

CAPTURING A GLOBAL STUDENT MARKET FOR COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES:
THE USE OF PRIVATE THIRD PARTY AGENTS IN INTERNATIONAL STUDENT
RECRUITMENT

by

LINDSAY BRIDGES COCO

(Under the Direction of Sheila Slaughter)

ABSTRACT

Globalization has undeniably affected the fabric of higher education systems worldwide. In particular, globalization has greatly impacted higher education markets and access for students, as there are now 4.5 million globally mobile students studying worldwide (Institute of International Education, 2014). In the age of academic capitalism, institutions of higher education exhibit increased market and market-like behaviors in order to secure external revenue streams; during this process, the boundaries among states, institutions, and industry are blurred (Slaughter & Leslie, 1997; Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004). American colleges and universities have progressively emphasized international student enrollment in order to capitalize on securing new external revenue streams, advancing campus diversity, developing cross-cultural learning environments, and more. The global commercialization of student mobility has given rise to private third party agents—individuals who are paid to assist students with finding, applying to, and selecting institutions at which to study abroad (Hagedorn & Zhang, 2010). Some countries, such as Great Britain and Australia have embraced agents and formed regulatory frameworks to guide the industry; yet, this has not been the case in the United States.

There has been scant scholarship about how American colleges and universities decide to utilize private third party agents as an international recruitment strategy and what impact this practice has on institutions and international students. This qualitative case study of four U.S. higher education institutions employs and examines data from 31 interviews, as well as in-depth document analysis and observational data. Findings indicate that institutions use these agents because they are able to assist institutions in capturing previously unreachable markets and that this strategy utilization impacts managerial capacity, financial operations, and campus diversity.

INDEX WORDS: international student recruitment, academic capitalism,
internationalization, globalization, higher education, international student
mobility

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my parents, who laid the early educational foundation that enabled me to complete this work.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

It is indisputable now that globalization has forever changed the fabric of higher education institutions around the world, as its effects are inescapable. Institutions of higher education are connected to other entities and nations through faculty exchanges, research partnerships, student mobility, international conferences, internships, joint degree programs, and branch campuses, to name a few. All of this has been made possible by the arrival of the information age with the Internet, the ease of global travel, and a constant communication circuit that is instantaneous in the era of globalization. Globalization has been defined and discussed by many scholars in many different disciplines, including those who study higher education (Altbach, 2004a; Carroll & Beaton, 2000; Knight, 2004; Marginson, 2006; Marginson & van der Wende, 2007; Scott, 2000; Teichler, 2004; van der Wende, 2003). In the context of higher education, Altbach (2004a) defined globalization as “the broad, largely inevitable economic, technological, political, cultural, and scientific trends that directly affect higher education” (p. 64). Knight and de Wit (1997) discussed these trends as a flow without borders, affecting each nation-state differently depending upon individual history, culture, agenda, policies, and traditions. Globalization has opened up higher education markets and forever changed access for students. It blurs traditional nation-state boundaries, as entities become more interconnected and interdependent, in a sense leading to homogenization (Gacel-Ávila, 2005). A term often confused or commingled with globalization is internationalization, another term discussed and

qualified within literature about higher education (Altbach & Knight, 2007; Knight, 2003, 2004, 2007, 2012; Knight & de Wit, 1995; Mazzarol, Soutar & Seng, 2003; Qiang, 2003). Knight (2003) defines internationalization as the “process of integrating an international, intercultural or global dimension into the purpose, functions or delivery of post-secondary education” (p. 2). Unlike globalization, internationalization recognizes nation-state boundaries, the relationships between entities, cultural differences, and tradition distinctions. Internationalization can be viewed as a response to globalization (Qiang, 2003) and also as a complementary or remunerative force to globalization tendencies of denationalization (Gacel-Ávila, 2005).

Recent decades have introduced the significance of internationalization within the global higher education system. Internationalization recognizes and augments a local context in an effort to restrict hegemonic forces. International ambitions and purposes are regularly found in institutional mission statements, recruiting practices, policies, programs, and partnerships. Numerous scholars have categorized and named these various activities into internationalization strategy tables (See Qiang, 2003). Inevitably, these categorizations name international student recruitment as a strategy that institutions may undertake to internationalize and to capitalize on advancing campus diversity, revenues, cross-cultural learning environments, and more. The liberalization of markets due to globalization has prompted institutions to target international student markets, and college students are studying abroad in numbers unmatched in previous years. In 2001, 2.1 million students were globally mobile; this number increased to 4.1 million in 2011 and continues to increase (Farrugia & Villareal, 2013). The United States is the number one destination country for students studying abroad and enrolls more students than any other country in its higher education institutions.

This liberalization of markets and decrease in information barriers with the explosion of the Internet, as well as the decrease in public funding of higher education despite increased costs, has moved institutions closer to the market as they search for new revenue streams (Slaughter & Leslie, 1997; Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004). While institutions have certainly taken different approaches to increase revenue, most certainly institutions have sought the enrollment of full-fee paying students, particularly international students, as the majority of international students pay their own way. During the 2013-14 academic year, the Institute of International Education (IIE) (2014a) reported that 65% of students studying in the U.S. used personal or family funds to pay their way through school. In addition to financial benefits, many institutions value the diversity of race, culture, thought, and viewpoints international students bring to campus. However, there is no doubt that international students are big business for higher education and also other for-profit entities. However, a relatively small number of colleges and universities enroll the majority of international students. Currently, 200 out of nearly 4,500 institutions of higher education in the U.S. enroll roughly 70% of international students, leaving the rest of the institutions in a difficult recruiting situation (Choudaha, 2015). Institutions that are largely unknown because of a dearth of research prestige, rankings status, or brand recognition face many obstacles to accessing overseas markets and recruiting international students.

Historically, students wishing to study abroad in the U.S. would find information by writing to institutions in other countries or utilizing government supported information centers in large cities (Altbach, 2011). This practice has all but disappeared, and the Internet and commercialization of international education gave rise to private third party agents and recruiters. Hagedorn and Zhang (2010) define agents as individuals who are paid to assist students with finding, applying to, and selecting institutions at which to study abroad. Agents

provide a wide range of services such as helping a student determine which institutions to apply to, career aptitude testing, personal statement assistance, application submission, and visa interview preparation, among others. These agents have become the path to university in many countries, particularly in Asia. In a country like China, it is the norm to hire an agent if a student wishes to study in countries like the U.S., United Kingdom, Canada, or Australia. Students and families may hire agents personally, paying a varying fee rate sometimes in the thousands of dollars depending upon the country. In other cases, the agent may be contracted by institutions of higher education to assist in international recruitment where the institution pays the agent a commission fee for each student who is accepted and enrolls in the institution. In yet another scenario, an agent may be hired by both the student and the institution, perhaps getting paid on both ends, a practice termed “double dipping” in the industry, thus bringing to light ethical concerns.

Controversy is alive and well surrounding the practice of using agents. Some liken the practice to utilizing a real estate, sports, or travel agent (Waxman-Lenz & Mayers, 2013), while others cite issues of legitimacy, transparency, conflicts of interest, and student choice and fit as reasons not to use agents. U.S. law is clear that incentive payments can be used to recruit international students, unlike domestic students. The Higher Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. § 1094) states the following:

The institution will not provide any commission, bonus, or other incentive payment based directly or indirectly on success in securing enrollments or financial aid to any persons or entities engaged in any student recruiting or admission activities or in making decisions regarding the award of student financial assistance, except that this paragraph shall not apply to the recruitment of foreign students residing in foreign countries who are not eligible to receive Federal student assistance.

The law is clear, but the federal government's actual position in practice on the matter is not. In fact, the U.S. federal government does not communicate a clear message regarding the use of educational agents at all. For example, EducationUSA, funded by the State Department, manages hundreds of education advising centers all over the world where students can find factual and inclusive information on colleges and universities in the U.S., as well as information about how to apply. This entity is prohibited from working with or promoting the use of agents, as outlined in the advising centers' policy guidance (EducationUSA, n.d.). On the other hand, the U.S. Department of Commerce actively works with recruiting agents and advertises this on a portion of their website dedicated to education. The website states, "Our worldwide team of education specialists is here to assist with your international outreach to students, potential partners, and agents" and goes on to list the "Golden Key Service" that institutions can obtain which, among other things, helps institutions to identify qualified educational agents. Conflicting governmental agency positions emphasize a lack of governmental policy coherence addressing the practice and amplify the ethical ambiguity surrounding the use of agents in recruitment in the United States.

Notably, agents are widely used in two of America's top competitor countries—Great Britain and Australia (Engberg, 2013). Both of these countries have utilized agents extensively and also have regulatory structures in place to provide management and supervision over the agent-institution relationships (Fischer, 2012). The British Council is one of the main organizations providing this oversight in Great Britain, and this organization has been offering training for agents since 2006 in order to help provide some of the quality assurance framework (British Council, n.d.). The Australian government has a section on their national study website devoted to agents, informing students of legislation pertaining to agents and other issues of which to be aware (Study in Australia, n.d.) and has adopted a code of practice and guidelines for

institutions to follow (Australian Vice-Chancellor's Committee, 2005). In addition, Australia requires institutions to list their agents publicly (Fischer, 2012; Study in Australia, n.d.), a practice that lends transparency. The United States lags behind these countries in instituting policies that assist in regulating the industry.

1.2 Study Significance

Mobility has offered opportunities for international students to seek higher education opportunities in the U.S. and other countries, although the American system remains the most sought after in the world. The pattern of student flows has typically been that students from the developing nations of the Southern hemisphere migrate to the developing countries of the Northern hemisphere to study (Altbach, 1989), but it should be noted that now student flow patterns are not one way and are of a very complex nature. The majority of students come to the U.S. to study in the business and science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) fields. IIE (2014b) reported that during the 2013-14 academic year, 21% of international students studied in a business and management field, while 19% studied engineering and 10% studied math and computer science, making these fields the top three areas of study for international students. An American degree confers knowledge and status, and Marginson (2002) notes, "What these students want is entry into Americanized global business circles, especially in finance and trade, and the skills of living and studying in an English-language environment..." (p. 126). Therefore, an institution's prestige becomes particularly important to international students, as it is an incentive to leave one's country to study elsewhere (Lee, Maldonado-Maldonado, & Rhoades, 2006). Altbach (1998) discussed the push/pull framework to try to illuminate factors affecting student flows in higher education around the world. This framework is important in a broad sense. While it does not highlight how individual decisions are made to study abroad, it helps to

provide economic, political, and social context to this phenomenon. “Push” characteristics to move students out of their home country could be such things as: (1) political unrest or war, (2) reduced access, (3) lack of academic freedom, or (4) faculty strikes. “Pull” characteristics drawing students to a host country could include: (1) wider variety of institutional type, (2) academic freedom, (3) political stability, (4) increased work opportunities, or (5) increased access. While not completely inclusive, this framework can be used to augment understanding of why students may decide to study outside of their home countries.

Of course, a student’s social class, financial status, and cultural capital affect one’s ability to study elsewhere, leading to a stratification of those who are able to take advantage of foreign opportunities and those who are not. Lee et al. (2006) observed that international students from low-income, developing nations are more likely to study in middle-income, developing nations like Mexico or Morocco, chiefly due to financial affordability. Thus, it is not only a stratification between studying abroad or not, but also where and in what types of higher education systems students are able to enroll in within the mobility landscape.

A discussion of globalization, internationalization, and student mobility is not complete without a mention of “brain drain.” Miyagiwa (1991) defines brain drain as the “emigration of skilled and professional personnel from developing countries to advanced industrialized nations” (p. 743). In the context of this study, brain drain is in reference to a process of educational training, when at the completion, a college student has a choice to either return to their home country or stay in the country where they have received a tertiary education (of course this depends on immigration and labor laws, as well as job markets in the educating country). Certainly, brain drain is of vast importance in the discussion of international students, and it is particularly worrisome for developing countries, as the drain is unequally distributed in their

unfortunate favor (Altbach, 2013; Lee et al., 2006). Some nations have to rely upon scholarly expertise and higher education systems of other countries, while others are able to develop their own academic prowess (McMahon, 1992); for countries who have to rely on others' educational systems, it is in their best interest to develop policies and opportunities to coax students back home after degree completion.

It is difficult to know the rate of return for international students studying the U.S. The National Academy of Science's Survey of Earned Doctorates (SED) records information about international doctorate students studying in U.S. institutions, and from this, we know that, in general, Chinese and Indian Ph.D. students have low rates of return, while Thais, Mexicans, and Brazilians have high rates of return (Altbach, 2013). Yet, this same type of tracking does not exist at the bachelor or masters levels (see Altbach, 2013 for a discussion of the SED data). Rich industrial countries are concerned with labor force shortages, and in some scenarios, international students are encouraged to stay in country to help fill these shortages.

As institutions move closer to the market in the age of academic capitalism (Slaughter & Leslie, 1997; Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004), marketization in international education has increased exponentially. Luke (2005) argues, "In the contexts of economic global flows, international education has become like any other business—or rather, a particular species of advanced service and information multinational activity that borrows heavily from corporate marketing, global branding, and expansion strategies" (p. 160). Historically, enrolling and subsidizing international students was viewed as a practice of foreign assistance (Williams, 1981). While that is still true in some cases, higher education is now viewed as a commodity, traded as an international good and contributing to economic well-being. Naidoo and Jamieson (2005) discuss the consumerist pressures leading to the destruction of traditionally valued academic capital in favor of revenue

generation, such as that provided by international student tuition. As this dissertation discusses, institutions attempt to gain their market share and economic power by recruiting international students and their tuition money, along with other innate benefits that this population brings to campus. Using academic capitalism as a framework, I assert that this increased marketization has pushed institutions to find new international student markets as avenues of revenue generation in order to stay competitive. As such, institutions have chosen to utilize agents, which has in turn, ceded institutional autonomy and perhaps given, if only partially, control of international recruitment to outside parties.

