing assaults on higher education. They find that government officials dominate the narrative of foreign interference. Academics are quoted considerably less. The authors' comparative analysis of allegations of foreign interference by country establishes a benchmark for future research.

Alexander Cooley, John Heathershaw, and Tena Prelec introduce readers to the concept of reputation laundering. Individuals, organizations, and countries can all launder their reputations by donating to prestigious universities. The authors suggest that higher education institutions are easily manipulated for such purposes because they do not have clear guidelines for accepting gifts that are legal but still risky. Using publicly available data, these scholars from the United States and United Kingdom highlight the patterns of foreign support of elite institutions. They remind us that even though these donations are substantial, they are almost certainly under-reported, suggesting the likelihood of even greater foreign influence in the American and British higher education sectors. A particularly significant contribution to the literature comes from the authors' detailed explanation of how laundering works.

Elise Ahn examines recent enforcement of long-standing U.S. policy on institutional reporting of foreign gifts and contracts. She uses discourse historical analysis to explore how the Trump administration framed the issues leading to new investigations of university non-compliance with federal statutes. Each investigation is premised on the belief that institutions under-reported foreign gifts. By focusing on the language of the investigation documents, Ahn finds that the government framed universities as negligent, inconsistent with peers, and lacking adequate infrastructure for their international activities. Her analysis reveals a racist and indiscriminate investigation scheme. Ahn convincingly argues that the federal government was fishing, looking at all international

activity as potentially malign, revealing that it did not understand institutions' commitments to comprehensive internationalization. She reminds scholars of international education to be vigilant and speak up about the use and abuse of international education, both foreign and domestic.

Roopa Trilokekar & Hani el Masry explore the inter-related concepts of public diplomacy, soft power, and national security vis-à-vis international education. By comparing Canada and the United States, they show how national security has become a more prominent rationale for international education at the expense of public diplomacy or soft power. Their study reviews the evolution of international education policy rationales through a review of policy documents and secondary literature as well as thirty key stakeholder interviews. This effort results in the development of a theoretical model to understand the relationship between public diplomacy and national security. They close with a discussion of policy implications that highlights several challenges in the years ahead, including the diminishing role of the university as a distinct and valued non-state actor. The authors see governments increasingly setting the rules of international academic engagement, pushing academics to the sidelines.

Ryan Allen & Yang Allen examine China's Thousand Talents Plan, the controversial recruitment scheme to repatriate Chinese citizens and enlist the services of foreign academics in elite universities to strengthen Chinese universities, especially in the applied sciences. Critics have alleged the scheme constitutes abuse of the international education sector's openness norms, even going so far as to posit it as a mechanism to facilitate espionage. The authors' turn their attention to the plan's effectiveness. Did it work? How much and what types of research were published? What institutional networks did it concentrate on? Using bibliometric data, Allen & Allen analyzed over 20,000 journal articles associated with the plan from 2008-2020. Research funded through the plan stopped growing and suddenly dipped in 2020. But they caution that that does not mean that similar recruitment efforts have been abandoned by the Chinese government—there are *still* partnerships between scholars. Yet at its height, associated research accounted for only one percent of total Chinese research. The authors do not see the relative paucity of publications alleviating concerns from

policymakers about espionage and technical theft. In fact, they worry about a deepening divide.

The contributions to this special issue collectively demonstrate that higher education is increasingly a venue for and instrument of foreign interference. Authors warn that both the interference itself and certain responses to it constitute significant threats to contemporary educational goals like economic mobility, social inclusion, and democratic citizenship. Indeed, foreign interference intersects higher education's competition phenomenon and diversity, education, and inclusion (DEI) agenda. Universities have become integral to a nation's security and economic productivity. Rivals therefore have incentive to steal or disrupt research and sow discord on campuses. But over-reactions are unfortunately too common. Public discourse and policy have enflamed xenophobia, racism, and a torrent of other societal ills. It may be that the 'foreign interference in higher education' narrative is an assault on higher education no less than the interference itself. This dynamic begs the question, to whom does higher education belong? Who has ultimate authority? Whose hands wield it?

The special issue suggests that the answer is less and less educational professionals. Two sets of authors—Long & O'Connell and Trilokekar & el Masry—present direct evidence of academics sidelined in public discourse and public policy when it comes to foreign interference. Allen & Allen show this indirectly, with a U.S. government agency—not a university—as the greatest partner to Chinese academics. Ahn underscores this dynamic by interpreting university and government values as incompatible. Cooley, Heathershaw, & Prelec remind us that it will be important to keep such power dynamics on our radar going forward. The special issue exhorts academics and other education professionals to regain control of the narrative on foreign interference to safeguard the autonomy of higher education.

Where can research on this topic go next? Authors in this issue engage theories and concepts from international relations and political science, but other disciplines and fields can expand our understanding even further. For example, the exploitation or weaponization of higher education for geopolitical gain is seldom chronicled and under-theorized. We do not know enough about its

psychological or societal impact. Researchers in psychology, sociology, and economics would have much to offer. There are numerous publicly available datasets on the China Initiative, foreign philanthropy, and other topics waiting to be analyzed. Network analysis and predictive models could be useful for informing public policy. As would studies on disinformation and strategic corruption on university campuses or within international education networks.

This special issue has its roots in a section of a graduate-level course on International Education and Public Diplomacy that I have been teaching at the George Washington University for the past few years. The course examines how nations use education as a tool of foreign relations. One of the central concepts in that course is soft power, the notion that countries can get what they want by being attractive (Nye, 2004). A nation's higher education system can contribute (or detract) from its soft power. The global communications consultancy Portland even uses the volume of inbound international students as a metric in its annual Soft Power Rankings. After the first year, though, the syllabus felt incomplete. Our news feeds seemed to suggest another path. Countries were getting what they wanted in higher education through manipulation and deception, too. Saudi Arabia had pulled scholarships from thousands of its citizens studying in Canada in retaliation to a perceived diplomatic slight. Russia had infiltrated a major American political party's ranks via a spy in the country on a student visa. So, I began to supplement our study of soft power with sharp power. This is the phenomenon that occurs when authoritarian regimes exploit asymmetrical freedoms to weaken the integrity of independent institutions (Walker, 2018). In education, it can take the form of weaponized enrollments, espionage, or censorship, among other practices. Balancing soft power with sharp power strengthened the course and opened new opportunities for scholarship.

I want to thank my students—especially Carly O'Connell, who co-authored our contribution to this issue—for their feedback and enthusiasm. Carly and other student members of a "malign foreign influence" research group were instrumental in shaping my understanding of concepts at the foundation of this issue. I am also grateful to the impressive lineup of authors represented in the issue. They demonstrated eagerness for the concept and worked diligently to share their

perspectives. I am impressed and inspired by them. The anonymous peer reviewers merit acknowledgment, too. Foreign interference is a relatively new topic, but the professionals we solicited for feedback took to it quickly and provided comments and questions that improved each of the entries that follow. Finally, I want to offer special thanks to Rosalind Raby, the journal's Editor-in-Chief, who also expressed early enthusiasm for the project and helped me to articulate its significance.

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Empirical Article

Public Discourse and Public Policy
on Foreign Interference in Higher Education

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Abstract

In recent years, news media have increased reporting about alleged foreign interference in universities worldwide. A flurry of new policies has followed. This article reviews discourse and policy on foreign interference in higher education in select countries. It identifies the alleged perpetrators and victims, the victims' concerns and responses, and the voices shaping the narrative about foreign interference. We combine the concepts of sharp power and right-wing authoritarianism to inform a discourse analysis and comparative policy analysis of a data set of 161 news articles and related media sources spanning a 30-month period of 2019-2021. Our findings highlight how government actors within the United States and Australia drive the international English-language discourse about Chinese foreign interference in a polarized media environment. We observe well-founded fears of China's exploitation of international students and research collaborations to the detriment of national security. At the same time, a resurgent worldwide authoritarian movement is also exploiting these concerns to augment long-standing assaults on higher education. Our study helps to bridge the gap between the primarily positive framing of the internationalization of higher education in scholarly discourse and the negative focus on foreign interference in higher education in the media, government, and other public discourse. It also serves as an important introduction to this phenomenon and call to action for scholars of the internationalization of higher education to conduct further research and actively engage in the broader discourse around this topic.

Introduction

Since 2016, foreign interference has become a matter of broad public concern in the United States. What started as allegations of Russian meddling in the U.S. presidential election soon transformed into fears about global adversaries' abilities to exert undue influence on other areas of national life. A variety of policy responses followed in phases. Near the end of 2018, the Department of Justice launched the China Initiative, a wide-ranging dragnet to stifle economic espionage. The effort would ensnare higher education institutions, faculty, and students. In 2020, the Department of Education began investigating higher education institutions for failure to disclose foreign contributions. The government's newfound interest in enforcing an overlooked regulation prompted outcries from the higher education lobby, which regards donor anonymity as critical to securing private funds. By the Summer of 2022, the U.S. Congress was considering legislation specifically aimed at curbing foreign interference in higher education. Several U.S. states had already passed similar laws. The government and conservative media championed these measures as necessary to address real problems. Higher education actors largely saw them as misguided responses that succeeded more in ruining careers and threatening revenue streams than strengthening national security. Liberals' expectations that Democratic control of the executive and legislative bodies, along with a mixed record of prosecutorial success in China Initiative cases, would redirect national attention elsewhere have not materialized. The idea of foreign interference in higher education now operates within the United States as a fait accompli.

Although the apprehension is particularly acute in the United States, American anxiety is not unique. Foreign interference has also become a notable phenomenon in other parts of the world. Responding to growing concerns, the European Union issued guidelines in January 2022 to mitigate foreign interference in university research. These worries may be well founded. That same month, an uproar began in the Netherlands when reports surfaced that a Chinese-funded research center at the Free University of Amsterdam was promoting Chinese propaganda about human rights. Dutch politicians are now calling for foreign interference legislation to preserve the autonomy of higher education institutions and ensure academic freedom. Australia, Singapore, and numerous other countries have already passed foreign interference laws. The trend may well continue to diffuse across the globe.

This article maps discourse and policy on foreign interference in higher education worldwide. We bring together the concepts of sharp power and right-wing authoritarianism to advance the study of the internationalization of higher education toward foreign interference. We contend that foreign interference is a significant problem that merits more scholarly attention. On the one hand, mounting evidence suggests that certain countries are exploiting international students and international research collaborations for geopolitical gain with detrimental effects on national security. On the other hand, a resurgent worldwide authoritarian movement is exploiting these legitimate concerns to augment long-standing assaults on higher education. Yet, there is little research on this subject and almost no comparative analysis. The few relevant studies generally view the problem through the lens of a single country. We, therefore, use discourse analysis and comparative policy analysis to identify relevant trends

and describe the reactions to growing concern about foreign interference in higher education. Understanding the extent of foreign interference in higher education around the world can mitigate its spread and calibrate appropriate policy responses. By cataloging and analyzing foreign interference and reactive legislation cases, this study aims to provide policymakers with evidence-backed observations, empower scholars to join their voices to the narratives, and serve as a springboard for future studies on this topic.

Literature Review

In August 2018, U.S. President Donald Trump reportedly told a group of business leaders that "almost every student that comes over to this country is a spy" (Karni, 2018; Redden, 2018b). According to Google Trends, searches for "academic espionage" reached peak global popularity that month. Indeed, much public discourse on foreign interference in higher education concerns international students or cross-national research. We, therefore, situate our study in the scholarship of international and comparative education as well as higher education. Researchers in these traditions share a common interest in the internationalization of higher education. Indeed, a recent review of two decades of internationalization of higher education research confirms the prominence of two themes relevant to foreign interference: scholar/student mobility and research internationalization (Bedenlier et al., 2018).

International mobility and research collaboration are trends that clearly merit scholarly attention. Yet, much of the research appears to treat these phenomena as implicitly positive developments. For example, Buckner (2019) shows that university administrators in 137 countries frame international students as tools to combat parochialism, support pipelines of skilled labor, or generate revenue. Other authors have highlighted how scholar mobility can facilitate cultural capital (Bauder, 2020) or successful transitions to new career opportunities (Uusimaki & Garvis, 2017). But some scholarship highlights mobility flows and collaboration patterns that reinforce global structures of power (Barnett et al., 2016; Shields, 2013). Others have drawn attention to how experiences with racism in the United States and United Kingdom negatively impact international students, especially from Asia and the Global South (Brown & Jones, 2013; Changamire et al., 2021; Lee & Rice, 2007). Critics of neoliberalism decry the global diffusion of academic capitalism for commodifying international students and knowledge networks (Kauppinen & Cantwell, 2014; Kauppinen et al., 2014). These critical perspectives demonstrate that international students and international research collaborations are mechanisms to investigate as much as they are outcomes to celebrate. Indeed, there remains a gap in understanding the exploitation of these mechanisms for nefarious purposes. In other words, international scholars/students and research collaborations also represent mechanisms for foreign interference.

There is a disconnect between the public and scholarly discourses on foreign interference in higher education. As our findings demonstrate, topics like academic espionage and campus propaganda pervade the English-language media landscape but receive scant attention in the scholarship of international and comparative education or higher education. Espionage is largely unaddressed in these fields' journals. Lee and Haupt (2020) acknowledge the public academic espionage discourse in their analysis of Sino-American research collaboration. Song (2020) laments the framing of Chinese students as security threats in Australia. Another rare mention occurs only to note that none of the most productive international research collaborators in a multi-national study expressed a concern about espionage (Yemini, 2019). Indeed, recent scholarship suggests that spying in higher education is just as likely to

come from the other direction. Allen and Bista (2022) detail the American government's history of domestic surveillance of international students.

Foreign propaganda is addressed more often, but still only in passing. Suspitsyna and Shalka (2019) found that between 2011-2015, articles in the *Chronicle of Higher Education* framed Chinese students most commonly as activists and least commonly as supporters of government propaganda. Comparative education scholars briefly mention foreign propaganda in the context of historical studies such as imperialism (Takayama, 2018) or the Cold War (Tsvetkova, 2008). Others speak of domestic propaganda from regimes such as Ba'athists in Iraq (Rohde, 2013) and Syria (Selvik, 2021). Similarly, the concept of interference itself appears in the higher education literature only concerning Chinese university autonomy from the Chinese government (Wilson, 2021), not as something associated with agents of foreign countries. The only mention of foreign interference in comparative education journals that we encountered occurs to assure readers that it was not happening in the development of Vietnamese textbooks despite foreign funding (Salomon & Ket, 2007). Still, the onset of a new era of geopolitics may rejuvenate scholarly interest in international education's vulnerabilities to malign actors (Lee, 2021). Because the scholarship on the internationalization of higher education has not sufficiently addressed foreign interference and related concepts like academic espionage or campus propaganda, constructs from international relations and security studies inform our analysis.

Conceptual Framework

We distinguish interference from influence. Foreign influence is recognized in international relations (Kauppi & Viotti, 2019). Nations routinely attempt to advance their own interests by changing other nations' political, economic, or social policies, practices, and attitudes (Meierding & Sigman, 2021). They influence through coercion, inducements, persuasion, and attraction (Nye, 2004). This perspective on influence is also well trod territory in the literature on international and comparative education, where scholars use frameworks like colonialism (Clarke, 2021), hegemony (Lo, 2011), and global governance (Buckner, 2019), among others, to examine the ways that non-native ideas about education take root. Interference differs from influence in degree. It is, in the words of security analyst Katherine Mansted (2021), the "most pernicious" kind of foreign influence (7).

Foreign Interference

The concept of foreign interference might initially seem anachronistic, as something associated with colonialism or the Cold War. But data suggest that foreign interference is experiencing a renaissance. According to Google Trends, the term achieved peak global popularity in December 2020 when Australia's parliament provided the federal government veto power over any deals a state makes with a foreign government. Later in the month, a flurry of disinformation appeared speculating about foreign interference in the 2020 U.S. presidential election. Indeed, until recently, foreign interference had been primarily associated with electoral integrity (Mohan & Wall, 2019). The concept broadened in 2018 when government agencies in Australia and the United States began applying it to various actions or motivations. Australia's national security legislation from that year describes as foreign interference offenses by, on behalf of, or in collaboration with a foreign principal that are covert or deceptive, threaten harm, or involve a "demand with menaces," i.e., blackmail (National Security Legislation Amendment Act, 2018). That same year, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security published a foreign interference

taxonomy that defines foreign interference as "Malign actions taken by foreign governments or foreign actors designed to sow discord, manipulate public discourse, discredit the electoral system, bias the development of policy, or disrupt markets for the purpose of undermining the interests of the United States and its allies" (Department of Homeland Security, 2018).

A key difference between the two understandings of foreign interference is that Australia focuses on conduct, but the U.S. framework is concerned with actors' intent and strategic objectives (Mansted, 2021). This distinction is captured in Americans' penchant for the qualifier *malign*. The 2019 National Defense Authorization Act included a provision for establishing a Malign Foreign Influence Response Center within the Office of the Director of National Intelligence. The office has not been established (Merchant, 2022; Murphy, 2022). The legislation defines malign foreign influence as "any hostile effort undertaken by, at the direction of, or on behalf of or with the substantial support of, the government of a covered foreign country with the objective of influencing, through overt or covert means (A) the political, military, economic, or other policies or activities of the United States Government or State or local governments, including any election within the United States; or (B) the public opinion within the United States" (National Defense Authorization Act, 2019). Covered foreign countries are Russia, Iran, North Korea, and China, a group associated with sharp power.

Sharp power

Joseph Nye introduced (1990) and developed (2004) the concept of soft power to articulate how countries can achieve their foreign policy goals without coercion or payments, i.e., hard power. Since then, soft power has become a catch-all term for the power of attraction and moved beyond its initial utility in political science and international relations. Notably, soft power has added justification for international education. Research indicates that international study experiences improve students' perceptions of their host country and can even help to diffuse host country values upon return (Atkinson, 2010). A global communications consultancy even uses the number of international students a country has in its country's soft power rankings formula (McClory, 2019). Some comparative education scholars have employed soft power as a theoretical framework, especially to explain Chinese and Asian internationalization initiatives (Ghosh et al., 2021; Lee, 2015; Lo & Pan, 2021). Higher education scholars, too, see Western nations increasingly using soft power as a policy rationale for strengthening internationalization (Lomer, 2017; Trilokekar, 2010).

Soft power begat smart power (i.e., the strategic combination of hard and soft power) (Nye, 2009) and, unfortunately, sharp power. Christopher Walker coined this latter term to describe the foreign influence approaches of authoritarian regimes that are neither conventionally hard nor soft. According to Walker, China and Russia increasingly utilize techniques they have perfected at home like distraction, manipulation, and disinformation to shape public opinion abroad (Walker & Ludwig, 2017). This kind of power is sharp because it can "pierce, penetrate, or perforate the political and information environments in the targeted countries" (Walker & Ludwig, 2017, p. 3). Another key element of sharp power is the lack of reciprocity. For example, China takes advantage of the openness of the U.S. media landscape, education environment, and information systems to promote its messages abroad but tightly controls foreign equivalents within its own borders (Walker, 2016). Figure 1 illustrates the relation between soft power and sharp power, with examples of each in higher education.

Figure 1: Patterns of Foreign Influence in Higher Education
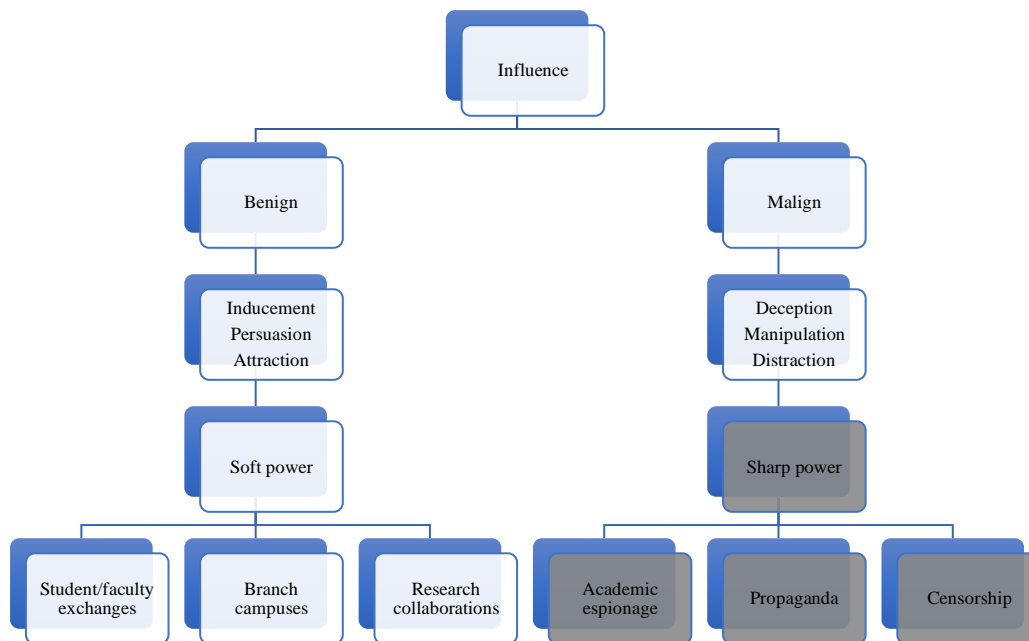
There is some debate about whether certain foreign influence mechanisms are soft or sharp. Nye, for example, contends that a Confucius Institute, the Chinese government-backed language and culture centers which diffused throughout American and Australian university campuses in the first two decades of the 21st century (Luqiu & McCarthy, 2019; Yang, 2010), is not reflective of sharp power unless it "crosses the line and tries to infringe on academic freedom (as has occurred in some instances)" (Nye, 2018, p. 3). Walker and Ludwig (2017) stake out a harder line, positing that Chinese educational and cultural activities are inherently marred by the authoritarian nature of the country's government and its anti-democratic goals (2017). Indeed, Walker asserts that the objective of authoritarian regimes is to stop the spread of democracy (2016). They aim to accomplish this abroad by targeting and undermining key democratic institutions such as elections, the media, and education. What makes sharp power so dangerous is its disguise in the trappings of soft power—international student exchanges, international branch campuses, and international research collaboration. Unlike soft power, though, or even blunt hard power, sharp power is stealthy and difficult to measure. One way to do so is to compile and categorize instances of censorship and manipulation (Walker et al., 2018). This study attempts to do just that by compiling and analyzing media reports of alleged foreign interference in higher education.

Foreign interference in higher education

The literature on foreign interference indicates that sharp powers set their sights on higher education for several reasons: universities are sites of classified research with implications for economic, technological, and military advancement; faculty and administrators shape public opinion and influence government policy; ideas in foreign scholarship can undermine national narratives; and minority students abroad have greater access to non-sanctioned support networks.

In the United States and Australia, especially, the sharp power of greatest concern is China (Bochner, 2020; Hannas & Tatlow, 2021; Lloyd-Damnjanovic, 2018). China operates more than 250

talent programs to recruit foreign assets but only publicly promotes a handful (Normile, 2022; Weinstein, 2020). Prominent among them is the Thousand Talents Plan, which recruits foreign scientists to affiliate with Chinese universities. The U.S. government's China Initiative has zeroed in on these programs in high profile academic espionage cases. When it comes to higher education, though, the chief apprehension with China has been Confucius Institutes. Walker and Ludwig (2017) observe that in Confucius Institutes there is the deliberate avoidance or one-sided framing of sensitive topics—in other words, self-censorship and propaganda.

Tromblay (2018) points to Confucius Institutes as examples of how foreign powers influence higher education through "strategic philanthropy." Sharp powers identify funding gaps and provide ample resources to strengthen academic programs. Foreign interference via financial support can be overt or covert. Cooley et al. (2021) highlight donations to universities—along with invited lectures and admissions—as ways malign foreign actors openly launder their reputations abroad. Conversely, Faizal et al. (2020) mention covert funding of higher education programs as an interference mechanism. Similarly, the U.S. Department of Education has expressed concern about the national security implications of universities' failures to disclose foreign gifts (Department of Education, 2020). Another way that sharp powers can obtain financial leverage over another country is by weaponizing the enrollments of international students (Tiffert, 2020). A prime example occurred when Saudi Arabia withdrew its funding for 5,000 Saudi students in Canadian universities after Canada's foreign minister criticized the Gulf nation's imprisonment of women's rights activists (Redden, 2018a).

Students are not always passive actors in foreign interference. Sharp powers may also attempt to block lines of faculty research or thwart institutional policies by deploying student groups in pressure campaigns (Allen-Ebrahimian, 2018; Tromblay, 2018). China and Israel have resorted to these tactics in the United States and Australia. China's transnational repression campaigns weaken the experience of minority students (Rotella, 2021) and threaten academic freedom in Australia (McNeil, 2021) and the United States (Tiffert, 2020).

Table 1: Motivations and Mechanisms for Actors to Interfere in Higher Education Abroad

Goals	Strategies	Tactics
Expedite knowledge	Espionage	Deploy international students and scholars to gather intelligence; recruit foreign faculty into talent programs
Suppress knowledge	Self-censorship	Deploy student groups to protest university policies and intimidate faculty
Repress own citizens	Censorship	Deploy student groups to harass other student populations
Generate favorable public opinion	Propaganda, philanthropy	Secure invitations to lecture, gain admission into reputable institutions, directly provide academic programs, donate to institutions and programs
Generate favorable policy	Propaganda, philanthropy	Secure invitations to lecture, weaponize enrollments

American Context for Intensifying Attention on Foreign Interference in Higher Education

Foreign interference in higher education is not a new phenomenon. Russia has employed students and professors as spies in American universities since the 1930s (Golden, 2018). So why is foreign interference in higher education gaining such traction now? A review of contemporary political, economic, and social trends can help explain the renewed public concern.

Contemporary foreign interference in higher education occurs amid the global rise of the far right (Miller-Idriss, 2020), variously expressed as authoritarianism (Diamond et al., 2016), illiberalism (Sajó et al., 2021), nationalism (Mylonas & Tudor, 2021), or populism (Moffitt, 2017), as well as the intersection of these trends (Blokker, 2021; Brubaker, 2020). Mudde (2022) defines the far right as groups and ideologies that believe social inequities should be maintained rather than overcome, and who reject values of democracy or liberal democracy such as majority rule, minority rights, and separation of powers. A common interpretation of the increase of these phenomena is a reaction to neoliberal globalization (Antonio, 2019; Berberoglu, 2021; Peters, 2018). The features of far-right movements can vary by country, but are generally characterized by hostility toward elites, decline in trust in social institutions, and rejection of democratic processes. Indeed, multiple international monitoring agencies have observed democratic backsliding worldwide since 2016, including in established democracies like the United Kingdom and United States (Economist Intelligence Unit, 2021; Freedom House, 2021; IDEA, 2021). We, therefore, understand far right authoritarianism as the public expression of hostile, anti-democratic ideologies through collective action and/or institutions of power, especially media and government.

In the United States, the contemporary far right backlash against neoliberal globalization has breathed new life into a mélange of the nation's most repugnant traits: xenophobia, philistinism, and paranoia, among others. These national characteristics interact with higher education in ways that render the sector increasingly vulnerable to domestic opponents.

Xenophobia

Throughout its history, America has been both a nation of immigrants and a nation afraid of them (Lee, 2019). After 9/11, American xenophobia manifested primarily as Islamophobia. By the mid-2010s, animosity toward immigrants shifted to the southern border where Central Americans were attempting to cross in unprecedented numbers. Since the beginning of the pandemic, fear of the other has been expressed increasingly as anti-Asian bias (Gutierrez et al., 2021; Lee et al., 2021) and violence (Ruiz et al., 2021). America's periodic xenophobic inflammations are correlated with isolationist movements (Kupchan, 2020). We see this with America First, the translation of which into both public discourse and government policy yielded substantial declines in the number of international students. These outcomes were celebrated by hard-liners. However, research rejects the contention that international students occupy coveted admissions slots that could be filled by Americans. To the contrary, the presence of foreign students actually increases domestic enrollments (Shih, 2015). But the misperception remains, and the narrative persists.

Philistinism

Americans' deeply rooted values of self-reliance and pragmatism can perversely manifest as a willful ignorance of, and even outright hostility toward, non-utilitarian learning, especially in the liberal

arts. What Hofstadter (1963) identified more than half a century ago as anti-intellectualism in American life, Nichols (2017) more recently sees as the death of expertise. Rejection of experts and established knowledge has always been part of the American political dynamic, but it has begun to move from the fringe to the mainstream. Decline in trust of social institutions is widespread (Pew Research Center, 2021; Rainie et al., 2019), but confidence increasingly diverges along partisan lines. Nowhere is this more evident than in higher education. Polls show that 59 percent of Republicans believe that colleges have a negative effect on the country, compared to 18 percent of Democrats (Parker, 2019). Perception of college professors is central to conservative views of higher education. Nearly four in five Republicans believe that higher education is heading in the wrong direction because professors bring their political and social views into the classroom. Conservatives are antagonistic toward higher education, and they see professors as the problem.

Paranoia

Hofstadter (1964) also teaches us that conspiratorial thinking is neither unique to the United States nor to our present moment but lurks beneath the surface of most societies and eras. Some places and times, however, are more prone to channeling conspiracies into movements. Ethnic, religious, and class conflicts bring these about in the United States. Each successive struggle results in the right-wing of the country feeling dispossessed of previously held authority. When these Americans no longer participate in the nation's decision-making structures, they presume dark forces are at work. We see this in the rise of QAnon. But the same thinking applies to higher education. The American right-wing is less likely to participate in higher education (Bailey & Williams, 2016; Pew Research Center, 2020) and more likely to hold antagonistic views of the sector. For them, higher education is a black box. The conspiratorial right-wing is therefore not inclined to make charitable interpretations of phenomena for which it has incomplete information, such as foreign gifts to universities. Conservatives also feel ostracized and persecuted on campus, which is reflected in recent concerns about cancel culture. The paranoid style in American politics renders higher education suspicious at best and malicious at worst.

The American right's disdain for and skepticism of higher education, coupled with its growing isolationism and long undercurrent of xenophobia all combine to make foreign interference a flashpoint. It is why conservative media and advocacy organizations monitor Confucius Institutes and foreign gifts to universities. It is why Republican legislators initiate and amplify allegations of academic espionage. A mixed record of prosecutions from the China Initiative shows that there is both foreign interference and not. Foreign interference therefore appears to sober observers at once a legitimate and overblown concern. Indeed, when it comes to foreign interference in higher education, there are both perceived and actual perpetrators and perceived and actual victims.

Research Questions

The preceding sections define foreign interference, identify it as an approach to foreign relations of certain authoritarian countries, and suggest aspects of higher education in democratic countries that may be susceptible to it. We also articulate why fears of foreign interference are intensifying. Still, we do not know, in any systematic way, what the scale and content of the concerns and responses are. Nor do we know who is shaping the public discourse.

This study seeks to answer the following questions: Where and to what extent is foreign interference in higher education a concern? Who are the alleged perpetrators of foreign interference? What has been the content of public discourse about foreign interference? In other words, what concerns underlie the fear of foreign interference in higher education? What actions are being taken around the world to combat such interference? And how do different countries' approaches compare to one another? Finally, whose voices are shaping the narrative around foreign interference?

Methodology

Data Collection

This study analyzes news media to examine the public discourse around foreign interference in English-language sources. Discourse analysis is useful for interrogating the conditions that precede actions such as policy responses (Dunn & Neumann, 2016). We also examine government webpages to compare foreign interference policies. Comparative policy analysis can strengthen public policy (Radin & Weimer, 2018). We collected data through targeted web searches and snowball sampling to compile a corpus of 161 texts covering a 30-month timespan from May 2019 to November 2021. Figure 2 demonstrates the temporal distribution of texts.

We targeted searches by setting Google Alerts for the phrases "foreign influence" and "foreign interference." We also searched for "[country name]" plus "foreign influence" plus "legislation" for information about specific national governments' responses. Snowball sampling involved following links from one article to another to gather information on similar cases and subscribing to international
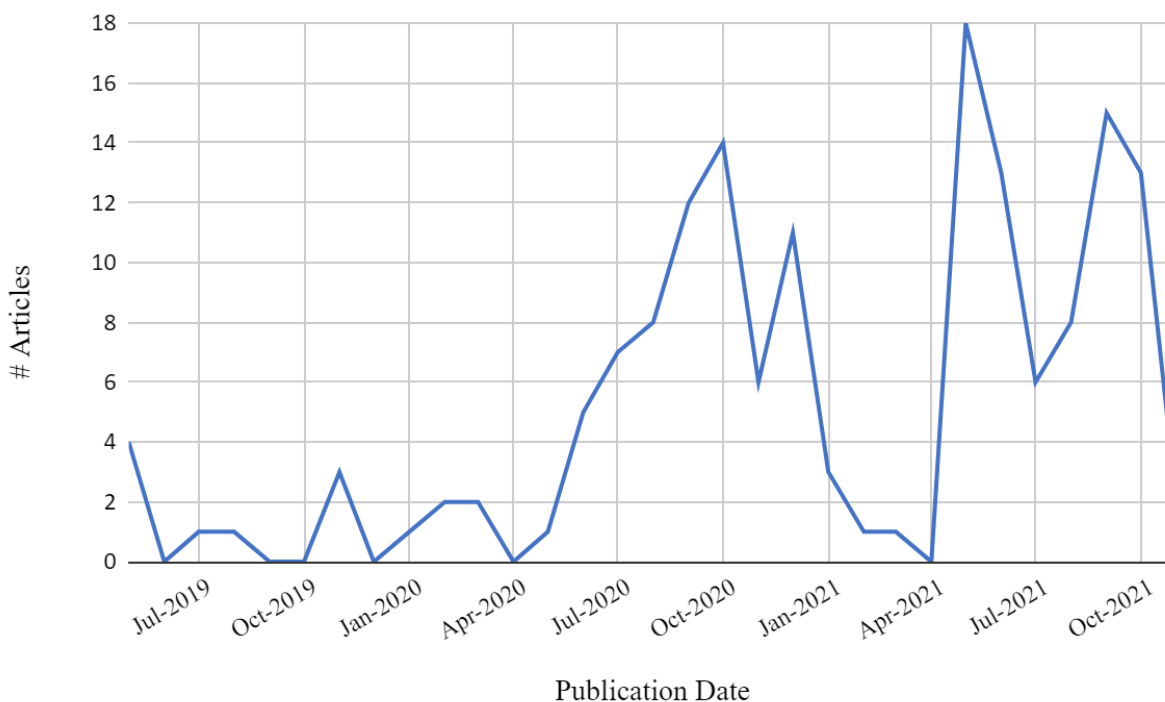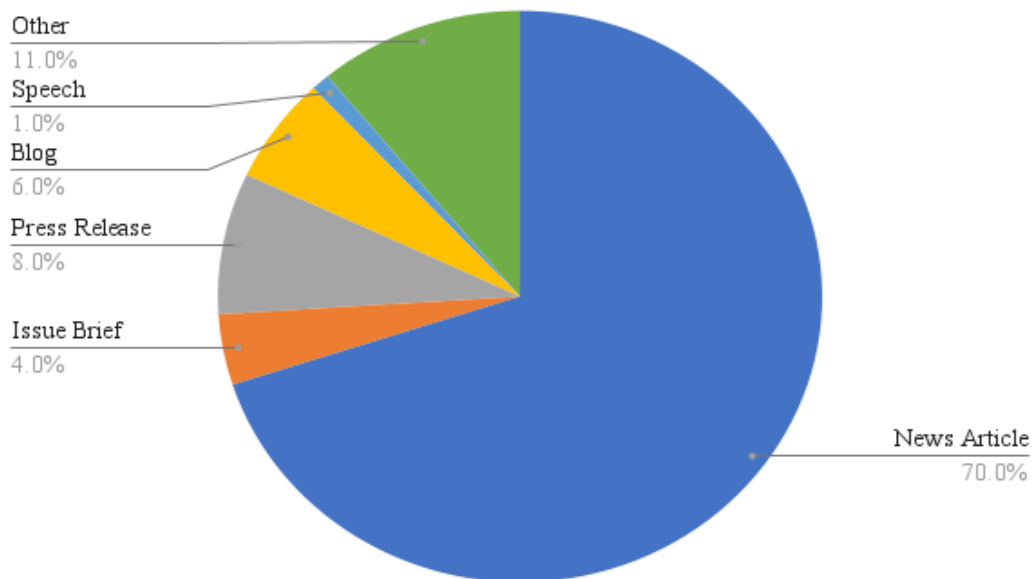
Figure 2: Number of Articles by Publication Month

Figure 3: Distribution of Source Types in the Foreign Interference in Higher Education Dataset

education-related periodicals such as Karin Fischer's *Latitudes* newsletter to identify relevant cases and sources.

The news sources represent a variety of countries but skew heavily toward American media. They range from higher education-focused periodicals such as *The Chronicle of Higher Education* (U.S.), *Times Higher Education* (U.K.), and *University World News* (international) to national outlets such as *National Public Radio* (U.S.), *The Wall Street Journal* (U.S.), and the *Hindustan Times* (India) to local or regional papers such as *The Ripon Advance* (Wisconsin, U.S.) and *The Canberra Times* (Canberra, Australia). Although news articles make up about 70 percent of the data set, there are a variety of other texts including blogs, issue briefs, speeches, press releases, presentations, and letters, as shown in Figure 3.

Data Analysis

After collecting the data, we cataloged, coded, and analyzed each source entry. We noted of each source the country responding (i.e., the alleged victim), the country of concern (i.e., the alleged perpetrator), programs or policies of concern, the specific content of concern, and individuals quoted. Specific content of concern refers to what underlying fear was described as motivating the actions described in the text, such as the fear that visiting scholars would steal research secrets or that foreign partners could threaten to withhold funding to pressure universities to censor themselves from teaching about topics that would upset the foreign partner. We entered these codes into a spreadsheet that we could sort and manipulate to discern patterns in the data.

We coded texts from U.S.-based sources with a bias rating score. Approximately a quarter of texts in the database appear in sources with bias ratings on AllSides, an organization that evaluates political leanings in news media. AllSides rates media organizations on a five-point scale: Left – Lean Left – Center – Lean Right – Right. We used the same scale to code an additional 70 texts ourselves. We

exercised caution by refraining from assigning extreme positions of Left or Right to any texts. We assigned texts from *The Chronicle of Higher Education* and *Inside Higher Ed* the label "Lean Left." We assigned texts from *Campus Reform* or the offices of Republican legislators the label "Lean Right." We labeled texts from executive offices like the Department of Justice "Lean Left" or "Lean Right" depending on which party occupied the presidency when the text appeared. Although, we labeled texts from the FBI as center regardless of the occupant.

        We also developed a five-point scale to analyze whether texts quoted experts or authority figures supporting university or government positions: University – Support University – Neutral – Support Government – Government. We coded a text that cited only Frank Wo, President of Queens College as "University." We coded a text that cited only Robert Daly, Director of the Kissinger Institute at the Wilson Center as "Support University." We coded a text that quoted only Florida Governor Ron DeSantis as "Government." We coded a text that quoted only Ryan Mauro, a national security analyst with the Clarion Project as "Support Government." We coded texts that cited figures supportive of both university and government positions as "Neutral."

Limitations

        Our dataset is not exhaustive. It does not cover every relevant case of foreign interference in higher education publicized during the period under examination. The dataset represents a snapshot of the English-language discourse on foreign interference in higher education over the course of the 2.5 years under consideration. It is limited to English-language sources, which skew heavily toward covering the United States, United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, and other countries with English as their primary language. We also conducted our desktop research primarily in the United States via Google searches. This practice narrowed the sources that we had access to through snowball sampling. Google emphasizes sources that optimize their placement in the search engine via the prevalence of key words, mobile-phone usability of the webpage, inclusion of internal and external links, and page loading speed, etc. These factors influenced what sources came to our attention.

Findings

Concerns

Countries of Concern

        The data set contains allegations of foreign interference in higher education against fourteen countries. The primary source of concern is China, which appears in 72 percent of entries. China concerns Australia, Canada, the European Union, France, Germany, India, Japan, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Sweden, Taiwan, the United Kingdom, and the United States. Remarkably, when a nation alleges interference by China, it is treated as the sole threat 89 percent of the time. In the few instances where China is mentioned along with other nations, the others tend to be concerns primarily of the United States, namely Qatar, Russia, and Saudi Arabia. Indeed, the database shows these three countries as concerns of the United States alone. Iran is also a concern of the United States, but also of France and the United Kingdom. Notably, multiple countries are concerned about the United States interfering in their higher

Figure 4: Countries Involved in Public Discourse About Foreign Interference in Higher Education
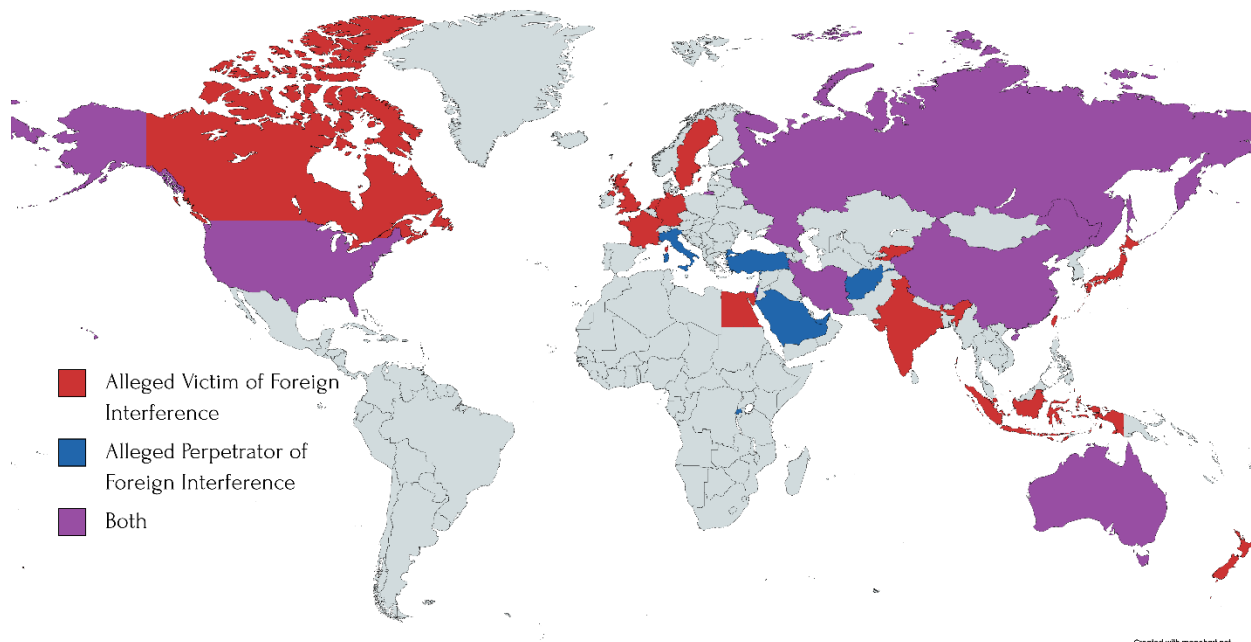
Note: Map created with https://mapchart.net/.

education systems, including ally France as well as China, Iran, Kyrgyzstan, and Russia. Nearly 14 percent of entries express concern about an unspecified foreign threat.

Units of Concern

Public discourse on foreign interference centers on various levels and actors within higher education. A majority (58 percent) of the entries in the dataset addressed concerns and actions at the institutional level. Institutional partnerships and institutional agreements with said partners figured prominently among these entries, including funding from foreign sources as well as influence over curriculum and campus culture. The dataset includes specific mention of 52 American higher education institutions, primarily falling under the R1 Carnegie classification for doctoral universities with very high research activity. They include a mix of private (Georgetown University, Yale University) and public institutions (California system campuses), as well as elite (Harvard University, Stanford University) and mass (University of Tennessee, the Ohio State University) universities. Thirty-one institutions (63 percent) appear only once. Among those mentioned multiple times, Stanford (7) appears most often. Sources reference Stanford in the context of visiting scholar visa fraud, foreign funding investigation, and a faculty campaign requesting cessation of the China Initiative. Georgetown (6), Harvard (6), and Tennessee (5) also appear in multiple entries. Five of six references to Harvard concern Charles Lieber, the university's Chemistry and Chemical Biology Department chair who would later be convicted of making false statements about his financial ties to China and failing to report foreign income. Beyond the United States, Australian universities were the next most prominent in the data set. Individual institutions there received comparatively fewer mentions, but references were typically made to Group of Eight institutions.

Texts that did not focus on content at the institutional level addressed students, researchers, and professors. A small number of articles discussed concerns regarding politicians and social media users. Some articles referred to more than one unit of concern.

Content of Concern

Research Theft

The data point to three categories of concern about stolen research. First, countries fear that academic espionage will expose vulnerabilities in their national security and/or enable adversaries to enhance their own military capacity. For example, in 2021, the provincial government of Alberta, Canada, requested that its four major research universities pause any new partnerships associated with the Chinese government out of concern that deliverables from those arrangements would be used by Chinese military and intelligence entities (CBC News, 2021). Similarly, in 2020, the United States revoked visas for 1,000 Chinese graduate students with alleged military ties (Li & McElveen, 2020). Second, stolen research can also position thieves to out-compete the victimized country economically. Indeed, the stated purpose of the U.S. Department of Justice's China Initiative was to identify and prosecute economic espionage. The department cites a report that states that China's industrial policy includes economic aggression to drive its own future economic growth (Department of Justice, 2022). Third, research theft can facilitate human rights violations that contradict the values of the victimized country. China drew censure from a Yale researcher and the U.S. company Thermo Fisher after they learned China was exploiting their research collaboration on DNA to develop a surveillance system of the Uighur ethnic group in Xinjiang (Wee, 2019).

Censorship and Propaganda

Fears concerning censorship and propaganda range from limiting academic freedom to pressuring academics and students to self-censor to imposing the values of a foreign nation onto the domestic population. These concerns are generally promoted by American conservative pundits and politicians. For example, some critics of Confucius Institutes, including the attorney general of the state of Indiana, characterize them as attempts by the Chinese Communist party to indoctrinate young Americans (Magdaleno & Herron, 2021). Conservatives also drive the discourse on foreign gift disclosures. Right-wing outlets like *Campus Reform*, *The Clarion Project*, and *The Daily Caller* promoted attempts by the U.S. Department of Education and Republican legislators to expose and curtail funding from American adversaries, principally but not exclusively China.

Indeed, China is not the only country involved in accusations of censorship and propaganda in education. Politicians in Kyrgyzstan have claimed that the American University of Central Asia promotes Western values such as LGBTQ acceptance (Imanaliyeva, 2020). The French education minister accused the United States of spreading identity politics that fragment society after professors faced pushback for teaching about racism, Islamophobia, and colonization (Matthews, 2020). Lastly, Russian authorities suggested that pro-American factions and organizations have encouraged student protests at universities and are attacking Russian values by promoting democracy and painting Russia in a negative light (Human Rights Watch, 2020).

Civil Unrest

The above examples from France and Russia also demonstrate the fear that foreign interference can destabilize national identity and create disorder. Along the same vein, Indonesia's counter-terrorism agency has expressed concern that restoring the Taliban regime in Afghanistan will exacerbate terrorist activity rooted in radical Islamic ideologies on university campuses (Yamin, 2021). As a final example, Singapore passed the Foreign Interference (Countermeasures) Act to combat a perceived threat of foreign campaigns to sow social discord and undermine its national sovereignty (Ross, 2021). Although the law is not targeted at higher education specifically, many academics there have expressed concern that it would impact their ability to collaborate with foreign partners.

Responses

Countries Responding

Our database identifies 20 countries that have expressed concern about foreign interference in their higher education systems. A majority (65 percent) of the entries are about foreign interference in the United States, but foreign interference is also a growing concern in Australia (12 percent) and Europe (9 percent).

Specific Actors Responding

At 80 percent of the data set, national and local governments are the primary entities responding to foreign interference. The remaining 20 percent cite a wide range of non-government respondents such as higher education institutions, presidential campaigns, non-profit organizations, and research firms. The five most frequently cited actors were the U.S Department of Justice (including the FBI, 26), the U.S. government broadly (15), the U.S. Congress or individual U.S. congress members (15), the U.S. Department of Education (14), and U.S. higher education institutions (12). All three branches of the U.S. federal government are represented, with the executive branch more active than the legislative or judicial. Multiple state governments, including Florida, Indiana, and Wisconsin, responded to foreign interference.

Among Australian actors, governmental departments and agencies (12) significantly outnumber higher education institutions (4) as respondents. Specifically, multiple articles referenced the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade as well as the Department of Education, Skills, and Employment.

National Policy Responses

This section compares government policy actions of eight countries featured in our data set. They include the five most frequently cited alleged victims of foreign interference—the United States, Australia, the United Kingdom, Canada, and Singapore—as well as Japan and India, who are collaborating with the United States and Australia as members of the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue, also known as the Quad. We also include China, which has taken notable steps to protect its own education system from foreign interference. Table 2 provides an overview. A more detailed analysis of each country's approach follows.

The table shows that the United States has taken the most stringent measures among the democratic countries listed, passing legislation to thwart foreign interference from multiple angles.

Table 2: Policy Responses of Select Countries to Concerns About Foreign Interference in Higher Education

Government actions	U.S.	Canada	U.K.	Australia	India	Japan	Singapore	China
Regulate international partnerships (e.g., Confucius Institutes)	x	x		x	x			
Withhold government funding to institutions with undesired practices	x					x		
Restrict visas for inbound students and scholars	x				x	x		
Monitor and regulate foreign funding	x					x		
Investigate and prosecute individuals/ organizations	x							
Provide funding to universities to enhance security						x		
Block/monitor apps and internet content					x		x	x
Restrict outgoing passports and visas								x
Discourage foreign language learning								x
Restrict foreign textbooks								x

Individual American states are also passing, or attempting to pass, their laws, primarily focused on foreign funding. Quad allies carefully monitor American policies, often reporting them in their local media, and adapting them to their circumstances. For example, Japan has also implemented policies

monitoring foreign higher education partnerships with countries of concern such as China. But instead of a top-down federal approach, they involve academics in the process of investigating wrongdoings by scholars and offer federal funding to help institutions develop better security frameworks. Japanese leadership intends to leave it to universities to manage their relationships but provides support to do so in a way that protects national security (Kakuchi, 2020). India and Australia have also taken measures that emulate the United States, including investigating Confucius Institutes. Australia went a step further than the U.S. by creating a policy that allows the federal government to veto foreign higher education partnerships that it finds suspicious. Regulating Confucius Institutes has been the most common collective tactic among the Quad, followed by increasing visa scrutiny of—and implementing restrictions on—inbound international students and scholars.

