Charter School Policies and Teachers' Sensemaking of the Pressures to Recruit Students to Their Schools

Dissertation

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Abstract

This dissertation examines the ways that teachers in charter schools respond to market pressures to recruit students to their schools. Policymakers in the United States promote charter schools to introduce competition into the education system in an effort to increase quality, efficiency, and innovation in schools. Charter schools do not draw a pre-determined student body based on their geographic location. Rather, charter schools start with no students and must recruit every child who enrolls in the school. A key assumption underlying these policies is that school personnel will feel competitive pressures when they do not meet their enrollment needs and make changes to their educational approaches to attract more students. One unintended consequence of charter school policies is that teachers may be drawn into work to recruit students to their school in addition to their full-time work to educate students. Drawing on sensemaking theories and employing a multiple-case study methodology focusing on 12 teachers at seven schools, I examine the ways that teachers come to understand and act on the need to recruit students to their school. There are several notable findings. All teachers in this study were surprised by the need to recruit students and experienced ambiguity both around how to respond and whether they would keep their jobs if they did not meet enrollment numbers. Teachers engaged in multiple different actions to recruit students, although there was a high level of variation in the extent to which teachers participated in student recruitment work and the ways that they experienced competitive pressures. The factors that shaped sensemaking include the extent to which schools are under pressure to recruit students, teachers' conceptions of their school's mission, ethical considerations, the extent to which teachers experienced burnout, and characteristics of school leaders.

Teachers' sensemaking of student recruitment work also led them to create competitive distinctions within their staff between "insiders" who were willing to engage in student recruitment work and "outsiders" who were not able or willing to engage. These distinctions led to contention between teachers. In some cases, competition between teachers to enroll the most students appeared to be a strong motivating factor to recruit students. Finally, teachers were often caught between promoting the democratic aim of education by including all students in their school and upholding the mission of their school by working to deter students from enrolling who were not a good fit. I conclude by offering suggestions for policymakers, implications for school leaders and teachers, and suggestions for future research.

Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation to my wife, Adrienne, my daughter, Fiona, and my parents Susan and Danny Long and Edward Luke. You have all supported and inspired me in innumerable ways.

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Finally, I want to acknowledge the role that my father, Edward Luke, played in this dissertation. While I was growing up he operated a grain elevator until he contracted Multiple Sclerosis and could no longer work. In his late thirties, having never completed a college degree, he decided to go to school for social work. Despite the immense hardships brought about by his disease – simple tasks like getting dressed in the morning and walking to his classes took hours – I never heard him complain. He passed away at the age of 42, two weeks short of completing his Bachelor's degree at Wilmington College. I cannot imagine a more daunting task and I have never seen someone so determined to do something despite all the reasons to give up. I am fortunate to have witnessed his resolve in the face of the impossible and his unshakable love of learning. These traits stick with me to this day and have enriched my life greatly.

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Chapter 1: Introduction, Framing and Research Questions

Introduction

Reform efforts in education have increasingly relied on policies that create competition for students between schools, leading to substantial growth in the number of charter schools over the last 25 years (Johnson, 2011; NAPCS, 2017). Charter schools do not enroll a predetermined group of students based on residence in a surrounding geographical area like many traditional public schools. Rather, they must attract their student body and are funded according to the number of students who enroll, introducing a competitive pressure to attract enough students to maintain operations (Chubb & Moe, 1990; Henig, 1994; Hoxby, 2003; Jabbar, 2015). Advocates of market-based education policies such as charter schools claim that competitive pressures act as a lever to bring about positive changes in all schools as they increase their quality, responsiveness, and innovative practices to attract students (See: Chubb & Moe, 1990; Fabricant & Fine, 2013; Finn, Manno, & Vanourek, 2001; Friedman, 1955; Hoxby, 2002).

One unintended and largely unexamined outcome of charter school policies is that school personnel must work to recruit students to their schools, often in addition to their traditional work of educating students (Holme, Carkhum & Rangel, 2013; Kasman & Loeb, 2013; Lubienski, 2007, 2009). While some research has focused on school leaders' work to recruit students (Jabbar, 2015a; Jennings, 2010; Kasman & Loeb, 2013) and some has focused on traditional public school teachers' reactions to market pressures to

recruit students (DiMartin, & Jessen, 2016; Holme, Carkhum, & Rangel, 2013), there has been no direct examination of the ways that charter school teachers engage in student recruitment work.

Student recruitment is a vital component of charter school policy because charter schools are designed to create additional educational options for parents (Peterson, 2016). Parents must perform the work of opting into the schools on one hand (See: Andre-Becheley, 2001; Bell, 2009; Cooper, 2005, 2007; DeJarnatt, 2008; Hamilton & Guin, 2006) and schools must perform the work of advertising themselves, recruiting students and communicating with prospective parents on the other (Jabbar, 2015; Lubienski, 2007; Kasman & Loeb, 2013). Therefore, charter school policies could create a sizable amount of extra work for school personnel. While some locations such as Chicago and New York City have begun to create city-wide school directories or guides (Chicago Public Schools, 2017; NYCDoE, 2016), evidence from the literature on charter school enrollment practices suggests that parents rely heavily on information and recruitment activities generated by individual charter schools and chains to inform schooling decisions (Jabbar, 2015; Kasman & Loeb, 2013; Lubienski, 2009; Luke, 2013; Olsen-Beal, Stewart, & Lubienski, 2016).

Despite the extent to which teachers may be drawn into the student recruitment process and the money that is at stake for student enrollment outcomes, policymakers have not addressed the role that teachers play in promoting their school and recruiting students. Neither the updates to the federal-level Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) – No Child Left Behind (NCLB) and the Every Student Succeeds Act

(ESSA) – nor the Ohio Revised Code address the possibility that teachers may need to take on substantial amounts of work to recruit students to their school (ORC 3314).

My study advances the field by examining how teachers in Ohio charter schools engage in the student recruitment process. I employ a multiple case study approach utilizing 12 teacher interviews, state-level grade card and building data, physical documents, and internet-based resources such as school websites and social media accounts. Drawing on sensemaking theories (Maitlis & Christianson, 2014; Spillane, Reiser & Reiner, 2002; Weick, 1995) as a framework for my analysis, this study attempts to ask the broad question: How do teachers make sense of the pressure to recruit students as part of their job? Part of this examination involves asking how teachers' professional relationships, the institutional characteristics of their school, and their own personal background shape their sensemaking of student recruitment work. More broadly, this study examines the processes through which charter school policies are implemented by charter school teachers, or "street-level bureaucrats" (Lipsky, 1980), who have a great amount of discretion in terms of how they fulfill the requirements enacted by state and federal policies. Teachers' discretion – their opposition or support for a policy, individual choices, and the extent to which they actively work on implementation – could have profound effects on the successful implementation of charter school policy (Anderson, 2006; Brower, et al., 2017; Meyers and Lehmann-Nielson, 2012; Sorg, 1983).

Charter School Policies and Market Pressure

The logic for employing competitive pressures on schools to increase quality is rooted in many of the policies that shape the charter school landscape today. For

example, the executive summary of the 2002 No Child Left Behind law, a precursor to the Every Student Succeeds Act (2015), states that "choice…requirements provide a substantial incentive for low-performing schools to improve. Schools that want to avoid losing students—along with the portion of their annual budgets typically associated with those students—will have to improve" (NCLB, 2002, p. 2).

Charter schools were established in Ohio with through House Bill 215 in 1997 and formally written into the Ohio Revised Code, Section 3314, on July 1, 1998. Charter schools were promoted in Ohio to encourage market-oriented change in schools. For example, speaking in 1997 in support of the initial charter school pilot program in Lucas County, R. Gregory Browning, then director of the state Office of Management and Budget explained, "There is a sense that the governance structure is very rigid in schools, and it is hoped that charter schools will promote reform and entrepreneurialism and sense of ownership and everything that goes along with that" (Candisky, 1997, p. 02B).

Charter school policies introduce competitive pressures to schools by largely tying funding to each student. This means that students who leave a traditional public school "take" a portion of the money allotted for them to the charter school they attend. Ohio Revised Code 3314.08 establishes the mechanism by which state-provided funding is deducted from traditional public-school districts when students who would otherwise attend those schools attend charter schools:

> Payments to community [charter] schools take the form of deductions from the state foundation funding of the school districts in which the community school students are entitled to attend school. Community school students are counted as part of the enrollment base of the resident school district to generate funding (ODE, Finance & Funding, 2018).

Each charter school must report their student attendance data to the state at multiple points throughout the year and receives funding in proportion to the number of students who are counted (ODE, EMIS Handbook, 2018, p. 15).

The state lays out a formula in Ohio Revised Code section 3314.08(C)(1)(a) to determine how much money a charter school will receive given the particularities of each student who enrolls. The main source of funding is the Opportunity Grant which in the 2018-19 school year provides $6,020 per full-time equivalent (FTE) student at the charter school. FTEs are calculated based on the number of days or percentage of the school year that a student attends a school (ODE, 2018, p. 29). The Ohio Department of Education outlines the formula:

Deduction from Resident District = Formula Amount x Resident Student FTE attending the Community School

For example, if a student attends a traditional public school for half the year and then transfers to a charter school in the middle of the year, the charter school would receive $3,010, or, half of the base amount of $6,020 provided by the Opportunity Grant. If they attend the whole year, the charter school receives the entire $6,020. Additional funding per student is determined if students meet certain characteristics including “students with disabilities,” “English Language Learners,” “economically disadvantaged,” and “students who are enrolled in career tech programs.” These additional funds range from $272 per student per year for economically disadvantaged students to $25,637 per year for students who are deaf, blind, or have a traumatic brain injury (ODE, 2019; Ohio Revised Code 3314.08 (C)(1)(b-g)).

This funding formula ensures that charter school leaders and teachers have a substantial stake in recruiting students to their school. If schools lose students or do not

meet enrollment goals they may need to cut academic programming, scale back funding to extracurricular activities, or even lay off teachers and other staff. Thus, school personnel may feel substantial pressure, in the form of competition with other schools or from internal sources within their school, to enroll as many students as they need to fund their operations.

Competition between entities, including between schools for students, occurs as a multi-stage process (McNulty, 1968). Jabbar's (2015a) study of school leaders' responses to competitive pressures in New Orleans conceives of the competitive process in schools in a four-step framework. First, school personnel perceive competitive pressures through the loss or threat of loss of students. Second, they work through mediating factors such as their position in the market place, school reputation, identification of the primary barriers to student enrollment, and the financial needs of their schools. Third, they adopt a range of strategies which could include academic changes, altering operations, advertising, targeting or avoiding certain groups of students, or taking no action. Finally, they experience the outcomes of their strategies, primarily when they either recruit the number of students they need or not (Jabbar, 2015a, p. 3; See also: Ni & Arsen, 2010; Holme, Karkhum, & Rangel, 2013). While there is some clarity on how school leaders may experience and respond to competitive pressures, no study has applied the same analytical lens to teachers in charter schools.

Teachers' Involvement in Student Recruitment

The academic literature on charter school teachers' work to recruit students is sparse. The bulk of research on competition for students in education focuses on the link

between competition and student achievement outcomes (Bohte, 2004; Brasington, 2007; Budin & Zimmer, 2005; Cullen, Jacob & Levitt, 2005; Imberman 2008; Jespin, 2002; Ni, 2009; Sass 2006; Zimmer & Budin, 2009), innovation in the classroom (Lubienski, 2003, 2008, 2009) and the relative monetary efficiency of charter schools compared to traditional public schools (Grosskopf, Hayes, & Taylor, 2004; Hoxby, 2000; 2002; 2003; Sclar, 2001). There is an emerging literature on school marketing practices in the United States (See: Olsen-Beal, Stewart, & Lubienski, 2016) and research on school leaders' work to recruit students (Jabbar, 2015; Jennings, 2010; Kasman & Loeb, 2013). But little work has been done to examine how the need to recruit students shapes the professional and personal lives of the teachers who may take on tasks associated with student recruitment. Holme, Carkhum and Rangel (2013) examined public teachers' perceptions of market pressures in environments like the ones that charter school teachers experience, but did not address the processes that those teachers undertake in response to market pressures. The bulk of studies on teachers' work to recruit students comes from international contexts including Canada, Israel, and the United Kingdom (See: Foskett & Brown, 2002; Oplatka, 2006, 2007; Oplatka, Hemsley-Brown, & Fosket, 2002), leaving the United States largely unexamined.

The international literature examining teachers' roles in student recruitment sheds some light on how teachers' work in the United States may be shaped by recruitment work. Teachers may perform multiple tasks in student recruitment work, including running open houses at their schools, engaging in direct recruitment at school fairs, and going door-to-door in the neighborhood surrounding their school to engage families (Oplatka, 2006, 2007). Teachers may also engage in more subtle forms of work to recruit

and retain students such as changing the way that they teach and changing the level of rigor in their classroom to retain students (Oplatka, 2006).

A limited body of research addresses teachers' views of recruitment work. While opinions about policy requirements may shift widely over time and may be hard for researchers to capture, it is important to consider them in studies of policy implementation because they may impact the extent to which individuals are willing to engage in the work (Lipsky, 1980; Brower, et al., 2017). Oplatka (2006, 2007) interviewed teachers who recruited students and found that they typically held one of three views on student recruitment work. First, some held negative views of student recruitment because it added extra work to their schedules, resulting in stress and burnout. Second, some felt resigned or neutral about student recruitment. For example, some teachers in Oplatka's (2006) study on marketized schools in Canada believed that marketing was an unavoidable aspect of teaching because school choice was so prevalent. Third, other teachers reveled in the work to recruit, compelled by the challenge to outperform other schools by recruiting more students. Researchers have identified the development of an "entrepreneurial" mindset in educators who are subject to competitive pressures. While some teachers may experience fear, anxiety, or even what Ball describes as "terror," others thrive in the competitive environment where their performance and ability to attract students are measured and rewarded (Ball, 2003). As schools throughout the United States are shaped by market-based policies that introduce competition for students alongside other performative practices such as teacher accountability for student performance on standardized tests, a focus on entrepreneurialism in the teaching profession has emerged (Baily, 2015; McGuinn, 2005).

The limited literature on teachers' work to recruit in marketized environments largely focuses on cataloging the tasks that teachers take on to recruit students and how they feel about the work. But there is very little focus on *how* teachers engage in student recruitment in terms of the physical and cognitive processes they undertake to respond to student recruitment needs. Furthermore, key contextual factors such as teachers' personal backgrounds, characteristics of the schools where they teach, and their social and professional relationships are largely absent from the literature. This study attempts to fill this gap by considering the processes that teachers go through to recruit students to charter schools and the contextual factors that shape those processes.

Student Recruitment and the Implementation of Charter School Policies

Policy implementation is, in its most basic form, "what happens between policy expectations and…policy results" (Ferman, 1990; Hill & Hupe, 2002; Honguro, et al. 2018). "Policy expectations" for charter schools vary widely between states and localities but typically include increased quality, efficiency, and innovation in education (Becker et al. 1997; Finn et al., 2000; Hoxby, 2002; Lubienski, 2003, 2009). Policy results may vary widely from expectations. For example, policymakers may envision competition leading to dramatic gains in student achievement on academic tests, while the actual results are far more mixed (CREDO, 2009, 2013). But policy results also include the unanticipated consequences of policy changes and demands. The goal of this study is to examine one largely unanticipated policy result – the introduction of the need to recruit students to meet enrollment needs. Policymakers envision students opting into charter schools and out of their historically-assigned traditional public school but have not largely anticipated

the process by which this occurs, the roles that teachers may play in the process, and its impact on their work and lives (NCLB.2002, p. 2)

Student recruitment is one aspect of the larger work to implement state and federal-level charter school policies. Charter schools are the result of policy and charter school teachers are "street level bureaucrats" (Lipsky, 1980) who do much of the work of policy implementation. This study, at its core, is an examination of the ways that teachers work to implement one aspect of charter school policies. Thus, it focuses on how teachers engage in overlapping and often conflicting thoughts and actions to fulfill the requirements of their work to recruit students.

Lipsky (1980) describes street-level bureaucrats as "public service workers who interact directly with citizens in the course of their jobs, and who have substantial discretion in the execution of their work" (p. 3). Several factors shape the way that they perform their implementation work including their knowledge of the policy or policies, school environment, work demands and conditions, personal competences, their background, and their opinion of the policy in question. Teachers' opinions of policies may be especially important to the implementation process. Meyers and Lehmann-Nielsen (2012) point out that street-level bureaucrats have a high level of discretion in how they respond to policy demands, ranging from "active cooperation" to "active resistance" Others such as Brower, et al. (2017) have proposed typologies of street-level bureaucrats' discretion including "oppositional," "circumventing," "satisficing," and "facilitative," (p. 816).

Sensemaking theories lend themselves well to studies of implementation because they reveal how individuals come to understand and act on the demands of policy, and,

ultimately, form a discretion toward the work. This is especially true of education policies that shape schools because individual teachers and school leaders are given immense discretion about the steps that they will take to implement the policy (Coburn, 2001; 2004; Spillane, Reiser, & Reimer, 2002). Street-level actors must work out their understanding of a policy and make decisions about how to move forward. This is essentially the process of Sensemaking (Weick, 1995). Sensemaking is about how individuals in organizations resolve ambiguity and come to new understandings of their work (Maitlis, 2005; Maitlis & Christianson, 2014; Weick, Sutcliffe, & Obstfeld, 2005) and occurs as they work to construct the "meaning of information or events" (Coburn, 2001; Porac, Thomas, & Baden-Fuller, 1989; Russell & Bray, 2013, p. 4). When individuals' expectations for how things ought to go are disrupted in some way, they must actively work to come to a new understanding of their circumstances, where they fit in their institutional environment and their revised roles (Maitlis & Christianson, 2014, p. 58; Maitlis & Sonenshein, 2010, p. 551). Maitlis and Christenson (2014) attempted to provide a concise and thorough definition of sensemaking as "a process, prompted by violated expectations, that involves attending to and bracketing cues in the environment, creating intersubjective meaning through cycles of interpretation and action, and thereby enacting a more ordered environment from which further cues can be drawn (p. 67).

Sensemaking in schools has been described as "the process whereby teachers' and administrators' interpretations of policy demands result in decisions about how to respond [to those demands]" (Russell & Bray, 2013, p. 4). Considerations of individuals' sensemaking are vital to understanding policy implementation because policies are not typically enacted in an orderly, systematic, and predictable manner. Rather, individuals

have great discretion about how, when, and to what extent they will enact the policy (Brower, et al., 2017; Meyers & Lehman-Nielson, 2012; Sorg, 1983).

Sensemaking theories provide a useful framework for understanding how individuals in organizations respond to and "make sense" of surprising developments, interruptions, or ambiguous situations in their work (Maitlis, 2005). The teachers in this study largely came from traditional school backgrounds where the idea of student recruitment was foreign. Thus, when they found out that they needed to recruit students as part of their job, they were surprised. This study examines how charter school teachers' expectations were disrupted and how they responded. They had well-formulated expectations for what they would encounter and experience in their profession. Most believed that their work would encompass traditional tasks and roles associated with educating students and that any extra tasks assigned to them would be familiar activities such as coaching, tutoring, or bus-monitoring duties. But they did not expect to have to engage in student recruitment work in addition to all their other tasks and often felt disoriented or confused by the tasks they were asked to perform. Therefore, they were forced to make sense of the ambiguity that they encountered, come to understand it and act on it.

Statement of Problem

Charter school policies induce competitive pressures by requiring that schools work to recruit enough students to maintain their operations. As evidence from the current literature shows, school personnel may take on a significant amount of work related to student recruitment. This study seeks to address problems related to teachers'

work to recruit students in response to competitive pressures. The first problem concerns how teachers come to terms with the new pressures and tasks related to student recruitment. The literature is sparse on how school personnel work to recruit students and how they make sense of the need to recruit. It is well-documented that the discretion of "street-level bureaucrats" to take on policy requirements and the actions that they perform to implement policy are vital to the success of policies (Lipsky, 1980). Therefore, it is important to understand how teachers move through the process from when they first learn about the need to recruit students to the point that they have an established orientation or level of willingness toward recruitment work (Brower, et al., 2017). Sensemaking has been used in past policy implementation studies to illuminate how individuals engage in both cognitive, physical and social processes to implement policy (Coburn, 2001; Spillane, Reiser, & Reimer, 2002). Thus, it is important to understand the ways that teachers make sense of the need to recruit students to meet the enrollment needs of their schools.

Second, sensemaking theories rely heavily on contextual factors such as individuals' backgrounds, social relationships, and the institutional characteristics of their organizations to provide understandings of the ways that they make sense of new situations and surprising occurrences. Because teachers' sensemaking could have a profound impact on the implementation of charter school policies, it is important to consider how contextual factors shape their sensemaking (Weick, 1995).

Third, the introduction of demands to recruit students from market pressures could have unanticipated effects or outcomes on teachers in charter schools, especially in the areas of burnout and ethical quandaries. Market pressures may cause school leaders to

introduce requirements that teachers take on extra roles to recruit students (Jennings, 2010; Oplatka, 2002a, 2002b, 2004, 2006, 2007), disrupting their work and taking them off track of their primary goal to instruct students. Extra-role tasks in teaching and other fields have been linked to burnout and dissatisfaction, especially if individuals do not feel as though the work they are asked to do fits their original expectations for the job (Brown & Rollof, 2011). Burnout and feelings of distress may contribute to higher turnover rates (Clandinin, 2014; Jacobson, 2014, pp. 94-104; Martinetz, 2012), lower job performance and a decrease in student learning (Kahlenberg & Potter, 2015; Torres, 2014a; Yeh, 2013). All these outcomes are counter to the original policy goals behind charter schools of increased quality, efficiency, and innovation and may undermine the ability of teachers to effectively deliver instruction.

Teachers' work to recruit students to schools may present unintended ethical quandaries to teachers in schools of choice (Oplatka, 2006; Oplatka, Hemsley-Brown, & Foskett, 2002). Charter school personnel may focus on attracting the most gifted and easiest-to-teach students, known as "creaming," while attempting to exclude or "crop out" those students who are harder to teach or may take more time and energy from the staff (Lacerino-Paquet, et al., 2002; Lueng, Alejandre, & Jongco, 2016). Charter schools may also advertise to students and families in ethically questionable manners. For example, Lubienski (2007) found that some charter schools in Michigan over-represented white students on their school websites and promotional literature, raising questions about how those decisions may have shaped parents' school choices. International literature also suggests that teachers in schools of choice may face ethical questions about misleading students to increase enrollment (Oplatka, 2006; 2007; Oplatka, Hemsley-

Brown & Foskett, 2002). It is important to consider how market-based policies such as those that create charter schools may lead to unanticipated outcomes that effect teachers' performance. It is also important to consider how ethical issues, burnout and extra-role tasks may shape teachers' sensemaking of market policies.

The final problem relates to the ways that teachers develop discretions toward student recruitment work. If schools rely on school personnel, including teachers, to engage in work related to student recruitment, their willingness to engage in recruitment, skillset, and the way it shapes the rest of their work, could have profound implications for the schools' ability to enroll students. More information is needed not only to construct a typology of teachers' discretion to meet market demands, but to understand the process by which their discretion is developed and shaped by their sensemaking.

Research Questions

The main research question guiding this study is: How do teachers make sense of the pressure to recruit students as part of their job? The sub-questions guiding this study are:

A. How is teachers' sensemaking of competitive pressures mediated by characteristics of their school?

B. How is teachers' sensemaking of competitive pressures mediated by personal characteristics and experiences?

C. How do teachers make sense of unanticipated outcomes associated with market-oriented policies?

D. How do teachers' sensemaking activities and the contextual factors that mediate them shape their discretion toward student recruitment work?

Overview of Methodology

The methodology behind this study is fully explained in chapter three. I employed a multiple case study approach to examine how 12 teachers from seven charter schools make sense of the requirements to recruit students and how those requirements shape their work. The main focus of this study is teachers' sensemaking activities that are stimulated by the need to recruit students. I used open-ended, semi-structured interviews (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009; Rubin & Rubin, 2012) to capture teachers' sensemaking activities and provide a highly descriptive explanation of the process that charter school teachers undertake to recruit students. This process is ongoing and often shaped by multiple forces, including teachers' thoughts and social interactions (Jennings & Greenwood, 2003; Weiss, 1994). I also gathered physical and electronic documents from the seven charter schools and analyzed online resources such as school websites and social media accounts.

The sample for this study was purposive (Lavrakas, 2008) because I wanted to identify and talk to teachers who were engaged in the recruitment process and was less concerned about talking to teachers who did not engage in recruiting at all. This study is descriptive in nature as well. Thus, the results are not generalizable to all charter schools or all charter school teachers. State and local policies and contextual factors play a profound role in shaping the landscape of charter schools and school choice between cities and states. Therefore, there are many factors that confound attempts to generalize the results of this study.

The number of interviews – 12 – is relatively small and could raise questions about validity and generalizability. While I address these concerns in chapter 3, it is

worth noting that I contacted nearly 300 teachers by email but received very few responses to participate. I am not able to say for sure why so few teachers responded. It could have been that I did not offer an incentive or they felt too busy to participate. It could also be that student recruitment is a sensitive subject and teachers were generally not amenable to talking to me because they were afraid that they would get in trouble with someone at their school. Most of the teachers in this study expressed concerns about anonymity because they felt like the information they shared reflected poorly on their schools, school leadership, or other colleagues. In some cases, teachers feared for their jobs. Therefore, I worked to alleviate the concerns of participants, utilizing methods for interviewing reluctant individuals including assurances of anonymity and taking steps to gain trust before the interview (Dundon & Ryan, 2010).

All interviews were coded and analyzed for themes (Saldana, 2013, p. 3). I employed a three-step process for coding to move from a first round of open codes to axial codes which establish themes and categories from the open codes, to selective codes which establish a "core" set of codes or theme (Strauss and Corbin (1990, 1998). I also used Weick's seven components of sensemaking, outlined in chapter 2, as a coding guide to provide a lens for how teachers made sense of the need to recruit and how outside factors shaped their recruiting (See: Smerek, 2012; Weick, 1995).

I employed two methods to triangulate the results (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2014). First, I allowed teachers who were willing to read through my write ups and analysis of their interviews to ensure that I accurately captured their thoughts and opinions. Second, I analyzed school recruitment documents and websites once before and once after each interview to ensure that teachers' accounts of the recruitment practices in

their school were aligned with their institutions' work and to further consider how schools may have influences teachers' sensemaking processes.

Definitions

This study employs several terms that may hold ambiguous meanings. The following terms will be used throughout the work:

Competitive Pressures: The term competitive pressure refers to the pressure that school leaders, teachers, management organizations, and other personnel sense related to the need to recruit students (Jabbar, 2015). Charter school policies are specifically geared to increase the pressure that school personnel feel to enact a change in the way that they perform their work.

Recruitment Work: The term recruitment work refers to the multiple formal and informal roles, responsibilities, and activities, both mental and physical, that teachers and other school personnel take on in response to competitive pressures on their schools to recruit students. Recruitment work can be performed by individuals working in isolation, but is more often performed by groups of teachers and other school personnel.

School of choice: This study focuses on charter schools but there are multiple other school types where personnel may experience similar market pressures to enroll students. These school types include private schools, magnate schools, trade or internship schools, and, increasingly, traditional public schools.

School Mission: A mission "offers critical information on the intended organizational purposes that differentiate each organization" (Lubienski & Lee, 2016, p. 64). The charter schools in this study each had a distinct mission, typically conceptualized through a mission statement about the broad goals and vision of the school. The missions of schools in this study typically related to an educational focus such as early college enrollment, college preparation, Science Technology Engineering and Math (STEM), and a focus on internships.

School Leader: The term "school leader" is typically synonymous with a building principal. However, school leaders can also have specific titles such as "CEO," which borrow from business and corporate discourses for identifying organizational leaders and delineating organizational structures (Fabricant & Fine, 2012). While I did not interview school leaders for this study, teachers indicated that their school leaders took on the traditional work associated with educational administrators while they also engaged in marketing and recruiting work for their school.

Students and Families: Charter schools seek to enroll students to their schools but there is significant evidence that suggests the primary decisions related to school selection are performed by parents, specifically mothers (Bell, 2005, 2007, 2009; Andre-Bechely, 2005; Neild, 2005). While parents likely perform majority of the school search work, grand-parents, extended families, and even friends and community members play significant roles as well. Therefore, in instances where I describe charter

school recruiters' primary targets, I use the blanket term "students and families."

Organization of Dissertation

This study explores how teachers make sense of the multiple messages, pressures, and requirements to incorporated student recruitment into their work as educators. Chapter one provided an overview and rationale for the study along with the research questions that guide the methodology and data analysis. Chapter two examines the context for the study and existing literature on competition in education, issues surrounding charter schools, policy implementation in education, and sensemaking theory. Chapter three outlines the methodology employed to conduct this study including rationales for the use of interviews, sample selection, and analytic techniques to identify themes in the data. Chapter four includes findings related to teachers' sensemaking, results from the sub-questions, and an explanation of other key findings from the data. Chapter five includes a discussion of the findings and how they relate to the research questions outlined in chapter one. Chapter five also includes implications of the findings for teachers' work in student recruitment and recommendations for researchers, policymakers, and district and school leadership.

Chapter 2: Conceptual Framework

This study examines the ways that teachers at charter schools respond to the demands, stemming from market pressures, to recruit students to their schools. Several lines of literature inform the conceptual framework of this dissertation. These include literatures on teachers' work to recruit students, sensemaking theory, and policy implementation, especially as it relates to the willingness and capability of "street-level bureaucrats" to enact policy. Additionally, this chapter provides a historical overview of charter schools both in the state of Ohio and nationally.

Logic and Background of School Choice Policies

Teachers' efforts to recruit students at charter schools are part of a larger policy strategy to open multiple educational options to families (Riddle, Stedman, & Aleman, 1998). To understand how teachers' work to recruit students is shaped by policy, it is important to understand the reasoning and assumptions made by policy makers who put charter school policies into place. Some argue that charter schools fulfill the vision of the civil rights movement by offering low-income and minority students opportunities to get a better education (Altman, 2016). Others argue that "consumer sovereignty" – the right of parents to freely choose their child's education – is a good reason to support school choice. The ability to choose has an inherent value that must be factored into calculations about the costs and benefits behind charter schools, whether other markers of quality

education are improved or not (Manhattan Institute, 2016, p. 26). Others argue that academic quality is less important than school characteristics such as unique programming, safety, convenience for families, and extracurricular activities (Harris & Larsen, 2015; Schneider & Buckley, 2002). Charter schools may yield mixed results in terms of academic achievement, but aspects of charter schools that do not directly relate to test scores may be of equal or greater value to students, families, teachers and society, than improved test scores. For example, schools which focus on arts, character education, or physical well-being may offer benefits that are very valuable, even if they do not translate into higher academic achievement.

The most prominent reasoning underlying charter school support is based on market theory which posits that schools will respond to competitive pressures to recruit students by changing aspects of their practice to be more desirable to parent consumers (Chubb & Moe, 1990; Friedman, 1955; Hoxby, 2002). Simultaneously, according to the theory, when given freedom from the constraints of bureaucracy and high levels of regulation, schools will innovate, change their practices, and become more efficient in response to market pressures (Bosetti, 2004, p. 387).

There are two prevalent assumptions embedded in the market logic promoted by proponents of charter school legislation. First, supply and demand-side market forces will lead to aggregate changes in things like school quality, efficiency, innovation, and availability (Hickock, 2008). Demand-side rationales for charter schools stem from the view that parents are best positioned to make decisions about their child's education and will make decisions about where to send their child based on school quality. According to this rationale, parents are uniquely able to determine which schools employ the

approaches and curriculum that will most benefit their child. Parents may rely on information generated by schools and state entities such as report card grades, test scores, and information about curriculum (Hastings & Weinstein, 2008) but they may also rely on non-academic factors as well to inform their decisions. The theory of change under demand-side approaches to charter schools is that parents will bolster the schools that respond to market demands by selecting those schools, thus exerting pressure to on schools that are not widely selected to make modifications. The theory posits that once schools experience market pressure in the form of inadequate enrollment, they will respond by either shutting down or making changes based on market research (Hickok, 2008).

Supply-side rationales for charter schools stem from the view that schools will engage in more efficient, effective, and inclusive practices to attract parents and student to their schools (Kasman & Loeb, 2013; Loeb, Valant, & Kasman, 2011). The increased autonomy granted to charter schools provides flexibility to innovate in direct response to market demands (Lubienski, 2003) so, over time, schools will tend to be increasingly more consumer-focused and responsive. The theory of change under the supply-side rationale is that schools will adjust their curriculum, pedagogical techniques, and other aspects of the education that they provide to appear more attractive to parent and student "consumers."

The second prevalent assumption associated with market theory is that parents will act rationally in their choice process (Krull, 2016; Wilson, 2016). Rational choice theory presumes that parents will act as "utility maximizers" who analyze multiple possible decisions, weigh the available data, and act on their knowledge (Bosseti, 2004,

p. 388). It is also assumed that parents will act in the best interests of their children when they make decisions (Bosetti, 1998, 2004), a key component of supply-side rationales for school choice. Additional assumptions about parent rationality are that parents know about their school options or "choice sets" (Bell, 2009), have access to information about those schools in their choice sets (Hastings & Weinstein, 2009), and have the capability and knowledge to make rational decisions (DeJarnett, 2009).

School choice policies in general trace their intellectual roots to Milton Friedman's (1955) libertarian vision of an educational system in which parents are provided the ability to choose the schools that work best for their child, raising the aggregate quality of schools via the free market. The seminal work that lays out the intellectual and empirical grounding for charter schools is Chubb and Moe's 1990 book *Politics, Markets, and America's Schools.* Although they do not specifically mention charter schools, their work provides a foundation for the logic behind school choice policies throughout the United States. Chubb and Moe argue that the organizational structure of traditional public schools was a primary factor in the lack of high-quality educational options, especially for low-income students. Despite the myriad educational reforms of the 1980s focused on student achievement, curriculum, and improving the quality of teaching candidates, they argue that "the last decades' [the 1980s] 'revolution' in school reform has been restricted to the domain of policy, leaving the institutions of educational governance unchanged." (Chubb & Moe, 1990, p. 18)."

Chubb and Moe claim that the traditional public school system had a number of fundamental flaws that can only be solved through a major re-working of system. The first problem they say was that the public education system is governed by

democratically elected school boards. Democratic elections allow for a multitude of different voices and interests in the education process. These competing voices slow down the decision-making processes and water down the quality of the education that students receive. Instead of everyone pulling in the same direction, traditional public schools are pulled in multiple, often conflicting directions (Chubb & Moe, 1990, p. 188). Second, the education system is highly bureaucratic and unresponsive to the needs of students, parents, and communities. Chubb and Moe claim that bureaucracy undermines autonomy in schools because it "imposes goals, structures, and requirements that tell principals and teachers what to do and how to do it—denying them the discretion they need to exercise their expertise to develop and operate as teams." (1990, p. 187).

To Chubb and Moe, the solution is clear. Instead of relying on democratically elected school boards and state legislators to run schools within a larger bureaucracy, allow individuals and private organizations to take over the administration of schools while still maintaining public funding. These private entities, having to compete to attract students and free from bureaucratic restraints would vastly improve the curriculum, strategies, and structures of school systems. Markets, Chubb and Moe argue, would allow the cream to rise to the top while poor-performing schools would either adopt what worked from high-performing schools, or, they would simply shut down, allowing their students to find better schools.

Writing in the early 1990s, Chubb and Moe not use the terms "charter" or "community" school, but they described the reform model that would predominate over the next three decades. In their marketized school system, free from bureaucratic and democratic restraints, "the authority to make educational choices is radically

decentralized…. Schools compete for the support of parents and students, and parents and students are free to choose among schools. The system is built around decentralization, competition, and choice" (Chubb & Moe, 1990, 189). The marketized system, if implemented well, would allow schools to be flexible in responding to the demands of parents and students who "vote with their feet" through their school selection.

There are critiques of the supply and demand side arguments for charter schools and school choice in general. First, there is mixed evidence that supply-side forces, namely incentives for schools to make themselves more attractive to parent consumers, significantly shape schools in positive ways. While some studies have shown slight gains in academic achievement for charter school students there is also high level of variation in the quality of charter schools, making it difficult to draw definitive conclusions about the effects of markets on schools (CREDO, 2009, 2013). More importantly, there is little evidence to suggest that competitive forces are the drivers of any increases in quality, efficiency, or innovation in charter schools. Research on the link between competition for students and school outcomes suggests that there no or a very small relationship between competitive pressures and improvements in academic quality (Brasington, 2007; Budin & Zimmer, 2005; Cullen, Jacob, & Levitt, 2005; Imberman 2008; Jespin, 2002; Sass 2006; Zimmer & Budin, 2009) or innovation (Goldring, Berends, & Cannata, 2012; Lubienski, 2003; 2008; 2009; Lubienski, Gulosino, & Weitzel, 2009; Renzulli, Barr, & Paino, 2015). Furthermore, qualitative and mixed-methods studies suggest that principals and other school personnel may have a hard time identifying sources of competition from other schools and responding to that competition (Jabbar, 2015; Jennings, 2010; Kasman, & Loeb, 2013).