Heightened international recruitment brings to light ethical concerns, especially when using third parties. A primary ethical question is the provision of student services within institutions that bring in international students, as these students do require a specific array of support services in order to help them be successful in their academic pursuits. If institutions are going to enroll these students because of their accompanying benefits to campus, then institutions must be willing to provide what the population needs, for example, immigration services, English language support, proper housing, dining services with different cultural options, culturally appropriate counseling services, and religious facilities. Moreover, institutional administrators must be concerned with institutional fit on the part of the student and the school. For institutions that use agents, third parties require institutions to be particularly vigilant to make sure that agents are acting in the best interests of students and institutions and not allowing financial arrangements to influence their work with students. Additionally, institutions must train their agents appropriately in order for agents to know what type of applicant a school is looking to enroll. There have been widespread reports of unethical agents who falsify documents, relay bad information, and overpromise what they can deliver to students

and their families. It is an under regulated industry with high risk. Yet, many institutions deem this risk one worth taking. A *New York Times* article (Lewin, 2012) highlighting international enrollment at the University of Washington quotes David Hawkins, director of public policy at the National Association for College Admission Counseling (NACAC) as saying,

We're in something akin to the gold rush, a frontier-style environment where colleges and universities, like prospectors in the 1800s, realize that there is gold out there. While it's the admissions offices butting up against the issues most right now, every department after them, every faculty member who comes into contact with international students, is going to have to recalibrate as institutions become more international. I see a cascading list of challenges.

As institutions participate in this “gold rush,” the higher education community must flesh out appropriate regulations, best practices, and ethical boundaries, as the profession is bound to maintain integrity in its duty to students.

The use of agents in recruitment is vastly understudied, as most coverage has stemmed from popular news outlets such as *The Chronicle of Higher Education* or *Inside Higher Ed*, policy or discussion papers, or anecdotes, rather than rigorous qualitative or quantitative study. There are certainly barriers to studying this topic. For example, there is no data available as to how many agencies are operating worldwide, making it very difficult to track industry growth and developments. Additionally, due to the negative perception and opinions of some regarding agents, as well as the aforementioned ethical considerations, it can be difficult to find agents and administrators who are willing to be completely transparent about the practice. While this has been changing in recent years due to national conversations (to be discussed in the next chapter), it is still difficult to gain access to study the topic due to aforementioned reasons, as well as some institutions' wishes to maintain tight confidentiality about their recruiting practices in order to sustain a competitive edge over peer institutions. Some scholars have studied the student experience when using an agent (Coffey, 2014; Hagedorn & Zhang, 2010; Pimpa, 2003) and the

ethical considerations involved (Robison, 2007). Yet, little information can be found regarding the organizational context with this practice.

We know little about the overall institutional decision to utilize this recruitment strategy, as well as the mechanics of managing an agent network. This qualitative case study endeavors to contribute to filling this research gap by exploring more about the practice of utilizing agents as an international recruitment strategy in a United States context. I ask the following research questions:

1. How do university administrators decide to utilize agents in international student recruitment strategies?
2. How are relationships between universities and agents initiated, maintained, and assessed?
3. How are institutions and international students impacted by the use of recruitment agents?

1.3 Definition of Key Terms

In this section, I outline definitions and clarifications regarding key terms used in this dissertation. Additionally, there are several professional organizations referenced in this study. I provide more information about these organizations in Appendix A.

Agency. In some cases, agencies may consist of one agent, a “mom and pop” style operation owned by one person or maybe a family, while other agencies may be large corporations operating in numerous cities throughout a country or even in multiple countries. Of course, there also exists varying organizational structures in between. In this dissertation, I use the term agency to refer to the business organization as a whole, whether this business is owned and operated by one individual or is a large corporation with thousands of employees. An agency

may be hired by a student and their family for a fee paid out of personal funds. Alternatively or concurrently, an agency may be contracted with an institution(s) of higher education that pay a commission fee when a student enrolls at their institution.

Agent. I utilize Hagedorn and Zhang's (2011) definition that an agent is "a third-party entity who is paid to assist a student to find, apply to, and/or prepare for college" (p. 186). Some agents are employees of the business organization, while others are actually the business owner. Generally, I use the term agent to refer to the individual(s) who actually, for example, assists a student in determining which institutions to apply to for college.

Sub-Agent. West and Addington (2014) define a sub-agent as, "An individual or firm serving as a subcontractor of an agency. Sub-agents may engage in student recruitment, advisement, application assistance, and/or related functions on behalf of their agency partners. Sub-agents may work in the same or other countries vis-à-vis the lead agency." (p. 7). Use of sub-agents is a normalized practice in the agent recruitment world, and it is not uncommon for institutions' contracted agency to utilize sub-agents. Universities may or may not know that sub-agents are being utilized by their main agencies.

1.4 Study Organization

This dissertation is divided into six chapters addressing the research topic. Chapter one gives a brief introduction to the topic, outlining the rationale for the study, research questions, and definition of key terms. Chapter two provides a contextual overview and conceptual framework discussion. In this chapter, I outline the history of international student enrollment in the U.S. and provide the context of current agent recruitment happenings, while situating this within the framework of globalization, social mobility, sector differences, and academic capitalism. Following in chapter three, I outline my qualitative research design, providing

information about my methodology, the research process, and brief case backgrounds. Chapters four and five present my four case studies. I examine two private institutions in chapter four by presenting the background and data collected for each case and weave these together to present a full case analysis in response to my research questions. At the end of the chapter, I include a cross-case analysis of the two private schools. Chapter five follows the same structure as chapter four, only with the two public institutions included in this research study. Chapter six concludes this dissertation by providing cross case analysis between the public and private institutions through review of the research questions and findings, as well as the study implications and discussion of the theoretical framework application to the findings.

CHAPTER 2

CONTEXT AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Introduction

Internationalization has become of paramount importance on many American campuses in recent years. Although there are many approaches to internationalization, this dissertation focuses upon international student recruitment and enrollment, specifically the use of private third party agents as a strategy for recruitment. In the past decade or so, the use of agents in higher education has proliferated across the world with countries like Australia and Great Britain using agents heavily, and other countries, such as the United States, gaining momentum in agent use amid controversy. This chapter will first outline the international student landscape with special emphasis on the U.S. context. I detail how the U.S. is situated globally in the international student market, as well as nuances describing the international student population in the U.S. Subsequently, I expound upon the agent context in this country, specifically events over the past several years that have impacted policy and professionalization of the industry. Next, I discuss two topics particularly important in the globalization and internationalization landscapes—educational trade and global ranking systems. I conclude the chapter by examining sector differences and academic capitalism theory as conceptual frameworks by which to analyze the birth and evolution of international recruitment agencies and institutional behavior in relationship to the phenomenon.

2.2 International Student Enrollment Context

International student mobility is not a new phenomenon; for centuries, students have been mobile to varying extents around the world. In Bevis and Lucas' (2007) history of international students, they report that from the earliest civilizations there were always foreign students in education, but the Greeks were perhaps some of the first to lure foreign students from great distances. Throughout various points in history, students, as well as scholars, were mobile. For example, in European medieval universities (models for the present-day university), students were mobile as early as the 11th century (Lee, Maldonado-Maldonado, & Rhoades, 2006; Wildavsky, 2010). Altbach (1998) notes that during this time, these early universities used Latin as the *lingua franca*, as they taught students from different countries, reminiscent of the widespread use of English as the language of instruction in present day. Many students during this time had to travel great distances to gain access to education, in various ways similar to what some students have to do now, although globalization has shaped this drastically. Scott (2000) stated, "Internationalism has always been part of the life-world of the university. From the very start, the university was defined as an international institution" (p. 5).

This study focuses upon international students studying in the U.S. It is important to understand international student enrollment (ISE) historically and currently within this national context, as well as how the U.S. is positioned globally in the international student market. American institutions of higher education make the U.S. the world's number one study abroad destination due to the widespread perception that the United States has the strongest higher education system in the world.

Prior to World War II, there were fewer than 10,000 students who studied in the United States (Wildavsky, 2010). After World War II, mobility began to increase dramatically, as

student flows opened up worldwide, and by 1955, according to the first Open Doors Report¹, there were over 34,000 students studying in the U.S. (IIE, 1955). Growth continued to increase steadily, and by 1980, enrollment was well into the hundreds of thousands with approximately 286,300 students coming to study at American institutions (IIE, 1981). In the next decade, numbers would increase to 386,851 by 1990 (IIE, 1990). At the turn of the millennium, the IIE Open Doors data showed that international enrollment was at a record 514,723 with predicted positive growth for the foreseeable future (Davis, 2000).

Since ISE reporting began in 1954 with the Open Doors project, the U.S. had seen mostly positive growth up until 2003 when the effects of 9/11 caused enrollment to drop for three continuous years due to visa regulation tightening and a perceived inhospitable climate for foreigners. The U.S. government and higher education institutions worked together to combat this by conducting outreach, streamlining visa procedures, expanding investment in EducationUSA advising centers abroad, and undertaking dynamic public diplomacy strategies to stimulate a recovery beginning in the 2006-07 academic year (Goodman & Gutierrez, 2011). This recovery and subsequent strong growth culminated in a record 886,052 students studying in American higher education institutions during the 2013-14 academic year, an increase of 8% from the previous year and a 75% increase from the 1999-00 academic year (IIE, 2014c).

Currently, there are 4.5 million globally mobile students worldwide, and the U.S. hosted 20% of them in 2014, a decrease from 28% of the 2.1 globally mobile students in 2001 (IIE, 2014c), indicating a more competitive marketplace. Yet, even with increased competition, other

¹ In 1919, to counter growing U.S. isolationism, the Institute of International Education (IIE) was established (IIE, n.d.). This organization would reinvent itself continually over the years, but the primary purpose was to promote international education domestically and abroad. Perhaps its greatest contribution would come in 1954 with the publication of the first Open Doors Report (IIE, n.d.). This report was the first comprehensive data collection of international students studying in the U.S. and is now widely recognized as the authority on international student enrollments in the U.S. It provides invaluable data with the support of the U.S. government.

nations still lag behind the U.S. in their share of the international marketplace. For example, the United Kingdom is in second place but only captures 11% of the market, while China (not even in the top eight host countries in 2001) takes third with 8% followed by France, Germany, Australia, Canada, and Japan respectively (IIE, 2014c). Even though the U.S. captures 20% of ISE worldwide, the international population is relatively small compared to the domestic population enrolled in tertiary education in this country. ISE accounts for only 4% of total U.S. enrollment; on the other hand, in both Australia and the United Kingdom, ISE is 20% of total enrollment (IIE, 2014c).

International student flows are comprised of complex webs of sending and receiving countries; various countries have, at different points in time, sent more or fewer students to the U.S., depending upon geopolitical climates, economic issues, higher education development, and so forth. For example, in the 1950s and 1960s, Canada was a top player in sending students to study in the U.S. (Bevis & Lucas, 2007). Countries such as India, China, Japan, and Korea have, for the most part, always been important players as well. During the late 1970s, ISE from the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) was increasing rapidly, mostly from Iran, Venezuela, and Saudi Arabia (Bevis & Lucas, 2007). In fact, in 1979 over 51,000 Iranian students were studying in the U.S., but the Iranian Revolution of 1979 and the holding of the American hostages caused the number of Iranian students in the U.S. to drop drastically in the following years (Bevis & Lucas, 2007), providing an example of how the decline of diplomatic relationships between countries affects ISE.

During more recent years, China and India have vied for the top sending country position with China taking the lead for the past four years, as India's enrollment numbers have been declining slightly. In the most recent Open Doors report (2014d), the IIE provided a 15-year

overview highlighting trends in ISE from the 1999-00 academic year until now. The report noted that there are now five times as many Chinese students, two and a half times as many Indian students, seven and a half times many Vietnamese students, and more than ten times as many Saudi students than there were in 2000, indicating explosive growth for these nations in sending students to study in the U.S. On the other hand, countries like Japan and Taiwan are now sending fewer students to the U.S. Japan's population has decreased by 59% over the 15-year period, while Taiwan's population has decreased by 27%. Yet, even with these decreases, the two countries remain in the top ten sending countries. IIE reports that Saudi Arabia, Vietnam, and Brazil have moved into the top ten list when, fifteen years ago, they ranked 21, 43, and 13 respectively in sending students to the U.S. There have also been significant increases in students coming from Latin America & the Caribbean, Sub-Saharan Africa, and the Middle East and North Africa regions. See Table 1 for Open Doors (2014b) data on the top 25 sending countries and the number of students studying in the U.S for the 2013-14 academic year.