Like the United States, Canada is seeing sub-national governments step up with stricter legislation than the federal government. As mentioned above, Alberta has ordered its four comprehensive academic and research universities to pause any new partnerships with links to the Chinese government and to review its existing relationships. The national government has not gone so far but is now requiring that universities submit risk assessments with all research funding requests.

The United Kingdom, in contrast, has not passed any legislation regarding foreign interference in higher education. Critics argue that British institutions and policymakers are too focused on the economic profits it receives from China (China Research Group, 2020). Members of parliament, however, have been lobbying for regulations that would require registering foreign agents and reducing dependency on China.

Singapore passed a Foreign Interference (Countermeasures) Act in Fall 2021. This wide-ranging policy was purportedly aimed at preventing foreign interference from undermining democratic society, but critics fear that it could restrict academic freedom because international research collaborations or any publications critical of the Singaporean government could be prosecuted under the reach of this new policy (George et al., 2021).

China seeks to mitigate Western influence by limiting the use of overseas textbooks in schools and placing less emphasis on testing English language competency (Yuan, 2021). It also seeks to exert influence over its citizens studying abroad. For example, a Chinese citizen studying in Canada believes his family was threatened by the Chinese government in response to criticisms he posted anonymously on Twitter (Chiu, 2021).

Voices Shaping Discourse

The most common sources in our dataset are news organizations dedicated to higher education. Along with the U.S. Department of Justice (8), *The Chronicle of Higher Education* (9), *University World News* (8), and *Inside Higher Ed* (6) are three of the top four most repeated sources. The mean and median entry in our set is Center (e.g., *NPR*, *Reuters*, *Associated Press*). A plurality of texts are Left or Lean Left, while a plurality of unique sources are Right or Lean Right (see Table 3). Representative Left or Lean Left sources include the *Chronicle of Higher Education, Inside Higher Ed,* and *The New York Times*. Right or Lean Right sources are more diffuse. They range from think tanks like The Clarion Project and the Foundation for Defense of Democracies—both of which the Council on American-Islamic Relations regard as "Islamophobic" (Shahbaz, 2021)—to local papers. Seven of eight local papers in the database are in states controlled by Republican legislatures. Among press releases from legislators, all are from

Table 3: Biases of Texts and Unique Sources

	Texts	Unique Sources
Left or Lean Left	47 (42.0%)	21 (32.8%)
Center	27 (24.1%)	16 (25.0%)
Right or Lean Right	38 (33.9%)	27 (42.2%)
Total	112 (100%)	64 (100%)

Republicans. Numerous other press releases, speeches, and miscellaneous documents are issued by high-ranking Trump administration officials in the Education, Justice, and State Departments.

Entries in our database routinely include commentary from experts. Government officials are the most frequently quoted individuals. Forty-seven percent of the entries feature quotes from government representatives, ranging from legislators to spokespeople for various government agencies to federal and state prosecutors to heads-of-state. The U.S. FBI Director Christopher Wray (7) was the most frequently cited individual, followed by former Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos (6), and former Secretary of State Mike Pompeo (5). Government voices call for enhanced support and sustained vigilance to counter foreign interference. For example, in a co-signed statement quoted in an Associated Press story, Pompeo and DeVos allege, "The presence of this authoritarian influence on our campuses has never been more concerning, nor more consequential" (Binkley, 2020). Similarly, the *New York Times* quoted Wray's congressional testimony in which he interpreted "naivete on the part of the academic sector" about foreign interference (Green, 2019).
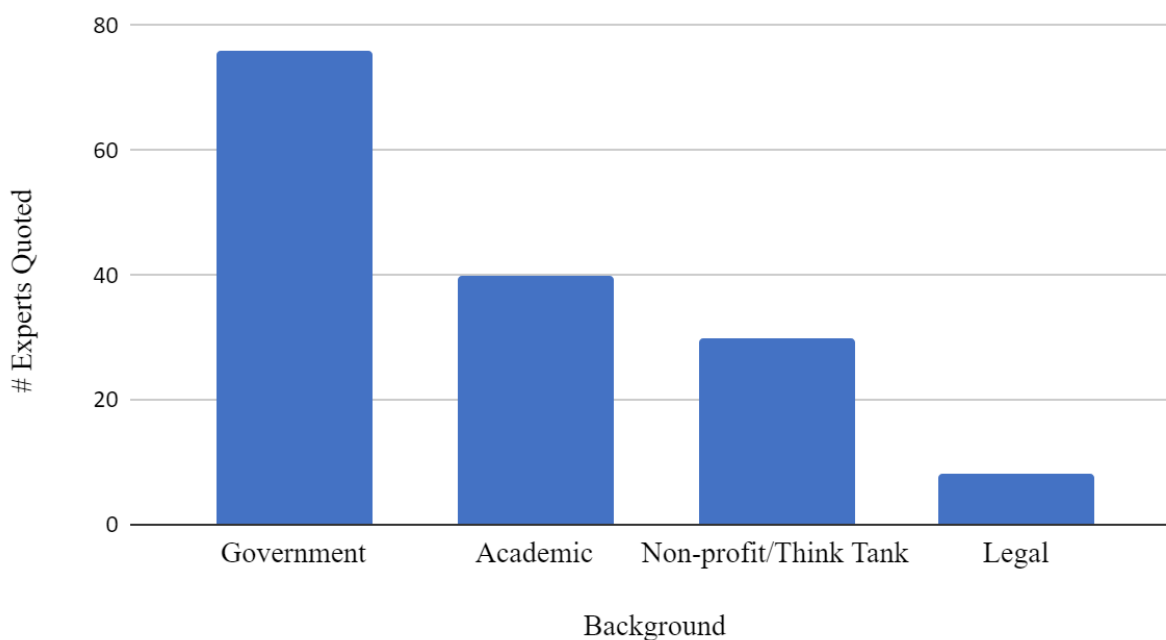
Figure 5: Background of Experts Quoted

Table 4: The Function of Experts in Texts by Source Bias

	Amplify University	Balance University/Government	Amplify Government	Total
Left or Lean Left	14	7	8	29
Center	8	0	5	13
Right or Lean Right	2	1	24	27
Total	24	8	37	69

Academics, including professors, college and university presidents, and institution spokespeople, made up the next most common group of experts quoted. They appear in 25 percent of the data set, nearly half as often as government officials. Academics in these texts typically oppose government positions. For example, multiple entries cite Steven Chu, the Nobel Prize-winning Stanford physicist and former Secretary of Energy, and Margaret K. Lewis, a Seton Hall law professor, both of whom argue that the United States should reconsider its approach to research security. Chu raises alarms about the impact of the China Initiative on the scientific community. Lewis has concerns about ethnic profiling. Representatives from non-profit associations and think tanks also figure in, at 19 percent combined. Lastly, legal experts made up about 5 percent of experts cited. Corporate cybersecurity specialists, members of the media, and social media users are also quoted occasionally.

There are 69 instances in which a text with a bias score quotes one or more experts or authority figures. The median expert or authority figure supports government positions. Table 4 shows that texts from Right or Lean Right sources are more likely to amplify government positions, while texts from Left or Lean Left sources are more likely to amplify university positions. Notably, though, Left or Lean Left sources are far more likely to amplify government positions than Right or Lean Right sources are to amplify university positions.

Discussion

Findings demonstrate that foreign interference is an especially serious concern in the United States, but that allegations of foreign interference in higher education are common in many other countries. The prominence of China as the supposed source of so much interference suggests the need for greater scrutiny of its possible meddling in the higher education systems of other countries, especially neighboring Asian nations. The English-language limitation of our database may skew the results toward cases from Western countries. That is why including nations like India, Japan, and Singapore in the database is especially notable. Considerable Chinese investments in African higher education in recent years makes the absence of any examples from that continent particularly conspicuous. Latin American nations are also absent from the data. Further research can identify whether these continents' news outlets may be reporting concerns in local languages, or whether there is truly a lack of concern regarding foreign interference in higher education in these areas.

Despite warranted concerns about its sharp power tactics, America's preoccupation with China in this context strikes an uncomfortable note given the country's anti-Chinese racist history from the Chinese Exclusion Act in the 19th century to the Red Scares after each world war to the modern-day xenophobia stirred up by associations between the COVID-19 pandemic and China as the virus's place of

origin. In this light, the China Initiative might best be understood as "merely a formal gloss on a racialized moral panic" (Lewis-Kraus, 2022). More than half of defendants in economic espionage cases since 2009 have been of Chinese descent (Kim, 2021). That is a major reason why a report from the American Physical Society (2021) on the impact of U.S. research security policies recommended renaming the China Initiative to focus on the crime, not the assumed perpetrators. Advocacy letters in our dataset echo this recommendation. In February 2022, the Department of Justice announced that it would do just that, touting a new broader approach called the Strategy for Countering Nation-State Threats (Department of Justice, 2022). The new strategy promised to use administrative tools rather than merely prosecutorial ones to address perceived threats, but critics are watching closely to see if prosecutions of professors continue.

       The high volume of institutions listed suggests that while there are well-known cases of foreign interference at specific institutions (e.g., Charles Lieber at Harvard), the problem is more widespread. The discourse's emphasis on research universities underscores the importance of research theft as the primary concern, and for a good reason. Since 2010, the share of U.S. federal investment in applied research and experimental development has increased while investment in basic research has declined (Trapani & Gibbons, 2020). Research institutions enroll the most international students and host the most international scholars (Institute of International Education, 2022). American universities also collected more than a billion dollars in anonymous donations from China, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and Russia between 2012 and 2020 (Department of Education, 2020). The concentration of knowledge and wealth at these institutions renders them targets of foreign and domestic adversaries alike. Sharp powers use espionage to steal research and philanthropy to promote propaganda. Conservative opponents amplify reporting on these issues from mainstream sources to suggest greater state control of higher education in right-wing discourse.

       Responses to perceived threats vary by country, but it is clear that some countries are following the lead of the United States. Australia, India, and Japan are coordinating foreign interference responses with the United States. European regulations are tightening and may converge with the Quad approaches. In February 2022, the United States Embassy in Dublin warned an Irish university about partnering with a Chinese university the U.S. Department of Commerce has identified as an entity with activities contrary to U.S. interests or national security (Mahon, 2022). This example suggests the possibility of increased global coordination against sharp power. Such collaboration is a welcome development, but ironic if it stifles international research collaboration, as many academic observers have warned and recent research has confirmed. Since the start of the China Initiative, the number of scholars who declare dual affiliations to universities in China and the United States has dropped by 20 percent (Van Noorden, 2022). During the same period, the productivity and citation rates of U.S.-based university life science researchers with long-standing ties to China have declined more than colleagues with ties to other countries (Jia et al., 2022).

       Our data indicate that the voices of university actors are drowned in a sea of government sound bites advocating vigilance and even regressive policies. Right-wing pundits and policymakers are all too eager to stir up anti-university sentiment. Data show a polarized media environment with a paucity of balanced information. Still, what is apparent through our data is that national and local governments alone cannot combat foreign interference. There must be a concerted effort shared by governments, scholars,

media, civil rights groups, and the public to understand the issue better, develop the best strategies for mitigating it, and implement those strategies fairly and effectively.

Conclusion

A global review of the English-language discourse on foreign interference in higher education tells the following story. Universities are taking in more foreign students, scholars, and dollars. Governments, too, are spending more on classified research at universities. These factors combine to render higher education targets of sharp powers eager to subvert democracies and facilitate their own military and economic advancement. The perpetrator-in-chief is China, which orchestrates a vast campaign to steal research, spread propaganda, and censor its citizens abroad. Accordingly, China's adversaries are increasingly concerned about their research universities. Evidence of actual foreign interference is mixed, but the fear of it is unmistakable. Consequently, more and more countries are responding by ramping up enforcement of existing regulations and passing new legislation. Much of the furor is driven by an emboldened, conspiratorial right-wing which see universities in general and international education in particular as antithetical to its nationalist and isolationist aims. Still, concerns about the deleterious impacts of academic espionage on economic competitiveness and national security mean that foreign interference has become a bi-partisan issue. Government voices drive the narrative. Higher education actors are marginal players. The Biden Administration's announcement of its intent to re-establish an advisory council that allows the academic community to weigh in on national security matters that impact higher education is a promising step to balancing competing concerns.

Our study helps to bridge the gap between the primarily positive framing of the internationalization of higher education in scholarly discourse and the negative focus on foreign interference in higher education in the media, government, and other public discourse. This study serves as an important first step of bringing a comprehensive approach to cataloging, categorizing, and analyzing cases of foreign interference in higher education that surface in public discourse. We have identified higher education institutions as the top unit of concern; research theft, censorship and propaganda, and civil unrest as the most feared impacts; China, the United States, and Australia as the key countries involved; different ways that countries are using policy to confront these concerns; and government actors as the dominant voices in the discourse.

Scholars and policymakers alike need more research on areas of the world not examined by this study including Africa, Latin America, and Asian countries beyond India, China, Japan, and Singapore. Research into non-English discourse on foreign interference in these regions would provide a valuable supplement to the data we collected. Furthermore, continued effort is required to determine how best to identify and measure foreign interference and the consequences of various policy responses. Foreign interference in higher education—actual and perceived—merits urgency and diligence from scholars and policymakers.

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Empirical Article

Foreign Donations in the Higher Education Sector of the United States and the United Kingdom: Pathways for Reputation Laundering

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Abstract

We explore how the influx of foreign funding into the higher education sectors of the United States and United Kingdom has raised the challenge of "reputation

laundering"—when foreign donors and individuals use donations to prestigious universities to boost their international public image and offset negative images or reported controversies back in their home country. We outline four pathways for reputation laundering—donations for academic programs/schools, naming rights, honorary degrees and board seats; and the offer of favorable admissions decisions—and examine the variety of policies, practices and safeguards that have been adopted by U.K. and U.S. universities in response. We present evidence, drawn from a survey of U.K. development officers, that university diligence procedures, which usually focus on compliance with the law, often are inadequate for filtering or deterring most types of reputation laundering.

Introduction: Foreign Donations in Higher Education

Over the last two decades, the higher education sectors in the United States and the United Kingdom have been internationalized at a breathtaking speed. Universities have established campus branches overseas, forged important new partnerships with foreign academic institutions, NGOs, and governments, and offer new degrees and programs with international orientation and content (Altbach & Knight 2007). According to the American Council on Education's *Mapping Internationalization* report (Helms et al., 2017), 73% of U.S. institutions reported partnerships with academic institutions outside of the U.S., 34% with NGOs, 17% with foreign governments, and 12% with corporations. Raising a university's international profile can cement a university's reputation and ranking within a highly competitive global higher education landscape and expand international networks for faculty, students, and administrators; foreign funders can make invaluable long-term investments and support new fields of study.

But internationalization raises concerns about possible undue foreign interference in international educational activities, including concerns about research theft, the dissemination of disinformation and propaganda, and the

endorsement of political and cultural values that are at odds with the educational mission and philosophy of the university, such as safeguarding academic freedom (Long et al., 2021). Deepening partnerships with authoritarian countries and overseas presence raise concerns about possible censorship practices or creating an environment that encourages self-censorship (Prelec et al., 2022).

In this essay, we explore how the surging inflow of foreign funding—especially as it comes from large gifts from individual donors—also raises another challenge under the rubric of malign influence—what we refer to as "reputation laundering." "Reputation laundering" occurs when foreign donors and entities use their donations to prestigious universities to boost their international public image and offset their negative images or reported controversies back in their home country. Importantly, reputation laundering may occur at the level of an individual, an institution or corporation, or a nation state and is likely to involve donations from charities or philanthropic vehicles. Higher education is not the only such vector for reputation laundering, but universities and the higher education sector are particularly susceptible on this front because university diligence procedures often lack clear guidance about what types of donations that do not strictly violate the law—should nonetheless be scrutinized, rejected, and why.

We begin by identifying some of the main trends in the influx of foreign funding to the United States and the United Kingdom as well as some of the challenges associated with classifying, investigating, and disclosing the origins of these funds. We then explore four main pathways in which reputational laundering can occur in university settings, providing recent cautionary examples from each. Our final substantive section examines the variety of policies, practices, and safeguards that have been adopted by U.K. and U.S. universities—including evidence drawn from a survey of U.K. development officers—and why they may prove insufficient to adequately confront the "reputation laundering" challenge. We conclude by stressing the need for clear guidance and greater transparency to reduce the risk of reputation laundering in universities.

New Foreign Challenges: Growing Foreign Donations and Malign Influences

Today's universities reap critical funds from individual gifts and foundations. Overall voluntary support to U.S. universities and colleges in 2018 totaled $49.60 billion (Kaplan, 2020). Foreign funding to U.S. and U.K. universities has also surged. According to the U.S. Department of Education, between 2013 and 2019 (U.S. Department of Education, n.d.), the reported total of foreign donations to U.S. universities exceeded $4 billion- though the actual figure is likely significantly higher. The leading reported foreign donors to U.S. universities from 2013 to 2019 were Hong Kong, the U.K., Canada, China, India, and Saudi Arabia (see Figure 1). Disaggregated by groups of peer schools from 2013-2019, the top foreign donor to the Ivy League universities was Hong Kong ($258 m), followed by the U.K. and mainland China ($160m) (See Figure 2). Hong Kong's meteoric rise as the leading foreign funding source is especially noteworthy (Chronicle of Philanthropy, 2019).

Figure 1: Top 10 Countries of Origin for Gifts Disclosed by U.S. Universities 2013–June 2019, according to U.S. Department of Education (in USD)
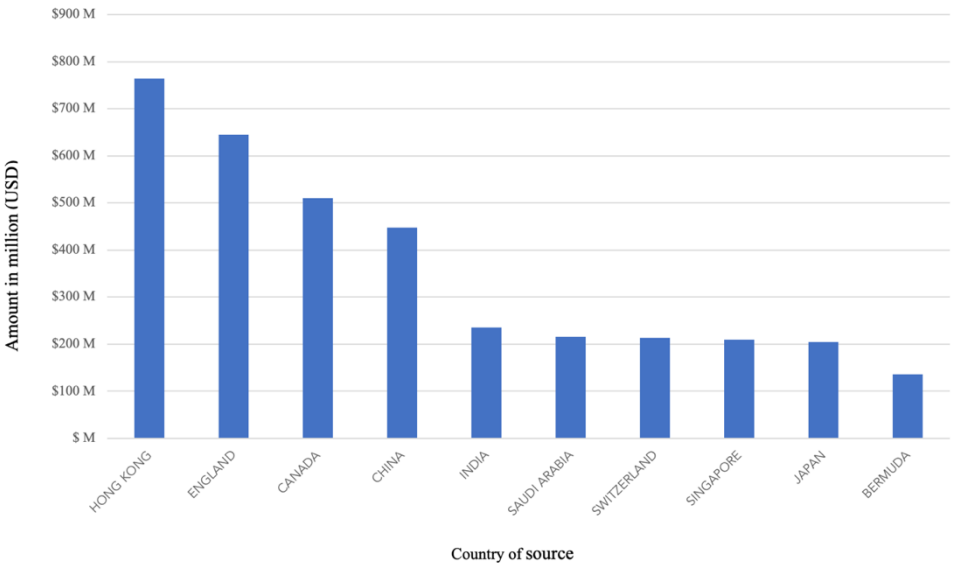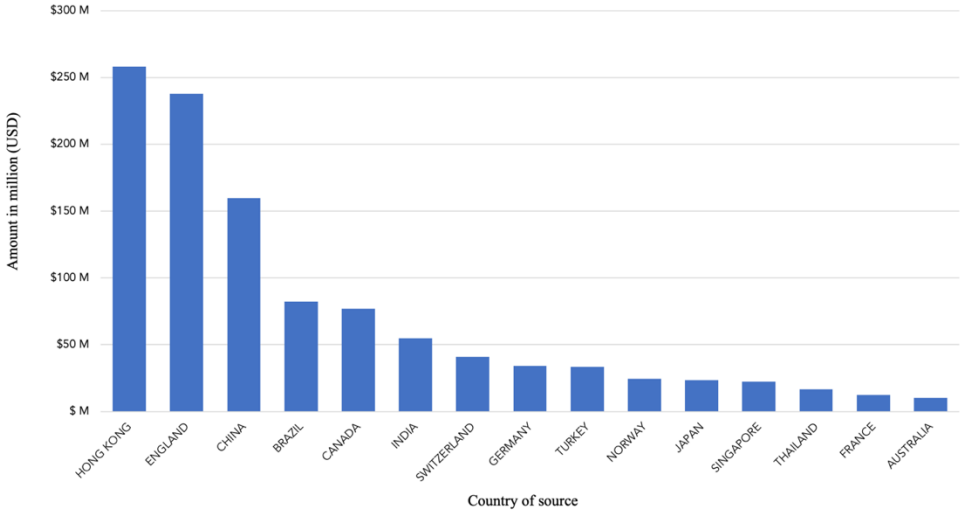
Figure 2: Top 15 Countries of Origin for Gifts Disclosed by Ivy League Universities 2013–2018, according to U.S. Department of Education (in USD)

Importantly, these official data almost certainly severely underreport the foreign origins of gifts and donations. As with other globalized entities like multinational corporations, high-net worth individuals and their foundations operate transnationally, co-mingling funds across favorable political and tax jurisdictions. Foreign-based donors actively maintain foundations or U.S.-based branches or pass-throughs. For example, the Qatar Foundation International, a charity registered in Washington DC, donated $1.4 billion from 2011-2014 primarily to just six U.S. universities that also operate a campus in the small Gulf state (Binkley, 2019). Similarly, high-net worth individual donors tend to hold multiple citizenships and may use U.S.-based entities for their donations. One of the largest individual gifts of the last decade—a $350 million made to Harvard University in 2014 by Ronnie Chan, a dual U.S. and Hong Kong national—was routed through a Massachusetts-based legal entity, even though the organization itself, according to its tax filings, received substantial funds transferred from foreign jurisdictions including Hong Kong and Monaco.

Gifts to the U.K. higher education sector are smaller but demonstrate similar internationalizing trends. Over the last decade an increase in tuition fees and the ramping up of development efforts have, according to the CASE-Ross report (2020), led to the near tripling of philanthropic donations received by the universities (from £0.5bn to £1.3bn). In the United Kingdom, there are no systematic data outlining the country of origin of donations, however, individual schools, as well as our U.K. interviewees, agree that although the majority of gifts still come from U.K. and U.S. donors, fundraising has become increasingly internationalized. For example, donation details released by Oxford University in response to a Freedom of Information request (2015) indicate a 100-fold increase from the Middle East from 2001 to 2014, with Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and Qatar accounting for the lion's share of donations. China has also increased in importance- by 2020, Chinese funding accounted for over one third of overseas funding, including student fees, to U.K. universities (Adams, 2020).

Beyond just increases in the total amount of foreign donations, the composition of fundraising has also changed. Universities receive, and actively solicit more mega-gifts from a smaller pool of elite donors. According to David Callan (2017), from 2005 to 2015 U.S. colleges and universities received over 14,000 gifts worth at least $1 million, and at least 100 gifts worth $100 million. Whereas in 2006, the top 1 percent of donors accounted for 64 percent of the dollar amount of university giving, by 2013 this had increased to 80 percent (Worth et al., 2020). And Genevieve Shaker and Victor Borden's overview (2020) of three decades of philanthropic support to higher education finds that a larger proportion of funds are now being designated for restricted, as opposed to unrestricted purposes, making the ascertaining a donor's background, preferences, and values more salient.

Over the same period, universities have ramped up their foreign outreach and alumni networks, while new groups of successful foreign nationals prioritize educational donations within their philanthropic activity. Surveys suggest that education is now the most popular individual cause for philanthropic giving among global HNWIs and private individual foundations (Johnson, 2018). For example, a survey of leading Chinese-American philanthropists (Kuo et al., 2017) found that

donations to higher education comprised 66 percent of all large gifts (over $1 million) made between 2008 and 2014.

Reputation Laundering as a Form of Malign Influence

This increase in foreign funding has been mostly scrutinized for a university's potential susceptibility to *authoritarian influencing*, attempts by overseas authoritarian or kleptocratic states, through donations, and other forms of engagement, to shape research and teaching agendas about these countries (Benner, 2017). In this paper we are concerned with the associated challenge relating to the gift or charitable activities of foreign donors - reputation laundering. We define reputation laundering in terms of the phenomenon of transnational kleptocracy, as the intentional, "minimizing or obscuring evidence of corruption and authoritarianism in the kleptocrat's home country and rebranding kleptocrats as engaged global citizens" (Cooley et al., 2018)." Donors who have been implicated in acts of corruption, political repression and intimidation, suspicious activity, or questionable governance—but who are not formally in power or sanctioned for their activities—may strategically use their philanthropic activity to whitewash or deflect attention from their current or prior legal issues or controversial actions. Thus, reputation laundering is a transnational process by its very nature, as it projects a donor's public image through their Western or global philanthropic activities and obscures their more controversial histories and actions in their home countries. Insofar as the object of reputation laundering is a state or other entity which engages in institutionalized coercion it is a form of authoritarian influencing.

At times reputation laundering, which is extensive in the Western cultural domain, overlaps with foreign individuals who also seek to improve the image of their authoritarian countries of origin. Wealthy Russian oligarchs have been among the most influential patrons of major artistic and culture centers in the West, and several of them were sanctioned following Russia's aggression against Ukraine in 2014 and 2022 and as a result of the investigation into election interference in the 2016 U.S. Presidential campaign. Casey Michel and David Szakonyi (2020) found that over the last decades, just seven post-Soviet oligarchs have donated between $372 and $435 million to U.S.-based non-for-profit institutions, including universities, museums, cultural centers and think tanks. A useful umbrella term for cases of authoritarian countries using various methods to shape opinions among publics abroad is 'authoritarian image management' (Dukalskis, 2021).

Authoritarian reputation laundering through philanthropic donations to universities can be considered a subset of this.

Methodologically, and as with undue influence by authoritarian regimes, reputation laundering's secretive nature and the fact that its influence in the higher education sphere is exercised primarily via self-censorship, it is difficult to prove an outright causation between a particular donation and direct impact on research, teaching, or decision-making. Furthermore, with universities eager to keep expanding their donor networks. The phenomenon now is so widespread and commonly accepted that we observe a general complacency that "this is just the way things work," and that individual examples all boil down to "different shades of grey."

Importantly, although international reputations can be managed, they can change rapidly beyond what can be safeguarded by image management when unexpected geopolitical events and foreign relations recast the reputations of individual donors or designated countries as international pariahs, thereby drawing attention to a university's foreign ties. Perhaps most dramatically, in 2010 a foundation controlled by then Libyan President Muammar Qaddafi and his son Saif Qaddafi pledged a gift of £1.5 million to the Global Governance Centre of the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE), just a few months before the Libyan autocrat was killed following a NATO military intervention in the country. The incident precipitated the resignation of the LSE's director Sir Howard Davies and a subsequent independent investigation (LSE 2011) criticized the university for "a disconcerting number of failures in communications and governance within the school" (22). Matters became even worse when reports revealed that Saif Qaddafi—who had been awarded a PhD in 2008 at the university—may have plagiarized his thesis. Similarly, in the United States, following the murder of *The Washington Post* journalist Jemal Kashoggi in 2018 in Turkey, MIT undertook a review of its relationships with the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, concluding that the university's existing relationships with the kingdom be preserved, but that the university refrain from engaging in major activities in Saudi Arabia, "until conditions on the ground have changed significantly" (Lester, 2018).

Financial Disclosure: Reporting Obligations and Compliance Procedures

In the United States universities obligated by federal law, and some by state law, to report major foreign donations and ensure that they do not accept donations that are the results of ill-gotten gains or from individuals who are subject to sanctions or ongoing criminal proceedings. The chief among these disclosure requirements is compliance with the Higher Education Act (1965, amended in 1998; sec. 117, also 20 USC, 1011f) that requires that all contracts with foreign donors and gifts over $250,000 in value be reported to the U.S. Department of Education (DoE). Though we are interested in foreign gifts and donations, the reporting requirement encompasses all foreign funding sources, including grants and contracts, some of which are usually administered outside of development offices. Notably, universities in the U.K. are under no such obligation, though at the time of writing (June 2022), an amendment—modelled on the U.S.'s 117 law— had been incorporated into the draft Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) bill to require universities to report their foreign donations and partnership (Hansard, 2022).

Elsewhere, we have detailed recent efforts to enforce compliance under federal law (Cooley et al., 2021), seemingly prompted by a February 2019 report from the Subcommittee on Investigations of the Senate Homeland Security and Government Affairs Committee about Chinese influence on American higher education found that American universities "routinely" failed to report foreign gifts as required by law appears to have been a key driver. In response to this congressional activity, the DoE opened compliance investigations into at least a dozen universities, prompting a backlash from U.S. universities whose representatives have argued that federal authorities have failed to issue adequate compliance guidance. As part of its investigation, the U.S. DoE also reportedly requested information about donations from Saudi Arabia, Russia, and Qatar, in addition to China. In its October 2020 report (U.S. Department of Education, 2020), the DOE criticized Yale, Harvard, and Cornell, for failing to report hundreds of millions of dollars in foreign gifts and Stanford for failing to record the individual names of anonymous gifts. A review of these initial reporting documents by the *Wall Street Journal* (O'Keefe, 2020) found that, in total, these

universities had failed to disclose about $6.5 billion in foreign donations from these countries of concern.

Vetting Reputations: Guidelines, Scandal, and Scrutiny

Unlike these federal and state reporting requirements, there is no standard guidance for universities to vet donors who donate to the university for the purposes of reputation laundering. Although concerns about reputational risk are now acute within universities, there is little consensus as to what exactly constitutes prohibitive "reputational risk" and how to mitigate or recognize red flags. When dealing with an individual foreign donor, universities often find themselves at a disadvantage to secure accurate and timely information about the individual's history, business practices and possible motives for engaging with the university. Some may rely primarily on commercial software on sanctioned or global political-exposed persons such as World-Check or WorldCompliance. Certain elite universities will be more scrutinous of potential donors who have no previous ties to the university than they will alumni. However, initial checks on a donor's standing often prove insufficient.

University policies rarely mention the vetting of reputations of donors, as most discuss financial procedures and accounting of gifts, thresholds for various types of endowments or, at best, explicitly mention how to deal with conflicts of interests in directly sponsored research. Decision processes and principles guiding acceptance or denial of donations from individuals remain mostly undisclosed or internal. Out of the leading 20 universities as ranked by the 2020 *U.S. News and World Report*, we found that only 3 merely mention ethical guidelines (Harvard, Yale, MIT), and only one addresses donations from non-U.S. sources (MIT).

Transparency about the origin and sums of all donations, foreign ones included, is also a challenge for most universities. Contacts and discussions with donors can be sensitive and competitive, leading to confidential meetings and negotiations between donors, or their representatives, and university administrators. Moreover, the level of guidance and training given to gifts and development officers about reputational risk and vetting potential prospect varies. Universities may provide briefings and standardized materials for all development

officers and professionals but given that a single university can employ hundreds of development officers across dozens of autonomous schools and units, this creates clear delegation issues and potential "principle-agent" problems. Furthermore, while some universities mandate that each officer must address a standard list of questions for each prospect, others prefer to allow officers the discretion for minimizing risk as they cultivate prospects.

Mechanisms for Reputation Laundering in Higher Education

Association with an elite university confers international legitimacy and prestige on charities and foundations that are funded by the individuals and carry its name. In this section we explore four types of donor engagement with universities, and the way their gifts are considered and scrutinized. Each of these offers a potential pathway through which university donations and engagement can be wielded strategically by foreign individuals to launder their reputation: donations for academic programs; awarding naming rights for Chairs and buildings; obtaining board seats and honorary degrees; and loosening admissions criteria in exchange for donations.

#1: Individual Donations to Establish Academic Programs/Schools

The most high-profile of foreign donations are those intended to establish a particular center or institute to promote a particular program or course of study. For individual patrons, such gifts comprise perhaps the most powerful means of enhancing their reputations and global standing, as they are integrated into the core mission of the university, its academic activities, or even new degree-granting schools.

Concerns about how individual donors and gifts might influence the governance and academic agendas of universities have been present throughout their history. For example, Craig Wilder (2013) has shown how America's Ivy league universities aggressively courted donations from slaveholders and their family members, while even after emancipation universities continued to fundraise by appealing to proselytize Native American populations and develop "racial sciences" as courses of study. In the U.K., similarly, the legacies of certain

benefactors are being reassessed: in 2020, the governing body of Oxford's Oriel College voted to remove the statue of Cecil Rhodes, who left the college £100,000 in his will and founded a postgraduate scholarship for international students that still bears his name, due to Rhodes role in British imperialism and his apparently racist beliefs. In 2019, following an internal report, Glasgow University agreed to set up a partnership with the University of the West Indies worth £20 million in what was reported as reparations and 'restorative justice' for the financial benefits (worth up to £198 million) it received from Scottish slave traders in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (Carrell, 2019).

In other cases, it is the more recent business ties of donors that have raised allegations of reputation laundering. For example, the Soviet-born, U.S.-U.K. citizen Leonard Blavatnik's donations to think tanks and cultural institutions have attracted public controversy due to the sources of his wealth in the post-Soviet Russian oil industry (de Haldevang, 2019). In 2017, following the 2016 election of U.S. President Donald Trump, a prominent professor at Oxford's Blavatnik School Governance—which had been established in 2015 following a 75m pound donation from the billionaire (then ranked the U.K.'s wealthiest man) —resigned in protest, alleging that the U.S. president stood in opposition to the value of "quality of governing" that the school claimed to promote (Weaver and Bengtsson, 2017).

In some cases, the object of reputation laundering may be a nation as well as its political elite and leading businesspersons. In 2018, the British Foundation for the Study of Azerbaijan and the Caucasus (BFSAC) gave a £10 million endowment to the University of Oxford; the identity of the donor was undisclosed due to the absence of that requirement in U.K. law (Matthews, 2021). On the back of this endowment, the Oxford Nizami Ganjavi Centre (ONGC), which studies "the Cultures of Azerbaijan, the Caucasus and Central Asia," was established. Anti-corruption watchdogs, investigative journalists, and academics, including those at Oxford (La Porte, 2015), have established that Azerbaijan's ruling Aliyev and Pashayev families are implicated in grand corruption and political repression, including establishing an offshore slush fund to conduct influence efforts abroad (OCCRP, 2017). In addition, to the direct opportunity for national branding, such

endowments offer indirect influencing and networking opportunities through their boards and advisors. One British politician, Lord Malcolm Bruce, who sits on the board of the BFSAC, in his letter to then U.K. Foreign Secretary Domonic Raab, refers to the Nizami Ganjavi Centre as "an important symbol of inclusiveness promoted by Azerbaijan today." The Council of Europe's "caviar diplomacy" scandal showed how Azerbaijani elites have used gifts, inducements, and bribes to change the image of the country among politicians and the intellectual and cultural elite of Europe (European Stability Initiative, 2012).

Beyond the possible aggrandizement of individual, corporate, and national donors, such donations can have further malign consequences by compromising academic governance and censoring or restricting the development of funded fields of study. First, donors may exert a direct influence upon the program's research agenda, publicly stated purpose, and scholarly profile. Donors may seek to control or exert an outsized voice in the appointments of critical governance positions, such as senior faculty chairs or advisory boards, or by otherwise trying to influence the curricular or programmatic agenda of the new academic unit. And even when direct pressure is not exerted by a donor, self-censorship, and the inclusion or exclusion of certain research topics and voices, in that academic community remains a prominent concern. For example, Jesus College, Cambridge, was accused of reputation laundering for the Chinese company Huawei after it released a 'white paper' which was funded by and had multiple co-authors from the company (Valero de Urquia, 2020).

Second, the new field or established academic unit itself might be regarded as controversial or highly politicized. For example, a number of Islamic Studies centers and programs have come under scrutiny for both the reputations of their donors and, even in the absence of a formal governing role, their deterring effects on academic or public scrutiny of the governance practices of these rulers and their governments. The high-profile donations of Saudi Prince Alwaleed bin Talal bin Abdulaziz Alsaud in support of Islamic Studies to Harvard ($20m), Georgetown ($20m), Edinburgh, and Cambridge have been scrutinized and criticized, though all institutions accepted the gifts (Ahuja, 2005). When Oxford established the ONGC with close links to Azerbaijan's ruling family, Armenian activists raised

questions about how the Centre would cover the history and politics of the South Caucasus (Matthews, 2021).

Third, attempts at reputation-laundering may be implicated in an individual donor's broader political campaign, legal struggle, or public relations campaign, not disclosed to the university, and whose pursuit may run contrary to ethical principles of the university like freedom of expression. For example, the Ukrainian oligarch Dmitro Firtash—who was indicted in the United States on charges of bribery and is still awaiting extradition from Austria—established a program in Ukrainian studies at Cambridge University as part of a broader effort in which he donated $230 million from 2010 to 2013 for Ukrainian-related cultural events in the country and in Western Europe (Kuzio, 2016). Firtash then strategically used the Cambridge donations in an attempt to win legal standing in U.K. courts to pursue legal action (which was ultimately unsuccessful) against the daily newspaper *Kyiv Post* for alleged reputational damage in the U.K. for an article published in Ukraine.

#2: Naming Rights: Buildings and Chairs

A second area for possible reputation laundering concerns assigning naming rights, most notably to endowed chairs and/or new buildings. Awarding named Chairs by donating endowed funds is now a common fund-raising practice and is an important vehicle to engage donors to substantially invest in a university. Universities usually have endowed chair policies (minimum amount, approval process, benefactor's advisory role, etc.), but the content of these policies is not always public nor consistently followed. When designated for an appointment in a specific field, universities must always strike a balance of ensuring that the position meets the terms of the benefactor while allowing freedom or selection and academic freedom of the chair holder.

The publicized ideological views and public comments of benefactors—or their associates—can also lead to legitimate concerns about a proposed gift. In 2004 Harvard Divinity School agreed to return a $2.5 million gift to endow a Professorship in Islamic Studies back to UAE President Sheikh Zayed Al Nahya. The decision followed a protest by Harvard faculty, students and alumni following

allegations that the UAE President was affiliated with the Abu Dhabi-based Zayed International Center for Coordination and Follow-Up, an organization that engaged in Holocaust denial and claimed that the Pentagon was responsible for the 9/11 attacks (Cooperman, 2004).

Further complicating such donations is that Chair donors may have their reputations tarnished at a later point. In a widely noted domestic example, following the death of Kenneth Lay, the former Chief Executive Officer of the disgraced energy giant Enron which collapsed amidst a corruption and embezzlement scandal, four U.S. institutions sought to review the terms of endowed professorships that had been funded by Lay (Luker, 2006). Southern schools have struggled with the reviewing positions named after prominent slaveholders and segregationists, a dynamic now further fueled in the wake of the Black Lives Matter protests.

#3: Honorary Degrees and Seats on the University Board

Universities can also be complicit in reputation laundering by awarding honorary degrees and/or seats on university board to compromised or otherwise controversial individuals. Here, the donations potentially purchase something of value- a degree or a seat in a major governing institution of the university itself.

Codes of conduct for Board members emphasize that the primary duty of any board member is to the educational institution. In the United States, a trustee's fiduciary responsibilities include the obligation to act in good faith on behalf of the school, remain loyal, and advance its mission. In the U.K., board members are obligated to adhere to "highest standards of ethical behavior" and avoid undue pressures or external influences (Eckel, 2019a). In the previously mentioned ONGC example, Nargiz Pashayeva, the sister-in-law of Azerbaijan's autocratic President of Azerbaijan, Ilham Aliyev, and an important member of the ruling family, was awarded a seat on the Board of the center. Indeed, the official Oxford announcement of the new center (Development Office of the University of Oxford, 2018), directly quoted Pashayeva.

In the United States, consider the role of Viktor Vekselberg, a billionaire referred to by the Washington Post as, "one of Russia's richest men and a member

of Vladimir Putin's inner circle," who made his fortune in precious metals and as head of the Renova Group investment conglomerate (Ferris-Rotman, 2018). Vekselberg was appointed to the MIT Board of Trustees in 2010 and then re-appointed in 2015, while serving as the President of the Skolkovo Foundation, a Russian initiative started by then President Dmitry Medvedev to develop a Russian "Silicon Valley." Vekselberg had been working on a $300 million collaborative project with MIT to develop a science and technology program in Russia but was abruptly sanctioned in April 2018 by the U.S. Treasury Department for "operating in the energy sector of the Russian Federation economy" (Daugherty, 2019). Vekselberg had become a member of the school's William Barton Rogers Society, a group reserved for elite donors (Eckel, 2019b), but was quietly removed by the university from its list of Board members shortly after his sanctioning. The university did not provide details as to how much he had contributed overall in gifts and donations.

#4: Receiving Favorable Admissions Decisions

A final area where universities can be inappropriately used to assist in reputation laundering lies in the linking of individual gifts and donations for preferential admissions treatment for the family members and associates of donors. Leading universities routinely maintain "development lists" of applicants from families of wealthy alumni and other actual and potential donors, for who admission criteria might be less stringent than the regular pool of applicants (Goldman, 2016). Strictly speaking, this pathway could also be viewed as more of a transactional form of corruption than an overt pathway of reputation laundering. But given that university admission and association confer prestige, such "pay to play" arrangements can elevate the global standing of these families and open new networks for overseas employment, association, and residence.

The 2019 U.S. admissions scandals dramatically revealed not only the privilege granted to wealthy contributors, but also highlighted the critical role played by transnational networks of fixers who collude with university administrators and athletic coaches to gain favorable admissions decisions for domestic and foreign wealthy donors (United States Attorney's Office, District of

Massachusetts, n.d.). The highest amount in the scandal was donated by Chinese pharmaceuticals billionaire Tao Zhao, whose family reportedly paid the admissions consultant William "Rick" Singer—who was indicted by federal prosecutors and has since pleaded guilty to a number of bribery and cheating crimes related to university admissions—a sum of $6.5 million (Rubin & Ormseth, 2019). The Tao family maintains that it was "misled" by Singer and that the donation was not related to their daughter's admission. Notably, Zhao's daughter was admitted to Stanford as a recruit for the school's sailing team, with no prior record in competitive sailing (Schleifer, 2019).

Our university interviewees confirmed that the admissions scandal has had significant ripple effects across U.S. universities, spotlighting the link between the contributions of wealthy and legacy donors and the admissions process. Although no administrators were willing to go on the record with these comments, several mentioned that some universities were widely known to have thresholds for foreign donations that would all but guarantee admission to the donor's persons of interest. Moreover, the DOJ investigation sheds some light on what seems to be the growing role of transnational fixers, who offer, informally, their services to overseas clients that include targeting gifts and donations to Western universities in exchange for admissions.

Research Findings: University Policies, Safeguards, and Institutional Best Practices

Our essay draws on primary research as well as publicly available secondary data. In our survey of officers in charge of donations at U.K. and U.S. universities, we selected the higher education establishments most likely to attract very significant amounts of donations: the 24 Russell Group universities in the U.K., and the Top 20 large U.S. universities as ranked by the 2020 edition of U.S. News and World Report. We asked them to share their gift acceptance policies and the way they changed over the recent years; to explain the role of the university's bodies involved in the gift approval process; and to explain whether gifts are treated differently depending on specific thresholds. In the U.K., out of the 24 institutions contacted (between July and September 2020), we received 17

responses to our survey (see: Appendix 1). We then carried out 13 in-depth interviews with U.K. respondents who indicated that they would be willing to assist U.S. further. At this follow-up stage, we discussed in detail the way their decision-making process works, sought to understand the red flags considered by the officers in charge, and explored the motivations behind the process. In the U.S., however, administrators were reluctant or nonresponsive (only 3 out of 20 indicated a willingness to be interviewed), though we should note that many of their institutions are currently under a compliance investigation by the U.S. Department of Education relating to the reporting of foreign funds. For the U.S. side we have, instead, commented on governance procedures from publicly available information.

Procedural Responses and Internal Changes

Wary of the great importance of keeping their reputation beyond reproach, prestigious universities have responded to the increased media scrutiny by adopting some ethical principles and expanded review procedures. Most notably, the LSE's Qaddafi case has had a significant echo in the U.K.: the 2011 report (London School of Economics, 2011) that originated from Lord Henry Woolf's inquiry on the LSE's links with Libya has been quoted by several of the university gift managers interviewed for this study as a "catalyst" that spurred change in their regulations and procedures in accepting donations. Similarly, following the Epstein revelations, and driven by the need to avoid similar reputational damage, U.S. institutions have set processes in motion to review the way they solicit, supervise, and accept such philanthropic contributions. Our survey addressed the formal system employed to assess potential gifts, while our follow-up interviews asked questions on how this works in practice, both formally and informally.

The imperative to attract ever larger sums of money, from and for an international audience, exposes university development offices to a number of challenges. Administrations increasingly deal with donors who are less familiar to them, without a previous university connection, who are likely interested in earning publicity or making a public impact through their gift. International donors often have backgrounds that are more difficult to desk check, necessitating

development offices to become proficient in foreign languages (especially Mandarin) and recruit development officers and overseas alumni who can assist in the vetting of prospects. This tendency prompted increased concerns: "when you stray away too much from the Western hemisphere, information becomes impossible to get to," said one of our U.K. interviewees. While highlighting the use of increasingly sophisticated measures to unearth information about potential donors such as social media profiles, some of them admitted that the lack of information could, at the same time, be a silver lining: "This is a disadvantage and an advantage, because [in the case of adverse publicity repercussions] we can say that we honestly did not know."

Trends in the U.K.

While philanthropic donations lack specific statutory provisions under U.K. law, elite British universities are no less aware of the need for screening donations than those in the U.S. Our research was conducted while the professional association Universities U.K. was drafting its "Security Guidelines for Universities" study (2020), following a tide of criticism from government, parliament, and the media regarding authoritarian influence. The range of issues included in the U.K. report include but far exceeds that of foreign gifts, encompassing the protection of foreign faculty and students, the integrity of research and the protection of intellectual property, the safety of fieldwork, and the integrity of foreign campuses. Aware that public attention has increased, U.K. universities seemed keen to demonstrate their alertness by cooperating with our research.

All of the seventeen U.K. leading universities that accepted to take part in our study indicated that their gift acceptance procedure happens on the basis of ethical guidelines drawn by their institution (see: Appendix 1). Of them, nine had published their latest guidelines online (Birmingham, Bristol, Cambridge, Durham, Edinburgh, King's College London, LSE, Nottingham, Sheffield, Southampton and York), while five institutions had theirs either behind a password-protected page, available upon request or not available to the public (Exeter, Imperial, Liverpool, Newcastle, Oxford and Warwick). The level of detail

of these guidelines varies, ranging from one-page documents to more thorough guidelines that are over 15 pages long.

The U.K. responses indicate that gifts to universities are typically handled by an office in charge of development and—occasionally—of alumni relations, in conjunction with some form of advisory body (a Gift Review Committee, or similar) that reviews the largest and/or riskiest gifts. The thresholds for conducting due diligence, and for determining the level of oversight required, vary greatly from institution to institution. While minor gifts would usually be subject to a risk-based approach by the administrator, mid-size gifts require the approval of a head of department, and larger gifts are usually subject to a review by senior university officers and/or by the high-level committee.

Geographically, not all gifts are subject to the same scrutiny. Donations coming from the post-Soviet space are, most often than not, treated with an added degree of caution, especially after Russia's 2014 invasion of Crimea. Such considerations are bound to increase dramatically after the invasion of Ukraine in February 2022. In some respects, therefore, it is those cases of reputation laundering originating from authoritarian countries outside the limelight that are those most insidious, as they might be given a free pass in consideration of the fact that they are not able to tarnish the reputation of the university in that moment of time.

Indeed, several university officers indicated that gift committees were influenced by events in the news that were perceived as creating reputation management risks. Other countries that universities have decided to treat with alertness are those that have been linked with troubles for U.K. academics or wider human rights issues (e.g., the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, and Iran were all mentioned by interviewees). Increasingly, donations from China are becoming a matter of concern for university administrators. Again, however, there is no overarching rule in how to assess country risk. Some universities have developed 'heatmaps' on the basis of external indicators (such as Transparency International's CPI), others take into account committee decisions and previous experience, and others operate on a purely case-by-case basis.

Most U.K. universities stated that, by and large, they conduct the due diligence internally, using open-source data. In most cases, university research officers could count on at least one paid-for software used to detect the ownership of any assets and the connections among companies and individuals. Some of the bigger institutions said that they also employ external background checkers on occasion, especially in cases that require specific language skills or that present a high level of complexity.

The length of the process varies. From "as little as twenty minutes" (in the hypothetical case of "an old lady who is an alumna of the university and wants to invest her savings") to as much as nine months for some institutions, or even 18 months for others, in the case of a complex and sizeable gift from a previously unknown donor. Larger universities highlight the importance of starting the process early and conducting screenings twice: once at the beginning of the relationship with the donor (when it is decided whether to pursue the prospect at all), and once at a point at which the gift is formally put forward.

Asked how many gifts were formally rejected for failing to comply with the ethical guidelines, universities reported a very low number, ranging from no rejections at all, to a maximum number of four rejections over the past year. The reason for the low number of rejections by the high-level committee was attributed, by the interviewees, to the protracted process in place: if a prospective donor is found to be clearly not aligned with the university's values, they say, the decision not to proceed with the relationship would be taken before even being brought before the high-level gift approval committee.

Institutions that are lucky enough to have a well-established history and track-record in attracting donations can usually count on a dedicated gift management/acceptance team with a well-developed checklist and procedures, a luxury not shared by more up-and-coming institutions, which sometimes rely on staff members with a wider remit. In all cases, universities have indicated that discussions and changes are ongoing in this area, thus clearly underlining the fluidity of the subject as well as its timeliness. Interestingly, most U.K. interviewees were convinced that the regulations present in U.K. institutions are

much more stringent than those in vogue at U.S. universities, despite the lack of transparency in the U.K. compared to the U.S.

Persistent Weaknesses

What are, therefore, the obstacles for the higher education sector to improve their rules in accepting philanthropic donations in a uniform and consistent way? The susceptibility to media trends, of which many of our interviewees spoke openly, is a first potential matter of concern. This issue raises the question of whether gift approval policies indeed constitute a consistent approach based on solid ethical and moral values or whether they are themselves react to external influences, pressures, and scrutiny. The research conducted for this paper suggests that the latter factor, the logic of consequence, is still a stronger motivator for conducting diligence than the logic of appropriateness.

Among the further challenges, there is also a marked difference in standards: what is defined as a 'large gift' deserving of heightened scrutiny varies drastically between smaller and larger institutions, and between the U.K. and the U.S. By way of comparison, some lesser-known universities among the U.K.'s Russell Group have reported that they consider any gift above £10,000 as a 'large gift' that therefore needs to undergo the highest process of due diligence foreseen. For some U.S. Ivy League universities, this figure stands at $10 *million* and above. And while smaller universities may heighten their guard for gifts that are comparably smaller than those received by the 'big shot' universities, they will also be penalized because of their lack of resources to dedicate to a professional team devoted to this line of work.