Jabbar (2015a) suggests a typology for charter school leaders' responses to competition. Actions include marketing and advertising, "creaming" easier or more gifted students and "cropping" those who are harder to teach, changing the programmatic offerings of the school, or doing nothing. Only one of these four strategies – changing the programmatic offerings of the school – align with the intentions of policymakers that competition will change the core educational offerings of schools. Even when charter schools do alter their programs to attract more students, Jabbar finds that they may focus more on extracurricular activities or special classes over changing the quality of the core education they offer.

Issues exist on the demand side as well. Parents may not make choices that are consistent with the intentions of policymakers and may end up bolstering underperforming schools when opting into them. Parents may rely on "rumor and gossip" from others in their social networks to make decisions (Ball & Vincent, 1998, p. 380) rather than on objective facts about the school such as letter grades issued by state entities (Hastings & Weinstein, 2011). Parents may also be incompetent choosers, focusing on the wrong aspects of the school or getting facts about the schools mixed up (Asmov, 2003; DeJarnett, 2011; Henig, 1994). For example, if parents focus on the physical aspects of buildings and choose schools based on their aesthetic appeal – the quality of the classrooms, how well kept the grounds are, or how recently the hallways were painted – they may end up incentivizing schools to focus on the physical qualities of their buildings without addressing the core education provided to students.

Institutional theory also suggests that enacting change to the core education received by students at the classroom via school choice will be difficult. Robust change

in response to competition may be hindered by isomorphism - the tendency of institutions in the same field to become more similar over time (DiMaggio, 1983; Meyer & Rowan, 1977). Even if charter schools personnel understand market pressures and attempt to respond to them in ways that attract families, they may be undercut by coercive pressures enacted by government regulation, professional or normative pressures that shape the ways that teachers are trained to teach and what they believe is normal, or through mimetic isomorphism, the tendency to mimic or copy more successful schools or schools that attract more students (Lubienski & Lee, 2016).

Charter school policies may also have unanticipated and unintended consequences. For example, there is evidence that some charter schools have "cropped" students who are difficult or more expensive to educate by counseling out students or making it more difficult for low-income families to find information on the school or to enroll (Lacerino-Paquet, 2002). Charter schools in some states have also been found to reinforce patterns of segregation between white and minority students, either through patterns of schools' student recruitment and advertisement or through parents' selection of schools (Garcia, 2012). Parents' choices may be especially potent in reinforcing patterns of segregation. It is widely held that parents' social networks (Holmes, 2002; Neild, 2005; Schneider, Teske, Roch, & Marschall, 1997) and geographical proximity to the school (Bell, 2007, 2009) influence their selection process. But these forces can serve to reinforce segregation patterns when parents choose schools that are either close to them or attended by people they already know.

Charter school policies are built on the assumption that the market pressures created by making schools compete to enroll students will compel a response from school

personnel. As this section demonstrates, the extent to which these policies actually influence the "street level" of teachers' classrooms and the core education provided to students in unclear. The next section covers the literature on how school personnel may respond to market pressures to recruit students to their schools.

Teachers' Student Recruitment Work in the Literature

A small body of literature, including studies in international contexts, has directly examined teachers' roles in student recruitment. To this point the examinations are largely explanatory and focus on cataloging *what* teachers do (e.g. open houses, tours, etc.) with little regard for *how* they engage in and think about student recruitment (Oplatka, 2006 2007). Furthermore, there is not yet a study that considers how student recruitment work is a part of the larger process of policy implementation that teachers engage in through their work. Thus, the application of policy implementation and sensemaking theory to teachers' work to recruit students could yield new practical and theoretical insights.

Principal and Whole School Approaches to Student Recruitment

Student recruitment at the K-12 level has been studied in the United States but focuses heavily on the work of school leaders. (Jabbar, 2015a, 2015b; Jennings, 2010; Kasman & Loeb, 2013; Lubienski, 2007) There are a few salient themes that permeate this literature.

First, the literature examining student recruitment practices focuses on school leaders' experiences of market pressures. Key questions underlying this literature

include: What are the sources of market pressures for school leaders and how can they be measured? And, how do school leaders respond to market pressures? Many studies have identified geographical proximity as a measure of competitive pressures on school leaders (See: Bifulco & Ladd, 2006; Imberman, 2011). In short, geographical proximity is used as a proxy for competitive pressures because school leaders theoretically feel the highest level of competition with the schools closest to them. But other studies suggest that school leaders' perceptions of competitive pressures are far more subjective than geographical proximity. For instance, Woods, Bagley, and Glatter (1998) find that high performing schools tend to view their primary competition as other high-performing schools, feeling little sense of competition with schools that may be geographically close but of a lesser reputation. School leaders may also perceive their biggest sources of competition to be schools with similar demographics and slightly higher performance (Kasman & Loeb, 2013) and schools in large, recognizable national charter school networks (Jabbar, 2015b) There may also be a social component behind school leaders' experiences of market pressures. Jennings (2010) and Jabbar (2015b) both find that school leaders' social networks, including their professional and social relationships with other leaders, heavily shape the ways that they perceive market pressures. In other words, school leaders with denser social networks have more "negative ties" with other school leaders who they felt were their rivals whereas leaders who knew of fewer school leaders and schools in their city felt less pressure.

Jennings' (2010) study of three high schools in New York City drew on sensemaking theory and network theory to examine how principals' responses to market pressures. She contends that rather than geographical proximity, principals drew on their

relationships with other principals to understand and act on market pressures in a more strategic manner. Specifically, she points out that

> Principals' networks offered access to resources that could be activated to make sense of the accountability and choice systems. How principals perceived accountability and choice policies influenced whether they activated their social networks for assistance in strategically managing the choice process, as well as how they made sense of advice available to them through these networks (Jennings, 2010, p. 227).

Jennings focused on principals' "collective sensemaking" of choice and accountability policies (See: Coburn, 2001). In short, considerations of collective sensemaking should draw on the perspectives of multiple individuals throughout an organization to observe how they shape each other's sensemaking. Jennings conceptualized principals' "colleagues" as other administrators within their schools and within their social networks at other schools. Jennings opted not to include teachers in her study of schools' responses to market pressures, explaining,

> I contend that principals enact the organizational environment (Weick 1969)—in other words, they diagnose the demands, possibilities, and constraints of the environment—by engaging in ''collective sensemaking'' in conversation with their colleagues. The principal is charged with monitoring the school's overall performance and occupies a unique structural position within the school organization. The principal generally serves as the primary point of contact with the school district, and information about the local accountability environment remains lodged in this role. Principals, then, have little to gain by making sense of these indicators with teachers, since teachers are disconnected from the administrative apparatus of the district (Jennings, 2010, p. 229).

While the context of Jennings' study – small public high schools in New York City – varies greatly from the context of my study – seven charter schools of various size and missional focus in Ohio – the results of my study, even at a basic level challenge the notion that teachers would be divorced from the collective sensemaking of choice policies.

Second, researchers identify the strategies undertaken by school leaders in response to feeling market pressures. There are four general strategic actions in response to market pressures (Jabbar, 2015a). First, schools may engage in "Improving quality and functioning" by creating better quality educational offerings (Aresen & Ni, 2012; Goldhaber & Eide, 2003). Next, leaders may engage in "differentiation" of the school through unique extracurricular activities and course offerings. This is more a matter of standing out in the field than increasing the quality of educational offerings (Woods, Bagley, & Glatter, 1998). Schools may also undertake a campaign of "glossification and marketing" to attract students through advertisements and promotion without necessarily changing anything about their core educational offerings (Gerwirtz, Ball, & Bowe, 1995; Lubienski, 2007). Finally, schools may perform "Cream-skimming and cropping," intentionally selecting students who are "easier" or less costly to teach and intentionally avoiding enrolling students who may take more time, energy or money to educate (Lacireno-Paquet, 2002; Welner, 2013).

Another key finding from the literature is that competition may lead to demotivation in teachers and school leaders. Even though market theory suggests that competition should spur on educators to work harder to recruit and retain students, school personnel may feel defeated and become less motivated if they experienced significant student loss. Holmes, Carkhum and Rangel (2013) studied two traditional public schools in Texas to examine how they responded to market pressures. They primarily interviewed school leaders and counselors, but also a limited number of teachers and found that school personnel could not identify their competitors and, by extension, were not strongly motivated to respond to student losses. Furthermore, the educators in this study felt that

they were out of control because schools around them "skimmed off" the most capable students, leaving behind students who were more difficult to educate. They described the process, explaining

> This skimming, they [educators at the school] believed, set off a cycle of decline that was impossible to climb out of: an increasing concentration of disadvantaged students, leading to a declining reputation and also to poor accountability rankings, leading to more losses of students to choice (Holme, Carkhum, & Rangel, 2013, p. 192).

Teachers' Student Recruitment Work

Much of the literature on teachers' participation in student recruiting efforts occurs in international contexts. Formal recruitment roles exist but are not as prevalent as more informal roles. Some larger chain charter schools have created positions specifically for responding to market pressures such as "marketing director" and "recruiter" (Fitzpatrick, 2015; Student Recruiter, 2015) but there is no indication that such positions exist widely, especially in smaller "mom and pop" charter schools. Ishtar Oplatka, in studies of Israeli and Canadian schools, has identified two informal roles that teachers may take on in response to market pressures to recruit and retain students (2002a; 2006; 2007). Teachers may take on the informal role of "recruiter" for their school, tasked with convincing parents to enroll their children. Teachers may also take on the role of "marketer," creating and disseminating information about their school, mostly in the form of advertisements. These advertisements can take place in small or large-scale forms and may occur through formal means such as fliers, radio advertisements, or websites or through informal means such as conversations with parents at school open houses or tours.

While teachers have not largely taken on specific roles with formalized work descriptions, there is evidence that they may take on many responsibilities associated with student recruitment. Teachers may take these responsibilities on voluntarily, as a requirement for certain teachers, or as an "all hands on deck" strategy in which all school personnel participate in recruitment work. One prominent responsibility is the direct, face-to-face recruitment of students. This typically occurs in school-organized events where families are invited to inspect the school via open houses or tours (Foskett, 2002; Davis & Ellison, 1997; Oplatka, 2006; 2007). These events allow teachers to directly interact with parents and students and promote the school by highlighting aspects of the educational environment, specific content offerings, and social or extracurricular opportunities at the school. Open houses and tours also serve as an opportunity to establish a fit between the school and the student. Oplatka (2007) explains that, "promotional events are an important…opportunity for prospective students and parents to see what the school is offering and to be provided with advice and counseling to identify the kind of education best suited to the child's needs" (p. 165).

Second, teachers may become "product builders" as they actively attempt to improve their educational "product" – classroom instruction, curriculum, activities, and other pedagogical strategies – to attract students (Hargreaves & Evans, 1997; Oplatka, 2006, p. 8, 2007). Although this outcome may support the view that competition will spur on educational quality, evidence suggests that teachers may simply highlight or even exaggerate the good things that are already going on in their classrooms rather than making significant changes to improve the quality of their work (Lubienski, 2007; Oplatka, 2007). Oplatka's findings are similar to Lubienski's (2007) study of charter

school marketing in Michigan. He found that rather than making a conscious effort to improve the curriculum, teaching, or climate, charter schools tended to focus on better marketing themselves to attract students.

Oplatka (2007) found that teachers are often called on in open houses and tours to promote specific, appealing aspects of their class to students and parents. Gerwitz (1995) describes this action as the "glossification" of the school. Glossification can occur in two primary ways. First, schools may highlight the exemplary aspects of the school such as "all-star" teachers, well-established programs, and high-performing students while downplaying or ignoring average teachers, programs and students in their marketing and recruitment materials and efforts. Second, schools and teachers may be selective in what aspects of their curriculum or classroom environment that they highlight in their attempts to attract parents and students. They would, therefore, leave out potentially negative aspects of their work while highlighting only the appealing aspects.

Teachers also take on the responsibility of "market scanning." By talking to current and prospective students and parents, teachers can gain "a substantial amount of information and feedback" about the work of the school and the preferences of parent and student "consumers" (Bagley, Woods, & Glatter, 1996; Oplatka, 2002a; Oplatka & Hemsely-Brown, 2004). This information can then be used to establish more relevant marketing materials and approaches and help school personnel develop a sense of what attracts students and families to schools (Bell, 1999; Birch, 1998; Jabbar, 2015; Kasman & Loeb, 2013). There is substantial evidence that parents rely on their social networks to select schools (Ball & Vincent, 1998) and one key aspect of market scanning work for

teachers may involve identifying and utilizing the social networks of parents whose children are already enrolled in the school to connect with potential new students.

Finally, teachers also take on the responsibility of "image management" for their schools. Oplatka, Hemsley-Brown, and Fosket (2002) interviewed teachers in a marketized school who claimed that their tasks were to improve the image of their school by "'image-building'…'persuasion', 'commercial operation' and 'Ensuring that the perception of the institution outside the walls of the institution is that which the people who run the school would want it to be'" (Oplatka, Hemsley-Brown & Foskett, 2002, p 183). Teachers also establish "pastoral" or caring relationships with their students to promote an image of the school as a caring, warm place for students (Foskett, 1998; Oplatka, Hemsely-Brown, & Foskett, 2002). The physical appearance of schools and classrooms are also important to a school's image because they can attract or repel potential parents and students (Oplatka, 2002a; Bell, 1999; James & Phillips, 1995; Furse, 1989). Parents may use physical aspects of schools as heuristics, or mental shortcuts, for making decisions about the quality of a school and whether to enroll their child or not (Luke, 2013; Schneider, Marschall, Roch, & Teske, 1999).

The roles and responsibilities associated with student recruitment do not fall evenly on all teachers throughout the charter school sector. Many teachers in charter schools may not perform any work related to student recruitment or see their more traditional roles as educators shift in any marked way. This is especially true in schools that already have well-established student bodies and do not need to work hard to attract additional students (Jabbar, 2015a). The work of marketing might also fall exclusively to principals or other non-teaching staff at a school although marketing could still impact

those teachers who do not engage in marketing work. Teachers may understand that their school needs to recruit more students, and even that their jobs may be "on the line" if the school does not meet recruitment goals (James & Phillips, 1995; Oplatka, 2006, p. 5).

There may also be a high level of ambiguity related to teachers' sense of their roles and responsibilities related to student recruitment. Foskett (2002) found that most teachers and principals in his study do not hold a coherent view about how to respond to competitive pressures. Therefore, they did not have a coherent marketing strategy at their school nor did they see the value of one. Additionally, principals and teachers may not have a clearly formulated and written marketing plan and may not collaborate on how to increase their student body (Bell, 1999; Jabbar, 2015). Student recruitment, then, happens in a seemingly random and reactive way, making it more difficult for teachers to both understand their role in recruitment work and to anticipate when they will be called on to engage in it.

Teachers' Views of Recruitment Work

The limited research on teachers' attitudes toward recruitment suggests that they hold mixed views on the process. These views may include negative attitudes toward marketing, positive attitudes, or they may view marketing as an aspect of their work that they cannot change and, thus, hold a neutral or resigned view of marketing work. These attitudes vary widely within and between schools and may be shaped by teachers' age and experience (Oplatka, Hemsley-Brown, & Foskett, 2002, p. 188). Teachers' attitudes toward marketing may also be shaped by their personal views related to marketing and privatization. Teachers who were required to engage in marketing work by their

managers held different attitudes toward marketing than those who were more supportive of marketing work or held an "entrepreneurial" attitude toward their work (Oplatka, Hemsley-Brown, & Foskett, 2002, p. 189-190).

There are several reasons why teachers may hold negative views of student recruitment work at their school. One reason that teachers may hold negative views is because they believe that recruitment work disrupts their work to educate their students. Oplatka found that student recruitment required teachers to be "focused too much on clients' tastes and desires rather than on 'pure' educational considerations" (2006, p. 17) and that marketing work placed undue burdens upon teachers because they were "trained to teach," not to market (2006, p. 14). The need to perform marketing work forced teachers to alter their pedagogical techniques, instructional practices, and curricular focus to meet the demands of consumers. It did not matter if what teachers considered to be best practices lined up with market demands. In a sense, teachers felt lost at sea when they were forced to perform marketing work. Their teacher training did not prepare them to be entrepreneurs, marketing-manages, advertising executives, recruiters, or copy writers. But they felt as though they were forced to take on aspects of their roles in their everyday work to instruct their students (Oplatka, 2006, 2007).

Market work may also contribute to stress and burnout. One prevalent threat to teachers' sense of well-being is the additional time that marketing work requires, including taking on extra tasks and negotiating a balancing act between marketing work and the traditional work of educating students (Oplatka, Hemsley-Brown, & Foskett, 2002). Teachers in Oplatka's studies believe that the need to attend open houses, make room for tours, and perform other tasks associated with marketing take away from their

already short time to prepare lessons, grade papers, teach, and perform other duties traditionally attributed to teaching.

Teachers also identify the uncertainty of working in a marketized environment as a source of stress and burnout (Oplatka, 2006, p. 1). In many cases, schools engage in high levels of marketing work because they need to attract students. There are many reasons for this including the need to raise the funds to pay staff and to maintain legitimacy through market selection. If teachers feel like they or their colleagues may lose their jobs, or if they feel like the reputation of the school may be undermined, there may be additional stress and resentment towards marketing activities.

Teachers' negative attitudes toward marketing may also stem from ethical considerations. Oplatka (2006) found that teachers in his study of a school in Edmonton Canada view marketing as "synonymous with selling, creating a facade and immorality" and "indistinguishable from poaching, selling and even deception" (p. 9). The teachers also view marketing as misleading and expressed a lack of comfort with the idea that competitive pressures force schools to use coercive practices to attract students instead of working with families to find the best educational fit for their children (See: Bell, 1999; Foskett, 1998; James and Philips, 1995; Kotler and Fox, 1995; Oplatka, 2002). Gerwitz, Ball, and Bowe (1995) found that teachers and principals that they interviewed tended to take an apologetic tone when describing their marketing activities. Similarly, Lauder & Hughes (1999) found that teachers felt like they compromised their principles for the sake of marketing. If teachers feel guilt, shame or resentment toward their marketing activities there could be broader implications for their willingness to stick with their jobs and the likelihood that they will feel burnt out or stressed.

Oplatka, Hemsley-Brown and Foskett (2002) found that teachers may also hold neutral views on marketing and student recruitment work. Some of the teachers they interviewed viewed marketing as an inevitable result of broader changers in education. Others resigned themselves to participate in marketing work because they were afraid that they would lose their jobs if the student population at their school fell too much. They did not necessarily like marketing but saw no way around it. Novice teachers largely did not question the role of marketing in their job because they had no other experience in which marketing was not a primary component of teaching

In some cases, teachers view marketing as a unique and challenging addition to their traditional work. Younger teachers tend to be more open to the prospect of marketing. Additionally, younger teachers cited their "professional responsibility" to market their school (Oplatka, Hemsely-Brown, & Foskett, 2002, p. 188). In contrast to their older colleagues, who viewed marketing work as an unwelcome intrusion into the "real" work of teaching, younger educators might be more accepting of the fact that marketing is just part of the job. This finding is especially interesting because it may demonstrate that marketing is increasingly being viewed as an aspect of teaching. This is consistent with an increased prevalence of "entrepreneurial" mindsets in education (Ball, 2003; Hess, 2007). It is also consistent with neoliberal modes of governing in which individual educators and schools are increasingly held accountable for their performance which is measured by the extent to which they meet market demand. In a competitive environment the ability to attract parents and students to a school becomes a marker of quality. Thus, teachers in successfully marketed schools may be more likely to support

marketing because their favored status among students and parents reflects well on the quality of their teaching.

Studies of opinions and attitudes should be read with caution. Attitudes and opinions may shape teachers' work and cognitive processes but it is difficult to tell how and to what extent they shape the process of student recruitment. For the purposes of this study, it is helpful to consider attitudes because teacher sensemaking is determined, in part, by cognitive processes. But this study is not an examination of teachers' attitudes or opinions of marketing work, rather it considers how those attitudes and opinions may shape or influence the processes which teachers undertake to make sense of and act on competitive pressures.

Charter School Growth in Ohio and Nationally

Charter schools have grown consistently over the past two decades, with a slight leveling-off occurring around 2014 (NAPCS, 2018). Ohio charter schools have seen a similar pattern of growth, although the number of charter schools and students in charter schools in Ohio has reduced slightly since 2014 (ODE, 2018). If charter schools are increasing or decreasing in number and enrollment it follows that charter school personnel are likely engaging in some sort of work to recruit, bring on, and retain students. If enrollment is growing, it indicates that charter school personnel may be more focused on recruiting and onboarding students. If enrollment is decreasing, as it has slightly in Ohio, it is possible that charter school personnel are subject to heightened market pressures as they work to recruit from a smaller pool of potential students and respond to student loses.

Charter school growth has been largely precipitous both in the state of Ohio and the United States. The number of charter schools in the United States has experienced a meteoric and consistent rise since 1999, going from about 1,500 charter schools to about 7,000 in 2017 (Figure 1). The number of students in charter schools has risen similarly from 349,714 in 1999 to about 3 million in 2017 (Figure 2).

The number of charter schools in the state of Ohio has risen greatly since 1999 as well from 48 to 362 in 2017. Most notably, the number increased by 200 over the five years between 1999 and 2004. Since 2004 the number of charter schools in the state has continued to rise, albeit at a more measured pace with a slight dip between 2014 and 2017 (Figure 3). A similar growth pattern occurred in the number of students educated in Ohio charter schools between 1999 and 2017 (Figure 4). Between 1999 and 2005 the number of students in Ohio charter schools rose by about seven times beginning with 9,809 students in 1999 and 71,988 in 2005. Since 2005 the number of students in Ohio charter schools has risen from 71,988 to 110,961. The enrollment of students in Ohio charter schools took a similar dip to the number of total schools, beginning around 2014 when the student enrollment was 123,844.

Figure 1. Number of Charter Schools in the United States, 1999-2017

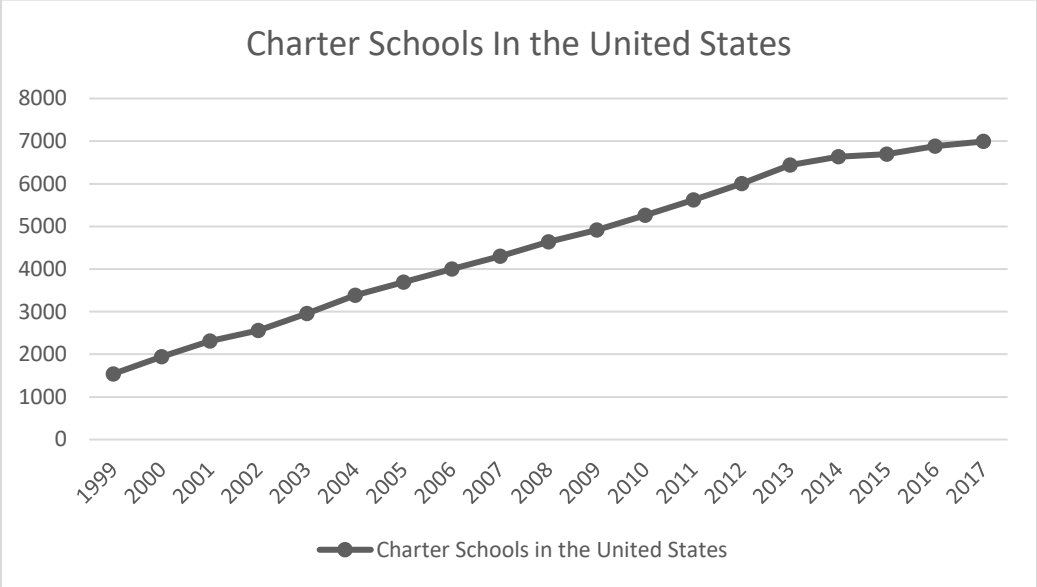


Figure 2. Number of Students in U.S. Charter Schools, 1999-2017

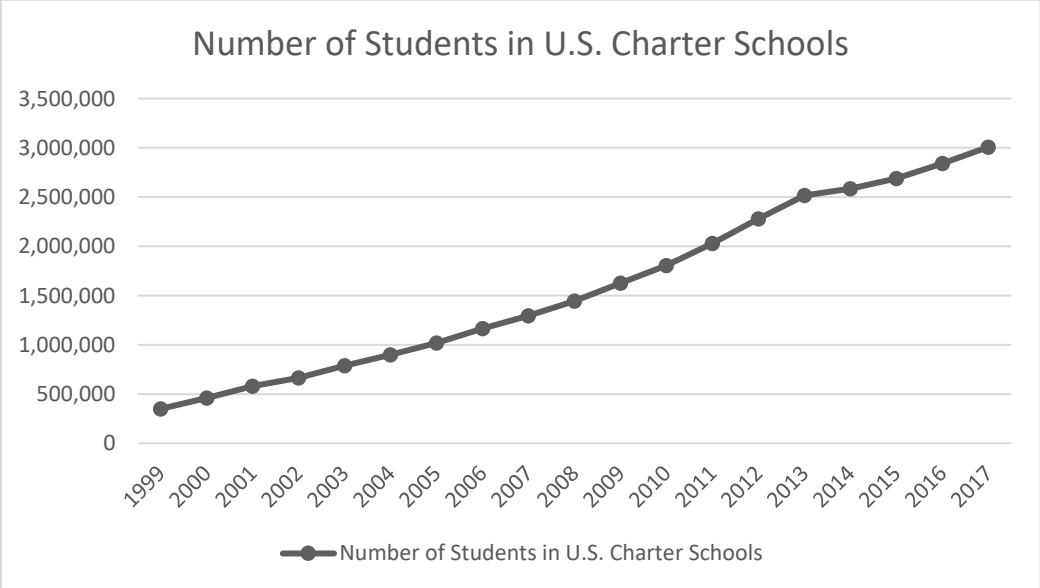


Figure 3. Number of Charter Schools in Ohio, 1999-2017

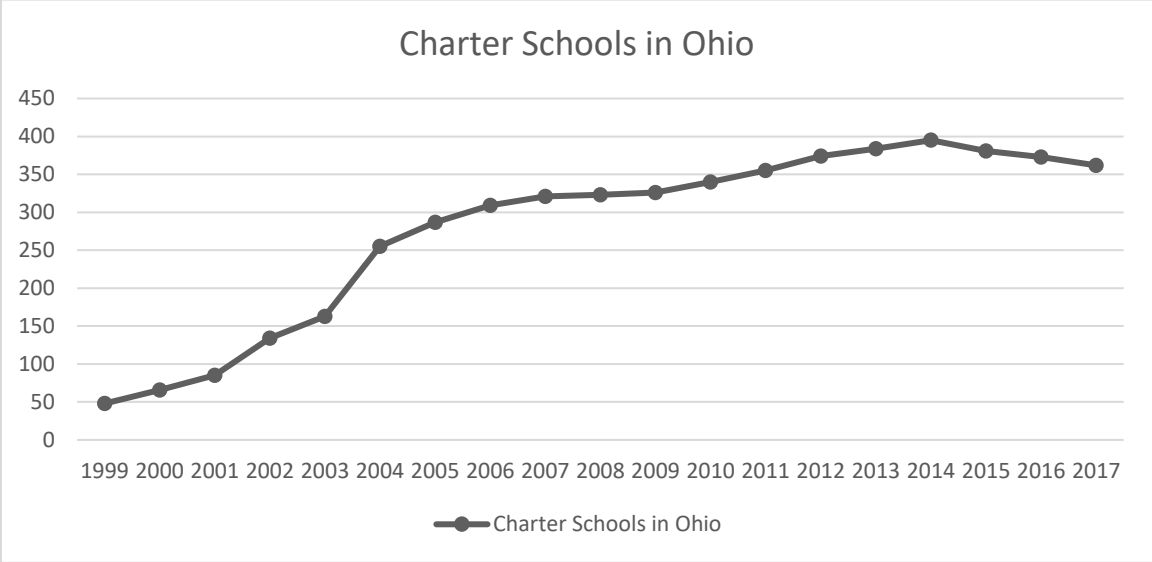
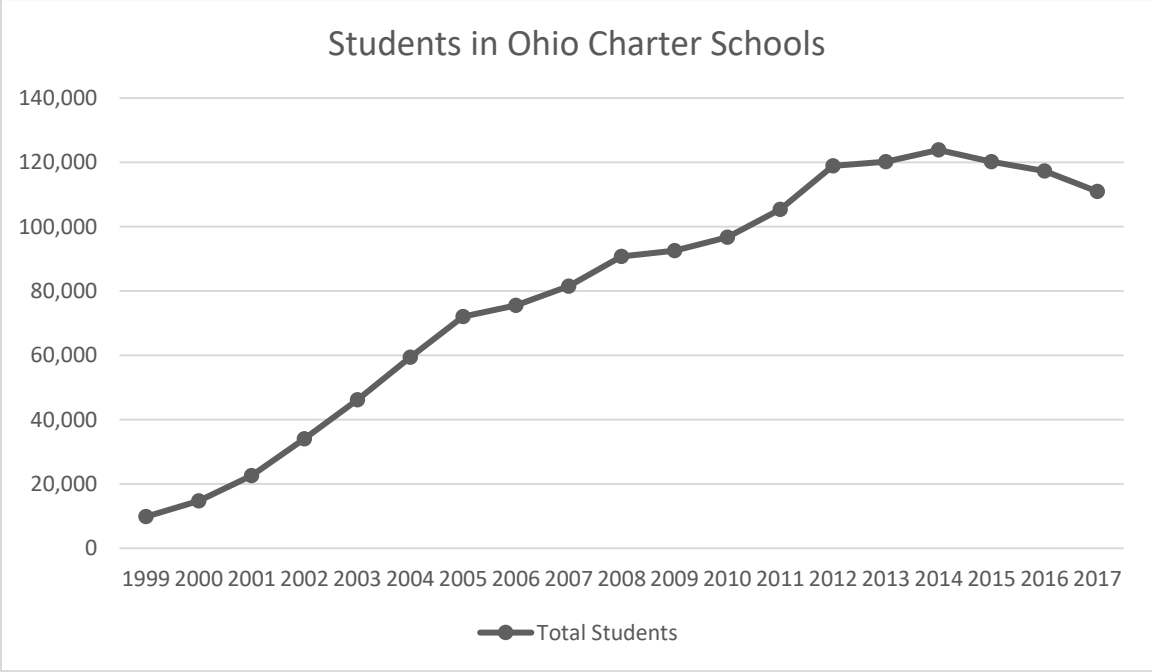


Figure 4. Number of Students in Ohio Charter Schools, 1999-2017



Evidence of the Prevalence and Scope of Student Recruitment in Charter Schools

The prevalence of student recruitment work by teachers is not yet clear but there is substantial evidence from small and international studies (Kasman & Loeb, 2013; Opltaka, 2002, 2004, 2007; Vatyami, 2017), studies on parents' school choice process (Andre-Bechely, 2001; Bell, 2007, 2009; Wilson-Cooper, 2005, 2007), and anecdotal evidence within the United States (Colombo, 2015; Farmer, 2014; Inspired Teaching, 2014; Philips, 2016) that teachers in charter and similar schools of choice are drawn into student recruitment work in significant ways.

Academic research on parents' school choice processes when deciding where to send their child to school sheds some light on the work that teachers perform in the student recruitment process, although very little explicit attention is paid to how teachers are involved in student recruitment work. For example, parents may talk directly to teachers to gather information about the school to guide their decision-making processes (Andre-Bechely, 2001, 2005; Cooper, 2005, 2007). Parents may also interact with teachers who give tours, participate in open houses, or run recruitment meetings (Luke, 2013). The research on parents' search processes does not directly focus on teachers' roles in student recruitment, but it does indirectly support the notion that teachers play a significant role in the process of student enrollment.

Several studies on parents' work to enroll their children into schools are qualitative in nature and provide direct quotes from parents on the roles that teachers play in their search process. For example, Wilson-Cooper (2005), in her study of African American mothers in the school choice process, describes parents' interactions with teachers during visits to potential charter schools. One of the mothers in Wilson's study

explained, “I went there [prospective charter school], I liked the teacher that I met, her curriculum” (p.182). This brief exchange does not provide specifics about how long the visit took, what they talked about, or how the teacher interacted with the parent. But it does raise questions about what this interaction looked like from the teachers’ perspective, how much time and detail they gave their explanation of their curriculum, and how their motives and identities as a teacher were shaped or challenged by the recruitment work that they performed.

Much of the anecdotal evidence on teachers’ work to recruit comes from online resources. Advertisements and online announcements are abundant for schools’ recruitment open houses where students and families are invited to tour the school, meet teachers, and ask questions (See: Fountain Hill Times, 2017, Jabbar, 2014; Inspired Teaching School, 2017; Otero & Parise, 2015; Vineyard Gazette, 2017; Wynn, 2014). Charter schools have also relied on more traditional methods such as yard signs, flyers, and brochures to market themselves (Vaznis, 2010). Other traditional means of advertising are also employed such as radio and TV spots, billboards, and even bus stop ads (Colombo, 2015; Lidsly, 2012; Vaznis, 2010). Some charter schools have also generated controversy through tactics such as awarding gift cards for referrals to students who enroll in the school (Colombo, 2015; Meyer, 2010).

Schools’ advertising budgets also provide insight into the prevalence of teacher recruitment work. Evidence suggests that many Ohio charter schools use a sizeable portion of their budgets in advertisement and recruitment efforts. While it does not follow that these same schools necessarily require teachers to work on student recruitment, it demonstrates that charter schools are paying attention to the need to recruit students and

are devoting resources to the work. The Columbus Dispatch has issued several stories on charter schools' spending on advertising. The now defunct Electronic Classroom of Tomorrow (ECOT), a prominent online school, has garnered the most attention for how they manage and use their state-issued funding (Bush, 2017). In 2014 they spent $2.27 million on advertising which is about $155 per student at their school (Bush, 2015a). However, spending is not limited to ECOT. Charter schools throughout Ohio spent about $5.6 million in 2014. While no other school came close to the aggregate amount spent on advertising by ECOT, the average spending per charter school was $21,600. Bush (2015b) explains in his investigation of charter school spending that "Mosaica Online of Ohio and Dayton SMART Elementary School each spent more than $700 per student on ads, or roughly 10 percent of their per-pupil state tax money. Canton College Preparatory School spent almost $600 per student, one of 14 charters to spend at least $300 per student. About 50 charters reported spending more than $100 per student on advertising."

There is some evidence that traditional public schools are responding to student losses to charter schools by taking up their own ad campaigns. 545 school districts in Ohio used public money to advertise their school, totaling $2.59 million in 2014. The biggest spenders were large urban districts. Toledo City schools led the spending with $268,400 and was followed by Cincinnati Public Schools ($165,800), Fayette Local Public Schools ($157,500), Cleveland Municipal ($139,300) and Columbus City ($108,300) (Bush, 2015b). However, to this point the per-pupil marketing budgets for traditional public schools have been dwarfed by those of charter schools.

There is also evidence that public schools are including teachers in the student recruitment process. For example, the Los Angeles Times reported that teachers at LA

Public Schools were called on by administrators to help in "handing out glossy fliers and creating Facebook pages to promote their after-school activities" (Philips, 2016). The article goes on to suggest that "The time and attention they are pouring into recruitment is fundamentally changing the nature of their jobs." Teachers have also been called on to go door-to-door to recruit new students or try to win back ones who left for charter schools in Nashville (Farmer, 2014), Washington D.C. (Brown, 2014), Detroit (Detroit Public Schools Community, 2011), and Kansas City (DeNisco, 2013). A Nashville Public Media report on student recruiting by traditional public school teachers states:

> Art instructor Carla Douglas took time out of her Saturday, but says there's a general sense that marketing shouldn't fall on teachers. "I'm sure there are plenty of teachers that are thinking that way. I'm sure there are. And they're not here," she said. Douglas says she accepts that recruiting may just become one more unpaid duty (Farmer, 2014).

Whiles these sources are anecdotal, they highlight a trend which may be driving changes to teachers' work to be more market-oriented even in traditional public schools. One district spokesperson highlighted the tension felt by traditional school principals and teachers saying, "There are a limited number of kids, and people are fighting for these kids. We have to become competitive with those who are out there" (DeNisco, 2013).