Table 1: Top sending countries to the United States

Rank	Place of Origin	2013-14
1	China	274,439
2	India	102,673
3	South Korea	68,047
4	Saudi Arabia	53,919
5	Canada	28,304
6	Taiwan	21,266
7	Japan	19,334
8	Vietnam	16,579
9	Mexico	14,779
10	Brazil	13,286
11	Turkey	10,821
12	Iran	10,194
13	United Kingdom	10,191
14	Germany	10,160
15	France	8,302
16	Nepal	8,155
17	Hong Kong	8,104
18	Nigeria	7,921
19	Indonesia	7,920
20	Thailand	7,341
21	Kuwait	7,288
22	Colombia	7,083
23	Venezuela	7,022
24	Malaysia	6,822
25	Spain	5,350

According to the Open Doors data (IIE, 2014b), the ten states with the highest concentration of international students were (in descending order): California, New York, Texas, Massachusetts, Illinois, Pennsylvania, Florida, Ohio, Michigan, and Indiana. The top three U.S. host institutions were New York University, University of Southern California, and University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign (IIE, 2014b). Goodman & Gutierrez (2011) note that well over 50% of international students study in research universities, and Choudaha (2015) reports that

70% of international students study in only 200 institutions of the American postsecondary system. This data in aggregate clearly illustrates the difficulty that institutions outside of these categorizations may face when trying to recruit internationally.

In general, higher education mobility is still only for the socially elite (Marmolejo, 2012). In spite of this, there is still a wider diversity of students who study abroad now than in previous years (Altbach, 2004a). The most popular majors for international students are: (1) business and management, (2) engineering, and (3) math and computer science (Farrugia & Bhandari, 2014). Asian students make up the majority of international students in the STEM fields and are driving growth in this major area (Ruiz, 2013). A majority (93%) of students attend school full-time (IIE, 2012). While the gender gap between male and females students seems to be closing, there are still more male students (56%) than females (44%) studying abroad in the U.S. (Farrugia & Bhandari, 2014).

For the first time since 2001, in 2012, IIE reported that undergraduate enrollment exceeded graduate enrollment, a trend that continues today. However, the ratio of graduate students to undergraduate students sent to the U.S. varies widely from country to country. For example, Indian graduate students greatly outnumber their undergraduate counterparts. In 2014, Indian undergraduates only make up 12% of the international Indian student population (IIE, 2014e). On the other hand, Saudi undergraduates (50%) greatly outnumber the graduate population (21%) in the United States (IIE, 2014f).

On a national level, international students and their dependents contribute significantly to the U.S. economy. The NAFSA² International Student Economic Value Tool (2014a) shows that

² NAFSA originally stood for National Association of Foreign Student Advisors. It was later changed to NAFSA: Association of International Educators. NAFSA is a large professional association based in the U.S. dedicated to international education and exchange.

international students and their families contributed a net³ of over \$26.8 billion to the U.S. economy in 2013-14 academic year, an increase of 12% from the previous year. Additionally, international students helped to support 340,000 jobs either directly or indirectly during that year. Of direct consequence for this dissertation, is that of the direct jobs that were created or supported by international students, 54% were in the higher education sector. In fact, for every seven international students enrolled in an institution of higher education, three U.S. jobs were created or supported by spending in the higher education, telecommunications, dining, retail, accommodation, transportation, or health insurance sectors (NAFSA, 2014b). Foreign students are highly likely to be funding their own education. For the 2013-14 academic year, 65% of students named themselves and/or family as their primary funding source for their education, followed by 19% naming an institutional source, and 16% naming an outside entity such as a foreign government or current employer (IIE, 2014b). One only has to see these numbers in aggregate to understand why international students are so vital to our national economy.

There is no national policy regarding access for international students in the U.S.; in fact, access remains fairly open for students who want to come study in American institutions. However, immigration laws and regulations do provide a framework and legal system for studying in the U.S. (Altbach, 1989). Altbach (2004b) proposes that navigating the bureaucracy to study in the U.S. is like running an “obstacle course” (p. 21). For an international student, navigating a foreign governmental bureaucracy can be quite daunting or even off-putting for some. The catastrophe of 9/11 brought increased regulation and financial burden due to increased fees and tracking for international students. The Department of Homeland Security established the Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS), designed to extensively track

³ During the 2013-14 academic year, the U.S. contributed approximately 9.6 billion dollars in support of international students.

international students through the system (Altbach, 2004b). Verbik and Lasanowski (2007) write about the immigration hardships that students experience in the U.S. compared to other countries, especially U.S. competitors such as Australia, the United Kingdom, and Canada. The complexity of immigration laws and the difficulty of obtaining a work visa after graduation could cause students to think twice about studying in the U.S. and could cause them to pick other countries with friendlier policies (Lee, 2010; Lee & Rice, 2007). This could hinder the United States' competitiveness with other countries (Altbach & Knight, 2007) and support some scholars' argument that the U.S. is becoming complacent with international student recruitment (Lee, 2008, 2010). Although enrollment in the U.S. has continued to increase incrementally in recent years, there are not large gains. Some might argue that if the U.S. continues to rest on its laurels that one day we will lose our position as the number one destination for foreign study.

It is possible however that dynamics may be shifting, as transnational education in the age of the Internet is helping to reshape where students go. International branch campuses have allowed some students to stay in their own countries to obtain an education from a prestigious American, Australian, or European university, for example. Yet, many students still seek out institutions abroad in hopes of receiving a better education or greater opportunities than they may be able to find in their home countries.

Most research currently focuses upon the difficulty of the international student experience (Lee, et al., 2006). The literature base is not robust for studying international student flows, markets, financing, or individual decision-making regarding where to study. The challenges of putting together global datasets are enormous given that not every country collects data about tertiary education and that data might be collected by various methods making it hard

to standardize. Despite the challenges, more research must be conducted in this area to inform our policies and practices in international student enrollment.

2.3 The Struggle for Control in the Policy Arena

The use of private agents in international recruiting is widely recognized as a current issue and challenge in the international education world, and there has been strong policy debate as to whether or not the use of agents is an ethical practice. It is against federal law for payments to exchange hands for domestic recruiting (as noted in the previous chapter), making many wonder why it is legal to do so internationally. Yet, the possible benefits of having an increased international student profile on campus have left many university administrators pursuing whatever avenues possible to enroll international students at their institutions, and the growth of institutional agent use in the U.S. is undeniably mounting. The national conversations about this practice are important background for my study, and here I summarize important current events in the U.S. context.

The National Association for College Admission Counseling (NACAC) is a U.S.-based professional association founded in 1937 and made up of over 14,000 professional members worldwide who support students as they make decisions about pursuing college (NACAC website). It is one of the leading national voices on college recruitment and admissions and has the most influence on best practices in undergraduate admissions. The organization sets guidelines through its Statement of Principles of Good Practice (SPGP), which all member institutions are mandated to adhere to in their recruitment and admissions practices. There is a wide array of guidelines within this document, “ranging from binding (enforceable) practices, such as the well known waiting period provided to prospective students prior to making an enrollment commitment (known colloquially as the ‘May 1 deadline’), to ‘best practice’

guidance on conducting need-blind admission policies” (NACAC, 2013, p. 9). Historically, this organization has taken a firm stance against the use of agents in international recruiting by barring member institutions from paying commissions to anyone recruiting or enrolling students (Jaschik, 2011).

In 1951, out of an expanding view that admissions officers were not salespeople but actually a professional unit of the university, the SPGP was revised to include the following statement (NACAC, 2013): “[College and university members will] ensure that admission counselors are viewed as professional members of their institutions’ staffs. As professionals, their compensation shall take the form of a fixed salary rather than commissions or bonuses based on the number of students recruited” (p. 9). A clarification to this statement was incorporated in 1993 when the membership voted to clarify that the ban on commission payments was for domestic and international students (NACAC, 2013). Although agency-based recruitment was generally not accepted in the U.S. undergraduate admissions scene, the practice had been adopted among English as a Second Language (ESL) program providers, as well as some other types of continuing education providers, executive education programs, and other specialized programs (Levanthal & Rota, 2013). However, the trend of agency-based recruitment in higher education was slowly and furtively growing, and by 2002, the practice was discussed again with NACAC’s Admission Practices committee, which concluded that minus a change in language, the practice would be in violation of the SPGP guidelines (NACAC, 2013). In 2005, NACAC made significant modifications to the SPGP, which included adjusting statements about incentive remunerations. The original rhetoric was as follows, “[Members agree that they will] not offer or accept any reward or remuneration from a secondary school, college, university, agency, or organization for placement or recruitment of students” (NACAC, 2013, p. 9). The

2005 policy additions (NACAC, 2013) clarified the statement as follows:

[Members will] not offer or accept any reward or remuneration from a secondary school, college, university, agency, or organization for placement or recruitment of students.

Members:

- a. will be compensated in the form of a fixed salary, rather than commissions or bonuses based on the number of students recruited;
- b. will not contract with secondary school personnel for remunerations for referred students. (p. 9)

Operating outside of the SPGP guidelines as a member institution introduces significant risk.

NACAC's (and others) concern about potential conflicts of interest, deception, lack of regulation, and misrepresentation were at the forefront of the agent issue. It was not only those who oppose the use of agents who had these concerns but also those who support the use of agents in recruitment as well. A difference between the two groups is that those in favor of agents believe that the industry can be regulated with appropriate regulations and oversight. Those who are opposed believe that the industry can never be fully transparent and that the commercialization this practice brings is unhealthy for international higher education.

In 2011, the NACAC board drafted a policy revision to clarify rhetoric used in the SPGP that the ban of financial incentives per capita “applied equally to domestic and international recruiting” (NACAC, n.d., p.1). It is important to clarify that this proposed revision, would not have barred the use of agents, only remuneration in the form of incentive payments based upon the number of students recruited (Jaschik, 2011). At the same time NACAC also issued a public call for comments regarding the proposed policy revision and received 300 comments from various individuals and constituent groups. The proposed change was controversial, especially since there were some U.S. institutions and NACAC members already using agents. In response, NACAC board members issued a statement that reinforced the association's pledge to the principle, but because the board learned that at least 200 institutions (and possibly more as these

were self-reporting) were already using agents, it implemented a freeze on processing reported violations for a period of two years while a special commission was formed to examine the issue (Jaschik, 2011). The NACAC Special Commission on International Student Recruitment, comprised of 28 members representing a wide range of constituent groups⁴ and opinions, was formed to examine the issue further and also to consider alternatives to agent use.

After nearly two years, in June 2013, the divided commission finally issued a report that Fischer (2013) noted, “Attempts to mollify everyone but is likely to please no one.” The report proposed to shift the SPGP language with one word by moving from “may not” to a compromise saying that institutions “should not” use agents. However, if institutions do use agents, the commission implored that the practice should focus on accountability, transparency, and integrity. In September 2013, the NACAC membership voted to accept this language into their standards (NACAC, 2013). This was a pivotal moment in the agent debate because, even though U.S. law accommodated agent use for international students, it has generally had a negative stigma nationally, especially without an endorsement by NACAC. While this was certainly no ringing endorsement of agents, this rhetoric shift did to some extent lift the negative stigma. It is still very much a contested, yet growing practice, with fervent supporters and detractors on each side.

In addition to NACAC, there is another professional association that is very visible in the agency-based recruiting landscape in the United States. The American International Recruitment Council (AIRC), founded in 2008, is an organization that promotes the ethical use of agents in the U.S. and works to establish quality standards for this practice. The organization is a strong

⁴It is important to note that at many institutions, the admissions departments are not the sole decision-makers about the use of agents. The members of the special committee included many individuals involved in college admissions, but there were also individuals who were involved in international initiatives outside of the admissions functional area.

advocate of agency-based recruitment, and its membership is comprised of U.S. accredited post-secondary institutions, pathway programs⁵, affiliated institutions⁶, as well as agencies. The organization was formed as a direct response to other national organizations' oppositional stance on agency-based recruitment. It is also a registered Standards Development Organization (SDO) with the U.S. Department of Justice and U.S. Federal Trade Commission. SDOs work to develop and publish industry standards, which may or may not be enacted into law. By registering as an SDO, AIRC is officially recognized as a body working to establish standards for the agent industry.

AIRC has 250 institutional members (as of November 2014) that are interested in promoting standards in ethical recruiting. These institutions vary in institutional type and the extent to which they are using agents, ranging from those that use many agents to those who are not using agents yet but are beginning to think about it as a strategy. Institutional members pay annual dues based upon enrollment numbers⁷ and are required to adhere to four guidelines, according to AIRC's best practices. The four guidelines are as follows: (1) commitment to proper student support services (i.e. immigration support, appropriate housing, culturally appropriate dining options, etc.), (2) accuracy in marketing information, (3) transparent student recruitment practices, and (4) engaged and strategic agent management. The organization has also established an accreditation process whereby private third party agencies can complete a certification process to become an agency member. Only agencies that complete the certification

⁵ Pathway programs generally serve as a bridge program for international students who may lack the necessary English or academic skills necessary to full enroll in a degree program right away. These programs are a hybrid of credit-bearing courses and English language instruction and are sometimes outsourced to companies providing this type of service (Redden, 2010). Pathway programs exist in a variety of models, and many times are a feeder program to undergraduate enrollment.

⁶ "Open to U.S. accredited secondary schools or secondary/ post secondary institutions based outside the U.S., which have been reviewed by a recognized national or international quality assurance system" (AIRC, n.d.a).

⁷ Institutional members pay \$600/year if enrolling less than 10,000 students or \$1,100/year if enrolling 10,000 or more students. (AIRC, n.d.b)

process are allowed membership status. This status signals to institutions and the student market that they are complying with recognized standards formulated by an AIRC committee and are legitimate recruiters.