Practically speaking, the decision as to whether to accept a gift raises obvious conflict of interest concerns. Donor research done by alumni relations and development staff is often guided by solicitation etiquette and for the purpose of developing engagement and stewardship strategies, rather than to investigate sources of wealth. Moreover, gift review committees are primarily tasked with protecting the legal interests of the university, considering conflicts of interest, and only occasionally managing the university's reputation. These operating procedures leave a lot of leeway and grey areas for accepting donations from

questionable or unreputable sources. They also exert considerable pressure on committee members to, ultimately, not get in the way of a potential large gift. Most problematically, eight of the seventeen U.K. respondents reported not having independent gifts committees but relying on formal or ad hoc systems of senior management approvals systems for large gifts (see Appendix 1). It was not clear how commercial and ethical requirements would be balanced in these cases.

A final significant challenge, mentioned by many of our respondents (and affecting large, decentralized universities in particular), appears to be the need to implement the ethical precepts across the whole institution. As a consequence of not being able to control the whole corpus of scholars, university officers state, there might be cases in which a 'rogue academic' makes a bad call in accepting some form of association, a speaking engagement or a donation from a dubious source. Whether this "bad apple" argument is a sufficient and satisfactory alibi in explaining the persistent cases of reputation laundering is beyond the scope of this paper.

Conclusion

We have argued that the question of improper foreign influence on higher education must be understood in terms of the wider ecology of reputation laundering across private and public sectors. Universities must balance safeguarding their own reputations with remaining open for business. Today's foreign funders are not just individual PEPs, but companies and the states with which they are associated, further blurring distinctions between reputation laundering, authoritarian influencing, and commercial interests. The controversy over Huawei at many universities reveals this complexity. The image of the Chinese elites, the preferences of the Chinese Communist Party, and the investments of a putatively private Chinese company are all at stake. Universities have responded differently to these challenges with, for example, Oxford stating in 2018 that it would no longer accept Huawei money, while Cambridge, according to one investigative report ("Revealed: Huawei's Oxbridge Millions," 2021) has received more than £25 million from the company from 2016-2021. The opaqueness of both the gifts and the assessment processes—both in the U.K. where

transparency is almost entirely lacking and, in a different way, the U.S. where institutions are required (but sometimes fail) to report major foreign donations—makes universities all the more subject to suspicion.

Although this paper has probed some of the issues and trends in foreign gifts and reputation laundering in the United States and the U.K., we invite researchers to explore the issues as they are impacting higher education in other democracies. Though much remains to be done in the realm of transparency, U.S. and U.K. administrators have been responding to pressure for disclosure and media reporting by establishing some vetting and diligence procedures, however imperfect. And despite our focus on the international donors in this article, it is important to recognize that reputation laundering, and more direct forms of influence are most visibly exposed in the domestic realm. In the United States, recent scandals and revelations—most notably those about child-trafficker Jefferey Epstein and the opioid-crisis embroiled Sackler family—placed increased scrutiny on universities and their procedures for dealing with high-value donors. These scandals have revealed the preferential treatment, and secrecy afforded to powerful individuals who provide large donations, whether domestic or foreign.

Reputation laundering relies on partial transparency whereby the benefactor is public, but their sources of wealth and any conditions of their gift are not. Our research suggests that the core problem is one of non-disclosure: the absence of robust and institutionalized transparency about reporting gifts and accountability about the process of scrutinizing them. To address this problem a new openness must begin within universities with the involvement of staff and students in the process of decision making about gifts *before* they have been accepted. Students, student-run newspapers, and alumni organizations key constituencies for holding universities– and their Boards– to account, although they too are hampered by non-disclosure. In the U.K., campaigns regarding links to Huawei and the Chinese state (at Jesus College, Cambridge [Valero de Urquia, 2020]), to a Chinese university partner's involvement in the repression of Uyghurs (at Exeter [Marks, 2021]), and to donations from fossil fuel companies (at Oxford [Lovett, 2020]), have all been led by students or alumni. Moreover, they have

exposed details of these links only after extensive research involving freedom of information requests.

The form and degree of transparency is crucial to any hope for progress. In the U.S., public reporting is a legal requirement but the adherence and enforcement of this has been lacking until now, due to both the compartmentalization of development offices and the absence of clear guidance from the DoE. In the U.K., members of the faculty and student bodies may be included in gifts committee from their positions as elected senators and guild officers. Major gifts accepted, foreign and domestic, must then be reported to a public body—not merely to Boards and university councils—and published with sufficient detail to chart relationships between individual donors and recipient schools and academic units in all cases except those where the case for anonymity has been accepted by a committee. Information on the beneficial owner of donations made via LLCs and the major funders of private philanthropic organizations should also be provided. Without full transparency according to clear public standards, reputation laundering by wealthy individuals with questionable sources will continue to be a problem for universities in the U.S., U.K., and beyond.

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Appendix 1: Summary U.K. University Foreign Gift Policies

Name of University	Response?	Ethical guidelines for donations	Highest level decision-making body	Thresholds for donations and responsibilities
University of Birmingham	Responded	Public	Senior management approval system	• Up to £10k: Fundraising officer • £10,001–£50k: Head of Fundraising • £50,001–£100k: Associate Director of the Development and Alumni Relations Office (DARO) • £100,001–£250k: Director of DARO • £250,001+: Registrar & Secretary after obligatory due diligence
University of Bristol	Responded	Public	Dedicated gifts committee independent from senior leaders	• Up to £25k: Director of Development and Alumni Relations (DARO) • £25k–£499,999: Director of DARO, with referral to Vice-Chancellor if due diligence raises issues • £500k–£999,999: Pro Vice-Chancellor, with referral to Vice Chancellor, Chief Operating Officer and Chair of the Board

				• of Trustees if due diligence raises issues • £1m+: Vice Chancellor, Chief Operating Officer and Chair of the Board of Trustees, with possibility of referral to Board of Trustees if due diligence raises issues
University of Cambridge	Responded	Public	Dedicated gifts committee independent from senior leaders	• Up to £100k: Heads of Departments and Institutions • £100,001–£999,999: Development and Alumni Relations Office upon formal due diligence • £1m+: Committee on Benefactions and External and Legal Affairs (CBELA). Cases that might be controversial may be referred to CBELA even if under the £1m threshold.
Cardiff University	No response			
Durham University	Responded	Public	Senior management approval system	• £1–£10k: A 'regular' or 'annual fund' level donation • £10k–£100k: A 'major gift' • £100k–£1m: A 'campaign level' donation or 'leadership' donation (subject to due diligence sign-off by senior university officers) • £1m+: A 'principal gift' (subject to due diligence sign-off by the Vice-Chancellor)
University of Edinburgh	Responded	Public	Senior management approval system	• £5k–£99,999: Director of Development and Alumni (D&A), upon initial due diligence • £100k–£499,999: Director of D&A, Ethical Fundraising Advisory Group (EFAG), and potentially the Central Management Group (CMG)

				• £500k+: all cases referred to EFAG, irrespective of risk identified
University of Exeter	Responded	Internal Only	Ad hoc senior management approval	• Under £10k: Gifts below £10k are encouraged to be allocated to one of the generic • £100k–£499,999: Director of D&A, Ethical Fundraising Advisory Group (EFAG), and potentially the Central Management Group (CMG) • £500k+: all cases referred to EFAG, irrespective of risk identified
University of Glasgow	No response			
Imperial College London	Responded	Upon Request	Senior management approval system	• Under £25k: Advancement. No due diligence unless risks are identified • £25k–£100k: Head of Development; Directors of Development; Director of Advancement Operations; Vice-President of Advancement. Standard due diligence • £100k+: Senior officers, including College Secretary & Registrar. Full due diligence
King's College London	Responded	Public	Dedicated gifts committee independent from senior leaders	• Under £10k: no due diligence unless risks are identified. • £10k–£100k: 'major gifts': due diligence procedure applies • £100k+ (single or cumulative): Fundraising Ethics Review Group (FERG)
London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE)	Responded	Public	Dedicated gifts committee independent from senior leaders	• Up to £100k: approval within Division. Risk-based approach. • £100k–£250k: Ethics Manager. Initial due diligence. • £250k–£5m: Ethics Grants and Donations Panel (EGDP) expedited: Chair and Panel

				• member review. Full due diligence. • £5m+: EGDP full panel. Can refer to School Management Committee (SMC). Full due diligence. • Sovereign state association: Head of Gift and Partnership Income Management; School Secretary; SMC
University of Leeds	No response			
University of Liverpool	Responded	Upon Request	Dedicated gifts committee independent from senior leaders	• £10k+: 'large donation'. Initial due diligence • £10k–£100k: controversial donations are referred to the Gifts Oversight Group • £100k+: automatically reviewed by the Gifts Oversight Group
University of Manchester	Refused			•
Newcastle University	Responded	Upon Request	Senior management approval system	• £10k+: obligatory due diligence. There are other thresholds above this that inform the level of approval needed, which is up to the University Council.
University of Nottingham	Responded	Public	Senior management approval system	• Under £25k: No due diligence checks required • £25k–100k: Director of Advancement (CARO) upon review of due diligence • Over £100k: Gift Acceptance Committee (including a mixture of University's Executive Board members, academics with related specialisms and Finance and Advancement staff) upon review of due diligence
University of Oxford	Responded	Upon Request	Dedicated gifts committee	Not disclosed

			independent from senior leaders	
Queen Mary University of London	No response			
Queen's University Belfast	No response			
University of Sheffield	Responded	Public	Dedicated gifts committee independent from senior leaders	• Under £25k: Heads of Department • £25 k–£99,999: Due Diligence Panel within the department of Campaigns and Alumni Relations • Over £100k: Donations Acceptance Panel (DAP)
University of Southampton	Responded	Public	Ad hoc senior management approval	• Significant gifts, of a value above £10k, are enshrined within a Gift Agreement.
University College London (UCL)	No response			
University of Warwick	Responded	Internal Only	Dedicated gifts committee independent from senior leaders	• Small: Regular Gifts (£1–£1k) and Leadership Gifts (£1k–£100k). Initial due diligence. • Medium: Major Gifts (£100k–£1m). Detailed due diligence. • Large: Principal Gifts (£1m+). Referred to the Fundraising Ethics Committee only if problems are raised.
University of York	Responded	Public	Dedicated gifts committee independent from senior leaders	• Under £500: 'Participation Gift'. No formal gift acceptance or due diligence process. • £500–£4,999: 'Leadership Gift'. Usually no due diligence. Authorization required from £1k

					• £5k+: 'Major Gift', dealt with by the Philanthropic Partnership and Alumni (OPPA)
					• £25k+: formal due diligence required. Acceptance of any donation of £1,000+ requires signed authorization from a senior leader, as follows:
					  ○ £1k–£100k: authorization from the Registrar or Director of External Relations (who is the Executive Board member responsible for OPPA)
					  ○ £100k–£3.9m: authorization from the Vice-Chancellor
					  ○ £4m+ also requires notification to Council. The highest decision-making body is new Due Diligence Approval Group, chaired by a Pro-Vice Chancellor, which, in turn, can escalate decisions to a sub-committee of Council, the Ethics Framework Governance Committee (EFGC)

Note. Most institutions have reported that, if red flags are raised at levels that are lower than those triggering automatic due diligence, they would escalate the gift to a higher level of scrutiny in the gift approval process. University of Sheffield: their ethical guidelines are included in the Code of Ethics.

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Examining the Politicization and Framing of HEA 117 in the US Between 2019 and 2021

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Abstract

In 2019, the U.S. Department of Education (DED) began increasing its enforcement of the Higher Education Act, Section 117 statute, which provides instructions for institutional reporting regarding foreign and contracts. The three questions guiding this article include: What were DED's stated premises for the investigations? How was international engagement characterized in the notices?

And finally, what traits, characteristics, and/or qualities were attributed to different actors? After providing an overview of Section 117, this article examines the notices of investigation issued by DED between 2019 and 2021 to better understand how the Agency discursively characterized malign and/or undue foreign influence utilizing a discourse historical analysis approach. After exploring these questions, this article then discusses the problematic assumptions revealed by four frames which emerged from the notices of investigations and concludes with a brief reflection on the continued challenges for universities and their international engagement (broadly defined) moving forward.

Keywords: Higher Education Act, Section 117, foreign influence, malign influence, international partnerships

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The Higher Education Act of 1965 has a number of regulations that delineate the U.S. Department of Education (DED) areas of oversight and higher education institutions' (HEIs) responsibilities related to international education and engagement. One regulation is Section 117, which focuses on institutional reporting responsibilities regarding foreign gifts and contracts. To mitigate the potential malign influence of foreign funding, Section 117 required HEIs to report on any foreign gifts that amount to $250,000 USD in any given six-month period to DED. While DED did establish a reporting mechanism, it did not actively operationalize its oversight over HEIs regarding their compliance with this regulation.

However, this changed under Secretary of Education, Betsy Devos, in 2019 (U.S. Department of Education, 2020). DED began actively utilizing Section 117 as part of a broader multi-Agency/Department effort under the Trump administration to mitigate malign and undue foreign influence—with a particular focus on China—in different sectors including higher education (Wray, 2020). As Long et al. (2021) noted, three underlying concerns regarding foreign influence on U.S. HEIs include "theft of proprietary research, promotion of propaganda and disinformation on campuses, and imposition of political or

cultural values through curricular and extracurricular programming" (p. 9). Subsequently, this article examines this recent enforcement of Section 117 (§1011f(a)) of the Higher Education Act, 20.U.S.C. §1001 et seq. (1965) in the United States between the period of 2019 and 2021. The article focuses on this period because DED was particularly active during this time, issuing 19 notices of investigation to U.S. universities; however, no new notices have been issued since the change in presidential administrations in late January 2021.

This is consistent with Lee's (2021) observation that international education—and internationalization in education more broadly—is not "solely a traditional education pursuit… [a]nd yet international education tends to be narrowly understood by universities and professional organizations as an educational rather than a geopolitical endeavor" (p. 10). Yet, while the operationalization of HEA 117 could be understood as part of the Trump administration's whole-of-government effort to sever ties with China, the DED notices of investigation reflect a less coherent set of underlying justifications, issues, and concerns in relation to foreign influence. As noted by Dollar and Hass (2021), despite the focus on China, the Trump administration overall did not have a coherent approach toward China. After dismantling the architecture that existed in engaging China, instead, the administration adopted a more reactive and "improvisational" approach. This article draws from political science scholarship focusing on "issue framing" or "issue definition" to capture the way DED's discourse within the notices of investigation shifted between 2019 and 2021, most noticeably after the onset of the COVID-19 global pandemic.

Issue definition is considered the first stage of the policy production process and provides insight into what the perceived problem is (Weiss, 1989). Examining this phase of the policy development process is important because "how a policy is defined at the start of the process can affect whether and how it will be addressed" (Gilardi et al., 2021, p. 23). Moreover, these frames or definitions can change over time and in this way, this could be understood as a "storyline or [the] unfolding narrative about an issue" (Gamson et al., 1992, 385; as cited in Gilardi et al., 2021, p. 23). Not only can frames change over time, framing as a processcan also be seen "from a constructivist vantage point, in

terms of how meanings arise through interactive processes" (Junk & Rasmussen, 2019, p. 486). Understanding DED's shifting frames through an issue definition framework not only demonstrates the complexity of operationalizing policies within a fragmented policy landscape, but it also provides insight into the dynamic and exploratory process of creating a policy framework for further action (Weiss, 1989).

To examine DED's oversight of HEA 117 through its 19 notices of investigation using an issue definition lens, this article broadly explores the following questions: What were DED's stated justifications for the investigations? How was international engagement characterized in the notices? And finally, what traits, characteristics, and/or qualities were attributed to different actors? After providing a more detailed overview of Section 117, this article then outlines the conceptual framework—issue definition. To delineate the different frames within the delimitations of the aforementioned questions, I utilized "discourse-historical analysis," which is a qualitative method within the critical discourse analysis tradition. The remainder of the paper then examines the 19 notices of investigation issued by DED by 2019 and 2021.

An Overview of HEA Section 117

Section 117 was introduced into the Higher Education Act of 1965 while undergoing reauthorization in 1986 during the 99th U.S. Congress, which was in session between January 3, 1985 to January 3, 1987 during the Reagan administration. Section 1206—now Section 117—was drafted and sponsored by the American Jewish Congress (AJC), revised after meetings with the American Association of American Universities and the American Council on Education, and was eventually passed as part of the reauthorization of HEA (1965) (Maslow, 1986). In his opinion piece, Will Maslow, the AJC General Counsel, stated two intentions why the AJC drafted this piece of legislation. First, the AJC "sought to protect academic integrity threatened by gifts or contracts with foreign entities containing all sorts of restrictive conditions" (para. 2). Maslow pointed to "huge gifts from Arab governments to Georgetown University creating a Center for Contemporary Arab Studies" (para. 2). The second intention was that regular disclosure would ensure compliance with the regulation (para. 7). Section 1206

was passed by the U.S. Congress as part of the amendments to HEA (1965) and was later operationalized through a reporting mechanism on the Federal Student Aid website.

As of 2019, HEA Section 117 consisted of seven parts, which included the following:

1. **Disclosure report [definition].** HEIs need to report gifts or contracts with foreign sources that equal or are greater than $250K USD. The total—$250K USD—may be a one-time amount or in combination with other gifts/contracts from that same source in a calendar year. Universities submit information to DED semi-annually—in January and July.

2. **Contents of report.** Description of the information to be reported, which generally includes the aggregate dollar amount and the attributed source, which included (but was not limited to) individual, country, or foundation.

3. **Additional disclosures for restricted and conditional gifts.** Same information required as above, along with a description of the conditions or restrictions.

4. **Relation to other requirements.** Provides guidance in case documentation is provided by the HEI to other federal agencies.

5. **Public inspection [disclaimer].** All disclosure reports for Section 117 are public record.

6. **Enforcement.** If a HEI fails to comply with Section 117, a civil action may be brought by the Attorney General to request compliance, and all costs incurred as a result will be paid to the U.S. Treasury.

7. **Regulations.** Provides definitions. Of note, "contract" is defined as "any agreement for the acquisition by purchase, lease, or barter of property or services by the foreign source, for the direct benefit or use of either of the parties." Also of note, "restricted or conditional gift or contract" is defined as "any endowment, gift, grant, contract, award, present, or property of any kind which includes provisions regarding" faculty hiring, establishment of university centers/departments, student admission, or

the "award of grants, loans, scholarships, fellowships, or other forms of financial aid restricted to students of a specified country, religion, sex, ethnic origin, or political opinion."

As DED began investigating, their information requests frequently far exceeded the minimum reporting for Section 117. For example, Section 117 does require institutions to report for gifts and grants awarded or contracted for the previous six-month period. However, the general time frame for the additional reporting in the notices of investigation went as far back as 2010. Moreover, in addition to foreign grants and gifts, DED requested information regarding individual faculty members and information taken from institutions' international partnerships agreements websites—for example, in the case of Rutgers, the contract/agreement search categories that were cited in the letter included: "General Cooperation Agreements," "Abbreviated General Cooperation Agreements," "To establish the Joint Research Laboratory for Advanced Electronic Materials and Sensors," "Double Degree Programs," "Research Collaboration," and "Other") from or with entities identified as "Partner Institutions."

In 2019, after initiating a round of investigations, DED synthesized their findings in a letter to Rob Portman, then chairman of the Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations within the Homeland Security and Government Affairs Committee, and provided some recommendations regarding HEA 117 enforcement. The synthesis was a milieu of observations, findings, and interpretations including:

- HEIs are multi-national, multi-billion-dollar enterprises that use foundations, foreign branch campuses, and other structures to generate revenue, often foreign.
- Data were underreported and inaccurate and increased enforcement is necessary for DED to carry out Section 117's statutory purpose.
- Although HEIs have deployed sophisticated systems for managing RSP-type grants and contracts, it appears that they do not use the same systems to collect data for Section 117 reporting.
- HEIs solicit money from different actors—governments, corporations,

people—in various ways.

- HEIs use foreign gifts to subsidize scholarships for foreign students but it is unclear what benefit this brings for American students, parents, and taxpayers.

- An acknowledgement that the investigation did not include examining cybersecurity but that HEIs engagement with foreign funders also poses a threat in this space because of the generally poor track record of HEIs regarding cybersecurity practices. (*Letter to Chairman Porter*, 2019)

The letter then proposed expanding the scope of the examination of the foreign money sources by recommending that

- Congress may wish to scrutinize more closely the goals and methods of foreign money sources, the significant efforts and corporate mechanisms some colleges and universities take and use to solicit and channel foreign money, the influence and effect foreign money may have on research and curricula, and the extent to which foreign money might provide the means for access to sensitive U.S. government research and/or create insider threats. (*Letter to Chairman Porter*, 2019)

DED concluded that they would (1) continue investigations as necessary and appropriate, (2) propose changes to the statute, and (3) expanded inter-agency consultation to unearth foreign money flows and institutional entanglements.

In addition to initiating investigations, DED concomitantly began proposing changes through the rulemaking process. In a statement submitted to the Office of Management and Budget on September 6, 2019, DED most notably proposed that if an HEI failed to comply with Section 117, that either "civil or criminal action may be brought by the Attorney General to request compliance, and all costs incurred as a result will be paid to the U.S. Treasury." The key phrase being "criminal action" which was expanded from "civil action" in the enforcement section. As DED began its investigations, it also changed the operational definitions of terms utilized in the regulation. For example, DED expanded what constituted the HEI including all affiliations, making the scope of the regulation broader than it previously had been. The regulation itself historically did not state anything about reporting on separate tax entities that

have a university affiliation but are not part of the institution. Yet, the scope of the investigations—as deduced from the notification of investigation letters—included foundations, foreign branch campuses, other revenue generating structures, as well as solicitations of "foreign governments, corporations, and persons in a variety of ways, including institutional fundraising operations, quasi-entrepreneurial activities by professors and administrators, and foundations and alumni organizations" (*Letter to Chairman Rob Portman*, 2019), which far exceeded what any HEI had previously had to report on. Finally, there was a new database portal that was created for reporting which was to facilitate greater transparency regarding foreign gifts and contracts universities have received.

Conceptual Framework

Underpinning this article adopts a fundamental assumption from within socio-legal theory regarding the relationship between the "Law" and "Society" (Creutzfeldt et al., 2020). Rather than starting with the law as an acontextual point of departure for scholarship, socio-legal theory research situates the law both in relation to and with society. As Creutzfeldt (2020) noted, "Socio-legal scholars embrace law as social, cultural, economic, linguistic and ideological" (p. 13). Arguably, the inclusion of Section 1206 (Section 117) into the HEA reauthorization in 1986 illustrates this. While the impetus for the AJC in proposing and negotiating Section 1206 was concern regarding the influx of money from Arab countries into U.S. higher education and its potential impacts, the specificity of the example they used indicates that the concern had particular ontological and ideological roots. In this case, the socio-cultural, ideological and geo-political coalesced to inform the proposed amendment.

If we accept this constructivist view of the law, the contextual reality that "all levels, branches, and units of government are accountable to different constituencies with competing agendas and heterogeneous preferences" (Weiss & Gruber, 1984, p. 226) informs not just the production but also the interpretation and implementation of the law as well. In the United States, after a bill becomes a law (or an Act), it is generally then interpreted and enforced by the Executive branch, which includes federal agencies like DED. The work of the federal agencies like DED is generally challenging because sectors like education are

such diffuse enterprises in the United States because they are dispersed across federal, state and local authorities (Weiss & Gruber, 1984).

Because of the heterogeneity of constituencies, issue framing then provides a useful conceptual lens to understand how actors like DED then justify their interpretation and enforcement of the law (Boydstun et al., 2014; Entmen, 1993, 2010; Gilardi, 2021; Junk & Rasmussen, 2019; Koduah et al., 2016; Lasswell, 1950; Singh & Swanson, 2017; Weiss, 1989; Wood & Vedlitz, 2007). This is because

> [f]raming essentially involves *selection* and *salience*. To frame is to *select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation* for the item described. (Entmen, 1993, p. 52, author italics)

Problem or issue frames call attention to certain aspects or facets of the problem and divert attention away from others (Entmen, 1993; Weiss, 1989). Relatedly, Weiss (1989) posited that "[p]roblem definitions must accommodate political realities, but they also help to create those realities. Although the pressures of institutional interests restrict the range of definitions that receive serious consideration, problem definitions carve new channels in institutional arrangements" (p. 114). While some scholars like Entmen (2010) assumed that strategies or higher-level priorities inform how issues are defined, others like Gilardi et al. (2021) acknowledged that there was and is a dynamicity to issue definition—the "unfolding narrative about an issue" (p. 23) —or pointed to the interactionist nature issue framing as both accommodating political realities and concurrently creating those realities (Weiss, 1989).

Subsequently, issue definition/framing affects how decision-makers themselves process the issue, which then introduces bias regarding what information is included, whose interests are represented/protected, and subsequently, what gets defined as salient choices moving forward (Baumgartner & Jones, 1993; Junk & Rasmussen, 2019). Or to use plain language, issue framing ultimately sets into motion, the process of determining "who gets what,

when and how" (Lassewell, 1950).

Methodology

Within political science scholarship focusing on issue framing and policy diffusion, there is a robust body of work around legislative text analysis (Hollibaugh, 2019; Jansa et al., 2019; Linder et al., 2020; Wilkerson et al., 2015). However, this approach toward text analysis generally focuses on large corpuses and utilizes different quantitative methods to ascertain frames, relationships, issues, etc. Alternatively, while discourse analysis is a research methodology that also relies on written texts as data for insights and judgments about policies, programs, events, and the like, it extends beyond textual data by including speech and other linguistic modalities and situates discourse within its sociolinguistic context.

Discourse historical analysis (DHA)—a qualitative method that is situated within the critical discourse analysis tradition—examines the interaction between different texts and artefacts across mediums to see how discourses are formed and spread (Krzyzanowski & Wodak, 2008; Wodak & Chilton, 2005). DHA is situated within the critical discourse analysis tradition, which is itself more broadly situated within critical theory and is underpinned by its assumptions regarding power, ideology, etc. As Fairclough (2012) stated "Critical discourse analysis (CDA) brings the critical tradition of social analysis into language studies and contributes to critical social analysis, a particular focus on discourse and on relations between discourse and other social elements (power relations, ideologies, institutions, social identities, and so forth)" (p. 9). Put another way, DHA is underpinned by a constructivist view of the law and essentially examines discourse diffusion. DHA is grounded in critical discourse analysis which is underpinned by the tenets of critical theory centering notions of power and the structuring of power, ideology, and "critique" (Reisgl & Wodak, 2009; Wodak & Meyer, 2009).

As Reisgl and Wodak (2009) and Wodak and Meyer (2009) outlined, within DHA, texts are organized by fields—action and control—and genres. Examples of fields of actions include law making political procedures, formation of public opinion and self-presentation, and political advertising, marketing and

propaganda. Fields of control can include political executive and administration. Genres include bills, laws, resolutions, magazines, white papers, memos, public statements/press releases among others. Discourse topics are then generated after examining the texts within fields and across genres (see Figure 1).

To be clear, this article focuses on a small subset of a broader research project that is looking at a number of different texts and artefacts that were produced by various Departments during the period between 2019 and 2021, as well as the subsequent "bandwagoning" that took place as similar laws were then either proposed or passed in state legislatures. The term "systematic bandwagoning" in reference to frame diffusion was used by Boydstun et al. (2014) and captures the cascading or discourse diffusion that will be explored in future research. But because the three questions posed earlier in this article are exploratory—What were DED's stated justifications for the investigations? How was international engagement characterized in the notices? And finally, what traits, characteristics, and/or qualities were attributed to different actors?

Because the textual data this article focuses are primarily the notices of investigation issued by DED, the field of action then is "political executive and administration." The genre of the documents are "letters" since the notices of investigation could be considered its own type of artefact since they are used to initiate different procedures within the oversight process. These letters then were used to generate four discourse topics—frames—that became the point of departure for the aforementioned more extensive DHA project.

Figure 1: Discourses as Social Practice Within DHA

Fields of Action				Political execution and administration	Field of Control
Law making political procedure	Formation of public opinion and self-presentation	Party-internal development of an informed opinion	Political advertising, marketing and propoganda	Political executive and administration	Political execution and administration
Genres					
* Bills * Laws * Resolutions * Directives	* Magazines * Public statements * Presentations * Reports	* White papers * Memos * Meeting notes	* Public statements * Websites * Social media	* Notes * Papers * Question/answers	* Notes * Papers * Question/answers

Discourse Topic 1　Discourse Topic 2　Discourse Topic 3　Discourse Topic 4

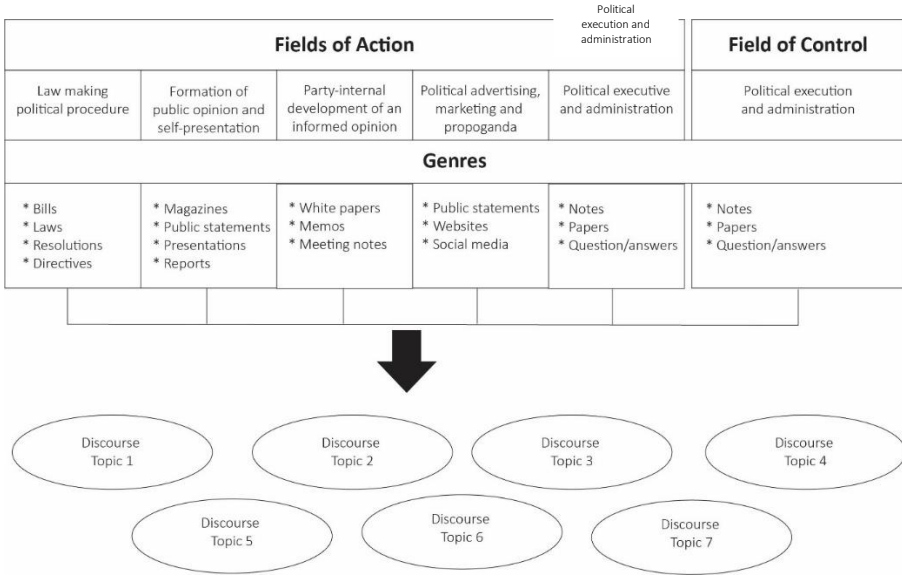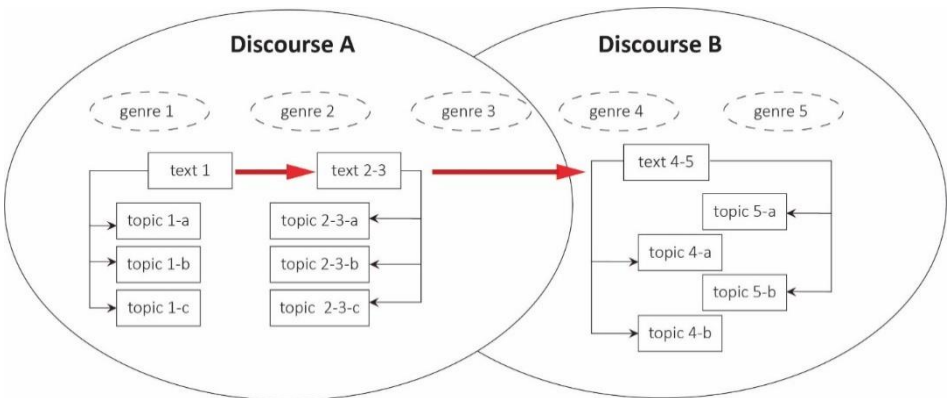Discourse Topic 5　Discourse Topic 6　Discourse Topic 7

Figure 2 shows how different discourses are both formulated by a set of texts and across genres and also how they interact with other discourses.

Figure 2: Wodak's Model for Intertextuality

Discourse A　　Discourse B

genre 1　genre 2　genre 3　genre 4　genre 5

text 1　→　text 2-3　→　text 4-5

topic 1-a　topic 2-3-a　topic 5-a
topic 1-b　topic 2-3-b　topic 4-a
topic 1-c　topic 2-3-c　topic 5-b
　　　　　　　　　topic 4-b

For this article, I applied DHA coding principles as articulated in Wodak

and Meyer (2009) to the documents, which, in this article, were primarily the notices of investigation issued by the U.S. Department of Education to 19 different HEIs between 2019 and 2021 and focused on what types of topics emerged from these texts.

Findings
HEA 117 Enforcement Between 2019 and 2021

In 2019, DED—under then Secretary of Education, Betsy Devos—began enforcing HEA Section 117. Among the first set of HEIs DED investigated were: Georgetown University and Texas A & M University (*Notice of 20 U.S.C.§ 1011f… Georgetown and Texas A & M*, 2019), Cornell University and Rutgers, The State University of New Jew Jersey (*Notice of 20 U.S.C.§ 1011f… Cornell* and *Rutgers*, 2019), and MIT and the University of Maryland (UMD) (*Notice of 20 U.S.C.§ 1011f… University of Maryland* and *MIT,* 2019). Between June 2019 and January 2021, DED sent notices of investigation to a total of 19 HEIs which were a combination of public and private institutions throughout the United States.

Each notice of investigation began with the premise that DED believed that their respective institutional "reporting [did] not capture all gifts, contracts, etc. that are under the auspices of Section 117 to all of the campuses and/or affiliated foundations and non-profit organizations." In the earlier notices of investigations, DED was particularly interested in all records and references in relations to China, Qatar, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, and Russia. The DED letters went on to request documentation that exceeded the minimum required Section 117 reporting. Requests included: information regarding individual faculty members, as well as specific details based on information from their institutional international partnerships agreements websites.

In the initial batch of notification of investigation letters indicated that if said institution appeared to be in violation of the regulation, that

1. The Secretary of Education would request the Attorney General to commence action that would enforce compliance and recover the full costs of obtaining the compliance, including all associated costs.
2. The institution had 30 days to provide all records of gifts and contracts…

> (*Notice of 20 U.S.C.§ 1011f Investigation and Record...*, 2019)

In addition to notes about records, the notification of investigation letters also stated

> If you claim attorney-client or attorney-work product privilege for a given record, then you must prepare and submit a privilege log expressly identifying each such record and describing it so the Department may assess your claim's validity. Please note no other privileges apply here...
> (*Notice of 20 U.S.C.§ 1011f Investigation and Record...*, 2019)

If an institution did not comply with the Attorney General and presumably in a manner deemed acceptable by DED, the institution was threatened with civil charges.

Following the early notices of investigations then, DED subsequently issued 10 more notices of investigation—in 2020, this included: Harvard, Yale, Case Western Reserve, Fordham, and Stanford Universities, as well as the Universities of Texas and Alabama, respectively; in 2021, this included: Auburn, Florida State, and Georgia State University, as well as the Universities of Nevada, Las Vegas, New Mexico, and Wisconsin–Milwaukee, respectively. The general contours of the letters remained the same with some variation. For example, the number of days provided by DED for HEIs to respond varied between 21 and 60 days and the action points varied depending on the institution and when the notices were issued.

Digging Deeper: Emerging Topics/Frames

The first emerging topic or frame was drawn from the premise for investigations and could be described as the "university as a negligent actor." Across the notices of investigation, DED articulated several reasons for opening investigations. The most frequently stated premise for the initiation of an investigation was that given the institution's self-described partnerships on their institutional websites (student mobility, memorandum of understanding (MOU), institutional partnerships), DED believed that the institution should have more to report than it had. The second premise DED investigators articulated was that the level of reporting was not commensurate with other institutions or that the

reporting submitted could not reasonably fully capture the institution's reporting. Relatedly, DED investigators alleged that because an institution had little to no history of reporting that they probably were not in compliance with the regulation. Finally, particularly in the case of Harvard University, DED alleged that it was "Harvard University lacks appropriate institutional controls and, as a result, its statutory Section 117 reporting may not include and/or fully capture all reportable gifts, contracts, and/or restricted and conditional gifts or contracts from or with foreign sources" (*Notice of 20 U.S.C.§ 1011f Investigation and Record Request/Harvard University*, 2020, para. 2). In the case of Harvard, the evidence that DED was referencing was the Charles Lieber (U.S. Attorney's Office District of Massachusetts, 2020) and Jeffrey Epstein (Harvard, 2019) cases, respectively.

The DED's impetus for investigating the HEIs fell into three general categories—that there was an absence of reporting which seems incongruent with the institution's international engagement; that there was an absence of reporting that seemed incongruent given other (peer) institutions' reporting; and that there must be a poor institutional reporting infrastructure as exemplified in cases like the Charles Lieber case. But common across these three reasons is the underlying frame of the "university as a negligent actor."

The second emergent topic or frame revolved around what constituted "foreign" or "malign" in relation to Section 117's primary concern regarding malign and undue foreign influence. Looking at the notices of investigation then, the second frame regarding what constituted malign or foreign influence could be defined more narrowly as "any engagement with China and in descending order, Qatar, Russia, Saudi Arabia and Iran."

Although there were periodic references of countries like South Korea, Japan and Egypt, the countries that DED was clearly primarily concerned with—given the focus and occurrences—were China, followed by Qatar, then Russia and Saudi Arabia, respectively. Figure 3 provides a visual overview of the countries DED investigators specifically named in the notices of investigation as reflected in the stacked bars by U.S. HEI and in chronological order of investigation.

Figure 3: Overview of Countries Mentioned in the Notices of Investigation
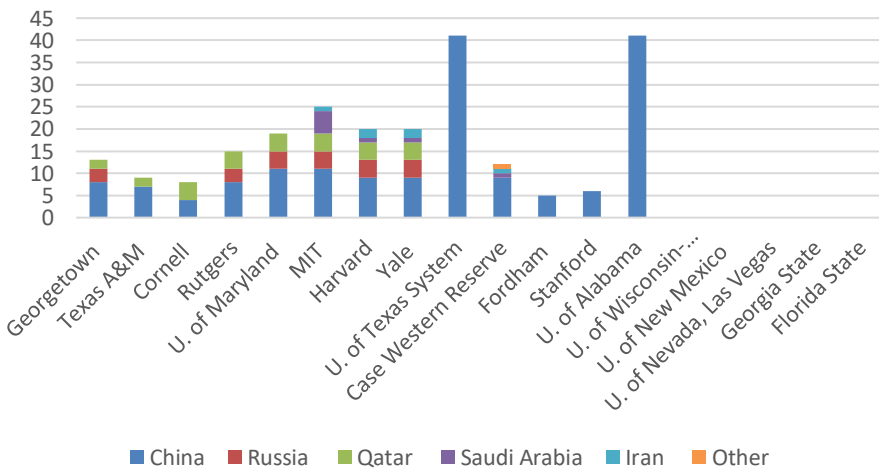
In Figure 3, Georgetown through MIT received notices of investigation in 2019, Harvard through the University of Alabama in 2020, and the University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee through Florida State University in 2021. Although HEA 117 does not specify a foreign country or countries of specific concern, the

enforcement of HEA 117 provides the contours of who the regulation was being interpreted by DED investigators. Across the HEIs which received notices of investigation between 2019 and 2020, in all instances, DED specifically identified Chinese entities (government offices, private sector companies, higher education institutions, etc.). What is striking visually in Figure 3 is after the declaration of the COVID-19 global pandemic is the almost singular focus on HEIs' partnerships and engagements with China. Although five notices were issued in 2021—starting with the University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee in Figure 3—all five received broad and brief notices of investigation, with no specifically named countries of interest. Figure 4 illustrates the disproportionate focus on China.

Figure 4: Treemap of the Named Countries in the DED Notices of Investigation
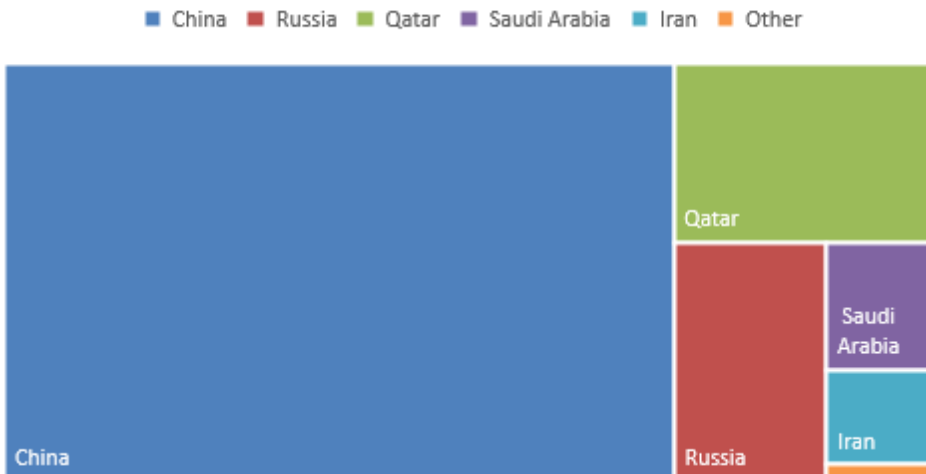
When drilling down deeper, not only did DED shift to focus almost singularly on China after March of 2020, the number of named Chinese organizations greatly expanded to include multinational companies in China or Chinese company branches. This included Huawei Technologies Co. Ltd and Huawei Technologies U.S.A., specific government agencies and organizations, as well as numerous Chinese higher education institutions, among others.

Throughout the investigation period, DED expanded the scope for information regarding engagement with particular countries beyond the HEIs being investigated themselves to also include other affiliated institutions including those registered in other countries. One example of the types of affiliated entities that were also named is the Cornell Foundation U.K., Ltd. In the case of MIT, DED asked for information for satellite sites/branch campuses, research partnerships, and partner institutions that are separate legal entities such as Skolkovo Institute of Science and Technology in Russia. Additionally, the expanded scope also included individuals with any Chinese affiliations, U.S. companies, U.S. citizens, employees of the HEIs who were responsible for reporting and collecting different types of data, as well as specific named research centers such as the Kerry Institute at Yale University (*Notice of 20 U.S.C.§ 1011f Investigation and Record Request/Yale University*, 2020).

While DED stated a general concern regarding university engagement with foreign influences, despite its stated interest in international engagement globally, DED—particularly after the onset of the COVID-19 global pandemic—was primarily focused on China. In this way, the malign and foreign influence could be rearticulated as influence from China.

In addition to framing the aforementioned countries as foreign and malign influences, adjacent to the second topic was the third topic or frame which DED also seemed to be exploring through the use of racist language and assumptions in relation to China and people of Chinese descent. Not only did the nature and aggressiveness toward Chinese institutions shift and increase after March of 2020, the use of language such as the "Chinese coronavirus pandemic" was referenced by DED in letters issued in 2020. Moreover, in addition to the use of racist language, in a number of letters, DED did not distinguish between

Chinese and Chinese-Americans named in the letters as persons of interest
despite the nature of the legislation, which focused on malign and undue foreign
influence. More specifically then, this third frame could be described as
untrustworthy people of Chinese descent, whether because of their nationality or
because they were somehow singularly responsible for the COVID-19 pandemic.

Finally, the fourth topic that emerged from the notices was in relation to
institutional liability and individual responsibility. Within some of the notices of
investigation, DED requested lists of individuals and/or named specific
individuals who may have received funds or had affiliations with foreign
governments and/or lists of people who was involved with the information
collection process for the institution. As an example of such a request, in the case
of the University of Maryland, DED requested:

> a list of all persons at your Institution supported by a gift, contract,
> and/or restricted or conditional gift or contract with or from a foreign
> source (e.g., a research scientist working on a project developing
> artificial intelligence or engineering systems funded in whole or in part
> by a foreign source, a foreign graduate student studying physics under a
> scholarship or other contractual arrangement with a foreign government,
> a fellow in a cultural studies program created by endowment or other gift
> from a foreign source). The relevant foreign source should be specified
> for each such person. (*Notice of 20 U.S.C.§ 1011f… University of
> Maryland,* 2019)

The expansion of what fell under the per view of the investigation was
particularly striking, as was noted by different HEIs and related professional
organizations in their letters to DED.

However, not only were the institutional information requests much
broader than what seemed to fit within the criteria of Section 117 itself (as
mentioned earlier), in several notices of investigations, DED also asked for the
names of those in the institution who were responsible either for the contract
under question such as anyone who was connected to the Wuhan Institute of
Virology research, foreign or otherwise) and/or people who were responsible for
general financial reporting. This request to name individual employees of the

university who work in finance and/or awards was startling when considering the institutional focus of the legislation itself. In this case, rather describe this in terms of a more specific frame, I propose that this topic is illustrative of DED's attempt to concomitantly investigate these HEIs while also fishing for the empirical information they need to understand how to sharpen their issue frames for further action.

Discussion

Using the notices of investigation then as a field of action within DHA, what frames did an examination of HEA 117 enforcement between 2019 and 2021 reveal? In this discussion, *issue framing, issue definition*, and DHA "topics" are used interchangeably. Returning to the three questions this article set out to explore then, first, what were DED's stated justifications for the investigations? The first and fourth frames provide insight into this. First, DED characterized universities as negligent (frame one)—through lack of due diligence or either intentional or unintentional negligence. If universities are negligent, then this would warrant DED's increased oversight over "bad" actors. Relatedly, the fourth frame on information fishing, which is arguably more of a focus than a frame, is necessary to further reinforce the first frame.

Regarding the second and third questions—how was international engagement characterized in the notices? And what traits, characteristics, and/or qualities were attributed to different actors?—given the first frame, generally, international engagement was portrayed through a negative lens with the U.S. universities being portrayed almost as complicit actors in opening the door for malign foreign influences with little or no reference made to the robust historical contribution of international education through areas like student migration, faculty and student mobility, research collaboration, etc.

Looking at the individual frames within the issue definition framework provided earlier in this article, regarding the "university as a negligent actor" frame, DED's concern regarding institutional underreporting, as well as the identified need to update the way the data was collected—through a new data entry portal—was supported by the increase in filings during this time and in subsequent reporting periods. The overall impact of the enforcement of HEA 117 did have a significant impact on institutional reporting with observable increases

in filing in June 2020 (*Letter to Chairman Rob Portman*, 2020)—both in terms of number of new filers (60) and monetary amount. Moreover, within and among HEIs, there was a general agreement regarding the need for more robust data collection structures to ensure compliance.

However, this frame is problematic for several reasons. Widening the aperture, by grouping all international activity as potential cause for suspecting that institutions were intentionally obfuscating foreign funds at their institution itself (at worst) or were negligent (at best) revealed a lack of understanding of the commitment to comprehensive internationalization at many U.S. HEIs (American Council on Education, n.d.). Yet, anyone working at the intersection of higher and international education will state that all engagements are not the same and just characterizing them by their lowest common denominator—that there was an international component—is reductionistic. As Weiss and Gruber (1984) noted, the field of education in the U.S. context is an example *par excellence* of a fragmented policy arena and that the lack of robust reporting to the federal government could be explained by the decentralized nature of data collection at the local level.

Second, in framing universities as being generally negligent, DED did not acknowledge the lack of guidance it failed to provide in Section 117's 30+ year history to help ensure and inform HEI compliance. Again, Weiss and Gruber (1984) observe that the lack of (robust) compliance may frequently be attributed to "the absence of effective administrative links among agencies and governments working in the same arena… the administrative links tend to be too coercive to use or too weak to be effective" (p. 227). While DED seemed to acknowledge the need for more coercive mechanisms to be ensure more effective oversight by changing the punishment for being non-compliant from civil to criminal, there was no dialogue or acknowledgement of its own ineffectiveness of historic de facto disinterest in providing more robust guidance regarding HEA 117.

Third, DED was using the Paperwork Reduction Act as a way of making changes to Section 117 and stated that it was unclear why HEIs were not compliant with the regulation given how easy it was to collect the data once the

investigations were initiated. Again, an alternative explanation for the perceived lack of reporting (instead of the "university as a negligent actor" frame) could be in the inherently aforementioned fragmented nature of the education sector in the US. In a study on K–12 school reporting to the federal government, Weiss and Gruber (1984) noted that "Much information is difficult to pull together from the scattered, hidden recesses where it resides. When confronted with a new form, many school districts, large and small, rely on existing information produced for internal use" (p. 233), which could be extended to many HEIs as well.

Regarding the second frame—malign and foreign influence referring specifically and (almost) singularly to China—I am not arguing that there are no real and present concerns regarding technology and knowledge transfer, along with cybersecurity risks. The bipartisan support regarding increasing U.S. economic and technological competitiveness against China demonstrates the persuasiveness of this particular frame. However, as Dollar and Hass (2021) noted, "China is not purely a partner, competitor, or challenger: it is all of them at once." This type of understanding requires a more nuanced approach and collaboration with HEIs to determine clearer terms of engagement, which many HEIs have been working to do, alongside numerous federal agencies.

The third frame could be seen as a subset of the second frame—by utilizing racist language which reflected neo-racist ideologies (Lee, 2021), it was building out the broader frame of China as a malign influence and threat by then expanding that to the pandemic and individuals. As noted earlier, the increased HEA 117 enforcement was part of the Trump administration's whole of government strategy to specifically "protect" the United States from China. Unsurprisingly as seen in Figures 3 and 4, the preponderance of DED's information requests was focused on Chinese institutions and Chinese nationals. Keeping in mind that HEA 117 was intended to focus on foreign nationals, DED's inclusion of Chinese Americans and Chinese-American owned enterprises reveals a blatant and brazen overextension of the regulation and reinforces the criticism that numerous individuals and organizations have raised regarding the continued prevalence of anti-Chinese and anti-Asian sentiment in the U.S. government (*Xiaoxing Xi, et al. v. Andrew Haugen, et al.*, 2022).

Language like the "Chinese coronavirus pandemic" has been widely decried by numerous civil liberties groups and reflected a long history of "Othering" Asians and Asian Americans in the United States (Holt et al., 2022). While this frame was more limited across the notices of investigation and also situated against the backdrop of rising discrimination toward people of Asian descent during the global COVID-19 pandemic, it does demonstrate what Gilardi et al. (2021) posited regarding how frames or frame storylines change over time and how those shifts may or may not then ultimately impact policy implementation discourses as well as agenda setting later in the future.

Finally, the fourth topic that emerged from the notices was in relation to institutional liability and individual responsibility. I propose that this topic is illustrative of DED's attempt to concomitantly investigate these HEIs while also fishing for the empirical information they need to understand how to sharpen their issue frames for further action. In this sense, this fourth topic was not so much a frame as it was an intention. Again, Weiss and Gruber (1984) provide insight into this, observing that "[p]olicymakers are often more interested in knowledge that increases their control over others than in knowledge that informs or enlightens them" (p. 226). However, to do this, "federal officials… must have knowledge about local circumstances to guide their efforts. But they have no direct access to knowledge about local circumstances and must therefore ask local and state education officials to provide the information they want" (p. 232). In the case of HEIs, this then requires them to request that information from local and state institutions. This tension between the first frame—characterizing universities as negligent—and the need to have data that supports this frame that is constrained by a federalist structure, then explains this tension reflected in almost all of the notices of investigation.