The prevalence of student recruitment work is also highlighted by the rise of marketing agencies and recruiting consultants who focus on advertising and student recruitment to boost schools' enrollment. Evidence suggests an emerging sector for marketing firms, individual contractors, and districts who specialize in professional marketing work for student recruitment. For example, the Palm Beach City Schools recently released a guide for building personnel to assist them in marketing called "A three-step, do it yourself guide to marketing your school." The guide explains that "In

today's competitive school environment, where the district must vie with private schools and charter schools for students, marketing efforts are crucial to the district's goals to win over parents and show them the district-run schools are their best choice" (Palm Beach Schools, 2017, p. 3). The guide also instructs school leaders to define their school for their target audience, build a brand, identify what makes them unique, and ask why families would choose their school" (Palm Beach Schools, 2017, p. 3). The guide also instructs leaders to "Utilize staff and parents to go door-to-door in your neighborhood to promote your school" (p. 7).

Similarly, the National Charter Schools Institute, a pro-school choice and charter school non-profit organization, released a how-to guide for marketing called "This little charter school went to market: A marketing course for school leaders" (Carpenter, 2009). The guide includes information on creating a brand and provides informational resources on marketing schools, preparing staff to participate in marketing programs, and directly recruiting students. Additionally, it provides guidance for creating a brand, setting a clear mission, and ensuring a welcoming environment for potential new students and families who visit the school. Teachers play a prominent role in marketing. The guide instructs leaders to make sure that teachers aren't yelling at students, maintain a neat and orderly classroom environment, and are trained on the proper way to interact with visitors (Carpenter, 2009, pp. 6-7). Finally, the guide provides a rationale for marketing that is repeated often in the literature on school marketing: "every kid is money" (Jabbar, 2015). The guide explains:

> Ever compute the cost to the school of a kindergarten student that doesn't reenroll for first grade? It's easy to do. Just multiply the average state aid for one child by 12 years (for a K-12 school). For example, if your average state per pupil allotment from the state is $7,000, failing to reenroll a single student could cost

> the school a minimum of $84,000 over a 12 period. Multiply that by say, six students, and the school is looking at lost revenue of more than a half-million dollars (Carpenter, 2009, p. 37).

It goes on to suggest ways to increase the enrollment that is vital to the financial stability of the school:

> To help raise re-enrollment, consider hosting annual events which showcase student talents for parents. Parents often tend to consider other schools when their student are transition between kindergarten and first, sixth and seventh, eighth and ninth. Events should be informal and should emphasize demonstrating current student accomplishments. Invite parents and the teachers of the next grade up (e.g., first grade teachers) to attend. Serve refreshments and have a curriculum display table in the back of the room. (Carpenter, 2009 p. 37)

While there is not a comprehensive examination of the ways that schools use their personnel, resources, and publicly-provided funds to advertise themselves, the information that is available from anecdotal sources suggests that the need to recruit students plays a significant role the operation of charter and, increasingly, even traditional public schools.

Student Recruitment Work as Policy Implementation

Teachers who engage in student recruitment work are engaging in policy implementation. A major goal of charter school policies is to provide more educational options for students (Bell, 2007; Peterson, 2016). Therefore, teachers who work to convince students to make the choice to come to their school and assist them in onboarding are, in effect, implementing policy. A key factor in the effective or ineffective implementation of policy is the discretion of teachers who may act as "street-level bureaucrats" in their work to attract, onboard, and retain students. The discretion of street-level bureaucrats is a wide term that can mean many things including individuals'

willingness to enact policy, awareness of the policy in question, and skills and ability to enact the policy (Lipsky, 1980).

There have been various attempts to create a typology of street-level bureaucrat's discretion, especially as it relates to their willingness to engage in policy implementation work. Sorg (1983) created a matrix of four categories to establish an implementation typology. These four categories were drawn from actors' willingness to comply with rule, regulations or statutes from policy and their awareness of the policy. They included "intentional compliance," "unintentional compliance," "unintentional noncompliance," and "intentional noncompliance." Meyers and Lehmann-Nielson (2012) proposed a "continuum of organizational behaviors" that ranged from active resistance to active cooperation. Brower, et al. (2017) proposed a "Policy Implementation Typology" that included four categories of individual response to policy demands. First, "oppositional" actors argue or appeal to their superiors or others against the work and changes brought about by the policy. Oppositional actors can also simply fail or act in response to policy demands or leave their roles. "Circumventing" actors are largely detached from the work and act on policies often at the last possible minute. They may also do the bare minimum of work needed to meet the demands of the policy. Circumventing actors may also be selective in the aspects of the policy they act upon, emphasizing some parts of the policy while ignoring others. "Satisficing" actors are also opposed to the policy but may take actions to implement the policy but "play dumb" to slow down the process. Finally, "facilitative" actors work to comply with the full extent of the policy change and make the appropriate changes to their work to meet the needs of the policy. (Brower, et al., 2017, pp. 822-827).

Sensemaking Theory

Sensemaking theory, popularized by Weick (1995), provides a useful framework for examining the process through which teachers learn about and implement policies. It also sheds light on how individuals develop a discretion toward a policy and the work it entails. Sensemaking theories are appropriate for this study because student recruitment practices are not prescribed by policymakers and often come as a surprise to teachers who do not anticipate that recruitment will be a part of their work. Teachers, then, must determine, or make sense of, how they are going to perform recruitment work. The element of surprise or ambiguity is a key focus of sensemaking theory which provides a framework to analyze the actions of individuals who find themselves in a confusing or unexpected situation and must find ways to reach new understanding and equilibrium in their work (Maitlis, 2005; Weick, 1995; Weick, Sutcliffe & Obstfeld, 2005).

While Weick and others have referred to sensemaking "theory," for the purposes of this study, it is better conceived as a framework for understanding teachers' cognition and actions. Sensemaking can also be used as a "perspective" (Smerek, 2009) to better see the processes that individuals undertake in order to move from a state of ambiguity to a state of understanding related to their roles in the organizations. Thus, for the purposes of this study I am employing sensemaking theories as a lens to view individuals' actions and cognition within an organizational environment, rather than attempting to validate a theory in the more traditional sense of the term.

The teachers in this study all took on jobs at their charter schools with no expectation that they would need to recruit students in addition to their more traditional roles as an educator. Therefore, when confronted by the need to recruit students, they

were surprised and forced to decide how to respond to the unexpected demands on their time and attention.

Sensemaking refers literally to "the making of sense" (Weick, 1995, p. 4) by individuals who encounter novel or ambiguous situations and must come to some understanding of what has changed and how to act moving forward. Policies such as those that require schools to recruit students introduce novel, confusing and ambiguous situations for teachers and other school personnel. Some of these situations come and go quickly and do not capture the attention of individuals. Other situations, however, "violate the expectations" of individuals and groups within organizations and require them to come to new understandings and make decisions about how to respond (Maitlis & Christianson, 2014, p. 57; Weick, 2005). Sensemaking is useful for policy implementation studies because it provides a lens through which to examine how street-level bureaucrats hear about policy changes or requirements, draw on their experiences and influence of their colleagues to understand the policy, notice and select "cues," or specific points of information, and act in ways that seem plausible or possible within their organizational constraints. Maitlis (2014) describes the sensemaking process, saying

> When organizational members encounter moments of ambiguity or uncertainty, they seek to clarify what is going on by extracting and interpreting cues from their environment, using these as the basis for a plausible account that provides order and "makes sense" of what has occurred, and through which they continue to enact the environment

Lipsky (1980) pointed out that individuals at the street level play a significant role in determining how policies will be implemented. Sensemaking theories aid understanding of policy implementation because, as Weick (1995) put it, sensemaking is an activity that is "less about discover than it is about invention" (p. 13). This study is

concerned with what teachers invent as they make sense of policy demands to recruit students.

Sensemaking theory considers how individuals in organizations comprehend and act in response to cues. Cues are bits of information that are generated externally from an individual and may or may not be noticed by that individual (Maitlis & Christianson, 2014, p. 70). In sensemaking theory, cues are introduced by the violation of individuals' expectations (Weick, 1995, 2005), changes to organizational structure or policy (Balogun & Johnson, 2004; Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991), threats or organizational identity (Dutton & Dukerich, 1991; Elsbach & Kramer, 1996) and crises (Brown & Jones, 2000; Weick, 1988, 1993; Wicks, 2001). Studies in educator sensemaking have focused on cues that come in the form of new requirements for standards (Allen & Penuel, 2015; Coburn, 2001, 2005), roles or tasks (Janes, 2016; Ketelaar, et al., 2013), or novel information about teachers' work and professional identities (Evans, 2007; Philip, 2011). The sensemaking literature in education typically focuses on capturing the process by which teachers and principals respond to cues generated by changes in policy, standards, or accountability measures.

Coburn's (2001, 2005) studies of teachers' implementation of a new set of reading standards in California provides an example of how teachers may encounter multiple cues during their work. Teachers gain information from what they read about the new standards, either from popular sources such as magazines or newspapers or technical documents from the state which outlined the standards themselves. Teachers also encountered cues from their social and professional environments via the conversations that they had about the new standards with other teachers or their principals. Official

directives from the building and district leadership also provided cues as did formal and informal professional development programs which guided teachers in implementing the standards. Finally, teachers gathered cues from past experiences in their personal and professional lives. Interestingly, Coburn found that principals have a strong influence on the cues that teachers first notice and, then, act on. This is partially performed as principals "influence teachers' enactment by shaping access to policy ideas, participating in the social process of interpretation and adaptation, and creating substantively different conditions for teacher learning in schools" (Coburn, 2005, p. 476).

Definitions of Sensemaking

Sensemaking has multiple definitions. Weick (2005) defines sensemaking as the way "groups and individuals socially construct the meaning of an ongoing flow of experience." Maitlis and Christianson (2014) define sensemaking as "a process, prompted by violated expectations, that involves attending to and bracketing cues in the environment, creating intersubjective meaning through cycles of interpretation and action, and thereby enacting a more ordered environment from which further cues can be drawn" (pp. 66-67). Samuels (2015) describes sensemaking as, "the process of social construction that occurs when discrepant cues interrupt individuals' ongoing activity, and involves the retrospective development of plausible meanings that rationalize what people are doing" (p. 22).

While definitions vary widely, certain aspects of sensemaking are captured by nearly all definitions. First, sensemaking is a process (Balogun & Johnson, 2004; Cornelissen, 2012; Sonenshein, 2010; Weick 1995). It is dynamic rather than stagnant in

nature, or as Hernes and Maitlis (2010) say, sensemaking occurs in an "ongoing present in which past experience is projected upon possible futures" (p. 27). In other words, individuals draw on past experiences to inform their present thoughts and actions and to anticipate what will happen in the future. These thoughts and actions work to create new possibilities for the future while limiting other possibilities. As these future possibilities manifest themselves, individuals receive new cues that they would not have received otherwise, and the perpetual process of sensemaking continues. Other researchers have described sensemaking in terms similar to a "process." Louis (1980) described sensemaking as a "recurring cycle," while Weick (2005) has referred to sensemaking as an unfolding "sequence" of events in which each action taken by individuals or organizations unfolds or makes possible other thoughts and actions.

Action is a central component of definitions of sensemaking. When individuals encounter cues, they act to respond to them. This action might be fairly limited such as searching for information related to the cue or talking to colleagues. However, the action individuals take may be complex such as incorporating new components into their work or significantly altering the way they approach their job. Action is also a key component of the process of sensemaking because when individuals act, they unveil new possibilities for future action.

Finally, sensemaking is social in nature because individuals are embedded in organizations with multiple other actors. Individuals' thoughts and actions are mediated heavily by their social context (Allport, 1985; Weick, 1995, p. 39). Furthermore, the way that individuals respond to cues in their environment is shaped in large part by social factors such as organizational culture and their professional relationships which

"produce…and sustain a shared sense of meaning" among individuals in an organization (Gephart et al., 2010, p. 285).

Sensemaking and "Worldviews"

Weick and others have suggested that sensemaking is shaped in significant ways by individuals' preexisting worldviews (Weick, 1995). Worldviews refer to cognitive frameworks that are made up of individuals' background, personal and professional identity, understanding of what their work should be like, and professional and personal experiences (Coburn, 2001; Jennings, 1996; Porac, Thomas, & Baden-Fuller, 1989; Spillane, 1999; Spillane & Jennings, 1997; Vaughan, 1996; Weick, 1995). Worldviews shape individuals' understanding of why things are the way that they are and how things ought to look moving forward. When teachers encounter new and novel situations or demands on their work, such as those imposed by policy changes or requirements, they must fit the new information into these pre-existing frameworks. Worldviews are significant because they can lead to a "restructuring" of policies by teachers who may or may not support new policy requirements based on how it "fits" or not into their worldview (Coburn & Woulfin, 2012). For example, if a teacher has a strong conception of teaching as caring for and educating all students, they may rail against policies that induce competition because they believe that such policies reduce students to "customers."

Sensemaking and the Enactment of Reality

Sensemaking theorists suggest that reality is socially constructed through the actions of individuals and organizations (Berger & Luckmann, 1966: Weick, 1979,

1995). Future events and circumstances are shaped by individuals' interactions and their socially-mediated decisions. Individuals' thoughts and actions shape their organizational environment and, as a result, the thoughts and actions of others within that environment (Porac, Thomas & Baden-Fuller, 1989). As sensemaking occurs, individuals choose what to focus on and what to ignore, how to act, and where to stand back. In short, "people often produce part of the environment they face" (Ponty & Mitroff, 1979, p. 17).

Weick (2003) has described sensemaking as a sort of evolutionary process in which individuals' efforts to adapt to their environment changes both the individual and the environment itself. This is a compounding process as subsequent decisions and actions both by individuals and others in their organizations further shape the reality of the organizations. Nicholson (2015) describes this process as enactment. Enactment refers to an organism's actions to adjust to its environment. As time goes on, an organism will become better adapted to its environment, through changes to the environment and through changes within the organism.

Sensemaking: An Inside and Outside Process

Sensemaking is both a cognitive, or "inside," process while it is also a social, or "outside" process. Processes unfold and develop both in the minds of individuals and through their and others' actions. While various studies differ on the extent to which sensemaking is cognitive or social, they generally agree that sensemaking involves the cognitive processes of individuals which are heavily constructed, mediated, and changed by the social and institutional dynamics affecting the individual.

Coburn (2001, 2005) argues that teachers' social networks, interactions, and relationship to power at their school all shape sensemaking. Sensemaking is a social process that primarily takes place between actors in institutions. While cognitive processes occur within individuals and impact sensemaking, it is impossible for sensemaking to occur outside of a social context. In other words, individuals' cognitive processes are highly shaped by social, professional and institutional forces at their school. Sensemaking is also largely tied to individuals' attempts to gather information and come to conclusions about cues that occur as surprises or disruptions which occur as social processes rather than simply cognitive processes.

Spillane, Reiser and Gomez (2006) view sensemaking as primarily a cognitive process, albeit, one that is heavily influenced by the "practices and common beliefs of a community" (p. 58). Sensemaking is cognitive, they argue, because actors within the same organizations make sense of cues in different ways, even though they may be products of the same institutional forces (See: Spillane et al., 2002b, p. 397). Thus, they view the site of sensemaking within individuals. Sensemaking becomes a process in which individual cognition is acted on by outside forces such as personal interactions, institutional norms, and policy demands (Spillane, et al. 2006, Spillane, Reiser, & Reimer, 2002). But individuals still maintain the ultimate ability to make sense within themselves, even when the sense that they make is highly structured by the forces surrounding them.

For the purposes of this study, I view sensemaking as a process that entails both cognitive and social elements which work in tandem. For individuals to process cues, work to understand new requirements, and act, they must think about the issues at hand.

However, individuals exist in social contexts which bind, shape, and mold their thoughts and actions.

The Social Dynamic: Sensegiving and Sensebreaking

Sensemaking occurs in social environments and is mediated by the social dynamics between individuals and groups within an organization. Sensegiving refers to the process by which individuals seek to influence the way that others come to understand and act on changes to their environment. Sensebreaking occurs when individuals attempt to break down or alter others' well-established meanings ascribed to processes, beliefs, or practices within organizations (Coburn & Woulfin, 2012; Lawrence & Matlis, 2014; Maitlis, 2005).

Sensegiving is "intentionally trying to change how other people think" (Smerek, 2009, p. 6). Leaders within organizations may attempt to influence others during times of change or ambiguity to achieve a "redefinition of organizational reality" (Gioia & Chittipedi, 1991, p. 442). Changes in practices, goals or social and professional dynamics within an organization create opportunities to implement changes that may not have been possible otherwise. Much of the literature on sensegiving focuses on leaders' roles in shaping the new organizational reality using influential techniques to guide individuals (Maitlis & Christianson, 2014, p. 67; Maitlis & Lawrence, 2007; Rouleau, 2005). However, anyone in the organization can engage in sensegiving activities. Furthermore, sensegiving may occur amongst multiple individuals at the same time and may occur in a competitive nature as people promote conflicting visions for their organizations.

Sensegiving is a political act. Individuals who attempt to influence the sensemaking process of others must have some sort of formal or informal authority, influence or leverage to coordinate organizational changes (Binder, 2002; Coburn et al. 2008). Coburn, Bae, and Turner (2008) studied sensemaking among district leaders and found that perceptions among staff that leaders held status and authority were connected to leaders' ability to influence the sensemaking of their staff in implementing new reading standards. Further studies have demonstrated that school leaders with high status and authority are able to persuade their staff to work toward implementing policy in specific ways (Coburn, Toure, & Yamashita, 2009; Coburn & Woulfin, 2012). Rather than simply setting out new rules and policies, these leaders could establish their plans for implementing policies simply by influencing their staff.

Maitlis (2005), in a study of sensemaking processes in the management of an orchestra, identifies four forms of organizational sensegiving. These sensegiving actions occurred both at the level of leadership within the organization but also occurred amongvarious "stakeholders" throughout the organization. First, "guided" sensemaking occurs when leaders take a very upfront and active role in influencing others to fulfill specific organizational goals. Stakeholders in organizations which are sensemaking in a guided way tend to be on board in bringing about the vision of the leader. "Fragmented" sensemaking occurs when multiple leaders or stakeholders hold different views of where the organization should go and attempt to influence others in ways that either spur on conflicts or lead to stagnation. "Restricted" sensemaking occurs when leaders attempt to influence the organization while stakeholders hold passive views of where they want the organization to go. Finally, "minimal" sensemaking occurs when neither the leaders nor

the stakeholders actively attempt to influence others' sensemaking. Minimal sensemaking can lead to several consequences including an adherence to the status quo or outside actors influencing the organization in the absence of internal direction. Maitlis argued that minimal sensemaking typically persists until an "external trigger" raised the stakes high enough for the organization for individuals to act to understand and move on their issues.

Sensebreaking is another way in which individuals might try to influence sensemaking in their organizations. Pratt (2000) describes sensebreaking as "the destruction or breaking down of meaning" (p. 64). Leaders can influence individuals and groups during times of ambiguity and change by actively trying to modify, unravel or reverse the expectations and understandings that are held throughout their organization. Once sensebreaking has occurred, leaders can begin the process of sensegiving to fill the void left by their sensebreaking (Lawrence & Maitlis, 2014). For example, in a study of courtroom interactions between judges, defendants, bailiffs and lawyers, Scarduzio and Tracy (2015) found that "negative emotional cycles" existed in courtrooms that could hinder the proper functioning and safety of the process of a trial. They found that bailiffs could engage in sensebreaking through their actions and communication patterns by disrupting pre-conceived notions that the trial process was an emotionally-negative experience.

The Process of Sensemaking

Sensemaking is a process, albeit one that is difficult to map out in a logical, consistent and predictable manner. While some researchers of educator sensemaking

have focused more on sensemaking as a cognitive process (Spillane, 2002) others have focused on sensemaking as a more social process (Coburn, 2001, 2005). All sensemaking theorists generally agree that sensemaking occurs in multiple phases which happen in an overlapping manner that is not necessarily linear. Samuels (2015) points out that "sensemaking never actually starts or stops. Instead, sensemaking is continually a part of an individual's lived experience" (p. 26).

Weick (1979, 1995) outlined four general elements of the sensemaking process. These elements can overlap, occur iteratively, and are ongoing. In other words, sensemaking can bring about individual development and change, and can bring individuals to well-developed understandings of their organizations, roles, or work. But sensemaking does not simply stop at the point that an individual feels like they have established a satisfying conclusion. Instead, the stages of sensemaking continue and individual sensemaking proceeds in new directions. The four components of the sensemaking process follow.

Ecological change: Ecological changes occur in institutions when some unexpected requirement, change or event occurs either from inside or outside the institution. These events may be innocuous and predictable such as the introduction of new accountability standards (Coburn, 2001; Gawlik, 2015) or they may occur in the form of disasters such as the Tenrife air disaster or the Mann Gulch disaster (Weick, 1990, 1993). The key is that ecological changes introduce ambiguity to organizational processes and disrupt individuals' expectations for how their work ought to happen. Ecological changes introduce "discrepant cues" to individuals within organizations where change or ambiguity is introduced (Dunbar & Garud, 2009; Louis, 1980; Vaughn, 1996).

Discrepant cues refer to bits of information or events that individuals do not fully understand or know how to act on. The process of sensemaking is the way that individuals come to terms with the new reality they find themselves in. They do this largely by developing an understanding of the discrepant cues and constructing a new version of their cognitive, physical, and institutional reality in which the discrepant cues make sense.

Enactment: Enactment occurs when individual action unfolds or makes possible a new set of circumstances that would not have existed otherwise. Enactment also helps individuals to develop understandings of their organizations, situations, or areas of confusion, as actions impose order onto an individual's environment. The term "enactment" in the social sciences has a rough corollary to the term enactment in the biological sciences which refers to "an organism's adjustment to its environment by directly acting upon the environment to change it" (Nicholson, 1995, p. 155). Once individuals experience an ecological change, they act in response to that change. Enactment occurs as a multi-stage process that bring clarity and direction to individuals. Weick's (2003) conception of enactment is as a process where individuals' actions help them to "develop a sense of what they should do next" (p. 186). Examples of enactment may include individuals' work to research responses to ecological changes, their attempts to circumvent the changes, interpersonal interactions or even "gossip" in an attempt to discover more about the ecological change in question. Enactment leads individuals to notice more "discrepent cues" (Jennings & Greenwood, 2003; Samuels, 2015, p. 29) that inform their sensemaking process.

Selection: Selection occurs as individuals decide – in either highly conscious ways or less conscious ways – which bits of information from their environment to pay attention to and which to disregard. Individuals' selection process is shaped both by their past experiences, their enactment, and their social and institutional environments (Jennings & Greenwood, 2003; Weick, 1995).

Retention: Retention occurs as individuals come to decide which cues are relevant to them and determine a "sufficient account" of their reality (Samuels, 2015, p. 32). Jennings and Greenwood (2003) identify two components of retention. First, individuals' come to terms with their new situation in ways that are *plausible* given their understanding of the institution they are in and in ways that support their identity in their professional role. Weick articulates the retention process for individuals in which they ask "what is the story here?' with the aim of articulating an explanation that is plausible enough to enable the person to take meaningful subsequent action (Weick, 2008). Second, an individual's identity will impact the cues they retain and how they act on those cues (Weick, 2003). An individual's identity is influenced by their understanding of their own "distinctive qualities" (Whetten, 2006, p. 221) and by the way that they "imagine how they appear to others" and how "others might judge this appearance" (Samuels, 2015, p. 33). Thus, the cues they see and choose to act on are shaped heavily by their self-conception and how they think others in their social environment will respond to them. For the purposes of this study, I am asking how teachers retain certain cues that lead them toward a somewhat firm stance toward student recruitment work. Brower, et al. (2017), for example, lay out four different orientations toward policy

implementation for teachers, ranging from opposed to supportive of the work to implement policy.

These elements are distinctive but may overlap in considerable ways. Furthermore, an individual may engage in more than once sensemaking process at a time so that different processes are occurring simultaneously and influencing one another. For example, school leaders and other personnel may need to make sense of new teacher evaluation standards while they make sense of new reading standards.

Weick's Seven Properties of Sensemaking

Weick (1995, pp. 17-56) outlined seven essential properties of individuals' sensemaking. These properties inform and mediate the process of sensemaking outlined in the previous section. The seven properties may or may not be present in individuals' sensemaking processes. Therefore, these properties are meant to act as guides to draw attention to various aspects of individuals' sensemaking to foster clarity and theoretical depth. They do not all need to be present for sensemaking to occur.

1. Sensemaking is "grounded in identity construction": Aspects of a person's identity impact how they come to understand and implement policy. Therefore, it is important to understand how individuals came into the teaching profession and what they believe it means to be a teacher. Identity construction is an ongoing process. While individuals' identities shape their actions and thoughts it is also important to note that identities shift as individuals engage in new experience and process new information. Identity is also shaped throughout the sensemaking process as individuals work to understand who they are, how their various roles

and relationships shape them, and in response to the situations in their work that trigger sensemaking. Weick (1995) describes the process of identity construction in relation to sensemaking, saying "the sensemaker is an ongoing puzzle undergoing continual redefinition, coincident with presenting some self to others and trying to decide which self is appropriate [to a given situation]" (p. 22).

2. **Retrospective:** Individuals come to understand the meaning of events by using past experiences as a reference point. Sensemaking theory emphasizes the need to understand how teachers draw on past experiences and actions to construct meaning in the present and to "filter" new events, information and requirements that may not be relevant or noteworthy given their past experiences. Careful consideration is key when examining retrospection in sensemaking because individuals continually refine and change their understanding of past events. For example, a teacher might have negative memories of a previous job but if they encounter a high amount of stress at their current job, they may begin to view the past position more favorably.
3. **Enactive of sensible environments:** Individuals act within their environments and, in turn, take part in constructing those environments. Organizations are the result of individual and group actions and as individuals work to make sense of their work, they will alter their environments in significant ways.
4. **Social:** Sensemaking is performed alongside other actors within and outside of an organization. As discussed above, social interactions shape and influence the thoughts and actions of individuals in significant ways. Additionally, individuals shape the sensemaking of others through sensegiving or sensebreaking.

5. **Ongoing:** Sensemaking is ongoing. Policies shift, the needs of organizations and individuals change, social dynamics are developed, and the way that individuals remember or understand their past experiences change over time. Furthermore, as individuals act and learn, their understanding of policy will develop as well.

6. **Focused on and by extracted cues:** Cues are "present moments of experience," or information, that are introduced into cognitive frames built on past experiences and "moments of socialization," especially in organizations (Weick, 1995, p. 111). Cues highlight the things that capture individuals' attention, what they remember, and what they are compelled to share. The cue extraction and sensemaking process are ongoing and shape one another. As individuals engage in the sensemaking process they start to notice new and different cues from their environment. Concurrently, noticeable cues in the environment trigger and shape sensemaking.

7. **Driven by plausibility rather than accuracy:** Weick (2005) explains that "To deal with ambiguity, interdependent people search for meaning, settle for plausibility, and move on" (419). The demands of any policy can be ambiguous to those who work to implement them. These demands are even more ambiguous when actors are responding to many policies that have been enacted over multiple years and at every level of government, such as those that create and shape charter schools. Because individual rationality is bound and time is limited, actors make sense of the demands of policy by going with the most plausible action, rather than the most accurate. Furthermore, in many situations there may not be a right or logical

answer. Therefore, whatever actions make the most sense given organizational realities may be the ones that individuals take.

Conclusion

As this chapter demonstrated, there is substantial evidence to suggest that teachers in charter schools may take on significant work to recruit students to their school in response to policies that introduce market pressures. However, there is little insight into how student recruitment work shapes teachers' working lives. Sensemaking and policy implementation offer a framework through which to examine teachers' recruitment work in more detail to understand how they engage in the process of recruitment. Therefore, a qualitative study of teachers in the student recruitment process, employing sensemaking theories to provide a theoretical framework, is warranted. The next chapter outlines the methodology for this study.

Chapter 3: Methods

This chapter outlines the research methodology underlying this study. I describe the rationale for a qualitative multiple case study approach, the study population, participant selection procedures, interviewing techniques, document gathering, data analysis and study limitations. The main research question that this study asks is: How do teachers make sense of the pressure to recruit students as part of their job? This question guided the methodological choices outlined in this chapter.

Multiple Case Study Approach

This study relies on a multiple case study approach to examine how policies that marketize education shape the work of teachers at charter schools in Ohio (Bryman, 2012; Creswell, 2013; Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Yin, 2014). Specifically, I focus on how teachers become involved in one aspect of marketized education, the need to recruit students to their school and how they make sense of the new work. Gall, Borg and Gall (1996) describe a case study as the study of a process in "its natural context and from the perspective of the participants involved" (p. 545). For the purposes of this study the participants involved are teachers at charter schools. The process in question is the work to recruit students to charter schools in response to market pressures that are created and driven by state and federal policies. The context is a large Ohio city with a mixture of private, traditional public, public magnet, and public charter schools. In some instances,

teachers in this study also had experiences working at schools in other cities. I have made sure to differentiate between the focus city and other cities when necessary.

The "cases" in this study are the schools in which the teachers work to recruit students. Creswell (2013) describes cases as "real-life, contemporary…multiple bounded systems" which are explored "through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information" (p. 97). While much of my focus is on the teacher participants, I also compare schools to analyze how unique institutional, professional, and social aspects mediate individual sensemaking. My sources of data for each case included teacher interviews, analysis of documents such as recruitment letters, advertisements, meeting notes, and analysis of online resources including websites and social media accounts. I also draw on state-produced data such as student mobility rates and school grade cards.

Qualitative case studies are useful for exploring processes that are not well understood (Marshal & Rossman, 1995). As the last chapter demonstrated, the body of research on teachers' roles in marketing and recruiting students to their school is limited and still developing in terms of scope, theoretical grounding, and sophistication. Furthermore, a qualitative approach is appropriate for studying "naturally occurring, ordinary events in natural settings" (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2014, p. 11) and allows for the identification of "unanticipated outcomes" and responses (Patton, 2014, p. 187). Social, cognitive and institutional processes such as teachers' work to recruit students to their school are "too complex, too relative, too elusive, or too fluid" to be easily captured by a research methodology that does not a provide a rich account of those processes (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2014, p. 19). The interviews and document

analysis I undertook provide a detailed description of the processes that teachers undertook to recruit their students along with an account of how unique institutional, social, professional and cognitive factors mediated teachers' work. Student recruitment work is the result of policies that may significantly change the teaching profession (See: Fabricant & Fine, 2013) so anticipating how teachers may react, how their work may change, or how policies will be put into place at the ground level is difficult.

A multiple case study is appropriate for studying teachers' recruitment work for several reasons (Bryman, 2012; Creswell, 2013; Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Yin, 2014). First, an examination of multiple cases highlights how local, state and federal charter school policies shape teachers' work and experiences across different sites. Second, a multiple case study highlights how sensemaking occurs across sites. Schools may differ according to the qualities of their staff, school cultures, professional relationships, or the relationship between the school and management company. A multiple case approach reveals commonalities in sensemaking across unique individual sites. Another important factor in multiple-case studies is that they can account for numerous influences that could shape what researchers observe. This study, for example, includes schools that experience high market pressure and low market pressure, firmly established schools and new schools, and "mom and pop" schools and larger chain schools. By accounting for multiple variations within the schools, I built a framework for teacher sensemaking and tested that framework over multiple individuals and school sites.

The goal of my multiple case approach is to provide exploratory and descriptive accounts of teachers' work to recruit students. Marshall and Rossman (1995) identify four purposes for research: exploration, explanation, description, and prediction.

Explanatory and predictive research require the types of conceptual frameworks and understandings of processes that are beyond the scope of this study given the limited work that has been done on teachers' recruitment of students. Exploratory research is especially important when "relevant variables have not been identified" (Marshall & Rossman, 1995, p. 15). Therefore, my goal is to provide an exploratory analysis of teachers in the marketized environment. This research also has a descriptive focus because it highlights what happened as teachers engaged in student recruitment, how they process new and novel requirements of their work, and how they come to a point where they can act and make decisions. I also seek to tell teachers' stories through this study. Thus, while I employ coding techniques to identify categories within the interview data, at times pulling out words, metaphors, and single sentences provided by teachers, I have tried to preserve the stories that teachers shared about their experiences.

I arrived at the sample size – 12 teachers in 7 schools – for two main reasons. First, it was difficult to convince teachers to sign up for my study because many indicated that they were nervous about participation. From informal conversations outside of the official interview, I gathered that teachers were nervous about revealing information that would reflect poorly on their schools or upset their school leader. To address these fears and convince teachers to participate, I utilized methods for recruiting reluctant participants including taking the time to build trust with them and outlining steps to ensure their anonymity (Dundon & Ryan, 2010). I also chose 12 interviews because I started to see a category saturation with that number (Marshall, et al., 2013; Saunders, et al., 2018). Grady (1998) explains that category saturation is reached when "new data tend to be redundant of data already collected. In interviews, when the researcher begins to

hear the same comments again and again, data saturation is being reached" (p. 26). This is not to say that each new interview did not offer something unique, interesting, and, at times, even contrary or paradoxical to the previous interviews. Instead, once I started to establish more well-defined and supported codes and themes, I noticed them coming up consistently as my interviews went on.

Finally, there are precedents for the sample size in this study. While there is much debate over sample sizes in qualitative methodology, Thomson (2002), in a literature review of 100 grounded theory studies, determined that a sample size of 10-30 was sufficient for reaching a categorical saturation. Also, similar qualitative studies on teachers' work to recruit students have drawn on a comparable sample size ranging from six interviews (Oplatka, 2006) to 29 interviews (Jennings, 2010).

Study Population

This study focused on 12 teachers in 7 schools, all who were currently working at "brick and mortar" charter schools in an Ohio city. The charter schools in this study tended to be under a decade old and started from scratch when recruiting their students. Private schools tend to be older, more well-established, and often connected to a religious organization, parish or diocese that can recruit students through word-of-mouth or through religious organizations. Traditional public schools tend to be rooted in a community and mostly enroll student who live within a certain geographical boundary (Tyack, 1974).

The schools in this study were largely similar in terms of their curriculum, student body, and pedagogical approaches (Figure 5). Two teachers worked at a drop-out

recovery school with a specific focus on students who had left their previous schools. The dropout recovery school in this study tended to have a shorter school day of five to six hours and students worked on computers to complete required courses. Teachers, therefore, did not take on many of the traditional roles associated with teaching. However, they took on similar responsibilities to recruit students and felt the same pressures to recruit as those in charter schools with a more traditional focus.

Figure 5. Overview of Schools

School Name*	Mission	Grade Level	Years Active	Waiting List
Taft Academy	Internship	9-12	15	No
Roosevelt Recovery Academy	Dropout recovery	9-12	7	No
City STEM Academy	STEM	K-5	5	No
Meyer Early College	Early college	9-12	14	Yes
Lawrence Preparatory Academy	College prep	7-12	6	No
Butler Preparatory Academy	College prep & arts	9-12	6	No
Harding Hills Academy	College prep	K-8	12	Yes

*** Pseudonyms**

All the teachers who participated in interviews were aware of the need to recruit students to their school, had taken part in recruitment work, and were able to describe the social and professional effect that recruiting had on them and their colleagues. Five of the schools actively recruited students year-round and were at a deficit in the number of students they needed to maintain an adequate level of funding.

Figure 6. Overview of Teachers

School Name / Teachers	Grades Taught	Content Area	Longevity at Current School	Gender	Race/Ethnicity
Taft Academy					
Beth	9-12	English	6 Years	F	Caucasian
Roosevelt Recovery					
Daniel	9-12	English	2 Years	M	African American
Rita	9-12	Math	1 Year	F	Hispanic
City STEM					
Emily	K-5	SPED	1 Year	F	Caucasian
Carol	K-5	Int. Spec.	3 Years		African American
Meyer Early College					
Megan	9-12	English	5 Years	F	Caucasian
Tara	9-12	Int. Spec.	1 Year	F	Caucasian
Lawrence Prep					
Mary	6-8	Math	5 Years	F	Caucasian
Naomi	6-8	English	2 Years	F	African American
Butler Prep					
Devon	9-12	Science	2 Years	M	Caucasian
Sara	9-12	English	5 Years	F	Caucasian
Harding Hills					
Thomas	9-12	Music	6 Years	M	Caucasian

Two of the schools recruited students at specific points in the school year but had a waiting list for students who wished to enroll. Typically, the most active recruiting "seasons" at all schools were late spring and summer.

