

The Private School Network: Recruiting Visits to Private High Schools by Public and Private Universities

ABSTRACT

Few empirical analyses of privatization compare public and private universities on a behavior associated with private universities. This manuscript analyzes off-campus recruiting visits to private high schools, which were made in 2017 by a convenience sample of 15 public research universities and 14 selective, private universities. Sociological scholarship on the relationship between high schools and universities conceives of off-campus recruiting visits as an indicator of a social relation. Therefore, we utilize social network concepts and methods to compare the recruiting networks of public and private universities. With respect to scale (research question 1), most public research universities in our sample made a disproportionate number of visits to private (out-of-state) high schools, though not as many as private universities. With respect to characteristics of visited schools (RQ2), both public and private universities tended to visit predominantly white schools in their home geographic region and the South. Public universities tended to visit lower ranked private high schools than private universities. Surprisingly, several public research universities visited sectarian private high schools at a rate similar to sectarian private universities. With respect to overlap (RQ3), descriptive statistics and community detection methods revealed substantial overlap in the recruiting networks of public and private universities.

1 Introduction

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2 Literature Review

We situate this study vis-a-vis scholarship on nonresident enrollment at public research universities, which lies within the broader literature on “privatization” [CITE]. Against the backdrop of many states disinvesting in higher education, the privatization literature examines the ways that public universities start behaving like private universities by emphasizing revenue generation and the pursuit of prestige in research and enrollment management behaviors. The so-called “iron triangle” of enrollment management states that universities pursue the three broad enrollment goals of access, academic profile, and revenue generation [CITE]. “Because resources are scarce, the imagery of the iron triangle suggests that the pursuit of one enrollment goal may involve tradeoffs with other goals. Scholarship on privatization expressed concern that the public research universities were emphasizing tuition revenue and rankings and deemphasizing access for state residents.

Author (XXXX) draw from resource dependence theory to conceptualize the relationship between state appropriations and nonresident enrollment. Organizations are dependent on external resources that are important for organizational survival/stability and cannot be easily replaced. Public universities depend on state appropriations but these funds became increasingly uncertain in the 1980s and 1990s (Delaney & Doyle, 2011). Resource dependence theory states that one response to resource decline or uncertainty is to seek alternative, substitute resources [CITE]. Tuition revenue is a potential substitute for state appropriations. Most states cap resident tuition price, but not nonresident tuition price. Therefore, Author (XXXX) argued that public universities have a financial incentive to grow nonresident enrollment in response to declines in state appropriations. Analyzing panel data from 2002-03 to 2012-13, Author (XXXX) found that a 10% decline in state appropriations was associated with a 2.7% increase in nonresident enrollment at all public universities and a 5.0% increase in nonresident enrollment at research-extensive universities.

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Delaney, J. A., & Doyle, W. R. (2011). State spending on higher education: Testing the balance wheel over time. *Journal of Education Finance*, 36(4), 343–368. Journal Article.

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