However, this frame casts light onto some problematic issues. Given the decentralized data structure and governance of institutions, DED could have adopted a learning or dialogic stance toward the local institutional contexts. However, even when eliciting feedback, this did not characterize the nature of the interactions. For example, while DED held the required public comments period, issues raised by HEIs and different affiliated professional organizations were

frequently dismissed and/or elicited responses that did not necessarily correspond to the questions asked. Not only did DED not meaningfully engage key constituencies before starting its enforcement process but it also generally demonstrated a lack of familiarity with how international engagement is structured on university campuses. This is to say, again, a characteristic of the U.S. universities broadly—and R1 institutions specifically—is that they are extremely decentralized entities. The idea that different parts of an R1 institution would be unfamiliar with international engagement in other parts of the same institution is unsurprising. This is not to say that this is a good characteristic of U.S. institutions; on the contrary, anyone working in international education could articulate numerous reasons why campuses should engage in more robust data collection. However, to attribute this to universities engaging in behavior that is intentionally and strategically malicious, as noted by DED (2021), that seemingly "leading institutions and industry associations are committed to expanding and deepening financial and operational cooperation with malign foreign sources such as China and Qatar" demonstrates a lack of awareness of how U.S. HEIs are fundamentally organized (*Letter to Chairman Rob Portman*, 2021).

Conclusion

In 2019, the U.S. DED began increased enforcement of HEA Section 117, which provides instructions for institutional reporting regarding foreign gifts and contracts, by submitting an amendment under the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995. What is striking about the information request was how DED characterized not only international engagement that could exemplify potential malign and/or undue foreign influence but who (or what actors) were potentially involved. Not only were foreign governments characterized as malign, but DED's approach toward enforcement signaled that U.S. universities themselves were bad faith actors as seen in their international engagement.

In one sense, rather than seeing more recent iterations of the intersection between politics and education as new or emergent, these events should be seen considering the constant focus and concern with foreign influence in the U.S. throughout the 20th century. This is particularly evident when looking at the

almost massification of higher education with the passing of the G.I. Bill (War Department, 1944) and the acceleration of the space race and the Cold War with the passing of the National Defense Education Act (U.S. Congress, 1958). It is important then that claims that the protectionist discourses that have (re)emerged in political discourse are somehow novel in relation to a more altruistic history should themselves be problematized (Lee, 2021). Yet, as Rumbley et al. (2021) noted, "[a]lthough internationalization has been achieving greater prominence in education policy development across the global throughout the last decade, the coronavirus pandemic, nationalism, and international tensions are potential setbacks" (p. 19). In this way, if we accept that political protectionism has been latent in the U.S. higher education-related policies and political discourse, the question then becomes, is there something novel about this newest iteration? In this sense, while not new, it is clear that contemporary geopolitics and phenomena are undoubtedly rupturing the norms and assumptions around the "balance" between internationalization and globalization and nationalist protectionism.

Using an issue definition/framing lens to examine the operationalization of HEA Section 117 provides some insight in seeing how DED was essentially message testing in real time to see which frames were more or less effective in persuading different decision-makers regarding a more parochial interpretation of the regulation. Although outside the scope of this article, it is worth noting that frames one and two have also been utilized in similar legislation at the state level. For example, in the Florida state legislature, the Foreign Influence Bill (2021) was passed, which speaks to the persuasiveness of those frames from a policy diffusion perspective. Relatedly, the continued scrutiny regarding foreign influence as demonstrated in a letter to Secretary of Education Miguel Cardona (2021) and the incorporation of HEA 117 language into new proposed legislation (America COMPETES Act, The, 2022; Higher Education Act, 2021) makes it clear that frames one and two were particularly effective in persuading different decision-makers as well. In a sense, while HEA 117 did not substantively change as a result of these investigations, the framings have been more and less effective in defining the problems. As Weiss (1989) noted:

Problem definition creates language for talking about problems and non-problems that draws attention to some features of social life at the expense of others, locates responsibility for problems, putting some groups on the defensive and others on the offensive, widens and deepens public or elite interest in particular social phenomena, and mobilizes political participation around issues or symbols highlighted by the problem definition. (p. 115)

This article aims to contribute to emerging scholarship examining the regulatory architecture in the United States which structures different facets of international education (Crumley-Effinger, 2021; Lee, 2021). It is also an initial attempt to explore how "national power can surface in international higher education policy and practices" (Lee, 2021, p. 13) and is operationalized through the different phases of policy diffusion, starting with issue framing and definition. From a methodological standpoint, DHA was utilized in a limited fashion because it does fundamentally require comparing texts and artefacts of a variety of times and this article was limited by its focus on the one set of texts—the notices of investigation. However, the future expansion of this work will focus on comparing across the artefacts produced during this time to examine the interaction between the frames and which frames could be seen as more effective in which domains. Though this article is limited by the narrowness of its focus, future research using a policy diffusion framework could also then help elucidate how policy diffusion is also taking place outside the United States as countries like Singapore and Australia, as well as regions like European Union have also been adopting similar types of legislation around foreign influence.

For international education practitioners and administrators, this initial examination of the enforcement of HEA Section 117 raises concerns regarding the potential such approaches may have in disincentivizing HEIs from engaging internationally teaching, learning and research because of the potential punitive misconstruing of that engagement by DED. In particular, given the ongoing bipartisan support for anti-China regulations and greater oversight of HE international engagement, it is critical for international education scholar-practitioners to develop this body of scholarship around the operationalization

and oversight of international education. By examining how existing regulations like HEA 117 are being operationalized and what similar laws are emerging, scholar-practitioners need to engage to ensure that higher education voices are represented in these discussions and engaging in making the case for why the U.S. HEIs should and could be engaging in comprehensive internationalization in ways that do not undermine the interests of the U.S. government.

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The Nexus of Public Diplomacy, Soft Power, and National Security: A Comparative Study of International Education in the U.S. and Canada

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Abstract

This paper examines how international education (IE), as an important tool of public diplomacy (PD) and soft power (SP), faces unique challenges as issues of national security (NS) become more prominent in this era of new geopolitics. It presents a model to understand the relationship between PD, SP and NS and then applies this model to a comparative study. The contrasting histories, approaches and perspectives of IE as it operates as a component of foreign policy and at the nexus of PD, SP and NS in both the U.S. and Canada are analysed. The paper concludes with three challenges faced by IE in the contemporary context: first, the diminishing role of the university as a distinct and valued non-state actor; second, the weakening of foreign policy as an outward looking, distinctly international investment; and third, the problem with choosing isolation over engagement as a strategy.

Introduction

The contemporary global political landscape is turbulent – characterized by the rise of Asia opposed by western hegemony, the relative transition of power from West to East, and the increased participation

of non-state actors in politics and policymaking (Falk, 2012; Hill & Beadle, 2014; Ikenberry, 2018; Khanna, 2019). This is resulting in the emergence of an *era of new geopolitics,* premised on the primacy of soft power criteria of influence and status, not to mention distinct shifts in global power structures and relations (Falk, 2012). Embedded in this are two critical considerations: the changing nature of conflict and security, and the creation of new rules of engagement, particularly in foreign policy and diplomacy.

In this era of new geopolitics, we argue that international education (IE) as an important tool of public diplomacy (PD) and soft power (SP) faces unique challenges. We define IE as a wide range of "activities that link people, educational institutions [and academic/research programs] across national boundaries..." (Farquhar, 2001, p. 1). Our particular perspective on IE is focused on its *engagement* as an important PD and SP tool by governments to fulfill their foreign policy objectives. IE as a tool of PD and SP encompasses exchanges, research partnerships, study abroad programs, virtual exchanges, foreign campuses and degree-seeking international students, among other forms of higher education engagement. For the purposes of our paper, we use IE as an umbrella term that is more expansive but encompasses exchanges, a term often used in PD literature.

This paper examines how IE as PD and SP is increasingly challenged as issues of national security (NS) become more prominent in this era of new geopolitics. There are growing concerns that IE exposes universities as "vulnerable" knowledge producers, to malign actors and malicious intents of espionage and theft, in this current geopolitical climate (Lee, 2019; Long et al., 2021). Rising concerns over national security are shifting governments' perception of IE; impacting IE as a tool of PD and SP. This paper thus offers a new perspective in examining IE as it operates at the nexus of PD, SP, and NS. While there is an ever-growing body of literature devoted to public diplomacy (PD), soft power (SP) and national security (NS), there is insufficient scholarship on IE as a tool of PD/SP vis-à-vis NS. The contemporary context makes this a critical subject of study as the precarious relationship between IE, PD, SP and NS has major implications for the future of IE, in terms of its rationales, approach and impact on university-government relations.

To better analyze the context-dependent nature of this nexus as well as our proposed framework, this paper presents a comparative case study of the U.S. and Canada. The two countries provide interesting comparators; sharing several similarities along political structures and values, yet contrasting histories, approaches and perspectives when it comes to IE as PD, SP, and NS. Indeed, their foreign policy is shaped by their place in the world and relationship to it, as well as their unique bilateral relationship as neighbors and close allies. Our paper begins with an outline of our conceptual framework, followed by a reporting of findings from our comparative study, and concludes with our analysis and understanding of the implications on IE as a tool for PD/SP, under increased concerns for NS, in this era of new geopolitics.

Conceptual Framework & Model

SP has been a critical asset for foreign policy engagements of states. Deriving from "the attractiveness of a country's culture, political ideals and policies…" (Nye, 2004, p. 4), SP is defined as the "ability of a state to affect others to obtain preferred outcomes by co-optive means of framing agendas, persuasion, and positive attraction" (Nye, 2013, p. 565).

Higher education has been recognized as a crucial SP tool to heighten the attractiveness of a given country or culture in world politics (Altbach & Peterson, 2015; Byne & Hall, 2014; Nye, 2004, 2005, 2007). IE, particularly the education of international students is frequently identified as a strong SP resource because as an "international student returns to his or her native country and takes over vital positions in the public or private sector, the individual will eventually affect his or her country's trajectory and, in turn, [the host country's] foreign policy" (Mai, 2015, para. 3).

PD is a political instrument and "a tool that is used by states, associations of states, and non-state actors to understand cultures, attitudes, and behaviors, build and manage relationships, and influence opinions" (Gregory, 2008). While SP and PD are not one and the same (Hayden, 2012), they are interrelated concepts. Nye (2013) argues that PD is one of the most effective ways for states to wield soft power. SP is intrinsically linked to a country's PD strategy and its behavior, domestically and internationally.

IE has arguably been a tool of PD well before its emergence as a concept or practice in foreign policy or international relations. Since World War II, IE has been particularly prevalent in bilateral and international academic exchanges – a prime example being the Fulbright program. The decades that followed, particularly the early years of the Cold War, saw heightened investments in higher education programs in Area Studies, including American and Canadian Studies – all backed by key government investments. IE as a tool of PD was thus developed by the state and operationalized by and at universities as autonomous institutions in order to build relationships, promote dialogue, and cultivate long-term impact.

Given that the practice of PD is commonly associated with the notion of SP, and IE is both an instrument of SP and PD, in this paper, we do not distinguish between SP and PD, but rather use the concepts as similar/comparable. Foreign policy can be defined as "the sum of official external relations conducted by an independent actor (usually a state) in international relations" (Hill, 2003, p. 3). Since our focus is on IE as an instrument of SP/PD to achieve foreign policy objectives, and as foreign policy primarily lies in the domain of federal/national governments, our study is state-centric. We closely examine the role of the respective federal ministries/departments in both the U.S. and Canada responsible for foreign policy and their engagement, including shifts over time in IE.

NS refers to the security and defense of the state and is centered on "the capacity to control domestic and foreign conditions that the state believes necessary to enjoy its own self-determination or autonomy, prosperity, and wellbeing" (Romm, 1993, p. 5). Scholars have examined the relationship between NS and PD (Snow, 2017; Wiseman, 2019) and warned about the challenges of an overall shift towards the militarization of PD as it becomes increasingly used in the service of NS. Scholars such as Ruther (2002), Snow (2008) and Cull (2020) have addressed how investment in IE, particular in the case of the U.S., has always integrated state objectives of NS. However, as mentioned earlier, there is insufficient scholarship examining *how IE operates at the nexus of PD/SP and NS*, given heightened investments in NS in this era of new geopolitics.

We acknowledge that there are no standardized definitions for SP, PD and NS and that these terms have no unanimous consensus among scholars. However, our selected definitions are state-centric in nature, and as such best suit our research focus. Based on our review of literature, interviews conducted and our data analysis, we propose a conceptual framework that maps the relationship between PS, SP, and NS. Our model has five vectors (see *Figure 1*). The idea behind these non-mutually exclusive vectors is they map the non-linear, and rather complex relationships between NS and PD/SP.

Figure 1: National Security and its Relationship with Soft Power and Public Diplomacy

This model will be applied in our analysis to understand the relationship between IE, PD/SP and NS.

Below, we outline the five vectors to map this relationship:

1. PD/SP and NS as Conflictual: In this scenario, PD remains an open instrument of statecraft, where successful outcomes are driven by perceived believability and trust. In contrast, military and intelligence instruments of statecraft continue to use both overt and covert forms of influence that rely on deception, and black and grey propaganda. We are cognizant that they are both tools of statecraft that are not mutually exclusive, but in this scenario, firewalls of protection across the information spectrum often break down and influence the ability of PD to successfully function (Gregory, 2008). This push and pull dynamic essentially dilutes the efficacy of PD, and risks rendering its programs/tools at best a shill or at worst obsolete or illegitimate.

2. PD/SP as Securitized by NS: Unlike the conflictual scenario above, this scenario considers instances when for example post 9/11, there is a turning point where PD is reconfigured to be in the service of NS. In this sense, this vector is distinctly different from the first. PD traditionally an open-sourced diplomacy-to-publics outreach efforts are directed by military planners inside the Department of Defense, diluting its power (financially, persuasively) inside the Department of State (Snow, 2017). PD in effect is in decline as SP, with NS becomes the default and more pressing concern (Wiseman, 2015).

3. PD/SP and NS as Complementary: This scenario envisions a future where a state's SP will be understood with relation to a degree of reputational security – the degree of safety accruing to a nation state that proceeds from being known by citizens of other nations (Cull, 2018) – a critical dimension of NS. In other words, SP and NS are understood as mutually beneficial tools of

statecraft. NS here becomes a part of the SP apparatus and SP becomes an essential component of (advancing) NS interests (Cull, 2018).

4. PD/SP and NS as Smart power: In this scenario, unlike the complementary vector, smart power goes beyond reputational security and relies on a combination of hard and SP. In other words, states cannot rely strictly on SP strategies—using attraction to preference outcomes—or entirely on hard power—using coercion, threat of force, payment—to thwart outcomes. There is a growing recognition that in an era of new geopolitics a combination of hard, and SP strategies are required. Both sources are needed to 'get smart' (Nye, 2009) in foreign policy. This approach underscores the critical need for both strong military and simultaneously investments in alliances, partnerships, and institutions at all levels to assert legitimacy and expand influence (Armitage & Nye, 2007).

5. NS as Engaged/Integrated PD/SP: In this scenario states develop a SP strategy with a two-pronged approach that considers both the projection and reception of SP. In other words, just as a state creates a strategy to project its SP or cultivate it through PD initiatives, it also takes into serious account the nature of the messages and initiatives that it will receive from other projecting states. Here there is appreciation that in an era of new geopolitics, SP projection is no longer monopolized by the Global North and that there has to be reception of SP projections from others to the Global North (Hayden, 2012; Nye, 2013, Trilokekar et al., 2021).

There are two primary uses for this conceptual model that go hand-in-hand: understanding the relationship between NS and PD/SP in relation to IE, and mapping the temporal evolution of said relationship, focusing on its historical evolution as well as its possible future(s). We will demonstrate these features of the model in our comparative analysis.

Research Questions and Methodology

We were interested in three research questions:

1. What is the relationship between IE as PD/SP and NS in the U.S. and Canada?
2. How have new geopolitics shifted this relationship?
3. What are the implications for IE as a tool for PD/SP in the context of new geopolitics?

This study employs a qualitative comparative case study methodology, using the U.S. and Canada as the two cases to bolster what Bartlett and Vavrus (2019) recommend, theoretical generalizability. The U.S. and Canada offer interesting comparisons given their similarities as federal democratic states. In both countries, education is the primary responsibility of the state/province and university-government relations are defined by principles of institutional autonomy and academic freedom. Both countries initiated IE programs post World War II as aspects of their respective foreign policy priorities. In both countries, IE enhances SP. The U.S. still retains the largest global market share of international students and is home to the largest highly ranked universities, while Canada is considered among the fastest growing popular destinations, in comparison to its competitors. These base line similarities enable a deeper contextual analysis of the nexus between IE, SP/PD and NS and map shifts in these relationships as an outcome of new geopolitics (Bray et al., 2007).

We relied on Gilboa (2008) to guide us through comparative research on PD; he recommends following George's (1979) advice of pursuing a "structured focused comparison" (p. 72) by simultaneously comparing the two cases (Bray et al., 2007) in terms of time range (post WWII- current period 2021) and government involvement (in context of foreign policy, PD/SP and NS). This comparison was based on a literature review including journal articles, newsletters, institutional and organizational websites that reflected scholarly/academic, policy and practitioner resources on IE in both countries. In addition, targeted semi-structured interviews were conducted to verify our analysis and understand the issues from a multi stakeholder perspective (Creswell, 2007). A potential list of thirty interviewees with scholars in the PD field, IE policy makers and advocates in government and non-government organizations and journalists focused on IE coverage in both countries was established. After securing approval from the university's research ethics committee, twenty interviews were conducted (US: 11; C: 7: US & C: 2). Interviews typically lasted for 60 minutes, were conducted on zoom, recorded and transcribed. To maintain strict confidentiality, the identities of the individual interviewed and their affiliations are not revealed; IE involves a fairly small and discrete community and therefore anonymity in data reporting is of utmost importance. Interview data has been selectively incorporated to substantiate our findings and analysis.

Research Findings

The following four dimensions are used to assist us with a 'focused structured comparison' of the two cases in terms of time range and government involvement:

1. International Education and its link to Foreign Policy
2. International Education as a tool of Public Diplomacy and Soft Power
3. International Education and its Relationship to National Security
4. International Education in Response to New Geopolitics

1. International Education and its Link to Foreign Policy

In both countries, IE is directly linked to foreign policy, as it is the Department of State (within it the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs) in the U.S. and Global Affairs Canada (within it the International Education Division) that have primary responsibility for IE at the federal level, albeit they are not the sole federal departments engaged in IE. Both countries initiated formalized IE programs post-WWII as components of their respective foreign policy priorities, with the Cold War and anti-communism providing the rationale.

United States

The "birth" of IE (McAllister-Grande, 2008, p. 4; Campbell, 2005) is linked to Senator, J. William Fulbright's vision of the "promotion of international good will through the exchange of students in the fields of education, culture and science" (Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, n.d.b, para. 3). He envisioned educational exchanges as producing cosmopolitan peacemakers and "as persons equipped and willing to deal with conflict or conflict-producing situations on the basis of an informed determination to solve them peacefully (Fulbright, 1976, as cited in Snow, 2021, p. 2). President Kennedy (1961-63) endorsed this rationale through the Fulbright Hays Act (1961). The Bureau of Educational and Cultural

Affairs (1960), later the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (1960) remains within the Department of State (DOS) endorsing this same mission (see, Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, n.d.a).

Scholars have debated the consistency with which the U.S. federal government has invested and kept alive this broader commitment to mutual understanding and peace through educational exchanges (Ruther, 2002; Snow, 2008; Veerasamy, 2021). In general, Republican presidents have been less interested in investments in IE with the long-term goal of securing peace and understanding while Democratic Presidents have generally supported investing in IE to meet America's foreign policy objectives. IE serves as an important foreign policy asset. As an interviewee describes:

> it has been solidly supported, like the Fulbright program, an international education role for the US government in a very bipartisan way. Even in other times of bitter divisions along ideological lines, very few people have said well let's close our doors and end all government investment in exchanges. People on both sides of the aisle get the things it does…[IE] has no real enemies. And that is why it's support has been pretty good independent of who's in the White House.

Canada

Post WWII and in context of the Cold War, Canada directed its foreign policy to building a strong reputation as a middle power committed to peace building (Potter, 2009). Unlike the U.S., Canada did not directly invest in IE as a tool linked to its foreign policy. Although a result of its foreign policy orientation, IE was supported in Canada indirectly and as part of its overseas development assistance (ODA) programs in the developing world. ODA engaged Canada's educational sector by deploying technical assistance personnel including faculty and students to developing countries and hosting students from developing countries on Canadian campuses (Bergfalk, n.d.; Bond & Lemasson, 1999).

Canada's commitment to ODA declined considerably in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Parallel to this shift, was an increasing 'trade creep' in Canadian foreign policy when trade was considered, "the brightest face of Canada's internationalism" (Cohen, 2003, p. 109). This shift in foreign policy directly impacted IE as there was growing sentiment that Canada could no longer afford educating international students because as Cohen (2003) states, "foreign policy had become a matter of what Canada could afford" (p. 83). As confirmed by an interviewee:

> I compare it to what we used to have. We don't leverage that toolkit in the way that we used to. It has become narrower; it has become much more granular. And I think that has been a disservice because I think it is through those kind of tools…that we were really able to broaden the Canadian footprint globally.

IE became directly linked to Canada's trade policy; with Canada's first IE policy (2014-2019) focused on the marketing of Canadian higher education and the recruitment and retention of international students. IE in Canada lost links with its ODA origins and its once weak investments in exchanges and scholarship programs were further severed. As one interviewee confirmed: "Canada has really struggled to get to scale in terms of thinking about international education as a tool of soft power."

2. International Education as a Tool of Public Diplomacy and Soft Power

United States

The Fulbright Program is overseen by the ECA, which is in the Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs branch in the U.S. State Department (U.S. Department of State, n.d.), clearly drawing the relationship between IE and PD. Certainly the Fulbright program does have a PD rationale built into its DNA, because as Snow (1992) and Bochner (1981) suggest, educational exchanges are seen as critical to building people to people diplomacy. It is because there is recognition of IE as a key tool for PD that select U.S. governments have made targeted investments in educational exchanges at critical junctures in international relations. Most noticeably under President Bush post 9/11, capitalizing on the "why do they hate us?" sentiment (as cited in Campbell, 2005, p. 142), a spotlight was created on the need and role of PD in fighting terrorism. This begs the question: does U.S. invest in IE as PD only in critical junctures in their foreign policy?

Investments in PD enhance U.S. SP, and America's higher education yields substantial SP; a well-recognized reality given that the "U.S. boasts the highest number of top universities in the world, attracts the largest number of international students, and contributes significantly to academic research" (McClory, 2017, p. 54). The link between PD, SP and foreign policy is made explicit when one notes that U.S. SP fell from first place in 2016 to fifth place in 2019, largely as a result of what Bista (2018) identifies as "tectonic shifts in the U.S. political and policy environments" (p. 3) under the Trump administration. Trump policies reversed the earlier trend of international student flows to the U.S. and decreased its attractiveness as a destination of study/stay. The strength and fragility of SP i.e. the image of a nation's culture, value and attractiveness is directly linked to a state's PD and foreign policy.

Canada

The 1970's were the only period in Canadian history when the federal government invested in IE as a tool of PD; however, by and large there is no direct association between IE and PD in the Canadian context. During this brief period, DFAIT invested in the Canadian Studies Program Abroad (CSPA), referred to as the "crown jewel" (Potter, 2009, p. 129) to promote an understanding of Canada within academic institutions and through international scholars abroad. The program was especially valued because it promoted a less direct and intrusive approach; it did not challenge provincial jurisdictional authority over education nor university autonomy or academic freedom. These were important years; after this period, budgets for IE support were severely cut. An interviewee described the Canadian approach as:

> intermittent and under-leveraged. So intermittent in that from time-to-time various governments over the last 20 years have seen the potential value and have created for example scholarships schemes with the regional focus or with a particular bilateral focus. But they are often very much in the past, they were kind of spurred by upcoming bilateral visits or upcoming summits.

Interestingly, Canada's poor investment in PD has not translated into loss or weak SP. Canada is considered one "the [more] popular destination[s]" (Bhardwa, 2017) with its higher educational institutions witnessing an exponential growth in their international student population (El-Assal, 2020; She & Wotherspoon, 2013). While the Canadian government credits this growth to its investments in marketing campaigns and other promotional efforts, perhaps as Potter (2009) suggests Canada's "peace keeping myth" (p. 4), "its policy of multiculturalism projected an image to the world of a tolerant nation that would

welcome newcomers" and in many respects an image of a "model nation" (p. 5) has helped build and maintain its SP internationally, positively influencing IE while also enabling Canada's SP to be strengthened through IE.

3. International Education and its Relationship to National Security

United States

As Cull (2020) has observed the U.S. has always approached investment in IE and cultural relations with dual objectives of mutual support but also NS. According to Snow (2008), the Cold war paradigm provided the rationale for federal investment in Title VI and exchange programs. These IE programs are valued as national resources given their pragmatic and national defense rationale (Ruther, 2002, p. 124). An interviewee concurred:

> national security and foreign policy aren't seen as completely different from each other. They are not seen in the ways that some other governmental structures, they are seen as reflecting completely different poles of international relationship. And the exercise of power or military or cultural, or economic and other are all interwoven. And that is seen as a positive and not a negative in the US system.

It is important to note that while Republican presidents have not supported the broader goals of mutual understanding, under Republican presidents the NS rationale was further strengthened. An interviewee supported this observation:

> 100%. … we always do better with Republican administrations. Always. There is a number of, we've done lots of research on this to try to determine why. It all boils down to a couple of key factors. One Republican administrations tend to be more robust with security issues. So, if you go back to my argument that foreign policy security, public diplomacy are connected, I would naturally expect Republicans to be bigger spenders.

It is important to note that 9/11 reframed IE as a risk to NS, i.e. instead of IE strengthening N.S. it undermined N.S. Post 9/11, a new tracking system for international students was introduced (Campbell, 2005, p. 141). American post-secondary institutions were viewed with growing distrust, with Congress proposing highly invasive legislation to regulate/monitor international academic programs. There was concern of extreme government oversight of education with threats of federal funding being stripped from Title VI programs that do not serve national interests (McClennen, 2006). Eventually however, the rationale for NS eventually led to more targeted funding not withdrawal or cuts to educational exchanges. As an interviewee stated there was always

> an open question are we more secure in the long run by having people who could be our enemies here living and studying and worshiping among us. Or are we safer if we close the doors…And pretty much all of the years that the US has been doing these exchanges, we have tended to have an open doors policy and open doors approach and students from everywhere come here, our

universities welcomed that…. when governments made an investment, it's usually been for security reasons.

Canada

NS has never been a rationale for IE within the Canadian context until this current period of new geopolitics. It is important to note that when the U.S. introduced its Title VI programs, there was an interest in supporting similar programs at Canadian universities. The Canadian government rationalized its role in these proposed programs given its direct and immediate interest in meeting national needs; however, support from the federal government raised ethical issues of academic freedom as well as constitutional problems and were subsequently never implemented (Trilokekar, 2007). Within the Canadian context, such a direct role of the federal government in IE was considered inappropriate. In comparing Canada to the U.S. an interviewee states:

In the United States…security always trumps trade. In the United States security is always more important. It doesn't matter what the discussion, the first question you ask I,s what are the security implications. In Canada exactly the reverse is true. In any discussion we have the question is how will this impact our overall wellbeing. We are a trading nation dependent desperately for our collective wellbeing on selling some 70% of our goods and services abroad… So, I think in our case trade always trumps security.

Therefore in the case of Canada, managing risks, to ensure economic security is key, and in the Canadian context economic security is tightly associated with national security. IE is spoken of in context of risks associated with disingenuous international students threatening the integrity of Canada's immigration system and economic risk in context of the high concentration of international students in Canada from a handful of countries.

4. International Education in Response to New Geopolitics

United States

The bulk of recent policy shifts in IE are aimed at America's relationship with China. This relationship is fraught with contradictions given its quick pivot. Beginning with the normalization of relations in 1979, with "academic partnerships being a tool of rapprochement and a vehicle for soft diplomacy" (Fischer, 2021, para. 25) to Obama's active encouragement of educational exchanges/partnerships with China, there is now a fairly dramatic shift to "suspicion of China" and a rare "bipartisan agreement in Washington" to limit partnerships (Fischer, 2021, para. 30). Trump initiated restrictions on Chinese students and scholars (Fischer, 2019; Larmer, 2019), especially for those studying and conducting research in sensitive fields within STEM disciplines, or with current or past connections to "an entity in the PRC that implements or supports the PRC's military-civil fusion strategy," (NAFSA, 2021, para. 6). He eliminated the Fulbright in China and Hong Kong (Redden, 2020) in addition to closing several other academic exchanges (Williams, 2020). Trump's China Initiative resulted in arrests of visiting researchers and American academics for allegedly hiding their foreign ties (Long et al., 2021; Machida, 2010). Speaking of the Trump period as distinct, an interviewee said:

[there have always been] ebbs…because there were often other priorities or because, just a lack of necessary, a real commitment. But they weren't often hostile ebbs. So, I think that is one of the differences of the Trump era. That there was this sort of seeing of universities and colleges as kind of in an adversarial sense. And so, the international engagement, the skepticism of that, it was almost dovetailing, right? Because there is skepticism of higher education and the skepticism of international engagement or just global engagement broadly in that era of very nativist moment. So, I think you know it was almost just a perfect storm of that.

The bi-partisan support against China is evident in continued policies under the Biden administration. Most recently, the U.S. Senate passed a China competition bill that greatly increased disclosure requirements for contracts and donations received from overseas by higher educational institutions, creating new oversight role for the government. As per Fischer (2021), the bill includes a provision that could effectively give the U.S. government veto power over international academic agreements, which would be "detrimental to the safety or security of the United States" (para. 37). Institutions would have to screen foreign applicants for research positions. Also institutions that host Confucius Institutes (CI) would have their NSF and Education Department funding restricted (Hall-Martin, 2020); similar limits on Defense Department spending already triggered a wave of closures of CIs.

At the same time, Biden has attempted to set himself apart from the Trump administration. The U.S. Department of State and the U.S. Department of Education issued a joint statement titled, Reengaging the World to Make the United States Stronger at Home (U.S. Department of State, 2021). It speaks to IE as the link to strengthen relationships between current and future leaders and contribute to global peace and security while enhancing American prosperity and serving the interests of the American people. Speaking highly of the Statement, an interviewee said:

> It specifically lays out why is international education important to American security, American diplomacy and the subtext is also explaining why a lot of its lodged in the Department of State, our Foreign Ministry as opposed to the Ministry of Education. And it's because it does have a big role to play in how people define diplomacy today. So, it is a watershed to have a statement like this from any American government.

Secretary of State Antony Blinken called IE a "foreign-policy imperative", but it is not clear how the government plans to reconcile both objectives, keeping IE as an imperative while monitoring international exchanges that are deemed detrimental to NS concerns; especially given the large presence of Chinese students and scholars on U.S. campuses and the dense research collaborations between the U.S. and China. China is America's top collaborator in published scientific research. Reminiscent of the post 9/11 period, there is growing mistrust and suspicion of universities because "campus laboratories aren't just hot spots for international collaboration; they are seen by some U.S. officials as "battlegrounds" (Ellis & Gluckman, 2019, para. 28) with FBI labeling universities as 'naïve actors' (Douglass, 2021; Lee, 2019).

Canada

Brexit and Trumpism, marked key geopolitical shifts, a wave of growing nationalism, populism and anti-globalist and anti-immigrant sentiments across much of the world (Douglass, 2021). Canada's IE and SP benefitted from these geopolitical trends as it stood in opposition to these trends, openly welcoming international students and new immigrants. The policy shifts in U.S. immigration and with it changed perceptions of the U.S. created a so-called "Trump bump" leading to Canada's success in recruiting additional international students and attracting the "best and the brightest" of new immigrants (Paikin, 2019). While this aspect of geopolitics benefitted Canada, it soon found itself in a difficult situation with China.

Similar to the U.S., there were reports of Chinese scholars in Canada engaged in espionage (Leuprecht, 2018), effectively impacting Canadian national and economic stability. The government is concerned with Huawei's significant research investments in Canada's leading institutions (Green, 2018), with Canadian universities reported among the top 10 universities outside of China collaborating with the Chinese People's Liberation Army (Leuprecht, 2018). Large number of CIs are closed – largely because of controversies within academic and broader communities vs. directives by the government. There is concern over the perceived co-opting of Chinese faculty and researchers hosted on Canadian campuses to further Chinese interests (Quan, 2019) raising threats to free speech and academic freedom (Xu & Friesen, 2019). However, an interviewee stated that unlike the U.S.

> We don't discuss it in the more explicit and open ways in which our American counterparts do, right? Right in a way that allows them to embed this as an intrinsic part of how they do business and how they engage globally etc. We have never made it explicit. It's behind closed doors and a quiet corner here and a quiet corner there.

Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS) is reported to have conducted closed door meetings at Canadian research universities (see Berthiaume, 2019; Blackwell, 2019; Quan, 2019; Vanderklippe, 2018). Unlike the U.S. however, there is no open government directive, except for the Building Security Awareness in the Academic Community report published by Public Safety Canada (Public Safety Canada, 2020). This report while speaking to the importance of open and collaborative environments for Canadian academic institutions, also warns of threats to the integrity of research that may compromise NS or undercut Canada's research or economic competitive advantage. Rather than prescribe measures, it outlines best practices, general indicators of concern and contacts for institutions to report incidences; China is not mentioned specifically as the threat. Another interviewee elaborates:

> Foreign affairs and the security establishment have kind of gone around and done webinars for institutions…to [sensitize faculty] to this evolving of all environment and sensitivities. But no, there isn't a framework per se. I know that there is some work being done on some guidelines, some notional parameters. But I think everybody is treading very carefully given the risk aversion to really maintain anything in black and white terms.

Discussion & Policy Implications

The U.S. case reveals how IE is a tool for foreign policy and PD, and how NS provided a rationale for investment in IE. The contemporary understanding of IE as PD can be traced back to the end of WWII

Figure 2: The US IE Landscape in the 1990s: Traversing Complementarity and Smart Power
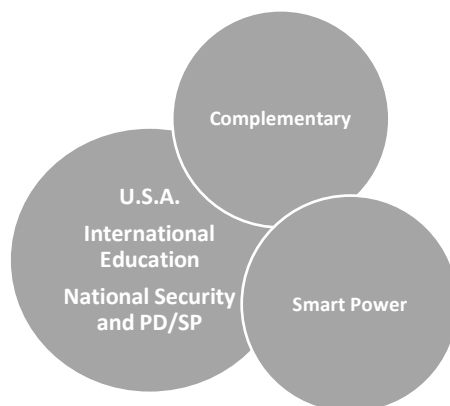
and the Cold War – particularly the development of cultural and exchange programs (Schneider, 2005) to promote dialogue and mutual understanding, and in turn expand the sphere of influence of the U.S. In applying the conceptual model above, we can draw on elements of a complementary relationship between PD and NS, because the former was effectively applied and used in service of the latter. But going a step further, we can see that the US historically also adopted a model of smart power, even if the vernacular was not commonplace at the time. Effectively, the US continued to invest in its military assets, built alliances, and invested in PD as a tool for advancing its NS interests.

By the end of the Cold War, the U.S. amassed significant SP reserves following decades of PD and IE initiatives and programs. Following the Cold War, a shift in messaging focused on sharing and spreading U.S. democratic and liberal values, especially to former Soviet republics. PD and IE were both seen as manifestations of SP – used to communicate America to the world and build appeal in the process. During the 1990s, IE as a revenue source was being widely recognized. Both 9/11 and the war on Afghanistan proved to be turning points – universities took on increased role in reporting and regulating international students and scholars, but also pathway dependency prevailed, and the relationship between NS and IE was recalibrated to one where post 9/11, IE helped secure American NS through additional, albeit more targeted PD initiatives. This is why we describe the U.S. during this period as one traversing complementarity and smart power (*as shown in figure 2*).

We argue that post Trump, and under Biden, there is shift from earlier path dependency. Similar to the post 9/11 period, there are concerns of IE as a risk to NS and questions about the university's credibility (under Trump) and naivety (under Biden); however there is a major difference. In spite of the important position taken through the Joint Statement to reaffirm IE as PD, the Biden administration had not initially revoked Trump's *China Initiative*, but instead introduced the *China Competition Bill*. Also the earlier regulations introduced post 9/11 concerned immigration processes, the purview of the federal government; current regulations aim to direct and control institutional behavior in IE by regulating partnerships; the purview of universities. Also these policies suggest a shift in the discourse on IE as NS; IE no more

Figure 3: Post 9/11 Move in the US towards a Conflictual Relationship between PD/SP and NS

enhances NS rather because it increases risk to NS, governments have legitimate authority to increase regulation and universities must comply as it is a matter of securing national interest. An interviewee warns:

> I mean in legislation that passed the Senate over the summer [2020], … there was a provision that would essentially give the US government … the ability to veto some academic partnerships. And so, I think the concern is sort of that even if there is some legitimacy at the root of the critiques of international collaboration that the response is going to go too far.

Could this be temporary and will the current period, eventually lead to a renewed investment in PD as was done post 9/11? It is difficult to predict because as an interviewee confirms:

> it is still a live issue…And I think it's going to inevitably complicate the way that universities interact with their Chinese counterparts and all countries…because they are all kind of concerned about this kind of government encroachment on really, I think on university research mainly and international collaboration.

While it is difficult to predict, based on our model, we suggest that the U.S. is now moving towards a more conflictual position between PD/SP and NS, but perhaps more importantly, one that represents a heavier securitization of PD with troublesome consequences for policy (as shown in figure three).

The Canadian experience is starkly different. Investments in ODA in the 1960s and the development of Canadian Studies in the 1960s and 1970s promoted Canada and built lasting international relationships, however these initiatives were significantly smaller in scale. IE in the 1980's and the 1990's became an activity formally linked to Canadian trade – this economic shift can be traced to the federal government's investment in the recruitment of international students. Another shift in the 1990s led IE to

be viewed as an immigration tool for workforce and population growth. IE was thus seen as an economic tool rather than a tool to secure political or security interest. In the Canadian case, PD and IE in Canada are loosely interlinked, but they cannot be historically mapped in the conceptual model used above because they were detached from NS, and their link to foreign policy was exclusively a part of the trade and immigration apparatuses.

In the present context, however, NS has entered the discourse on IE in Canada. We see the same concerns as in the U.S. when it comes to the vulnerability of IE in exposing Canada to undue risks, including theft, espionage and discussions around increased regulation of the university sector when it comes to academic/research partnerships with China. An interviewee explains:

> It will be very easy for Canada just to roll over and follow the American lead. And to date I have been encouraged that there is more robust conversation and there has been some pushback. But there are tendencies. We are allies of the United States. Our defense depends on the United States. Our security depends on the United States. And so, at the same time over the decades, we played a useful role for the United States being able to do things that they themselves can't do. So, there's that.

Unlike the U.S., the Canadian government has to date steered away from developing and/or imposing regulations on universities. An interviewee clarifies

> [Canada has] Not yet. Yet is the big word [moved in this direction]… And that has been part of it is how much do you want to draw attention to this because there is potentially risk that comes, especially to Canada US relationship seeing the kind of decisive steps that have been taken in the US to regulate, to give direction. And none of our institutions want to end up in that situation… They are going to have an impact on how we operate. And the other part of this is I'm fearful that they are going to become precedent setting. And so, this might be one of the more extreme examples where we are going to have to navigate complexity…[So] I agree with you that what happens with China is going to have an impact on international education going forward.

While there are concerns that the government may move in this direction, especially as it faces pressures to mirror policies adopted by its Western allies; there are also expressions of a realignment of foreign policy with Canada adopting a 4Cs approach (coexist, compete, co-operate and challenge) in how it deals with China as a maligned force (Smith, 2021). Canada's position illustrates greater caution. Unlike the U.S. it is not a super power and as such is heavily reliant on international trade; therefore, it has to take a more practical approach in accepting geopolitical power shifts. Also, IE for Canada has become its life line for institutional funding and recruitment of future immigrants; and while it cannot openly contest its closest ally, the U.S., it has to also cautiously carve its own unique position in its international relations. Canada's approach is described by an interviewee:

> Both Canada and China have done a really admirable and respectful job of keeping the international education conversation distinct from other bilateral challenges. And that's important. And I think also you know it is important that our government knows, and all players know is that

Canada's universities have been involved with China for over 120 years now actually. And so, there is some deep expertise there that can be drawn on to help navigate these relationships. And that expertise has been developed through international education and international exchange. We've got to keep pathways open for conversation and dialogue. And I think there is a healthy respect for that.

Therefore in this particular context, we place Canada in and around the complementary vector, with a growing concern for making IE work in context of growing NS concerns, but also inching towards engaged/integrated soft power, given it is not a hegemon and/or super power and its more practical approach encourages it to work with another growing super power. We surmise that given its geopolitical positioning, its foreign policy and minimal investment in PD, its contrasting objectives to the US, Canada has followed a different trajectory, see figure 4, as far as PD/SP, NS and IE go.

It is clear that contexts differ greatly between the two countries to sufficiently impact their investment in IE in relation to foreign policy and to PD/SP and NS. However, the current context is a shifting landscape and concerns over IE in context of NS, especially in relation to China, have very similar undertones in both countries. The contemporary shift in perception of IE as linked to NS is instructive in raising three key challenges for the future of IE as a tool for PD/SP. These challenges include:

1. The diminishing role of the university as a distinct and valued non-state actor.

IE is commonly acknowledged as one of the most powerful and long lasting PD tools for mutual understanding and trust-building (Scott-Smith, 2008, as cited by Snow, 2021; Machida, 2010). However, what is most important to note is that IE is well respected and valued because it is built on a model of

Figure 4: Canada Traversing Complementarity between NS/IE, and Developing an Engaged SP Strategy
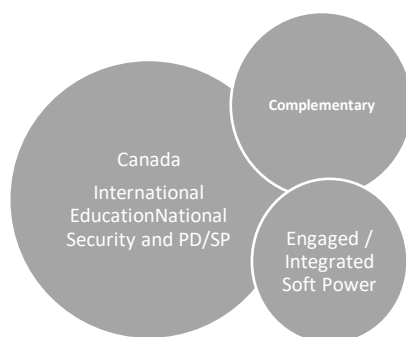
partnership between a state and a non-state actor, where as a non-state actor, universities maintain an arm's length relationship with the government. It is the nature of this relationship that enables universities to earn the respect and trust of national and international communities. Speaking of the Fulbright, an interview stated: "[it is] probably the most recognizable international exchange program in the world. We have successfully managed to operate above the political fray. And I think we add value in that we end up focusing on opportunities and not politics." As another interviewee stated:

> Where things might be complicated politically, education can still cut through all of that in a very soft, kind of soft diplomacy standpoint. It can still allow us to quietly maintain relationships and build people to people ties even when things are tough….it allows us to still operate under the radar.

Undoubtedly, universities, work within not outside government policy. Indeed, as Marginson (2019) states, "when government sneezes then universities catch cold". However, in both the U.S. and Canada, universities are founded on principles of institutional autonomy and academic freedom that enable them to work with their counterparts despite international tensions. In the current context however, governments are pushing towards setting the rules of international academic engagement (Friesen, 2021, para. 24), claiming in both countries that the university sector is naïve, at times even accusing universities as subversive or anti-constitutional; this is highly problematic. Perhaps Marginson (2019) is right when he suggests that "the dangers to academic freedom in the West posed by Chinese party-state activity might be equaled or exceeded by the dangers to academic freedom in the West posed by Western security agendas" (para. 49). Speaking of the Canadian context, an interviewee confirms:

> I think we are going to see probably more regulation. Something more potentially more prescriptive which is concerning because I think the luxury that our institutions have been afforded up to now as I mentioned being these kind of non-state international actors is they have had tremendous, they set their own foreign policy… But I think we are increasingly going to see those efforts to intervene. And not just in the research area. In all areas… So, I think we are in for tough times ahead.

2. The weakening of foreign policy as an outward looking, distinctly international investment

As Douglass (2021) illustrates, there has been rise of nationalism across several states, fueled by wave of rising populism and protectionist ideologies that speak against internationalization, migration and ultimately IE. Lee (2019) states, "in the past year especially, numerous federal proposals and governmental or organizational policies in the United States, United Kingdom and Australia have made clear that internationalization as a goal in itself is to be secondary to the country's global advancement and security interests" (para. 1), promoting a kind of an exclusionary nationalism. NS interests have thrust the state and protection of its interests as priority. Furthermore, global interests are viewed as hostile to the interests of the state, setting up this dichotomous hierarchy between the two, often subsuming international interests under national interests. Biden has attempted to reverse Trump's populist policies, however the priority given to national interests prevails. As an interviewee forewarns:

> I think my biggest fear is closure…[that] everyone moves to a let's focus on our own house and pay less attention to the rest of the world. I think that has really significant implication in terms of…equity and diversity. I think it has significant implications in terms of capacity building. And I think it even has security implications because one of the values of international education it allows us to see nations as people and not as policies.

Canada is an interesting case because it has not gone down the road of heightened nationalism, anti-immigration and anti IE. However, it has had its own Canada First approach. IE is directly linked to Canada's needs and has value exclusively in context of the benefits it brings to the Canadian state. The rhetoric of national competitiveness and prosperity has even uncharacteristically transformed Canada into a fairly aggressive competitor. And this competition for national advantage is so strong that in this era of new geopolitics, Canada is singularly concerned with "securing this income …by entering new markets and diversifying its source countries of international students" (GOC, 2019, p. 4). As an interviewee confirms:

> I would say that this goes back to both to the Saudi situation and to the changing geopolitical context is the recognition that Canada is overly reliant on just a handful of countries. And so, diversification strategy that draws on talent from a broader number of countries is very much part of our pathway moving forward.

Within the national narrative, IE as a tool of PD is almost non-existent in Canada.

Ironically however, IE is directly linked to and benefits from an outward looking foreign policy. As Lee (2019) eloquently states, "a key benefit of IE is the ability to make what is 'foreign' more understandable and appreciated, including a country's complexities and the many cultural contradictions within them" (para. 50). It is critical that we not lose sight of key tenets of PD as two-way dialogue. Foreign policy and domestic or national interests are interconnected; but foreign policy has a distinct function, one that needs continued strengthening from an internationally engaged domestic public. If national/domestic policy agendas subsume foreign policy, we will erase the effectiveness of IE as a tool of PD.

3. Problem with choosing isolation over engagement as a strategy

It is important to remember that the origins of IE are directly linked to the Cold War period when rather than disengage, the U.S. and Russia began bi-national exchanges. The Fulbright Program was a Cold War strategic effort to learn about both states that were friend and foe.

As an interviewee states during the Cold war, there was investments made in relationships with countries that were adversaries: "And so, [there was an investment in] teaching Russian during the Cold War. And that is why it is very interesting to look at teaching Chinese now. It is not following quite the same pattern as teaching Russian."

Wiseman (2019) suggests that democracies have essentially two strategic policy choices: whether to isolate or engage the adversary, and he suggests that while PD "is not a panacea for easing hostile bilateral relations, it is one of many elements that a judicious government can use — in order to improve relations with an adversarial state" (p. 152). By continuing to host and participate in bilateral exercises, scholars suggest there is a possibility of diminishing extremist views and reducing the negative image/perspectives and misconceptions that exist within the hostile state. As stated boldly by an interviewee:

Because just as there are global risks, the risk of not working with some partners, if we don't work with China on climate change. If we don't, you know, there are a whole number of areas where we can and should be working with international actors with whom we have other disagreements…. it's my hope that as we've learned over the last 80 years, dialogue and exchange is healthier than the alternative. And you go through robust patches, and you go through dry patches… But I am hopeful that we don't lose sight of the need for exchange and dialogue…

With disengagement, as global competition intensifies, limiting international ties and curbing knowledge production, will not benefit any state or global society (Long et al., 2021). In fact there are fears that deteriorating relations between the United States and China could leave American researchers on the outside of important collaborations. Perhaps most importantly, as Satterfield (2021) states, "as authoritarian states such as China and Russia look to systematically curb freedom and democracy throughout the world, it's imperative that the United States continues to bolster its people-to-people diplomacy. Our most powerful assets remain those that have guided and strengthened our nation since the beginning - our democratic principles (para. 12); hence the notion that PD, in the form of engagement, is generally more effective than isolation.

Conclusion

This paper attempted to examine IE as it operates at the nexus of PD, SP, and NS, both historically and in the current new geopolitical context. It provided a comparative case study using a state-centric framework to analyze the context-dependent nature of this nexus and its influence on policy. It began with an outline of a conceptual framework, proposing a model to understand the relationship between PD and NS, followed by a reporting of findings from a comparative study of the U.S. and Canada, using Gilboa's (2008) recommended structured focused comparative method. Our analysis of the two cases sheds light on understanding the implications on IE as a tool for PD/SP, under increased concerns for NS, in this era of new geopolitics.

Cull refers to exchanges as the "soul" of public diplomacy (2019). IE is an important tool for PD/SP; however, as this comparative study illustrates, each state's geopolitical positioning shapes its foreign policy and NS interests, and with it, its investment, approaches, and very definition of IE, and its link (or not) to PD as a tool of SP. The model presented helps map these relationships and draw attention to concerns for IE moving forward. The controversies and debates surrounding IE and relationships with China in today's context of new geopolitics are shifting government's perception of IE. These shifts caution us against three challenges: first, the diminishing role of the university as a distinct and valued non-state actor; second, the weakening of foreign policy as an outward looking, distinctly international investment; and third, the problem with choosing isolation over engagement as a strategy. As democratic states, it would be best if both the U.S. and Canada, as an interviewee suggests, "invest in minimiz[ing] risk but not minimize IE as a tool". Looking ahead, another hopeful interviewee states:

And we will also come out of it well because we will figure out how wide the door can be open. And what are the things that are absolutely off-limits. I think we'll see the government appreciate

more and more what is outlined in that joint statement that there is real value to our security, our diplomacy, our economy by being quite serious about international education.

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A Bibliometric Exploration into the Global Research Impact of China's Thousand Talents Brand

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Abstract

The Thousand Talents Plan was an ambitious government initiative to repatriate and/or recruit experts from the global Chinese diaspora, along with some non-Chinese experts. The plan has received much criticism from abroad, accusing it of taking advantage of the open international education sector and facilitating espionage. While the Thousand Talents Plan received the most international attention, it was just one of over 200 Chinese governmental talent recruitment plans, which we label broadly as the Thousand Talents Brand (TTB). Using bibliometric analysis from the Web of Science, we find that research connected to the TTB decreased following the recent outcry but was only roughly 1% of all Chinese research output at its peak in 2018. We also find that the research was mostly concentrated in the hard sciences, with relatively little in the social sciences. Our results show the research funded through the initiatives was most partnered with researchers from the Western powers, including connections to institutions with national security concerns. While the findings do illustrate a complex web of global research governance through international partnerships, they cannot alleviate scrutiny of the potential alignment between the TTB programs and sensitive sectors abroad.