I employed two methods for recruiting participants. First, I visited charter school websites and collected teachers' email addresses if they were listed publicly. I sent them emails which explained the nature of the study and what their involvement would look like (Appendix A). If I did not receive a response within two weeks I sent a follow up

email. Another way that I recruited teachers was through a snowball sampling process. That is, after concluding interviews with teachers, I asked them to pass my information onto other charter school teachers who might be interested in participating (Hornby & Symon, 1994). This process yielded three of the interviews.

Data Collection

My data came from 12 interviews along with text and electronic documentation related to the schools including enrollment forms, fact sheets, and frequently asked questions (FAQs) sheets. I also included state-produced data such as school report cards and student demographic data. Additionally, I viewed school websites and social media accounts such as Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram. In some cases, I obtained radio advertisements, promotional materials such as fliers and information from yard signs and billboards. The number of interviews and the number of cases for this study is not random but where I started to notice a "category saturation" and did not yield further insight from additional interviews (Strauss & Corbin, 1998; Yin, 1994, p. 46).

I used a semi-structured interview method with open-ended questions (Hammer & Wildavsky, 1993; Kvale, 1996). Each interview lasted about an hour and took place at a location of the participants' choosing, typically a coffee shop. The main goal of interviews was to ask questions that allowed teachers to share their experiences and provide description of the processes they undertook to recruit students. At times, I asked them to elaborate on the feelings and opinions that they shared when it was apparent that these attitudes shaped their work to recruit or influences their social and professional relationships.

I also wanted to create a space for teachers to tell stories about their work. Narratives are valuable because they highlight the processes that teachers undertake. But they are also valuable because they shed light on how teachers cognitively structure their experiences into coherent stories (Crandall, Klein, & Hoffman, 2006). The stories teachers told provided insight into what stuck out to them in their experiences, what was important enough to remember, and how they drew connections between events. In this sense, stories helped to highlight teachers' sensemaking process because sensemaking is retrospective and occurs as individuals think about what happened and how to restructure it in a coherent and satisfying way (Weick, 1995). Stories do not provide a thorough retelling of everything that happened. Rather, they are made up of selected bits of information and reconnected through narrative form. I was cautious not to draw conclusions about causes and effects, even if teachers claimed that one thing caused another, because they may claim cause and effect to weave a narrative together out of selected events without those events necessarily connecting in reality.

In each interview I drew on an interview protocol with 12 questions (Appendix B). While I did not ask all the questions on the protocol in any given interview, I used the protocol to structure the interviews in a coherent way and to ensure that all interviews roughly covered the same topics. I asked follow-up questions to elicit more detail about certain answers and occasionally skipped or slightly altered questions on the protocol that were not relevant to teachers' experiences or to draw out interesting and relevant experiences.

I transcribed each of the 12 interviews myself to capture the nuance and conversational flow of the interview. Researcher transcription is important because it

provides an opportunity to make observations about the tone, inflections and pauses within the conversations that researchers may not remember if their transcripts are done by someone else. I started the transcriptions the day of the interview itself and usually completed the transcription process within two to three days of the interview. I also transcribed documents such as advertisements, radio ads, and brochures, or, when possible, copied and pasted the text from those documents into a document to be coded. After each interview I created a short memo of my initial thoughts on the interview and a big-picture overview of the data provided by respondents. I then added any relevant information to the memos after transcribing the interviews. After transcribing each interview, I listened to the interview again, comparing it to the transcript to ensure accuracy.

I collected, and in some cases, transcribed documents and other materials from the charter schools that employed respondents. These documents and materials included materials that were explicitly created for student recruitment purposes such as pamphlets, postcards, brochures, radio ads, and yard signs. I also collected documents that were not explicitly used to recruit students such as school websites, overviews of curriculum programs, school calendars, and academic and demographic data such as school report cards. I reviewed these items before and after conducting in-person interviews and created memos linking data from the interviews with the documents where appropriate.

Data Analysis

I undertook an iterative approach to data collection and analysis (Mills, Durepos, & Wiebe, 2010). Instead of collecting all the data before analyzing it, I allowed both

processes to inform one another simultaneously. I began to transcribe, code, and create themes and categories immediately after I transcribed my first interview. This allowed me to observe similarities codes, themes, categories and narratives between interview participants as I completed subsequent interviews.

The data for this project is largely in the form of words – notes, interview transcripts, and institutional, promotional, and policy documents. I engaged in a three-step coding process beginning with open codes, moving to more structured and conceptual thematic axial codes, and, finally, identifying selective codes that captured the core categories identified in my analysis. (Charmaz, 2006; Strauss & Corbin, 1998; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). I also drew on previous theory as a coding strategy, drawing on Weick's (1995) seven properties of sensemaking and models for processes of sensemaking (Jennings & Greenwood, 2003; Weick, 1979). The properties and processes of sensemaking provided a conceptual vocabulary for coding the data and seeing the processes teachers described out in interviews.

During open coding I assigned identifying words or phrases to bits of text within the transcripts. I also employed in vivo coding techniques in this phase (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2014; Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 61). I did not draw on theoretical concepts or categories to establish a coding process in my first round of codes, although I acknowledge that my knowledge of sensemaking, market and other theories likely shaped the way that I coded the data. Because I began coding some interviews before I completed and transcribed others, I engaged in a "constant comparative" method of data analysis (Corbin & Strauss, 1990, p. 9). As I worked through coding each of the interviews I compared the codes that I created to the codes from other interviews. This

allowed me to ask questions about why I selected the codes that I did, allowed me to ensure consistency in the coding process, and to begin to identify ways that participants' experiences and narratives overlapped. Once I coded all the interviews I entered the individual codes into a coding document for further analysis and comparison (Appendix C)

In the second round I categorized my initial open codes into axial categories (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 96). During the axial coding process, the original codes established in the first step of analysis were analyzed, compared, and grouped together to create larger categories throughout the data including interview transcripts and documents. At this point in the process I began to draw more on Weick's process of sensemaking – ecological change, enactment, selection and retention – along with the seven properties of sensemaking to inform the categories that I established for the first round of codes. (Weick, 1979, 1995) For example, one of Weick's seven properties of sensemaking is that it is shaped by "social interaction." During the axial coding process, I used the broader category of "social interaction" to organize my original open codes into conceptual groups. This allowed me to consider the role of social interactions in shaping teachers' work and experiences to recruit students. I also examined the processes that teachers went through from the point that they found out about the need to recruit to the point that they had established a firm discretion toward student recruitment work. While I used Weick's process and seven properties of sensemaking to inform the categories and themes in my data, I did not limit the categories to Weick's process and properties alone.

The last step in the three-step coding process was to undergo selective coding (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p.116). During selective coding I established "core categories"

out of the categories identified in axial coding and began to develop theoretical constructs around the core categories and their relationship to other categories. The core categories that I developed are listed in Figure 7.

Figure 7. Core Categories in the Data

Surprise & Ambiguity	Ethical Quandaries	Staff Divisions/Competition
Information Gathering	Burnout	Enactment
Past Experiences	Institutional Characteristics	Market Pressures

I also identified stories or narratives in my transcripts. While close, single-line coding can reveal theoretical insight, I did not want to limit my analysis to a "microscopic" viewpoint and, where applicable, considered larger chunks of the interviews as well. Teachers' stories revealed insights into what happened, the processes they undertook, and how they reconstructed events and gave them meaning in retrospect (Weick, 1995).

I employed a structured process for analyzing data from physical and electronic sources such as brochures, enrollment forms, websites, and social media sites. School websites and social media accounts are used, in part, for student recruitment (Jabbar, 2015a) and may be the first place that parents go when they begin searching for a school (Buckley & Schneider, 2006; Luke, 2013). Websites and social media accounts are especially challenging to analyze because they are multi-modal – created from pictures, videos, graphics, and texts – interactive, and typically change significantly over time. Therefore, I employed a more robust and systematic approach to gathering and analyzing

online data. Pauwel's (2012) multimodal framework for analyzing websites and web-based documents provided the framework for analysis to gather data systematically. This framework allows researchers to dig beyond the surface of the website to consider website authorship, why certain decisions were made regarding content and design, and how contexts may inform the creation of the website. The framework is made up of six "phases of discovery" which include:

I. First impressions and reactions: Researchers record their initial impressions of the website and what "sticks out" to them.

II. Inventory of salient features and topics: Record the most prominent words, phrases, and images, along with an account what words, phrases or images are most prominent on the website.

III. Analysis of content and formal choices: Focus on messages, words, and images used to build up the website and a consideration of why those choices were made over others.

IV. Embedded viewpoints or voice: Consider of how individual and institutional authors communicate through the website including not only the messages they convey but their choices regarding all texts and images. Ask whose voices are prominent and who might be left out.

V. Information organization and spatial priming strategies: Examine how headings, links, and other visuals are displayed and ordered. Consider the placement of drop-down boxes, links, and information. Ask what messages are conveyed to audiences by the order of information and topics.

> **VI. Contextual analysis:** Consider the larger context for the creation of the website. What features about the school, management organization, geographical considerations, and larger policy context help to explain the website? What is known about individuals and institutions given the most prominent voice on the website? (Pauwels, 2012, p. 252)

Once information was identified on the websites it was coded and used for the comparison to and analysis of data from interview and other sources (Glasser & Strauss, 1979).

Validity

I took steps to resolve issues of validity in this study. First, I offered to provide transcripts, memos and to offer my initial thoughts on the interviews to respondents to provide member checking (Mero-Jaffe, 2011; Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2014). Three respondents asked for the transcript and four asked to see the final dissertation document when I finished. Of the respondents who provided member checking, none asked to revise or redact their previous statements nor did they indicate that they had been misunderstood or misrepresented by the transcripts. I also triangulated the data collection by including interviews with multiple individuals at multiple sites and by collected data from the schools themselves through physical documents including signs, flyers, brochures, and posters and from online sources such as social media and school websites (Lather, 1986). Additionally, I talked through the framework and my major findings with peers and advisors to ensure that I was understanding the data and coming to theoretically sound conclusions.

Limitations of the Study

There are limitations to this study. First, the findings are not generalizable to all charter schools and all teachers. My study focused on one city in Ohio. Charter school policies vary greatly by localities and, while they share many common features, are the product of unique state, city and district policies (See: Haerens & Zott, 2012). This study was also conducted at a unique point in time in relation to education policy and economic shifts. During the 2016-17 school year when this data was collected, unique political changes were underway. The election of Donald Trump to the presidency and the appointment of Betsy DeVoss as Secretary of Education upended the charter school sector (Williams, 2018). The direction of school choice and charter school policy was especially unclear at the outset of Trump's tenure when this data was collected and it is possible that the widespread attention given to charter schools could have significantly shifted both public perception of charter schools and teachers' understanding of what it meant to teach in a charter school.

Generalizability is difficult for two reasons. The small sample size does not yield statistically significant findings that can be generalized. Also, I interviewed teachers who were engaged in a specific process – the work to recruit students to their school. Because participation was voluntary and my recruitment of participants was targeted toward teachers with a unique set of experiences, it would be impossible to say whether these 12 teachers constitute a representative sample of all teachers at all charter schools (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2014). It is possible that the teachers in this study responded to my request for interview because they had a particularly positive or negative experience, or because student recruitment was emphasized at their schools at a uniquely high level.

There are also limitations associated with the use of interviews as a key method of collecting data. Interview questions only capture aspects of the process that participants remember or deem to be important (Maxwell, 1992). Because interviews take place after the fact, participants may simply forget key details or reconstruct stories and observations without including all pertinent information. Another drawback of interviews is that participants' verbal responses to interview questions may say much more about their attitude toward the subject than about how they engage in a process (Gross & Niman, 1975; Wicker, 1969).

The effectiveness of interviews can also be further hampered by participants' "desirability bias" (Kaushal, 2014). Teachers in this study were asked to share details about their student recruitment work and aspects of their school. The process of student recruitment involves setting and meeting goals, working in sometimes difficult situations, and, at times engaging in actions that participants might not feel completely comfortable performing. Therefore, it is possible that participants would only share thoughts and experiences that they want to share to make themselves look good or avoid embarrassment, rather than a more accurate account of their work.

I address these limitations through the steps to ensure validity outlined above. Furthermore, in my findings and discussion sections I am careful not to draw conclusions under the assumption that my findings represent all charter school teachers, charter schools, and address all contextual factors. Rather, as an exploratory and descriptive study, the goal of this research is to highlight themes and to propose theoretical considerations for future research and to illuminate the processes that teachers undergo in student recruitment work (Marshall and Rossman, 1995).

Conclusion

Because student recruitment practices in charter schools are not yet widely-studied and are under-theorized, a qualitative, multiple case study is warranted. Interviews and document analysis provided a wealth of data on teachers experiences in the student recruitment process. My findings are outlined in the next chapter.

Chapter 4: Findings

This chapter presents the findings from the 12 teacher interviews, physical and online document analysis, and the analysis of the schools' academic and demographic metrics. I address the main research question that underlies this study: How do teachers make sense of the pressure to recruit students as part of their job? The sub-questions guiding this study are:

A. How is teachers' sensemaking of competitive pressures mediated by characteristics of their school?

B. How is teachers' sensemaking of competitive pressures mediated by personal characteristics and experiences?

C. How do teachers make sense of unanticipated outcomes associated with market-oriented policies?

D. How do teachers' sensemaking activities and the contextual factors that mediate them shape their discretion toward student recruitment work?

This study considers the ways that student recruitment work supports charter school policy implementation. A key goal of charter school policies is to introduce market pressures via competition for students, into the educational system. Policy makers assume that competitive pressures will change the core educational practices and offerings at schools, as school personnel attempt to attract students to their school. Therefore, the ways that teachers respond to competitive pressures warrant consideration and are laid out in this chapter.

Figure 8. Overview of Findings

Research Question	*Overview of Findings*
RQ1: How do teachers make sense of the pressure to recruit students as part of their job?	• Gathering information from school leaders, gossip between teachers, and observation • Taking actions that lead to a clearer understanding of student recruitment work • Establishing an "insider" or "outsider" identity related to recruitment work
RQ2: How is teachers' sensemaking of competitive pressures mediated by characteristics of their school?	• Level of competitive pressures on teachers to recruit students • Strategically recruiting or "counseling out" students to maintain the school mission • State-produced academic metrics had little bearing on sensemaking • Characteristics of school leadership
RQ3: How is teachers' sensemaking of competitive pressures mediated by personal characteristics and experiences?	• Employment background and past teaching experiences inform sensemaking • Influence of race – Awareness of own race related to student recruitment • Gender – Female teachers experience high levels of harassment while recruiting
RQ4: How do teachers make sense of unanticipated outcomes associated with market-oriented policies?	• Burnout • Extra-role tasks • Ethical quandaries related to "creaming" and "cropping" students

RQ5: How do teachers' sensemaking activities and the contextual factors that mediate them shape their discretion toward student recruitment work?	• Discretion types:
	  ○ Active Participation
	  ○ Reluctant Participation
	  ○ Indifferent/Infrequent Participation
	  ○ Active Resistance

This chapter proceeds in five parts, addressing each of the research questions. First, I consider the ways that teachers experienced ambiguity and surprise in response to the need to recruit students. Ambiguity and surprise trigger sensemaking in individuals who attempt to come to new understandings of their roles, or, to a "new normal" (Weick,

1995). I then consider the ways that teachers engaged in sensemaking as a response to surprise and ambiguity. Second, I consider how school characteristics mediate teachers' sensemaking of student recruitment. Third, I consider how teachers' backgrounds and experiences mediated their sensemaking. Fourth, I address how student recruitment led to unintended outcomes in the form of teacher burnout and ethical issues and how those outcomes shaped teachers' sensemaking. Finally, I provide a typology of teacher discretion toward student recruitment work.

Ecological Change: Finding Out About the Need to Recruit

Sensemaking occurs when individuals within an organization encounter surprise and ambiguity and must make a new account of their role in the organization to move forward (Maitlis, 2005; Maitlis & Christianson, 2014; Weick, Sutcliffe, & Obstfeld, 2005). All 12 participants indicated that they were surprised when they found out that they would be engaging in recruitment work. Teachers found out about the need to recruit through multiple sources and at multiple times – sometimes during their employment interview and sometimes well after. Ten of the twelve teachers in this study could identify a specific point in time when they found out about the need to recruit.

Teachers' responses to the news that they needed to recruit were mixed. Two of the teachers were taken aback by the additional work that they were required to perform. Naomi reflected on finding out about the need to recruit, saying "I never knew. . . It was the weirdest thing for me. I should have known, like, there are these charter schools. Someone is going out and telling people about these charter schools but I never thought that is something that teachers would be doing." Rita was also surprised and skeptical of

the request that she participate in recruitment work because she did not feel like her staff had the training to recruit well or a full understanding of why there were being asked to engage in student recruitment work. She explained, "I will say it was not in my offer letter that I was going to have to do that kind of thing. And I just feel like if they want us to do it that's fine, make us aware, and…. help us understand what you want us to do exactly."

Four of the teachers were surprised to learn about the need to recruit students but saw it as a fair request, considering the unique needs of charter schools to recruit students. Devon, for example, held a preconceived notion of charter schools that led him to believe that he would work longer hours than average under unpredictable conditions. Although he was surprised by the need to recruit students, he was not surprised that he was asked to take on an additional, non-traditional role. He explained, "They mentioned recruiting to me during my interview and asked if that is something I'd be willing to do.... You're always gonna end up doing things…'other duties as assigned.' You know, that's gonna happen. You're gonna end up filling extra roles."

Four of the teachers responded positively to the news that they would need to do recruitment work. For example, Emily described finding out that she would need to recruit students, saying

> my principal brought it up to me that "Hey, in a month we're having this carnival and we use it to recruit children and if you'd come in and help you meet some of your students and you come in and help and we'd really appreciate it. And you'd get to interact with the teachers and stuff." And I was like "OK, Cool, what do you need me to do?"

Tara and Thomas, whose schools had a low need to recruit, indicated that they were surprised by the need to recruit but never felt pressure to recruit from their school

leaders. When asked if she was told about recruiting when she took her job, she responded, “No, I was not aware that that would be something that would be asked of me.” Tara explained that she gathered that there was a need to recruit but she was not asked to do it until later in her career.

Student Recruitment Work and Ambiguity

In addition to feeling surprised about the need to recruit, teachers also dealt with ambiguity about how to respond to the market pressures that were placed on them. Ambiguity is a key driver of the sensemaking process because it motivates individuals in organizations to

> clarify what is going on by extracting and interpreting cues from their environment, using these as the basis for a plausible account that provides order and “makes sense” of what has occurred, and through which they continue to enact the environment” (Maitlis & Christenson, 2013, p. 58; See also: Maitlis, 2005; Weick, 1995).

Individuals in ambiguous situations strive to come back to a more plausible account of their role in the organization and how they fit in.

The ambiguity that teachers experienced related to student recruitment work generally fell into one of two categories: strategy ambiguity and employment ambiguity. All 12 teachers in this study experienced strategy ambiguity, or ambiguity around what they should do in response to market demands to recruit students. Ten of the teachers also experienced ambiguity about the long-term viability of their school and their jobs if they did not meet enrollment needs. They were responding to a specific component of charter school and school choice policies, namely, that schools that cannot maintain student

enrollment through attracting enough students, will shut down or be forced to lay off staff (NCLB, 2002).

Strategy ambiguity. Teachers experienced ambiguity around the actions they should take in response to the need to recruit students. The teachers in this study did not expect to need to recruit students when they took their jobs and, by and large, their training was in educational skills such as pedagogy and student discipline. Thus, when they were asked to engage in student recruitment work, they did not have a good sense of how to move forward.

A major source of ambiguity around strategies stemmed from a lack of clear direction and consistency from school leaders. Beth, from Taft Academy, described the ambiguity surrounding her work to recruit students. She felt like as soon as she had a sense of what to expect and how to get all her work done, something changed. She explained

> I'm going to give you a metaphor. It's like being in a batting cage where you're practicing hitting a basic softball and then just having things go, "Curve, Curve, Curve," and you have to constantly dodge them [distractions from recruitment demands]. And, so, you feel like a teacher, as a teacher, you get in your groove, you get things planned, and you get your classroom settled and there's just curveballs and chaos.

Beth attributed the lack of predictability in her job, especially related to student recruitment work, to poor planning on the part of her school leadership. When asked about the strategies that the school leaders provided teachers to engage in student recruitment, she explained, "Strategy is too strong of a word. That would imply that there was something that stretched across the entire like guiding principles in this."

Mary also experienced a lack of strategy from her leadership related to student recruitment that increased her sense of ambiguity around what she should be doing. She described the situation she found herself in during her first year at Lawrence Prep Academy saying "there was no coherent anything. We showed up for training in July and it was kind of like, 'OK, guys build your management system, build your curriculum.'" She claimed that her leadership provided no direction on student recruitment, other than sending teachers door-to-door to pass out fliers, explaining

> half of our day in the summer was just out knocking on doors. It was incredibly ineffective …there was no great system that we were using. It was just like we had maps and we'd go out and just walk up and down and canvass, passing out informational fliers, wearing "LPA" shirts. That was basically all the order there was to it.

Another source of strategic ambiguity was managing time and resources. Mary experienced ambiguity related to how she should manage her time when she had to recruit along with her other tasks. She reflected on starting recruitment work, saying, "I remember feeling the pressure of not having enough time. . . I don't even know if anyone was managing it. I remember feeling like this isn't really well organized."

Sara and Devon, who both worked for Butler Prep Academy experienced ambiguity about recruitment work because their school tasked them both with significant roles related to student recruitment. They differed over how to respond to market pressures which led to an ongoing tension between them. They primarily experienced ambiguity in terms of how to move forward in recruiting work when their leadership provided very little direction and when they were unable to settle on a course of action together. Sara explained that

> I was fighting with Devon about the dumbest things. I was like, I have my ways, you have your ways. I pull in more kids than you are but I have more experience

> than you do. And you're going macro and I'm building relationships and, its different. But me having to navigate around trying to listen to what he wanted me to do and being like, Steve [School leader at Butler Academy], this isn't going to work.

Megan did not experience a high level of market pressure because her school, Meyer Early College, had established a reputation in the community for being a high-quality school. She experienced ambiguity related to how to recruit students when the school already had a wait list. She recognized that there was a tension between needing to recruit students to maintain fiscal sustainability and needing to keep their class sizes small to keep their reputation as a high-quality school. Her school leadership had not addressed this problem which confused Megan and other teachers. She explained, "we're like, 'what do we do?' Like, there's too many people that want to come and then our class sizes need to be kept small."

The direction of the school leadership also created ambiguity between teachers who disagreed about how to best approach the recruitment work. Beth was unsure of how to respond to the need to recruit because there was so much disagreement between the teachers on her staff. When asked about her colleagues' response to leadership strategies related to student recruitment, she explained, "I'm not sure about strategies, but I know that some people believe very much in the mission of the school, the school, and the people who ran the school. And that other people definitely do not."

Employment ambiguity. Teachers in this study also experienced ambiguity around whether they would have a job if their schools did not reach certain enrollment numbers. For example, Naomi, from Lawrence Prep Academy, described the constant worry she felt over the security of her position, explaining "if they [her school] don't hit a

certain number. . .. they would have to lay some teachers off. Because, you know, they wouldn't have enough money to support all the teachers that they would have. So, they would have to make layoffs, combine some classes, do all sorts of things."

Beth's school leadership at Taft Academy wanted to grow the school to a specific number of students because they believed that they would achieve financial sustainability at that number. Many of the teachers knew of this goal but did not know if they would reach it or not. She recounted her conversations with other teachers, explaining "fear would probably be the dominate response. 'What if we don't make it there? Will I still have a job, how could this affect me personally or my family personally if we don't reach this particular goal?'" Rita, from Roosevelt Recovery Academy, had a similar experience. Her school was under a high level of pressure from their for-profit management company to raise their student enrollment. She described her building as "the black sheep of our schools because we have the fewest students" and explained "we're constantly wondering if we're going to get shut down."

Sara, from Butler Prep Academy, was not worried about her job security because she was one of the few teachers that had been at her school since its inception and she had a very close working relationship with the school leader. She experienced ambiguity in terms of how to explain to other, less-established teachers how important it was to work at student recruitment because she did fear that they may lose their jobs. On one hand, she wanted to relay the importance of every staff member engaging in student recruitment work to maintain a sustainable enrollment. On the other hand, she knew that if she was too vocal about the need to recruit and the possible negative consequences of

under-enrollment, she would demoralize newer teachers or scare them away from the school. She explained

> the urgency [for newer teachers to work on student recruitment] is not [there]. . .. they've never watched a school just shut down because of numbers. And yet I'm very well-aware that that is a reality. But to advertise a place of employment in that manner, like, it's that fragile, isn't a good way to retain teachers. So, it's kind of like, help but you don't have to see the whole truth here because we're gonna handle it.

Teachers who worked at the same schools in this study did not necessarily experience the same type and levels of ambiguity around their job security. For example, Emily and Carol, from City STEM Academy, experienced ambiguity around their jobs in different ways. Emily felt no sense that her job was in trouble while Carol believed that some teachers may lose their jobs, or, at least were under threat of termination. Emily, in her first year of teaching, had fewer interactions directly with the principal around student recruitment. Carol had been at City STEM for three years and had more access to the principal. She described an interaction between the principal and sponsors that she witnessed in a meeting on recruitment, saying,

> our sponsor came and told us this is where you are in terms of enrollment. This is where we need to be or we'll have to change some things around. It was that. Instead of being K-7 it would be K-5…. If we can't get enrollment why not just knock it down to K-5?"

Carol also was more in tune with the staffing changes at the school than Emily. Each teacher got an aide in their class at City STEM if they reached 29 students. Carol, however, observed that many of the aids at the school had to cut hours because there were not enough students to support their salaries. She explained, "A lot of our aids had to cut hours because we didn't have enough students and it didn't make sense for them to be there. So, we had to cut hours and then they took shifts for when they would be there."

Carol saw the cut to aid's hours as a sort of canary in a coalmine – a possible indication that more cuts would be coming that could eventually affect the teaching staff. This led her to experience ambiguity around whether she would keep her job while Emily's positivity and possible naivete led her to feel confident about her job.

How do Teachers Make Sense of the Pressure to Recruit Students as Part of Their Job?

All 12 teachers in this study acknowledged that their schools faced pressures to enroll students, although there was great variation in the amount of pressures faced by each school. Because of these pressures, teachers were asked to engage in activities related to student recruitment to boost or maintain enrollment. These initial and subsequent requests sparked surprise and feelings of ambiguity in teachers. This section considers teachers' sensemaking responses to the need to recruit students to their schools and answers the main research question: How do teachers make sense of the pressure to recruit students as part of their job?

Information Gathering

A key aspect of teachers' sensemaking of the demands to recruit students involved gathering information related to market pressures and student recruitment. Sensemaking involves seeking out information as a means of resolving ambiguity (Rudolph, et al., 2009; Weick, 2005, 1969). The ways that teachers in this study sought information was rarely as simple as asking direct questions to their school leaders, although, at points, that did happen. Information gathering is, instead, a multifaceted and messy process. Balogun and Johnson (2005) explain that "individuals engage in gossip

and negotiations, exchange stories, rumours and past experiences, seek information, and take note of physical representations, or non-verbal signs and signals, like behaviours and actions, to infer and give meaning" (p. 1576). At other points, teachers were provided information, typically from school leaders whose goal was to get the teacher to perform work related to student recruitment. This is in line with the literature on sensegiving which suggests that some members of organizations try to shape or guide the sensemaking of others, typically through sharing information and making requests (Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991). However, teachers were not simply passive recipients of information from school leaders. Weick (1995) suggests that individuals engage in a "selection" process in which they consciously or unconsciously acknowledge and remember certain information or "cues" and disregard others. Therefore, even when teachers in this study were provided direct information, instructions, or demands from their school leaders, they still played a part in determining which information they would select and which information they would disregard.

Teachers typically first found out about the need to recruit from a one-time conversation with their school leader who either told them about the work in their interview or orientation or later when the need to engage in recruitment work arose. However, by the time I interviewed them, teachers had been recruiting students for months or years and had developed deeply complex and nuanced views of student recruiting based on their experience and the multitude of information they had received over time.

Teachers drew on multiple sources of information to come to a better understanding of the need to recruit students to their school and how to engage in it.

These information sources included information from school leaders, gossip and speculation between teachers at their school, information from teachers at other schools, and "gap-filling." In short, gap-filling refers teachers' attention to the needs of the school that are not specifically assigned to them but need to be done anyway. Teachers often learned about the need to recruit because they saw needs, or "gaps," in the work that were not being met. These gaps were instructive to teachers in the sense that they provided information about where work was needed and what actions they should take. They also provided avenues through which teachers became engaged in student recruitment work.

Information from leaders. The primary source of information on the need to recruit came from school leaders. While teachers could typically remember the first time they learned about the need to recruit, they continued to gather information on the need to recruit in an ongoing manner throughout their careers. Teachers differed in terms of how much information they received from their school leadership. Sara and Devon from Butler Academy were both intimately involved with their principals in recruitment work. Sara held an ongoing dialogue with the school leader, Steve. She explained, "Steve relies on me for that stuff [managing recruitment work]. He calls me his bull dog. I'm really serious about it. I'm like 'I got six!' . . . . He tells me about our recruiting numbers. We'll text, like 'What's the number?' 'I'm about to close 3' and 'I have 7.'" Sara and Devon also sat in on meetings related to student enrollment. Sara described these meetings, saying

> We have quarterly fiscal overviews and transparency is something that we try to value so we can see how much is being spent on instruction and where the Title I funds are going or coming from, how many students are enrolled, are we going to have to back data and not get credit for kids.

Sara and Devon's school leader emphasized information related to enrollment and the school budget. This influenced their recruitment goals. Sara explained, "There are so many things involved in the budget but the number [of students to enroll] itself you know, we shoot for it to be about 15 over that or 20 just because of mobility." Devon and Sara both shared that their school leader also communicated to the entire staff regularly and was adamant that all staff be involved. Devon explained that

> something that our principal reminded them [the staff], specifically, is that recruiting is something that you are expected to be helping with. At some point in the summer you will be contacted and you are expected to be helping to do it. . . .the principal is good about reminding us that recruiting is important – especially when we have recruiting events.

Mary also heard from her school leadership about the need to recruit students on a consistent basis. She explained that "The numbers were constantly being discussed. There were targets by the week. [A leader at their Management Organization] created this new enrollment tracker that had all these bells and whistles."

Teachers also learned about the need to recruit when they observed the pressure on their school leader to increase enrollment. The leader at Rita's and Daniel's school, Roosevelt Recovery Academy was pressured by their for-profit management company to raise enrollment. This forced the leader to bring teachers in to the recruitment work to ensure their numbers were satisfactory to their management company. The leader told the staff about the numbers and the need for everyone to participate in recruitment work but the staff could also see the mental and emotional effect that student enrollment had on him. Rita explained,

> Our director started in March and they've been on him about enrollment. Like, every single week they make him call in and talk about our enrollment. How many people have we talked to, how many prospects do we have, how many times have we gone that week? Like, he has to report this every single week. We

> also have these goals that we're supposed to hit every month, and we haven't hit them all. We've done well but we haven't hit them all ….I mean, it's really clear he's getting a lot of pressure about it. And it's a lot of like, "What aren't we doing right?" And it makes him feel like he's got to scramble and make us do more recruitment to get the numbers.

Other teachers found out about the need to recruit from their school leaders as a specific strategy to rally the teachers to work to meet enrollment goals. One strategy was for the leader to share specific recruitment needs with the staff and to let them know that there would be negative consequences for the school if the numbers were not met. Daniel, from Roosevelt Recovery Academy, explained his leaders' communications with the staff at his school saying, "They know the exact number they need to maintain finances. We know that number, we're aware of it." Beth also knew that her school was trying to grow. Talking about the ongoing effort to increase the school's size to maintain financial viability, she said

> The administrators would talk to the teachers about those matters. Because they were explaining why they were seeking to open new schools. …. I would imagine at some point we all knew that there was that threshold [number of students] that we were trying to hit and that's why they were looking for new ways to open new schools to make it sustainable.

Other teachers were less aware of the need to recruit and did not have significant or sustained communications with their school leaders on the topic. Rather, they intermittently received requests to help in recruiting as needs arose. Emily found out about the need to recruit when her principal called her shortly after her hire date, explaining, "my principal brought it up to me that 'hey, in a month we're having this carnival and we use it to recruit children and if you'd come in and help you meet some of your students and you come in and help and we'd really appreciate it.'" Naomi, from Lawrence Prep Academy, had a similar experience to Emily, explaining that

> My first experience with recruitment with them was I hadn't even started working at the school yet, I had just moved back to the city and just was getting emails about the upcoming school year from the principal and all of that and was just like, "Hey, you want to come out with this teacher and do some recruiting for the school?"

Teachers also found out about the need to recruit through announcements or updates from their school leadership. Thomas' school, Harding Hills Academy, had a low need to recruit students but he received intermittent updates, mostly around the need to ensure that they retained the students they already had. He explained, "we get a lot through our email… figuring out who's got reenrollment packets. So, the office staff are kind of keeping track of our numbers and we kind of get updates on that really throughout the whole school year, it's an ongoing process."

Naomi often found about recruitment needs when her school leaders began requesting assistance from teachers in recruitment work. She said, "they don't pressure you, per se, intentionally. Or, it doesn't come off as if its pressure. But they will keep asking until someone complies so, you know, someone will eventually say OK." Megan, from Meyer Early College, also found out about the need to recruit through leaders' requests for assistance. When she first started working at her school she did not participate in recruitment work but as she gained more experience and familiarity with the school, her leadership called on her to assist recruitment efforts. She said, "kind of as I've developed my leadership skills at both schools that I've been to and teaching at for 2 years. They kind of asked me to speak out like at parent night and family meetings to talk about my experience."

Megan's school typically had a waitlist or needed to recruit a very small number of students to meet their enrollment goals. She explained that "we do kind of talk about

enrollment in December and it [enrollment] opens in January and our secretary talks about it and our principal mentions the meetings and then it's over because it closes so quickly." Emily's school, City STEM, also had a low need to recruit. They typically relied on teachers going door-to-door, an annual carnival to promote the school, and radio ads. The school leaders did not bring up recruitment until they needed teachers to volunteer for the work or bring teachers into the creative process. She explained,

> our principal shares at the end of the year how many students that we have for next year and then we usually have that carnival which I told you about before. . . . [school leaders] brought it up at the staff meeting like "We're going to do a radio commercial, does anybody have ideas for that? Or, we're going to do a flier. Does anyone want to help design that?

Gossip and speculation. Teachers also gathered or were given information from their teacher colleagues, often shared through informal conversations. While some of this information was given for the purposes of explaining recruitment procedures much of it occurred through informal methods, and often through the form of complaining or gossiping with one another.

Beth described conversations with other teachers about the possibility that Taft Academy would close, saying "fear would probably be the dominate response. 'What if we don't make it there? Will I still have a job, how could this affect me personally or my family personally if we don't reach this particular goal?" Rita likewise explained conversations at her school, saying, "we're like the black sheep of our schools because we have the fewest students. So, like we're constantly wondering if we're going to get shut down."

At Butler Prep Academy many of the teachers felt divided over the perception that some teachers were favored over others to take on student recruitment work. Devon

received a small stipend for work he had completed to recruit students over the summer. Some of the other teachers found out about this and began talking behind his back. He explained,

> Some of them [other teachers] found out I was being paid to do it and they were like 'well I'm not being paid to do it' even though that was actually an expectation for them. Like, they're being paid through the summer there actually is an expectation that you help with the recruiting."

Similarly, Beth relayed that student recruitment was a frequent topic of conversation and gossip between teachers at her school. There was a strong split between the teachers who believed everyone should be more invested in recruitment work and others who believed they were asked to do too much work. She explained,

> The people who wanted to have everybody as dedicated as they were would sometimes lecture the others. Like… "Why weren't you at this recruiting session?" You know, there would be confrontations like that like, "This is your duty you need to do this," and the other people were just like, "I can't there's just too much going on." So that did cause a bit of a strain.