The agency certification process consists of ten steps listed on AIRC's website. To apply for certification, agencies must submit an application and a \$2,000 non-refundable application fee. A preliminary review of the agency occurs, and if it is determined that the agency can proceed to the full review, then the agency is required to pay \$5,000 to cover the cost of a self-evaluation and external review. An AIRC certification board (operating independently of the board of directors) conducts a review process, which includes an on-site review of the agency's headquarters by an external reviewer who is an institutional or organizational AIRC member without a conflict of interest with the agency undergoing review⁸. As another step in review, AIRC also announces agencies that are undergoing certification review, so that individuals may comment on the agencies' compliance the council's standards. The AIRC certification board makes the final decision on whether to certify or deny an agency based upon the total findings of the review process. If an agency passes certification, they are required to pay a first year's membership fee of \$3,000⁹. Therefore, the total agency financial investment to go through a successful certification process is \$10,000 with either a \$2,000 or \$4,000 investment yearly thereafter. The certification is good for five years. AIRC's website listed 72 certified agencies in more than 300 cities in 90 countries at the writing of this dissertation.

⁸ According to AIRC's website, "It is the responsibility of the agency to cover the external reviewer's round trip airfare (economy); airport transportation in country; and at least 3 nights' lodging and meals at an international hotel of 3 stars or above." See <http://airc-education.org/airc-certification-application> for an outline of the whole certification process.

⁹ In subsequent years, certified agencies pay membership based upon the number of students they place globally in a year. Dues annually are \$2,000 for small agencies placing less than 500 students per year or \$4,000 for large agencies placing 500 or more students per year.

AIRC's certification process is controversial. The governing board and the certification board are purposefully separated in order to provide an impartial process for certifying agencies. However, critics note that the process is "self-validating; its members are universities and agents who benefit from the ethical cover that certification provides" (Altbach & Reisburg, 2013, p. 3). There are no independent organizations involved in the certification process. In addition, the certification process is for agencies and not individual counselors employed by the agencies (Engberg, 2013). Certainly, there could be agencies who pass certification that may have employees who present ethical challenges, but on the other hand, there are domestic recruitment counselors working for reputable institutions who may not have the most scrupulous personal ethics.

It is also expensive, as outlined above, to be a certified agency member. The cost of certification, as well as annual membership fees, can be cost prohibitive for smaller "mom and pop" style agencies. These smaller agencies still make up most of the agency market, meaning that most may not seek certification given that the cost over five years is almost \$20,000 (Engberg, 2013). Therefore, a large majority of the agency market could be excluded from certification.

However, there is no other accreditation process in the U.S., and supporters argue that the AIRC process is certainly a solid start to professionalizing the industry through recognized standards and certification. Being certified lends a cachet that may allow agents to enter institutional markets that they otherwise would not be able to access. Additionally, it may also assist in matching institutions and agents who are interested in ethical recruitment.

The development of AIRC as an organization is important to understand because prior to its establishment, there was no organization in the U.S. focusing specifically on the development

of ethical standards regarding this practice. While it was certainly discussed at NACAC, NAFSA, and other professional organizations, it was not the sole focus. This is different from countries such as Great Britain and Australia, two of America's strongest competitors and countries that use agents extensively for recruiting purposes. Both of these countries have an extensive regulatory framework regarding the use of agents. For example, Australia's institutions are legally responsible to demonstrate that they are working with reputable agents, have written agreements describing the terms of these relationships, list publicly which agents they work with, and hire an ombudsman to address and manage complaints (Jaschik, 2012). In Great Britain, the Quality Assurance Agency, as well as the British Council, has provided guidance to institutions on how to work with agencies, as well as a code of ethics to incorporate into contracts. Specifically, the British Council has focused upon training for agents.

There have also been partnership efforts among countries to try to establish and coordinate regulation for the industry. In March 2012, education officials from the United Kingdom, Australia, Ireland, and New Zealand signed the "London Statement," a joint statement of principles that "stresses the need for professionalism and ethical responsibility on the part of the commission-based agents who help many schools, colleges, and universities to recruit international students" (British Council, 2012). A series of meetings that also included the U.S. and Canada led to this statement, although the U.S. and Canada are noticeably absent from the signatory list (Baker, 2012). Given the unsettled nature of the agent debate domestically, it is not surprising that the U.S. did not sign the London Statement.

2.4 Trade Liberalization and Global Competition

In the introduction chapter, I discussed the difference between globalization and internationalization, as well as the relationship between these two phenomena. International

students bring with them a diversity of perspective, ethnicity, and culture that most institutions find invaluable. Although there are multiple strategies to achieve internationalization, international students are the most visible aspect (Altbach, 1989). Mazzarol, Soutar, and Seng (2003) call recruiting international students a “first wave” approach to internationalization. Seemingly, in order to compete in a globalized world, institutions must be on the road to increased internationalization. The ability to compete makes internationalization an institutional motivator. There are two specific areas stemming from globalization and internationalization that are particularly pertinent to the topic of this dissertation—the growth of educational trade and the impact of global rankings. The following sections provide an overview of the impact of these two areas on student mobility.

Educational Trade

There is increased visible growth of educational trade¹⁰ in recent decades. For example, there are more globally mobile students than ever before, a growing number of branch campuses, and an increase of international articulation agreements, to name a few examples. A key marker in the liberalization of trade in education services is the General Agreement in Trade and Services (GATS), administered by the World Trade Organization (WTO). The purpose of GATS is to systematically eliminate barriers to trade in services to promote additional trade (Knight, 2002; 2006) and to open up markets (Altbach, 2004a). GATS emerged in 1995 (Tilak, 2011), and it was discussed in numerous negotiation rounds over the years. It was ultimately ratified by the parliaments of all of the 149 WTO member countries by 2006 (Knight, 2006). WTO trade is segmented into three groups: goods, services, and intellectual property rights (Tilak, 2011). GATS is the first international legal trade agreement to cover services, as previous agreements

¹⁰ I use Knight’s (2006) definition of education trade defined as cross-border educational initiatives that are commercial usually for-profit endeavors (though not always).

have been focused on trade in products. Education is labeled a service under this agreement with higher education categorized as a subsector. There are four supply modes in GATS; in other words, there are four different ways that services can be traded internationally. The modes are: (1) cross-border supply, (2) consumption abroad, (3) commercial presence, and (4) presence of natural persons. These modes of supply apply to all twelve GATS service sectors, and in the area of education, study abroad is categorized into the consumption mode (Knight, 2002). The overall objective of GATS is to progressively liberalize trade by decreasing or eliminating barriers to trade in services altogether.

The GATS deal is divided into three segments (Knight, 2006). The first section contains general principles such as the Most Favored Nation (MFN) Treatment and National Treatment (to be explained shortly). In the second part, specifics are given for each of the 149 countries' access commitments for foreign providers to its domestic market. The last section is comprised of additions detailing limitations for each sector.

Knight (2006) provides the following helpful summary of GATS and its obligations, as it is a complex agreement that is sometimes difficult to grasp. There are two types of obligations that exist in GATS: Unconditional or "top down" and conditional or "bottom up." Unconditional obligations apply to all twelve service sectors, no matter if a country has scheduled a commitment in a specific sector or not. The four unconditional obligations are as follows: most favored nation, transparency, dispute settlement, and monopolies. Two of these—MFN and transparency—are particularly pertinent to the discussion in this dissertation. MFN compels equal and unfailing treatment of foreign trading partners who are WTO nation members, meaning there is no favored treatment or allowance for "special deals." For example, if a United States institution of higher education chooses to establish a branch campus in Greece, then

Greece is obligated to give other WTO member countries the same opportunity or treatment.

Conversely, if Greece denies the U.S. institution the opportunity to provide the service, then all WTO member nations are denied the opportunity. Additionally, transparency means that all member nations must publish all processes that influence services, inform the WTO regarding policy changes, and respond to requests from other member nations regarding the changes.

Transparency applies to all sectors and all countries.

The conditional obligations of national treatment and market access are pertinent only those items listed in the national commitments, and the country itself determines the degree to which it commits to the services. National treatment compels equal treatment for domestic and foreign providers when they are both allowed to supply a service in a WTO member country (for example, a foreign language training company may wish to establish a commercial presence in a specific country alongside the already existing domestic companies). This obligation applies only when a country has made a specific sector commitment, and exemptions are allowed. Market access is also a conditional obligation that determines to what degree a foreign provider can access the market. For example, a country may allow only its national institutions to grant college degrees, which would limit the market access for foreign higher education institutions. This can be subject to one or more of the six types of limitations allowed by GATS. Each country is granted autonomy to determine its own market access limitations for committed sectors.

Regarding the consumption mode in student mobility, there are certain barriers that GATS endeavors to remove. Many of the educational barriers in trade are not clearly visible, but barriers could include such things as laws prohibiting foreign providers from entering the market, prohibition of employment while individuals study abroad, restricting specific academic majors

for study abroad, quotas on the number of students, or visa restrictions (Tilak, 2011; Sahni & Kale, 2004). Lane and Owens (2011) note that one of the most concerning aspects of GATS is that it focuses on the process of trade rather than the service quality. There are voices on both sides of this agreement as to whether this is a positive or negative move to accelerate marketization of higher education. Supporters of GATS argue that it can increase innovation through a competitive marketplace, provide increased access through foreign providers, and align workforce needs more closely with education (Knight, 2002; Larsen & Vincent-Lancrin, 2002). Opponents disagree and say that GATS can encourage foreign domination, a lack of quality control, increased commercialization, and a lack of focus and money on domestic higher education plans (Knight, 2002; Larsen & Vincent-Lancrin, 2002). It should be noted however that the challenges and benefits will vary country to country and will depend upon the mode of delivery and sector being discussed.

Educational trade brings forth a chicken or the egg scenario. What came first, increased cross-border activity followed by trade regulation or trade regulations that prompted increased cross-border activities? I take the position that internationalization has and will increase despite education now being subject to trade regulations. Students studying abroad and agency-based recruitment would happen regardless of the existence of GATS, yet the commodification of education has ushered in a regulatory environment for education, something that many in higher education decades past would have never thought possible. Thus, a defined regulatory environment may in fact encourage faster market entry because there are clearer game rules.

The Race to the Top

The effects of ubiquitous globalization have impacted competition within higher education. In decades past, institutions may have only been concerned with local, state, or

national competition, but now, institutions must compete globally as well. Rhoades and Marginson (2002) use the term “glonacal” in their work to illustrate the interrelatedness of global, national, and local phenomenon impacting higher education. This connectivity, as well as a globalized world market, has given rise to global university rankings. U.S. News and World report produced the first national institutional rankings in the U.S. in 1983, but rankings have proliferated over the years in various forms. There are numerous global rankings systems, but Shanghai Jiao Tong University’s Academic Rankings of World Universities (ARWU) and The Times Higher Education’s World University Rankings (THE) have emerged as the most globally influential (Cantwell & Taylor, 2013; Federkeil, 2008; Hazelkorn, 2011; Marginson & van der Wende, 2007). Yet, these global rankings only comprise a very small portion of institutions worldwide, as it is really only feasible to rank one type of university—the comprehensive research-intensive university (Marginson & van der Wende, 2007). Hazelkorn (2011) discusses the world “fascination” with the top 100 institutions out of the world’s more than 15,000 institutions of higher education. Therefore, institutions not in this elite sector, find themselves left out the race to the top. “Rankings serve to legitimize an institution’s placement in the global hierarchy, yet in many cases, cement the universities that have the most prestigious reputations into place. This only exacerbates the stratification that exists in higher education” (Kauppinen, Coco, Choi, & Brajkovic, in press).

Rankings are controversial, and scholars have discussed (or criticized) various rankings’ methodological designs (Altbach, 2006; Cantwell & Taylor, 2013; Kauppi & Erkkila, 2011), reliability and validity (Delgado-Márquez, Hurtado-Torres, & Bondar, 2011), and their meaning (Hazelkorn, 2011). Regardless of rankings’ controversial nature, “these ranking systems insert new lines of competition into the relations between universities by facilitating competition within

and across national borders” (Cantwell & Taylor, 2013, p. 198). Bowman and Bastedo (2011) explore the effects of world ranking scores for colleges and universities, finding that being ranked highly increases prestige. Institutions might go to great lengths to increase their reputations, allowing the external environment to shape their activities. Of the top two global rankings systems mentioned previously, THE accounts for international staff and students in its criteria, while ARWU depends more heavily on research measures, yet this could measure international dimensions in an indirect way since research to some extent depends upon international faculty and students (Delgado-Márquez, et al., 2011).

Lee (2010) notes that international enrollment is a “critical marker” of prestige. In addition, there is a certain cachet that comes with having high international student numbers. It cannot be overlooked that international students provide alumni networks all over the world, increasing an institution’s visibility and brand and thereby enhancing institutional prestige. Country of origin, secondary schooling, and socioeconomic status may all affect the level of prestige a student brings to an institution. International students could be viewed as a “critical resource” in the prestige race, and institutions may purposively structure their activities (i.e. agency-based recruitment) to obtain this critical resource. However, the “type” of international student recruited to an institution may affect the degree of prestige. Furthermore, while having international students on campus may not help an institution break into the top 100 universities in the world, there are still many added benefits that these students bring to campuses and beyond.