Introduction

In 2008, the central government of the People's Republic of China (PRC or China) launched the Thousand Talents Plan, an ambitious measure to repatriate those trained overseas or recruit others from the Chinese diaspora, along with some non-Chinese experts. The initial goal was to recruit roughly 2,000 elite scholars from mostly high-tech areas with generous research funding, relocation packages, and other attractive incentives (Miao et al., 2021; Zweig & Wang, 2013). Through the plan, China attracted world-renowned scientists to its institutions, including those in areas such as artificial intelligence and nanotechnology (Gao et al., 2016). Consequently, the success of the Thousand Talents Plan led to an expansion beyond the initial target, including various "Talents" funding from localities, adding to the plethora of other recruitment plans already established by the Chinese government such as the Thousand Young Talents Plan and the Ten Thousand Talents Plan (Kim & Allen, 2018; Zhu, 2019). These efforts were outcomes responding to the Outline of the National Plan for Medium and Long-Term Talent Development Plan (2010-2020) published by the central government in July 2010.

The initial Thousand Talents Plan has gained the most international attention, becoming shorthand for all of China's national recruitment initiatives, but these efforts were often a crisscross of various programs with slightly different foci that centered on the recruitment of experts from abroad. According to a report by the U.S. Senate (2019), the Thousand Talents Plan was the most prominent of the over 200 talent recruitment plans that China implemented. These Talents programs have operated at four levels: national, provincial, city, and even institutional (Zhu, 2019; Stoff, 2020). Recently, popular media and politicians outside of China have focused on the Thousand Talents Plans when discussing all talent initiatives (U.S. Senate, 2019; Armstrong et al., 2020). For instance, Jia's (2018) Career guide: China for *Nature* described opportunities through the various programs simply as the "Thousand Talents scheme", despite the guide referring to multiple programs. Given the haphazard nature and similar naming conventions, we have labeled these various plans under the broader umbrella of the Thousand Talents Brand (TTB), representing the era of the recruitment programs, innovation incentives, and young scholars' initiatives that proliferated since 2008. Thus, this research has labeled these "Talents" programs carried out by Chinese governments

under the Thousand Talents Brand. For instance, through this distinction, both the Thousand Talents Plan and Ten Thousand Talents Plan have been categorized under TTB—even as the latter was technically aimed at domestic scholars, many awardees still had backgrounds and research connections related to elite institutions outside of China (Cao, 2017).

The success and scope of the overseas recruitment efforts by China brought criticism and controversy from abroad. Stakeholders in Western societies argued that these talent recruitment efforts took advantage of the open international system, and some even called it espionage (Joske, 2020; U.S. Senate, 2019). Commonly, some professors in the U.S. were arrested or fired for not disclosing their involvement with the Thousand Talents Brand programs, a violation in some nations due to restrictions on government grant allocation and foreign monies, such as failing to list inclusion in the program on U.S. National Institute of Health (NIH) grants (Keen, 2021; Zweig & Kang, 2020). In the most high-profile case, Charles Lieber, a renowned professor from Harvard University and nanotechnology expert, was convicted over hiding his association on U.S. Federal grant applications that he had received millions of U.S. dollars to be affiliated with Wuhan University of Technology (U.S. Department of Justice, 2021a). Although there have been some cases of misconduct by a few scholars related to the Thousand Talents Plan (Zweig & Kang, 2020), observers have criticized the increased scrutiny of Chinese scientists and diaspora groups as xenophobic or racist (Lee & Haupt, 2020; Tollefson, 2019). Because of the controversies, it has been difficult to gauge the impact of the Thousand Talents Brand on the global landscape of higher education, as official data on the broader project has not been readily available and the fragmented nature of the funding schemes has been allocated by various levels of governments and localities in China. Furthermore, due to the international opposition toward the TTB, the Chinese government has wiped public documentation related to the programs. The official websites of the State Council and Ministry of Education (MOE) have deleted the relevant information regarding the "Thousand Talents Plan" in Chinese. There are some previous documents related to "*rencai*" ("人才", Talent), but without direct connection to the TTB, which added obstacles to the study of the topic.

Research has explored various aspects of TTB operations (Miao et al., 2021;Zweig & Wang, 2013), outcomes (Fedasiuk & Feldgoise, 2020; Zweig et al., 2020; Zweig & Kang, 2020), and other project specificities (Kim & Allen, 208; Stoff, 2020; Zhu, 2019), but there have been few broader bibliometric analyses of the research impact of the initiatives (Marini & Yang, 2021). This research aims to interrogate the international critiques of the TTB, filling the gap in understanding the reach of the initiatives. We use the following research questions to guide this exploration:

1. How much and what types of research have been published through the Thousand Talents Brand and how does it compare to overall research output in China?

2. What institutions both domestically and internationally have been a part of research through the Thousand Talents Brand?

3. What has been the engagement of international joint-research publications through the Thousand Talents Brand in terms of nation-state comparison?

Literature Review

Chinese Research and Development Governance

The Chinese higher education sector has been critical to the Chinese Communist Party's (CCP) national development plan since the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949, epically in terms of public good provision targeted at building an educated citizenry capable of innovation and technological advancement (Allen & Zhang, 2021; Sun & Cao, 2021). However, the sector was severed from the Western world during much of the Cold War, relying on expertise from the Soviet Union for technical assistance and sector emulation. With the post-1978 Reform and Opening, the higher education system began to connect to American, British, and other Western institutions for educational training and partnerships. In 1983, Deng Xiaoping (as cited by Miao et al., 2021), China's paramount leader who shepherded the opening period, argued: "Introducing foreign talents as a strategic policy that must be adhered to for long term" (p. 5). Over a period of thirty years, Chinese students fueled international education by sending students throughout the world, with the hope that they would return to help develop domestic innovations, known as "sea turtles" (Kim & Kim, 2020; Liu, 2021).

To harness the returning students and foster domestic innovation models, the Chinese government established a series of elite-making university policies that would fundamentally shape the national higher education hierarchy. In the 1990s, both the 211 Project and later the 985 Project were established to bring Chinese universities to international standards by funneling massive government investment to the top level of the sector. The policies were largely successful as measured by Chinese universities on the world stage such as through international partnerships and global university rankings (Allen, 2017; Lo & Allen, 2022). In conjunction with the heavy investment within the higher education sector, the CCP's 13th Five Year Plan (FYP) for 2016-2020 streamlined national research and development (R&D) funding through the Ministry of Science and Technology by converging research projects (Kenderdine, 2017). Similarly, the government launched a new policy in 2015 called Double First Class ("双一流") that built upon the previous policies by adding incentive mechanisms and focusing on specific disciplines (Allen, 2021). Universities within these schemes have attracted scholars, students, and other stakeholders from the world and have dominated the domestic higher education sector (Allen, 2017; Gao & Li, 2022; Lo, 2011). However, there has been critique that despite the growing international reputation, Chinese universities cannot truly innovate and that national R&D would stagnate (Altbach, 2016; Horta & Shen, 2020). To make up for these potential deficits, the nation has had an overreliance on academics and scholars trained abroad (Sun & Cao, 2021).

Thousand Talents Brand Era

China, even before the establishment of the PRC, has had a long history of tapping into its diaspora for trade and investment. The Western Returned Scholars Association (WRSA) was established in 1913 and continued to operate with over 220,000 individual members in China and throughout the world (Joske & Stoff, 2020). The organization reportedly has close ties to the Thousand Talents Programs and advocates technology transfer back to China through global working stations, contests, and other support programs. Scholars have shown that the reliance on foreign technology has been baked into the Chinese governance structure since 1949 and has been especially rampant since the post-1978 expanded overseas research and

development ventures (Hannas & Chang, 2020a; Miao et al., 2021; Sun & Cao, 2021). Further, the CCP realized the importance of the global Chinese diaspora in the 1980s as these groups offered the bridge between Western capital and Chinese manpower. In 1994, the Chinese Academy of Sciences (CAS) established the Hundred Talents Plan, while, in 1998, the MOE established the Changjiang Scholars Program (Stoff, 2020). In 2006, building directly upon the elite-making higher education policies, the 111 Project was launched with the explicit goal of recruiting overseas experts from the "top 100 research institutions in the world" (Spears, 2020, p. 31). Indeed, many of the leading scientists at the elite 211 and 985 universities had trained at Western universities (Li & Xue, 2021). Scholars have found that these programs have been directly tied to the international prestige of hosting institutions, connecting to university rankings and placements in a competitive sector (Allen, 2017; Shen & Jiang, 2021; Zhu, 2019).

International talent policies have been directly tied to domestic development and the governance of research and development, ramping up since the launch of the Thousand Talents Plan in 2008 (Joske, 2020). Through a policy analysis of government documents, Spears (2021) argued that the CCP has three clear goals regarding overseas populations: 1) "return to China to work", 2) "start a company", and 3) "serve China" (p. 23), even if choosing not to return home. In a bibliometric analysis of the Youth Thousand Talents Plan, Fedasiuk and Feldgoise (2020) found that over 66% of the awardees came from the US. A key critique of Thousand Talents Brand efforts has been that the recruits have come from high-tech areas, sometimes related to national defense. Indeed, the various programs have attracted researchers in areas such as quantum physics, nanotechnology, and biomedical innovations (Dyer, 2020; Fedasiuk & Feldgoise 2020; Keen, 2021; Stoff, 2020). For instance, Mulvenon and Zhang (2020) reported that a handful of researchers were recruited from the Department of Defense, U.S. Air Force, and U.S. Navy, along with hundreds from within the Department of Energy. Likewise, researchers have found considerable collaborations between American researchers and the so-called "Seven Sons of National Defense" in potentially sensitive areas of national defense—some of the funding redacted from Chinese scholars' CVs and data had to be manually searched (Fedasiuk & Feldgoise, 2020; Stoff, 2020). These universities include Northwestern Polytechnical University, Harbin Engineering University, Harbin Institute of Technology, Beihang University, Beijing

Institute of Technology, Nanjing University of Science and Technology, and Nanjing University of Aeronautics and Astronautics. The U.S. government under Trump issued a ban on visas for researchers, scholars, and students from the Seven Sons of National Defense due to military ties (Kania & Wood, 2020; Mulvenon & Zhang, 2020).

Despite the intense efforts and resources put into the Thousand Talents Brand era by the Chinese government, scholars have found mixed results for these various talent initiatives. In terms of attracting top Chinese talent from abroad, the strongest scientists involved in the Thousand Talents Plan were generally only working in a part-time capacity with Chinese universities (Zweig et al., 2020) and awardees often favored quantity over quality in terms of publication output (Marini & Yang, 2021). Illustrating these struggles through qualitative interviews, Rezaei and Mouritzen (2021) found that returnees within these Talents Programs often felt isolated and "positioned outside Guanxi networks" (p. 7). Relatedly, Kim and Kim (2020) reported that despite the talents push, returning Chinese has had lower success in obtaining positions, even altering the sea turtle nickname to "Haidai (海待)" or "Haydai (海带)" (p. 88). The explorations of operations inside China that show the struggles of the TTB offer a differing picture compared to the concern of the endeavors that dominated discussion abroad.

International Engagement and Disengagement

Over the last few decades, China has been making unprecedented gains in terms of global research and development, often relying on international collaborations with scholars from Western institutions. Indeed, the Chinese government has made significant efforts to incentivize international metrics and indicators for domestic universities and researchers, such as publishing in the Science Citation Index (SCI) and Social Science Citation Index (SSCI) or moving up in world university rankings (Chou, 2014). Publishing within these elite indices has driven research agendas and brought with them significant cash rewards for scientists (Allen, 2019; Tian et al., 2016). However, recently the Chinese government pulled back from some of these foreign measures in evaluation like SSCI or SCI, leading some to wonder if the sector is in a new phase of development (Li, 2020; Lo & Allen, 2022). Regardless of the recent shifts, the high-level investments and

incentivization structures that dominated the sector for over two decades prior have made China one of the global leading powers in research and development.

Scholars have used bibliometric techniques to understand the research impact and growth China has made compared to peers around the globe. In a bibliometric analysis of China's Web of Science output, Liu et al. (2015) found that the nation's output of research output boomed from 2002 to 2013 and was dominated by the affluent universities on the eastern coast. Much of the collaborative research output was partnered with US-based researchers (Liu et al., 2015). In terms of global comparison, after years of catching up, researchers have found that China is only rivaled by the U.S. in terms of overall global research and academic output, overtaking the European sectors and other traditional powers (Kwiek, 2021; Marginson, 2021). However, scholars have still questioned the extent to which China has *caught up* to its global peers, critiquing the bibliometric measures and the nation's international governance position (Altbach, 2016; Horta & Shen, 2020; Marginson, 2021). Differing from the US, Chinese researchers have shown to be much more collaborative on a global scale (Lee & Haupt, 2020). During the global COVID-19 crisis, the U.S. and China led the world in research capacity on the pandemic and researchers argue that research cooperation between these two powers will be crucial in the coming years to tackle global challenges (see Lee & Haupt, 2020; Sun & Cao, 2021).

The growing dominance and expansion of internationalism in China's research and development coincided with pushback against globalism from around the world, especially in the West with the election of Donald Trump in the U.S. and Brexit in the UK. Cantwell and Grimm (2018) referred to the rise of nationalism and concerns of geopolitics within scientific fields as techno-nationalism. Indeed, the election of Trump to the U.S. Presidency marked a tumultuous period for US-China relations. Trump strongly campaigned against China, accusing the nation of taking advantage of the U.S. in trade and actively stealing technologies and innovations. His administration kept these promises by enacting tariffs, limiting and tougher vetting of student visas, and scrutinizing foreign donations to universities. Further, in 2018, Trump launched the China Initiative to target "trade secret theft, hacking, and economic espionage" by the Chinese government (U.S. Department of Justice, 2021b, para. 4). The initiative mostly targeted Chinese scientists,

emphasizing involvement with the Thousand Talents Program, and continued partly through Joseph Biden's presidency. However, in 2021, when several high-profile scholars who were arrested through China Initiative had their charges dismissed, scholars, activists, and NGOs such as the Committee of 100 (2021) called the endeavor a "New Red Scare" (p. 4) that was based on racism and ethnonationalism, demanding Biden suspend the plan (Tillman, 2020; Tollefson, 2019).

Overall, these actions and sentiments alarmed scholars involved in the mobility and Chinese educational sector, as it was feared students and scholars would be scared away from the U.S. as a destination and the larger decoupling of the universities between the two nations (Allen & Ye, 2021; Lee & Haupt, 2021). While the loudest and most fervent critique of China's talent endeavors stems from the Anglo West, scholars, and governments from around the world have raised concerns over these strategies, such as in Europe (Tatlow et al., 2020) and East Asia (Hannas & Chang, 2020b). Higher education stakeholders worry that rising insularity and nationalism will destabilize the international education sector, including people-to-people exchanges and international student flows, coupled with the barriers to the sector due to the COVID-19 pandemic (Lee & Haupt, 2021; Sun & Cao, 2021).

Methodology

The design of this study follows recent bibliometric analyses regarding the politics of publishing from a global perspective (see Kwiek, 2021; Lee & Haupt, 2020; Lee & Haupt, 2021) and others on Chinese talent programs (Fedasiuk & Feldgoise, 2020; Marini & Yang, 2021; Shen & Jiang, 2021; Stoff, 2020). The bibliometric approach can provide a macro view of broader trends to understand the research output of institutions, networks of experts, and entire nation-states from an interdisciplinary standpoint (Donthu et al., 2021). One of the essential features of bibliometrics analysis is to apply quantitative techniques to massive datasets. Given the large and wide scope of the collected data for this research, the bibliometric analysis serves as a powerful method to explore and analyze the empirical data and it helps to reveal the uncovered trends linked to TTB from a longitudinal perspective. Additionally, the statistical descriptions derived from the bibliometric method disclose the characteristics of research relevant to TTB and their

connections and comparisons to the overall research outputs in China. A summary of published research under TTB, such as their research interests (foci) and related intellectual fields, can be achieved through graphical representations and descriptive comparisons across the data (McMillan, 2015). Bibliometrics analysis offers a robust tool to encapsulate the structural evidence of a given field, via examinations of social, political, and power relations among various research actors that are present in the data (Donthu et al., 2021). In this specific research, the domestic and international institutions affiliated with TTB, joint-research publications, and collaborators provide this structural evidence.

The study relied upon two indices from the Web of Science: SCI and SSCI. Generally, the former index focuses on hard sciences while the latter on social sciences. These indices have been seen as elite publishing spaces due to their usages as measures in global ranking metrics and China has paid special attention to these international journal indices, offering handsome incentives to scholars who publish in them (Chou, 2014). Although, in 2020, the PRC government promised to deemphasize these indices, the effect of the proclamation is still too early to fully gauge (Li, 2021). Nonetheless, the usage of the indices as data can provide insight into global research outputs and scholarly engagement.

The dataset for this study was created by pulling bibliometric entries from the Web of Science over the timeframe of 2008-2020, beginning with the first year of the Thousand Talents Plan. Considering the database's primary function as a library search tool, the data from the Web of Science needed to be cleaned and organized to conduct proper analysis as designed in this study. Similarly, the system can still differ depending on the timeframe of data collection or publication reporting, as journals get added or removed from the various indices or publishing dates change to match print placement. Other studies in the field relying upon similar bibliometric data have faced similar barriers (Liu et al., 2015; Marginson, 2021), but the design can still provide macro insights into the broader trends of research and scholarship. We will further discuss the results in the context of the methodological limitations and choices in the conclusion section.

Table 1

Selected Sample Titles of Various Thousand Talent Brand Programs from the Dataset

Administrative Levels	Examples of the Thousand Talent Plans
National Level	Recruitment Program of Global Experts 1000 Plan of China
	1000 Foreign Expert Distinguished Professor Plan
	1000 Youth Elite Program in China
	China 1000 Plan National Distinguished Professorship
	China 1000 Youth Plan Program
	China Youth 1000 Talent Program of The State Council of China
Provincial Level	Zhejiang Province Excellent Young Talents Fund Project of Traditional Chinese Medicine
	Six Talents Peak Project of Jiangsu Province
	Guangxi New Century 1000 Talent Project
	Hubei Provence for 1000 Talent Program
	Hundred Talent Project in Beijing
	Beijing Innovation Talent Project
	Beijing Excellent Talent Training Subsidy Program Youth Backbone
Municipality Level	Yunling Industry Leading Talents
	Taishan Industrial Leading Talents China
	Scientific Research Foundation for Peacock Talents of Shenzhen
	Science and Technology Innovation Talents Program of Ganzhou City
	Science and Technology Innovative Talents Support Program of Shenyang
	Qinghai 135 High Level Talents Training Project
Institutional Level/ Other	Ministry of Education 1000 Youth Program
	China Postdoc Innovation Talent Support Program China Postdoctoral Science Foundation
	Chinese Academy of Sciences 100 Talent Program
	Alberta Innovates Technology Futures and China's 1000 Talent Plan
	Tsinghua University Talents Support Program
	Research Foundation for Introduced Talents of Kunming University

Note. Compiled by the authors from the dataset to illustrate TTB at various levels of governance.

Through a Boolean logic search of the database, any journal article that reported a Thousand Talents initiates or any variant as a funder was included in the dataset. The inclusion of the funders offers a glimpse into the broader Thousand Talents Brand beyond the fragmented talent recruitment initiatives that have arisen through various levels of Chinese government. However, how authors report funders is not standard across individual journals. For instance, an author might report "1000 Talents Plan" and another "Thousand Talents Plan", causing a mismatch within the Web of Science database. Due to self-reported descriptions of funding from TTB, there were thousands of variations listed within the collected data. To clean the data, we collapsed these discrepancies together for the final analysis. There are three main categories of TTB:

Innovation-focused talent plans, experts' recruitment targeted schemes, and young scholars-centered projects. As displayed in Table 1, three major aspects of TTB were carried out at the national level, followed by the provincial, municipal, and then prefecture-level cities. Additionally, universities and local education entities enacted their versions of the Thousand Talents Plan. In view of the complexity, our research considers the Thousand Talents Brand under this umbrella.

The resulting sample included 20,008 journal articles, with each offering several pieces of information to draw a deeper understanding of the overall impact of the Thousand Talents Brand. First, the longitudinal TTB output was explored across the period of study, along with a comparison to total Chinese research output. Next, to explore the fields of focus for the research output, the data were compared by inclusion in SCI or SSCI, along with a similar comparison to overall Chinese research output in these two indices, which offers a comparison between hard sciences and social sciences in terms of the research focus of the initiatives. Furthermore, a snapshot of the specific fields of research for the TTB dataset was explored to understand where the initiatives centered funding. Finally, to explore the various institutions and collaborators connected to TTB funding, we offered a snapshot of the Chinese universities and research academies that were most affiliated with the journal articles in the dataset. Likewise, for international collaborators, we explored the non-Chinese institutions that were most affiliated with the TTB data, along with an overall tally of collaborators on these journal articles from other nations.

Limitations

Marginson (2021) warned that there are limits to dawning meaning from bibliometric data, noting the positivist and materialistic approach that drives these types of measurement. Our study was designed using other bibliometric research as foundational guides (see Kwiek, 2021; Lee & Haupt, 2020; Lee & Haupt, 2021). But these kinds of studies have limitations in the type of data. Using Web of Science in the manner that we have done within our bibliometric analysis comes with drawbacks set by the operating company, Clarivate. Due to user restrictions on scaping and downloads, the dataset can mostly provide a broad descriptive sample of the TTB's research impact. Likewise, because the database's main function is for reference search, research purposes are only secondary. Given that publications may be added or removed

to the various indices, the Web of Science could alter findings in the future, as well as publications altering dates of journal articles to match printed publications. Despite these barriers, the data can still offer a key snapshot of the given period in terms of research impact like other bibliometric analyses have shown in prior studies, even as the Web of Science database is tweaked and altered in the future. Finally, there is a kind of opaqueness in the study of Chinese governmental policy, especially those related to sensitives areas, which scholars working in this field have become accustomed to. While this research can offer glimpses and clues, there must be continued efforts to explore these policies at various levels.

Findings

Thousand Talents Brand Longitudinal Comparison

Publications connected to Thousand Talent Brand funding mostly saw impressive growth since 2008. As displayed in Figure 1, in the early years of the TTB, given that scientific publishing takes years to produce, there were unsurprisingly few publications in the first three years, with only eight TTB-funded articles in 2008, up to 22 in 2009, and 24 in 2010, a 73.21% compound annual growth rate (CAGR), as calculated $CAGR = \left(\frac{V_{final}}{V_{begin}} \right)^{1/t} - 1$, over the initial period. However, entering deeper into the new decade from 2011 onwards, there was a sharp increase year to year, exploding from 65 articles in 2011to 1,252 in 2015, and peaking in 2018 at 4,234 articles that year, a percentage increase of 81.60% compound annual growth rate between 2011 to 2018. In 2019, the frantic growth stopped and dipped that year to just 4,218 articles and dropped again to 3,735 in 2020, potentially due to new pressures described in the literature review, which will be posited in the discussion section. Overall, Thousand Talent Brand publications listed in the Web of Science had a compound annual growth rate of 66.89% from the beginning measurement year in 2008 to the final in 2020.

Figure 1

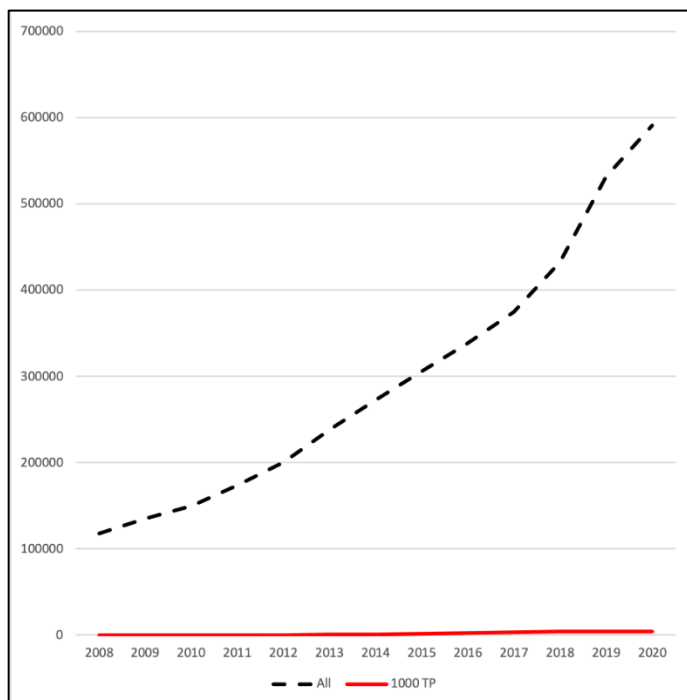*Number of TTB Articles in the Web of Science (2008-2000)*
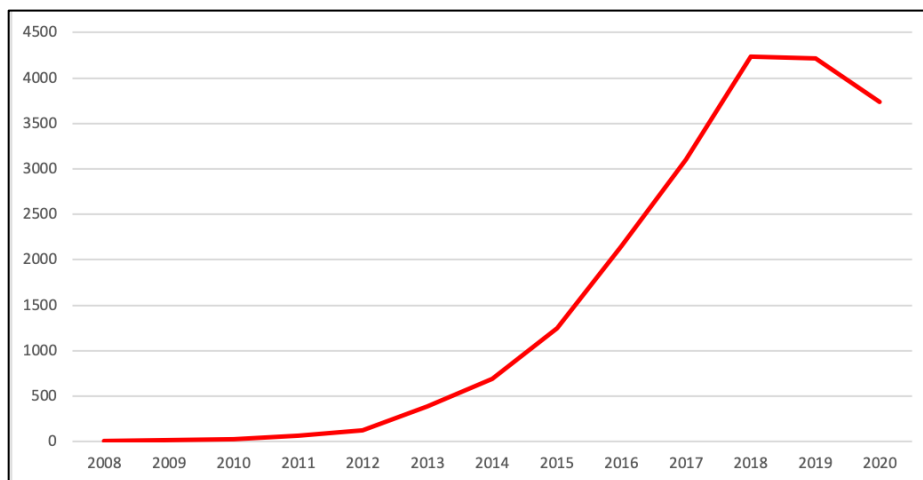
Note. Number of articles on the y-axis; year on the x-axis.

Given the international media and governmental scrutiny of the Thousand Talents Brand, a comparison to overall Chinese research outputs is crucial to recognize the impact and scope of the scheme. Overall, the TTB is barely visible compared to the scale of all Chinese research output displayed in Figure 2. Consistent with past work that highlighted the massive gains in Chinese research output, there were 117,764 articles in the Web of Science in 2008 with at least one Chinese author, jumping to 590,991 in 2020, a 14.39% compound annual growth rate over this period. It should also be noted that the overall Chinese research output did not see a slowdown in 2019 nor a drop in 2020, as discovered in the Thousand Talents Brand articles over this same period. To better understand the placement of TTB articles within this massive output for all of China, the yearly ratio was calculated. As shown in Table 3, the ratio of research related to the TTB rapidly rose from 2008 and peaked at just under 1% of the total output in 2018. However, converging with the other results in the study, the overall percentage fell in the subsequent years to just under 0.63% in 2020. The findings show that even at the peak, these initiatives accounted for just a fraction of the overall research output from China.
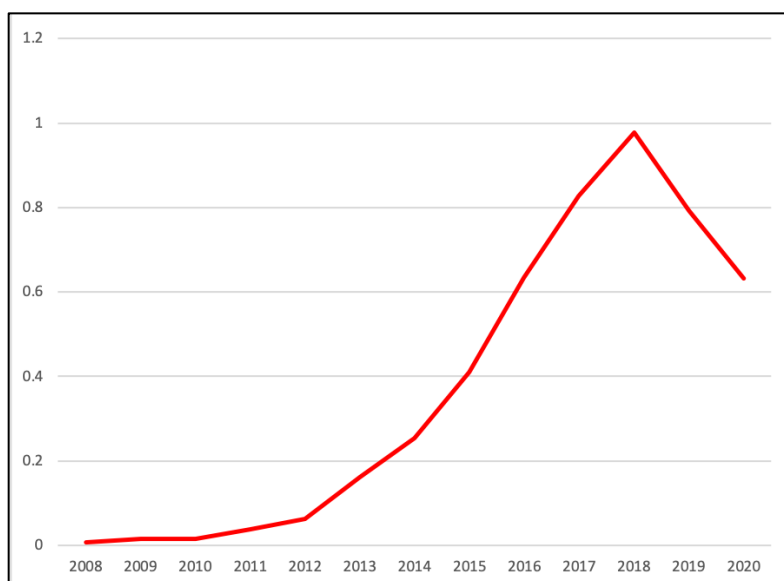
Figure 2

Longitudinal Comparison of All Chinese Research Output in Web of Science vs TTB

Note. Number articles on the y-axis; year on the x-axis.

Figure 3

Ratio of TTB Articles to the Overall Chinese Research Output in the Web of Science

Note. Ratio on the y-axis; year on the x-axis.

Thousand Talent Brand Research Foci

We explored the key critique that the various Thousand Talent initiatives target high-tech and sensitive areas. As displayed in Figure 4, the growth of the hard science articles dominated and shaped the entire output of TTB publications, with those in the social sciences hardly appearing on the chart (note that some interdisciplinary journals can be cross-listed on both indices, although these are minuscule relative to the total comparisons within the study). The first social science article with TTB funding was published in 2012, reporting two articles in the SSCI that year, while there were 122 hard science articles listed in the SCI. None of the years in our study had more than 100 social science articles in the SSCI, with the highest total coming in 2020 with 85, recording a compound annual growth rate of 59.79% from 2012 when an article in this index first appeared. There were already over 100 hard sciences articles listed in the SCI in 2012, ballooning to 4,174 in 2018 before dropping the subsequent years to 3,650 in 2020, a compound annual growth rate of 66.57% over the entire period. Indeed, over the selected period, almost all journal articles with TTB funding were from the hard sciences, adding up all the articles from this period, there were 19,708 listed in SCI and only 300 in the SSCI. These incongruencies between the datasets will be explored further in the discussion.

It is important to contextualize the TTB data within the overall research output of China as displayed in Figure 5. When looking at all of China's research output in the Web of Science, the results yield similar patterns as the Thousand Talents SCI and SSCI dataset, with the hard sciences massively growing from 115,187 in 2008 to over 573,880 in 2020, while the social sciences went from 4,045 in 2008 to 44,351 in 2020, growth rates of 14.32% and 22.09% respectively. In addition, we also examined the ratio between the types of output for both the total Web of Science and TTB data. As displayed in Figure 6, the ratio between SCI and SSCI articles has been consistently in favor of hard science articles for both comparisons in the research output over this period. However, we find that TTB articles have had a lower ratio of social science articles compared to the overall Web of Science output in China, peaking in 2020 for both datasets at .077% and .023% respectively. Furthermore, while the ratio for the TTB articles saw a short decline and

stagnation from 2017 to 2019, eventually bouncing back in 2020, the overall Web of Science only saw

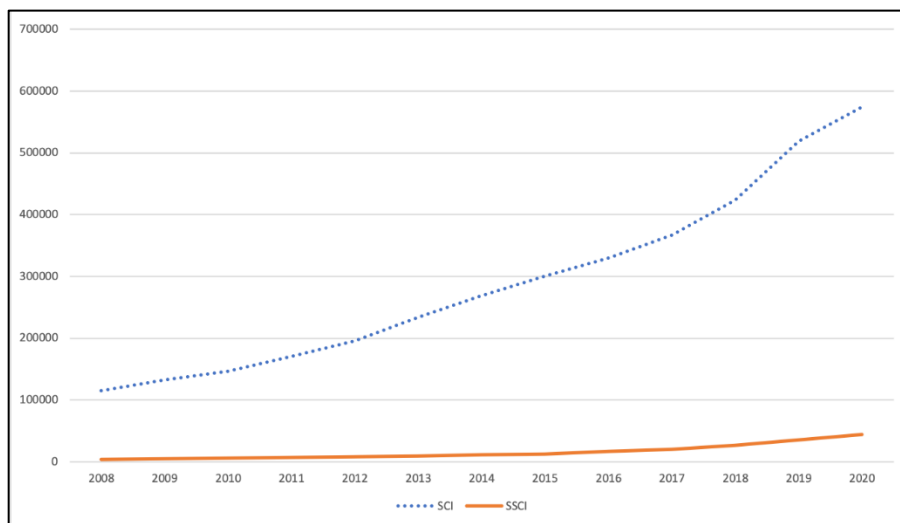consistent growth of SSCI articles.

Figure 4

Longitudinal Comparison Between TTB Articles listed in SCI vs SSCI
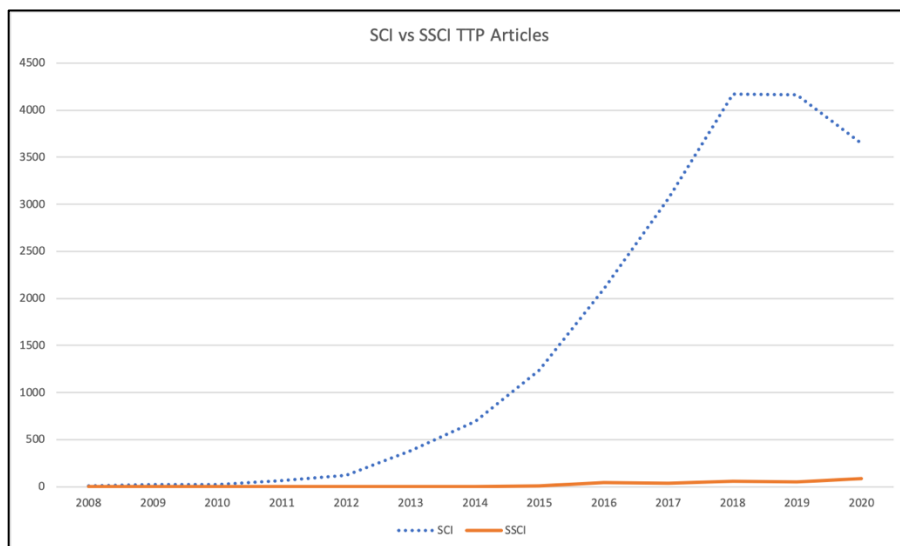
Note. Number of articles on the y-axis; year on the x-axis.
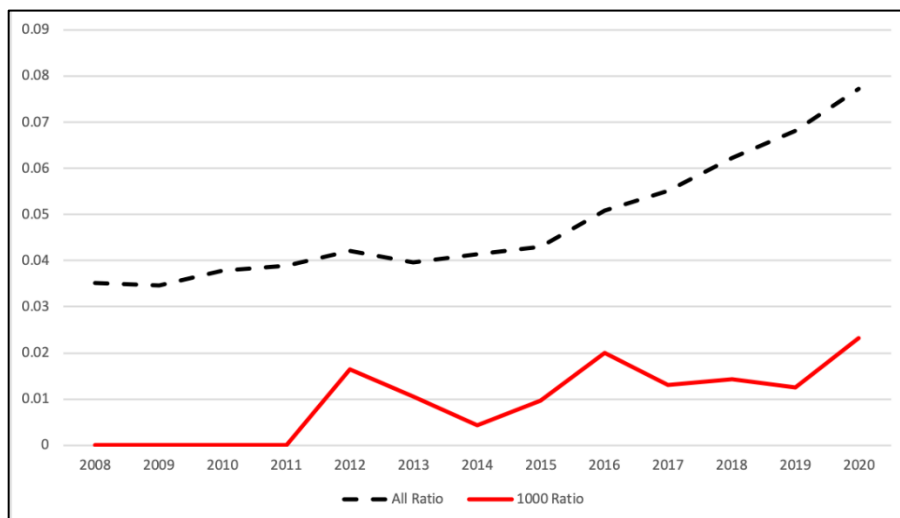
Figure 5

Longitudinal Comparison Between All Chinese Research Articles Listed in SCI vs SSCI

Note. Number of articles on the y-axis; year on the x-axis.

Figure 6

Longitudinal Comparison Between the Ratio of SCI to SSCI in TTB vs. All Chinese Research Output


Note. Ratio on the y-axis; year on the x-axis.

While the SSCI and SCI data can provide overall trends, looking at specific fields of research offers a look at the focus of the research agenda for the government-backed funding. Trending with our other findings, hard science fields dominated the publications that had funding through the initiative. We have displayed the fields that contained at least 100 articles in Figure 7. While the total number of different fields was 128, only 39 met this threshold and were dominated by a handful of hard science fields. The only fields to have over 1,000 articles during the period of the analysis were Chemistry (7,354), Material Sciences (5,170), Physics (4,266), Science Technology (3,969), Engineering (1,949), and Energy Fuels (1,054). Likewise, other notable fields in the dataset that have raised concerns from policymakers and other stakeholders in the past were identified as Computer Science (561), Biotechnology and Microbiology (306), and Telecommunications (190). Furthermore, given the importance of global response to the COVID-19 pandemic, it should be noted that fields that could be critical to the pandemic made the list such as Research Experimental Medicine (196) and Immunology (155). There were no social science fields represented on the displayed list, as none met the 100-article threshold. The highest social science field comes from Psychology with just 35 articles.

Figure 7

Total Number of TTP Articles by Field From 2008-2020
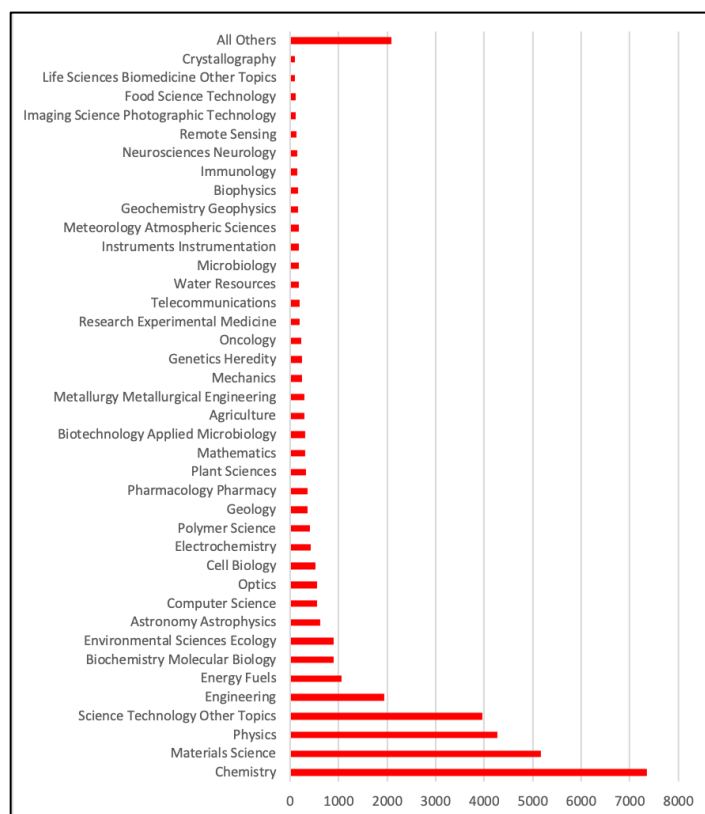
Note. Count is in terms of articles.

Thousand Talent Brand Institutions and Collaborators

Our research also explored the critiques of the types of institutions involved in the various Talents

programs. We have displayed the traditional Chinese university affiliation shown in Figure 8 for the leading

institutions with over 300 articles with TTB funding, not including research academies and institutes.

Leading the university count was Tsinghua University with 1,359 articles, followed by the University of

Science and Technology of China with 1,264 and Peking University with 1,242, the leaders producing the

most TTB articles of traditional Chinese universities. While there is a relative drop after these three elite

Chinese universities, the next three are Zhejiang University (1,010), Fudan University (859), and Shanghai

Jiao Tong University (851). The university list is dominated by leading C9 League universities and other

top technical institutions. Furthermore, a considerable amount of research in China funnels through the

various Academies, along with the broader Chinese Academy of Science, which can be cross-affiliated with individual universities. Looking at the specific Academies in this dataset illustrates the hard science and technology focus of published research, as shown in Figure 9. Physics labs dominate the list, such as Dalian Institute of Chemical Physics (325), Institute of Physics (222), and Institute of High Energy Physics (270), along with Chemistry labs, with the Institute of Chemistry (212), Shanghai Institute of Organic Chemistry (197), and Xinjiang Technical Institute of Physics Chemistry (185). These Academies have been critiqued for their connection to military technology transfer. Similarly, in terms of the so-called Seven Sons of National Defense, only Beihang University had more than 300 articles funded through TTB with a total of 427, as displayed in Figure 10. Other Seven Sons still had an impressive amount of these types of funded articles, such as Beijing Institute of Technology (277), Northwestern Polytechnical University (253), and Harbin Institute of Technology (195), while the other three had a drop-off for Nanjing University of Science and Technology (71), Harbin Engineering University (51), and Nanjing University of Aeronautics and Astronautics (47). With a view to the uneven spread of the Seven Sons, the TTB research seems to be more dominated by traditional C9 League universities, former 985 listed universities, and other high-profile technical institutions.

Figure 8

Leading Producers of TTB Articles by Chinese Universities From 2008-2020
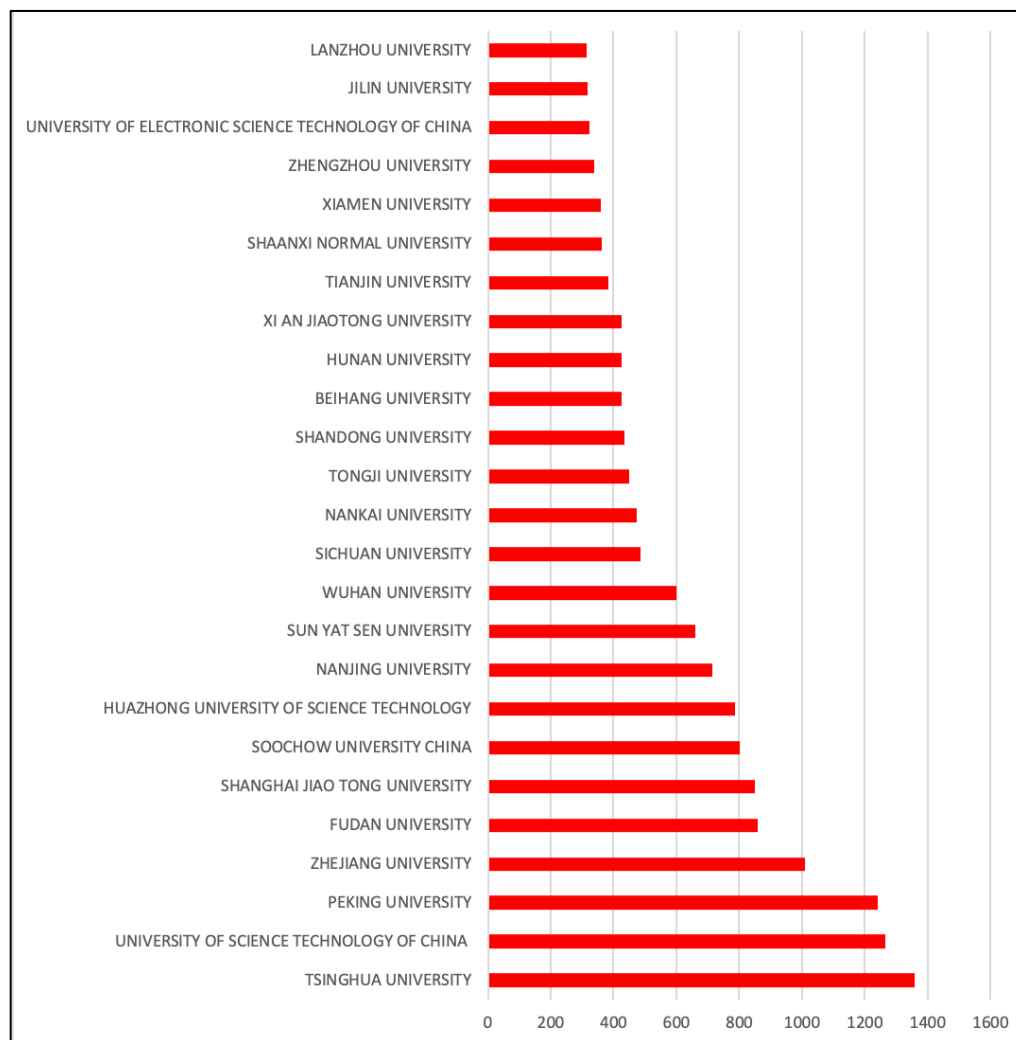
Note. Count is in terms of articles.

Figure 9

Leading Producers of TTB Articles by Specific Chinese Academies From 2008-2020
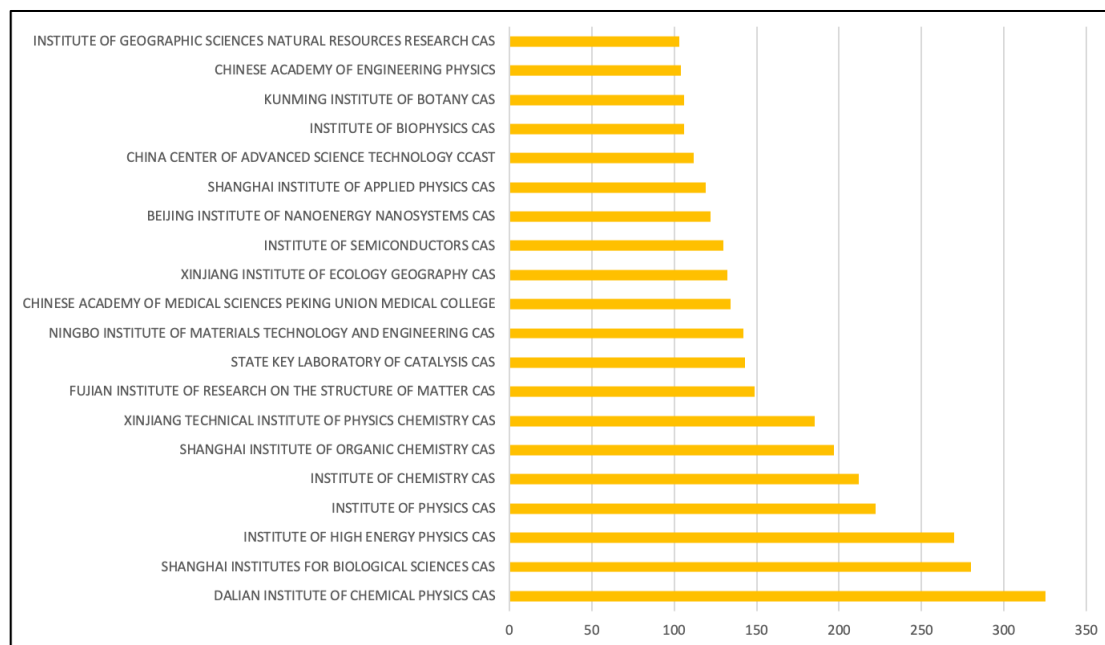
Note. Count is in terms of articles. The general category of "Chinese Academy of Sciences" has been removed from the graph as it skews the visualization and can potentially count across different affiliations.

Figure 10

TTB Articles Produced by the Seven Sons of Defense From 2008-2020
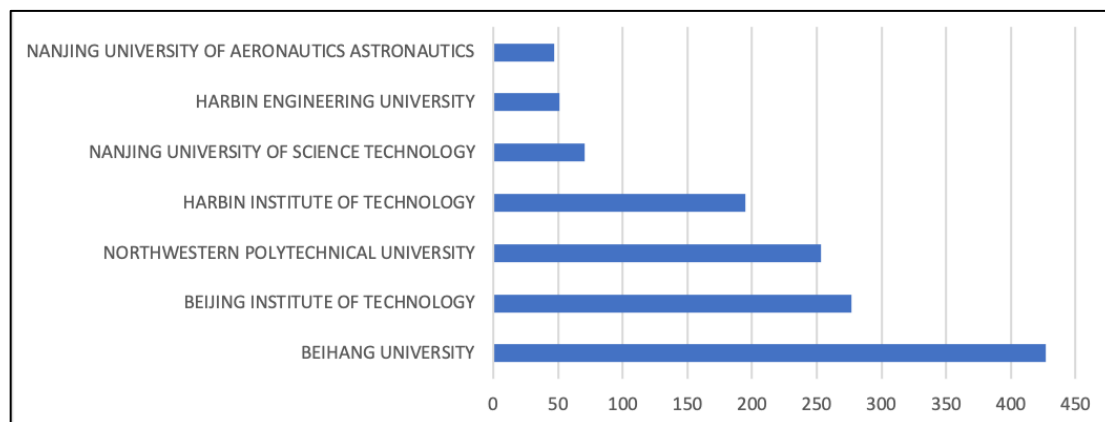
Note. Count is in terms of articles.

Another concern explored in the research related to the issue of technology transfer from researcher institutes and facilities outside of China. We explored the non-Chinese affiliations with research that had Thousand Talents Brand funding from at least one author, displayed in Figure 11 of those with 150 or more entries. The United States dominated the list, with the U.S. Department of Energy surprisingly topping all institutions with 543 articles, followed by the University of California System with 497, and the University of Texas System at 272. However, European powers were also found represented with articles that were connected to TTB funding, with several having over 250 articles: France's Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique (321), Russian Academy of Sciences (275), Germany's Max Plank Society (263), the Netherland's University of Groningen (257), and Italy's Istituto Nazionale di Fisica Nucleare (253). The only non-Western institution to make the list came from Singapore, the National University of Singapore at 166. It should be noted that all these international institutions are recognized as leading research and development facilities within their given domestic sector, which will be further discussed in the concluding sections.