Teacher-led recruitment activities. Another way that teachers gained information on the need to recruit was through teacher-led recruitment initiatives. Three teachers, Devon and Sara from Butler Prep, and Mary from Lawrence Prep were tasked to lead various aspects of their school's recruitment efforts. Devon planned several events and typically included other teachers as volunteers. He saw this as a valuable way to get teachers acclimated to the school and to the idea of recruiting, saying "in August that's when we started the radio ads, that's when we put up the yard signs…that's when I started to get other teachers involved because we came back two weeks before the students did so that's when I was able to get a lot of that stuff going." He also explained, "I went to all the festivals [to recruit] . . . . I did have two people that were with me but

that was because that was during staff training had already started…we had been at school that day and I asked for volunteers." He also set up small classes at a local community organization to recruit students to his school and asked other teachers to help him there. Sara who also worked at Butler Prep had a similar strategy to getting other teachers involved in recruiting work and introducing them to the idea of recruiting. She included other teachers in tasks such as canvassing neighborhoods and passing out literature and making calls to prospective students. She especially tried to convey the importance of hitting pre-set enrollment targets, saying

> Teachers start two to three weeks before the students do. And during that period of time…even last year when I wasn't running point, I was like, OK, here are maps, here are, you know cross out the bad numbers, make phone calls. Little tasks that aren't as intimate, depending on the person. Because when we have turnover like that…You know, our doors won't open. But you don't say that. Like, 150 150 150!

Mary also introduced teachers to the concept of recruiting by incorporating them into her work by having them participate in neighborhood canvassing and calling families. She explained,

> I would organize these staff recruitment days where everyone was required to come and we would all go out for like three hours and it took a ton of time because I would do a robo [call] and anyone who called us back and anybody, like they went into the maps and everybody got like 30 houses to go to, and it took a lot of time to prepare for them.

Other teachers were not in charge of recruiting events but learned about recruiting from teachers who were in charge. Naomi learned a lot about student recruitment at her school through another teacher who was assigned as a partner for her to canvass neighborhoods to pass out fliers. She explained,

> I was like brand-spanking new to the first school and just ended up being out with the teacher who was I think returning for his second year. . . . And was kind of

> just like going off of what he said, going "Yea, that's what we're going to do for you, make sure your child grows and does all this stuff" I was totally unprepared."

Despite feeling unprepared, Naomi learned a lot by observing her colleague "sell" the school.

Information from teachers at other schools. Devon from Butler Prep Academy viewed teachers at other schools as a good source of information, particularly regarding student recruitment strategies. Devon attended an annual charter school fair for schools in his neighborhood and the surrounding neighborhoods, explaining how he leveraged his relationships with teachers and leaders from other schools to learn how to better recruit for Butler Prep. He said,

> There's going to be four charters there that are charter middle schools. I'm gonna talk to them and I'm gonna say "nice to meet you, I'm so and so. Where are you gonna be this summer? Like, what events do I not know about that are going on?" That's how I found out about things I don't know about and I was able to get us booths there so we could show up and go. So, I ask "what are you doing? What's been successful for you?" Because I can get online, I can go get a book but these people are recruiting, in my neighborhood, the students that I'm trying to recruit. So, if I can find out what is working with them it will probably work for us.

"Gap Filling." A final way that teachers gathered information on the need to recruit was through "gap-filling." Often teachers observed a need, or "gap," that was going unmet related to student recruitment. These needs may or may not have been known throughout the school, by the school leadership, or by other teachers. They also may or may not have been part of teachers' official roles and responsibilities at the school. Teachers simply acted when they believed they needed to ensure that their school was successful. "Gap-filling" actions are important because they helped teachers to make sense of their situations by helping them decide how and when to act. Often, saw their

actions as part of the larger work of keeping the school going and believed that if they did not act, no one would.

Emily, from City STEM, understood that many of the teachers on her staff worked above and beyond the hours assigned to them in their contracts. She acknowledged the difficulty of working multiple nights and most weekends but said,

> but it's just what you have to do as a teacher at a charter school. You have to go above and beyond. You have to get it done and your to-do list will never be done but you have to pick and choose what you can get done that day and do what it takes to help the children succeed and help parents succeed and increase the value of the community. So, our teachers understand that and they're not negative about recruiting, they're excited.

Megan, from Meyer Early College, also acknowledged that teachers at her school often took on extra tasks to make sure the school ran well. She explained, "we're all pretty young and pretty close to each other so it doesn't really even bother us, I don't think. . . for us it's like that, this is part of our job. Like if it needs to get done, it's part of it."

Emily and Megan were from schools that had a low need to recruit and reported the staff was generally amenable to recruitment work. Beth's school, Taft Academy, had a harder time recruiting students. She noticed the "gap-filling" of other teachers but felt like they worked toward burnout and that their willingness to spread themselves too thin ultimately harmed the rest of the teaching staff by causing division between them. She explained, "There would just be people who would be very willing to stretch themselves thinner and thinner and thinner in the name of the… greater good. There tended to be a difference between people who had spouses and children at home who couldn't devote their entire evening every evening to recruiting students."

Enactment

Another key sensemaking activity that all teachers in this study engaged in is enactment. Weick (1995), described enactment as the process through which individuals come to a better understanding of their situation and resolve ambiguity by taking action. This is opposed to more typical conceptualizations of the ways that individuals come to understand new situations by sitting down and thinking until they reach a satisfying conclusion. Weick (1983) described an example of the "enacted" environment in a study of managers where "order is present, not because extended prior analysis revealed it, but because the manager anticipated sufficient order that she waded into the situation, imposed order among events, and then 'discovered' what she had imposed" (p. 228).

The teachers in this study engaged in dozens of different actions and strategies related to student recruitment. Figure 9 (p. 111) provides a comprehensive list of actions and strategies and which teachers participated in them. The most common ways that teachers' schools engaged in student recruitment work were through neighborhood canvassing, school websites and social media, school tours, open houses, recruitment sessions, and face-to-face, informal conversations with students and families. As teachers engaged in these activities or viewed others engaging in them, they enacted more tangible and legible environments. This, in turn contributed to their willingness or unwillingness to engage in student recruitment.

Enactment does not simply refer to the actions that individuals take. Rather, enactment refers to the actions that individuals take along with their understanding and experience of the outcomes of those actions (Weick, 1995). The process of teachers' enactment occurred in two broad stages. First, teachers took actions associated with

student recruitment work, either because they saw the need or were asked by school leaders or other teachers to act. Second, teachers discovered a new, often less ambiguous, reality as the result of their actions. When teachers took actions their understandings of student recruitment work developed and became clearer.

Teachers' two-part process of enactment of student recruitment work led to five broad changes in their perceptions of the work, typically clarifying their views of student recruitment work, their roles in the work, and their discretion toward the work. My analysis revealed several broad ways that enactment either resolved or reinforced ambiguity that teachers felt about both recruitment strategies and their employment

First, enactment of student recruitment work led several teachers to feel like their strategies were not working and left them feeling frustrated or burned out. Second, and conversely, other teachers developed a stronger belief that their strategies were paying off and led them to feel supportive of recruitment work. Third, teachers developed the belief that student recruitment was not well organized and their strategies were not implemented well. As teachers' actions led to clarity in these areas, their trust or mistrust for their school leaders and their schools' student recruitment strategies were altered or reinforced. Fourth, enactment led teachers to question their personal safety which contributed to many teachers' skepticism of their schools' student recruitment strategies. Fifth, as teachers acted to recruit students they gained clarity about how student recruitment work fit into the rest of their work to educate students. I refer to this as "managing encroachment," as student recruitment work pressed in on other educational tasks and teachers had to negotiate how they would fit their new work into their schedule.

Figure 9. Strategies to Recruit Students

	Butler Prep Academy		City STEM Academy		Harding Hills Academy	Meyer Early College		Lawrence Prep Academy		Roosevelt Recovery School		Taft Academy
Strategies	**Devon**	**Sara**	**Carol**	**Emily**	**Thomas**	**Megan**	**Tara**	**Mary**	**Naomi**	**Daniel**	**Rita**	**Beth**
Door-to-Door			X	X				X	X	X	X	
School Tours	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X
Yard Signs	X							X				X
Fliers	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Billboards	X					X	X					
Feeder Schools (in-district)												
Feeder Schools (Out-of-dist)	X											
Open House	X	X	X	X		X		X	X	X	X	X
Altering Teacher Strategies					X							
Radio Advertisements	X											
Family/Social Networks						X		X				
Out-of-School Classes	X											
School Website	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Social Media												
Twitter	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Facebook	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Instagram	X	X				X	X	X	X			
Other	X	X										
Adding Special Classes	X	X										
Extra-Curricular Activities	X				X	X	X					
Branding Strategies	X		X									
Changing/Revising Mission	X	X	X									
Physical Changes to School	X	X	X									
"Word of Mouth"	X	X				X	X	X				
Management Org. Advertising												
Teacher-led recruitment	X	X						X			X	
High-level strategizing	X	X						X			X	
Outside Recruitment Events	X											X
Re-recruiting former students		X								X	X	
Business Canvassing			X	X								
Counseling Out Problem Stud.	X	X										
Incentives for recruiting			X	X								
Bonus for recruiting											X	
Cold-Calls								X			X	
Robo-Calls								X			X	
Personal Relationship		X								X		

Enactment and the perception that student recruitment strategies were futile. Many of the teachers took actions related to student recruitment that led them to believe that recruitment work was futile. Rita, Beth, and Mary all engaged in various activities related to student recruitment, typically at the requests of the school leaders. They all started with a positive attitude toward student recruitment work. Mary came to her school and initially was interested in doing student recruitment work. She spent two years at a school in another state where she was a member of Teach for America. This experience helped her to develop an entrepreneurial attitude toward student recruitment and she was confident that she could do well in her new charter school position. She explained, "the whole prospect of going out into the neighborhood and literally finding your students was exciting to me. And I knew that I was going to be a part of it, like, sometimes half of our day in the summer was just out knocking on doors." However, after she acted to work on recruitment she changed her mind about student recruitment. She said,

> It was incredibly ineffective . . . I would have a full day of doing follow-up home visits and not a single one of them would be there or they would change their mind. And then let's say you had 50 kids signed up by the end of June only 20 of those 50 would make it to the first day of school because they'd move, forget their birth certificate, or they'd change their mind or the bus schedule actually comes out and its inconvenient, or the kid decides "I'd just rather go to my neighborhood school because my friends are there."

Mary expected that she would continue to be successful as she had been at her previous school. But once she attempted to engage in recruitment work, she developed a less positive attitude about it. She also led the teachers in student recruitment efforts after her first year at the school. Her experience in leading other teachers in recruitment work was similarly disappointing. She recalled what she perceived to be the futility of her efforts, saying

> people would go out, you know, if, let's say I put a solid 20 hours into preparing one of those days and then you've got 24 people times 3 hours so like 75 man-hours that day. So, 100 hours, right, total. Plus, another 20 for all the follow-up calls and another 10 for other things. So, [about] 130 hours invested into this one day, basically. Setting it up, implementing it and then the follow-up afterwards. And we'd get 5 ids [of students who showed interest] and we'd be happy with that… there's gotta be another way.

Rita, from Roosevelt Recovery Academy, also felt that her efforts to recruit students were futile. She was positive about student recruitment until she began to canvass her school's neighborhood to hang literature on doors. She explained that the teachers would walk around and "hang up the door hangers and go into general neighborhoods around here and put up, you know, the signs that say what our school is all about. Those get removed almost immediately, it kind of feels like a waste of money."

Carol did not believe that student recruitment work was completely futile but did grow increasingly frustrated as she gained more experience with recruiting. For Carol's first two years she did not have to take on much student recruitment work and typically only recruited students during the summer. However, City STEM was not as successful in recruiting students over the latest summer and Carol, who I interviewed three months into the school year, was starting to believe that her efforts were a waste of time. She explained, "Originally during the summertime, I was all for it. And I was really excited about it. But as the year started to go on it got to be a little too much. Just because I was trying to do my job and trying to recruit so much." Carol was asked, for the first time in her career, to carry her student recruitment work into the school year. The work she took on to try to teach and recruit at the same time enacted a new reality for her where she grew increasingly frustrated with student recruitment work and started to view her school's efforts, and her place in them, in a different light.

Enactment and the perception that student recruitment strategies are effective. Devon, Sara, and Emily enacted student recruitment work and developed a firmer sense that their efforts were effective and worthwhile. There was a strong connection between these teachers' positivity related to student recruitment and the perception that their efforts to recruit students paid off.

Devon agreed to take on a teacher-leadership role in student recruitment efforts when he took his job at Butler Prep Academy. He attributed the invitation to lead recruitment to his previous experience as a recruiter for the college that he attended for his undergraduate degree. Still, he was surprised to be taking on the student recruitment work and felt a high level of ambiguity when he started, especially related to the strategic plan for recruitment at the school. He did not believe that the strategic plan for recruitment, partially developed by Sara who also participated in this study, was adequate and undertook to make it more systematic and "formalized."

Devon explained the actions he took to develop a more comprehensive strategic plan saying,

> I set up some partnerships and was active in creating different programs, active in creating recruiting opportunities rather than the usual kind of summer events that schools go to. . . . I wanted to build relationships with these community programs. I wanted to build relationships with these schools.

Once he put his plan in place, Devon believed that he could be successful as a recruiter. He was previously unsure if his strategies would work but explained,

> Because of that [his action to put a strategic plan in place] we got our word out a lot bigger than previous years. When I started the enrollment was about 120 and now it's over 160. So, I was able to recruit 60-70 students. It was 120 and then people graduated and now it is 160 so…We still have students coming in based on work I did this summer.

Sara had different ideas about what strategies would be most successful but, like Devon, she initially was excited to recruit but skeptical of her ability to effectively enroll the number of students they needed. Sara initially saw that their recruiting efforts were focused on large-scale strategies to engage many families. They undertook strategies such as yard signs, radio ads, and bill boards. She undertook a more personal approach to build relationships with families so that they would stay at the school. Her actions led to what she perceived as positive results and built her confidence in the "micro" approach she developed. Numerically, her student recruitment efforts paid off. She explained her actions, saying

> it went from a macro-style to a, more like, personal and I got numbers way better than the other guy [Devon] did. . .. So, I came in with my skills two weeks before and recruited 30 kids and the majority of the student body is from me. . . . I went back through those student files and contacted them. And that relationship factor, that rapport, that you know a small school setting provided, and the fact that they were in situations that were not easy meant that a lot of kids were dealing with mental issues like hard-core schizophrenia…all that kind of stuff. So, I offer them our remote program and a lot of those kids, I got like 25 kids back and started that program back again.

Emily also enacted student recruitment work which led her to feel more positive about her role in recruitment at City STEM Academy. Unlike Sara and Devon, Emily did not think about the number of students that she recruited. Instead, she measured the success of her school's strategies by the responses that she received from community members and families. For example, she explained that her school's strategy was to "go door-to-door with another teacher… Go to different day cares, different businesses and we drop off stuff [school fliers and brochures]." She explained that the people they encountered in the neighborhood were happy to see them and interested in the school and its role in the community, saying,

> most people are receptive and they like that people care about the education of their children and they'll stop you right in the Marc's parking lot or Giant Eagle parking lot and sit there and talk about it. "Oh, you're a teacher? You teach at this school? Oh, I want to hear about it!"

"Formalized" or "disorganized" strategies. Teachers in this study who acted to recruit students also gained more clear perceptions of the quality of the organization of the strategies their schools undertook to recruit. Interestingly, teachers in this study did not hold firm views of how well organized their schools' recruitment strategies were before they started recruiting. It was only after they took action that they began to develop firmer views of the organization or disorganization of their work. Teachers who believed that their schools' recruitment efforts were "formalized" or better organized tended be more willing to engage in student recruitment work while those who believed that their schools' approaches to student recruitment work were disorganized tended to be opposed to recruitment work or only engage in it reluctantly.

Devon, Sara, and Mary, who led a significant amount of the recruiting efforts at their schools, put in place more strategic approaches to student recruitment at their schools. Devon and Sara who worked for Butler Academy generally saw that their strategic efforts worked, even though they took different approaches to recruitment, and continued to try new more strategic approaches. Mary who worked for Lawrence Prep Academy did not see her enrollment efforts pay off and became frustrated and disillusioned what she believed were highly disorganized recruitment efforts by her school leaders.

Devon explained how he came to establish a more formalized approach to student recruitment work. He initially was surprised by the need to recruit but realized that he

needed to establish parameters for how he would approach it. He explained his process, saying, "I wrote a proposal for how I would do recruiting. I presented it to them, saying 'I will do this, I will meet these goals, these are the methods that I will use, these are the resources that I will need from you.'" Devon perceived that his approach was different because it was more organized than the recruitment work that had been done in the past at his school. He explained,

> They never had someone come in and say, "This is the plan I have and this is how I'm going to do it and these are my goals, this is what will happen." I mean every week, every Friday, I sent an email to the board. . .. Nothing like that had ever been done before, nothing that formal. And so, I really formalized the process.

Sara, similarly, formalized her recruiting activities and strategies. Although she valued planning, her approach was less systematic than Devon's. But she did learn what worked and what did not and changed her strategies accordingly over time. Sara had been recruiting for five years and explained how her strategies for student recruitment had developed over time

> There has been an evolution. Because awareness builds and then we try new things. In year one before we opened….We did events, we went door to door, not necessarily knocking on doors but passing out literature, just, you know, bright, happy literature saying 'No uniforms' or, you know, 'Open Lunch,' 'We're mastery learning in a safe, bully-free school.' So, the first year we had a lot, a lot more yard signs and, um, putting posters up or putting things up in Kroger or whatever, you know. Shots in the dark.

Mary, unlike Devon and Sara, acted on student recruitment work and ended up feeling more unorganized and unaware of what strategies worked the best. The systematic and more strategic actions that she took were either limited or blocked by her leadership or simply did not yield the results she hoped to see. She also believed too many other factors hindered her student recruitment work. For example, her school

needed Mary to help develop professional trainings for other teachers and often lacked the resources that she needed for her classroom. She explained

> there was no great [student recruitment] system that we were using…. I just remember kind of, the stressful part of it was like, "We haven't decided the school-wide behavior management system we are using yet. I don't have any books in my classroom yet and I'm a reading teacher." I don't even know if anyone was managing student recruitment. I remember feeling like this isn't really well-organized.

Mary led several recruitment efforts at her school but felt that instead of helping her to establish a more systematic approach to recruiting, they often left her feeling more confused or frustrated about what recruitment strategies or approaches worked best. For example, she recounted the time that she tried to recruit more students by putting current students in a raffle drawing if they brought a new student to the school. She tried to take a more systematic approach by getting other teachers to get the students excited for the raffle. She explained,

> It was not as successful as I thought it was but part of it was that I …what I asked the principal to do was this was only going to work if the kids are excited about it. Like, if the kids are excited about this they will find their friends and bring them and convince them to come. What I wanted was for every teacher to really trump it up, like bring in a kindle if they had it, show them how cool it was, like sell it. And what ended up happening was that teachers were like "Here's a flier, take one, pass it out, you know." And so, there were only 10, 20 kids who were excited about it.

Enactment and experiences of personal harm and danger. As teachers took actions to recruit students, they often encountered potentially dangerous or harmful situations. This was especially true when they went out into neighborhoods, typically on foot, to pass out recruitment literature door-to-door. Teachers' experiences of danger often led them to be more skeptical of their school's recruitment efforts and suspicious of their school leaders, although experiences of danger did not turn all teachers against

school recruiting. Two teachers, Emily and Sara, encountered dangerous situations and still maintained a positive perception of recruiting efforts at their schools.

Mary often canvassed neighborhoods around her school during the summer to pass out literature on her school, enroll students, and make connections with current students' families to encourage them to continue to enroll. One morning she encountered a situation that precipitated her determination to leave her school to look for a new job. She said,

> I was out on Saturday morning, there was a man on the front porch, he had a baby in his arms. He said, "come on over here, tell me about your school." So, I go up on the porch and four other big men come out and they were, I think, still awake from the night before, they were inebriated and they blocked the exit to the porch. I couldn't leave, they blocked the way out of the porch. And they were making all these really crude sexual comments and they said I couldn't leave until I bent over and like all these, I mean it was like, I was scared.

Mary told her principal about the incident hoping that they would not ask her to canvass neighborhoods by herself anymore. However, she did not feel that her principal's response was adequate which precipitated her decision to leave. She said,

> I tell them this when I get back. I was like, "I really don't want to go by myself anymore, this is not safe, nobody else is expected to go out including the principal." Everybody else is always in pairs but here I am expected to go out by myself everyday. . . .They were like, "OK, yeah, only do it if you feel comfortable" and the next day it was like "are you going to go out today or not? And it was just like, I quit. This is ridiculous. I just feel so under-valued here."

Mary was generally positive about recruiting when she started her job but the combination of the lack of a solid strategy for recruiting and her principal's disregard for her safety caused her to turn away from student recruitment work and charter schools in general. She explained, "in the charter schools you either work for a crummy one or you work for one where the staff is totally abused, totally treated with disregard."

Naomi and Rita had similar experiences to Mary. Both were required to canvass their neighborhoods often and encountered dangerous situations during their recruitment work. The lack of safety also contributed to their negative feelings toward student recruitment work and their reluctance to fully participate in it. Both believed that the requirement to canvass neighborhoods demonstrated a lack of care for them on the part of their leadership and the feeling that achieving the right enrollment numbers was the most important consideration of the school leaders, even above the safety of the teachers they sent out to recruit. Naomi explained her situation, saying

> my first experience was with a [prospective] student. Went up to their porch…they had a screen door but the screen was missing the glass. So, we get up to the door and out jumps this pit bull, I'm like deadly afraid of pit bulls and so I'm sitting there like "Oh my, I'm about to die trying to recruit kids for this school!" That was my first experience. I'm not sure how much they think about the safety of teachers.

Rita also made the connection between market pressures to recruit students and the need to engage in possibly dangerous situations. She did not feel comfortable going out into the neighborhoods around her school but realized that the target student demographic for her school typically lived in lower-income, higher-crime neighborhoods. She explained,

> But it's just uncomfortable if you're in a pair of females especially, to go to some of these areas that feel more dangerous. Like, we've been catcalled, and we've been like harassed not up close but from far away. But it's like disconcerting to be sent to these areas. At the same time, it is our demographic so we need to be more comfortable with it.

Emily and Sara also felt unsafe at certain points while they were out recruiting. But they were not turned off from recruiting. Their support from their school administration and their belief that their work was meaningfully connected to increased enrollment helped them to overlook the dangerous situations. Emily explained,

> I was in the Marcs [Grocery Store] parking lot and we had permission to be there putting things on cars and I was walking around putting fliers on peoples' windshields and this man came up to me and the other teacher that I was with us…most of the times when we go to a dangerous area we take a male teacher with us but it was both of us girls and we both are really young and we were putting stuff on peoples' cars and he yells "Hey, What did you just put on my car?" And he was yelling and screaming at us and so we didn't walk back to try to get in and get away, we walked across the street to a shop and just kept walking away from him.

Sara also encountered people who harassed her while out recruiting. She said, "it was more a feeling, like 'I'm watching you until you go back to your car.'…I'm not afraid of much and I think that is probably pretty apparent. But I don't know… you have to be fearless in a way."

Enactment and the management of task "encroachment." Another aspect of teachers' enactment of recruitment work was what I call "managing encroachment." The strategies that teachers undertook to recruit students took time, focus and energy and required teachers to adjust their more traditional roles as educators related to instruction, student discipline, extracurricular advising. Many of the teachers found that student recruitment work began to interfere, or "encroach," on their traditional work as educators. A key component of their enactment of student recruiting was their effort to figure out how to manage all their work to educate students alongside the new and largely unexpected work of student recruitment. Encroachment occurred in several ways including the interruption of teachers' education of students, distractions and confusion around what their roles at the school should be, and the need to take on "extra-role tasks." The way that teachers dealt with the encroachment of student recruitment work on their more traditional tasks shaped the way that they ended up viewing student recruitment

work, particularly the extent to which they were willing to work on student recruitment for their school.

Some teachers such as Mary, Sara, and Devon spent a considerable amount of time engaging in student recruitment work. Others such as Beth, Daniel, and Naomi did not spend a large part of their work time in recruitment work but did believe that it interfered in their ability to perform their more traditional teaching roles.

Beth resisted her school leadership's requests that she participate in recruitment meetings. The meetings typically took place on a weeknight and lasted 60 to 90 minutes. Beth acknowledged the need for these meetings but did not see how she could fit them into her already tight schedule. One major reason for this was the once-a-week staff meeting held after school for one to two hours. She explained that she enjoyed meeting prospective students on tours and even having them in her class but

> the recruitment sessions are an entirely different matter. Because this school has a once a week staff meeting after school and then we have, recruiting sessions among many, many other duties including writing narrative grades that take a very long time to do when you have 125-150 students. And sometimes you'd be missing your planning period to do some substitute teaching for other staff members who are sick, things like that.

She went on to explain that she simply did not feel like she could adequately do her job and manage the additional recruitment work her school leaders asked her to perform, saying, "there are just literally so many hours in the day and so much you can do to restructure your life to fit more planning and grading in. So [recruiting students] would definitely slow down the grading, the assessment, and interfere with the planning process."

Naomi had a similar experience to Beth. She felt that her school asked too much of the teachers related to student recruiting and reported that she and other teachers had

trouble fitting everything the school leaders asked them to do into their schedules. She explained, “I don’t think it is something that teachers should have to think about or consider. You already have to focus on too many things as a teacher and then to add recruiting students and making sure you have enough people, enough bodies in seats in the classroom, that’s ridiculous to me.”

Other teachers specifically modified their teaching or educational practices to incorporate student recruitment work into their tasks. Daniel acknowledged the market pressures his school faced, saying, “In any charter situation you have to [recruit students] because, sad to say, those kids are your paycheck.” His work as a teacher was encroached upon because his school leaders asked him to alter his teaching style to ensure that students would stay at the school. He explained, “You’re being told, ‘we have to keep these numbers up,’ so you have to modify your teaching. At my previous school they told me that I was too extreme.”

Establishing an Identity: Student Recruitment “Insiders” and “Outsiders”

Identity construction is a key component of sensemaking (Weick, 1995). Teachers engaged in sensemaking of recruitment work by establishing divisions between themselves and others on the staff based on their perceptions of who was supportive of student recruitment and who was not. In other words, teachers saw that some of their colleagues were willing to perform recruitment work while others were not, and that some teachers were skilled at recruiting while others were not. As teachers in this study gained a clearer picture of their role as recruiters, they began to formulate an identity and to identify others on their staff based on their participation and skill in recruiting. In

general, teachers in this study divided the teachers at their school into "insider" groups and "outsider" groups. "Insider" group teachers tended to be positive about the recruiting work, motivated to boost enrollment at their school, and successful at recruiting students. "Outsider" group teachers tended to be negative about having to recruit, did not believe it should be part of their job, or were not skilled at recruiting.

Support and opposition to student recruitment. Teachers established "insider" group and "outsider" group identities based on their perception that some teachers were supportive of recruitment work at the school while others were not. Sara and Devon, who led a considerable amount of the recruitment work at their school, Butler Prep Academy, made clear distinctions between those who were supportive of recruitment work and those who were not. Sara, who saw herself in the "insider" group, explained that many of her fellow teachers believed that she took recruiting too seriously and were skeptical of her willingness to pour so much time into the work. She explained, "my co-workers who have no idea of the process, the importance of it, act like I'm pushing boundaries." Sara developed further divisions between her staff by establishing a line between those who led recruitment efforts and those teachers who were not experienced or involved enough to be consistently involved. Sara also claimed that some teachers should be more involved in higher level decisions related to student recruitment and others should just show up and follow the directions of others. She explained that her strategy for running recruitment activities with teachers was "just delegating it completely. Like, 'you people go here with one leader'. There's really not enough time to let people manage themselves as far as this is concerned."

Devon also faced push back from teachers at his school who refused to participate or pushed back on the recruitment activities he planned. He explained

> those people were doing nothing at all. They weren't doing anything. And they liked that they weren't doing anything. And they acted like I told them that's what I wanted even though I didn't and they took pride in the fact that they weren't doing anything and "you're going to fail and we're going to laugh at you." And then I was successful. Then they tried to take credit. Which was a weird thing.

Mary also led recruitment efforts for her school, Lawrence Prep Academy. She quickly noticed a division between teachers who were willing to positively engage in recruitment efforts and those who she referred to as "grumblers." She described the difficult process of ensuring that the "grumblers" were not teamed up to engage in neighborhood canvassing, explaining

> there were a few groups of teachers who would go out and I would try to pair them together strategically so one grumbler was with one, sort of like, non-grumbler. I wonder how many people just go out to lunch and put up their feet and check all these boxes that they went out and no one was home. It was a struggle.

Conversely to Devon, Sara and Mary, other teachers believed that they were in the "outsider" group, avoiding student recruitment work. Beth saw that some teachers at her school were willing to spend considerable time and energy on extra tasks associated with student recruitment while others were not. She associated this willingness with a belief in the mission of the school but also with a loyalty to the school leadership. She explained, "I know that some people believe very much in the mission of the school… and the people who run the school. And that other people definitely do not." Divisions occurred between those who were positive about the school mission and leadership and those who were not when extra work needed to be performed around student recruitment. She said

> There would just be people who would be very willing to stretch themselves thinner and thinner and thinner in the name of the… greater good. The people who wanted to have everybody as dedicated as they were would sometimes lecture the others. Like, "Why didn't you make your lunch duty?" "Why weren't you at this recruiting session?" You know, there would be confrontations like that like, "This is your duty you need to do this," and the other people were just like, "I can't there's just too much going on." So that did cause a bit of a strain.

Divisions also occurred between those who had considerable family commitments or interests outside of school and those who did not. Beth described a common scenario that played out at her school, saying

> There tended to be a difference between people who had spouses and children at home who couldn't devote their entire evening every evening to this. And people who had other responsibilities whether those were kids or some other responsibility or interest. For example, the art teacher had a life of being an artist as well and didn't want to just spend all the time at the school. So, that wasn't an example of family motivated. Lack of being able to stay at the building every day until 7 or 8. So there, there were just people who had chosen to their lives to be the school…and people who didn't want that and wanted to have life outside of their work.

Beth considered herself to be in the "outsider" group of student recruiters at her school because she felt that she no longer believed in the mission of her school and was skeptical of the school leadership's push to increase enrollment at the school. This put her in opposition to the "insiders" who were willing to put a sizable amount of time and effort into recruiting efforts.

Skilled and unskilled student recruiters. Teachers also created divisions between teachers on their staffs based on specific skill sets or abilities related to student recruitment. For example, Rita saw herself as an "insider" teacher because her background in sales and business equipped her for recruiting students to her school. She saw herself as "selling" the school to family customers and noticed that she was more

skilled than many of the teachers at her school who struggled to recruit students effectively. She explained,

> It's very awkward for people who don't have any like sales sort of experience, because like how do you approach some random person and ask them to sign up at your school?. . .we're not trained in recruitment. We aren't trained in the sales techniques to like sell yourself and sell the school.

Rita also drew strong distinctions between teachers who were naturally drawn to student recruitment and those who were not. One of the teachers at her school was particularly uncomfortable engaging in student recruitment work. Rita explained that when the teachers were sent out during school hours to canvass neighborhoods and recruit, "He would always just stay behind because was horrible at canvassing. He would just sit in the car he never wanted to get out. He was uncomfortable doing it, so he would normally stay behind with the students while the rest of us would go out."

Sara saw distinctive "insider" and "outsider" groups based on who she believed should be participating in planning student recruitment work. Butler Prep's school leader, Steve, put her Sara and Devon in charge of student recruitment and they quickly drew firm distinctions between those on staff who planned and executed the work and those who followed the directives of the planners. She recalled a conversation she had with several teachers who questioned her approach, saying "help but you don't have to see the whole truth here because we're gonna handle it. We have the staffing to handle it, the experts to handle it. Having everyone hands on is not the way to go. And then it's too many cooks in the kitchen." Similarly, Devon also experienced tension with other teachers who felt like they were being left out of the student recruitment planning process. He explained,

> at the beginning of August, I had a really strange conversation with the teacher leader and she was like, "now you want help?" And I was like, "what do you mean? I said from the beginning that I could use help…How did that not express an interest in me getting help from all of you?" And she's like "You just made it really clear that this was your thing." And I'm like "How did I do that?"

"We kind of drink the Kool Aid" – perceptions of whole-staff support for student recruitment. Megan and Emily also had a sense of identity related to their recruiting work. However, they believed that their entire teacher staff were engaged and supportive of student recruitment efforts and were, thus, "all in." In other words, they believed that all the teachers we completely supportive of student recruitment work. Megan attributed the staff's wholesale willingness to engage in recruitment work to the effectiveness at educating students and the reputation of the school. Speaking of the extra work that they put into recruitment, Megan said, "we kind of drink like the Kool aid at our school, right? Everyone is, we're all pretty young and pretty close to each other so it [student recruitment work] doesn't really even bother us." She attributed her schools' reputation as a factor in why teachers wanted to engage in student recruitment and why parents wanted to send their kids to her school. She explained, "our faculty is great. Our sense of community I think, is really great… our level of rigor and academic strength… teaching at my school it's definitely made me a better teacher." She then explained that, "parents want their kids being, you know, taught by people who are professional, and well educated and there for the right reasons." Megan perceived that the reputation of her school limited the amount of work that teachers needed to do to recruit students. The reputation drew families to the school so teachers did not have to go out and recruit in ways that teachers at other schools might. Simultaneously, because the reputation of

Meyer Early College was good, Megan believed that teachers were motivated to perform the small amount of recruitment work they were asked to do.

Emily believed that two factors led the teachers on her staff to be uniformly "all in." First, the relationships between teachers on the staff were very close, leading them to want to work together on building their school. However, she also indicated that her school leader recruited teachers who were willing to spend extra time and energy on tasks outside of traditional teaching roles and she did not tolerate teachers who would not participate in student recruitment. Emily explained,

> I mean you always have one bad apple in the crowd. But no, all the teachers that are at our school they want our school to grow because they want to keep their jobs. And that…that enrollment if it doesn't drop they'll have a job. But they want our school to grow and my principal is very good about recruiting teachers that actually care and want to be at the school.

Emily also indicated that her school leader would not hesitate to let go of negative teachers or those who would not or could not fully participate. She explained,

> if we have a teacher that is negative then they're gone. Our principal doesn't deal with that. If you don't want to be here our contracts are at-will. They're not yearly so we're at will employees so if we want to leave, we leave. If I want to leave tomorrow, I'm gone. So, my principal has no resentment towards you if you do want to leave. She understands.

Other teachers were not firmly established in "insider" groups or "outsider" groups. Tara and Thomas did not participate in student recruitment work because it was not a high need at their school. They were not negative or skeptical about the need to recruit at their school. They simply knew that other teachers handled the bulk of the student recruitment duties, did not see the need to recruit, and had not been asked to participate in recruitment work. Thomas was aware of the need to recruit but saw his work as a music teacher as the way that he contributed to student enrollment work. He

explained, “The one thing that I would say is my part, that I kind of feel a little bit responsible is since I teach music, I try to have a couple of performances every year that draw in a lot of parents. And I hope that that’s something they like, and appreciate and talk about and want to come back and do.”

While Thomas understood that he performed some aspects of recruitment work, he did not view himself as a recruiter and maintained that he was on the outside looking in at the teachers who did most of the recruitment work. He said, “I don’t think of myself as a recruiter. I don’t think of myself as actively going out and recruiting students. For me it’s more about retention than trying to create the best school possible so that students want to come back and that families want to come back.” Thomas believed that other teachers might feel more pressure to enroll students and, therefore, were more likely to participate in recruitment work. He explained,

> I could see where grade level teachers would have more pressure… I’ve never known anyone to be singled out or pressured. But I can understand their fear of numbers going down and that would end up meaning less job available for people. Umm, so that would be the one concern where somebody might be pushing a little harder.

Tara was similar to Thomas because she did not actively engage in student recruitment. She saw the connection between her work as a teacher and student recruitment in two indirect ways. First, she believed that if she was a good teacher they would retain the students who took her classes. Next, she believed that her teaching could contribute to the overall reputation of the school, ensuring that families continued to sign their children to for the school. She was aware that she did not actively participate in student recruitment and was aware that other teachers did, albeit on a voluntary basis. She explained,

> I think, the teachers who are involved in recruitment definitely enjoy it. Because for us it's more of a voluntary thing. So, you know, teachers give up their

> Saturday mornings to be at the information meetings, or after school, or things like that. So, I think it was more of, you know, teachers seem to enjoy it, they don't see it as a burden, they just see it as hey, I'm talking about the school district that I love or the school that I have fallen in love with and so I share that excitement with anyone who talks to me about it.

Competition Between Teachers to Recruit Students

Another factor that shaped teachers' sensemaking was competition over recruitment strategies and who could recruit higher numbers of students. Sara and Devon both reported having a contentious relationship with one another over disagreements about how to best recruit. Sara described her strategy as a "micro" approach, where she focused more building relationships with students, contacting students who dropped out to convince them to come back, and doing home visits. Devon, on the other hand, preferred a more "macro" approach, using radio advertisements, yard signs, and attending large community events to pass out information on the school. Sara explained why she disagreed with Devon's approach, saying, "Steve [school leader] was way more willing to waste money on things that Devon would pitch. Radio ads and Radio ads in Spanish and stuff that had never proven to work, ever at all. I at least like to know that something works before I invest in something."