2.5 Conceptual Framework

I use the theory of academic capitalism as my primary framework by which to examine the utilization of agents in higher education international student recruitment. However, to begin

this discussion, I first explore sector differences among the various higher education actors involved in this topic to illustrate differences to provide context. I then introduce academic capitalism theory to identify ways in which higher education has moved closer to the market, specifically in international student recruitment. Using this theoretical lens, I examine new circuits of knowledge, the growth of interstitial and intermediary organizations, and new revenue streams in agency-based recruitment of international students.

Sector Differences

Many scholars have discussed various sector differences within higher education and other non-profit organizations (Frumkin, 2002; Gumpert & Snyderman, 2006; Leslie, Slaughter, Taylor & Zhang; 2012; Toutkoushian, 2001; Weisbrod, 1998; Weisbrod, Ballou, & Asch, 2008; Winston, 1999, 2004). This research project involves several sectors, making differences in functioning of these organizations an important framework for understanding institutional use of agents. In higher education, it is recognized there are three sectors: public, private non-profits (referred to henceforth as privates), and for-profit institutions. This research focuses upon public and private colleges and universities, but for the purposes of this discussion, non-profit will serve as an overarching term for higher education, while for-profit will be used to discuss private third party agencies. The nuances of the relationships between my case institutions and their agent networks are influenced in some ways by different ways of operating between non-profit and for-profit. Andreasen (2009) terms these relationships between non-profit and for-profit entities as “cross-sector alliances” and explains that these cross-sector alliances “yield strategic or tactical benefits to both parties” (p. 157).

Hansmann (1980) asserts the defining characteristic of non-profits is the “non-distribution constraint.” This essentially means a non-profit cannot have shareholders like a for-

profit enterprise can—a non-profit owns itself (Hansmann, 1980; Winston, 1999). Weisbrod et al. (2008) note that colleges and universities participate in two activities: growing revenues and subsequently spending them. The most noted financial difference between public and private institutions of higher education is in revenues; publics receive the largest portion of their revenue from state appropriations (Gumport & Snyderman, 2006). However, appropriations have steadily declined in recent years for public education, and many schools have had to pursue a growing variety of private revenue-generating activities, such as raising tuition and fees (Gumport & Snyderman, 2006; Weisbrod et al., 2008). Private institutions depend heavily on tuition and fees, alumni giving, and sources of private support (Toutkoushian, 2001). Gumport and Snyderman (2006) suggest financial profiles of publics and privates are beginning to converge, as public education becomes more privately subsidized and private education to some extent is publicly subsidized. Additionally, non-profits must balance their missions against pursuit of external resources because in some cases resource gain might be possible from sources with the potential to distort those missions (Weisbrod, 1998).

The use of agents in higher education arguably increases the financial profile of institutions. Nonprofits in higher education are engaging in what academic capitalism terms market activities or commercialism, as they engage in different supplementary revenue generating activities, such as the use of agents (Weisbrod, 1998). Conversely, agencies' purpose is to make profit and to "sell" all they can to consumers. This is in contradiction to the mission of most higher education institutions, yet some institutions are using agents to "sell" higher education services to international students. Weisbrod (1998) provides a very important point salient to the relationship between higher education and agents: generating resources will sometimes lead to sacrifice of control over their use. It is possible that generating tuition dollars

from international students through agents could require a sacrifice of mission, purpose, student selection, finances, or recruitment practices, depending upon the institution. If it does, the degree to which this happens is still not known.

Organizations respond to their environments differently. Resource dependence theory proposes that organizations adapt to their external environment in order to obtain critical resources (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978). Based on this, organizations purposively structure their activities and respond to fluctuations in the external environment in ways that augment their capacity to acquire critical resources. Tolbert (1985) asserts that institutional environments are differentiated by organization, and she explores administrative structure according to resource dependence. As relationships to external resources become institutionalized as a need fulfillment, Tolbert asserts administrative structure will grow to the proportion of dependency on the organization. In the case of agency-based recruitment, there could be growth of international offices with, for example, the hiring of staff to manage agents as the phenomenon grows. It seems likely that administrative structures will grow as agent use proliferates, and this will be explored in my study.

Froelich (1999) asserts the “Degree of dependence experienced by an organization is determined by the importance and concentration of resources provided. Organizations that rely on few sources for vital inputs become highly dependent on and beholden to those providers for survival” (p. 247-248). If institutions become highly dependent upon the tuition dollars from international students who are recruited by agents, then commercial activity in the form of “selling” higher education goods and services worldwide is sure to increase. The different purposes, environments, and constraints between the non-profit and for-profit worlds will be

scrutinized throughout the case studies in this dissertation, as these differences are important for the analysis of marketization.

Academic Capitalism

Since the 1970s, neoliberalism has strongly influenced political, economic, and social systems worldwide. Neoliberalism “proposes that human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets, and free trade” (Harvey, 2005, p. 2). This ideological positioning has promoted commercialization and deregulation, which many universities have embraced and benefited from in the past decades. During the neoliberal period, universities have adapted to a new way of thinking. The theory of academic capitalism explains how institutions move to pursue market and market-like behaviors in order to secure external revenue streams, while blurring the boundaries among states, institutions, and industry (Slaughter & Leslie, 1997; Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004). While higher education was not a primary architect of neoliberalism, segments of it have embraced the concept, which has certainly played a role in the evolving mechanisms that continue to augment academic capitalism and promote entrepreneurialism. While some units of the university have participated fully in market activities, other units may be unwilling to participate or may not be included at all in these activities (Slaughter & Cantwell, 2012).

As Slaughter and Rhoades (2004) explain, academic capitalism in the neoliberal economy encourages higher education institutions to contribute to new global circuits of knowledge, create interstitial organizations to bring the corporate sector inside the university, establish intermediary organizations that link the public and private sectors, increase managerial capacity to manage these networks and revenue streams, build new research infrastructure, and create new ways of

marketing. All of these actions help to link institutions to the neoliberal economy in order to try to generate new external revenue streams and to create new circuits of knowledge. Academic capitalism also emphasizes networks of individual actors who link various organizations in the public and private sectors, obscuring traditional organizational and sector margins.

Slaughter and Leslie (1997) assert that academic capitalism emerged and intensified from the unprecedented Bayh-Dole Act of 1980, a law that allowed universities, as well as faculty members, to patent discoveries from federally funded research. Commercialization of research strengthened in the years after the passage of Bayh-Dole. Corporations supported Bayh-Dole but regularly argue claims in court over ownership of patents from scientific discovery, as corporations support university labs and are financial partners in invention development. In scenarios like this, the boundary between public and private sectors is no longer impenetrable. Research commercialization and the federal funding environment in the academic capitalism era contribute substantially to stratification among universities and also within universities (Rosinger, Taylor, Coco, & Slaughter, in press). Certainly, a combination of decreased public funding, a noticeably strong spirit of entrepreneurship in the 1980s, changing academic values, and stiff competition in the educational marketplace contributed to a growing commercialism and a move to the market (Bok, 2003).

Kauppinen (2012) writes that transnational academic capitalism (TAC) recognizes that nation-state lines are not natural boundaries for academic capitalism behavior in higher education, or through a complementary theoretical view, the globalization of academic capitalism may refer to the varying levels of academic capitalism in different nation states (Kauppinen & Cantwell, 2014). The transcendence of TAC networks is especially true for international student recruitment, as activities span the globe with, for example, an American

university contracting with an agent in Nepal to recruit a student who would enroll and attend university in the U.S. In this scenario, revenue generation and partnerships are blurring traditional nation-state boundaries by initiating transnational financial exchanges, creating a new global circuit of knowledge, and promoting intermediary partner relationships. As institutions try to access revenue from other countries, these would-be multinational institutions of higher education are organizations that contribute directly to TAC (Kauppinen & Cantwell, 2014). Deeg and Jackson (2007) discuss transnationalization and multilevel governance noting the “increasingly transnational character of economic actors and multilevel character of institutions that go beyond the nation-state” (p. 154). Institutions as well as agents can certainly be viewed as transnational economic actors who operate within and among nation-states while pursuing external revenue. However, as Marginson (2006) emphasizes, global commitments vary among nations, and flows can be bi- or uni-directional depending upon the power and influence of the organization or nation-state.

These new transnational revenue streams in the form of international students are especially important as institutions are trying to capture new markets. Rhoades, Maldonado-Maldonado, Ordorika, and Velazquez (2004) write that academic capitalism encourages institutions to proceed further into global activities and leads them to pursue national and international populations, instead of local ones. International students are a huge economic incentive (Lee, 2010), as the majority of undergraduate foreign students are fully tuition bearing with no assistance from the institution or government (Altbach & Knight, 2007). Altbach (2011) notes that revenues from international students “have become a compelling part of institutions’ bottom lines” (p. 11). Yet, we must see whether these are really new revenue streams or cost recovery for expenses incurred to recruit international students (Knight, 2004).

Kauppinen, Mathies, and Weimer (2014) argue that the socially constructed field that is the international student market is a battleground of struggle and competition as institutions and nation-states compete for international students. These entities try to lure students with clever marketing and financial (and other) incentives. According to these scholars, students market themselves as the “raw material in the commodification process” (p. 255), while institutions and governments compete to secure the best talent. In this contested ground of international student recruitment, with TAC networks come increased marketing and advertising to recruit to capture the funds. Institutional administrators depend upon their agents to advertise to student markets the institutions may not be able to reach on their own accord. In essence, agents become the “face” of the universities that use them. It is not uncommon, as part of the contractual or informal agreement, for institutions to pay agents a marketing budget. This could be used for advertisements, brochures translated into the local language, recruitment fair participation fees, and so on. In fact, many institutions rely on agents to help to build their international brand through this marketing. A study by Naidoo (2010) examines export readiness of institutions, defined as the extent to which an institution is concentrated on meeting needs and wants of the international student recruitment process stakeholders. His results indicate that universities must be willing to invest in collecting solid market intelligence to improve export performance, which can be a large expense. Agents are one way that institutions can gather market intelligence to help them be more successful.

Marginson (2006) proposes there are three segments in the positional market (Hirsch, 1976) in higher education. Segment one is the elite research universities, such as Harvard University, that do not have to play the market game because there is always a high demand for few spaces. In other words, there is intense competition for entry, so the university does not have

to drop prices or cater to the consumer as much. In the context of this dissertation, international students recognize the brand of segment one schools, and institutions do not have to use agents to become visible or to generate revenue. Segment two is aspirant research universities that do relatively well, but these institutions would like to be in segment one. They are, however, unable to break into the upper echelons of higher education and stay in the middle area of higher education stratification. Segment three entities have to aggressively pursue revenue streams and commercialization activities to survive. It could be that these segment three institutions may have no other choice than to utilize agents to try to increase enrollment. Some of these institutions may already be equipped to serve or attract more international students, while others may not have appropriate infrastructure or managerial capacity in place for this population. Yet, these institutions need new sources of revenue, and international students may be able to fulfill urgent financial needs.

Interstitial organizations (Mann, 1986) are formed at the interstices, or near the edges of, existing units within the university (Slaughter & Cantwell, 2012). Interstitial organizations emerge from within the university to manage new initiatives and revenues stemming from these market and market-like behaviors in the academic capitalism era (Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004). As international recruitment has gained momentum, many institutions have had to create international admissions managerial positions, resulting in a build up of managerial capacity. Lee et al. (2006) utilize the assumption that increased international activities, such as international student recruitment, increase managerial capacity according to academic capitalism. Examples of this would be creating positions such as, director of international admissions, agency network managers, international recruiters, international student services directors, and so forth. For some campuses, this has meant creating new offices and hiring brand new people, and in other cases,

this has meant restructuring current managerial capacity and drawing upon existing organizational talent. Interstitial relationships also connect individuals across the university. For example, a faculty member who speaks Arabic may work with international admissions to participate in recruitment travel. Naidoo (2010) indicates that universities should not put all recruitment activities under the authority of one office but rather should coordinate across units in order to deliver a more complete educational experience to students. Therefore, some institutions may find it useful to involve different campus stakeholders in the recruitment process.

Intermediary organizations began to flourish during the late 1970s (Slaughter & Cantwell, 2012). Intermediary organizations and networks, according to academic capitalism theory, bring the corporate sector inside the university and connect the public sector with private industry. This is clearly illustrated when analyzing the agent phenomenon. For example, the American International Recruitment Council (AIRC), a non-profit organization, connects for-profit entities (agents) with the state (public institutions) and other non-profits (private universities). This is an example of blurring organizational boundaries to take advantage of new opportunities created in the neoliberal economy by helping to facilitate entrepreneurialism. Individuals within these organizations flow among the various sectors, entering and retreating from various circuits of knowledge and ideological frames. Foreign agents also serve as intermediaries between institutions and international students, in some ways similar to the for-profit college counseling industry, which evolved as a consequence of academic capitalism (Slaughter & Leslie, 2001).

Academic capitalism theory provides a multi-layer theoretical lens by which to examine the use of agents in international recruitment. A globalized marketplace incorporates economic,

social, and political considerations that impact international student flows worldwide, and these impacts have very real world effects on institutions of all varieties in the U.S. and elsewhere. In the next chapter, I present my methodology for this study and highlight each individual institution included in my research.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

The purpose of this study is to understand institutional decision-making around the use of private third party agencies as an international student recruitment strategy. My study sought to explore how these relationships were established and maintained from institutional administrator, private agent, and international student perspectives. In light of this subject matter, I asked the following research questions:

1. How do university administrators decide to utilize agents in international student recruitment strategies?
2. How are relationships between universities and agents initiated, maintained, and assessed?
3. How are institutions and international students impacted by the use of recruitment agents?