Figure 11

Top International Institutional Affiliations of research with TTB Funding
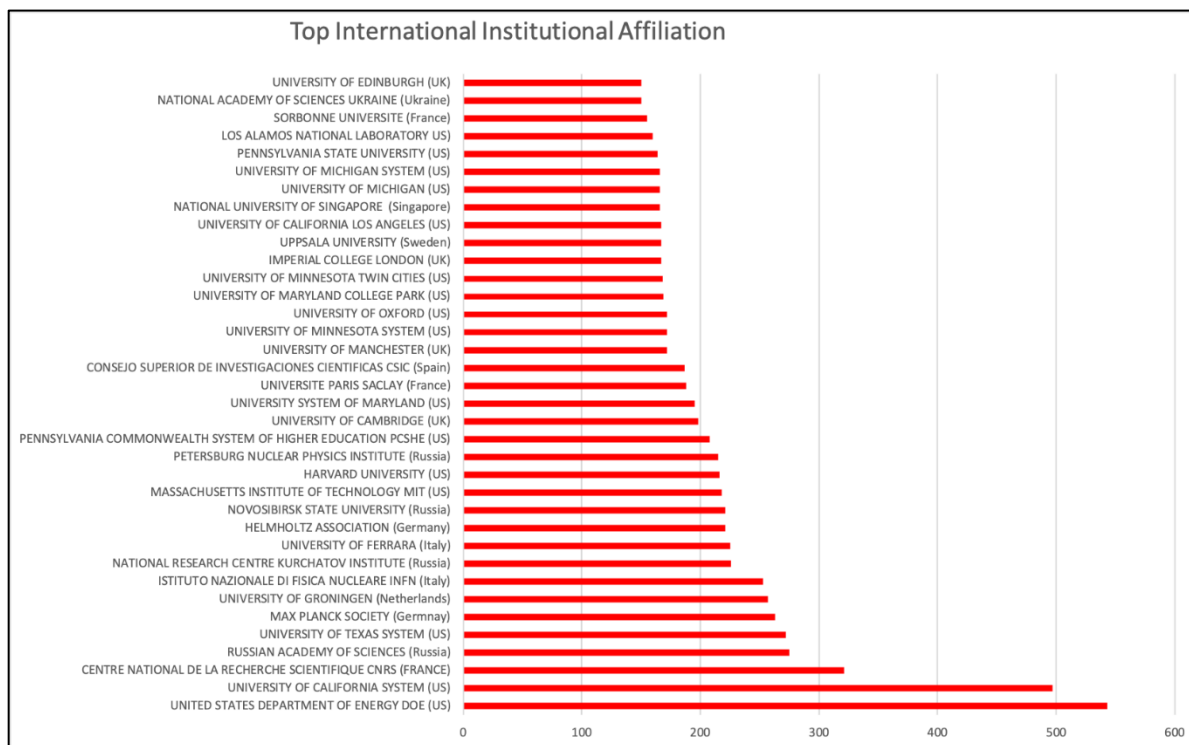
Note. Count is in terms of articles.

Overall, this research sought to understand the global reach of the Thousand Talents Brand. We found nations across the world held partnerships with TTB-funded research through articles published in the Web of Science, as displayed in Figure 12 of locales with 100 or more entries. Researchers from the United States were by far the most active in producing research jointly with TTB colleagues with 4,418 articles over this period, which accounted for roughly 29% of all publications of the non-Chinese institutions in the dataset. Joint publications with U.S. researchers were more than the next six nations combined. The dominance illustrates the reliance on partnerships between the U.S. and China. Furthermore, other nations most connected with joint research of Thousand Talents Brand funding were dominated by other Western powers. The other leading nations in terms of TTB articles were Germany (1,027), England (865), Australia (792), and Canada (622), as represented in Illustration 1. China's Asian neighbors also had connections to the funding. Japan was the highest non-Western nation with 556 articles, while Singapore and South Korea

also appear with 392 and 318 respectively. Outside of the US, Europe, and East Asia, other regions were more sparsely represented in the joint research data. In terms of the Middle East, there were 129 TTB-funded articles with authors from Turkey and 158 from Saudi Arabia, as no other nations in the region were over 100 articles over this period. Furthermore, Brazil had 170 entries to lead the representation of South America, while Colombia had 124 articles. Following the trend, Africa was relatively excluded from the program, with no countries in the entire region scoring more than 100 articles. The highest total from the region was South Africa with only 44 articles. The totality of the results highlights the connection the TTB had in favor of the strong, traditional research powers.

Figure 12

Global Collaborations with TTP Articles From 2008-2000
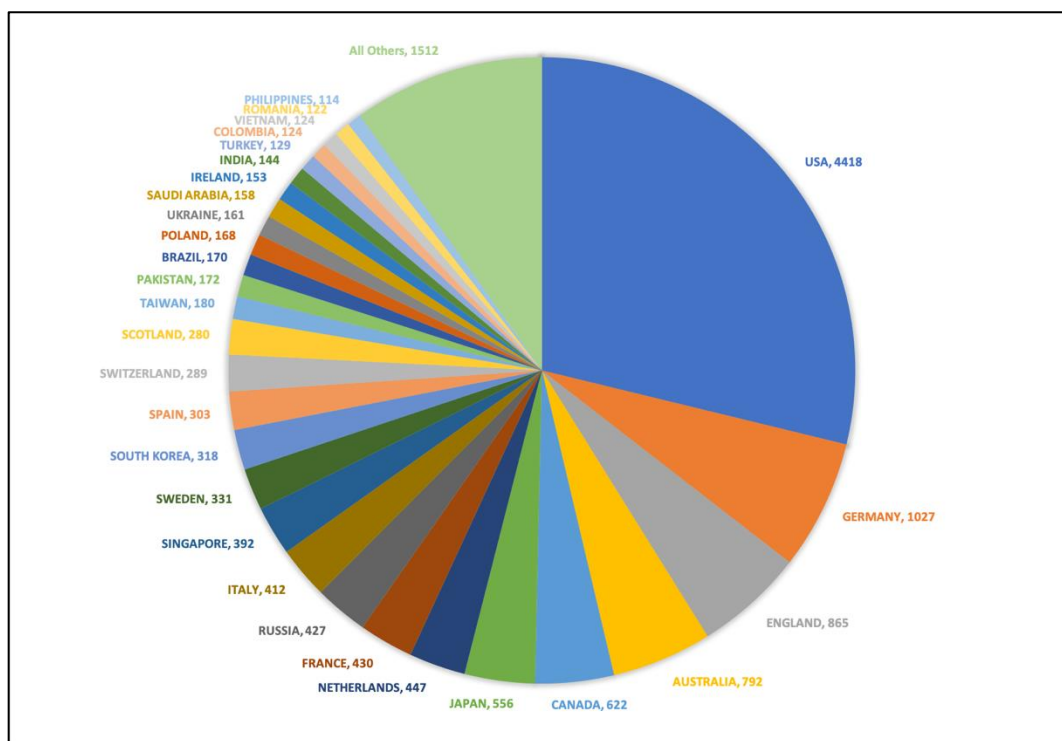
Note. Count is in terms of articles.

Illustration 1

Geo Mapping of International TTB-Published Research from 2008-2020

Note: US removed from illustration for color scaling

1   1,027
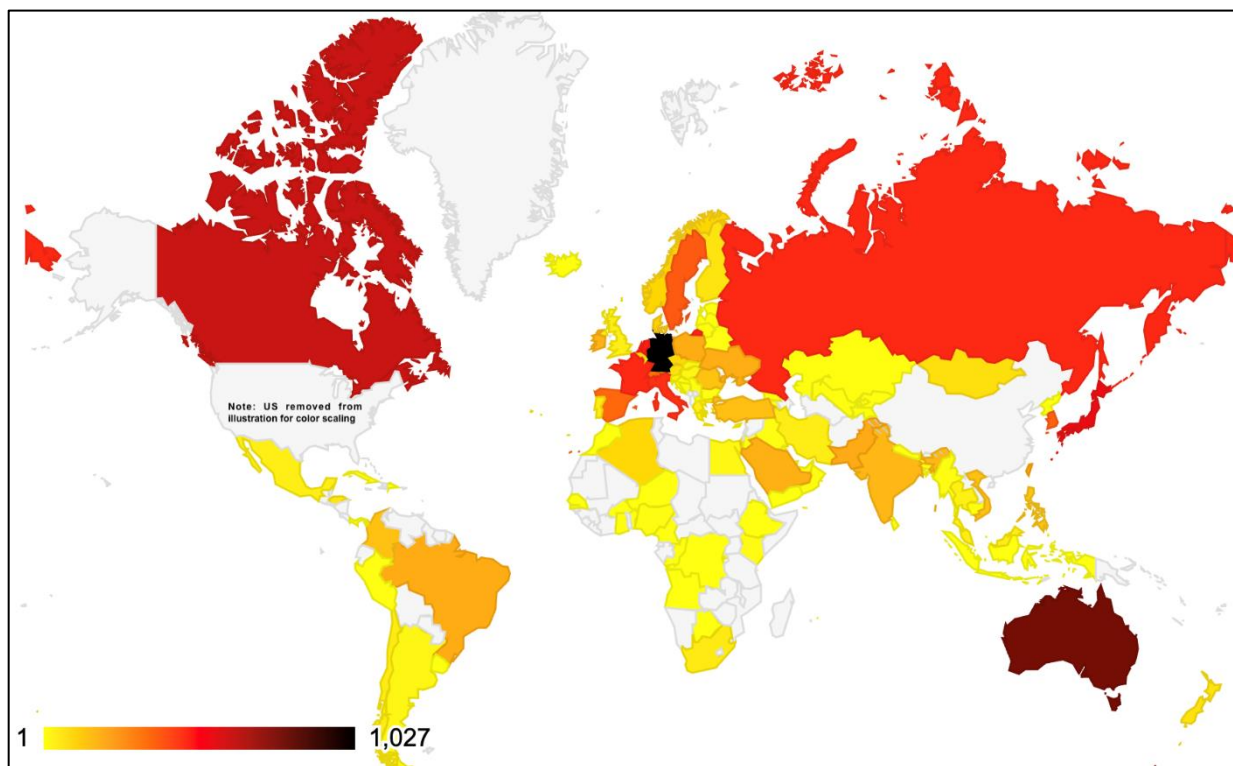
Note. Count is in terms of articles. The U.S. was removed from the color-coded mapping due to its outlining dominance skewing the color scaling.

Discussion and Conclusion

The study aimed to understand the global impact of the Thousand Talents Brand through a bibliometric analysis of Web of Science data. Much of the findings align with past research on Chinese recruitment initiatives. Regarding the first research question, we find massive growth in research connected to the various programs from 2008 to 2018. However, post-2018, we find that research funded through the TTB stopped growing and suddenly dipped in 2020. We believe that these results are related to the intense pressure that manifested around the world, especially in the U.S. and other Western nations, to curb the influence of these programs due to espionage and other misconduct. As China has perceived the foreign antagonism toward TTB, most of the related information was taken down and the government also stopped promoting such programs. However, this does not mean that similar recruitment efforts have been

abandoned by the Chinese government. Instead of confronting and further irritating the global community, China has phased down the specific TTB and redesigned corresponding policies and directions. On September 27 and 28, 2021, at the Central Talent Work Conference in Beijing, Chinese leader Xi Jinping delivered a speech emphasizing the strategy of strengthening the country with talents in the new era (Xinhua, 2021). According to Xi's vision and ambition, China seeks to become home to accommodate professional talents and a major world center of innovations. The Strategy of Reinvigorating China Through Human Resource Development was not something new, it was first brought up in the 11th Five-Year Plan in 2006. The reiteration of talent management shows that China will continue with aspects of TTB, but in a different and low-key manner. Despite the intensive focus by stakeholders outside of China that caused this behavior change, we also find that research funded through TTB represented just a fraction of total research output by the nation, peaking at just under 1% in 2018. The results suggest that if the programs are curbed or even completely scrapped, the overall research capacity of China will not be greatly impacted.

The second research question reflected the concerns from around the world towards targeted areas in high-tech innovations and perceived attempts at technology transfer. Indeed, there have been high-profile cases of questionable research practices of TTB participants that may have resulted in undercutting technical capacities in sensitive areas (Fedasiuk & Feldgoise, 2020; Joske, 2020; Stoff, 2020). Our findings in the bibliometric analysis will not alleviate these concerns. For this question, we find that the TTB funded almost no research in the social sciences relative to hard sciences. There were only a handful of studies in fields that would not cause any alarm or suspicion, such as Urban Studies, Archaeology, History, and Psychology. The leading fields were all hard sciences like Chemistry, Materials, and Science Physics. In these findings of the field-specific articles that had TTB funding, Chemistry was by far the most represented field of research, with over 1,000 more articles published than even the second-highest field of Material Science, tracking with the chemist Charles Lieber as the most high-profile case of misconduct related to the TTB. Our findings by themselves do not reveal any nefarious doings by the various talent initiatives, only that the specific guidelines for the programs do explicitly focus on advancing the nation's technical

prowess. Our findings show that the Thousand Talents Brand has been effective in fostering research published in highly cited journals in these areas. However, given this clear goal, the rest of the world is likely to continue to distrust these endeavors, potentially limiting their effectiveness in the coming decade, which likely connects to the Xi government's decision to deemphasize the brand.

Our third question focused on the institutions connected to the TTB, as a critique has been levied at the connections to the Chinese military, namely through the so-called Seven Sons of Defense, especially for researchers based in sensitive institutions abroad. Given these concerns, our results reveal that the awarded funds through the TTB privileged those from elite institutions in China, focusing on the top Chinese C9 League and former 985 universities for these opportunities. Rather than connecting to explicit foreign policy goals, these findings align with long-held hierarchies within Chinese higher education (Allen, 2017). Conversely, we did not find any overrepresentation of the Seven Sons of Defense within the TTB-funded research. While this does not suggest that there are no connections between the military and the TTB programs, it highlights how the output more resembles the domestic order of the education sector rather than foreign policy goals. The current study illustrates how China's lower-tiered institutions have been broadly excluded from high-level funding, aligning with past reports on the operations of universities in China (Altbach, 2016; Gao & Li, 2022).

Finally, we explored the international partner institutions and home countries of research partnerships through the TTB-funded journal articles. The results of our third research question show that the traditional Western powers have been favored as partners for these various projects. The U.S., Germany, England, Australia, and Canada accounted for roughly half of the research output in the dataset, highlighting previous concerns (Stoff, 2020; Tatlow et al., 2020,). Joint publications by scholars associated with American institutions especially dominated this indicator in the study at over 22% of all articles. Some of China's Asian neighbors such as Japan, Singapore, and South Korea were also well represented as research partners, aligning with Hannas and Chang (2020b). Overall, though, the global partnerships mirrored that of the global research landscape. Likewise, the individual foreign institutions most represented within TTB-funded articles came from within these locales, like large U.S. state higher education systems or renowned

research universities in Europe. These types of institutions have massive research scopes and connections around the world, meaning that it should be no surprise to find them on a list of this kind. However, some of the partners found in the research highlight the concern that scholars and other stakeholders have raised. For instance, the leading partner for articles with TTB funding was the U.S. Department of Energy, along with other scientific research institutes and affiliates from Europe. It should also be noted that there were relatively fewer partnerships with non-Western, non-elite universities or institutions abroad.

Future Directions

The results from this bibliometric analysis will not alleviate concerns from policymakers regarding espionage and technical theft levied at these Talents programs. There has certainly been a central focus on technical capacities and recruitment of experts from elite institutions. Our data cannot show the actions taken by individual scholars nor does it prove espionage. The results can only offer hints about the state of the program, building from other past work for the discussions and interpretations of the findings. Thus, our study recommends future research into more detailed and nuanced comparisons of those recruited through the TTB. Likewise, future work must consider the strategies used by the government regarding TTB operations. Considering these points, researchers should emphasize the returnee Chinese scholars via TTB, their publication performance, and career trajectories.

The key aspect of this research is that these are still partnerships between scholars, with information publicly available on research articles and readily available on the Web of Science. Western observers have viewed the TTB programs as antithetical to the open international system, taking advantage of the people-to-people and scholarly exchanges that have dramatically increased post-WWII, especially with the end of the Cold War (Joske, 2020). While the Chinese government has been keen to work within the international order during its rise, there are signs that the nation is now turning inwards regarding education and other sectors (Li, 2020; Lo & Allen, 2022). Our findings only add to this possible turn by the Chinese government, with a critique of the TTB era giving way to something new that is less globally focused. Sun and Cao (2021) argued, "There is real risk of decoupling between the two countries in technology and talent" (p. 6). For instance, Xiao-Jiang Li was fired from Emory University after it was discovered that he was part of the

Thousand Talents Program, derailing his research Huntington's disease (Keen, 2021). Because Li was a world-leading researcher in this specific illness, the space potentially lost years in finding a cure.

After decades of growing international cooperation and an open scientific system, the future might bring a much more closed world akin to the Cold War for higher education, research and development, and people-to-people exchanges. Today, there are parallels between Chinese scholars and programs in the current geopolitical environment. Although China may also choose a more inward path as it navigates a post-COVID-19 world (Li, 2020; Lo & Allen, 2022; Yang, 2020). While politicians and scholars squabble over the foreign policy tactics of China's international recruitment endeavors, potential individuals within these programs may not even fully recognize nor care about the geopolitical meaning of their participation. Indeed, individual scholars, academics, and other researchers returning to China have stronger economic and local grassroots incentives for returning home (Liu, 2021). However, the true cases of infractions and espionage related to the Thousand Talents Brand have tainted the broader relationship between China and partners around the world, hurting individual scholars trapped on either side and setting back global knowledge production.

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Empirical Article

Vulnerability and Well-Being: International Students' Experience in North Queensland, Australia

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Abstract

In this article, we examined the impact of COVID-19 on international students' experience and highlighted the importance of supporting this student group. We drew on findings from a mixed methods study in North Queensland, Australia. First, we discussed mental well-being and analysed how the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted individuals' mental health and well-being. We linked our analysis to international students' vulnerability and well-being, looking specifically at the

impact of financial and emotional distress. The findings of our study provided knowledge regarding the challenges international students face in North Queensland. In order to better meet the needs of international students, we argue that higher education institutions must provide tailored programs and services, including nurturing, supportive, responsive, and needs-orientated environments, to address the challenges international students face, and the mental health needs posed by the pandemic and beyond.

Keywords: COVID-19, higher education, international students, mental health, well-being, vulnerability

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International students represent one of the most relevant and biggest sojourner groups. As Neto (2020) describes, sojourners are "people who travel internationally to achieve a particular goal or objective with the expectation that they will return to their country of origin after the purpose of their travel has been achieved" (p. 457). Various scholars use the push-pull theoretical framework to explain factors influencing the decisions of students to cross national and cultural boundaries or territories of origin to study abroad (Bista & Dagley, 2015; Udah, 2021). Some students are pushed by unfavourable conditions, such as political instability and the lack of educational and employment opportunities, in their home countries. Others are pulled by better opportunities, such as quality research and education, scholarships, economic and employment opportunities, and possible immigration prospects in the host countries. For many international students who have been pushed or pulled to study abroad, their destination countries are lands of opportunity. They can further their education at a world-class institution, explore different cultures, broaden worldviews, enhance professional knowledge, learn new ways of thinking and behaving, gain globally recognised credentials and qualifications, and even solidify status on return to their countries of origin (Huang et al., 2020; Udah, 2021; Wu et al., 2015).

While most international students gain international educational experiences, it is important to emphasise that as sojourners many international students face numerous challenges and setbacks that many universities fail to recognise (Carter et al., 2017; Gautam et al., 2016; Udah, 2021). Research

indicates that studying abroad implies many adjustment challenges and problems (Altinyelken et al., 2020; Ambrósio et al., 2017; Firang, 2020; Gautam et al., 2016; Soong, 2020; Wu et al., 2015). In their study destinations, international students face unique hardships (Soong, 2020) and experience more academic and/or social difficulties than their domestic counterparts (Ambrósio et al., 2017; Firang, 2020). Despite many benefits that cross-cultural education offers, many international students have to cope with challenges associated with adjusting to a new (unfamiliar) culture, social, and educational setting (Ahrari et al., 2019; Altinyelken et al., 2020). Also, they deal with language barriers and must learn different cultural norms (Ambrósio et al., 2017). In addition, international students often experience social isolation, loneliness, homesickness, loss of interpersonal contacts, financial difficulties, discrimination, and prejudice (Ambrósio et al., 2017; Firang, 2020; Gautam et al., 2016; Soong, 2020; Wu et al., 2015). These challenges can trigger feelings of hopelessness, uneasiness, insecurity, inferiority, depression, anxiety, loss, and other mental health conditions (Carter et al., 2017; Wu et al., 2015). The challenges have significant implications for student success, retention, completion, and achievement (van Agteren et al., 2019). Thus, to improve educational outcomes and well-being for international students, universities need to support international students to cope with adjustment challenges as well as psychological distress that could lead to mental health concerns (Carter et al., 2017).

As social work researchers and scholars, we recognise the importance of promoting international students' mental health and well-being across the higher education sector. Drawing on findings from our research project examining the experiences of international students in North Queensland (NQ), Australia during the COVID-19 pandemic, this study aims to show the pandemic-induced challenges and their impact on the students' mental health. By identifying multiple stressors and risk factors, our findings hope to provide insightful knowledge regarding the unique experiences of international students and their mental health needs that must be addressed properly in institutions of higher education.

Vulnerability and Well-Being of International Students

Mental health is a state of mental well-being in which people can cope well with life stresses, realise their potential, function productively and fruitfully

at work and in their private life, and are able to contribute to their communities and the wider society (World Health Organisation, 2018). Globally, having good mental health is important and is a priority for the health agenda. Having good mental health has a huge impact on every aspect of our lives as individuals because it affects behaviour, physical health, work, and relationships, as well as the people around us (Commonwealth of Australia, 2021). However, mental well-being goes beyond the absence of mental illness. It encompasses a range of positive mental, emotional, physical, social, spiritual motivational states, relating to feeling resilient, functioning well, and being able to connect with others (van Agteren et al., 2019).

There has been an increasing focus on the primary importance of supporting and promoting the well-being of students across the higher education sector (Baik et al., 2019). This is because: first, mental well-being of students is an important public health issue (Barkham et al., 2019). Second, mental well-being strongly correlates with a student's academic performance and general study experience (Huang et al., 2020). Third, research indicates that higher education students have a higher incidence of mental health problems, experiencing high levels of psychological distress, depressive symptoms, and other mental health difficulties (Carter et al., 2017).

Compared to domestic students, international students face more difficulties (Udah, 2021), are at greater risk for poor adjustment (Ahrari et al., 2019), and are more susceptible to mental health problems and well-being issues (Huang et al., 2020). For example, the stress of high tuition fees may compound their pre-existing stress (Carter et al., 2017). Even before the COVID-19 pandemic, international students are particularly vulnerable (Altinyelken et al., 2020; Firang, 2020). A group is defined as vulnerable when they are significantly likely to experience harm while having insufficient ability or means to protect themselves (Udah et al., 2019). Factors such as language barriers, financial difficulties, cultural stress, racism, discrimination or prejudice, and poverty contribute to experiences of vulnerability among international students (Huang et al., 2020; Wu et al., 2015).

International students' vulnerability derives from their condition as migrants and their class condition as students. In times of crises, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, international students experience additional challenges due

to factors including social isolation, exclusion, marginalisation, unemployment, financial uncertainties, work visa restrictions, and lack of access to adequate resources. These additional challenges can lead to poorer mental well-being (Zhai & Du, 2020).

International students' mental well-being is an important area of interest for theory, research, and policy practice. Following Nussbaum's (2011) capabilities approach, we conceptualise international students' well-being in terms of their capabilities to achieve their potential as human beings. Assessing international students' well-being is, therefore, based on understanding their personal and social circumstances. This assessment also includes understanding the real opportunities available to them and the kind of life they can pursue and effectively are able to lead—for example, being able to study, read, socialise, work, and participate in host society life. Thus, in accordance with Nussbaum (2011), we argue that international students' well-being depends both on what they are able to do and can be in their host institutions and countries. It is living in a way worthy of human dignity and the capacity to achieve their potential as human beings (Nussbaum, 2011).

COVID-19 and International Students

The COVID-19 crisis was first reported in Wuhan, Hubei in China, in December 2019 (Cao et al., 2020). Due to its rapid spread across the globe, it was officially labelled as a pandemic on March 11, 2020. By a pandemic, COVID-19 is seen as an epidemic occurring worldwide, crossing international boundaries and affecting many people (Last, 2001). The pandemic is not just a public health emergency, but also an economic and social crisis that causes both national and international concerns. As Francis and Udah (2020) explain, "it is a health crisis with a huge impact on social and economic welfare. It is also a welfare issue with a huge impact on public health. It is a crisis like no other in modern human history, disrupting almost every aspect of our lives and society" (p. 167). The pandemic has significantly led to a spectrum of psychological, psychosocial, and economic consequences (Montemurro, 2020; Zhai & Du, 2020), transforming relationships among individuals, families, and communities (Paredes et al. 2020).

Professor Shekhar Saxena at Harvard University argues that the COVID-19 pandemic is affecting people's mental health and well-being in three ways:

First, there is the *psychological impact*, which comes from fear and uncertainty associated with the virus. During the pandemic, many people have developed a fear of getting infected or dying, and fear of the virus striking their own family members or city or country. Second, there is the *feeling of loss*. In this pandemic, many people have lost their freedom to socialise and do what they want, leaving many people more distressed, disrupted with a persistent feeling of something missing. Third, there is the *feeling of hopelessness and helplessness*, which are characteristic signs of depression. Whilst not everyone has anxiety and depression as an illness, many people have experienced stress and distress during the pandemic (Saxena as cited in Bhargava, 2020). For some international students, it has become symptomatic, and even evolved into a mental health disorder, impairing normal functioning and requiring help (Cao et al., 2020).

Indeed, the COVID-19 pandemic has brought unprecedented changes to higher education institutions worldwide, resulting in significant pressure and challenges for international students. The pandemic led higher education institutions to shutting down their campuses and suspending in-person class attendance, having consequences on day-to-day life, mental health, and well-being of international students (Soong, 2020). For many international students with pre-existing mental health needs, the closure of campuses or suspension of on-campus learning means a lack of access to resources, decreased socialisation, and exacerbated triggers of poor mental health (Cao et al., 2020).

While mental health problems are believed to exist along a continuum from mild, time-limited distress to severe mental health conditions (Patel et al., 2018), the pandemic has influenced where people are situated on that continuum (United Nations, 2020). Many international students who coped well before the pandemic are now less able to cope because of the multiple stressors generated by the pandemic (Zhai & Du, 2020). Also, international students who had few experiences of anxiety, depression, and distress before the pandemic, now experience an increase, with some developing mental health conditions (Cao et al., 2020). In addition, international students who previously had a mental health condition, now experience a worsening of their condition and reduced functioning, suffering from poor mental health and well-being (Firang, 2020).

Existing studies suggest that the changes implemented by universities to cope with the pandemic and meet government regulations impacted on

international students' mental well-being (Firang, 2020; Paredes et al., 2020; Zhai & Du, 2020). As universities transitioned to online learning, many international students felt alone and disconnected (Firang, 2020). Some reported significant distress (Zhai & Du, 2020) and compounded negative emotions (Montemurro, 2020; Paredes et al., 2020), including experiences of shock, stress, isolation, frustration, trauma, depression, anxiety, fears of contracting COVID-19, betrayal, grief, and confusion (Cao et al., 2020).

Research has shown a strong correlation between stressful life events and the incidence of mental illness (Caron et al., 2012). In fact, international students experiencing social and psychological distress are at an increased risk of suffering poor mental health and well-being (Firang, 2020), which can have detrimental effects on physical health and academic success (van Agteren et al., 2019). Psychological distress impact negatively on student success, academic performance, and learning experience (Baik et al., 2019). It is, therefore, important for higher education institutions as well as the wider communities to step up and endeavour to understand international students' unique experiences, vulnerabilities, and challenges. There is a need to become more aware of what can be done to provide timely and effective interventions for international students in order to prevent psychological distress and improve outcomes.

Research Methods and Procedures

Our research examined how COVID-19 impacted the mental health and well-being of international students in NQ, where there has been an increase in the number of international students from around the world. The research is a mixed methods study, employing quantitative and qualitative techniques. We found that combining different research techniques for data collection would provide the most pragmatic, suitable, and helpful approach for triangulation in answering the research questions (Clark & Ivankova, 2015; Creswell & Clark, 2017) and expanding the evidence base for this study (Shorten & Smith, 2017).

To understand the complexities of the issues being investigated, we adopted a sequential explanatory approach. Quantitative data were collected and analysed in the first phase and then qualitative data were collected and analysed to explain quantitative data (Shorten & Smith, 2017). The quantitative results informed the interview questions. The participants were purposefully selected in

the second, qualitative phase (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). We used understandings from participants' subjective experiences of being international students in NQ during the COVID-19 pandemic to explain in greater details the initial quantitative findings (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The study received ethics approval from the James Cook University Human Research Ethics Committee. The criteria for inclusion were that 1) participants were international students on student visa aged 18 years and over and 2) were enrolled at a university in NQ.

Quantitative Phase: Survey (Online Questionnaire)

An online survey was first conducted to reach a wider sample of international students in NQ. The survey link was sent out to the international student population via university noticeboards, the office of international students, and community organisations. Permission/approval was sought from organisations where sites were moderated at which survey links were disseminated. The survey consisted of sixty questions. The quantitative survey collected data in different domains, including identity, ethnicity, education level, pandemic impacts and coping, social needs, socioeconomic status, and life priorities.

A total of 58 students completed the survey. Of the respondents, 15 (25.9%) reported their gender as male and 43 (74.1%) as female. In terms of age, 34 (58.6%) respondents were between 25-34 years of age; 14 (24.1%) were between 18-24 years of age; and 10 (17.2%) were between 34-45 years of age. As for marital status, 28 (48.3%) were married, two (3.5%) were engaged, 27 (46.6%) were never been married, and one (1.7%) was in a de facto relationship. The respondents come from India (n = 35), China (n = 7), Nepal (n = 3), Nigeria (n = 3), Hong Kong (n = 2), Philippines (n = 2), United Kingdom (n = 2), Ecuador (n = 1), Ghana (n = 1), Kenya (n = 1), Sri Lanka (n = 1), and United States (n = 1). As described above, the majority came from India.

Qualitative Phase: Interviews and Participants

To enhance understanding of international students' experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic, open-ended, interview questions were used for the qualitative phase to explore in more depth the initial quantitative survey findings (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). After an examination of the initial survey responses, the researchers decided on the themes that emerged from the responses. The key

themes—the impacts of the pandemic, challenges, well-being, and satisfaction—were explored in more depth with a sample of international students residing in NQ. A purposive snowball sampling method was used to recruit participants. The participants (n = 20) consisted of international students (13 females and 7 males), between the ages of 22 and 40 years.

Table 1: Demographic Information about the Interview Participants

Name (Pseudonym)	Age group	Gender	Origin country	Educational level	Arrival visa	Year arrived
Abigail	18-24	Female	India	Master's degree	Student Visa	2019
Amber	25-34	Female	India	Master's degree	Student Visa	2020
Ann	25-34	Female	India	Master's degree	Student Visa	2019
Arabella	25-34	Female	Ecuador	Master's degree	Student Visa	2017
Ashley	34-40	Female	India	Master's degree	Student Visa	2020
Camila	18-24	Female	Hong Kong	Master's degree	Student Visa	2020
Chelsea	25-34	Female	Sri Lanka	Master's degree	Student Visa	2018
Dorcas	25-34	Female	India	Doctorate	Student Visa	2019
Frederick	34-40	Male	Ghana	Doctorate	Student Visa	2017
Jeffrey	25-34	Male	India	Master's degree	Student Visa	2019
Patience	25-34	Female	India	Master's degree	Student Visa	2020
Paul	25-34	Male	India	Master's degree	Student Visa	2020
Nicole	34-40	Female	India	Master's degree	Student Visa	2013
Rachel	25-34	Female	India	Master's degree	Student Visa	2020

Rosita	25-34	Female	Kenya	Master's degree	Student Visa	2018
Sandy	25-34	Female	India	Master's degree	Student Visa	2019
Sean	25-34	Male	India	Master's degree	Student Visa	2019
Sergio	34-40	Male	India	Master's degree	Student Visa	2020
Simon	25-34	Male	Nepal	Master's degree	Student Visa	2020
Thiago	25-34	Male	England	Doctorate	Student Visa	2018

Written informed consent was obtained from each participant before participation. Also, the purpose of the study were explained to them. As Table 1 indicates, participants came from Ecuador, Ghana, Hong Kong, India, Kenya, Nepal, Sri Lanka, and England. Similar to survey respondents, more than half of the participants came from India. Participation in the study was voluntary and participants were assured of their privacy and confidentiality.

In-depth semi-structured interviews (40-60 minutes) were conducted with the participants, allowing the researchers to gain a rich understanding of participants' experiences and challenges (Patton, 2015; Udah & Singh, 2019). The interviews were exploratory and stimulated the narration of experiences that would remain unexpressed within a questionnaire format (Udah & Singh, 2019). The interview questions focused on participants' decisions to study abroad, study experiences, personal and socioeconomic conditions, satisfaction, and well-being. Most interviews were conducted and recorded via zoom, with a few face-to-face in the researchers' office while complying with social distancing guidelines. The interview data were recorded with the permission of participants and transcribed verbatim for analysis.

Thematic Analysis

Thematic analysis was used to analyse the interview data—to identify, interpret, and report common thematic elements across the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Cresswell & Cresswell, 2018). The data were coded using NVivo. During the coding process, the researchers searched for keywords, buzzwords, and

metaphors to support analysis and interpretation (Udah et al., 2019). Themes that emerged were related to financial challenges, unemployment or loss of income, loss of productivity, isolation, and lack of social connectedness driven largely by COVID-19 restrictions. (The themes are presented later in this article.) We drew on interview data extracted from six participants to establish and provide valuable insights into the experiences of international students during the pandemic. Participants were given pseudonyms to protect their identity. The quotes used in the following section are direct quotations and excerpts from the transcriptions of the qualitative interviews.

Findings/Results

Based on the responses of survey respondents and the accounts of several participants, many international students in NQ experienced stress and distress during the pandemic, impacting their studies and well-being. For example, survey respondents and many interview participants reported experiences of depression and anxiety. When respondents were asked in the survey as to how they felt during the pandemic, 21 (36.2%) respondents felt anxious, 14 (24.1%) lost, two (3.4%) abandoned, and six (10.3%) supported. Similarly, several participants felt anxious and helpless during the pandemic. As Sean, a Social Work student from India, explained, "They [international students] were basically struggling due to hopelessness."

When Sean arrived in Australia in 2019, he received minimal support and struggled to adjust to life because of cultural differences. He had also troubles getting to know how things work, and finding part-time job. He found it difficult and stressful when his university closed because of the COVID-19 pandemic. He was anxious and became confused about what will happen to his studies. Sean stated:

> I was a bit confused about what is going to happen like my studies and everything that I got. So, because of that, I started going down a bit. Yeah, that time, due to online education and everything, yeah, I found it difficult.

In the above quote, Sean talked about 'going down a bit.' He felt confused because of everything happening during the pandemic. His account indicated that the disruptions, pressure, and restrictions brought by the pandemic resulted in

significant social, emotional, and mental health challenges among international students. Like Sean, many participants felt anxious, confused, and down a bit emotionally. They also found things difficult and felt everything was beyond their control.

For many participants and survey respondents, the COVID-19 pandemic further exacerbated their challenges and vulnerability, impacting their mental health and well-being. For example, 56.14% (n = 32) of survey respondents extremely worried about the impact of the pandemic on their life and psychological well-being. The pandemic impact on the mental and physical health of international students in NQ was also well-illustrated in the accounts of many participants. For example, Dorcas, who is a doctoral student, considered the pandemic as having a huge impact on her studies, personal life, and mental health. While Dorcas sees herself as a studious person, she believed that the pandemic was affecting not only her work productivity and performance but also her mental health and well-being. Dorcas noted:

> I have not been able to see my family for two years. So, it has also affected my study because if I am not feeling happy here, how can I focus on my work?… I am emotionally down because I cannot meet my people, my family and I am not getting enthusiasm or motivation to continue my work. So, it is impacting my study and personal life a lot.

There is an indication in the above quote that Dorcas' productivity and performance reduced because of lack of social support, enthusiasm and motivation to continue her studies. Dorcas felt isolated and believed that visiting her family in India would re-energise her. She added:

> I am emotionally very weak…. If I would have gone to India and come back like meet them, refresh my mind, and come back; I would be more energetic or more motivated for my work.... I think a lot of dropping out of my PhD because I am more concerned about my mental health and for my well-being.

Dorcas articulations above highlighted the importance of family support for health and well-being of international students. The above quote suggested that family support could help strengthen international students' coping skills in the

face of adversity. One of Dorcas' biggest challenges in Australia was socialising and connecting with people. Dorcas articulated:

> As an international student, one of the biggest challenges I feel is connecting with people. You are from a different cultural background, different language, and worldviews but they are different. So, it has happened to me with socialising with people and I think, sometimes, I am isolated…. So, this is the main problem. I like to make friends here, local, and the main causes are language or cultural difference…. The ways people here live are quite different, and our mentality is also different that might be a reason I could not make some friends here.

While studying abroad provide opportunities to further education and international experience, Dorcas' account above suggested that it also brought challenges. For many participants in this study, language and cultural barriers were significant problems they faced in NQ. However, almost half (44.83%) of survey respondents indicated that language barrier was the most important challenge facing international students in Australia. Interview participants confirmed that language and cultural barriers could lead to isolation. Like Dorcas, many participants felt isolated and disconnected not only because of language barriers but also because they were far away from their families and close friends, ethnic community and cultural environment.

For many participants, the pandemic-induced disruptions and restrictions together with their existing challenges affected their well-being. Explaining how the COVID-19 pandemic affected her, Arabella from Ecuador stated:

> As an international student, it was very hard time for me…. I lost my job and dad, and I was not entitled to get the support the university was providing…. I felt more disconnected and was not able to travel home. It affected me financially and emotionally…. It was a huge thing. The COVID-19 thing affected me.

Arabella came to Australia, believing that her studies would be an open door for success in life. However, the pandemic hit her hard. She lost her job and her father during the peak of the crisis. Not only that she was ineligible to receive support from her university, she could not also travel home for her father's funeral.

Combined with linguistic, cultural, and financial challenges, the pandemic had a real impact on her mental health and well-being. Linking the topsy-turvy emotional rollercoaster of COVID-19-induced stress to her experience as an international student in NQ, Arabella explained that being an international student came with a package of challenges. She described international students as people in "a constant rollercoaster of emotions." Arabella elaborated:

> One day, you gonna feel like you are able to get anything that you want. You feel so capable. You feel that everything is going perfectly in your life. And tomorrow, you gonna see yourself on the floor and feel, sometimes, extremely sad, extremely useless, and extremely disappointed that you are not capable to do things because of all the things, challenges that you are facing in different aspects. Next day, you gonna laugh of that feeling—you know why, I was so sad yesterday and everything is so perfect now because then you gonna maybe receive good news about the assignment that you took. Yeah, you did that work very well and later, maybe, you gonna meet friends and you gonna share emotions. Yeah, I will say that it is a rollercoaster because you learn in a good sense and in a bad sense. All of this makes you, makes part of the experience of studying and living here.

Many participants found themselves on a similar constant rollercoaster of emotions. While 75.44% (n = 43) of survey respondents reported that they were satisfied with life in Australia, additional difficulties brought by the pandemic made many participants felt stressed and depressed. Despite pre-existing challenges of international students before COVID-19, the pandemic was sending many international students on emotional ups and downs, which were compounded by their lack of support from families, friends, and even from the government of their host countries.

The pandemic brought additional challenges to international students in NQ. According to our online survey, international students in NQ had deep concerns about their ability to pay their tuition fees. More than 72% (n = 42) of survey respondents reported that paying tuition fees and getting jobs were the most

important challenges facing international students in NQ. For example, Rosita, a female Master of Social Work student from Kenya, said:

> I think right now with the pandemic and everything, I am unable to get the tuition fees. It has been a challenge for me. It is really a challenge because before, you can get somebody from home to assist you. Right now, everybody's life is really tight and so yeah, I am thinking tuition fee is what makes it so difficult.

When COVID-19 broke out, everything Rosita was expecting crashed. She was expecting to receive support from her husband in the USA and mother in Kenya. These supports never happened. Her husband lost his job and her mother could not travel to support her. As the borders were closed and with no job, Rosita worried a lot on how to raise money for her tuition fees during the pandemic. Consequently, she found it difficult and very stressful. Like Rosita, many other participants worried about their tuition fee and being unemployed during the pandemic. Explaining how the pandemic affected her, Ann from India said:

> Yeah for me, it is financial instability because more than the pandemic in Townsville, my family was also affected in India. So, my parents were like I should try to find a good job and pay my fees. So I found it like a responsibility. So, when this pandemic came in, luckily, I had a job. I used to get to work like 20 hours a week, thankfully and I could pay like half of my fees. But then, I was always skeptical about my job whether I would get work to do and I was like always praying please: I need work because I don't want to be a burden to my parents again. I guess all international students were concerned mostly about the money and the fees we pay and how we could at least ease the burden of our parents so that would be fine as well…

Similar accounts were shared by other participants. In addition, Ann's account is consistent with the survey findings. In the survey, 45.45% (n = 25) of respondents strongly agreed that COVID-19 would decrease their income while 56.90% (n = 33) extremely worried about their finances. Given that many participants lost their part-time jobs, and had not enough income nor other sources of support in Australia during the pandemic, financial hardship meant that some of

them could not meet their daily needs nor afford basic necessities, such as food and rent. Paul, a Master of Social Work student from India, described what life had been for him as an international student:

> Being an international student coming from India, times have really been hard for me. Coming from a middle class family, I came here with an education loan. So I have to keep an eye on my expenses. Also, I can't always depend on my dad for my pocket money. It's like not very ethical of me asking for money. So what I do is I try to do like several other jobs which is why I'm working at McDonald's and also I am doing workout program for my friends and family back in India.

There is an indication, from the above quote, that Paul was struggling to make ends meet. As an international student, he earned just enough money to live on. He finds his condition very depressing. Paul added:

> It has been a depressing experience. After spending so much money, taking education loan, hoping to study at university and experience the campus life, COVID-19 shattered my dreams…. Financial stress is one of my biggest challenges since COVID-19. I do not really make a lot of money at my workplace. Sometimes, I split my money, eat less just to survive, and live a cheaper life. Back in India, I was living lavishly and eating whatever I want.

Such plights were not peculiar to Paul. Paul's account captured some of the pains and distress of international students during the COVID-19 pandemic. The overwhelming majority of the participants (95%) felt depressed and experienced high levels of psychological distress during the pandemic. The majority felt unable to support themselves financially due to the pandemic. As Paul explained, the pandemic placed international students in difficult financial positions and shattered their dreams of studying, living and working in NQ. While the pandemic did not jeopardize their study plans, financial difficulties during the pandemic added to participants' stress, depression and anxiety levels, impacting their academic performance and mental well-being.

Discussion

The inflow of international students in Australia has increased significantly. International students, most of whom are on temporary visas, accounted for approximately 30% of higher education enrolments in Australia (Dodd et al., 2021). As of September 2021, there were over 356, 143 international students in the higher education sector, representing 52% of the total population of all student visa holders studying in Australia (Department of Education, Skills and Employment, 2021). These students see Australia as a place to achieve their study abroad dreams and aspirations (Udah, 2021). The students also contribute to the diversity and internationalisation of their classrooms, campuses, and communities (Wu et al., 2015). However, the pandemic has taken its toll on international students by bringing additional challenges to them, impacting their mental health and well-being. The impact of the pandemic on the mental health and well-being of international students in NQ was well illustrated in the accounts of many participants.

The findings revealed that international students encountered different challenges and setbacks during the pandemic. The findings from the qualitative interviews with participants were consistent with the survey findings. The findings can inform higher education institutions on what can be done to support the well-being of international students. As a crucial part of students' academic success and overall study experience, identifying ways to strengthen well-being—physically, mentally, emotionally, socially, and spiritually—is therefore critical in enabling international students to cope with the challenges of study abroad and achieve their potential as human beings (Nussbaum, 2011).

As our participants' accounts indicated, international students are vulnerable to the impacts of COVID-19 due to social isolation, unemployment, financial uncertainties, work visa restrictions, marginalisation, and exclusion from government subsidies. Our findings also revealed that international students experienced substantial levels of psychological stress due to the pandemic. The emotional, social, economic, and personal challenges that several participants reported have the potential to adversely affect mental health and well-being. Therefore, there is a need for higher education institutions and policy-makers to consider the multiple stressors, challenges, setbacks, and risk factors exacerbated by the pandemic that contribute to stress and psychological distress among international students when recruiting students from overseas.

The pandemic has laid bare the vulnerabilities and structural challenges that many international students still experience when living and studying abroad. Our findings provided knowledge regarding the international students' well-being and experience and highlighted areas that deserve attention in mitigating the impact of COVID-19 on international students. As our study revealed, the stress, anxiety, and depression experienced by many participants resulted not only from their financial uncertainties and difficulties finding employment, but also from their isolation, lack of social support, family, and friends during the pandemic. The pandemic related stresses are likely to persist as long-term stressors, affecting international students' physical, cognitive, emotional, and interpersonal functioning, as well as performance (Huang et al., 2020), leading to learning difficulties and course attrition (Baik et al., 2019). Therefore, every effort should be made to respond to the mental health and well-being needs of international students.

The well-being of international students depends on a fine balance of teacher support, family support, social support, and coping strategies (Shadowen et al., 2019). Often, their families and friends are valuable sources of resilience and support in dealing with issues, such as academic challenges, language barriers, acculturation stress, financial difficulties, social isolation, discrimination, difficulties accessing resources, and other issues associated with studying and living abroad (Huang et al., 2020). Support from families, friends, teachers and university environment can help to build and strengthen their resilience, consequently enhancing their well-being. However, the lack of emotional and social support can be a risk factor for poor health and well-being among international students (Soong, 2020). A lack of support can increase risk for depression and anxiety (Shadowen et al., 2019). Depression and anxiety, resulting from the lack of social support, language barriers, and perceived discrimination, are likely to have significant impact on the academic performance, interpersonal relationships, well-being and overall study experience of international students (Huang et al., 2020). Therefore, it is important that higher education institutions support and promote the well-being of international students by enabling them to strengthen their resilience and develop inner, personal abilities (Nussbaum, 2011).

There is also a need to provide nurturing and effective supportive environment that allows them to use their abilities (Dodd et al., 2021). To do this,

however, higher education institutions need to be aware of and understand the pandemic related challenges and other potential sources of setbacks in the lives of international students. There is no doubt that unexpected events and emergencies such as the COVID-19 pandemic can make people, including international students feel anxious, and stressed, producing significant emotional effects detrimental to mental health and well-being (Commonwealth of Australia, 2021; Paredes et al., 2020). Similarly, the loss of income and social support and connectedness afforded by COVID-19 restrictions can increase risks for mental health and well-being of international students. As indicated in the accounts of many participants, a lack of social support and employment are significant risk factors for poor mental health and well-being. While their financial hardship can be linked to their loss or lack of part-time jobs during the pandemic, the lack of social and emotional support can adversely impact on their coping strategies and academic learning and engagement (Huang et al., 2020). Thus, recognising international students' risk factors can help higher education institutions to plan and provide interventions to properly address the mental health and well-being issues caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Higher education institutions have social and ethical responsibilities to ensure the mental health and well-being of international students. As social and emotional support is vital for student well-being and continued learning (Dodd et al., 2021), it would help also to provide a learning environment that enables international students to achieve their potential by engaging in learning that is of high quality, meaningful, genuinely relevant, and potentially transformative (Dodd et al., 2021; Udah, 2021; Zhai & Du, 2020). Given the emotional and physical impacts of the pandemic, it is important to offer supportive resources and services with multifaceted strategies to address the challenges of international students. Thus, higher education institutions need to develop and implement timely and effective well-being interventions for international students. Such interventions could be provided through intentional outreach aiming to improve access to available support services by international students with special needs and circumstances. Many participants see it as very important to supporting their well-being. Reaching out to students intentionally can help improve access to service and enable students to control their feelings and stay away from the misfortunes brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic (Zhai & Du, 2020).

In addition, the findings of this study indicated the need to ease international students' financial burden. Higher education institutions need to consider providing financial assistance and more scholarships for international students, especially for the students whose employments are restricted and who cannot receive support from both their families and governments of host countries. However, this financial support must be paralleled with culturally competent and easily accessible mental health support (Soong, 2020). Furthermore, there is a need for higher education institutions to support the language proficiency and cultural integration of international students. For some participants, their lack of English proficiency and cultural differences are barriers to their access to adequate resources and successful socialisation in NQ. This, in turn, can lead to poorer mental health, and well-being outcomes (Paredes et al., 2020; Zhai & Du, 2020). Supporting international students' language proficiency and cultural integration could enhance their academic learning, and participation in society (Wu et al., 2015). Many international students in Australia could benefit from workshops and oriental programs where they can learn about Australian culture and become familiar with colloquial English and common slang words used in Australia. Such workshops and programs can teach international students about Australian academic, social, and cultural mores for effective communication both in academic and non-academic settings (Wu et al., 2015). It is imperative to educate international students on mental health issues. Educating students on mental health issues can increase their awareness and understanding of mental health problems, enhance their ability to cope with daily life challenges, participate meaningfully in society, and encourage them to seek professional help when needed (Barkham et al., 2019). Therefore, providing mental health literacy and stress management training would be important for supporting their well-being (Dias et al., 2018) and encouraging the development of the core human capabilities (Nussbaum, 2011).

While experiences of international students may differ, from a practical standpoint, it is important that higher education institutions take a holistic—a whole-of-institution—approach to creating a supportive learning environment and address the risk factors common among them (Wright & Winslade, 2018). Taking the holistic approach requires introducing a range of programs and workshops, which include special orientation for learning and development of intercultural competence and friendship, tutoring programs to guide international students to

succeed in their academic learning, and counselling services to support their psychological stress (Wu et al., 2015). In addition to providing services targeted to international students with adjustment difficulties (Ahrari et al., 2019), creating a healthy working and learning environment for everyone would benefit the student community at large. This process also calls for developing a model of care that is more creative, responsive, and needs-orientated for students' well-being (Dodd et al., 2021). Programs that prevent international students from feeling a worsening sense of entrapment or being boxed-in by their circumstances should inform such a model of care (Soong, 2020). To effectively support and promote the mental health and well-being of international students, models of care and support must be sensitive to cultural differences (Huang et al., 2020). It is not sufficient to simply improve existing services, but a greater understanding of how international students think about and talk about mental health and well-being issues is required to better meet their needs. Thus, it is essential for higher education institutions to incorporate, and strengthen, if needed, culturally responsive services and practices that are respectful, inclusive, and relevant to the needs of international students (Cunningham, 2019).

Implications and Conclusion

Using qualitative and quantitative techniques of data collection and analysis, this article has explored and examined the impact of COVID-19 on international students living and studying in NQ. While the findings of this study may not be generalised beyond the study participants, studies that have examined the experiences of international students in other parts of Australia during the pandemic may be compared to check whether the accounts reported in this study match well with national trends. Due to the word limit, the current study does not report other variables, such as migration motivations and reasons for living and studying in NQ, Australia. Future studies exploring these variables and needs of international students in regional areas of Australia beyond the COVID-19 pandemic would be beneficial.