Both Devon and Sara claimed to pull in more numbers than the other. Sara described implementing her personal approach over the summer saying, "it went from a macro-style to more personal and I got numbers way better than the other guy [Devon] did." However, Devon claimed that he recruited more students, explaining that since he was hired the year before,

> we now have a waitlist and students pushing through the door. There wasn't really any recruiting structure in place when I started. And, so, it was very difficult. But I set up some partnerships and was active in creating different programs, active in

> creating recruiting opportunities rather than the usual kind of summer events that schools go to. And because of that we got our word out a lot bigger than previous years. When I started the enrollment was about 120 and now it's over 160. So, I was able to recruit 60-70 students. It was 120 and then people graduated and now it is 160 so…We still have students coming in based on work I did this summer.

While it is impossible to say who recruited more students, it is clear that Devon and Sara's sensemaking of student recruitment demands was shaped by the competition they felt toward one another. Devon, for example, used his competition with Sara as a motivator to put in more hours and energy into recruitment. He perceived that Sara was angry because he was asked to lead recruitment over the previous summer. He explained,

> So, that was awkward because there was contention about me being asked to do recruiting. Because the teacher before me [Sara] had been there since the school opened and had done it every summer but she wasn't a professional recruiter. She was branding us as a drop out recovery school which we're not. Making promises that can't be kept, branding us the wrong way. She's not very professional as a person which is bad for the brand, unprofessional, that type of stuff. So when I was asked to do it…it was awkward. She flipped out on me once.

Devon claimed that his competition with Sara motivated him, saying,

> she wanted me to fail. Like she was hoping that I would perform poorly and she would dance on my grave a little bit. . . .Because of that I'm not going to ask her for help. I did a lot of it myself. Which was funny because it was the most successful recruiting the school had ever had. I was like, "you're welcome."

Similarly, Sara doubled down on her more personal approach to student recruitment because she believed that Devon pushed too hard to institute his "macro" approach to student recruitment. She explained how her approach was different since she started working with Devon, saying, "I guess more carefully thinking through those things and realizing that rapport and family relationships and reputation and branding is the whole thing. And the bells and whistles are not what get the thing [enrollment] going."

Mediating Teachers' Sensemaking: School Characteristics

This section addresses the first sub-question of this study: How is teachers' sensemaking of competitive pressures mediated by characteristics of their school? Several aspects of schools' institutional characteristics mediated, or shaped, teachers' sensemaking of student recruitment work at their school. Teachers' work was shaped by the competitive pressures to recruit students, the school's mission or primary educational focus, academic characteristics of the school, and characteristics of school leaders.

Competitive Pressures on Schools to Recruit Students

One characteristic of schools that shaped individual teachers' sensemaking was the extent to which teachers and leaders experienced market pressures to recruit students. It is difficult to precisely measure the extent to which school personnel feel market pressures. Previous studies on market pressure have largely used geographical measures and school physical proximity (e.g.: Ni, 2012) along with the perceptions of school leaders about who they believe to be their largest sources of competition (Jabbar, 2015b; Kasman & Loeb, 2013) to establish measures of market pressure.

One possible indicator of the extent to which school personnel may experience market pressure is the mobility rates of students at schools. Mobility rates refer to the "percentage of students, who, because they moved into or out of the district, did not spend a majority of the year within the district" (ODE, 2019b). Mobility rates are not a perfect representation of market pressures on a school. They could represent student losses which would theoretically increase market pressures. But they could also indicate that a school is doing well and fulfilling or exceeding its enrollment goals by attracting

students school during the year. What mobility rates do indicate is the extent to which a school's student body fluctuates either up or down during the year. The more fluctuation that a school experiences, the more likely it is that teachers will take on student recruitment work, either by trying to make up for enrollment loses over the year, or by working to recruit and onboard students who enroll. Figure 10 provides an overview of teachers' perceptions of market pressures along with the mobility rates of their student bodies.

Figure 10. Student Mobility Rates for Schools

School Name / Teacher	Teacher Perception of Market Pressures	Mobility Rate
The Taft School		10-15%
Beth	High/Fluctuating	
Roosevelt Recovery Acd.		70-75%
Daniel	Medium	
Rita	High	
City STEAM Acd.		20-25%
Emily	Low	
Carol	High/Fluctuating	
Meyer Early College		0-5%
Tara	Low	
Megan	Low	
Lawrence Preparatory Acd.		5-10%
Mary	High/Fluctuating	
Naomi	High/Fluctuating	
Butler Preparatory Acd.		50-55%
Devon	High/Fluctuating	
Sara	High/Fluctuating	
Harding Hills Acd.		10-15%
Thomas	Low	

Teachers in this study were aware of the market pressures on their schools to enroll students. Two of the schools, Roosevelt Recovery Academy and Butler Preparatory Academy, had student mobility rates above 50%. Sara and Devon, who

worked for Butler Preparatory Academy, reported that they felt significant competitive pressures to recruit students to their school. Sara and Devon often had to scramble in the summers to meet their enrollment goals and then would attempt to add students or maintain their enrollment numbers throughout the year. Sara explained, "I filled my program in two weeks [at the end of August] because we just needed the numbers...and I recruited 30 kids." Devon had a similar experience, reporting that he was nervous about the enrollment at the beginning of the current school year, saying, "there is a lot of pressure. Because our numbers weren't good in July."

The dropout recovery school, Roosevelt Recovery Academy, had the highest mobility rate, at 70-75%. Daniel and Rita, teachers at Roosevelt Recovery Academy, both acknowledged the high need to recruit students and believed that their status as a dropout recovery made their work to recruit uniquely challenging because many of the students they recruited had unique difficulties and negative experiences at their previous schools that caused them to leave the school in the first place. Despite their agreement that student mobility was a problem, their experiences of market pressures were very different. Daniel, when asked if pressure to recruit was a problem at his job, said, "it's not, [there is no] pressure to go out and beat the drum. If we see a kid we talk to them." Rita had been teaching at Roosevelt longer and worked more closely with the school leader. Her knowledge of the inner workings of the school and access to the school leader caused her to feel market pressures more distinctly than Danial. She had seen one school leader get fired for not being able to recruit enough students. She was also aware of the continued pressures on her new school leader from the management organization because they worked closely together as well. She explained,

> Yea, we're like the black sheep of our schools because we have the fewest students. So, we're constantly wondering if we're going to get shut down. . . .Our director started in March and they've been on him about enrollment. Like, every single week they make him call in and talk about our enrollment. How many people have we talked to, how many prospects do we have, how many times have we gone that week. Like, he has to report this every single week. We also have these goals that we're supposed to hit every month, and we haven't hit them all. We've done well but we haven't hit them all.

Meyer Early College had the lowest mobility rate, between 0-5%. Tara and Megan, who taught at Meyer Early College, also reported feeling low pressure to recruit students. Tara attributed the low need to recruit to the school leadership's desire to keep their class sizes relative low. She explained, "our recruitment needs are low because we can only accept based upon teachers and, you know, wanting to keep class sizes small, you know, there's not really a lot of space open." Megan similarly attributed the low need to recruit to the desire to keep class sizes low. She also believed that the school's reputation contributed to the low pressure to recruit, saying, "there's too many people that want to come and then our class sizes need to be kept small."

Other teachers experienced fluctuating enrollment needs over time. For example, Naomi, who worked at Lawrence Prep Academy, felt a distinct pressure to recruit students during her first year of teaching. She described the climate at the school when student enrollment figures dipped especially low, saying

> I think it was very anxious. I think the treasurer was, I would say he was fearful because he controls the money and he doesn't want to put people in situations where they start the school year and, unfortunately, we have to do layoffs because there's not enough students. I don't think that the school administrators or teachers ever feared but I, there was definitely some anxiety over it.

However, after her first year Naomi's school constructed and moved into a new building. She explained, "During my second year we relocated to a much nicer building and I think alone after the building was built, having to recruit students after the building was built

was just obsolete. The way the building looked just gave off the feeling that 'my child's going to be successful here.'"

Other teachers reported that the pressure to recruit students fluctuated over the course of each academic year. For example, Emily's school, City STEM Academy, typically performed their recruitment work during the summer and then mostly focused on retention during the academic year. She explained the process that they undertook saying,

> our principal shares at the end of the year how many students that we have for next year, we don't recruit during the school year. Just the summer. And we recruit for grades up to four. We'll specifically tell them, "we have two seats for second grade, three for fourth grade, and we just tell them the information that we know."

Carol, who worked with Emily at City STEM Academy, was closer to the principal and had worked at the school for two years before Emily arrived. She had a different perspective on recruitment needs, perhaps because of her proximity to the principal and experience at the school. She explained,

> the enrollment process went on a bit longer than previous years. Trying to enroll students. I know each year they do their annual carnival and that is how they get the enrollment. But this year was the first year that they had to do a little bit more… we had to get like 15-17 kids. And so, it just seemed like "How are we going to get this many kids because they've already started school?"

Sara and Devon from Butler Prep Academy similarly experienced fluctuating pressures over the course of the year. While they experienced consistently high pressure to recruit throughout the year, it was especially intense during the summer, right before their student enrollment would be reported to the state for funding purposes.

Market Pressures, School Mission, and Teacher Sensemaking

Another institutional aspect that mediated teachers' sensemaking of student recruitment work was school mission. The schools in this study each had distinct missions that teachers were aware of and able to articulate. However, teachers indicated that the mission of their school shaped their sensemaking as they attempted to maintain the mission while simultaneously accounting for market pressures.

Figure 11. Primary School Focus and Mission

School Name	Focus and Mission	Grade Level
The Taft School	Internship and field experiences	9-12
Roosevelt Recovery Academy	Dropout recovery	9-12
City STEM Academy	Science Technology Engineering Mathematics	K-5
Meyer Early College	Early college partnered with a local university	9-12
Lawrence Preparatory Academy	College preparation	7-12
Butler Preparatory Academy	College preparation and arts	9-12
Harding Hills Academy	College preparation	K-8

"Cropping" students to maintain the mission of the school. Several of the teachers reported either letting difficult students go or taking steps to convince students not to enroll to maintain the fidelity of the mission of their school. These actions, known as "cropping," helped to ensure that the school does not take on too many students who would bring about financial difficulties or put excessive strain on the staff (Jabbar, 2015a,

p. 7; Lacireno-Paquet, et al., 2002; Welner, 2013). Sara explained how her school, Butler Prep Academy, often took on students who had been expelled from their previous schools. This led to the staff feeling overwhelmed by the frequent and severe behavioral issues that hindered the educational mission and environment of the school. Sara explained,

> there have been a few kids before that their behavior was just so, more aligned with alternative school behavior. . . we finally had to come to the realization that we did not have the manpower to deal with kids that are this ridiculous, that are going to throw this many classes, that are going to do this and this and this. So, we make a decision as a staff, or, if Steve needs to make a call real quick he will. And if we do have to expel someone we don't expel them so it goes on their record, we suspend them and like, set their records out when they want them. We just say they can't come back.

Sara did acknowledge that there were non-behavioral issues that led to the exclusion of certain students. She and her school leader had to turn away a student who needed a wheel chair, explaining,

> I've had a situation before where we say, "We don't have a ramp but we're sorry, but we'll put that in our thing of things to do." But we'll never enroll that child. Wanted to for that child but let them know that that's something that we are working on.

Sara did not see this situation as specifically excluding a difficult to educate child and did not see the denial of service in explicitly financial terms. Rather, she believed that the school currently had limitations that were beyond their control and appealed to a sort of good faith that they would follow through on their obligation to put in a ramp

Megan's school, which had an early college focus, attempted to counsel academically struggling students away from enrolling. Megan explained how her conversations with parents of low-performing students often went: "we're kind of honest with those parents. I feel like up front like it's, if they need a lot of support, we're

probably no the school for you. So, because you know, we have a small special Ed department, or, you know, intervention department." She went on to provide an example of a student who did not meet the expectations of the school and how it affected the student

> This year we have a student with severe flight instabilities. But she came up through the public school system who let her do whatever she wanted because they weren't able to help her either. So…I mean I see where you're coming from that, it hasn't really been a drain or hasn't been a resource thing. But she has decided that being at the school is not a place for really people with any instabilities.

Megan, like Sara, did not believe that her school's reasoning behind excluding certain students was financial in nature. Rather, she believed that the school's mission of sending students to college during their high school career was not possible for students with certain disabilities or "instabilities."

Undermining and altering the school mission to meet market demands.

Teachers also reported that their school missions were altered by market pressures. Rita, who taught at Roosevelt Recovery Academy, reported feeling caught between taking the time to educate her students and going out to recruit more students. Her management company, a for-profit organization that managed several drop out recovery schools, put pressure on their staff and school leader to recruit students. But they were also adamant that the school help students to complete more assignments. She described her frustration associated with the duel but contradictory pressures of recruiting students and finishing assignments, saying,

> they're [management company] really big on numbers. Like, how many assignments are completed. It's a huge deal. They do a tracker every week where we see how many English assignments are done, how many math assignments,

> and it's this big competition almost. Like, it needs to be over a hundred or you suck. And, so, they're taking us out of our rooms for hours [to recruit], but we need to have our numbers up. So that's just frustrating.

Beth also saw her school's mission undermined by market pressures to recruit students. The Taft School where Beth worked had an internship and field site focus for students. However, the Taft School also developed a reputation that it was welcoming and supportive of students who had struggled, both academically and socially, at other schools. Beth valued the focus on "each individual" student that was a key component of her school's mission and culture. But she also saw that the highly-inclusive atmosphere, coupled with the need to increase enrollment, began to undermine the mission of the school because they increasingly took on difficult to educate students. She explained that the school developed a "really interesting trend…that in a short period of time, in a couple years, they went from 15-20% to IEP to over 40% IEP." This shift forced more of the teachers to focus on working on IEPs and focusing on basic academic skills rather than developing the internship program.

Beth also indicated that the focus on individual students that was such a strong aspect of her school's culture became undermined because the school took on too many students per teacher. She explained, that recruitment pitches at her school's enrollment meetings

> always sounding like they're going to emphasize the individual. Which I think philosophically they were very committed to. It makes it harder to do in practice when you wear lots and lots of hats and the number in your classroom go up.

Beth also saw that many of the students who her school took on, especially mid-year, were the students with the greatest difficulties who took the most time to adequately education. She explained that they took on a lot of

> people who needed a lot of care. Which is who I think the school would be for, but if you ….advertise the school as a place where people are going to get a lot of individual attention that's going to take a lot of time. But if you're putting a lot of bodies in a room because you need to hit the bottom line those two things are opposed."

While Beth believed that the school leaders genuinely wanted to make decisions based on what would best promote the mission of the school, she felt that often financial considerations would prevail over missional considerations. In the case of Taft Academy, a primary mission was an emphasis on individual learning and one-on-one interactions between teachers and students. However, Beth saw the financial needs crowd out that goal. She explained, "remember the recruiting numbers are based on the bottom line, not how much space there is in each room or the building itself. So, whether or not you had space for bodies, they were coming in."

Developing new missions to attract and retain students. Advocates of charter schools and schools of choice in general would suggest that schools will change their missions if they need to attract more students or work to retain the ones who are already enrolled. Most of the teachers in this study did not indicate that they actively changed the mission of the school or the way that they taught to attract students. Rather, they focused on recruiting students through enrollment activities and seemed to believe that they needed to advertise their school rather than change it.

Devon and Sara at Butler Prep were unique in the sense that they developed new programs and practices at their schools to attract and retain students. Sara spearheaded the development on a hybrid online and in-person program at her school to retain students who were in danger of dropping out and to attract back students who had dropped out of

the school. Initially, the mission of Butler Prep centered around college preparation with an arts focus. Even after she created the hybrid program, Sara considered it largely as an off-shoot or extension of the primary goal of the school which she did not believed changed with the introduction of the hybrid program.

Sara attributed a large part of her success enrolling students to the 25 students that she re-enrolled to the school through her hybrid recovery program. She explained,

> We've put them in our hybrid program so they stay in our school, so we give them mobile internet access point and a chrome book to use so we have some curriculum called grad point so they can still take classes through our school. Because a couple of them were in situations where they might move back so it was kind of the normal…things that happen when you work in charter education. The living situations can really be very complicated. So, they might move away for a few months to live with their aunt or uncle and then maybe they'll be back when their parents are back on their feet.

Devon also saw the need to alter the educational focus of the school. He was in his second year of teaching at Butler Prep and believed that the school needed to look more like a "real school" to retain students. Devon considered his own experience in school along with what he believed the students at Butler Prep expected their educational experience to be like and concluded that many aspects of schooling, especially related to extracurricular and social activities, were needed. He believed that being more like a traditional school and setting themselves apart from most charter schools that also did not offer these extra opportunities would help Butler to attract and retain more students. He explained,

> we as a charter school need to offer them things that other schools are offering them but that most charters are not. So, things like having a prom or having a homecoming dance or going on field trips. Not all charter schools do these things. . . .when I started there was a problem with students not acting like we were a real school and it really bothered me a lot obviously. I started a student government so having a student government. Having clubs. We didn't have any clubs last year, now we have ten of them. So, doing all that sort of stuff – that's school culture

> stuff but really its important…because students want to feel like they're at a real school.

Carol, who taught at City STEM Academy, indicated that her school was in a branding transition to compete with other schools for students. City STEM did not reach its enrollment numbers over the summer as it had typically done. This meant that many of the teachers and other school personnel were asked to continue to recruit students well into the school year, placing an additional burden and stress on them. Carol explained that one reason they did not meet enrollment goals was because they over-promised on the education that they could offer as a STEM school, causing several parents to leave. She said,

> The interesting thing about my school is that we are going through a whole rebranding process right now. So, right now like its geared toward the whole STEM thing, but we really don't too much follow that. So that's really the whole reason for our rebranding. We got a lot of questions about, like, "You're a STEM school but you don't have too much technology," and things like that.

Carol described the process at City STEM to rebrand. The school leaders and teachers were all involved and considered what students needed in a school and what focus would help them to attract the students they needed to meet enrollment needs. She explained,

> We're all just giving different ideas of what we think the school should be centered around as far as our motto and stuff like that. I know there's been talk about we're building kids into leaders and things like that. So, we're basically trying to center around how we want the students to come and know how the students can help us remold ourselves as teachers.

Carol**,** Sara and Devon's cases are interesting because they partially validate the goals and aims set out by charter school advocates and pro-charter school policy makers. Namely, that when exposed to market pressures, school personnel will work to change core components of the education offered to students either by offering innovative approaches, higher quality offerings, or more variety in course selection and educational

approaches (Hoxby, 2002; Lubienski, 2003, 2005). Unfortunately, it is beyond the scope of this study to determine whether those changes were nominal or actually penetrated the core education practices at the schools.

Schools' Academic Metrics and Teachers' Perceptions of School Quality

Charter school policies aim to enroll more students into schools that are deemed high-quality by the state and to encourage students to leave schools that are deemed failing (NCLB, 2002). Teachers in this study did not largely emphasize the importance of their state-issued school report card grades. It is possible that teachers might not have been aware of the results of state-issued evaluations of their schools. It is also possible that the teachers in this study discounted the state-issued report card grades because the grades presented an identity threat. Elsbach and Kramer (1996) found that personnel in institutions of higher education deal with identity threat when confronted by the low ranking of their school. Maitlis (2013) describing Elsbach and Kramer's study, notes that individuals "worked to affirm positive aspects of the organizational identity that the rankings had overlooked, making sense of the incongruous ranking in ways that reduced the identity threat" (p. 75). Maitlis (2005) also found that individuals in organizations with strong identities often discounted data and rankings that were contradictory to their perceptions of their organizations. The schools in this study tended to have strong identities based on their stated missions. Teachers placed much more emphasis on their school's mission and the anecdotal quality of the teaching and leadership when trying to attract students. They did not indicate that reporting their state-issued report card grades played a large role in the student recruitment process.

Figure 12. State-Issued School Report Cards, 2017-2018

School Name	Overall	Achievement	Progress
The Taft School	D	D	B
Roosevelt Recovery Academy*	--	--	--
City STEM Academy	D	F	D
Meyer Early College	C	A	A
Lawrence Preparatory Academy	D	A	B
Butler Preparatory Academy	F	F	F
Harding Hills Academy	C	D	A

*Dropout recovery schools are not evaluated according to the same metrics as traditional schools and are not issued overall letter grades.

Megan and Tara from Meyer Early College High School emphasized their reputation as the most important component of their ability to attract and retain students. They did not mention their state-issued report card grades. Megan explained of her school, "it's kind of built up a reputation for being the kind of best alternative to public school that you can go to and a lot of parents want to send their kids to our school." Their overall grade of C and achievement and progress grades of A supported to their claims that their school was high quality. While an overall grade of C is about the state average for state-issued letter grades, Meyer Early College did much better than surrounding schools within the city that would have been their primary competition for students. Megan explained that their school did experience competition from other schools but their reputation buffered them from losing students or experiencing enrollment problems. She explained, "we do kind of compete with other schools, but [their] reputation is not there."

One teacher did mention the school report card but was confused about the grade her school received. Emily claimed, "we got an A for value added," in reference to the Progress component on the school report card. Interestingly, Emily's school actually received a D on the Progress component of the school report card, which is measured by

value added scores. It is not clear whether she was simply mistaken about her school's grades, or whether she was refencing another figure that was not reflected on the report card.

School Leadership and Teacher Sensemaking of Student Recruitment Demands

A final institutional characteristic that shaped teachers' sensemaking process was school leadership. School leaders at every school in this study headed up the student recruitment work or worked directly with teachers who were tasked with leading student recruitment. Principals employed "sensegiving" techniques to shape teachers' sensemaking of student recruitment. Additionally, two relational qualities between teachers and school leaders shaped teachers' sensemaking: teachers' trust for their school leadership and the extent to which school leaders allowed teachers to have agency in deciding how to perform student recruitment work.

School leaders and "sensegiving." Principals engaged in "sensegiving" in attempts to incorporate teachers into student recruitment work and to shape teachers' work to be more consistent and effective in bolstering enrollment. Gioia and Chittipeddi (1991) describe sensegiving as "attempting to influence the sensemaking and meaning construction of others toward a preferred redefinition of organizational reality" (p. 442). Sensegiving contributes to individuals' construction of meaning but does not totally shape it. Factors such as personal experiences, role in the organization, and organizational characteristics may shape the extent to which one person can provide sensegiving to another. Further, sensegiving is not a purely "top-down" process in which

organizational leaders shape the sensemaking of those under them in the administrative structure. Individuals in any role within an organization can engage in sensegiving, regardless of where those two people fall in the structure (Maitlis & Christenson, 2013, p. 67; Maitlis & Lawrence, 2007). The principals of teachers in this study engaged in sensegiving strategies related to student recruitment. There were instances of teachers engaging in sensegiving for principals. For example, Sara and Devon from Butler Prep Academy worked weekly with their principal to provide updates on student recruitment and to brainstorm how to move forward, helping their principal to make sense of ambiguities surrounding the student recruitment process. But the clear majority of sensegiving actions described by teachers in this study were performed by principals to shape the sensemaking of teachers.

The most explicit way that principals engaged in sensegiving was through asking or telling teachers to engage in student recruitment work. Each of the 12 teachers in this study reported that their principals engaged teachers, to varying extents, with requests or orders to perform student recruitment work. This typically occurred through requests at staff meetings or via email for volunteers, although some principals set up mandatory recruitment events such as tours or recruitment fairs that all teachers were required to attend.

Other teachers reported that their principals engaged in more contentious sensegiving, especially when some staff members refused or were reluctant to engage in student recruitment. For example, Devon, who helped lead student recruitment for Butler Prep Academy, tried to get volunteers from the teachers for an event he was planning. He explained, somewhat sarcastically,

> we had been at school that day and I asked for volunteers….during part of staff training I asked Steve [school leader] if we could go and put out yard signs… and Steve asked, no, he voluntold them [refusing teachers]. Voluntold them. Yes, it is very effective."

Devon's use of the slang term "voluntold" indicates that there was some tension between the school leader and the staff members who refused to perform the recruitment work. "Voluntold" typically refers to an outwardly pleasant request for an employee to perform a task, but with an underlying message or understanding that the employee does not actually have a choice in the matter. Devon's use of the term "voluntold" suggests that the school leader engaged in sensegiving by communicating to the staff that everyone needed to take part in student recruitment.

Principals also engaged in sensegiving in more subtle ways. For example, Carol described how her principal responded when teachers were asked to engage in recruitment work well into the school year, something they had not been asked to do in previous years. Carol described a conversation that she had with her principal that helped her to understand the importance of student recruitment and to maintain her motivation to do the work. She explained,

> my principal would make you look within and think about what it means, if you aren't really excited about bringing kids into the school then are you really excited about your job? . . . .it made me think about, "why did I take this job?" And it helped me think about the excitement I had when I was actually offered this position

Teachers' trust in school leaders. The teachers in this study who were willing to work on student recruitment generally trusted their school leaders to make decisions related to student recruitment and other areas of the school that were in their best interest.

For example, Rita did not always like going out to recruit students, and felt reluctant, at times, to participate in student recruitment activities. But she was willing to continue working on student recruitment because she trusted her school leader to both lead the recruitment efforts and to be effective in recruiting students. She explained, "my director, he's fairly good at being charming and you know, getting people to come in.... he can just go out and get people to sign up. I don't even know what he does."

But several of the teachers also indicated that they did not trust their principal to have their best interests in mind, or to act competently to ensure that student recruitment was done effectively. This caused teachers to doubt whether they could be effective at recruiting students, and, by extension, maintaining the enrollment numbers and funding they needed. Their lack of trust also caused teachers to believe that they were wasting their time, undermining the goals that their school leaders set for student recruitment. For example, Mary was placed in charge of a large portion of the recruitment work at her school and was often called to go above and beyond in her work to recruit students. However, when she attempted to raise issues with her school leaders about things like the safety of teachers when they canvassed neighborhoods or the relative inefficiency of their recruiting strategies, she did not feel heard by her school leaders. This led her to feel frustrated about her work and ultimately contributed to her decision to leave the school. She explained that she was

> totally treated with disregard. Everybody there worked non-stop, I earned nothing, and then it was just like, there was no appreciation or like…I know I came in with a lot of leadership experience and I had no voice. It was just, the whole thing was frustrating because it was like, how are you this bad at managing adults? If you are so good at managing kids, how come you are not investing into the people

Mary also did not trust that her school leader was competent enough to perform her job well, causing her to question the leader's ability. She explained that the school leader's lack of organizational and relational ability ultimate contributed to the negative environment of the school and poor recruitment outcomes. Mary said, "She was not a good principal. I'm talking like screaming the F-word at students in the hallway, rolling in at like 10 and out at 2. Just terrible decision-making all over the place. And there was no coherent [student recruitment strategy]."

Beth similarly lost trust in her school leaders, primarily because she felt that their poor planning and lack of strategies hurt teachers by requiring them to work longer hours in harder situations than they should have. When asked if her leaders had a strategy for recruiting, Beth responded, "strategy is too strong of a word. That would imply that there was something that stretched across the entire like guiding principle." Another way that the school leaders broke Beth's trust is because she believed that they cultivated factions within the teachers at the school. She explained, "I know that some people believe very much in the mission of the school, the school, and the people who ran the school. And that other people definitely did not."

Over time, Beth observed these factions becoming stronger and more divisive between staff members. Eventually, Beth felt that she could no longer trust her school leaders to act in her best interest or in the best interest of the staff. In part, she believed that her school leaders took advantage of the lack of union at the school and were too quick to let people go when they expressed opposition to the school's mission, explaining "without a union people would be dismissed… So there was this permeating fear that if you didn't do what you were told or you didn't do things the right way you would lose

your job." This caused some of the teachers to feel increasingly insecure about their jobs and, by extension, more likely to "toe the line" when it came to student recruitment work. She said, "there's just a thought of brewing mistrust between the administration and teaching levels. Especially as people were let go when they didn't seem to be toeing the line."

Teacher agency and school leaders. Teachers also responded well to school leaders who provided them with a high level of agency in making decisions about student recruitment. This shaped teachers' sensemaking in two ways. First, teachers who were given a high level of freedom to make decisions about how to best recruit tended to buy in more to their leaders' requests to engage in student recruitment work. Second, teachers felt less pressure to recruit students which freed them up to take on more student recruitment work without feeling like they were being evaluated or judged.

Sara and Devon felt a high level of pressure to recruit students but believed that they had personal agency to make decisions about how much they wanted to do in student recruitment but also what directions the school should take strategically in relationship to student recruitment. Sara talked about how Steve, her school leader, trusted her to perform and lead a large part of the student recruitment work. In part, she was so willing to take on the extra work because she was in control and viewed her school leader in many ways as her peer in deciding the direct of the school's recruitment efforts. She explained, "Steve relies on me for that stuff [recruiting work]. He calls me his bull dog. I'm really serious about it." She also recalled the first year of the school when her and Steve worked to keep the school open. They lost a lot of students toward

the end of their first year and had to scramble to recruit the appropriate number of students for the fall. She explained.

> Steve and I just had this wild idea to keep us open…No real hours prescribed. Because in the summer recruiting does not work on an 8-5 schedule. And, so that was what made it kind of nice. I know I'm gonna do my job. I know it's not like I have to, but I picked up the responsibility because I wanted it.

She went on to explain in further detail that she did not view their work together to recruit students through a hierarchical lens where Steve called all the shots. Instead, she viewed herself as spearheading the work because she was uniquely in touch with families and able to perform the work, explaining

> Those parents know me more than they know anyone, they know me better than they know Steve…I'm just more active in the community. He has a family and a wife he has to do and I'm basically on call for whatever needs to happen whenever it needs to happen. That's just what I do. So, it's not tyranny or anything. Steve and I are always in communication, it's definitely always in tandem.

Devon, who also worked under Steve at Butler Prep Academy acknowledged that while Steve gave a great deal of freedom to him and Sara, he did not extend that flexibility to everyone, especially those teachers who were not excited or as willing to engage in recruitment as Devon and Sara. Devon recalled a conversation at a staff meeting between Steve and some teachers who were complaining about recruiting, "something that our principal reminded them, specifically, is that recruiting is something that you are expected to be helping with. At some point in the summer you will be contacted and you are expected to be helping to do it." Interestingly, Devon went on explain that Steve experienced "mixed success" when he tried to make student recruitment work a requirement.

Teachers who felt like they had a lot of freedom to decide when and how to participate in student recruitment work tended to be more amenable to taking on extra work and spending time outside of their traditional work of educating students to help bring up their enrollment. Megan was highly involved in student recruitment work at her school but got to that point gradually by volunteering for progressively more involved roles. She explained,

> I was never told I was going to be doing anything. But kind of as I've developed my leadership … and teaching at for 2 years. They kind of asked me to speak out like at parent night and family meetings to talk about my experience…. They never really tell us, but they kind of, our administration kind of asks, "Who wants to speak at the thing?"

Emily's experience was similar to Megan's. She explained, "The principal doesn't make it a requirement, you do it out of the kindness of your heart. . . . bringing it up at the staff meeting like "We're going to do a radio commercial, does anybody have ideas for that?" She attributed her principal's willingness to give the teachers a lot of flexibility in managing student recruitment and deciding when they would get involved. Emily drew a parallel between her principal's willingness to trust staff to recruit students and her trust of her staff to weigh in on the hiring of new teachers. She explained that her school leader "trusts us enough to involve us in the process of hiring new staff. But …recruiting students…you get to do both sides and it makes you feel important. And that is what is cool about our school." Furthermore, Emily felt a lot of freedom to engage in student recruitment on her terms, without the pressure from her school leader to recruit a certain number of students. This allowed her to consider why she wanted to make the school a better place and to develop a motivation to recruit students outside of the motivation that her leader might have placed on her. She explained, "our principal doesn't put that

expectation on us that it's a requirement, that you have to do it. OK – let's go do this because we want our jobs to be better, we want our school to be better, we want the community to be better."

Conversely, some teachers were turned off of engaging in student recruitment work because their school leaders were too heavy-handed and did not seem to trust them. Mary relayed that the teachers at her school felt that the demands from her principal that they recruit placed more pressure on them. She recalled seeing other teachers complain about student recruitment, saying,

> It was required. They hated it. I remember being in meetings where the principal had learned that even like kind of the favored teachers were complaining heavily about having to recruit. They didn't think it was their job, they didn't think it was something they should be expected to do….People were working a whole lot. So to ask for something else [put more pressure on teachers.]

Beth had a similar experience to Mary. She believed that her school leaders simply piled work onto teachers. The result was that many of the teachers felt like they had no freedom to make decisions about how to educate their students and to what extend they wanted to engage in student recruiting. She said, "you were expected to do more and more and more. And it was in the name of bettering the organization and keeping things going and keeping your job."

Mediating Teachers' Sensemaking: Personal Characteristics and Background

This section addresses the second sub-question: How is teachers' sensemaking of competitive pressures mediated by personal characteristics and experiences? Weick (1995) described sensemaking as a retrospective process by which individuals come to understand their current circumstances and goals through the lens of their past.

Individuals in this study drew on past experiences to make sense of their present student recruitment work. Teachers' sensemaking of student recruitment was also mediated by personal characteristics such as their race and gender.

Reflecting on Past Teaching Experiences to Make Sense of Recruitment Work

Teachers' past experiences at other schools often informed their sensemaking of student recruitment work. In several cases, teachers' reflections on past experiences helped to cement their willingness to recruit at their current school. This occurred primarily because teachers saw their current school as more effective after they compared it to their past experiences. For example, Megan, who worked at Meyer Early College, taught at a school in North Carolina before moving back to Ohio to teach. She appreciated Meyer Early College and was willing to engage in student recruitment work in part because she compared it to her former school. Reflecting on her experience in North Carolina, she explained "it was the worst school I've ever been to in my entire life. It was awful. And I walked out after a month and I found another job at a public school for like the next year and a half before moving back from North Carolina." Thomas also had a poor teaching experience at another charter school that gave him a more positive view of his current job. He explained,

> There was a little bit of an instability at the first school. It was little bit more new. When I got there, they were just moving into a new building from being in trailers. So, in my two years we had two different principles, a lot of teacher turn over and I was looking for a little bit more, a more well-established school.

Mary's initial willingness to recruit was also informed by her past experiences. However, she had largely positive experiences before coming to Lawrence Prep Academy. These

positive experiences made her excited to jump into working on student recruitment and several other tasks in addition to her traditional teaching work. She explained,

> I started teaching through the Teach for America program so I started teaching 7th and 8th grade writing in Brooklyn, New York at a public school and I actually loved my placement school and loved being there but I was specifically recruited to Lawrence to come back to my hometown of Columbus to help them get Lawrence Academy off the ground.

Once she got to Lawrence Academy and found out about the need to recruit, she reflected on her positive experiences as a Teach for America cadet and the successes that she had at her school in Brooklyn. She continued,

> I had this experience teaching [in Brooklyn] for two years, I had really good academic results with my students. Some of them made three years of growth, they had good test scores so I went into it feeling like, "I'm a good teacher, and I want to learn how to build a school and I'm going to build a school." So, the whole prospect of going out into the neighborhood and literally finding your students was exciting to me.

Non-Teaching Experiences and Student Recruitment Work

Many of the teachers drew on experiences outside of teaching to shape their stances toward student recruitment work. For example, Rita had a background in sales before becoming a teacher and saw that her experience could help her to be more effective at marketing her school. She explained,

> I did a lot of training on how to use the phone, like how to make sales calls. So, one thing we did a few months ago is we went through all these old files [of student contact information]. I was making cold calls to these files that may or may not exist. And it was totally comfortable for me because I'm used to making cold calls now.

She also believed that her sales experience helped her to consider ways to "sell" her school to potential students and families, and believed that this gave her an advantage over other teachers without that experience. She said, "It's very awkward for people who

don't have any like sales sort of experience, because like how do you approach some random person and ask them to sign up at your school."

Devon similarly drew on his past experiences to bolster his confidence as a student recruiter. He saw school culture as pivotal in attracting diverse students and drew on work that he performed in his master's program, explaining, "I push very hard to make sure we have a good culture. Because in my master's programs I was studying institutional bias. So, specifically, with students in poverty and students of color." Devon's capstone project for his master's degree focused on the retention of poor and minority students in colleges. He explained, "my graduate fellowship was actually recognized by the white house council on higher education as the best practice in retention." He attributed this honor with providing him the confidence to take on so much of his new school's recruiting work. Devon also worked on recruiting in other fields, both as a student recruiter for a university and as an employee recruiter for a firm in New York City. He recalled

> I was asked to do recruiting because I did recruiting for 6 years. I did recruiting on wall street… I understood marketing and branding and I understood the issues that had occurred the previous years in recruiting so I made a proposal [for the school's recruiting plan].