3.2 Research Design

For my empirical analysis of this subject matter, I employed a qualitative case study design. Merriam (2009) describes how qualitative research is well suited for understanding how individuals interpret and construct their respective worlds; in other words, qualitative research allows a researcher to understand experiences, rather than defining a cause and effect. Given the dearth of research on this topic area, a qualitative approach allowed me “to discover rather than test variables” (Corbin & Strauss, 2008, p. 12). Yin’s (2003) work explaining how to undertake

rigorous case study research enhanced my methodological understanding; I selected a case study approach because I was interested in the “how” and “why” questions of this particular method of international student recruitment. As noted by Yin (2003), these types of questions are more likely to be central to case studies, experiments, or histories, yet case studies are distinct from histories or experiments in that they study contemporary events when “behaviors cannot be manipulated” (p. 7). In this case study, I the investigator, was unable to manipulate behaviors and situations, as I tried to understand the dynamic current phenomenon of the ongoing evolution of the use of agents in international student recruitment.

Case Selection

Case study researchers note the importance of bounding the unit of study (Merriam, 1998; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Stake, 1995). Merriam (1998) notes, “If the phenomenon you are interested in studying is not intrinsically bounded, it is not a case” (p. 27). For this research, I selected four institutions—two large, public research universities and two small, private masters colleges. Each institution bounds a case. Due to controversy over the use of agents in recent years, as discussed in chapters one and two, I was particularly interested in studying institutions focused on transparency and ethical use of agents. This led me to discover the American International Recruitment Council (AIRC) through current events news outlets.

Colleges and universities in the U.S. who hold membership in AIRC agree to follow AIRC guidelines in their international recruitment practices with agents. The AIRC (n.d.) website states:

An institution’s adherence to AIRC’s institutional guidelines signifies its commitment to engaging in marketing, recruitment and student support practices that are truthful, ethical and transparent and which meet with the highest levels of professionalism. Furthermore, it signifies an institution’s commitment to operating in accordance with NAFSA’s Principles of Good Practice for the Recruitment and Admissions of International Students.

With this foundation, I began a case site selection process from AIRC's list of institutional members. Flyvbjerg (2006) utilizes information-based sampling as a method founded upon what type of information a case will provide. In addition, Patton (2002) describes intensity sampling (a information-based or purposive strategy) as a method for selection, whereby cases are selected based on the richness and intensity of information provided about the phenomenon being studied. These sampling strategies informed my case selection decisions. As of December 2013 when I began the selection process, there were 220 colleges and universities that held institutional membership in AIRC¹¹.

As a second phase, in order to help bound the cases further, I chose to select all of my cases from within one state. This helped to provide a baseline for understanding state politics, enrollment trends, and public financing of higher education. I used Open Doors data (IIE, 2013) to determine which states enrolled large numbers of international students. I chose to examine states with a significant international student population hypothesizing they might have been early adopters in the use of agents or perhaps more aggressive with using agents, thus enrolling a larger number of international students. In order to protect confidentiality of the institutions and participants, I do not name the state where my institutions are located.

As a third phase in selection, I determined how many institutions in each of the identified states were AIRC members. It was important to have a wide enough range of schools in the state selected in order to ensure I could obtain access to four institutions, as I wanted to study at least two institutions with different control (public and private) to be able to examine variation. Once I had identified an appropriate pool of institutions in the selected state, I began the process of obtaining access at institutions. I was able to gain access at two large public research institutions and two private liberal arts colleges. Next, I provide site context for each of these institutions.

¹¹ As of November 2014, AIRC institutional membership had increased to 250 members.

*Site Contexts*Middleton University

Middleton University, established in the late 19th century, is a small, private liberal arts college situated in a rural area about thirty minutes from a major metropolitan area. Middleton enrolled approximately 4,200 degree seeking students for the fall 2014 semester, and its international student population was over 250 students that semester, making international student enrollment about 6% of total enrollment with the majority of students studying at the undergraduate level. Approximately half of the international population hails from Saudi Arabia through that government's scholarship program for undergraduate study; the next largest population is the Chinese. Offering over twenty academic majors for undergraduates and less than five graduate programs, in the Carnegie classification system, Middleton is categorized in the master's colleges and universities (medium programs). The institution is not ranked in U.S. News and World Report and is an institutional member of AIRC.

Middleton does not have an emphasized history of agent use and only seems to have built up international recruitment efforts and agent networks in recent years. Middleton has two persons working in international recruitment—one staff member and one faculty member. The international admissions director rarely travels for recruitment due to financial constraints, while the faculty member travels every summer, as well as occasionally sending over faculty members who might have expertise in a particular region.

The cost of attending Middleton as an undergraduate student living on campus is over \$32,000 per year with around 90% of the total student population receiving some form of financial aid. Most international students receive financial assistance based upon GPA. I

conducted fieldwork at Middleton in June 2014 under a separate Middleton Institutional Review Board approval with phone interviews continuing into the Fall 2014 semester.

Pike University

Established in the late 19th century, Pike University is a small, private liberal arts college located in a rural area, about one hour from a major metropolitan region. I identified Pike as an institution that placed significant emphasis on international student enrollment through providing international student scholarships, well-developed international student services, various international recruitment strategies, and a large number of staff in the international office for a school of its size. As well, Pike holds a membership in the American International Recruitment Council (AIRC). The total student enrollment for 2014-15 was approximately 4,000 students with the majority being undergraduates, and the international student enrollment was over 400 (including undergraduate, graduate, and English intensive program students), making up roughly 10% of the student body. As reflected in many schools across the country, students from India, China, and Saudi Arabia made up the majority of international enrollment in the spring of 2014 with an additional thirty countries representing the remainder of the international student population.

The institution is not ranked by U.S. News and World report, and in recruitment strategy relies strongly on selling themselves as a personalized experience with strong support for international students. The Carnegie Classification lists Pike University in the Master's Colleges and Universities (larger programs) category. Pike offers approximately sixty undergraduate majors with less than ten graduate degrees. Undergraduate tuition and fees for students living on campus is over \$40,000 per academic year, and the institution does provide scholarships for international students who have the required GPAs. In promotional materials, there are numerous

scholarships outlined ranging from \$1,000 to \$15,000 per academic year depending upon program, study level, and GPA of the international student. Several Pike University staff members travel internationally throughout the year to recruit and manage and train their agent network. I conducted fieldwork at the institution in June 2014 with subsequent phone interviews continuing until November 2014 under the University of Georgia's Institutional Review Board (#STUDY00000807).

Bingley University

Bingley University is a large, public urban institution founded in the earlier half of the 19th century. This university enrolls over 40,000 undergraduate and graduate students on its main campus and is ranked in the top 150 national universities list published by U.S. News and World Report. The institution has robust academic program offerings with over 300 options from which students may choose. In contrast to the missions and purposes of Pike and Middleton, research dollars are significant at this institution. In 2012, Bingley University received over \$400 million in research funding. The institution is classified by the Carnegie Foundation as a research university with very high research activity.

International enrollment at Bingley is large with over 3,000 students enrolling mostly from India and China; however, there are also over 100 other countries represented in addition to those countries. International undergraduate students pay approximately \$26,000 in tuition per academic year. International growth has been fairly rapid with a particular emphasis on increasing undergraduate international enrollment versus graduate international enrollment. University administrators are strategically planning to continue growing international enrollment with aims to enter the top echelons of international student enrollment in the country.

The international recruitment process is highly developed with use of multiple recruitment strategies and also staff on the ground in other countries who are coordinating efforts in a particular country. University domestic staff travel frequently to recruit and manage operations, and they use an agent network to assist in recruitment and have advanced processes in place to sign agent partnership agreements and tracking systems.

Emmett University

Located in a quintessential smaller college town, Emmett University is a large public institution classified as a Carnegie research university with high research activity and is ranked in the U.S. News and World Report top 150 national universities. It is situated in a rural area over an hour from a large metropolitan city. The institution received close to \$30 million dollars in research funding in fiscal year 2013 and offers over 250 undergraduate and graduate majors of study.

Emmett enrolls over 20,000 students at its main campus, with approximately 1,800 international students. Undergraduate international enrollment is 56% of total international enrollment. International undergraduate students pay just under \$20,000 per academic year in tuition. Consistent with national trends, China and Saudi Arabia send the largest numbers of undergraduate students, while India and China are the largest senders of graduate students to the school. In total, 114 countries were represented in the international student population for the academic year 2013-14. Since 2005, international enrollment has grown by about 1000 students, indicating a steady, progressive growth versus a rapid build-up.

University administration works to implement comprehensive internationalization strategies, which includes international enrollment and the use of multiple strategies, including

use of agents. Many students enter as conditional admits into the English intensive program before moving on into full time academics.

3.3 Data Collection

Scholars note that case studies employ different methods of data collection (Merriam, 1998). In this vein, I collected data by using three different methods: interviews, observations, and document analysis. In the following sections, I outline in detail the techniques I used to collect the data.

Interviews

I followed a semi-structured approach in my interviews for this study. A semi-structured approach allowed me to utilize pre-determined questions developed from my conceptual framework, but also allowed for the used of probes and follow-up questions depending upon how the participants answered with information they chose to share (Roulston, 2010). See Appendix B for the interview protocol materials. To protect the confidentiality of my participants and to establish a deeper rapport, neither participants' names nor the names of the institutions and/or agencies with which they are associated are revealed in this dissertation. Because of the ethical debate surrounding the use of agents historically, and despite recent shifts in the perceptions of some, I chose to maintain confidentiality so that participants would feel more comfortable relating their experiences and perceptions to me. Interviews lasted between 20-70 minutes and were audio recorded and subsequently transcribed verbatim.

For this project, I interviewed 32 people who were university administrators¹², enrolled international students, or private agents working with one or more of the case study sites¹³.

¹² Administrator in this context includes one faculty member who assists with recruitment at Middleton University.

¹³ I conducted 31 interviews, but two of these interviews had two people each participating. Additionally, I conducted two interviews with one person to secure additional information.

See Table 2 for a breakdown of institution and participant category.

Table 2: Interview participants by case site and position

<i>Category</i>	<i>Pike</i>	<i>Middleton</i>	<i>Bingley</i>	<i>Emmett</i>
University Vice-President	1			1
Faculty Member		1		
University Director, Assoc/Asst Director	1	1	3	2
University In-Country Coordinator			2	
University Intl Recruiter/Program Coordinator	3		1	
University Graduate Assistant/Student	5			
University Undergraduate Assistant/Student	1	1	4	1
Private Third Party Agency Employee		1		3
Total	11	4	10	7

For university administrators, I interviewed people in such positions as vice-presidents, faculty, directors of international admissions, international recruiters based in the US and abroad, as well as graduate assistants. I used purposeful sampling (Patton, 2002) to identify administrators by reviewing the international recruitment/admissions website pages, and, subsequently, contacted people associated with the international student enrollment and admissions process. Additionally, I used “snowball” sampling (Patton, 2002) to ask what other administrators and faculty on campus were involved in the recruitment process to obtain recommendations to find other participants. I conducted 19 interviews in person, 11 over the phone or Skype, and one through email for a participant who preferred to respond in writing.

I also interviewed undergraduate and graduate students who had experiences with agents to share. Two of the four campuses assisted by sending an email to their international student populations with a formal request from me asking for participants, and I received several student responses from this. Additionally, some administrators and faculty members recommended specific students who I contacted to request participation. Through my interviews with administrators, I gleaned information regarding private third party agencies with which each of

the schools partnered, and through this, I asked for recommendations and contact information for agents from whom to request participation.

Finally, I interviewed agency representatives who work with the institutions studied. Due to these individuals working in various countries, such as China and Brazil, as well as other parts of the U.S., all of these interviews were conducted via Skype. Obtaining interviews with agents proved to be a difficult part of the participation process. Many were unresponsive to my communication, and some informed me they would not be willing to discuss their businesses with me. Given the controversy over agent use in the U.S., I expected this and tried to mitigate it as much as possible by utilizing personal contacts and referrals to use in the participant recruitment process. Ultimately however, I was only able to obtain the participation of four agents for my study.

Documents and Records

As a second method of data collection, I collected and analyzed documents and records obtained from the study sites. These documents and records provided information about institutional strategies and profiles that may have been unreported in interview data. Moreover, these documents and records provide a useful check for interview data to strengthen researcher interpretation of findings (Hodder, 2000).

At each institution, I gathered recruitment materials used to attract international students to campus since these documents provided important context for institutional international marketing efforts. I also collected data on international student enrollments at each campus; this data provided the overall international student enrollment, as well as a breakdown by country of nationality. Additionally, I gathered each institutions' agent training materials if they were available; all four institutions had an agent manual or Power Point presentation they gave to the

agencies with which they work. I also used the institutional websites, and also the agency websites (when available for English translation). I used the institutional websites to understand how institutions marketed themselves to international students, what academic programs are offered, and what services are provided to international students. Finally, I also utilized the agency websites when I could to learn what types of services agencies offered and how their companies were structured.