Given that there are to date, no empirical accounts in the available literature of the impact of COVID-19 on international students' well-being in NQ, this study is timely. The accounts of study participants were socially and culturally relevant and provided rich insights into what life has been for international students

in NQ, Australia. The accounts were chosen not because they represent the general experience of international students, but because they best revealed something about the impact of COVID-19 in relation to the well-being of international students (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Furthermore, they shed some light on and enhance understanding of the experiences of being an international student in regional areas of Australia and further contributed to the field of comparative and international education, theoretically, methodologically, and practically.

The participants' experience can be applied to decision-making processes, heuristically or dynamically, allowing higher education institutions to understand international students' challenges and risk factors exacerbated by the pandemic and strengthen their resources while ensuring access to effective services that improve well-being and outcomes. In accordance with Nussbaum's (2011) capabilities approach to well-being, we argue that supporting and promoting the well-being of international students is of primary importance. We call for higher education institutions to play a crucial role in enabling international students to achieve their potential as human beings, thereby, fulfilling their core mission of providing high-quality learning experiences and positive graduate outcomes (Baik et al., 2019). As Nussbaum (2011) argues, there is a need to promote justice through improving everyone's well-being. The impacts of the pandemic on international students' well-being require higher education institutions to prioritise steps towards social justice and inclusive practices. Such institution-level endeavors would facilitate international students in developing certain core human capabilities essential to thriving in their classrooms, campuses, and host societies. Creating justice-oriented and inclusive practices can be accomplished by enabling international students to live full and creative lives, ensuring physical and mental health, promoting freedom of thought and critical reflection, providing opportunities for emotional development, and granting permission for social interaction, recreational activities, and participation (Nussbaum, 2011). These core human capabilities are necessary components for promoting international students' well-being and improving their overall outcomes.

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Empirical Article

Acculturation and Social Media: How Do International Students Engage with Facebook While Abroad?

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Abstract

This study investigates the relationship between Facebook use and acculturation using Berry's acculturation orientations and Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT) as theoretical frameworks. The researchers followed 15 international students' Facebook walls during their first and second semester in the U.S. by creating a fake Facebook page to be added as the international students' social network. The major findings of this study include a) the pattern of Facebook postings was the same during the semester, b) international students used convergence communication strategies to better communicate with people in their network, and c) some participants' Facebook postings indicate a strong identification with their home culture.

Keywords: acculturation, Berry's acculturation model, Communication Accommodation Theory, Facebook, international students

Introduction

Advancements in technology have changed the experiences of international students while studying abroad. For example, even in the host country, international students are able to access a large percentage of home country media through the Internet. Among many contextual factors that are associated with adaptation to a new culture, media use is believed to be one of the critical factors in the acculturation process since it is highly related to an individual's language skills, communication behavior, information-seeking options, and opportunities for social interaction (Yang et al., 2004). With the advent of Web 2.0 technologies and platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and other Social Network Sites (SNS), international students studying abroad can more easily and efficiently maintain contact with their friends, family, and home culture. Furthermore, college students, domestic, or international, constitute a significant population that uses SNS (Raacke & Bonds-Raacke, 2008). The aim of this study is twofold. The first aim is to investigate how international students communicate with others using Facebook, one of the most widely used SNS around the world, during their first and second semester in the US. The second aim is to investigate how international students negotiate their identity on Facebook during their first and second semester in the US.

Theoretical Framework: Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT)

In a new cultural environment, international students are expected to learn and adapt to the norms of the host society if they are to function successfully. Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT) posits that people use two types of orientation: convergent orientation and divergent orientation (Gallois et al., 2005). When people use convergent orientation, they will accommodate to their interlocutor's communicative strategies, while those who employ divergent orientation strategies are attempting to differentiate themselves from their interlocutors and are accentuating their differences (Gallois et al., 2005). That is, if international students are trying to fit-in in the new environment, they might use a convergence communication style even when using a SNS, such as communicating with American friends using English and talking about American lives. On the other hand, using convergence communication style might feel awkward or even betrayal of one's true self, then they might use divergence communication style to show how different they are. In that case, those international students might communicate with people back home using their native language and talk about home country matters. In terms of language choice, then, international students who have English as an additional language may use English as a way of practicing a convergence orientation. On the other hand, when international students want to diverge from American mainstream culture while interacting with American friends, they might use their native language when posting on their Facebook walls.

Literature Review

Acculturation and the Use of Facebook

Previous literature has documented that use of a host country SNS facilitates acculturation for international students (Li & Tsai, 2015). For example, Lin et al. (2011) found that the use of Facebook helped international students adapt to US society. At the same time, international students can also maintain access with the home country culture via a home country SNS (e.g., Renren in China). For example, Zhang (2012) found that the international students from China used Chinese SNS (Renren) to maintain their home country social ties while abroad. In a new environment, it is not uncommon for people to feel stressed due to unfamiliar foods, culture, social systems, language, and more; thus, newcomers may experience what Berry (1971) called "acculturative stress." Using the home country SNS to help alleviate acculturation stress and maintain high psychological well-being, on the surface, may appear to be logical; however, previous literature offers evidence contradicting these intuitions. Park et al. (2014), in fact, found that Korean and Chinese international college students in the US, who used only Facebook, demonstrated significantly less acculturation stress than those students who used both Facebook and a home country SNS or a home country SNS exclusively. Similarly, the level of psychological well-being was significantly higher with the group that only used Facebook compared to

those who used both Facebook and home country SNSs. Zhang (2012) found that students who engaged with Chinese SNS (Renren) experienced greater swings in culture shock than students who only engaged with Facebook. These results are consistent with the linear or unidimensional acculturation process view (e.g., Kim, 1979). That is, in order to adjust to a new culture, people need to spend more time with people in the new culture and spend less time with people with their home culture. It should be noted, though, that Kim's theory is focused on long-term adaptation and does not address short-term stays such as foreign exchange students (Kim, 2005).

At the same time, because causality of the research (Park et al., 2014; Zhang, 2012) is not clear, the directionality is still unknown. As such, it may be possible that international students who have less acculturative stress may consume more of the host country SNS. That is, these international students may have already adjusted to a new culture. In order to understand this the causality between acculturation processes and SNSs, this study focused on international students who were in their first or second semester of study and who had never lived in the US before as its research population. By observing the real time Facebook wall postings, we were able to observe and document the changes or lack thereof from the beginning of the participant's study abroad experience.

In addition, the increased use of Facebook might reduce opportunities to communicate with others face-to-face. Song et al.'s (2014) meta-analysis found that lonely individuals tend to use Facebook more than people who are not as lonely. Therefore, it follows that international students who are unfamiliar with their new cultural context and who are lonely tend to depend on SNS sites for their social needs. Due to the prevalence of SNS, international students can easily live their lives in different countries without intergroup contact in the host country by using social media to communicate with people from their home countries. In a similar vein, Raman and Harwood (2016) stressed the importance of interpersonal contact, along with mediated contact with individuals from the host county to reduce intergroup anxiety.

Until recently, a comparison of host country SNS consumption with home country SNS consumption was meaningful because people used several different SNSs (Park et al., 2014). However, the landscape of SNS is changing daily. Many ethnic SNSs have become obsolete, e.g., Cyworld (Korea), Mixi (Japan), My Space (USA). Today, instead of the divide between home and host country SNSs, many students have access to 'global SNSs', which are accessible around the world and are available in several languages (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, Instagram). As such, past comparisons and conclusions derived from studies of home versus host country SNSs on acculturation are no longer sufficient for the current dynamic SNS context. Instead, the use of global SNSs and their potential influence on acculturation has supplanted the home vs host SNS research because of their global reach and, therefore, are the impetus for this study. Because of the widespread international accessibility of Facebook, the authors chose to analyze the ways in which international students make use of Facebook as they adapted to their new living environment.

Previous studies have also focused mainly on the length of use (how long each person used the SNS per day) and have largely ignored the variety of functions that SNS serve. Zhang (2012), for instance, found that Chinese international students, when in the US, used Facebook because they wanted to learn about American culture. Zhang (2012), however, found the students tended to use Facebook passively, only reading other peoples' posts and news, and not actively posting anything on their Facebook wall. Thus, using Facebook as a tool for learning about the culture of the US, while not actively contributing to it; a fly on the wall position. Thus, comparing the use of SNS solely based on the length of SNS use is misleading and only provides a partial picture of participant activity. The holistic nature of the current study and its qualitative method helps to fill in the gaps revealed by previous studies. Thus, this study asks the following questions:

RQ1: What are the characteristics of Facebook posts that international students made during the first or second semester in the US?

RQ2: What communication strategy (convergence/divergence) do international students invoke to communicate with others on Facebook?

Acculturation, Identity, and the Use of Facebook

International students' self-perception guides their behavior both in face-to-face and computer mediated communication. For example, Chen and Hanasono (2016) found an interesting dichotomy of usage in their study of Chinese students studying in the US. For those Chinese who identified themselves more as Chinese spent more time and updated their status more often on Chinese SNS (Renren); whereas Chinese students who identified themselves more as American spent more time and updated their status more frequently on American SNSs, (i.e., Facebook).

Berry's (1990) acculturation orientations are a useful concept to understand international students' acculturation and their behavior on Facebook. Berry (1990) developed a model that includes four acculturation orientations: a) integration (positive attitude toward both host and home cultures); b) assimilation (positive attitude toward host culture, but not home culture); c) separation (positive attitude toward home culture, but not host culture;) and d) marginalization (negative attitude toward both host and home cultures).Thus, as different from Kim's (2005) integration theory of acculturation, people can acculturate without losing contact with their home country's culture. Furthermore, Block (2007) proposed that the acculturation process is not unidirectional moving from the home culture to the host culture; rather, it is dynamic. At times a person may wish to activate a convergent orientation toward one or the other cultures with whom the person has connections, while at other times the same person may invoke a divergent orientation. For example, during holidays or other special events in a year, a person may wish to associate more with the home culture, but at other times, that same person may strive to be more a part of the host culture, and therefore, strive to exercise more convergence strategies in an attempt to acculturate with the host culture.

At times, the reverse direction might be true. Zhang (2012) found this to be true with a group of students from China. Zhang observed that the longer Chinese students stayed in the US, the more they identified with their Chinese culture. Similarly, Block (2007) found that some American students studying abroad reinforced their American identity, and in turn, some of them expressed more isolationist views rather than expanding their worldview. Thus, the acculturation process and convergent and divergent orientation strategies, when incorporating issues of identity and language learning, create a complicated, complex, and dynamic relationship that requires investigation.

Further, Ward (2008) advocated studies that investigate acculturation outside Berry's (1990) four orientations by providing three new lines of research (i.e., the study of ethnocultural identity conflict; the development of a new construct, the motivation for ethno-cultural continuity; and the application of acculturation and intergroup theory to the study of tourism). Ward (2008) described possible cases where migrants experience an ethno-cultural identity conflict because "for some individuals traditional and new identities may be perceived as incompatible" (p. 112). Thus, in addition to RQ1 and RQ2, this study asks the following question:

RQ3: How do international students communicate their identity on Facebook?

Research Method

In order to answer our research questions, we followed international students' Facebook wall posts during their first or second semester in the U.S. Further, we used a quantitative method to collect background and demographic data so we would know more about who the participants were, but our primary data was that collected from documenting participants' Facebook wall posting behavior. In the following section, we explain the sample of our participants first, followed by descriptive quantitative data collection and analysis, and lastly the procedure of qualitative Facebook content analysis.

Sample

The participants were recruited through English as a second language (ESL) bridge courses (in which English language learners take freshman level university content courses and ESL classes concurrently) and student organizations at a university located in the upper Midwest in the US. In order to avoid breaching ethical and validity issues, only ESL students whose English proficiency level is above an intermediate (circa CEFR A2-B1) level were included in the study. We collected data from this specific

population because many international students begin their academic careers in the US in some kind of ESL classes. By the time international students are immersed completely in content courses and no longer enrolled in language support programs, they will have already spent at least one semester in the US. Thus, to address our research questions, we felt it was necessary to focus on international students' SNS behavior during their first or second semester.

Seventeen international students agreed to participate in the study. Although all of them completed the pre-survey, only seven participants completed the post-survey. Also, only 15 of the 17 original participants added the researcher created profile as their Facebook friends. Thus, we followed these 15 international students. These 15 international students came from a variety of countries. Please see Table 4 for the characteristics of the 15 international students. Next, we explain the measurements we used to understand the characteristics and backgrounds of the participants.

Measurements

Participants of the study were asked to complete two online surveys: one at the beginning and another at the end of the semester. Demographic information such as age, gender, and nationality were collected. Besides demographic information, the researchers assessed the following: 1. Quality of intergroup contacts, 2. Media use, 3. SNS use, 4. Sociocultural adjustment, 5. Intergroup anxiety, 6. English language proficiency, 7. Number of American friends, and 8. Depression.

SNS & mass media use. Following Raman and Horwood (2016), SNS use was assessed by the possession of membership and duration of use (in minutes and hours per day). Likewise, the researchers followed Raman and Horwood (2016) to collect participants' media use by asking participants to self-report on the different types of media (e.g., print, TV, radio, Internet) they consume in their home country and the United States. The means and SD for each media is summarized in Table 1.

Sociocultural adaptation. To gather information about participants willingness and ability to adapt to their new environment, the researchers used the Sociocultural Adaptation Scale (SCAS) (Furnham & Bochner, 1982). The SCAS was designed to measure the skills required to function in a sociocultural context that is new to the person. The SCAS consists of 30 Likert style items and are designed to measure a person's ability to make friends and to interact with others at social events. The SCAS was chosen because it has been proven to be consistently reliable in previous research (Ward & Kennedy, 1994). Higher scores illustrate the difficulty adapting to a new environment whereas lower scores tend to correlate to relative ease with adapting to a new culture. The reliability coefficient was satisfactory for the pre-survey data (Cronbach's alpha = .90, $N = 16$, $M = 2.44$, $SD = .56$) as well as the post-survey data (Cronbach's alpha = .85, $N = 7$, $M = 2.49$, $SD = .39$). Also see Table 2.

Depression. To measure for symptoms of depression and to track these symptoms over the course of the study, the researchers used the Zung Self-Rating Depression Scale (ZSDS) (Zung, 1965). The ZSDS consists of 20 Likert style items that seek to identify the frequency of depressive symptoms a person may be experiencing. The ZSDS uses a 4-point scale in which a 4 means the person is always experiencing a particular symptom, and a 1 means the person never or rarely experiences the depressive symptom. Thus, the higher the score, the greater the level of potential depression. Scores may range from 20 to 80 with cutoff scores of 48 suggesting a depressed mood. The reliability coefficient was satisfactory for the pre-survey data (Cronbach's alpha = .72, $N = 15$, $M = 41.4$, $SD = 7.03$, $range = 31\text{-}61$). On review, all the participants' scores fell in the normal range except one student who scored higher than normal (61). A score of 61 suggests this student is moderately depressed (Zung, 1965). The reliability coefficient was lower for post-survey data (Cronbach's alpha = .61), but when we deleted question item 18, which asked, "My life is pretty full", the reliability coefficient became satisfactory (Cronbach's alpha = .72, $N = 7$, $M = 39.14$, $SD = 6.64$, $range = 30\text{-}48$). In the post-survey, nobody scored into the depressed range. Also see Table2.

Intergroup anxiety. Based on Stephan and Stephan's (1985) intergroup anxiety scale, we assessed students' level of anxiety on anticipated intergroup anxiety along eleven adjectives. The survey asked, "If you were the only member of your ethnic group and you were interacting with Americans (e.g., talking with them, working on a project with them), how would you feel compared to occasions when you are interacting with people from your own ethnic group?" The adjectives are *certain* (reverse coded), *awkward, self-conscious, happy* (reverse coded), *accepted* (reverse coded), *confident* (reverse coded), *irritated, impatient, defensive, suspicious*, and *careful*. Responses were reported using a five-point scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The reliability coefficient was lower than expected for the pre-survey data (Cronbach's alpha = .60, $N = 14$, $M = 2.86$, $SD = .37$), but the reliability coefficient for the post-survey was satisfactory (Cronbach's alpha = .84, $N = 7$, $M = 2.91$, $SD = .50$). Also see Table 2.

Language proficiency. To capture participants' perceptions of their English language abilities, the researchers adapted Bekteshi and van Hook's (2015) language proficiency instrument in which participants self-reported their ability to read, speak, and write in English. Participants indicated their proficiency levels on a 5-point Likert type questionnaire (scale 1 = very uncomfortable; 5 = very comfortable). Also see Table 3.

Quality of intergroup contact. Following Raman and Horwood (2016), quality of intergroup contact was measured by a single item asking, "How do you describe quality of contact with Americans?" The response options varied from 1=Very bad to 5= Very good. Also see Table 2.

Number of American friends. The number of American friends were measured by a single item, "How many American friends have you made since you came to the US? Please put only the numbers of American friends. For example, if you have 10 American friends, write 10 in the blank. If you don't have any American friends, write "0". Also see Table 2.

Facebook Content Analysis
Procedure

The participants of this study all friended a *hypothetical friend* on Facebook that had been set up by the researchers for the purpose of this study. The researchers then began documenting participants' interactions on their Facebook walls. The data collected was later analyzed after the study was closed. Hoping to minimize the effects of the researcher's paradox, it is important to note that the researchers did not actively post on the *hypothetical* Facebook wall during the study.

As Hsieh and Shannon (2005) described, qualitative content analysis contains three distinct approaches (i.e., conventional, directed, or summative). We used a "directed approach to content analysis" (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). The directed approach to content analysis is useful when the research is deductive based on previous research and existing theories (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). The directed approach to content analysis starts with identifying key concepts or variables as initial coding categories (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). Thus, we first conceptualized key variables, such as convergence and divergence phenomena, and then operationalized the variables to be measured. The two researchers, independent of each other, coded the Facebook postings of the participants. The Facebook wall coding process included manifest (e.g., posting frequency, language) and latent content (e.g., targeted audience, positive/negative/neutral). We started with the following fixed categories: Posting frequency, Posted by, Language, About, Targeted Audience, etc. However, as we coded, other phenomena began to emerge. For example, in the category Language, we originally had two choices, English or Other. Because of the frequency of code switching and/or the use of multiple languages, it became clear that additional choices were necessary. Another example of the shifting categories is that of Targeted Audience. At first there were two choices, American friends or home country friends, yet it became clear that a category for Non-American friends in the US was necessary. During the next phase, the researchers combined their coding

into one Excel spreadsheet, and then met to negotiate any discrepancies between their original coding decisions. It should be noted that after analyzing the two independent code sheets, there was 99% agreement (percent agreement intercoder reliability) in the initial codes; thus, interrater reliability is very strong. The next step of the directed approach to content analysis is to see whether "The findings from a directed content analysis offer supporting and nonsupporting evidence for a theory. This evidence can be presented by showing codes with exemplars and by offering descriptive evidence" (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005, p. 1282).

The researchers did not "return to the field" so to speak to ask participants to verify the researchers' coding accuracy for several reasons. First, data collection continued up until the very end of the semester when students were studying for final exams, preparing end of term projects, and traveling, making it difficult to conduct these member checks. Also, as Flick (1992) points out, conducting member checks for the purposes of triangulating data can be considered an act of re-entering the field, and, therefore, any data collected during re-entry adds to the qualitative data. In short, attempts to triangulate, while well intentioned, can lead to a never-ending cycle of data collection, verification, data collection, verification, etc.

Results

Because only seven participants completed both pre and post online surveys, we decided to treat online survey data as background information for the participants of our Facebook content analysis. That is, the online survey data presented here are descriptive in nature. The descriptive information is addressed first to understand the Facebook posting analyses that followed.

Descriptive Statistics from Online Surveys

All of participants self-reported that they had a Facebook and Instagram account while some reported having a Twitter account too. Over the three months in which the study took place, participants' SNS use did not change dramatically. For some students, their Instagram and Twitter usage increased slightly during the three months. Facebook was used regularly across all of the participants. In both pre- and post-surveys, participants indicated that they consumed more home country media than American media (See Table 1).

Table 1: Media Use (in hours per day)

	Pre-survey (n = 17)		Post-Survey (n = 7)	
	M	SD	M	SD
Home Country TV	3.18	1.29	2.43	1.40
Home Country Radio	1.69	.95	1.43	.54
Home Country Newspapers	2.41	1.28	1.43	1.13
Home Country Print (e.g., magazines)	1.94	1.03	1.86	.90
Home Country Websites	3.76	.97	4.00	.82
American TV	2.06	1.09	1.71	.95
American Radio	1.35	.70	1.29	.49

American Newspapers	1.41	.71	1.29	.49
American Print	1.35	. 70	1.29	.49
American Websites	2.65	1.00	2.5	1.23

In the pre-study survey, we found that the participants had an average of 4.15 friends from the United States. In the post-survey, it appears that the average number of American friends increased by nearly 1 and ¾ points to 5.50. In terms of psychological well-being, it appears that participants did not suffer from depression with the possible exception of one student as evidenced in the Table 2.

Table 2: Pre-and Post-Survey Comparison

	Pre-Survey		*Post-Survey*	
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*
Depression	41.4	7.03	39.14	6.64
Social Function	2.44	.56	2.49	.39
Intergroup Communication Anxiety	2.86	.37	2.91	.50
Quality of Intergroup contacts	2.88	.93	2.29	.95
Number of American Friends	4.15	4.53	5.50	7.40

We also measured the level of English proficiency of our participants. It is a well-established fact that anxiety (Krashen, 1981) about one's own language skills in their L2 can directly affect a person's ability to interact in the new language. The pre-and post-study survey data show that the participants felt neutral to comfortable when speaking, reading, and writing in English. As can be seen participants did not report any significant change in their level of English proficiency between the pre- and post-study survey (also see Table 3).

Table 3: Perception of English Proficiency

	Pre-Survey (n = 17)		Post-Survey (n = 7)	
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*
Speaking English	3.0	.94	3.14	.69
Reading English	3.41	.80	3.29	.95
Writing English	3.24	.90	3.57	.71

Note. 1 = Very uncomfortable, 2 = Uncomfortable, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Comfortable, 5 = Very comfortable

Table 4: Facebook Posts

ID	Gender	Home Country	Posting Frequency (1. None, 2. 1-2times a month, 3. 1-2 times a week, 4. everyday)	Language (1. English, 2. Other, 3. Code-switch)
A	Male	Burkina Faso	3	1,2,3
B	Female	Japan	3	1,2,3
C	Female	Albania	2	2
D	Male	Nepal	3	1,2,3
E	Female	Japan	2	1&3
F	Male	Nepal	1	No posts
G	Male	Nepal	2	1
H	Female	The Ivory Coast	2	2
I	Female	Korea	1	No posts
J	Female	Turkey	1	No posts
K	Male	Japan	2	2 &3
L	Female	Japan	1	No posts
M	Female	Japan	2	1&2
N	Female	Nepal	2	1,2,3 or no words
O	Male	Malaysia	2	Mostly no words/just a picture or a link

Research Question One

      Research question one asked the characteristics of international students' Facebook posts during the semester. The analysis of the coded data revealed: 1) lower Facebook posting frequency; 2) Communication back home; 3) No change.

Lower Facebook posting frequency

Consistent with Zhang (2012), the present study found international students' low active use of Facebook. Although most of the participants were tagged or received messages from their Facebook friends at times, only three participants posted on their Facebook walls 1-2 times per week during the three-month period. Most of the participants did not either post anything at all on their walls or posted only 1-2 times per month. In the quantitative data we collected, our participants rated their level of writing, reading, and speaking English proficiency as between neutral (3) and comfortable (4). Thus, we can believe that English might not be the issue for not posting on their Facebook walls. Consistent with Zhang (2012), it is possible that international students use Facebook mostly to read others' posts or personally communicate with their friends using a massager, and not posting much on their Facebook wall.

Used mostly as a communication tool with friends back home

Across all of the participants, pictures of trips and campus events were the most frequently posted content. There were no postings regarding current news and opinions about certain topics. Most of the pictures appeared to be targeted to their home country friends because they were mostly using their native language to explain the pictures. Furthermore, most of the corresponding comments about the participants' posts came from friends who are, presumably, from their home countries, but certainly not from friends at the local university where the current study was conducted. For example, Student E posted mostly pictures from her trips during break without any comments. She once wrote on her wall that she could not connect to Line (Japanese originated SNS, mostly used in Japan), but she used only Japanese, not English. This suggests that she mainly uses Line to communicate with her friends in Japan, and she also communicates with her friends in Japan on Facebook as well.

No change during the first semester

Although the frequency of posting and the use of language varies across participants, the pattern of posting is consistent for each participant. When comparing the beginning and end of the semester, the content and language of the posting is identical for each participant. In other words, no noticeable behavioral changes were evidenced on Facebook.

Research Question Two

Research question two asked what kind of communication strategies international students used to communicate with others on Facebook. In order to answer the question, the researchers analyzed the coding results of international students' Facebook wall postings based on CAT's convergence/divergence communication strategy. The differences among participants surfaced due to the variations of Facebook friends. When the participants only included Facebook friends from their home country, they used their native language exclusively and the topics were relevant primarily to events, past and present in the home country. Although our participants indicated that they felt neutral to comfortable on average to speak/read/write in the English Perception Survey, their usage of English in their Facebook wall was none or very limited. This is also an indication that their target audience was not American. The participants used convergence communication style to effectively communicate with Facebook friends who were in or from their home country. For example, Student A who posted pictures frequently, often did so without including a caption or the captions were in his native languages. Student A commented about a well-known soccer player of his own country using his native language. Similarly, Student O shared a link of a funny video that appears to be a criticism of American culture. The language in the video is his home language, not English.

On the other hand, when students' Facebook friends included both Americans and friends in their home country, students code-switched, using both their home language and English. For example, student B code-switched using both English and Japanese. Student B's topics of Facebook postings also included some events occurring in the US, including holiday celebrations or vacations.

Research Question Three

Research question three asked what identity negotiation international students used on Facebook. In order to answer the question, we analyzed participants' Facebook wall postings to see how international students negotiate their cultural identity. It appears that our participants identify themselves with the home country cultural group. For example, Students M and G posted their own pictures in their country's traditional dress. The characteristics of the postings were coded as positive. They were both smiling and showing off their traditional costume. Furthermore, Students C and D posted pictures from their time in high school or other activities they shared in their home country. These "memory-lane" posts were both frequent and extensive. Student D frequently posted pictures of her family from her country. Student C posted several pictures that show high school friends in his country. In addition to pictures recalling fond memories, Student C also posted pictures promoting his culture such as "Nepal Night" (an annual campus event). Seven students posted information or events about their affiliated cultural student organizations on Facebook, such as Japan, Korea, or Turkey Night. Student A posted links related to their home country. These pictures and links, as one might expect, emphasize a strong connection with their formative cultural backgrounds. Therefore, these postings indicate positive views of their home cultures.

When the participants post pictures and events relating to their life in the US, the depiction and the pictures illustrated the comparisons and/or contrasts between their own countries and the US. Student H, who came from the Ivory Coast, for example, posted the clothes she needed to wear in the US to keep warm during the winter months. Similar types of postings are comparing or contrasting clothing, foods, transportation, etc. are seen across participants. There were also the predictable vacation trip pictures posted on Facebook, depicting participants' lives in the US. While visiting popular destinations such as Disney Land, New York City, or San Francisco. For example, Student O posted several pictures from his trip to San Francisco with his friends who happen to be from the same culture. Although the pictures were coded as positive, these postings gave the impression of a traveler. That is, the participants continued to position themselves as outsiders.

Discussion

This study was able to investigate international students' use of Facebook through the observation of first or second semester international students' Facebook behavior. At the same time, this study should be received as a case study as the results are not generalizable.

Limited Exposure to American Culture

Based on our surveys, it is clear that international students, especially those people who are new to the US, prefer to consume their home country media rather than the media of the host country. In the past, international students needed to communicate with American students or consuming American media if they wanted to adapt to the new culture (e.g., Kim, 2005). However, it might be possible to adapt to a new culture while continuing to communicate with friends and family and consuming media in their native country. Based on the quantitative background information, our participants reported that they felt neutral to comfortable when speaking, reading, and writing in English. Further, the level of English proficiency had not changed between the pre- and post-survey. Thus, it is unlikely that the relatively small amount of American media consumption reported by our participants is due to a lack of English proficiency. At the same time, our participants reported relative ease of adaptation to a new culture as evidenced in the sociocultural adaptation score, which showed a narrowing in the standard deviation from the pre-survey data ($M = 2.44$, $SD = .56$) and the post-survey data ($M = 2.49$, $SD = .39$). It may be that international students use their home country media, like comfort food, to cope with acculturative stress. With increased globalization and migration, societies around the world are becoming more diverse and accepting of different practices and behaviors. That is, international students can continue to live into

their home culture, while also learning to communicate well in English and learning more about and possibly adopting some American behaviors or norms.

Similarly, many of our participants used Facebook mainly to communicate with their friends in their home countries. As such, the relationship between the use of American media or SNS and adaptation to a new culture is still unclear. Although previous studies reported that the use of American media and SNS affects international students' adaptation positively (e.g., Li & Tsai, 2015), international students do not appear to engage enough with host country SNS and media to affirm or reject claims that these communication sources assist students with positive cultural adaptation. In order to better clarify the relationship between SNS use and media consumption and adaptation, future experiments should be designed to incentivize participants' use of SNS sites during the data collection period. Additionally, understanding a lack of motivation for using American SNS and other media may be beneficial for furthering our understanding of the reality current international students live with while abroad. The easy connection with people in their home country might be the cause for what appears to be a lack of interest or motivation.

Previous study found that international students had "friends from their own country or culture, and higher number of co-national friendships compared to host-national ones" (McFaul, 2016, p.11). Similarly, our participants indicated they had only a limited number of American friends (4-5 on average), which suggests a lack of SNS use to communicate with American friends. Because we only followed our participants' Facebook activities, there exists the possibility that international students communicated with American individuals face-to-face. At the same time, given the current popularity of SNS among college students, this scenario is unlikely. It should be noted that there are culture differences in terms of SNS usage. For example, Americans add a large number of friends to their SNS compared to Japanese SNS users (Barker & Ota, 2011; Omori & Allen, 2014). Traditionally, a larger social network and high relational mobility is valued in the US (Schug et al., 2010). Relational mobility refers to the "opportunities to voluntarily form new relationships and terminate old ones within a given context" (Schug et al., 2010, p.1). As such, when international students come from a culture where intense friendships (strong ties as opposed to weak ties), and lower relational mobility, international students might need more time before "friending" someone to their SNS network. Further research investigating international students' offline communication with local students may provide a more robust understanding students' communication behavior.

International Students' Online Behavior

Consistent with CAT, the results of our analysis indicate that international students' use a convergence communication style to help them communicate better with people in their network on Facebook. When Facebook friends are limited to people in the same country, international students used their native language and mainly posted events and pictures from their home countries. Conversely, when international students include American Facebook friends, they code-switched, communicating with their Facebook friends using both English and their home language. Similarly, they posted both events and pictures relating to their time in the US as well as their home countries.

In terms of international students' identity, participants' Facebook postings indicate their strong identification with their native culture. Showing off their ethnic uniqueness such as wearing their traditional clothes, and advertising student cultural organization events suggest their positive feeling toward their home country. In addition, pictures taken while on a trip in the US gave the impression of a traveler. Because this study was conducted during students' first and second semester in the US, it is understandable that they identify strongly with their home country culture.

CAT explains that people tend to use divergent communication style when they are communicating with outgroup members. Because international students are in the US for a limited time, it is natural for them to identify themselves as outgroup when communicating with American students stressing the differences and identifying with their home cultures. From our data, self-identifying as

outsiders and separating from mainstream American culture did not seem to affect participants' psychological well-being or physical fitness. As such, if we use psychological well-being and physical fitness as indicators for measuring adaptation goals to a new culture, the present study shows that people can acculturate without losing contact with home county culture as opposed to Kim's (2005) integration theory of acculturation. This may potentially be one of the greatest assets of SNS in that they quite possibly can function as a scaffolding agent, allowing students to stay connected to their home cultures as they learn to live, study, and socialize in the host culture. Before the advent of digital SNS, international students had to rely on letter writing, newspapers, television, and the occasional long-distance telephone call, to stay connected with the home culture. Today's SNSs allow for international students to engage with their home cultures on a regular basis and virtually instantaneously.

Theoretical Implications

The present study investigated how international students negotiate their cultural identity by analyzing international students' Facebook wall posts during their first and second semesters in the U.S. Our analysis revealed that international students mostly identified themselves with their home cultures. When international students posted about their lives in the U.S., they positioned themselves as an outsider, which gave the impression of a traveler. Although Berry's (1990) acculturation orientations are a useful tool, we found the needs to develop more nuanced in-between categories for international students as Ward (2008) argued. Berry's (1990) acculturation orientations' four categories are created based on the combination of positive and negative attitude toward home and host cultures. However, the attitude might always be positive and negative. Our results revealed that many international students identify themselves with their home culture. At the same time, their Facebook posts show the positive attitude toward American culture. However, their view is more from the outsider's point of view. Thus, although their attitude toward their home culture as well as American cultures are positive, we don't believe their cultural orientation is not quite "integration" orientation because they identify strongly with their home culture. As such, acculturation theories such as Berry's (1990) acculturation orientation needs more discussion and development given the variety of combinations and degree to which individuals feel toward their home and host country cultures.

Limitations

The present study contains several limitations which prevent generalizing the results. The first limitation is the small number of participants. Because this study focused on international students who have English as an additional language and who were enrolled in advanced ESL classes in their university, the pool of the possible participants in one institution was limited. Thus, this study should be taken as a case study. In order to generalize, it's necessary to have a larger participant pool.

Second, the present study focused exclusively on the experiences of international students during their first and/or second semesters abroad. Thus, the duration of the data collection is limited. While adapting to a new culture varies from individual to individual, three months only allows a person to scratch the surface of a new culture and begin to fully acculturate into a new society. A longitudinal study consisting of international students' entire undergraduate program would likely reveal a more robust understanding of the role SNS, specifically Facebook, play and allow us to unpack the role of SNSs in the acculturation processes.

Finally, the present study collected data from ESL classes and while these specific ESL classes are designed for all students who have English as an additional language, domestic and international, the primary population is international. Therefore, the participants had limited opportunities to meet American students on campus because their classmates were also international with some being from the same home country. In order to fully understand international students' adaption to a new culture, collecting data from international students who are taking content classes, i.e., business, chemistry, math, history, etc. with American students are needed. The potential for contact and relationship building is

greater and may actually propel international students on to an inbound trajectory (Wenger, 1998), which in turn may manifest itself in richer SNS activity.

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Appendix-Code Book

The Facebook postings were coded according to the following codebook.

Unit of data collection: Every posting that the international students posted during the first/second semester in the US.

Participant ID and **coder ID** were entered.

- A. Posting frequency
  1. None
  2. 1-2 times a month
  3. 1-2 times a week
  4. Everyday
- B. Number of FB friends
- C. Posted by
  1. Self
  2. A Friend
- D. Social network
  1. Friends from home
  2. American friends in the US
  3. Non-American friends in the US
  4. Combinations
  5. Somebody else
- E. Topic
  1. Relevant to home country
  2. Relevant to host country
  3. Something else
- F. Language
  1. English
  2. Native language
  3. Code-switching
- G. Characteristics of the post
  1. Positive
  2. Negative
  3. Neutral
- H. Targeted audience
  1. American friends
  2. Friends in a home country
  3. Non-American friends in the US
- I. Picture
  1. Yes
  2. No
- J. Type
  1. Selfie
  2. Group
  3. Solo
  4. Video
- K. Occasions (Explain)
- L. Link
  1. Yes
  2. No

Empirical Article

The Education Process of Children with Imprisoned Parents After the July 15, 2016 Coup Attempt in Turkey

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Abstract

This article explores the educational processes of the high-school youth and higher education youth of parents who were imprisoned following the coup attempt in Turkey in July 2016. Data was collected from parents who are involved in their children's education and who have been subjected to political persecution. The research is focused on educational processes with respect to students' academic success, psychological problems, and changes to moral and universal values, all from the point of view of the parents. The main conclusions seem to be that the majority of students whose parents were imprisoned had to change their schools,

their academic success decreased, the students who continued their higher education were prolonged or had to leave their schools, and the majority of them did not have serious psychological problems. Finally, the sense of injustice they felt when their parents were arrested, students seem to question universal and moral values.

Keywords: July 15 coup attempt, hizmet movement, prison, education and training of students

Introduction

This study examines the educational status of students (secondary-high school and higher education) whose parents were incarcerated after the coup attempt of July 15 2016 in Turkey. As the research author, I was working as a faculty member at Mevlana (Rumi) University Faculty of Education before the July 15 coup attempt. The university I worked at was closed (667-KHK, 2016). I was expelled from my profession just because I worked at this university, my application for an associate professorship was suspended, and I was imprisoned for approximately 16 months. After I got out of prison, I learned that the psychology of my children was turned upside down, that the school administration marginalized them, and I observed that their success dropped noticeably. I wondered if this situation, which I saw especially in my children, was also in the children of others who had to share the same fate with me. Therefore, I tried to carry out this work in compliance with international ethical rules. While collecting data from individuals, I saw some individuals abstaining and giving short answers. *"You had events to write a book on, I asked why do you give very short answers and hesitate."* I can say that one of the answers, especially, shocked me. *"I spent 13 months in prison for a tweet I posted on social media".*

Theoretical Background

Education has played a vital role in shaping social life in the past and today's world and continues to do so. Education starts in the family and continues

in educational institutions according to the structure of the society in which they live (Biesta, 2015; Lyn et al., 2012; Standish, 2014).

There are primary conditions for continuity in education and health education. The first condition for an individual to have a healthy education is safety (Moore et al., 2020; Turcotte-Summers, 2016). Therefore, an individual who is unsafe or not feel safe cannot receive a healthy education. The second condition is continuity in education (Babić, 2017). Continuity in education will also bring academic success (York et al., 2015) and transition to higher (Aboye, 2021).

It can be said that ensuring continuity in education is essential for quality education. The primary responsibility for a healthy education for students rests with families and states. It can be said that it is the responsibility of the parents to ensure that the students go to school and meet their basic needs. However, it is also among the duties of the state to provide a school environment and to create a fair education system that is safe and free from pressure.

The relationship of education with justice is at the center of educational sociology (Matthews, 2013). DeMatthews (2015), summarizes how social justice should be achieved in education in four different ways: He writes; a) School administration should take into account individual and cultural diversity and should not include discrimination between individuals. b) It should not enforce oppressive and unfair practices. c) It should use democratic processes in order not to be marginalized. d) It should adopt an egalitarian approach by avoiding unfair practices.

According to Francis et al., (2017), to ensure social justice in education, countries should primarily focus on the individual while organizing their education policies. Therefore, the individual's gender, ethnic origin, socio-economic background, and other indicators should not prevent the individual from accessing education. If the individual cannot reach the education that is his or her natural right due to these characteristics, he or she starts to question universal and moral values (Appiah, 2005). Schwartz (1992, 1994) explains universal and moral values as being in favor of freedom, justice, honesty, religiosity, and social order. Popova and Roza (2014) point out that developing a truly civilized society is impossible unless individuals adopt universal and moral values. Özcan and Polat (2016), on

the other hand, state that the most important factor in adopting universal and moral values is the school and, thus, the teacher. In this context, ethnic identity or political persecution should not hinder children's access to education. Only in this way can social justice be achieved in education.

Social justice in education should be an ideal lifestyle and a vision that embodies all aspects of being human. Therefore, every educator should take responsibility to protect, develop and support the values, principles and ideals of social justice in education (Francis & Mills 2012; Nieuwenhuis, 2012; Randall, 2019).

Individuals need equal access to resources and opportunities to develop and use their capacities or abilities. Individuals who access these equally have the chance to discover and develop their talents (Appova & Arbaugh, 2018; Heffernan, et al., 2020). Accordingly, the individual's right to education should not be restricted (Gordon, 2013). The individual must freely access the education he or she should receive. The individual should not be excluded and not isolated from society (Peters & Besley, 2014).

A coup attempt took place in Turkey on July 15, 2016. After the coup attempt, hundreds of thousands of investigations have opened about people connected to the Hizmet Movement (also known as the Gulen Movement), and tens of thousands of people have been in jailed (https://ohalkomisyonu.tccb.gov.tr/). Most imprisoned people have children of secondary school and higher education age.

Therefore, the study deals with the education process of juniors who have transitioned to higher education together with youth currently continuing higher education. Given the bereavement and knowledge of students of the higher education age, being the child of a politically persecuted parent may be more traumatic for them (Matthews-Whetstone & Scott, 2015). It can be summarized as the beginning of a process that is difficult to recover, particularly for this age group to drop out of school (Peña, 2012).

The main starting point of this study, therefore, was to find out what kind of changes occurred in the education life of these students, what has changed in their academic success, whether they had psychological problems or not, whether

there were changes in their sensitivity about moral and universal values or not and whether they have attained the fundamental right to education (Gordon, 2013).

The relevant literature is examined depending on the examination of the educational curriculum in prisons and the learning of prisoners (Baskas, 2016; Lukacova et al., 2018; O'Grady, 2017; Sams, 2014), university and prison cooperation (Gray et al., 2019; Ludlow & Armstrong, 2019; Szifris et al., 2018), the situation of women whose spouses are in prison (Karacabey, 2019), and the views of school counselors about the children of imprisoned parents (Petsch & Rochlen, 2009). This study examines the changes in the educational background of children whose parents were in prison in the past or whose parents are currently in prison. Data were collected from parents who were personally involved in the educational process of students and who were politically persecuted. In this respect, it is hoped that the study will be a first in the field, fill an important gap, and provide a different perspective on the education process of children whose parents are incarcerated.

Aims and Research Questions

The aim of the study is to examine the educational processes of children whose parents were incarcerated or whose parents are currently in prison. For this purpose, answers to the following questions were sought.

1. What has changed in students' school and university life and academic success?
2. Did the students experience any psychological problems?
3. What kind of changes occurred in the sensitivities of the students regarding moral and universal values?
4.

Research Method

Research characteristics

In this study, qualitative research methods and techniques were used to reach the main goal determined and search for answers to research questions. According to Bhandari (2020), qualitative research involves the collection and analysis of non-numerical data (e.g. text, video, or audio) to understand concepts,

ideas, or experiences. It can be used to gather in-depth information about a problem or to generate new ideas for research. Situation assessment, one of the qualitative research methods, was used in the study. In case of evaluations, the aim is to collect and analyze data in-depth, contrary to empirical generalizations (Patton, 2014, p.228).

Research participants

Before the researcher started, the researchers have discussed with the experts of the field about the composition of the participants from students. As a result of the discussions, it was concluded that the students could not solve such questions psychologically. Therefore, it was decided that the participants should consist of parents who take care of the students in this process. The study's participants include 26 individuals, having been imprisoned after a military coup in Turkey on July 15, 2016, who are interested in their children's education process (secondary-high school and higher education) while they were in prison.

The criterion sampling method, one of the purposeful sampling methods, was used in the sample selection of the study. The basic understanding in choosing criterion sampling is to study all situations that meet some criteria (Patton, 2014: 243). The main criterion in the research is to examine the educational processes of the children of individuals who are known to be close to the Hizmet Movement after the coup attempt of July 15 2016 and who are imprisoned for this reason. The demographic characteristics of the individuals participating in the study are presented in Table-1. The focus of this paper is on children of High School and Higher Education age.

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of The Participants

		f	%
Gender of Parent	Female	20	77
	Male	6	23
Profession	Teacher	10	39
	Housewife	8	31

	Medical staff	4	15
	Engineer	2	7,5
	Academician	2	7,5
Total		26	100
Gender of Children	Girl	12	60
	Boy	8	40
School Type	Middle School	8	40
	High School	5	25
	High Education	7	35

When Table-1 is examined, it is seen that the majority of the participants were women, and the majority of them were teachers in the past. These women are closely involved in their children's education, and many of them are still in prison. All of the interviewed men were released after serving a certain period of time in prison. Therefore, the data consists directly of the views of politically persecuted people. Most of the children are under the responsibility of the participants are girls. When the table is examined again, it is seen that the individuals whose education processes are examined within the scope of the research consist of students who have transitioned to higher education together with children in the younger age group and are currently continuing higher education.

Data Collection Tool

In the study, a semi-structured interview form was used in order to examine the education processes of the school-aged children of politically persecuted and imprisoned parents. Glesne (2013) expressed the interview in qualitative research as getting information about what you cannot see and making alternative explanations about what you see. For this, a semi-structured interview form was prepared. In the preparation of the interview form, firstly, questions were designed to provide data suitable for the research.
Accordingly, the content of the research questions in the interview form is as follows.

After the 2016 coup attempt;

1.   Whether students change their schools,

2.   Changes in students' academic achievement,

3.   Whether students are exposed to psychological pressure at school by their friends, school administration, or teachers,

4.   And what changes were observed in students' sensitivities to moral and religious issues.

The questions were presented to the opinions of 2 faculty members who are experts in the field of qualitative research. Afterward, a pre-interview was made with two parents. At the end of the study, the interview form was finalized.

Data Collection and Analysis

In the study, one of the qualitative data collection methods, the open-ended survey method, was used, and the parents' opinions were taken in January-February 2021. The main condition for determining the participants is that either of the parents has been incarcerated.

Before the interview, the content of the study was explained to the parents by phone. It was stated that the data would be confidential, and then the interview form was sent to the volunteers. The responses that came back from the participants were coded as (P-1, P-2, P-3…) where P indicates 'parent', transferred to NVivo 10 software, and analyzed. In the data analysis, one of the descriptive analysis types, representation with frequency, was used. In the analysis of the data, the inductive (Thomas, 2006) method, which is frequently used in qualitative research, was used. The data obtained as a result of the analysis are presented in detail in the findings section, based on the research questions.

Validity and Reliability

Below, the study conducted in line with the recommendations of Merriam (2013), Miles and Huberman (1994), and Patton (2014) regarding the validity and reliability of this research are explained:

1.   In order to ensure internal validity or credibility, the analysis continued until a certain saturation was reached within the framework of

the data collection and data analysis process of the study, and sufficient time was spent on this task.

2.   In order to increase the external reliability of the research, the research process and what has been done during the process has been explained in detail. In this context, the model of the research, data collection process, analysis, and interpretation of the data are richly and intensely defined.

3.   In order to ensure internal reliability in coding, NVivo reports were reviewed by an expert researcher in the field of qualitative research. The two encodings were compared with each other and reliability was calculated using Miles and Huberman (1994)'s formula (Reliability = consensus/consensus + disagreement X 100). In the reliability study conducted specifically for this study, the concordance between the two encodings was calculated as 96%.

Results

The research findings were analyzed and presented as models using the NVivo-10 package program. The findings obtained were supported by the statements of the participants.

Education and training status of students

The first issue addressed in the study was whether students experienced school and university changes and what kinds of changes were experienced in their academic achievement. The obtained results are presented in Figure-1.

Figure 1. *The Education and Training Process of Students*
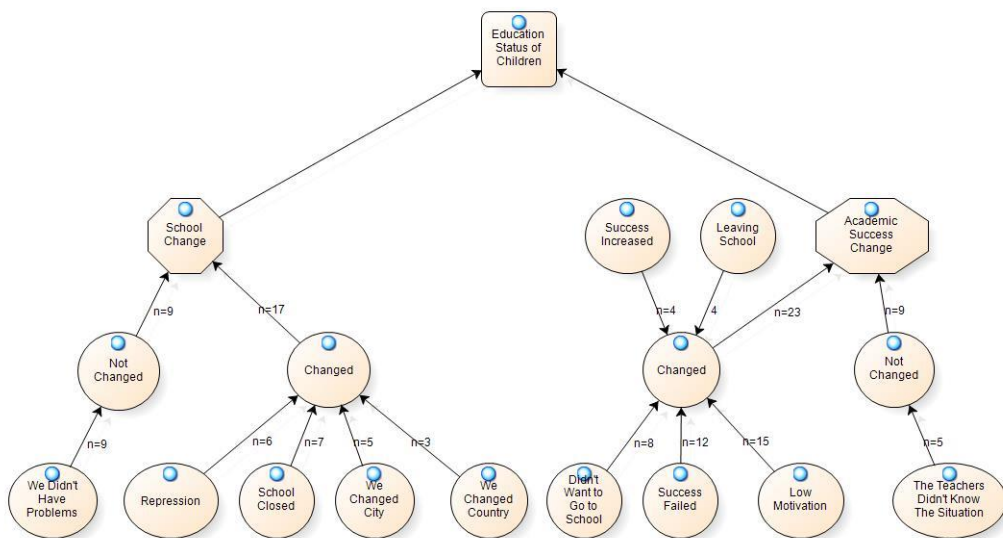
When Figure-1 was examined, most of the participants (n = 17) stated that they had to change their children's schools. Despite this, participants (n = 9) indicated that they did not have to change schools because they did not experience any problems. The most apparent reason among the participants' reasons for changing schools is that the schools that their children attend were closed (n = 7). However, exposure to psychological pressure (n = 6, expressed by parents with children in high school and higher education), city change (n = 5), and country change (n = 3) are among the stated reasons. Parents state that;

Yes, while going to private school, we had to change it because of financial reasons or the school closure. (P-1)

My son was studying at the foundation university affiliated with the Hizmet Movement. We had to change the school because the university was closed. (P-4)

We changed because when my husband was arrested, I didn't have to change the province and stay with my family. (P-3)

Yes. We had to change it because of the influence of the environment when his father first went to prison. (P-12)

We are currently abroad. We have changed schools twice while in prison in Turkey with my wife. Because when my husband was arrested, we had to move to another city with our family. But I had to change the school again due to the strict attitudes of the teacher, his lack of emotion, and the lack of empathy even though we told him about the child's situation. (P-21)

While my son, as a student, should only focus on his academic career and lessons, his education life was attempted to be prevented due to reasons beyond his control. Because my son was imprisoned for 13 months, and his education life was interrupted in a certain period because he was in prison. (P-18)

We changed his school; we changed the province first because we were threatened. We gave it to the private school where we moved, fearing that they would harm him in the public school. When I was arrested… (P-24)

When Figure-1 is analyzed in terms of academic success, it is seen that academic success has changed in most of the students. The reasons for the negative change in success are the desire not to go to school (n = 8), decreased academic success (n = 12), low motivation (n = 15), and leaving school (n=4). In the interviews, it was stated by their parents that the students who dropped out were higher education students and that some of these students had to migrate as well. On the other hand, there were some (n = 4, whose success increased) who stated that the success of the students changed positively. However, some parents (n=5) stated that there was no change in their children's achievements. Parents attributed this to their children's teachers not being aware of their situation. This situation belongs to the students in the younger age group.