The Influence of Race and Gender on Student Recruitment Work

Teachers' reported that their race and gender played roles in their sensemaking of student recruitment work. Naomi was reserved in her support for student recruitment work, primarily because she felt that she was not able to "sell" the school the way that her school leaders wanted. She explained that the school's focus on character, high-

expectations, and college readiness attracter her to the school and was a primary focus when trying to recruit students. However, after she had been at the school for a while she noticed that the way that she described the school to prospective parents and students did not always line up with reality. She explained, "I almost felt like I was selling these lies to parents." Her primary issue centered around the claim that the school held high expectations for all students. As an African American woman, Naomi drew on her own experiences of teachers having low expectations for her. This helped her to notice that some teachers at Lawrence Prep Academy held lower expectations for minority students and students in poverty. She explained,

> they definitely had a culture of high expectations academically. However, I think unintentionally some teachers come in with high expectations and then the behavior expectations I think are lower because of where they think students are coming from. So, for me that was tricky navigating as an African American female who relates to the population I am serving. My expectations academically for you are just as high as my expectations behaviorally for you. And I feel like unfortunately in a lot of schools, you know, it's a lower expectation of how students who live in poverty how they'll behave.

Other teachers felt that they had to work to achieve legitimacy in the eyes of the minority students and parents who they tried to recruit. Specifically, two of the white teachers in this study – Emily and Devon – admitted to being self-conscious and feeling like they needed to overcome a barrier to reach legitimacy in the eyes of African American and Hispanic families. Emily worked harder to explain who she was and why she taught at her school, despite the racial difference between her and her students. She talked about canvassing the neighborhood to drop off literature on the school and specifically going into an African American hair braiding shop. She recalled,

> They're like, you shouldn't be here. Why are you here? And they get all defensive. But I tell them I'm a teacher and they're like, "Oh. You're white and you're at a braiding shop. You're not here to get your hair braided. You're here

> because you care about the education for my children and I appreciate that you want to teach my child."

Devon, had a more humorous approach to deal with his racial differences from his students. He recalled doing a voice-over for a radio commercial for the school. The radio station played mostly hip hop and R&B music and Devon felt self-conscious about his inclusion in the commercial. He described his feelings, saying "I took out a radio ad, radio ads…They had me record them which was not my preference because there'd be Drake [prominent African-Canadian rapper] and then my white-ass voice like, 'Hey come to high school!'"

Several of the female teachers in this study had reservations about student recruitment based on their perceptions of safety when they were out doing student recruitment. For example, Rita's school, like all schools in this study, sent people out in pairs when they canvassed to pass out information door-to-door. She drew a distinction between going out with another female and going with a male, saying, "it's just uncomfortable if you're in a pair of females especially, to go to some of these areas that feel more dangerous. Like we've been catcalled, and we've been like harassed … I don't mind going with one of our male teachers."

Unanticipated Outcomes of Student Recruitment Work

The third sub-question of this study is: How do teachers make sense of unanticipated outcomes associated with market-oriented policies? Unanticipated consequences are widely discussed in the field of policy implementation (See: Brady, et al. 2014; Merton, 1936; de Zwart, 2015). Policymakers created and bolstered charter schools and other schools of choice to induce core changes to the curriculum, personnel,

use of funds, or educational approaches at schools (Fabricant & Fine, 2012). While these policies have generated mixed results in terms of quality, efficiency, and innovation (See: CREDO, 2009, 2013; Ni & Arsen, 2011; Lubienski, 2009), it is still unclear what other changes have been introduced into schools by policies that induce competition. Teachers in this study highlighted two potentially negative outcomes associated with the market pressures to recruit students. These unanticipated issues include ethical quandaries as teachers struggled how to navigate concerns around student recruitment and teacher burnout.

Unanticipated Outcome: Teachers' Ethical Quandaries

Student recruitment work raised ethical issues for teachers. Ethical considerations fell into two categories. First, teachers perceived that their schools were taking on too many students or students who would not be a good fit for the school, undermining their primary educational missions and work for students. Next, teachers felt that they had to tell half-truths or hide certain aspects of their schools to convince families to enroll their children.

Market pressures undermine school and student wellbeing.

Teachers were highly in tune with the missions of their schools and generally believed that the students who enrolled in their schools should be a good fit for the school. However, Charter schools are created to be open to all students and, except in rare cases, are not supposed to recruit or limit access to students with specific attributes. The Ohio Revised Code section 3314.06(A) on Community [Charter] School Admission

Procedures states that "admission to the school shall be open to any individual age five to twenty-two entitled to attend school." Notwithstanding specific policies pertaining to the creation of single-sex schools and schools for students with Autism, 3314.06(E) states that "The school may not limit admission to students on the basis of intellectual ability, measures of achievement or aptitude, or athletic ability." Teachers in this study consistently sought what they perceived to be the best interests of their schools and the students the sought to recruit. However, this meant that they sometimes undermined the law by seeking to counsel students to move to other schools or to not enroll at their school at all.

For example, when asked if he recruited students who might be difficult for the school to educate, Devon said,

> I don't do that. That's unethical… there are students who would come to me and be like, "I dropped out three years ago and I just need this one credit or whatever." I'd be like, "we have a hybrid program but honestly there are other schools that work with…most of our students are 16, you're like 22. Do you really want to go to our school?

He went on to qualify that they did not turn students away outright, explaining, "Of course, we're happy to have you, we're a public charter, we'll accept anyone who applies, we have space. But we might not be the best fit for you and your needs." However, he was skeptical that his school would ultimately benefit from the student enrolling, anticipating that they would eventually unenroll, explaining "I can recruit you and maybe we'll get paid for you for like a month."

Beth's school, the Taft School, was under pressure to retain students during the school year. She witnessed several students who she believed were not a good fit for her school but believed that market pressures encouraged the school to keep students who

should otherwise be counseled to leave or expelled. Like Devon, her goals related to the retention of student recruitment were in tension with the state law governing charter school enrollment. Beth believed that her school promised to promote and graduate students so they would not transfer to another school. Beth explained,

> You know I personally witnessed people graduating who I knew should not have, to keep that [retention] rate up. People you would have thought should be suspended or have the police called on some of their actions and they weren't. People who weren't expelled when they probably should have been.

She went on to explain how many of the students did not fit the mission of the school but were counseled to enroll into the school and to stay. She said, "Sometimes we'd have a 21-year-old. Because you technically you can do that, whether or not it was the right fit or the best possible outcome for the student, it was a number on the rolls."

Rita believed that the pressures that her school leader and fellow teacher felt from their management company to enroll students and get them to finish their credits ultimately worked against their students' best interests. She described the push from her management company specifically to raise graduation rates because the company was being evaluated on how successfully its schools performed on the student graduation requirement. The management company also wanted to be able to advertise that they were successful in helping students graduate, in part, as part of a recruitment strategy to enroll more students. Rita explained, "it's like a diploma factory, is what I often feel like. And I hate that word but that's just what it feels like. It's like rushing these kids to get credits that should be done in a semester, they're doing them in like 2 weeks."

Misleading families and students to bolster enrollment. Teachers also reported having ethical issues because they were asked to make, or observed others making,

misleading or inaccurate statements to "sell" the school to potential families and students. In many cases families and students would not receive all the information that they needed, or were provided selective information so that they would be more likely to enroll or stay at the school. Teachers' sensemaking of student recruitment was shaped, in part, by the extent to which they were sure that the information that they conveyed to students and families about their school was accurate. The teachers who either resisted student recruitment or reluctantly participated in student recruitment, Mary, Naomi, Beth, Danie, and Rita, all felt like they had to convey information about the school that was in some way misleading. It is important to note that none of the teachers reported that their school leader asked them to lie about the school. Rather, the teachers tended to feel uneasy about the way that they "sold" the school to students and families through the information they chose to withhold or share.

Naomi recalled feeling unethical for going door-to-door to recruit students when she did not fully understand the quality or mission of her school. She initially felt uncomfortable because she did not fully understand what she was trying to recruit students into. In hindsight, when she did understand the school better and the fact that she was somewhat misleading in how she described what the school could offer to parents, she viewed her actions as more ethically problematic. She explained,

> I almost felt like I was selling these lies to parents because there was no way. So, yea, I was like brand-spanking new….and just ended up being out with the teacher who was I think returning for his second year….And was kind of just like going off of what he said, going "Yea, that's what we're going to do for you, make sure your child grows and does all this stuff" I was totally unprepared. Looking back, I should have never done that because… I feel like I don't' want to say anything to parents to allow them to put their child in a school that I know nothing about.

Other teachers felt like their school had high-minded ideals for what they wanted the school to be like and what they wanted to do for their students. But a combination of mismanagement and market pressures undermined those initial goals. Beth explained the how the goals that her school emphasized did not always end up getting played out in the everyday education of students. She said, that teachers and leaders at the school were

> always sounding like they're going to emphasize the individual. Which I think philosophically they were very committed to. It makes it harder to do in practice when you wear lots and lots of hats and the number in your classroom go up. Because, remember the recruiting numbers are based on the bottom line, not how much space there is in each room or the building itself. So, whether or not you had space for bodies they were coming in. So… and it was just part of keeping your job.

Beth highlighted how market pressures undermined her school's mission, creating an ethical dilemma for teachers who knew the way that they talked about the school aligned with their stated goals but not necessarily the education that students would experience. Ultimately, Beth made the decision to leave the school at the end of the year, citing the uncomfortable ethical questions her recruitment work raised. She explained,

> I didn't think I could positively represent the school any longer, which is why I am seeking other employment….I do believe it was successful for a certain type of student, but that's not what you're going to say in recruiting. In recruiting, you're going to…bill it as something more widely appealing to more people and I felt like that wasn't true.

Rita was similarly troubled by the way that market pressures prompted ethically questionable actions at her school. Rita worked at Roosevelt Recovery Academy. Many of her students had previously dropped out of school so she and her colleagues were working with a population that was prone to high mobility rates and typically had trouble showing up to school consistently, even when they were still on the roster. She explained the pressures that she felt from their management company to keep retention rates up

high. One strategy the school used was to procure sick notes from parents when a child did not show up to the school over an extended period of time. Even though the students were not sick, the school could continue to receive funding for them because they were still listed as a Full Time Equivalent student on the rosters. Rita explained her dilemma, saying

> The problem is retaining, because we have to keep them. If they don't come back then they get unenrolled and then we lose those numbers again….we had 25 people who were going to be unenrolled for not attending….we were doing frantic home visits trying to gets note signed that they were sick, you know. Which felt really shady to me because they weren't actually sick, they just weren't coming to school. But you can use a written excuse.

Unintended Consequence: Extra-Role Tasks and Burnout

Another unanticipated outcome of market policies had to do with the extra work that teachers took on to recruit students. There were two general negative outcomes to this extra work. First, teachers were required to take on more work than they could handle so that other areas of their work, including classroom instruction, suffered. Second, teachers experienced multiple negative outcomes related to burnout including stress and frustration.

Extra-role tasks. Student recruitment work was an extra-role task that each of the teachers in this study took on to some extent. A few of the teachers, particularly, Sara, Devon, and Mary, took on substantial amounts of extra work. But most of the teachers in this study engaged in it on a weekly or monthly basis. However, many of these moderate participants still faced burnout and overwork because student recruitment was just one of many other extra tasks that they were asked to undertake. Several of the teachers made

the connection between working at a charter school and performing extra-role tasks at their school. For example, Emily explained,

> You teach at our school and have growing classes, you are there 8:30 to 4:30 and if you are tutoring that night you're there till 5:15. And you're there for other meetings when parents can't come during school so some nights I've been there till 8:30 at night. But it's just what you have to do as a teacher at a charter school. You have to go above and beyond.

Devon similarly made the connection between the extra work he took on and the charter school environment. Explaining why he was surprised by the need to recruit students but not opposed to requests that he help with it, he said,

> I was really familiar with charter education and because I had done research on it I knew…also working in higher education…you just end up doing a lot of things that aren't on your job descriptions. Just education in general. You're always gonna end up doing things that aren't on the, you know, "or other duties as assigned". You know that's gonna happen. You're gonna end up filling extra roles.

Sara also had a sense that extra-role tasks were associated with the school's charter status. When a new teacher complained about all the extra work that the staff had to perform in addition to their regular teaching schedules she responded, saying,

> I explained to him plenty of times, we do extra stuff here because that's what we do. This is what it is. He wanted to change the whole vibe of it to be like "everything is fair and equal and predictable"…and it was like, "you don't know what you are talking about"

Some teachers willingly took on extra tasks while other resisted. Mary felt like her principal did not have a solid plan for or understanding of how to do many of the duties that needed to be performed at the school. She described her roles in addition to teacher as "detention management, lunch duty…teaching a class on high school readiness and…serving as the guidance counselor and getting the 8th grader placed in high

schools." In addition to this she also managed the recruiting at her school. The lack of trust of her school leadership led Mary to resist requests to perform extra tasks.

On the other hand, teachers like Megan and Emily understood that they were taking on extra roles but were willing to because they believed in the mission of the school and trusted their school leaders. Megan explained, that many of the teachers put their whole lives into teaching and were OK with not having a lot of time outside of school. She said, "we're all pretty young and pretty close to each other so it doesn't really even bother us I don't think…this is part of our job. Like, if it needs to get done, it's part of it."

Burnout. Teachers associated student recruitment work with burnout and overwork. Burnout shaped teachers' sensemaking of the need to recruit in substantial ways. As teachers began to experience burnout they became more critical of requests to recruit students. Burnout also contributed to teacher sensemaking when they reflected on negative past experiences to bolster their current student recruitment work, simply out of appreciation for being out of the previously bad situation.

Mary described a particularly busy period of recruiting for her school right before the school year began. The extra work that she took on to organize student recruitment took a mental toll on her and led, in part, to her decision to quit her job. Her frustration with student recruitment work was also compounded by the fact that she felt undervalued and underpaid. She described her school at that point saying,

> Everybody there worked non-stop, I earned nothing, and then it was just like, there was no appreciation. . . . If you are so good at managing kids, how come you are not investing into the people who are [teaching them]. . . . if there'd been some sort of reasonable overlap between hours, compensation, respect and opportunity for growth I would have stayed forever and, I'm a very loyal person.

Mary's frustration at feeling burnt out and underappreciated was also shaped by a conversation that she had with a high-level pro-charter school advocacy organization who she knew from her work at – prep. She described seeing him at a coffee shop one Saturday morning and striking up a conversation

> the big guy at [a Pro-Charter School organization] just happens to live in the same neighborhood as I do. I was like, "Aren't you?" And we got to talking and I was talking about this issue [teacher burnout] with him and he was just kind of dismissive about it. He was just like, "There are a lot of charter schools that are just unapologetic, like, yea we work people to the bone, we know they aren't going to stay that long and we'll get a new group.

Naomi believed that her students needed her and other teachers to put in more work to educate them and she understood the market pressures that her school was under to recruit students. When she first started teaching at her school, Naomi was willing to perform extra work for her school, especially related to student recruitment work. However, she got pregnant and anticipated that having a child and taking on all the work that her school leaders asked of her would be too much. She described her decision to pull back from student recruitment work, saying

> I felt like there was an unwritten rule that like, "you're gonna be there way more than 40 hours a week." Which every teacher knows you work more than 40 hours a week but when you're at school and they had an extended school day and extended school year so I know kids need that. It's a perception that kids need that when you're behind [academically] many years. I just couldn't do it anymore, I was pregnant with my daughter and just decided, "I can't teach this way and still be the mom that I want to be."

Beth actively opposed the recruiting work at her school because she believed it contributed heavily to burnout and that it took away from her education-related tasks such as lesson planning and working one-on-one with students. She described trying to balance all of the work that she had to do in addition to student recruitment work, saying, "there are just literally so many hours in the day and so much you can do to restructure

your life to fit more planning and grading in. So, it [student recruitment] would definitely slow down the grading, the assessment, and interfere with the planning process." Beth rejected her school leaders' calls to take on more student recruitment work, even though she acknowledged that the teachers at her school felt pressure to recruit to ensure that they would keep their jobs. Her resolve to resist was bolstered by her observation of other teachers who burned themselves out trying to do everything the administration asked of them, explaining,

> They just stretched themselves thinner….teachers are pretty stretched thin…. But none of that really mattered you were expected to do more and more and more. And it was in the name of bettering the organization and keeping things going and keeping your job.

Other teachers experienced burn out at previous jobs. These experiences tended to bolster their willingness to take on extra work associated with student recruitment because their current schools seemed better by comparison. These previous experiences were negative enough that they shed their current roles in a positive light. Daniel described a situation at the school where he was employed before his current job at Roosevelt Recovery Academy. The previous school required him to work for 60 or more hours a week. He explained,

> Burnout is a major major issue…. I was tired. I was tired of dealing with the mess. People go to work at 7 in the morning and sometimes don't leave until 4 in the morning, go home, change clothes, and come back. There was one day I pulled 36 hours. I left to get food and buy clothes at Walmart. Back to work, change. Try doing that for 5 years. I'm glad that I'm where I am now. Things have changed. I needed that.

Daniel was a reluctant participant in student recruitment work at Roosevelt Recovery Academy. But he was somewhat willing to engage in student recruitment work because of his previous negative experience.

Other teachers experienced burnout threat. They did not necessarily feel burned out at the time of our interview, but had the sense that they could get burned out if they were asked to do more than currently requested. Carol explained, "at one point we were spending parts of our school day going out and recruiting. And I thought that was too much, especially if it would have continued. It would have caused some burn out and burdened some people."

Sensemaking and Teachers' Discretion Toward Student Recruitment

The final sub-question of this study is: How do teachers' sensemaking activities and the contextual factors that mediate them shape their discretion toward student recruitment work? At the time of our interviews, teachers in this study had fairly set discretions toward recruitment, even though two of the teachers had been at their schools for less than a year. A key component of policy implementation is "street-level bureaucrats'" willingness to engage in all aspects of enacting the policy in a robust manner (Lipsky, 1980). There have been various typologies of the discretion of street level bureaucrats, laid out in detail in chapter 2. While specifics differ between researchers, typologies of discretion range from those who are unwilling to those who are willing to engage in implementation (Brower, et al., 2017; Meyers & Lehman-Neilson, 2012; Sorg, 1983). The teachers in this study fell into four distinct groups related to their willingness to participate in student recruitment work. Devon, Emily, Sara and Megan were all active participants. Tara and Thomas were indifferent/infrequent participants. Daniel, Rita, and Naomi were reluctant participants who agreed to perform student recruitment work with reservations. Beth and Mary were active resisters who refused to

do student recruitment and, ultimately, decided to leave their jobs over their dissatisfaction.

There are two important points to make before considering these discretions toward student recruitment in more detail. First, teachers' discretion developed over time as they engaged in sensemaking of student recruitment work. Mary, for example, started out excited to do student recruitment work but ended up actively resisting participating in it. This study only provides an indication of where the teachers have been and where they are at the time of the interview. It is possible that with institutional changes or personnel changes at the school, teachers' discretion toward recruitment will change as well. Second, teachers' in this study often fell into multiple categories or types of discretion over the course of their careers. For example, Beth, who ended up actively resisting the recruitment efforts of her school, explained that "Probably for the first two years I was outwardly positive about the school to people who would ask me, and I was happy to do the [recruitment' tours]. But as time when on and the more I learned about it, I was disenfranchised and not wanting to do the sessions. The recruitment sessions specifically."

Discretion Type: Active Participation

Emily, Megan, Devon and Sara were active and positive in their participation in student recruitment. Emily cited several reasons for her active participation. The close-knit nature of her staff was attractive to her, she explained "it's a family. The staff itself is a family." She made a connection between the close-knit nature of the staff and the widespread willingness to engage in recruitment work, saying,

> People get excited because they haven't seen each other all summer. And since they haven't seen each other all summer they're like, "Oh, yea, hey! We get to go." And since you don't know who are recruiting with till you get to the school you don't know who signed up for that day unless you individually texted everyone and asked. You really don't care you just show up to school and whoever is there you go out with. So, it's kind of a little reunion for us teachers over the summer so its enjoyable.

Figure 13. Teachers' Discretion Type Toward Student Recruitment Work

Discretion Type	Teacher and School Name
Active Participation	Sara (Butler Preparatory Academy) Devon (Butler Preparatory Academy Megan (Meyer Early College) Emily (City STEM Academy)
Reluctant Participation	Naomi (Lawrence Preparatory Academy) Carol (City STEM Academy) Rita (Roosevelt Recovery Academy) Daniel (Roosevelt Recovery Academy)
Indifferent/Infrequent Participation	Thomas (Harding Hills Academy Tara (Meyer Early Academy)
Active Resistance	Mary (Lawrence Preparatory Academy) Beth (Taft Academy)

Emily attributed her positivity toward recruitment work to the hard work that the staff performed together. She explained,

> You have to go above and beyond. You have to get it done and your to-do list will never be done but you have to pick and choose what you can get done that day and do what it takes to help the children succeed and help parents succeed and increase the value of the community. So, our teachers understand that because they're not negative about recruiting, they're excited. They see each other and they go around and talk to people about our school and kind of brag about ourselves.

Megan was also outwardly positive about recruitment. She contrasted her positive experience at Meyer Early College Academy with a previous negative experience at a school in another state where she felt disillusioned. She said,

> we believe in what we're doing. And I've been in schools where…it was awful how much I did not care. … and it was just like really disheartening. And, so, by the end I knew I was moving so I just took all my vacation days. So, like it was just like such as, it was like such a negative place to be and there's so much turn over in administration that like teachers didn't have any sort of buy in. And here [her current school] … they could ask us to do stuff and we all would like agree to do it.

Sara and Devon were also active participants in student recruitment work, although, unlike Emily and Megan, they did not believe that their entire staff was onboard with their work to recruit. They also actively disagreed and argued with one another over strategies, competed with one another over the number of students they recruited, and held very contentious views of one another. Regardless, they were both willing to engage in student recruitment work and both held positive views of their work, the school leader, and the mission of the school.

Discretion Type: Indifferent or Infrequent Participation

Tara from Meyer Early College and Thomas from Harding Hills Academy, were indifferent to student recruiting work and participated in it infrequently. They both taught at schools with low market pressure and were not in the "insider" group of teachers who actively participated in the limited amount of student recruitment work that was performed. Tara knew about recruiting and supported her school's work to recruit students. When asked if she was a direct participant in student recruitment efforts, she responded, "I am not…. but there are some teachers that will attend the open houses slash

informational sessions to be able to give a testimonial about, like, how the school operates and just kind of answer questions from parents. But, me specifically I am not directly involved." Tara acknowledged the low market pressure on her school, explaining, "our recruitment needs are low because we can only accept based upon [the number of] teachers and…wanting to keep class sizes small." Similarly, Thomas understood the need to recruit to his school but believed that his role in student recruitment work was more behind the scenes. He explained, "I don't think of myself as a recruiter. I don't think of myself as actively going out and recruiting students. For me it's more about retention than trying to create the best school possible so that students want to come back and that families want to come back."

Discretion Type: Reluctant Participation

Daniel and Rita from Roosevelt Recovery Academy, Carol from City STEM, and Naomi from Lawrence Prep Academy were reluctant participants in student recruitment work. They were skeptical of the need to recruit and questioned the recruiting requirements placed on them by their school leadership. However, they continued to perform recruitment work because they saw the need to recruit at their schools to maintain enrollment and believed that their school leaders needed their assistance.

Rita understood the need to recruit at her school. She explained,

> I brought it up to our enrollment specialist [from her school's management company], and she's like 'We just need bodies, we need numbers.' Because our director's just getting all this crap about getting numbers so….it feels to me like they don't care who they get as long as they get numbers. They get bodies.

She wanted to see her school grow and maintain her and her colleagues' jobs but she also felt a significant amount of pressure to recruit, saying "we're really made to feel like it's something that we should expect to do. That it's something that's part of our job." Rita was often asked to combine her class with another teachers' so one of them could go to canvass the surrounding neighborhood to pass out school fliers door-to-door. She explained,

> it's really actually very annoying. Because, well it's usually if we're very slow. Like students have gone home early then we'll go out in the afternoon. And I don't mind that as much…. But it's when I've got students…I think it's stupid to make us leave the students to do their work while we go out and hang door hangers for 3 hours.

Despite Rita's distaste for leaving her classroom to recruit, she was willing to go because she was appreciative of her job and felt like her background prepared her for recruitment work. She explained, "I don't like being dragged out of my room and I'd rather be in my room working. But I really needed the job and I feel like I'm pretty good at it. Even if it's not my favorite thing to do." Daniel, also from Roosevelt Recovery Academy did recruitment work but also modified his teaching at his school leaders' insistence to retain students at the school. He explained, "Your being told 'we have to keep these numbers up, so you have to modify your teaching… they told me that I was too extreme." Daniel was reluctant to change aspects of his teaching to retain students but understood that without that retention his staff could face cuts.

Naomi participated in student recruitment work but had reservations because she believed she often promoted the school without knowing enough about it or the effect it would have on the students and families she recruited. She reflected on early experiences of canvassing neighborhoods door-to-door to recruit students, saying, "I was totally

unprepared. Looking back, I should have never done that [recruited students] because I feel like…I don't want to say anything to parents to allow them to put their child in a school that I know nothing about." Despite her reservations about recruiting, Naomi often heard from her school leadership that their school needed to hit a certain number of students to maintain their current teaching staff. She explained, "there were certain numbers needing to be hit and we would get a constant update of where we were on those numbers and teachers would be going out all summer with this letter of commitment, talking to families, trying to get them interested." These messages from her school leaders motivated her to continue engaging in student recruitment to help ensure that the school would stay afloat, even when she held ethical reservations about doing so.

Discretion Type: Active Resistance

Beth from Taft Academy and Mary from Lawrence Prep Academy both actively resisted their school's' efforts to recruit students. Both intended to quit at the end of the year based on their experience with student recruitment. Beth explained why she resisted recruitment work, explaining:

> this particular charter school was having a once a week staff meeting after school and then we have, recruiting sessions among many, many other duties including writing narrative grades that take a very long time to do when you have 125-150 students. And sometimes you'd be missing your planning period to do some substitute teaching for other staff members who are sick, things like that. . .. most people realized, or felt that they had to do it and signed up for the session during this once a week staff meeting we were told to sign up. And people did sign up and I believe tended to show up. I did not, that was my responses to not show up.

Beth did not outwardly oppose her school leaders. Instead, she attempted to stay under the radar until she could move into another job. She explained,

> Once it was my turn to go to a recruiting session I had already started looking for jobs outside of the school. So, I was anticipating not coming back the following fall and I didn't think I could positively represent the school any longer, which is why I was seeking other employment. So, the problem was I couldn't exactly tell my administrators that, that I no longer believed in the school or the mission. . .. I don't believe I was honest about why I didn't go. I just didn't show up.

Beth also resisted her school's recruitment efforts by opposing other teachers' calls to engage in student recruitment at a deeper level. She described her interactions with other teachers, saying:

> The people who wanted to have everybody as dedicated as they were would sometimes lecture the others. Like, "Why didn't you make your lunch duty?" "Why weren't you at this recruiting session?" Umm, you know there would be confrontations like that like, "This is your duty you need to do this," and the other people were just like, "I can't there's just too much going on."

Mary was also actively resistant to student recruitment work. Like Beth, she started off positive about student recruitment work and was slowly turned against it as she observed what she perceived to be the futility of her work to recruit and the incompetence of her school leaders. Unlike Beth who gradually got to the point that she actively resisted recruitment work, Mary had a breaking point that caused her to decide to quit teaching at her school. She was harassed while going out to recruit door-to-door on a Saturday morning and decided to quit shortly after. She told her school leaders that she was not comfortable going door-to-door on her own to pass out information on recruiting. She explained that, "the next day it was like 'are you going to go out today or not?' And it was just like, I quit. This is ridiculous. I just feel so under-valued here."

Conclusion

This chapter laid out the findings from the multiple case study on teachers' recruitment of students to their school. The next chapter provides a discussion of the

findings, implications, and recommendations for policymakers, school leaders, and researchers.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Implications and Further Research

This chapter lays out a discussion of the findings from chapter 4. I begin by discussing some broad implications from the findings. Then, I establish a preliminary framework for the process of teachers' sensemaking of student recruitment work and discuss considerations for researchers who employ sensemaking theory. Finally, I discuss recommendations for policymakers and potential directions and questions for future research on teachers' roles in student recruitment. The notable findings that I discuss include:

- Teachers worked in many ways to recruit students to their schools. The strategies they employed and the extent to which they were involved in student recruitment varied widely between and within school sites.
- Teachers had a high level of discretion in determining how they would recruit students to their school. At points teachers engaged in "creaming" and "cropping" of students based on their perception that those students would be a good fit for the school or not.
- Teachers in this study developed firm identities related to the need to recruit students. "Insider" teachers were highly involved in student recruitment while "outsider" teachers were not highly involved.
- Teachers drew firm distinctions between those who were "insiders" and "outsiders" on their school staff. In some cases, competition between teachers

within the same school over student recruitment seemed to be a stronger motivating factor than competition between different schools.

- Teachers felt a tension between the democratic aim of including all students in their schools and the need to uphold their school's mission by recruiting students who were a good "fit." The teachers in this study tended to counsel students who were not a good fit to consider other school options.
- Negative and unintended outcomes of marketized policies included teacher burnout and the introduction of ethical quandaries related to student recruitment.
- School leaders played a significant role in shaping teachers' sensemaking of student recruitment and their eventual discretion toward student recruitment.

Teachers' Work to Recruit Students in Response to Market Pressures

This study contributes to the existing literature on market effects on education in multiple ways. First, there has not been a thorough examination of the work that charter school teachers undertake to recruit students to their schools in response to the market pressures placed on them by policies that induce competition into the education system. This study demonstrates not only that charter school teachers engage in student recruitment work, but also that they may play significant roles in student recruitment at their schools. This finding highlights the need to place a focus on teachers in the student recruitment process because much of the literature in the United States context largely downplays the role of teachers or focuses heavily on school leaders (Holme, Carkhum & Rangel, 2013; Jabbar, 2015a, 2015b; Jennings, 2010; Kasman & Loeb, 2013; Lubienski, 2007).

Teachers engaged in multiple different strategies related to student recruitment. My interviews indicated that teachers took on student recruitment work most significantly through giving school tours (12 teachers), passing out fliers (12 teachers), engaging in after school open houses for potential students (10 teachers), and going door-to-door in the neighborhood to recruit (6 teachers). All teachers indicated that their schools used a website and social media accounts to engage students and families as well. These findings are consistent with international literature which suggests that teachers in schools of choice may participate in student recruitment work (Foskett & Hemsley-Brown, 2002; Oplatka, 2006, 2007), but it is the first study to show how teachers in charter schools in the United States engage in student recruitment work.

Another important finding is that there was significant variation in terms of the extent to which teachers engaged in student recruitment. Some teachers such as Tara and Thomas, whose schools experienced low market pressures, engaged in minimal levels of recruitment work, while others such as Naomi and Daniel, whose schools experienced higher levels of market pressure, engaged in more recruitment work. Still, others, such as Devon, Sara, and Mary, led student recruitment work and, at times, seemed to play a larger role in organizing student recruitment work than their school leaders. These findings warrant further consideration which I discuss in the section below titled Recommendations for Further Research.

There was also a surprisingly high rate of teachers in this study who experienced threats and danger in their work to recruit students. All but two of the female teachers – Megan and Tara who did not need to go door-to-door to recruit students because their school experienced low competitive pressures – experienced physical threats or

harassment. This is an important finding for school leaders and other individuals who manage student recruitment processes. The personal well-being of teachers is a good in and of itself, so requirements or requests that teachers go out into communities should be made with caution. School leaders should be mindful about when and where they ask teachers to go and should take precautions such as sending teachers out in larger groups and providing transportation for teachers to easily leave situations where they feel uncomfortable. Personal danger and harassment also raise human capital issues. Mary, for example, took on many roles at her school as a teacher leader, curriculum developer, student recruitment director, and led professional development trainings for the staff. By all accounts she was a valuable member of the teaching staff. However, she decided to quit after she was verbally harassed and physically intimidated while out in the neighborhood trying to recruit students. Had her school leaders taken more precautions and taken her complaints seriously, she likely would have continued working at the school.

Teachers' Discretion Toward Student Recruitment Work

Teacher's sensemaking of student recruitment led them to firm discretions toward student recruitment. I established a rough typology of teacher discretion toward student recruitment work (Figure 13). This typology is similar to other typologies of street-level bureaucrats' discretion toward policy implementation (Brower, 2017; Meyers & Lehman-Nielson, 2012; Sorg, 1983).

Teachers in this study exhibited a wide range of discretionary actions. Most notably, teachers had some discretion over which students attended the school and which

students did not. While no teacher in this study refused a student access to the school, they engaged in other strategies to shape the formation of their student body. For example, Megan, who taught at Meyer Early College, a school with a good reputation for academic achievement, heavily cautioned certain students against attending who would not be a good academic fit. Similarly, Devon counseled students not to attend Butler Preparatory Academy if he felt that they would be likely to drop out. These actions seemed innocuous or even helpful from the vantage point of the teachers. However, they were extending and withholding access to a public benefit – in this case the right to enroll in a public school – which is a key component of the discretion of "street-level bureaucrats" (Meyers & Lehman-Nielson, 2012).

One surprising finding is that my data did not point to specific teacher character traits that were linked to their discretion. Past literature suggests that some teachers might have a more "entrepreneurial" personality or attitude than others and, thus, be more amenable to the idea of having to recruit their own students (Ball, 2003). Further, certain teacher characteristics and experiences are associated with a more entrepreneurial mind frame and a willingness to engage more wholeheartedly in reform movements such as charter schools. Two teachers in this study, Mary and Naomi, participated in Teach for America which is often associated strongly with a willingness to participate in reform efforts (Sondal, 2013). However, both teachers, while willing to recruit at first, ultimately were opposed to the idea of recruiting students to their school.

Teachers' discretion appeared to be shaped most by several social and institutional factors, particularly the characteristics of school leaders. First, teachers' trust in their school leader shaped their discretion toward student recruitment work. Teachers

who had more positive discretions toward student recruitment trusted their school leaders to make good decisions about how to engage in the work. Teachers like Emily, Sara, and Devon trusted their school leaders and ultimately were positive about student recruitment. Mary and Beth, on the other hand, did not trust their school leaders to lead student recruitment competently or with integrity.

Second, teachers who experienced productive autonomy tended to have more positive discretions toward student recruitment. By productive autonomy, I mean that teachers experienced two things. On one hand, they could see that the work that they performed to recruit students to their school paid off. On the other hand, they had the ability to make autonomous, self-directed decisions about how best to recruit students to their school. Sara and Devon, from Butler Prep Academy, were both teachers who experienced productive autonomy. They were both able to identify how many students came to the school because of their recruitment work and had a high level of freedom to make choices about how best to recruit students.

Teachers also had significant discretion to engage in student recruitment work in ways that they believed would work. Sara tried a more personal and relational, "micro" approach, visiting families in their homes and building on personal relationships with the students, while Devon attempted a more "macro" approach using radio commercials, recruitment fairs, and other large-scale strategies. The teachers who had positive discretions believed that their work to recruit students was worth their time. The strategies that they undertook clearly resulted in increased or sustained student enrollment. Teachers such as Beth and Mary were opposed to student recruitment work because they did not see their work to recruit students result in gains in enrollment. On

the other hand, teachers such as Sara and Devon both believed that their strategies paid off.

Figure 14. Characteristics of Teacher Discretion

Discretion Type for Student Recruitment Work/Implementation	Teachers	Characteristics of Discretion Type
Active Participation	Sara, Devon, Emily, Megan	• High trust in school leadership • Strong connection between actions and outcomes • Coherent strategies • Low-instance of burnout and ethical quandaries • Medium and high levels of market pressures • Principal sensegiving present
Reluctant Participation	Naomi, Daniel, Carol, Rita	• Low trust in school leadership • Weak connection between actions and outcomes • Incoherent strategies • Burnout and ethical quandaries are present • Medium and high levels of market pressure • Little principal sensegiving or ineffective principal sensegiving
Indifferent/Infrequent Participation	Tara, Titus	• High trust in school leadership • Little connection to recruitment work • Low market pressures • Little principal sensegiving
Active Resistance	Mary, Beth	• Low trust in school leadership • High levels of burnout • Significant ethical quandaries • Weak connection between action and outcomes • Incoherent strategies • High levels of market pressure • Teachers resistant to principal sensegiving • Leads to quitting

Teachers' discretion was also shaped by ethical considerations that they faced in their work to recruit students. teachers who had positive discretions toward student recruitment did not experience the negative outcomes associated with recruitment that many of the teachers talked about. Teachers like Beth and Naomi, who both felt like they could not ethically try to recruit students to their schools, were generally opposed to student recruitment work. Other teachers who did not experience ethical issues in their work tended to be more positive about student recruitment.