Observations

I visited each of my four study sites over the course of two weeks during June 2014. Merriam (1998) suggests that observational data assists in providing environmental context that can later be used as reference points for ensuing participant interviews. At each campus, prior to conducting interviews, I spent time observing the campus environment and physical surroundings, especially buildings and offices that were fundamental to international students' college experience. I was also able to observe each city from a "newcomer" lens, given I had never visited these cities and campuses prior to my field trips. This allowed me to try to view things through an international student lens, such as how would a new student view the campus on arrival and how would those students navigate through the first days of the semester. I was also able to observe international admissions/services offices to see how staff interacted with each other and how students visiting the offices interacted. I used a field journal to record observations throughout the day and during interviews, and at the end of each day, I spent time synthesizing my observations and writing down summative thoughts and questions for follow-up with the participants.

In ethnographic research, researchers typically rely upon years of observation data (Wolcott, 1999). From this, I knew that I needed to be cautious about interpreting observational

data collected at one short point in time, as any given observation could be an anomaly. For my study, I choose to be conservative in my interpretation of, for example, administrative interactions between staff members and students in the offices I visited, as I only observed for a very short period of time. Thus, I utilize, as Merriam (1998) suggests, my observational data to provide environmental context.

3.4 Data Analysis

I followed well-recognized qualitative analytic techniques to systematically analyze both university documents and participant interviews. Using my research questions and theoretical framework, I initially coded both documents and interview transcripts according to an a priori coding scheme. See Table 3 for an outline of the a priori themes linked to my research questions and conceptual framework that I used to code themes during the preliminary round of coding.

Table 3: A priori themes

<i>Research Questions</i>	<i>Themes</i>
How do university administrators decide to utilize agents in international student recruitment strategies?	Leadership decisions and perspectives Recruitment strategies
How are relationships between universities and agents initiated, maintained, and assessed?	Agreement details Training/education for agents
How are institutions and international students impacted by the use of recruitment agents?	University administrative structure Intl student population description Institutional finances

Throughout the a priori coding, I took extensive notes on other themes that began to emerge, as I used an open coding process to proceed in the next phase of data analysis. As Strauss and Corbin (1990) noted, open coding is “the process of breaking down, examining, comparing, conceptualizing and categorizing data” (p. 61). I used alphanumeric codes to categorize data into themes; for example, I used A2 to indicate agreement details about commissions and contract development between universities and agents. See Appendix C for a

complete code list. Thus, as themes began to emerge, I coded them accordingly using the constant comparative method; this involved comparing each data unit with others and subsequently grouping them or creating new codes (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Maykut & Morehouse, 1994). Some themes did not emerge from the data as frequently as others. If themes appeared in more than five interview transcripts, I utilized a code, however, if it appeared in less than five interview transcripts, I collapsed this code into another code where appropriate.

Merriam (2009) recommends several strategies for increasing validity and reliability in all stages of a research project—conceptualization, data collection, analysis, and interpretation, and findings presentation. I employ many of these strategies throughout various stages in my study. I used multiple data collection methods, as well as sources of data, to triangulate my themes and findings. When necessary, I contacted participants for clarification and further information gathering at various points during the project. I also discussed with colleagues and other higher education researchers my study process and initial analysis and preliminary interpretations to gain critical feedback as a method for adding credibility to my research. Additionally, I have endeavored to convey my case descriptions and findings with thick, rich description, “providing enough description to contextualize the study such that readers will be able to determine the extent to which their situations match the research context, and hence, whether findings can be transferred” (Merriam, 2009, p. 229). Finally, I pursued a multi-case research design in order to seek variation in sampling and increase the generalizability of my findings. Methodologists (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Creswell, 2007; Kvale & Brinkman, 2009; Roulston, 2010) also highlight the importance in qualitative research of understanding the researcher’s biases, suppositions, and perceptions, which I elaborate on in the next section.

3.5 Limitations and Reflexivity

One of the critiques of qualitative research is its limit to generalize to other cases. I tried to address this by including two different types of institutions in my study; however, it was never my intent to generalize my findings to cases outside of my study, as all institutions function differently with different circumstances and strategies impacting international student recruitment. Certainly, there were institutional types that I knowingly excluded, namely community colleges and for-profit institutions that are most certainly utilizing agents to recruit international students. This is a regrettable but necessary action to take in order to bound this dissertation appropriately.

Another limitation is that my case study sites were all located in one state. Another state could have very different political, economic, and funding environments that alters the ways in which institutions use agencies. This could be another limiting factor to generalizing to other institutions. Moreover, I made a conscious decision to study institutions that at least exhibited concern with the use of transparent and ethical practices surrounding the use of agencies, as indicated by institutional membership in AIRC. Certainly, one of the trepidations about this practice is that there are many institutions that are not using ethical or transparent practices to recruit international students, as I certainly heard anecdotal stories from my participants regarding this issue.

Due to the innate international nature of my study, there were language considerations. The majority of the students and agents whom I interviewed were not native English speakers, and I do not speak any of their native languages. At times, participants may have been unable to express exactly their thoughts and feelings in regards to a question I asked. In these cases, I

clarified as much as possible through follow up questions, and I left their words transcribed verbatim, even when it might not have been the appropriate English rhetoric.

International students play the central role in the use of agents in recruiting. Simply stated, without them there would be no need to recruit. While I did interview students for this project, the student experience was not the main focus of my research. Without a doubt, student decision-making involving the use of agents is a subject that needs much further research. I rely on other scholars' work (Coffey, 2014; Hagedorn & Zhang, 2011; Pimpa, 2003) to illuminate this focus for the study I undertook and urge other researchers to continue to work in this important area.

Several personal and professional experiences influenced my decision to undertake this study. I spent numerous years working in higher education in Doha, Qatar, and this experience opened my eyes to international student markets and the implications of internationalization in both positive and negative ways. From this experience, I think about phenomenon in global ways. I am especially concerned about motivations of institutions that pursue internationalization haphazardly and without defined purpose, and most especially, I am always concerned for the well being of international students as they pursue studies outside of their home countries.

I also would like to disclose that in December 2013, I was selected for the Marjorie Peace Lenn Award for pursuing my dissertation research in the area of international trade in education and international student mobility from the American International Recruitment Council (AIRC). I received a small monetary award and the opportunity to attend the annual AIRC conference. Attending this conference allowed me to network and meet individuals who would be crucial in helping me obtain access to my study sites and participants. In addition, my attendance at this conference raised many of the questions and issues I broach in this dissertation, as well as

informed my understanding of the work that institutions and agents conduct individually and in partnership with each other.

CHAPTER FOUR

PRIVATE INSTITUTIONS

4.1 Introduction

Colleges and universities in the U.S. are highly stratified by a number of factors such as size, purpose, religious affiliation, research activity, internationalization efforts, to name only a few. As such, the two private cases in this chapter, identified as masters colleges by the Carnegie Classification, vary substantially from the two public research institutions discussed in the following chapter. While private institutions share common characteristics with public institutions, a major difference between them is the primary method for generating revenue. Public institutions are subsidized by state appropriations, and as well, large research institutions (public or private) have other avenues to gain financial resources, such as patents, grants, and contracts. Small private colleges do not have access to as many resources outside of tuition, and these institutions are much more heavily dependent upon tuition for their survival (Altbach, 1999; Toutkoushian, 2001; Weisbrod, Asch, & Ballou, 2008). While a small number of elite private research institutions, such as Harvard and Columbia, have been able to preserve their top positions by restricting enrollment, recruiting the best students, and using endowment growth to influence other resources (Rosinger, Taylor, & Slaughter, in press), the private institutions in my study do not possess these same advantages. Most non-elite private institutions (in this case, historical liberal arts colleges) can be deeply affected by the ability to meet enrollment needs in order to balance the budget. The dependence on enrollments can place intuitions in a precarious

position in any given year based on their capacity to fill classroom seats, and one unexpected cost can, in some places, wreak catastrophic consequences (Taylor, 2012).

As higher education has moved closer to the market (Slaughter & Leslie, 1997; Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004), institutions have sought out new markets to generate new revenue streams. The international student market has been attractive to many schools because of students' ability to pay. International students make their way to the United States through various avenues. Governments, such as Saudi Arabia and Brazil, sponsor students to study abroad and bear the full cost of tuition. In this case, student subsidies do not have to be provided by the institution, and the institution profits considerably from these full pay students. Still, many more students come to the U.S. through their own volition (sometimes with the help of a private third party agent) and represent different financial asset levels, nationalities, and academic preparedness.

In a recent World Education Services report, Choudaha, Orosz, and Chang (2012) surveyed 1,600 prospective U.S.-bound international students from 115 countries to gain insight into different profiles of financial resources and academic preparedness. This study is particularly helpful for understanding how institutions might pursue targeted recruiting. Participant responses allowed researchers to categorize international students into four groups: strivers, strugglers, explorers, and highfliers. Financially elite students were segmented as either "explorers" (low academic preparedness) or "highfliers" (high academic preparedness). "Highfliers" (24%) are the *crème de la crème* ideal type of international student a school desires—they are extremely bright and seek prestigious institutions without any expectation of financial assistance. All institutions want these students, but only those schools with international branding and top rankings are likely to attract them. "Explorers" (25%) also possess excellent financial resources, but they do not have the stellar academic records likely to get them admitted

at a top tier school. Instead, they study abroad at second tier institutions. These are the types of students who are particularly attractive to school with pressing financial need because they do not require financial aid, but still possess the qualifications needed for admission. Making up 30% of respondents, the “strivers” have low financial resources with high academic preparedness. Financial constraints do not dissuade these students from pursuing top tier institutions, but financial aid impacts their selection of school. Lastly are the “strugglers.” This group has both low academic preparedness and financial resources. They are more likely to need additional preparation to do well in college courses, and the reports notes that 40% of this group plans to attend an ESL program. In addition, they are much less selective about institutional reputation. This report provides a helpful contextual framework for thinking about recruitment practices and international enrollments at my case institutions.

In this chapter, I focus upon the two private universities in my study. I present the each of the cases separately, by providing rich description and “telling the story” of its international student recruitment strategy, focusing particularly on agent-based recruitment. At the end of the each case description, I provide a case analysis by utilizing fundamental elements of academic capitalism theory. After presenting the individual cases, I present a cross-case analysis in order to provide insight into the similarities and differences between the two private cases.

4.2 Middleton University: A Backdrop

Tucked away in a sleepy, conventional small town, the Middleton University main campus is home to approximately 2,500 students, and when combined with its satellite campuses is nearly 5,000 students (including non-degree seeking). Middleton’s twelve-month full-time equivalent enrollment (FTE) for 2012-13 was 4,927. Middleton is not one of the bustling hubs of cosmopolitanism that are so attractive to international students coming to study in the United

States. Neither the glamour of California, nor the bright lights of New York City are present. It is not a place where students can easily find international grocery stores, a large airport in the city to ease travel home, or seemingly endless events and activities on the weekends. Nonetheless, it is a snapshot of small town America, and campus is picturesque with a combination of newer buildings scattered amongst the old. The university is one of the main employers in the area. When I visited during the summer, the only activity visible on campus was the many athletic camps taking place for children. Typical of many campuses across the nation during summertime, students had fled for vacations, summer internships and jobs, and trips home. International students were no exception to this phenomenon, as many of them took advantage of time off to go home for the summer or to travel around the United States.

The location itself makes international recruitment onerous, as it is not a ranked metropolitan university with a global brand image. Recalling Marginson's (2006) segments within the positional market, this institution would fall into segment three. In this segment, institutions aggressively pursue revenue streams and commercialization activities to survive. It is not a selective institution; documents show that freshman undergraduate applicants need a minimum 2.25 GPA to be considered for admission. For students who are not academically competitive enough to attend the highest ranked schools (such as the explorer or struggler groups previously mentioned), Middleton offers a solid American education in a place that is not overwhelming in size, making it easier to navigate as a foreigner. One Middleton student I interviewed said, "It's a magic[al] place for me...I understand who I am. I need to find a place and focus and study. That's it. So, it's quiet." It is an environment conducive for focusing, and for students who may have to work harder in class due to English language skill level, this setting can certainly be advantageous.

The university houses three academic colleges with the majority of international students enrolled in the business school or the criminal justice program. An administrator called the criminal justice program “our bread and butter.” Like many small private schools across the country, internationalization in the form of enrollment has begun to take hold at Middleton more recently. This was noted by the individual who oversees all of the international recruitment and enrollment responsibilities when he said, “Well, we’re fairly new to international student recruitment.” In 2010, a targeted international enrollment strategy began to form when university leadership created the director of international admissions position. Creation of the international admissions unit provides an example of an interstitial organization that has emerged to manage this newly emphasized recruitment, according to academic capitalism theory (Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004). Prior to this managerial change, international student recruitment was driven by international students who “found” the university on their own. “Before I started, or before my position was created, we had international students, but they were more or less athletes who were a part of a specific team. Once I started it, we kind of ramped up a little bit, I would say, and that’s more strategic,” noted the director.

This “ramp up” culminated in 260 international students enrolled during the Fall 2014 semester, according to census information given to me by the international admissions office. More undergraduates enrolled (187) than graduate students (57), and in addition, there were 16 non-degree seeking students. Saudi Arabian undergraduate students are the overwhelming national majority with 110 undergraduates and one non-degree seeking student enrolled during that fall. Following in second place was China with 17 undergraduates, 27 graduates, and 12 non-degree seeking students. India and Canada followed with 13 and 14 students respectively. The whole international student population represented an array of 30 countries that semester, as

students came from other places such as Brazil, Germany, Kosovo, Libya, Romania, Cameroon, Venezuela, and Jordan. With this context set, I turn to data that emerged regarding how Middleton administration recruits their international student body.