Since my elder daughter could understand our situation better, her academic success did not decrease, and even my daughter worked harder to make her father happy in prison. She started to be at the top three in the exams held in the province we were in. "(P-1)

We had no academic problems, but we received psychological treatment and used medication during this challenging process. (P-3)

He had to leave university because we had to go abroad because my wife's sentence was upheld by the court. (P-7)

Yes, as I mentioned above, my sons were pushed back by the university administration and teachers. They were not admitted to the school, and they gave the exam results from the lowest grade in the classes. (P-13)

Because it was a stressful and troublesome process, it became difficult for my child to focus on the lessons in some periods, and then his studies were disrupted. While he had his own plans for his education life, his plans were interrupted for strange reasons. That's why he graduated with a lower score while his academic performance would be better. (P-18)

While my oldest daughter was preparing for university exams, she stubbornly studied harder. (P-3)

Students' psychological conditions

The second issue addressed in the study was whether the students had any psychological problems. The obtained results are presented in Figure-2.

Figure 2. *Change in Students' Psychological Status*
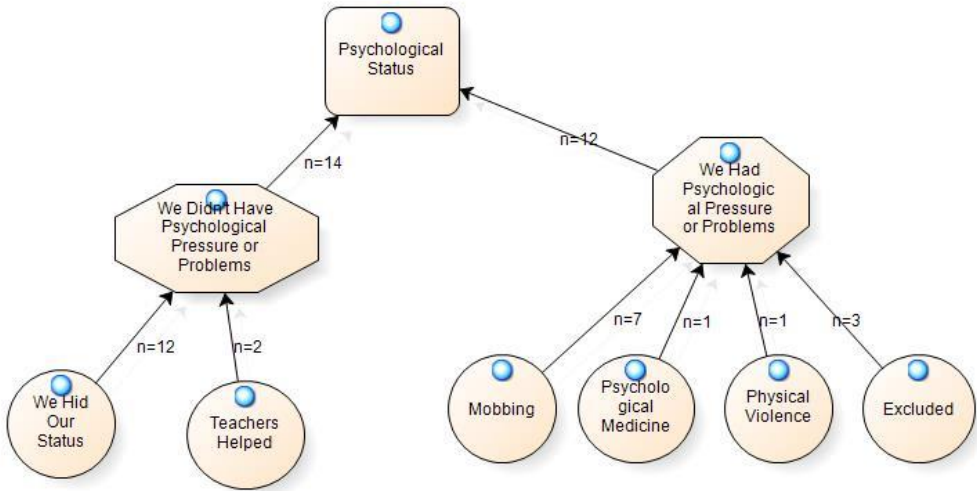
When Figure-2 was examined, most of the participants (n = 14) stated that their children did not experience psychological problems. On the other hand, participants (n = 12) stated that their children had psychological problems. While explaining the reasons why their children did not experience psychological pressure or problems, the participants attributed to the fact that the school administration, teachers, and friends were not unaware of their situation. However, there were also participants (n = 2) who stated that their teachers were helpful.

> We could not explain the troubling situation we experienced as a family to the school administration and teachers. Only the children's classroom teachers and guidance service knew. They were talking about their satisfaction with the moral and academic success of the children. This situation ensured not to mistreat the children. The school counselor said

that I came across politically neutral teachers and that I could have problems if I had come across other teachers (P-1)

Our teachers helped, but it was still a bit of a problem. (P-5)

The participants who stated that their children have psychological problems; mobbing (n = 7), exclusion (n = 3), psychological medicine (n = 1), and physical violence (n = 1). This issue was expressed by parents with high school and higher education children.

> While in Turkey, you came from my daughter at school, they put pressure FETO school, children did not want to go to school because she felt under constant pressure. (P-2)
>
> They told their friends that we lived separately from their fathers. When I was arrested, they couldn't attend school anyway; my little son attended open high school. They also kept my daughter under custody during her university enrollment and could not enroll in the school. My older son was at university. (By the way, my elder son was also arrested with me on a media show, although he stated that he was studying in Istanbul, he was asked to sign the court in Konya every week, and his school was extended.) He was mobbed by his friends and teachers at his school. In addition, ten people were subjected to deathly violence after school. She stayed at home for two months because the hospital refused to treat them ... (P-13)
>
> Due to the effect of this period, my child had a low success rate of up to 20% in the university exam, which is the peak of the education process. (P-14)
>
> ... he received psychological treatment and took psychological medicine ... (P-3)
>
> In this process, I think that my children are exposed to psychological pressure indirectly, if not directly, in their schools. Because politics had entered the schools now, and from kindergarten to universities, serious negative statements were made about people who made political propaganda under the name of July 15 celebrations and were imprisoned because of these lawsuits or were imprisoned and released before. (P-16)

Students' moral status

The third issue addressed in the research was whether there was any change in the ideas of the organizers about moral and universal values. The results obtained are presented in Figure-3.

Figure 3. *Changes in the Moral Status of the Students*
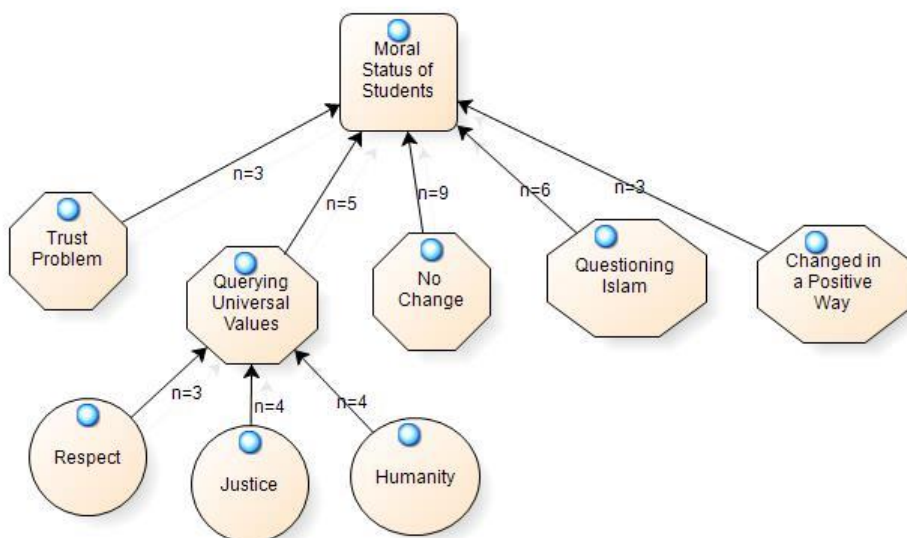
When Figure 3 is examined, there were also participants (n = 3) who stated that most of the participants (n = 9) did not experience problems with their children about moral and universal values, and even positive developments were observed.

> I think we survived with the least damage when they have grandfathers and grandmothers and family relatives who suffer from similar situations. (P-8)
>
> … They've gotten more sensitive; they try to pray at every opportunity. (P-17)
>
> On the other hand, the participants also stated that their children had problems of trust (n = 3), began to question the religion of Islam (n = 6),

and questioned universal values (n = 5). When Figure 3 is examined in terms of universal values, it was stated by their parents that the students started to question the values of respect (n = 3), justice (n = 4), and humanity (n = 4). This issue was expressed by parents who have children in high school and higher education. When the interview forms are examined, it is understood that most of the students who question these values are students who attend high school or university or have to leave the university.

Morally, they said that if people who live right are punished, we can also lie ... (P-1)

Unfortunately, it's troubled, they believe in God. That's all. (P-22)

  My son, who goes to high school, have been signs of deism and its effects are still continuing ... Prejudice has developed against religious people ... (P-14)

…the feeling of love and trust for people has diminished...(P-24)

They started questioning the concept of justice, especially my son who goes to university. The fact that their fathers were guilty while not guilty damaged their belief in the state. (P-19)

Discussion and Conclusion

This study took place in and out of Turkey after the July 15, 2016, coup attempt when the arrested parents revealed that students experienced what types of educational changes. The larger study includes examining the educational processes of all students from primary school to university. This article reports on upper-secondary and higher education students. Hundreds of thousands of people after the coup attempt with the decree issued by the government of the Republic of Turkey (KHK) was purged from office. Tens of thousands were jailed, and thousands of private institutions and 15 private universities (Appendix-1) were closed. It is composed of people imprisoned who were university graduates and continues in Turkey arrests for this group (available at www.ihd.org.tr., 2019). The biggest reason for all of this is that these individuals and institutions are linked to Hizmet Movement. The subject of my work is not about who and why these people

are connected or why they were jailed if they are guilty or not. Therefore, this issue was not mentioned in either the introduction or the discussion part of the study.

The first issue examined in the study is whether there are changes in the education-training status of the students. After parents are imprisoned, families face various difficulties such as economic insecurity, habitual routines, and a series of negative behavioral changes (Geller et al., 2011; Sugia, 2012). When the data obtained were analyzed, it was determined that most students had to change their schools. One of the most obvious reasons students have to change their schools is the closure of their children's schools. Especially with the closure of 15 foundation universities, the universities of thousands of students continuing their higher education had to change. It was even revealed as a result of interviews that some students were imprisoned. It is also seen that some of these students cannot continue to university. In the literature (Behr et al. 2020), the reasons for not attending university are stated as the national education system, the country's financial policy, and the type or quality of higher education institutions. This study finding is different from the literature for the reasons stated, and it is considered valuable.

Apart from this, exposure to psychological pressure and changing cities and countries are among the reasons stated. According to this, it is seen that students have problems in the context of school after the July 15 coup attempt in Turkey. However, some students did not have issues and did not have to change their schools. An important part of the parents who stated that they did not experience any problems stated that they hid their situation from both the school administration and their children's teachers.

When the academic success of the students was questioned, it was stated by their parents that academic success fell mostly. Among these students, it was stated by their parents that individuals who were preparing for the university exam experienced a decrease in their success. It is seen that the reasons for the decrease in success are the desire not to go to school and low motivation. However, parents stated that their children were not admitted to schools and exams by administrators and teachers, and they were given low grades. According to Sugia (2012), the arrest of the parents, witnessing this situation, or encountering uncertainty about

how long the parents will stay away from home is a traumatic event for many children.

The second issue examined in the research is whether there are changes in the students' psychological state. As a result of the interviews, it was stated by their parents that most of the students do not experience serious psychological problems. While the interview form was sent to the participants, the ages of their children were also asked. When the parents' responses are examined, it is seen that especially younger students do not experience psychological problems and are not exposed to any psychological pressure. When parents explained the reasons why their children did not experience psychological problems, they attributed it to the fact that the school administration, teachers, and friends were not unaware of their situation. However, some parents said that their teachers helped them. Given the link between parental imprisonment and children's well-being, and the fact that children spend significant time at school, schools are in a position to intervene and assist children with current or previously imprisoned parents (Sugie, 2012; Turney, 2019).

Despite this, there were also parents who stated that their children had serious psychological problems and even had to use psychological medicine. When the interview forms were examined, it was stated by the parents that the students attending high school and especially higher education had psychological problems and even used psychological medicine. Psychological problems determine students' behaviors, expectations, and attitudes (Bean & Eaton, 2001). When the interview forms are examined, it is seen that the students who are exposed to these events are in the large age group. Stating that their children had psychological problems, the parents expressed this as mobbing, exclusion, psychological medicine use, and physical violence. Among the possible reasons for this situation, it can be attributed to the intense negative news about the "Hizmet Movement" in both social media and visual media. There are studies in the relevant literature that support this finding of the study. Children experience profound psycho-social difficulties while their parents are imprisoned, often stigmatizing and creating social support systems, interactions with peers and teachers, and isolation and embarrassment that hinder children's educational opportunities and outcomes

(Murray & Ferrington, 2005; Sugia, 2012). The arrest, imprisonment, and release of a parent are potentially traumatic events for children (Wildeman, 2009).

The third issue addressed in the research is whether there has been any change in the students' ideas about moral and universal values. As a result of the observations, some participants stated that most parents' children did not experience problems with moral and universal values, and even that there were positive developments in moral values. When the forms were examined, it was seen that the issue of moral and universal values was not questioned, especially among the younger students. However, grandparents and grandmothers take care of children whose parents are in prison (there were participants who indicated this) may have prevented moral problems. When the international literature was examined, it was seen that there were results contrary to this finding of the study (Aaron & Dallaria, 2010; Huan et al., 2005; Murray et al., 2012; Murray & Ferrington, 2005; Popoola & Ayodeji, 2022). Muray et al., (2012) stated that with their parents' imprisonment, antisocial behaviors, mental health problems, and psychological medicine emerged in children. In addition, Aaron and Dallaria (2010), stated that imprisoned parents expose children to factors that put them at risk of committing a crime.

On the other hand, some parents stated that their children had serious problems regarding universal and moral values. When the interview forms were examined, it was determined that most of these students were individuals who started or continued their higher education. These are expressed as the problem of trust and questioning the religion of Islam. When the expressions of the parents are examined in terms of universal values, it is seen that the students start to question the values of respect, justice, and humanity. Again, when the forms were examined, it was seen that the issue of moral and universal values was questioned in older students. Over time, children recognize fear, anxiety, love, anger, and hatred. However, a sense of justice and conscience develop faster in older age groups. Thus, each child develops his / her sense of justice and questions this concept in case of situations that he/she thinks to be unfair (Can, 2018).

Children whose parents are imprisoned are a highly vulnerable group with many risk factors for negative consequences, so they can easily question universal

values (Murray & Ferrington, 2005). In areas where parental imprisonment is prevalent, life-long consequences for children, parental imprisonment causes greater inequality between adults and children (Wildeman, 2009). When the study is examined from this point of view, the results of the research are important not only for the Turkish sample but also for the children of the other world who have been politically persecuted. As described above, many studies (Baskas, 2016; Gray et al., 2019; Ludlow & Armstrong, 2019; Lukacova et al., 2018; O'Grady, 2017; Sams, 2014; Szifris et al., 2018) while dealing with incarcerated individuals, it can be said that children who will be the architects of our future are ignored. Therefore, it can be said that the results of the study are important and will fill the gap in the field.

Suggestions

The study was conducted on the basis of qualitative research methods and techniques. The results obtained should be limited to the area and sample used in the present study. Despite the above limitation, the researcher believes that the post-coup attempt of July 15 revealed valuable findings regarding the education and training processes of children of school age. The following recommendations have been developed for researchers who want to do different studies on the subject;

1. It can be said that the most striking finding in the study is that most of the students do not experience serious disinformation in terms of universal and moral values. However, parents whose children are at the age of higher education have stated that there are radical changes in their children's religious and justice feelings. Therefore, if interviews are done with students who are especially in higher education, it is possible to come up with different results.

2. As a result of the interviews, it was seen that some participants had to leave their country. An international comparative study can be conducted with both parents and children on the education system of the country they come from and the perspectives of teachers and administrators.

3.   After the July 15 coup attempt, 16 foundation universities associated with the Hizmet Movement were closed. Therefore, a mixed-method study can be conducted that deals with the education processes, resilience, and transitions of students in the higher education age who have been politically persecuted or forced to leave their homeland.

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Appendix-1: List of Closed Universities

	The Name of the University	City
1	University of Altın Koza (İpek)	Ankara
2	University of Orhangazi	Bursa
3	University of Canik Başarı	Samsun
4	University of Selahattin Eyyubi	Diyarbakır
5	University of Fatih	Istanbul
6	University of Melikşah	Kayseri
7	University of Mevlana	Konya
8	University of Şifa	Izmir
9	University of Turgut Özal	Ankara
10	University of Zirve	Gaziantep
11	University of Kanuni	Adana
12	University of İzmir	Izmir
13	University of Murat Hüdavendigar	Istanbul
14	University of Gediz	Izmir
15	University of Süleyman Şah	Istanbul

Empirical Article

From 2000 to 2018: Examining the Relationship Between Net Tuition Revenue and the International Undergraduate Student Enrollment at Public Doctoral Universities

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Abstract

Increased international students could potentially contribute to the institutional financial stability. However, there is limited research evidence regarding the association between net tuition revenue and international undergraduate student enrollment at public doctoral universities through a longitudinal perspective. This research, therefore, fills the gap and investigates the association between international student enrollment and the financial status of institutions. Informed by Cost-Benefit Analysis (CBA), this study used correlational analysis, One-way ANOVA and Post Hoc tests to examine the relationship from different perspectives. These findings indicated a statistically significant positive correlation between net tuition revenue and international undergraduate student enrollment numbers at public doctoral universities from 2000 and 2018. The research also revealed statistically significant differences in net tuition revenue among institutions grouped by international undergraduate student enrollment levels. The results illustrated the nuanced trend in the three waves of international student enrollment.

Introduction

Three waves (Choudaha, 2017) of the rapid growth of international students enrollment in U.S. universities and colleges have sparked recent research interests in the consequences of international student enrollment. Under the aforementioned circumstance, this study is interested in the potential association of net tuition revenue and international student enrollment from a higher education budgeting perspective from 2000 to 2018.

In the fall of 1999, there were 514,723 international college students in the United States. These students comprised 3.5% of the total enrollment of college students. In the 2018-2019 school year, 1,095,299 international college students were in the United States. With the doubled number of international students, the percentage was 5.5% of the total enrollment of college students (Institute of International Education, 2019). In the 2019-2020 school year, there were a total of 1,075,496 international college students in the United States (Institute of International Education, 2020). In the latest analysis, NAFSA: Association of International Educators (2020b) found that during the 2019-2020 academic year, international students studying at U.S. colleges and universities contributed $38.7 billion and supported 416 thousand jobs to the U.S. economy.

The guiding theoretical foundation of this study is Cost-Benefit Analysis (CBA), which contributes to informed decision-making through efficient educational investments in higher education. Educators can use economic methods to link resource inputs and outcomes (Hummel-Rossi & Ashdown, 2002). Economists developed CBA in the 1930s and 1950s, and then in the 1960s, these CBA approaches were applied to assess efficiency in education (Levin, 1991; Rice, 1997). CBA values all consequences to all members of society as a policy or project assessment method, and it quantifies these consequences in monetary terms (Boardman et al., 2018). People usually use it to determine opportunities that provide the best approach to achieve more benefits while saving costs. CBA can contribute to decision-making quality through more efficient educational investment in higher education (Belfield, 2015).

While the nation's economy continued its recovery after the Great Recession in 2008 (Rich, 2013), many higher education institutions struggled financially (Society for College and University Planning, 2018). The higher education leaders were responsible for ensuring the tuition-cost equation was being developed and monitored effectively. Higher education is needed to focus on the effective allocation of resources with priorities and maximizing outcomes (Society for College and University Planning, 2018).

Research on the relationship between net tuition revenue and international student enrollment has produced similar findings supporting the strong positive relationship at certain levels, but not every institution (Cantwell, 2015; Komissarova, 2019; Shih, 2017). There has been no study examining the relationship between net tuition revenue and international student enrollment during the three waves of international student mobility (Choudaha, 2017), which is 1999-2020. Both Cantwell (2015) and Komissarova (2019) worked on a larger sample with four-year colleges and universities that award at least bachelor's degrees. Since both Cantwell and Komissarova found a strong relationship at the public doctoral universities, this study specifically focuses on the category of public doctoral universities from 2000 to 2018.

The purpose of this research is to investigate the association between net tuition revenue at public doctoral universities and the international undergraduate student enrollment from 2000 to 2018 using

secondary data. Here are two research questions:

1.   Are the gains in net tuition revenue associated with international undergraduate student enrollment at public doctoral universities?

2.   Is there a statistically significant difference for net tuition revenue among public doctoral universities by international undergraduate enrollment level?

According to the two research questions, the association between the gains in net tuition revenue and international undergraduate student enrollment was examined from two different perspectives: the first question investigates the association between net tuition revenue and enrolled international undergraduate student number as a continuous variable, while the second question examines the extent to which net tuition revenue varies among instantiations by grouping universities using the international undergraduate student enrollment levels. The findings were interpreted by the three waves of international student mobility (Choudaha, 2017). This research is significant, given the current effect of the global pandemic of COVID-19 on international education and the immigration reform agenda. With the theoretical background of CBA, the study will provide evidence for informed decision-making through more efficient educational investment in higher education (Belfield, 2015). At the end of the third wave of international education, with a global view of the pandemic's effect on higher education, determining the impact from the budget management perspective is vital to the area of international higher education moving forward.

Literature Review

This section provides the theoretical foundation that guides the overarching research questions and design, along with the relevant literature to help the authors define and measure the interested variables for this study.

Net Tuition Revenue

After Lingenfelter (2012) reviewed the history of higher education in the United States, especially the trends and milestones that have shaped the evolution and financing of public colleges and universities, it concluded that effective budgeting required analysis, engagement, adaption, and negotiation over ends, means, and values. Higher education policymakers have been asked to continue to rely at least to some extent on economic foundations (Brewer et al., 2015). Cost analysis, as the core of formula budgeting, is required for fairness and efficiency. Understanding the causes of cost and pricing in higher education is important to craft meaningful policy recommendations (Massy, 2012).

In the 2019 NACUBO Tuition Discounting Study (National Association of College and University Business Officers, 2020), 366 private and nonprofit colleges and universities reported an estimated 52.6% average institutional discount rate for first-time, full-time, first-year students in 2019-20 and 47.6% for all undergraduate students. Both represent the highest values in the last decade. However, the rising discount rates could lead to flat or declining net tuition revenue. Even institutions were generating revenues from other sources, but they were likely not enough to offset any declines in net tuition. From the budgeting perspective, discounting tuition is a double-edged sword, which increases institutional grant aid and flattens growth in revenues. That is why the term of net tuition revenue was

applied in this study. Net tuition revenue is the total amount of tuition and fees, minus state and institutional financial aid and medical tuition and fees (Laderman & Weeden, 2020).

Three Waves of International Student Enrollment

2019 Open Doors (Institute of International Education, 2019) showed that in the 1999 school year, there were 489,866 enrolled international students and 24,857 Optional Practical Training (OPT) international students, for a total of 514,723 international college students in the United States. It accounted for 3.5% of the total enrollment of college students. NAFSA found that during the 2019-2020 academic year, international students studying at U.S. colleges and universities contributed $38.7 billion to and supported 415,996 jobs in the U.S. economy (NAFSA, 2020a).

Choudaha (2017) analyzed the change in international student mobility from the lens of three overlapping waves spread over 20 years between 1999 and 2020. A wave was defined by the key events and trends impacting international student mobility in a period. Wave one started in 1999 and ended in 2006. It was shaped by the terrorist attacks of 2001 and the enrollment of international students at institutions seeking to build research excellence. The second wave (2006-2013) has its origins in the global financial crisis, which triggered financial motivations among some institutions in traditional top destinations to expand international student enrollment aggressively. Economics and the English language were the key factors. From 2013 to 2020 was the third wave. With the slowdown in the Chinese economy, United Kingdom's referendum to leave the European Union, and American Presidential elections, the third wave showed increasing competition among new and traditional destinations to attract and retain international students.

International Student Enrollment and Economic Impacts

Shih (2017) examined the data from 1995 to 2005 to explore how international students impact domestic enrollment at the graduate level and found that high net tuition payments from international students helped subsidize the cost of enrolling domestic students. Cantwell (2015) concluded that some, but not all institutions were able to generate additional tuition revenue by enrolling international students, and the significantly positive relationship happened at public research and doctoral universities only, and the study was focused on the time period from 2000 to 2009. Komissarova (2019) used the years from 2003-04 to 2016-17 to analyze a sample of public and private not-for-profit U.S. colleges and universities. The conclusion was that the relationship between international undergraduate enrollment and net tuition revenue varied by sector and by Carnegie classification. Also, the strongest association was found at the public research universities level, which echoed what Cantwell (2015) found. The existing research about the relationship between net tuition revenue and international has produced quite convincing findings, despite these studies' many differences on their focused areas (Cantwell, 2015; Komissarova, 2019). The primary findings revealed that international student enrollment positively impacted domestic enrollment at graduate level, and net tuition revenue at the undergraduate level at public doctoral universities.

The institution's reputation was an important factor for international students to choose to study in a U.S. institution (Lee, 2010). Lee (2010) revealed that students from East Asia, even with limited information about the institutions, heavily relied on institutional rankings, such as the *U.S. News and*

World Report. This study focused on the institutions which were on the list of *U.S. News & World Report Find the Best Colleges for You* (U.S. News & World Report, 2018).

In summary, the theoretical framework, CBA, can improve the quality of decision making by estimating the strengths and weaknesses for policy and project assessment. Considering the current financial situation with discounted tuition, the term of net tuition revenue was applied in this study. On the other hand, Choudaha (2017) analyzed the change in international student mobility in three overlapping waves spread over 20 years between 1999 and 2020. Existing research about the relationship between net tuition revenue and international have produced quite convincing findings (Cantwell, 2015; Komissarova, 2019; Shih, 2017) supporting the string positive relationships at certain levels. However, there was a lack of longitudinal study for the three waves. In addition, no current research had a deep evaluation of the association between international student number and net tuition revenue through international student enrollment levels, which could identify the relationship and the variance.

Theoretical Framework

Boardman et al. (2018) introduced Cost-Benefit Analysis (CBA) as a policy or project assessment method that values all consequences to all members of society and quantifies the consequences in monetary terms. People could use CBA as a systematic approach to estimate the strengths and weaknesses of alternatives and determine the best options to achieve more benefits while saving costs. CBA supplements commonly use effectiveness and efficacy-related evaluation methods by adding an economic component to the evaluation (Belfield, 2015).

Pareto efficiency is the foundation of CBA (Boardman et al., 2018). Pareto efficiency, or Pareto optimality, is an economic state where people cannot reallocate resources to make one individual better off without making at least one individual worse off (Chappelow, 2019). However, using a decision rule to implement only Pareto efficient policies is impractical for different reasons: the information burden of measuring, the administrative burden of making a transfer, and compensation to overstate costs and understand benefits (Boardman et al., 2018). On the other hand, it gives policymakers a realistic sense of the overall cost and benefit of an invention by identifying and assigning a value to the inputs and outputs. It is not just to the budget but also to the community (Rice, 1997). Tsang (1997) suggested that recognizing the importance and usefulness of cost analysis in educational policymaking and evaluation is needed. As CBA and Pareto efficiency cannot directly implement this study's data analysis, recognizing it would help policymakers to apply CBA to determine the best options to achieve more benefits and save costs in each higher education institution.

Economic evaluation is broadly applied to optimize the production of particular outcomes within budgetary constraints with certain inputs (Barnett, 1993; Chambers, 1999; Hummel-Rossi & Ashdown, 2002). Educators can use economic methods to provide linkage between resource inputs and outcomes (Hummel-Rossi & Ashdown, 2002). Levin (1975) demonstrated the applicability of cost-effectiveness, which was considered the first work to appear in the education literature seriously advocating for economic evaluation in educational decision-making (Hummel-Rossi & Ashdown, 2002; McLaughlin & Phillips, 1991). CBA has been frequently applied in the area of education. The outstanding examples of cost-benefit analysis include the Perry Preschool Program (Barnett, 1985), the Chicago Child-Parent Center programs, and the Abecedarian Child Development Program (Barnett & Masse, 2007; Belfield,

2015; Heckman et al., 2010).

The analysis of the costs and benefits of an educational program is more complex than it initially appeared. Adopting either CBA or CEA (Cost-Effective Analysis) in educational evaluations had been slow (Levin, 1991; Levin & McEwan, 2001). Monk and King (1993) concluded that the lower utilization of cost analyses was because of the complexity of the inputs and outputs in education. Tsang (1997) summarized that the applications of cost-benefit studies in policy analysis and evaluation could achieve through determining the rate of return or choosing among alternative investment options using efficiency as one of the criteria. Furthermore, education decision-makers need complete information about the relationship between expenditures and outcomes. And the information should include details of how services are delivered to make informed decisions about how to allocate the best funds (Chambers, 1999; Hummel-Rossi & Ashdown, 2002). In summary, as the application in education, CBA does not directly identify the best alternatives; rather, it provides information that may assist in decision making. CBA can contribute toward improving the quality of decision-making through more efficient educational investment in higher education (Belfield, 2015).

CBA is the theoretical foundation that supports the overarching inquiry of this research, which highlights the association between the benefit as net tuition revenue and international undergraduate student enrollment as investment. This research did not use the CBA framework from the economic felid to methodologically inform data analysis, which should adopt more advanced analysis and is beyond the scope of this study due to the data limitation of using the secondary data. The following research is needed to investigate the association between next tuition revenue and international student enrollment by controlling more contextual costs while the data availability is increased with a more specific study design.

Methodology

The study assessed the association between international undergraduate enrollment and net tuition revenue at public doctoral universities from 2000 to 2018 in the United States. This longitudinal research implemented a secondary database using quantitative research methods. The research first used international student enrollment numbers as the independent variable, for which the study used Pearson correlational analysis. For the second research question, ANOVA was used as the analytical approach because the researchers categorized all the universities into nine groups based on the student enrollment numbers, which will be detailed in the following section.

Participants

This study used secondary data from the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) (National Center for Education Statistics, 2020) collected by the Postsecondary Branch of the National Center for Education Statistics (U.S. News & World Report, 2018).

The samples were limited to public doctoral universities based on the research interest. The identification of the sample from the IPEDS data involved five steps. It started from 405 U.S. doctoral universities included public and private ones from the IPEDS data. After eliminating the institutions with missing data for either revenue from tuition and fees, international student enrollment, and private doctoral universities, there were 205 institutions left. In the last step, the U.S. News & World Report Best

Colleges (U.S. News & World Report, 2018) were merged for ranking. So, the final sample was 180 public doctoral universities, which reported revenue from tuition and fees, enrolled first-time degree/ certificate-seeking undergraduate students from foreign countries, and had the U.S. News rankings.

Data and Variables

The data analyzed covered the period 2000 through 2018 with the three waves of international student mobility (Choudaha, 2017). As mentioned previously, this study primarily used secondary data from the IPEDS (National Center for Education Statistics, 2020) developed by the Postsecondary Branch of the National Center for Education Statistics. IPEDS is an annual data collection distributed by the Postsecondary Branch of the NCES, a non-partisan center under the Institute of Education Sciences management under the U.S. Department of Education (IPEDS, 2018). The NCES is considered the primary federal entity for collecting and analyzing data related to higher education.

For the two interested variables, the first variable of net tuition revenue is the total amount of tuition and fees, minus state and institutional financial aid and medical tuition and fees (Laderman & Weeden, 2020). IPEDS defines net tuition revenue as the amount of money the institution takes in from students after institutional grant aid is provided (IPEDS, 2020). The IPEDS data is labeled as "nettuition 01," which stands for the net tuition and fees revenue and is measured in United States dollars. In the IPEDS data, for public institutions, tuition and fees, and institutions grants are collected separately. Based on the Governmental Accounting Standards Board (GASB), in IPEDS data, net tuition revenue is a deprived variable, which is calculated by subtracting institution grants (restricted and unrestricted) from tuition and fees (IPEDS, 2015).

The independent variable is the number of international students enrolled in a university for a specific year. An international student is defined as an individual who is enrolled for credit at an accredited higher education institution in the U.S. on a temporary visa, and who is not an immigrant (permanent resident with an I-51 or Green Card), or an undocumented immigrant, or a refugee (UNESCO Institute For Statistics, 2020). In this study, the independent variable is international undergraduate student enrollment, and the IPEDS definition was applied as the number of first-time degree/certificate-seeking undergraduate students from foreign countries (IPEDS, 2020). Since the IPEDS foreign country data is only required in even-numbered years, the numbers of first-time degree/certificate-seeking undergraduate students from foreign countries of 2000, 2002, 2004, 2006, 2008, 2010, 2012, 2014, 2016, and 2018 were collected for the study.

After retrieving the number of undergraduate international student enrollment, the sample of 180 institutions was divided into nine groups by international undergraduate enrollment levels as: one (1-19), two (20-39), three (40-59), four (60-79), five (80-99), six (100-199), seven (200-299), eight (300-399), and nine (more than 400). The decision of dividing the sampled universities into nine levels was based the data distribution. The researchers tested on the data distribution with intervals as 50, 100, 200, and 350, respectively, and found the overly large interval size missed some categories, and the small interval size led to too many categories with minimal groups. The challenge of the unnormal distribution of data across years was particularly due the drastic change of international student enrollment size in almost two decades. After five failure experiments with different intervals, the researchers finally decided to code the way listed above, which had the samples distributed in each group normally.

Analytic Strategy

This study investigated the relationship between two variables, net tuition revenue and the enrollment of undergraduate international students at public doctoral universities from 2000 to 2018, using two approaches. Research question one was interested in the linear relationship between the net tuition revenue and the enrollment of international undergraduate students. Prior research has shown that the relationship was strongest for undergraduate students in public doctoral universities during a shorter time period (Cantwell, 2015; Komissarova, 2019). This study emphasized public doctoral universities with a much more extended period from 2000 to2018, which corresponds to the three waves of international student mobility (Choudaha, 2017). Since the international undergraduate student data were collected by IPEDS every other year in even-numbered years, from 2000 to 2018, 10 Pearson correlation analyses were conducted to examine the relationship, and the results was interpreted by incorporating the three waves of international student enrollment. The higher the absolute value of the correlation coefficient, the stronger the relationship is.

For the second question, the interest was to further reveal the significant variance among public doctoral universities for the net tuition revenue based on the international undergraduate student enrollment level. As mentioned above, the sample of 180 institutions was divided into nine groups by international undergraduate enrollment levels. The ANOVA analyses provided more nuanced evidence which public doctoral university net revenue differs by the undergraduate international student enrollment, when grouping the universities in different categories. Since it was a longitudinal study, 10 one-way ANOVA with Post Hoc tests were conducted to examine the difference. The Post Hoc tests helped reveal where the difference lies between different levels (Salkind, 2017).

Results

This section presents the statistical results. Table 1 presents descriptive statistics of all variables from 2000 to 2018. The dependent variable is net tuition revenue, and the independent variable is international undergraduate enrollment number. The first column reports both variables from 2000 to 2018 in each even-numbered year. Table 1 shows considerable differences among the minimum, mean, and maximum. The observations indicated the variables were widely distributed.

The first question was to identify whether the gains in net tuition revenue are associated with international undergraduate student enrollment numbers at public doctoral universities from 2000 to 2018. Table 2 shows the results from the 10 Pearson correlation analyses' findings in detail with the Pearson correlation coefficient and the significant p-value between net tuition revenue and international undergraduate student enrollment. Since the study was concurrent with the three waves of international student enrollment by Choudaha (2017), Table 2 lists the results in three waves. In addition, the means of international undergraduate student enrollment were displayed.

In summary, the results indicated correlations between net tuition revenue and international undergraduate student enrollment number in all sampled years. Specifically, from 2000 to 2018, the average international student enrollment number increased from around 50 to over 150. Meanwhile, when the public doctoral universities recruited more international students, more net tuition revenue was gained. This resonates with the existing research that indicated the net gains in tuition revenue by enrolling more international undergraduate students in public research institutions (Cantwell, 2015;

Komissarova, 2019). An interesting finding from this study is that the coefficient was gradually getting

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics of the Variables

Variable	Min.	Max.	*M*	*SD*
Net tuition revenue				
2000	-660208	326821768	53603363.428	46997019.360
2002	-31929174	334967865	58296813.939	53084614.641
2004	3979899	357206000	79116431.200	62022994.999
2006	3834693	390852000	96228610.933	75946089.835
2008	255000	456182000	110945466.467	90061006.286
2010	5157681	523186000	129354613.750	103933901.145
2012	6168628	631461000	155102678.350	125373452.854
2014	6497931	683858010	169840829.506	136412009.147
2016	5468311	821076000	186468939.494	151479550.626
2018	2672758	873336000	195221431.156	163692093.112
International undergraduate enrollment				
2000	1	511	56.628	75.067
2002	1	544	53.500	74.005
2004	1	583	55.221	80.269
2006	2	740	68.025	97.291
2008	2	712	81.654	116.359
2010	1	907	98.277	150.951
2012	1	1282	142.757	217.655
2014	1	1238	155.099	232.390
2016	2	1542	172.382	257.945
2018	2	1290	158.247	249.570

Note. M = Mean, *SD* = Standard Deviation

Table 2: Correlation between Net Tuition Revenue and International Undergraduate Student Enrollment and Number of Enrollment from 2000 to 2018

	Wave One (2000-2006)			
	2000	2002	2004	2006
Mean of first-time international undergraduate student enrollment	56.63	53.50	55.22	68.02
Correlation between Net tuition revenue and International undergraduate student enrollment	.340***	.330***	.352***	.392***
P	0.001	0.001	0.001	0.001
	Wave Two (2006-2013)			
	2008	2010	2012	2014
Mean of first-time international undergraduate students	81.65	98.28	142.76	155.10
Net tuition revenue*International undergraduate student enrollment	.547***	.692***	.724***	.758***
P	0.001	0.001	0.001	0.001
	Wave Three (2013-2020)			
	2014	2016	2018	
Mean of first-time international undergraduate students	155.10	172.38	158.25	
Net tuition revenue*International undergraduate student enrollment	.758***	.735***	.739***	
P	0.001	0.001	0.001	

Note. ***. Correlation is significant at the .001 level (2-tailed).

Table 3: 10 one-Way ANOVA of Net Tuition Revenue by International Undergraduate Enrollment Levels in Three Waves from 2000 to 2018

	Wave One (2000-2006)			
	2000	2002	2004	2006
Dfb	7	8	8	8
Dfw	156	151	154	154
F	6.445	6.292	6.677	8.789
P	0.001	0.001	0.001	0.001
	Wave Two (2006-2013)			
	2008	2010	2012	2014
Dfb	8	8	8	8
Dfw	163	157	160	163
F	9.911	19.662	19.17	24.258
P	0.001	0.001	0.001	0.001
	Wave Three (2013-2020)			
	2014	2016	2018	
Dfb	8	8	8	
Dfw	163	164	165	
F	24.258	25.646	25.344	
P	0.001	0.001	0.001	

Note. Dependent variable: net tuition revenue; independent variable: international undergraduate enrollment levels.

Dfb is the degree of freedom between groups. Dfw is the degree of freedom within groups

Table 4: Significant Differences between the Highest Level (More than 400 International Undergraduate Students Enrolled) with Other Levels 2000-2018

9 X	2000	2006	2008	2010	2012	2014	2016	2018
1	-33042381.3	-100147291.8	-187234523.689***	-284673676.638**	-301702178.167***	*-319025650.569****	-355425298.435***	-376631106.313***
2	-18931826.36	-94209053.25	-169831759.417***	-270190519.878**	-286976520.972***	*-333533753.939****	-356131098.406***	-349762165.220***
3	-2985374.958	-82745815.59	-160608834.667***	-239913221.819**	-255093764.273***	*-309709505.611****	-323296968.391***	-326279149.523***
4	10722942	4257690.5	-133347804.750**	-212760773.141**	-244933981.357***	*-241516794.942****	-267948974.019***	-285168592.157***
5	5532364.667	-3827188.333	-95106342.82	-179761418.903**	-241906320.500***	*-264728475.556****	-266209836.191***	-265722510.773***
6	31391615.47	-32886945.02	-111447931	-180798796.932**	-208443537.094***	*-242671835.116****	-233541895.417***	229169004.189***
7	44848317.88	12999529.78	-23130178.97	-152774692.278**	-155940865.833**	*-173511618.889****	-262763105.391***	180542039.473**
8		71034348.17	-60945601.33	-66893283.78	-109491669.1	*-134281253.603***	-172075825.491***	89314423.77

Note. **The mean difference is significant at the .05 level.
***The mean difference is significant at the .001 level.
Column one: 1: 10-19, 2: 20-39, 3: 40-59, 4: 60-79, 5: 80-100, 6: 100-199, 7: 200-299, 8: 300-399

bigger along with the increased international student enrollment number, which means the association between the two interested variables was getting even more stronger when there are more international students enrolled. During the period from 2000 to 2018, the statistically significant correlational coefficients increased from moderately positive (0.330) to strongly positive (0.758) for the three waves.

The second question examined the difference in net tuition revenue among public doctoral universities based on the international student enrollment categories/levels from 2000 to 2018. After several attempts and failures, finally, the sampled institutions were categorized into nine categories. The coding of categorization contributed to the existing literature by identifying the specific differences among institutions with varied enrollment levels. 10 one-way analyses of variance Tukey's Post Hoc tests were conducted.

All 10 one-way ANOVA findings are displayed in Table 3, with the three waves of international student mobility identified (Choudaha, 2017). The findings revealed there was a significant difference in net tuition revenue among public doctoral universities by the international undergraduate student enrollment levels. The differences were statistically significant in each ANOVA. The F value increased from 6.292 in 2002 to 25.646 in 2016. The F values ranged between 6.292 to 8.789 in wave one and rose to the range of 9.911 to 24.258 in wave two. In the end, the F values steadily stayed around 25 in wave three. The findings showed that the F value boosted from 2000 to 2018, demonstrating increasing differences among universities based on international student enrollment.

Interestingly, Tukey's Post Hoc analysis specified the difference among different groups in all sampled years. In earlier years, the positions of significant differences were more scattered. Since 2008, findings of the highest international undergraduate student enrollment level showed the trend of significant differences with others. Table 4 demonstrates the Tukey's Post Hoc findings of the position between more than 400 with each other category from 2000 to 2018. From 2008, the category with more than 400 students became significantly different with four lower levels. Furthermore, in 2014 and 2016, the highest level had significantly different net tuition revenue from all other eight levels. From 2010 to 2018, the highest level was significantly different from each of the lower seven levels. In summary, Tukey's Post Hoc findings reported that the highest-level universities, which enrolled the most international undergraduate students, exhibited significant differences from lower levels since 2008. In the second and third waves, when the universities recruited more international students, and the relationship between net tuition revenue and the international undergraduate student enrollment was stronger, this level of institutions gained significantly different net tuition revenue.

In summary, the study found that the net tuition revenue was statistically different among institutions with varied international undergraduate enrollment levels in each ANOVA analysis from 2000 to 2018. Through the paired post hoc analysis, it is evident the institutions with the highest international undergraduate student enrollment gained significantly more net tuition revenue than the lower levels since 2008. The quantitative research advances the current understanding from a longitudinal perspective (2000 - 2018) with three waves of international student enrollment (Choudaha, 2017).

Discussion

This paper assessed whether and to what extent that public doctoral universities in the U.S. generated net tuition revenue by enrolling international undergraduate students using two different

approaches: 1. by enrollment number and 2. by enrollment category. It delves deeper into the association between international student numbers and institution net tuition revenue by investigating both the linear relationship and the variance among institutions with different enrolled international students.

Findings of question one indicated that sampled public doctoral universities did gain more net tuition revenue by enrolling additional international undergraduate students from 2000 to 2018. From a longitudinal perspective, the coefficient strength gradually got stronger when universities recruited more international students. Between 2000 and 2018, the 180 public doctoral universities experienced a 287% increase in new international undergraduate student enrollment and a 364% increase in net tuition revenue. It resonates with previous evidence (Bound et al., 2020; Komissarova, 2019; Shen, 2015) of the revenue stream from international students as an approach to counteract diminishing state support for public higher education. Empirical studies have demonstrated that whenever state funding is insufficient, public universities intended to collect more tuition revenue (Jaquette & Curs, 2015). The findings of this study could also be considered as selective public research universities gained net tuition revenue and buffered declines in state funding in the last two decades.

The quantitative research advances the current understanding with three waves of international student enrollment (Choudaha, 2017). In the first wave from 1999 to 2006, this research supports the chronological division by finding the increase of international undergraduate student enrollment and a significantly positive correlation between net tuition revenue and international undergraduate student enrollment. In this research, public doctoral universities witnessed a modest decline in both the number of new international undergraduate student enrollments and the relationship between net tuition revenue after 2001, which matched the changing trend after the terrorist attacks of 9/11 (Choudaha, 2017) and a robust growth right after.

With its origins in the global financial crisis, the second wave (2006-2013) had the outcome of the recession as severe budget cuts in higher education in many countries around the world (Choudaha, 2017; Eggins & West, 2010). The leading institutional emphasis shifted to finance, and meanwhile, China's middle-class was growing, and many could afford to send children to study overseas (Choudaha, 2017). This study supported it by finding a 227% increase in international students increase and a 193% increase in Pearson correlation from 2006 to 2014 (by research's calculation). The findings were aligned with such a change in the way tuition was paid by international students. The correlation coefficients between net tuition revenue and international undergraduate student enrollment were statistically significant, and they increased from moderate to strong in the second wave.

Due to the economic and political turbulence, from 2013 to 2020, the increase of international student enrollment slowed down in the third wave. The findings supported it with the decreased enrollment number and the slowdown of the increasing trend in the correlation coefficients. The change of correlation strength in wave three also echoes the decline of international student enrollment from the economic slowdown in China, Brexit, the election of Donald Trump, and so on (Choudaha, 2017).

This research found statistically significant differences in net tuition revenue among institutions grouped by international undergraduate student enrollment levels for the second research question. The trend of increasing significant differences started less (four to six) in wave one to the peak of 17 in wave two and ended with fairly more (around 15) in wave three. Through Post Hoc analysis, the highest international enrollment level gained significantly more net tuition revenue than the lower levels since

2008. In 2014 and 2016, the highest level gained significantly different net tuition revenue from every other level. The study deeply identified the top universities in 2014 and 2016, which were the peaks years of international student enrollment. There were 18 institutions in the highest level that recruited more than 400 international undergraduate students in 2014. The top five institutions with most international undergraduate students enrollment were Michigan State University (1238), Purdue University-Main Campus (1125), the University of Illinois at Urbana – Champaign (1065), University of California – San Diego (941), and University of Washington -Seattle Campus (918). In 2016, there were 22 institutions in the level that recruited more than 400 international undergraduate students. The top five institutions were the University of California - Irvine (1542), University of California – San Diego (1136), Michigan State University (1127), the University of Illinois at Urbana – Champaign (1042), and University of Washington -Seattle Campus (955).

From the perspective of host institutions, revenue generation has become an essential rationale for universities in the United States to increase international enrollments (Deschamps & Lee, 2015; Lee et al., 2006). In this longitudinal study, Tukey's Post Hoc findings contributed to the existing literature by identifying the specific differences among institutions with varied enrollment levels. The findings discovered more universities proactively developed the capability to recruit many international undergraduate students after 2008, which was a significant indicator of the university tuition revenue.

Limitations

There were obvious limitations related to the secondary data of this research. First, the three waves of international enrollment were from 1999 to 2020. Due to the availability of the secondary data, for the sample of 180 institutions, the IPEDS data were not exactly available. IPEDS collects international student enrollment data in even-numbered years. That was the reason the 1999 and 2019 data were not available. Second, public and private universities apply different accounting standards. In IPEDS data, most public institutions apply the Governmental Accounting Standards Board (GASB), and private and public institutions apply the Financial Accounting Standards Board (FASB). One limitation is that in this study, only public doctoral institutions were included. In the end, this study primarily focused on the relationship between net tuition revenue and the international undergraduate student enrollment at public doctoral universities. However, other variables that may impact the relationship are recommended in further research.

Implications and Conclusion

Based on the current research, this study is one of the first that explored with a specific emphasis on the public doctoral universities, and the findings resonate with the current research (Cantwell, 2015; Komissarova, 2019). Secondly, this research identified the relationship between net tuition revenue and international education enrollment with a dataset extended for almost two decades from 2000 to 2018, which runs almost concurrents with the three waves of international student mobility (Choudaha, 2017). Thirdly, this research contributed to the literature by revealing the nuanced trend of the relationship that from 2000 to 2018, the significantly positive coefficients between the two interested variables were growing stronger since 2006 and peaked in 2014, and then from 2016 to 2018, it slightly decreased but still kept a stable high level. Fourthly, this study was one of the few to categorize institutions by the

international undergraduate student enrollment numbers. The unique contribution creates a new method to reveal the difference in net tuition revenue by a categorized size of international student enrollment for future studies. Since such categorization has never been reported in the literature, this study provided a rational approach for categorizing institutions by the international student enrollment numbers. Last but not least, the findings of Tukey's Post Hoc analyses echo the three waves of international student enrollment (Choudaha, 2017). This study used a statistical method to report that the institutions with the highest capability to enroll international undergraduate students from 2010 to 2018 gained statistically different net tuition revenue than most institutions that enroll lower levels of international students. Since the research was one of the few to categorize international undergraduate student enrollment institutions, Tukey's Post Hoc findings could be applied for a deeper study of different international undergraduate student enrollment levels, especially the top ones.

The scholar-practitioners of international higher education leverage research and scholarship to inform practice and advance the theoretical foundations (Saubert & Ziguras, 2020; Streitwieser & Ogden, 2016). With the cost analysis of different institutions, the scholar-practitioners, researchers, and policymakers can apply the findings of this study to budget management, confirm the efficacy of existing services, modify the provision of current international student enrollment and retention, and design new services. Since a limitation of this study is that IPEDS collects international student data every other year, one recommendation is to continue the research based on each institution's different situation with every year's data. A cost-benefit analysis case study could be quantitative or mixed research with the addition of qualitative research. It would be a great opportunity to assess the cost and benefit from international student enrollment with the guideline of Pareto efficiency, and reflect the impact of policy, reorganization, consolidation, and change of key offices in each year. In addition, it could also identify whether international student enrollment boosts domestic recruitment in individual university.

While this study showed significant evidence of the strong relationship between net tuition revenue and international undergraduate student from a longitudinal perspective, revenue-generating is not the only reason to recruit international students. There are variety of reasons to recruit international students, as fostering a diverse campus, building a culturally diverse learning environment, learning about different cultural perspectives in first hand, enriching campus with cultural perspectives, and so on. The research could be the blueprint cost-benefit analysis in individual universities or other levels of institutions, as private doctoral universities and regional scope, and the benefits should include economic and non-economic impacts. The cost-benefit analysis provides policymakers the foundation for evaluating the institutional support for international 'students' recruitment and enrollment. More research is recommended to include other key variables to explore this topic and deepen the understanding.

To summarize, this study investigated the association between net tuition revenue at public doctoral universities and international student enrolment from 2000 to 2018 with two steps. The first analysis identified a statistically significant positive correlation between net tuition revenue and the international undergraduate student enrollment at public doctoral universities, and the relation developed stronger from 2000 to 2018. Moreover, the findings of the second question demonstrated that the net tuition revenue was statistically different between international undergraduate enrollment levels in each analysis from 2000 to 2018. Furthermore, the highest level institutions, which enrolled more than 400 new international undergraduate students a year, developed a significant difference from the lower levels

since 2008. Yet, the potential for net tuition revenue gain does not mean every institution will achieve it by enrolling additional international undergraduate students. Individual cost-benefit analysis is recommended, and the research contributions can be translated into practical information. From the budget management perspective, institutions can use them to confirm the efficacy of existing services, modify the provision of current international student enrollment and retention, and design new services. The study provides international education practitioners, researchers, and policymakers with evidence for informed decision-making through a cost and benefit lens.

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