Teachers also talked about experiencing burnout or seeing student recruitment work interfere with their more traditional tasks as educators. Teachers who were positive and engaged in student recruitment such as Emily, Megan, Sara and Devon did not experience burnout in their jobs. Teachers like Beth, Daniel and Carol were reluctant to engage in student recruitment work because they experienced burnout when they were required to do more work than they thought they could take on.

Perceptions of Competition and Divisions within Schools

Another key finding from my interviews with teachers is that market pressures appeared to do more to inspire competition and divisions *within* schools rather than between them. Teachers in this study were very aware of who on their staff was willing to do student recruitment work and who possessed the skills and knowledge to carry it out. Each of the 12 teachers identified "insider" and "outsider" groups within the staff. This led many of the teachers to see other teachers through a competitive lens. The competition within the school also acted as a central motivation to many of the teachers to recruit students to their schools.

These findings line up with previous research that suggests that school personnel do not have strong conceptions of the other schools that are their biggest sources of competition for students (Holme, Carkhum, & Rangel, 2013; Jabbar, 2015a, 2015b; Jennings, 2010). Principals have tended to rely on subjective means to understand competitive pressures and their conceptions of competition are not objectively based on the number of students that attend other schools over theirs. Rather, principals may rely on their social networks to establish who is their primary competition (Jabbar, 2015a; Jennings, 2010). Principals may also view their primary competition as those schools with similar demographics (Kasman & Loeb, 2013) and those within the most visible large school networks (Jabbar, 2015b). Holme, Carkhum, & Rangel (2013) studied traditional public school teachers in the student recruitment process but found that they largely were unmotivated to find out who their competition was and felt powerless to stem the flow of students from their schools to others.

Teachers were strongly motivated by competition with other teachers at their school. As the findings demonstrated, teachers came to identify themselves and others as "insiders" or "outsiders" in student recruitment and subsequently reinforced those divisions with their actions. These divisions fell along several different lines, each motivating teachers to engage in student recruitment to various extents.

The best example of this competitive motivation was Sara and Devon, from Butler Prep Academy, who were motivated by the desire to outdo each other. Neither had a strong conception of the other high schools in their area who presented their largest competition. But they did compare the numbers of students they had recruited to the school and were very aware of how their recruitment strategies differed and clashed with

one another. Furthermore, Devon and Sara were aware of the factions of teachers at their school who they considered to be supportive of the work to recruit students in general. But they were also very aware of who supported their approaches and strategies for student recruitment and who were not on board with them. This awareness seemed to motivate both Devon and Sara to work harder at student recruitment.

Other teachers, particularly, Emily and Megan from City STEM Academy and Meyer Early College, were motivated by the perception that their staff was united and "all in." Emily described the unity and positivity of the staff at her school, saying "I know this all sounds like a fairy tale, but it's not." And Megan quipped about the teachers at her school, saying, "We drink the kool aid," a humorous reference to cults filled with unquestioning and completely dedicated followers. Whether these are accurate descriptions of the how the teachers at these two schools really felt is beyond the scope of this study. But, Megan and Emily employed this conception of their schools to drive their student recruitment work. They developed a sort of "us against the world" approach in which their motivation was to work, as a team, to overcome the odds to recruit a student body and help them overcome their negative circumstances.

Other teachers were motivated to engage at a deeper level in student recruitment work by their perception that other teachers in their schools could not be trusted to recruit well due to lack of skill or incompetence. Mary had to split her staff up based on their willingness and trustworthiness to go door-to-door to make calls. Her motivation was not that she wanted to go above and beyond or outshine another teacher. Instead, her motivation stemmed from the belief that if she did not micro-manage the student recruitment work, it would not get done. Rita similarly was motivated to assist in student

recruitment because her background in business gave her a skill set that allowed her to be successful at cold calling families and canvassing neighborhoods. She created a division between herself and the principal of her school who had the skillsets to be success student recruiters, and teachers at her school who were not comfortable or motivated enough to leave the classroom to recruit students.

Finally, other teachers were motivated to *not* engage in student recruitment, in part out of a reaction against other teachers who they felt were too pushy about recruitment or who set too high of expectations. Beth, for example, started out motivated to engage in student recruitment but her willingness to engage in the work decreased over time as she increasingly observed divisions in the staff based on willingness to work. She took action to recruit students, for example, by engaging in tours for students or meeting with parents, but soon found out that many teachers believed that she was not doing enough. This led her to view those teachers as "insider" teachers who would "stretch themselves thinner and thinner, all in the name of the greater good," and herself as an "outsider" teacher who was not fully devoted. Eventually, Beth felt disenfranchised from her school and was no longer motivated to participate in the student recruitment process.

Teachers' Recruitment Work and the Shaping of School Missions

Market pressures undermined or shaped the ways that teachers conceived of and upheld their schools' missions. School missions are a key component of charter school policy because charter schools are supposed to increase the number and diversity of educational options for students and families (Lubienski & Lee, 2016; Peterson, 2016). If school missions do not attract parents, or, if the school's stated mission does not line up

with actual education received by students, the goals of charter policy may be undermined as parents opt into schools that do not actually reflect their preferences for educational programming.

Many teachers indicated that they often took on students who were difficult to teach or would not be successful given the school's mission and focus. For example, Beth talked about how her school, Taft Academy, wanted to focus on the needs of individual students but took on too many students with IEPs. The result was that teachers were not able to focus on individual students because they were too busy working on IEPs. Additionally, to make ends meet, Taft Academy over-enrolled and took on more students than the teachers could handle while still maintaining their mission.

Teachers used their school missions to exclude certain students. For example, Megan focused on Meyer Early College's reputation as a rigorous and successful school. She discussed counseling students away from her school, saying, "we're kind of honest with those parents. I feel like up front like it's, if they need a lot of support, we're probably no the school for you." This suggests that the democratic goal of educating all students may be undermined as educators work to exclude students who may not support the mission of the school.

Butler Prep Academy, where Sara and Devon taught, provided an interesting case where the school was responsive to market demands by altering certain missional aspects of the school. In particular, Sara created a new online and in-person hybrid education program that helped students in danger of dropping out of school, or to attract those who had already dropped out and were contemplating a return. This is in line with the goal of policymakers – charter schools should be more responsive to meet the needs of parent

and student "consumers" (Hoxby, 2002; Lubienski, 2003). Much of the literature has suggested that schools will focus more on marketing and advertising themselves over changes in the core education they provide (See: Jabbar, 2015; Lubienski, 2007). This finding challenges the assumption that charter schools will only focus on advertising and recruiting over educational changes – although advertising and recruitment were the prominent responses reported by teachers in this study.

Comparisons Across Case Schools

There were factors that shaped teachers' work to recruit student across each of the case schools and other factors that seemed to have little bearing. These factors are listed in Figure 15 below. First, the school mission in and of itself, did not seem to impact teachers' work to recruit students. That is not to say that teachers were not aware of the mission or did not work to uphold their school mission through their recruiting activities. Rather, there did not seem to be a school mission type that made it harder or easier for teachers to recruit students. For example, Butler Prep and Harding Hills Academy both had a college preparatory mission. But Butler Prep had a mobility rate of over 50% and teachers experienced a high level of pressure to recruit students, while Harding Hills had a much lower mobility rate – 10-15% - and teachers experienced low pressures to recruit students. Another factor that appeared to have little impact on teachers' recruitment was the content and focus of the school websites and other advertisements. Schools in this study seemed to emphasize similar things across their websites, social media, and advertising. These included a focus on the individual students' interests, a focus on preparation for future endeavors, and somewhat vague references to "academic

achievement" and "excellence" that did not correspond necessarily with state-issued report card grades.

Figure 15. Comparison of Case Schools

School	Mission	Mobility Rate	Waitlist	Major Recruitment Strategies	School Leadership Style	Website/ Advertisement Focus
Butler Prep Academy	College Prep	50-55%	No	Radio ads, recruitment events, tours, altering educational offerings	• High agency for teachers • High pressure to recruit • High trust	• College prep • Arts • Individual interests and attention • Caring/inclusive environment
City STEM Academy	STEM	20-25%	No	Fliers, local business partnerships, recruitment events, tours	• High agency for teachers • High/fluctuating pressure to recruit • High trust	• STEM focus • Individual attention • Caring/nurturing environment
Harding Hills Academy	College Prep	10-15%	Yes	Retention strategies, recruitment events, tours	• High agency for teachers • Low pressure to recruit • High trust	• College preparation • Individualized attention • Character education
Meyer Early College	Early College	0-5%	Yes	Retention, word of mouth, reputation, tours	• High agency for teachers • Low pressure to recruit • High trust	• College preparation and participation • Academic excellence/exclusivity
Lawrence Prep Academy	College Prep	5-10%	No	Neighborhood canvassing, tours, fliers & signs, cold calls	• High agency for teachers • High pressure to recruit • Low trust	• Academic Achievement • Character education • College success • Academic excellence/exclusivity
Roosevelt Recovery Academy	Dropout Recovery	70-75%	No	Neighborhood canvassing, tours, cold calls	• Low agency for teachers • High pressure to recruit • High trust	• Flexibility to graduate • Individual attention • "Drama free" environment
Taft Academy	Internship	10-15%	No	Recruitment events, tours, fliers, yard signs	• Low agency for teachers • High pressure to recruit • Low trust	• Individualized education • Career readiness • Caring/inclusive environment

School advertisements, websites, and social media also tended to focus on the school as an inclusive environment where all students were nurtured and cared for, while at the same time, suggesting that the school was an exclusive environment where students would receive exceptional education that they could not receive elsewhere. There is some indication that school advertisements and missions may not line up with the reality of the school's actual quality so this is not a particularly surprising finding (Lubienski, 2007; Olsen Beal, Stewart, & Lubienski, 2016).

There were factors across schools that appeared to shape teachers' student recruitment work. Teachers at schools with waitlists, Meyer Early College and Harding Hills Academy, experienced low pressures to recruit and had a high level of trust in their school leaders. These teachers were also provided a high level of agency, the freedom to choose when they wanted to participate in student recruiting and how they would participate. Another factor that shaped teachers' work across schools was the level of trust they had for their school leader. Teachers who trusted their school leader to make good decisions related to student recruitment strategies were more amenable to the idea of student recruitment and saw it as an interesting and engaging challenge. Those who did not trust their school leaders believed that student recruitment was a waste of time, a source of stress and burnout, and undermined their work to educate students.

Preliminary Framework for Teachers' Sensemaking Process

This study largely focused on the ways that teachers engaged in different aspects of sensemaking to address and resolve surprise and ambiguity. As I worked with my data, I noticed a loose but similar process of sensemaking began to emerge for all twelve

teachers. The goal of this framework is not to produce a picture of a rigid and predictable model that all teachers engaged in the sensemaking process will undertake. Rather, it is a preliminary visualization to aid in "capturing patterns across contexts" to aid future research (Maitlis & Christianson, 2014, pp. 106-107).

Teachers' sensemaking was not performed in an orderly fashion but did end up leading them to establish a distinct discretion toward student recruitment work, outlined above. Discretion is relevant to the larger goals of market-oriented policies because such policies rely on the participation, willingness, and skill of "street-level bureaucrats" (Lipsky, 1980) to implement the policy with fidelity (Brower et al., 2017). The preliminary framework addresses how teachers established their discretion by outlining a five-step process by which they made sense of the need to recruit, moving from the point that they were surprised by the need to recruit to the point where they established a set discretion toward recruiting.

The five-stage framework played out in the following stages: First, all 12 participants were surprised by the need to recruit and faced ambiguity in determining their response. While two of the teachers were initially skeptical of the need to recruit at, all began with a willingness to participate in student recruitment work and did not strongly question whether they should be asked to participate. Second, participants went through an "information gathering" phase where they collected or were provided information about the need to recruit, or learned by observing others doing recruitment work. Third, often simultaneous with information gathering, they entered the "enactment" phase where they acted in response to the information they gathered. Teachers' actions and the results of those actions played an important role in establishing

whether those teachers ultimately felt that student recruitment work was worth their time and efforts. The fourth phase, "establishing identity," refers to the ways that teachers understood themselves to be in either an "insider" group that was actively involved in student recruitment or in an "outsider" group that was uninvolved in the work or actively resisted full participation. Teachers also worked to identify other teachers at their school in either an "insider" group or "outsider" group, causing tension on the staff and further solidifying conceptions of identity. Finally, because of the multiple factors explained above, teachers came to form a discretion toward recruiting, falling into one of four categories: "active participation," "indifferent participation," "reluctant participation," or "active resistance."

The five phases of the framework did not occur in perfect order and often occurred simultaneously. Weick (2001) emphasized that sensemaking largely occurs as a process where "more than one emphasis tends to operate at any point" (p. 96). Furthermore, the stages occurred cyclically. For example, teachers' enactment of student recruitment work often raised new questions that led them to seek out more information. Despite the largely iterative approach in which teachers circled back through information gathering and enactment multiple times, there was an observable chronological sequence from the time that teachers were surprised by the need to recruit to when they held an established discretion toward recruiting work. Therefore, this framework should be viewed as a snapshot of a point in time in a developing process rather than a stagnant and rigid stage model.

This framework roughly lines up with Weick's (1979, 2005) model of the sensemaking process that includes ecological change, enactment, selection, and retention.

Teachers experienced ecological change when they were asked to recruit students to their schools. Ecological changes, in this case the request for teachers to recruit students, prompt "recursive cycles of enactment, selection, and retention, meant to reduce equivocality" (Maitlis & Christenson, 2013, p. 60; Weick, 1979). The equivocality, or ambiguity, that teachers wanted to reduce led them to ask specific questions of their work including: What does this new work mean for my role as a teacher? What strategies and actions should I take to engage in student recruitment work? Will I have a job if we are not successful at recruiting?

The sense of ambiguity prompted two broad responses. The first was to gather information about recruiting needs and what teachers should do. The second was to act based on the information gathered. Teachers' information gathering and enactment align roughly with Weick's conception of enactment. Orton (2000) described enactment as a recursive process "in which organization members create a stream of events that they pay attention to" (p.231). Weick described enactment occurring when people "act in organizations [and] often produce structures, constraints, and opportunities that were not there before they took action" (p. 306). Thus, enactment consists of actions taken by individuals but also of the information that they gather or receive in response to the actions of themselves or others. The recursive nature of information gathering and enactment means that one does not necessarily precipitate the other, but they occur in an ongoing cycle of information gathering, action, and further experiences and understandings. The cycle of enactment and information gathering was especially strong in the sensemaking of teachers in this study because they often waited until they received information, often via specific requests from their school leaders to act. Those actions,

then, led to a new series of possible actions and new information that they needed to process.

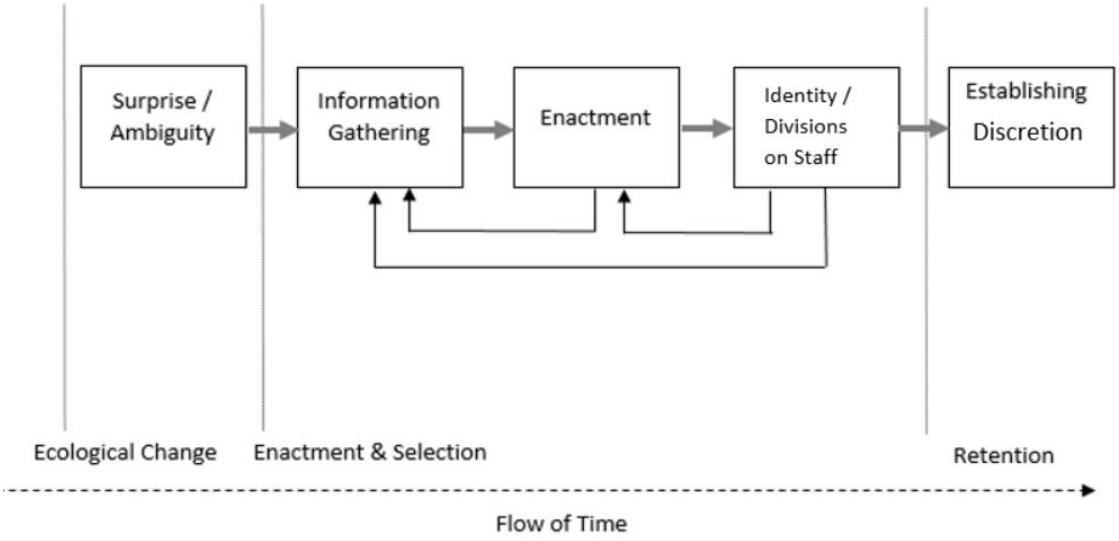
Another component of Weick's process of sensemaking is selection. Selection refers to the process by which individuals consciously or unconsciously determine which cues, or information, from their environment to give attention (Jennings & Greenwood, 2003; Weick, 1995). Teachers in this study engaged in cue selection throughout their sensemaking process. Their selection was influenced by the sensegiving of school leaders, their past experiences, and what struck them as most important given the multiple demands on their time along with the pressures that they felt from feelings of burnout and ethical issues. An interesting finding from this study is that teachers established an identity in relation to the student recruitment work at their school. Teachers established divisions in their minds between those who were "insiders" and those who were "outsiders," often based on their willingness to engage in student recruitment and their knowledge and skill to recruit. A large part of teachers' cue selection process was the establishment of their positionality on their staff. In other words, teachers' conceptions of where they fit on the staff – as someone who either did student recruiting or not, or as someone who was either skilled in student recruiting or not – played a significant role in the way that they selected cues.

Finally, teachers' establishment of a discretion to student recruitment aligned with Weick's sense of retention. Retention occurs when individuals have established a "sufficient account" of reality in their organization (Samuels, 2015, p. 32). Teachers' discretions toward student recruitment were shaped strongly by several factors including whether they saw themselves in the "insider" group or "outsider" group of recruiters at

the school, their trust in their leadership, and the extent to which they believed their recruitment work was a worthwhile use of their time. Retention was the also the product of the previous phases of sensemaking for teachers, including the information that they received, the actions they took, and the results of those actions. It is important to note that teachers' discretions toward student recruitment were not set in stone. Rather, they are the product of a recursive cycle and, as they gather more information, enact more recruitment work, and get a clearer picture of their position at the school, will likely change over time. Therefore, while each teacher had a firm discretion toward student recruitment that had a profound effect on the ways that teachers worked to recruit students, those discretions were subject to change. For example, Beth was one of the strongest resisters to student recruitment work but if I had interviewed her three years before, she would have been one of the more active and positive participants in student recruitment work.

This framework is a preliminary attempt to understanding the ways that teachers react to confusing and surprising elements of their work that are introduced by policies that induce market pressures. It is not generalizable to a larger population of teachers in charter schools but can be conceptualized as a guide for asking better questions about the processes that teachers undertake to both make sense of their marketized environment and to establish a discretion toward marketing work such as student recruitment.

Figure 16. Preliminary Framework for Process of Teachers' Sensemaking of Competitive Pressures



Implications for Sensemaking Theory

There are three specific ways that this study informs future research on sensemaking. First, the current literature under-emphasizes the role that ethical considerations may play in individuals' sensemaking in organizations. The teachers in this study dealt with multiple ethical issues that both shaped their sensemaking and their discretion toward student recruitment work. Many of the teachers in this study felt ethical uncertainty around how their recruitment of certain students might negatively impact the student and the school. Beth, Sara, Megan, and Devon all had experiences of turning away students based on emotional or physical disabilities, or on the perception that the student was not academically ready for the school. Despite the state law (ORC 3314) that says community [charter] schools may not work to exclude students based on attributes such as race, class and disability, teachers in this study did not indicate that excluding students with physical and emotional abilities was a strong ethical consideration for them.

Rather, Beth, Sara, Megan, and Devon seemed to believe that the ethically right thing to do was to counsel students away from or out of their schools when they believed that the school was not the best fit for that student. The school mission, therefore, took precedent over the democratic aims of education embodied in the requirement that all students be included.

Ethical considerations shaped teachers' willingness or opposition to student recruitment. The teachers who were opposed to student recruitment or resigned to it typically felt at some point that they were asked to act unethically. For example, Beth, from Taft Academy, decided to quit her job because she felt ethical tension around recruiting students to the school when she no longer supported the mission or trusted the school leadership. Similarly, Rita felt like the for-profit management company that ran Roosevelt Recovery Academy had turned the school into a "diploma factory" in order to maintain a high enrollment and receive money for as many students as possible. Rita did not decide to quit her job but held strong reservations around whether she should participate in recruitment work or not.

Much of the theory around sensemaking rightly emphasizes social factors, personal background, and institutional factors related to individual sensemaking (Coburn, 2001, 2005; Weick, 1995). There are also questions about the extent to which sensemaking occurs as a cognitive process, with some researchers focusing heavily on cognition (Spilanne, 2002) and others deemphasizing it (Coburn, 2001). Sensemaking is typically conceptualized as a process that is influenced by individual action, contextual factors, and internal cognitive processes. However, there needs to be more of a focus on

how individuals weigh ethical considerations against other pressures, including market, institutional, and social pressures.

Second, sensemaking theories could also be bolstered through more explicit attention to the ways that divisions and competition between individuals, or "cliques," on organizations' staffs shape the sensemaking of individual members. Teachers in this study very clearly delineated between groups of teachers who identified as an "insider" on student recruitment work and those who identified as an "outsider." Some teachers identified themselves as "all in" and had very clear conceptions of how their position compared to teachers who were not all in. Other teachers also saw themselves as being on the outside looking in. They understood that the work had to be done but believed that other teachers would take on the work.

Finally, researchers should focus more on how the introduction of privatization schemes into public entities shapes the sensemaking of individuals in those organizations. All teachers in this study, except for Daniel from Roosevelt Recovery School, had traditional backgrounds in education. They attended public schools and none had a strong conception of the market pressures that they would face when they began teaching at their charter schools. The introduction of market pressures created a sense of ambiguity that often grated against teachers' identities as educators. Furthermore, the need to address market demands to enroll more students created additional work for these teachers as they engaged in student recruitment tasks. The effect of privatization schemes on sensemaking could be especially prominent in governmental and educational fields which are often subjected to privatization schemes (Baltadano, 2011; Brown, 2007). But

other fields such as medicine and corrections, which are also increasingly subjected to privatization schemes, would benefit too.

Recommendations for Policymakers

A key goal of charter school policies is to increase the quality of education, foster innovative practices and missions, and to encourage the efficient use of finances and resources. Several findings from this study indicate that these goals may be undermined by market pressures that lead to the often-substantial work by teachers to recruit students. These findings are outlined above and include the undermining effect of markets on school missions, the ethical issues that teachers had to navigate, the link between student recruitment work and burnout, and the potential divisions that student recruitment work caused on school staffs. The following recommendations focus on refining the current system as it stands now. Larger questions about the viability of the charter school sector and effectiveness the broad market-based reforms introduced over the past 25 years are vital but beyond the scope of this study.

Altering Funding Schemes to Alleviate Market Pressures

Policy makers should reconsider the way that the student enrollment counting process shapes charter school funding. Currently, charter schools provide their enrollment figures to the state multiple times a year, per Ohio Revised Code 3314.08(C)(1). This policy places an undue burden on schools and over-emphasizes the need to quickly ramp up enrollment numbers through quick fixes such as advertising or incentive schemes. If a charter school is forced to face decreases in funding, it reduces the likelihood that the

personnel on the staff would have time and the patience to consider meaningful core changes to the education that they provide students. One option for policy makers to consider is to reduce the number of times that students are counted. Another option would be to allow schools that lose students to maintain their current levels of funding for a time if they demonstrate ways that they are making significant improvements to the core education and services that they offer to students. Funding could be reduced if, for example, a charter school does not increase enrollment over the course of several semesters. However, this strategy would offer some reprieve to schools that are otherwise forced to focus solely on the "bottom line."

Policymakers should also consider how innovative missions and goals of charter schools can be shielded from market pressures, especially during the first few years of the school's existence when they are often building the school from the ground up. There are a few strategies that may be appropriate to meet this goal. First, the state could provide more stable funding streams to new schools over their first several years to ensure that they can focus on establishing the mission of the school without the distraction of trying to maintain enrollment. Funding streams outside of those attached to student attendance and private funding would help new charter schools to get off the ground without the extra worry of a school shutdown lingering over their work. Second, the state could provide more oversight of charter schools to ensure that their teachers and other school personnel who are vital to students' education are not being asked to take on roles significantly beyond their primary roles as teachers. A final way for policymakers to ensure that teachers are not overburdened by the need to recruit students is to institute policies that would make it easier for teachers in charter schools to collectively bargain

and have their voices heard by their school leadership, school board, and management company. The current political context in Ohio and nationally would make the unionization of charter school teachers a non-starter (Marra, 2018). However, if unionization becomes more tenable in the future, a modified version of a teachers' union could be instituted among charter school teachers to promote teachers' well-being and voice.

Mandated Training for All School Personnel Involved in Student Recruitment

Policymakers should mandate "recruiting ethics" trainings for school personnel including teachers and school leaders along with those who work at charter school management companies and sponsor organizations. This type of training could address how charter school personnel recruit students to ensure that they are inclusive of all students and avoid "cropping" out students who may be difficult or more expensive to educate. It is especially important to address issues of student enrollment in Ohio, given the scandal associated with student enrollment at the now defunct Electronic Classroom of Tomorrow (ECOT) (Kelly, 2018). This training could also address how principals and others who lead recruitment efforts can consider how to best engage volunteers, parents of existing students, community members, and other non-teaching personnel in student recruitment work.

Office of "School Selection"

A large-scale strategy for policymakers to consider is to establish a section within the Office of Community Schools or even a new office within the Department of

Education, to assist families and students in choosing the best schooling option for them. This entity could be titled the Office of School Selection. The primary purpose of this office would be to act as the first point of contact when families decide that they want to choose a school other than their traditional neighborhood school. Instead of the current system which incentivizes schools to reach as many students as possible and "sell" themselves to families using sometimes incomplete or misleading evidence, this office could help families to navigate their school choice options, help them determine what aspects of schools they value, and provide them with a robust amount of information on potential schools. Another key value of this office is that it would reduce the amount of work at the building level that may fall on teachers to recruit and onboard students. As this study demonstrates, possible negative outcomes of teachers' involvement in student recruitment may include burnout and the introduction of ethical issues that can bring about emotional distress to teachers and discord on staffs. Taking the primary task of recruiting students off teachers and other school personnel would serve to reduce possible negative outcomes.

Families who are interested in attending a charter school could register through an online portal through the Department of Education website. Once registered through the online portal, families could be connected to someone within the office– a trained specialist or counselor - who would help them navigate their school choice decisions, lay out possible educational options within the distance the family is able to travel, and help them to understand how to best consider their child's educational needs. This would help to shield families from emotional appeals, advertisements, and misleading recruitment

pitches (Lubienski, 2007). It would also help to ensure that parents do not make split-second decisions based on limited information (Luke, 2013).

There are other factors that warrant the creation of an Office of School Selection. First, such an office would increase the amount and quality of information on schools. One fundamental issue that hamstrings choice efforts is a lack of quality information on schools (Lubienski, 2005, 2007; Hastings & Weinstein, 2008). An Office of School Selection could increase the flow and availability of accurate information on schools, leading to a better informed "customer base" of parents whose aggregate decisions might boost the incentive for schools to innovate, be more efficient, and increase their quality.

An Office of School Selection would also reduce the need for charter schools to market themselves. The goal behind many choice-based policies is for schools to respond to market pressures by improving the quality of the education that they offer. But evidence suggests that charter schools often turn to advertising (Jabbar, 2015a; Lubienski, 2007) to attract students when they feel market pressures instead of school improvements. There is no guarantee, but an Office of School Selection that helps students and families find a school would reduce the incentive for charter schools to advertise to distinguish themselves. Once the incentive to advertise is gone, it is more likely that charter schools will look to other means to distinguish themselves, increasing the likelihood that they make improvements to their core educational offerings.

There are further benefits to the creation of an Office of School Selection. Providing a resource for students and families in the school choice process would limit the negative possible effects associated with parent irrationality in the school selection process (DeJarnett, 2011). If parents respond to emotional or misleading marketing

appeals from charter schools, or take shortcuts in their decision-making process, the foundational goal of higher-quality and more innovative education could be undermined. Further, if the state takes a larger role in assisting parents to make better decisions about where to send their children to school, it is more likely that the state's goals of efficiency, innovation and quality in education will be bolstered. The state would be far more likely to clearly communicate information on a school's academic performance, use of funds, student retention rates, and other markers of quality than that school would be. This is especially true if the school has a large financial incentive to get as many students to enroll as they possibly can, whether they are being completely honest or not.

Several steps would need to be taken to ensure that the work of the Office of School Selection was administered fairly. To bolster the legitimacy of such an office, the state would have to select a clear set of criteria on how to rate schools including observable and evidence-based standards and objective ways to match students according to non-academic factors such as geographical and school missions. An Office of School Selection would also be subject to political pressures from outside the office, especially because the directors of such offices are appointed by the governor. Additionally, the office would be subject to influence by members of the state legislature, which is made up of many members who have receive large campaign donations from for-profit and low-performing charter school networks (e.g.: Youngstown Vindicator, 2018). Therefore, care should be taken to ensure that political pressures are not allowed to infiltrate and shape the work of the Office of School Selection.

Recommendations for Further Research

This study examined 12 teachers at seven charter schools. One drawback of deeply studying a small number of cases is that it is difficult to generalize the results to the whole or locations with different contextual particularities. Future research should involve large-scale studies that employ robust data sets to examine how marketization affects schools and how teachers engage in student recruitment. There are several important questions that need to be addressed in research studies:

- What percentage of charter school teachers at city, state and federal levels are involved in student recruitment work and how much time do they spend doing the work?
- How does the scope of recruitment work differ by school, city, and state contexts? Because there is a higher level of focus on student recruitment in international contexts (Oplatka, 2006, 2007; Oplatka, Hemsley-Brown, & Foskett, 2002) comparative work should be performed on schools of choice in different countries.
- How has the scope and focus of recruitment work changed over time?
- How does participation in student recruitment activities differ for teachers under for-profit management companies compared to those in non-profit management companies?
- How do factors such as the school's longevity, mission, level of competitive pressures, and association with sponsors influence student recruitment work?
- How much time to teachers in charter schools spend on student recruitment compared to other tasks?

- To what extent do teachers have discretion over excluding certain students from their schools? How do these discretionary actions play out between teachers and students and families who are interested in enrolling at the school?

Another question to consider is how schools' missions are shaped or reshaped by exposure to market pressures. A key finding of this study is that many teachers believed that the core missions of their schools were undermined when they had to scramble to recruit more students. Often, they felt as though market pressures forced them to ignore mismatches between student needs and their missions and, despite the potential harm to the students, they enrolled or retained them. Specific questions researchers could ask include:

- If student enrollment is low and schools feel significant market pressures, how might their missions be abandoned, reinforced, or refined?
- Do experiences of market pressures shape school missions over time?

Further, questions could draw on institutional theories to consider the effects of isomorphism on schools' missions and effective functioning. Isomorphism, in short, refers to the tendency for organizations in the same fields to look more similar to one another over time. This move toward similarity can be driven by coercive actions by governments or markets, normative means that drive actors in a field to approach their work in similar ways, and mimetic means, where organizations mimic the style and strategies of more successful organizations. (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Meyer & Rowan, 1977; Nee & Ingram, 1998). It is important to consider how charter school schools' missions and practices could be undermined by the isomorphic tendencies

induced by market pressures. There are two main ways that isomorphism could shape charter school missions, leading to a lack of diverse options in schooling, a fundamental goal of charter school policies. First, schools that feel market pressures may attempt to copy, or, mimic schools that they deem to be more successful. This could lead to a lack of diversity in the field but also could lead charter schools to make largely nominal changes to appear to be like more successful schools. There was some evidence of isomorphism in the schools in this study. City STEM Academy was undergoing a rebranding phase when I interviewed Carol and Emily. Carol cited two primary reasons for the rebranding. First, the school was STEM in name only. There was no solid curriculum on technology or engineering, leading many parents to ask questions. Second, the rebranding was due to market pressures. The school did not meet its summer enrollment numbers and the school leader, along with the sponsor, wanted to rebrand the school in an attempt to attract more students. Questions that are beyond the scope of this study emerge for future research:

- How do schools work to brand or rebrand themselves or change their missions when they face significant market pressures to recruit students?
- How do isomorphic tendencies shape the branding and rebranding processes?
- To what extent do the core educational processes of schools change when they undergo changes to their brands or missions? How does this process unfold?

Finally, this study focused on the student recruitment of 12 teachers, one or two teachers at each of seven schools. One key area of further focus could be a single-site case study over a longer period. Single case design studies on teachers' recruitment work could continue to employ a sensemaking theoretical frame work. Many studies in education on teacher sensemaking have employed single or cross-case studies between

two schools (See: Coburn, 2001, 2005; Coldren, 2006; Janes, 2016; Walls, 2017). Single case study design could be very similar to this study but focus on multiple interviews with several teachers, principals, and other school personnel from a single school (Yin, 1994). A case study design would also allow researchers to observe teacher recruitment work as it unfolds. Recruitment work was often done in response to market pressures. School leaders and teachers found out that their enrollment numbers were too low and acted to address the issue by working to recruit more students. It would be interesting for a researcher to be able to observe the entire process at a single site, from the time that school personnel find out about the need to recruit, through their recruitment work phase, and in the aftermath of success or failure. This approach would allow for an in-depth analysis of the interactions between individuals at the school and could provide a valuable longitudinal component to observe how individuals' approaches to student recruitment develop over a months-long or year-long period.

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Appendix A: Participant Recruitment Email Communication

Hi, my name is Jeremy Luke. I am a Ph.D. candidate in Education Policy at Ohio State University.

I am conducting a study on how teachers at charter schools engage in student recruitment. Surprisingly, there is little research in this area even though student recruitment activities may take up a significant amount of charter school teachers' time and energy.

I am seeking out volunteers to participate in an in-person interview that will last about an hour. The interview can take place at a time and place of your choosing.

These interviews are totally anonymous. I will change your name and all other identifiers such as your school's name and neighborhood. Nothing that you say can be held against you or will be shared with your colleagues or employer.

I am seeking out charter school teachers with varied experiences so it is OK if your engagement in student recruitment practices is limited.

If you would like to participate or have any questions, please respond to this email or call me at the number listed below.

Also, please feel free to forward this email to any other charter school teachers who may be interested. It would be much appreciated.

Thank you for your time,

Jeremy Luke

Appendix B: Interview Protocol

1. Can you tell me a little bit about your school and how the year is going (or went)?

2. Can you describe your experience as a teacher at your current school?

3. How did you get into teaching? Can you describe your personal background?

4. What would you consider to be the most important aspects of your job as an educator?

5. When did you find out about the need to recruit students to your school? How did you find out?

6. How does your school engage in the student recruitment process?

7. How are you personally involved in the process of recruiting students or marketing the school? If you are involved can you provide detail about what you do?

8. How do you typically find out about the need to recruit students at your school? Where do you get your information?

9. Who do you typically work with when engaged in recruitment or marketing activities? Can you describe what your relationships looks like in this sphere?

10. Does the need to recruit students shape or influence your work as an educator in any way? Can you describe what this looks like?

11. Can you describe your motivations for recruiting students? Why do you personally choose to engage in student recruitment work?

12. Do you interact with families and students while performing student recruitment work? Can you describe those interactions?

Appendix C: Axial Coding Categories

"All in"	Ambiguity	Anxiety	Awareness of other schools/competition	Personal Brand
School Brand	Burnout/overwork	Buy in	CMO/EMO	Communication and Information sharing
Competition within school	Dissatisfaction	Encroachment of recruiting on other work	Ethical issues	Extra-role tasks
Focus on Future	Goals	Information gathering	In/Out Groups	Institutional characteristics
Leadership	Leaving	Limits on recruitment work	Networks	Over-Loading
Physical/ Geographical issues	"Powering through"	Policy	Pressure	Resistance
Strategy evaluation	Retention	Sensegiving	Sensebreaking	Seeking Stability
Student attrition	Surprises	Teacher ID	Teacher Roles	Teacher Responsibilities
Tension	Time	"Vacuum Filling"		