4.3 Recruitment: A Bounded Strategy

Most institutions of higher education utilize multiple strategies to form a comprehensive domestic and international recruitment plan. These strategies target various markets and types of students in order to enroll a well-rounded and diverse incoming class based upon the type of students university administrators have identified they would like to see on campus. A National Association for College Admissions Counseling (2013) report highlights five general strategy areas for international recruitment: (1) using institutional admission staff and other university partners, (2) recruiting via school based counselors and other resources, (3) taking advantage of services offered by the federal government (such as EducationUSA and the Department of Commerce), (4) private third party agents, and (5) other third party service providers (such as promotional companies for advertising). Colleges and universities may choose to utilize all or some of these to recruit international students. In order to understand the use of private third party agents, it is important to understand the overall vision and strategy at each case institution to know how the use of agents fits in as a singular strategy or in synchronization within a broader recruitment plan.

At Middleton, administrators focus upon a small number of strategies during this burgeoning international enrollment push, as they look to enroll 500 international students in the long-term. The director explained that Middleton is “more of an armchair recruiting type of university.” Armchair recruiting is commonly known in the field as utilizing recruitment methods that do not require staff to leave campus, and Kallur (2009) notes this approach is a

solid beginning strategy for schools with a small offering of programs and a tight budget. Ideally, institutions would be able to use their own staff to recruit abroad, yet for many institutions, this is simply unfeasible financially and administratively.

Middleton's director of international admissions is a one-person office and does not have the capacity to travel abroad to recruit on a regular basis. He noted, "We don't quite have the human capital to travel for a month or two months at a time, out recruiting students, and I just don't think that we would see quite the return on it that probably we would need to for it to make sense." Travel is more of an occasional luxury, although some years bring no recruitment travel at all. When travel is supported, faculty members are asked to travel as a way to target local markets and to provide native language speakers. For example, one of their Tunisian professors has traveled in Arab countries representing Middleton because he was Arabic speaking, which helps to provide a level of comfort for inquiring parents and students. An exception to the infrequent travel is the China Program faculty coordinator, a dual U.S. and Chinese citizen, who travels with university support to China every summer and winter to meet with prospective students and to manage Middleton's agent network. This faculty member's pre-existing knowledge of Chinese culture, economy, and language allows the institution to capitalize on existing organizational talent, highlighting an aspect of interstitial organizational structure under academic capitalism theory (Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004). Using existing human resources enables the institution to function with current resources, and in this case, faculty members are assisting in managing new initiatives. This type of interstitial relationship showcases itself at an individual level, as faculty members working with international recruitment assists in connecting individuals across the university. This type of strategy is also supported by Naidoo's (2010)

scholarship, which indicates that coordinating recruiting activities with individuals across the university serves to deliver a more complete educational experience to students.

Due to staffing and financial constraints, recruitment by university staff is not as emphasized as other strategies. “We really rely on our partnerships that we develop, whether that be with an agency or a foreign government, or a private company,” said the director. These intermediary networks blur organizational boundaries, a tenant of academic capitalism (Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004). These networks also serve to take advantage of opportunities in the neoliberal economy by connecting for-profit, state, and non-profit entities. These partnerships illustrate Kauppinen’s (2012) transnational academic capitalism as these partnerships transcend traditional boundaries with different entities working together to organize operations in many different countries, cultures, and economies.

Government partnerships were particularly central to Middleton international student enrollment, as the institution is “really focused in on those types of partnerships to bring in our enrollment classes each term” said the director. He also emphasized the impact of the Saudi Arabian government scholarship on their international student enrollment when he stated, “I would say in the last really two years is where we've really taken off. A lot of that I would attribute to our partnership with the Saudi government, as many other universities have...We have a really strong Saudi population.” In 2005, the King Abdullah Scholarship Program was established by the Saudi Arabian Ministry of Higher Education in an effort to train individuals for labor market shortages, with a particular emphasis on trying to close the gap on a dearth of Saudi faculty members (Alamri, 2011). This program sends large numbers of students to higher education programs in the western world and is widely considered to be the most expansive fully funded government scholarship program in the world (Bukhari & Denman, 2013), and this fact

has had a definitive impact on American higher education enrollments, as noted in chapter two. At Middleton, the director went on to say, “We have partnerships with the UAE government. We're in talks with the Qatari government, and also Kuwait as well.”

Additionally, Middleton also employs a private third party agency network to assist in outreach and recruitment. Signing agreements with agents on the ground in their target countries gives Middleton recruiting nimbleness they would not have otherwise. Interestingly, the use of agents on their campus began before the more recent, coordinated recruitment approach in order to benefit from the emerging Chinese market. “We've used Chinese agents, I would say probably all the way back into the very early 2000s. Most recently outside of China just in the last four or five years,” explained the director. Additionally, the faculty coordinator for their China program wrote that Middleton had been using Chinese agents for “nine years.” As Middleton University leadership envisions an increased international profile, the director noted that there is an emphasis on “increasing our agent relationships.” Very simply, agents are able to provide services that are attractive to Middleton’s campus vision.

Especially for a staff of one person with a faculty member who assists, the ability to have individuals on the ground in other countries was probably the most significant reason to use agents. The director shared this when asked what the benefits of using agents were:

The biggest is the ability to be in places that you can't travel to. Really, it provides easier access to a country, especially if you're entering a new market. But really the ability to be a one-person office, but at the same time, still recruit from different parts of the world, different corners of the world is the biggest benefit by far.

The faculty coordinator for the China Program listed several specific ways that agents assisted with student recruitment in China. He wrote:

They promote our institution on their cost. As they have close contact with the market, they can recruit students for us according to our admission standard efficiently and effectively...they make the application process more efficient and effective by helping

prospective students file their applications, and they help increase visa success rate by helping our admitted students file visa application. They assist and monitor our admitted students in their travel to our campus.

In the era of academic capitalism where institutions target non-local markets, increased marketing efforts are a hallmark of institutions trying to bolster international enrollments. Private third party agents serving as intermediary organizations between the university and the international students help institutions to achieve increased marketization as a benefit of their contracted services. In this regard, Middleton cedes a certain level of control of their overseas activities to these agent intermediaries. In the next section, I examine multiple aspects of these relationships in order to more fully analyze and understand the inner workings of these intermediary connections.

4.4 Themes of the agent process

Initiation: Agent Network and Agreements

This section will examine how Middleton University establishes its agent network and how administrators formulate agreements for these assumed mutually beneficial partnerships. Many individuals inside and outside of higher education view the vetting of agencies and formal agreements that groups sign as the first step in ensuring that ethics and transparency are at the forefront of this practice. Certainly, there are unscrupulous institutions for which ethics and transparency take a backseat, but there are also many institutions, as well as agencies, for which developing appropriate agreements is a primary and significant concern (See chapters one and two for more discussion of ethical concerns).

At the time of the site visit for this study, Middleton University administrators worked with twenty-three agencies with which they had formal recruitment contracts. The international recruitment office is contacted quite frequently by agents hoping to foster a relationship with

them, and the director exasperatedly noted that he is contacted by “at least a couple [agents] per week usually.” At Middleton though, professional associations and personal recommendations are more valued than cold calls in establishing a long-term working relationship with an agent. In particular, ICEF and AIRC are looked to for a layer of vetting because of the belief that if the agency is accredited through these organizations, most especially AIRC, then a first test of legitimacy has been passed. This emphasizes the role of intermediary organizations that have emerged to manage academic capitalist processes within agency-based recruitment. At Middleton, these intermediary organizations wield some control and power through their accreditation processes over how Middleton decides which agencies to use. If agencies are certified through one (or both) of these associations, then Middleton staff will invest in learning more about the agency to see if it is mutually advantageous to formalize a relationship. The director described the inquiry process like this:

It's a series of phone calls, and series of meetings just to get a feel of what is it that they have to offer. Do we make a good fit academically and where we're located? How do they operate? Are they operating as the main agency or do they use sub-agencies? One of the bigger things that I really like to ask is what is the plan? Because the same way that you would recruit a student to Middleton is, in my opinion, going to be very different than how you would recruit a student to [public state research university]. It's not the same process. It's not the same type of students so that's probably one of the bigger questions and one of the bigger questions that I rely on to make a final decision is what's the plan, and you'll quickly find out who is serious about having a contract and sending students or who is serious about really helping students to study in the states.

At Middleton, the director and faculty China program coordinator are the main points of contact for the contracts that are signed. The faculty member coordinates their China network and contracts, although the director has a hand in this. As he noted, “I'm involved in those contracts but certainly not to the extent I am in the non-Chinese ones.” It is also necessary for Middleton to retain an outside legal counsel for all contracting to make sure that Middleton is protected; however, the director is the main person for determining commission structure and payments.

Middleton negotiates each agreement independently of others, and as a result, has many different types of agreements that it must track and pay out. “I wish there was a standard commission. Yeah, it's all a negotiation process. I think some countries are probably more agreeable to a certain type of contract, but we do all kinds of different contracts,” explained the director. In some of the contracts, Middleton pays a percentage between 10-20% of net tuition; in others, they might utilize a cheaper initial flat fee with a recurring payment each semester that a student attends as an incentive for agents to recruit students who will persist to degree completion.

Commission calculation and payouts engenders another layer of complexity to the process, which the director emphasized as a “nightmare for our business office.” One can see that the lack of contract standardization can certainly be managerially cumbersome. Yet, on the other hand, it provides flexibility for different markets, types of agencies, and programs. Furthermore, it is not only a consideration of what amount will be paid to the agent, but also when the money will be paid. Logically, a school would not want to pay a commission until it was evident that the student would matriculate and pay tuition in order to ensure that the student is invested in being on campus. “We don't ever pay any money until our census date, which means that a student owes full tuition at that date, and we don't pay any money until students pay his or her tuition,” said the director. While the amount of money paid is not standardized, the timeline for when commission payments may begin is. This resource generation is valuable enough to override the administrative work that it generates.

Data suggests that Middleton University is particularly concerned with financial matters for students and takes this issue into account during the contracting process. The school leadership does not want students paying for agents with whom the school works, and administrators check in with students once they arrive on campus to see if they were personally

charged by an agency. The director explained,

In almost all of our agreements, part of the contract is that we don't allow the agent to double dip and charge the student and then get a commission from us as well. So we really want to find out. I would say for the most part we've had very few problems, but the ones we have had may get escalated in a meeting with myself and a VP to either find out what really happened or set someone back in line, or actually just end the partnership altogether.

Agencies are for-profit entities with an obvious goal of maximizing profits, and this differentiates them from the non-profit higher education world. Many agencies may charge students to cover costs and gain more profit because perhaps commissions are not enough. Under academic capitalism, market based activities are drastically increased (Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004). It is expensive for agents to advertise for universities; college fairs, advertisements, and promotional material printing expenses can add up quickly. Yet, institutions expect their agents to market them heavily. Commissions from some schools may not cover these costs, forcing agencies to charge the student as well if there is no marketing budget provided by the university. It then becomes an issue of how much cost should the school cover and how much should the agency cover. Considering the firestorm this issue has produced in the international recruitment world, Middleton's stance on this issue can provide a more straightforward solution. While Middleton's leadership acknowledges the expense of marketing, they prefer the agent not charge the student and try to make this a contractual reality by providing a marketing budget to the agency to decrease costs and protect student financial interests. However, if an agency is going to charge a student, then they prefer that the charge be contractually set. "You should probably agree upon some fee that's appropriate instead of someone gouging a student before they come here" said the director. He later noted that he did not necessarily see "double dipping" as destructive, depending on how it was structured contractually.

In addition to the financial arrangements, there are also other contractual considerations

that are important to using this agency strategy at Middleton. The director explained the importance of marketing terms in his interview,

A lot of times we like to agree if there are marketing terms. How can our name be used? Where can it be used? Do things need approval? I think that's really probably one of the bigger things is partnering with someone that will properly represent the university. In most cases, allowing someone to use our name and represent us at fairs, and schools, and with parents, and we just want to make sure that that person is doing it appropriately.

Of course, the risk of enabling an outside entity to use your brand and reputation is enormous, as ceding this control can cause significant damage if not utilized appropriately. In addition to finances, this is another institutional consideration in the use of agents (Hanover, 2010).

Relationship Maintenance

Once a relationship is initiated, then both parties must work to maintain the relationship in order for it to be beneficial; therefore, training agents is a major part of the management workload. Training can involve U.S. staff traveling to do on-site sessions with agents, Skype conversations, meeting at conferences, providing agent manuals and other materials, or a combination of all of these. The director related Middleton's training process:

So that's one of the most important parts, and after we kind of finished our series of meetings where we're determining if we're a good fit, we then set up another series of meetings where we're doing training sessions with anyone that might be involved. We also have an agent-training manual that we provide, and then we'll mail some brochures with other instructions and then get back together and go through everything again before someone really hits the road and is starting to recruit for us.

The embedded role of technology in the era of globalization plays a large role in enabling and facilitating how Middleton conducts agent trainings, making this type of recruitment possible for the institution. "Skype seems to be the best tool to use, especially because you can use video and they can have multiple people. We've done a few on site when we've traveled, which is always much better, but Skype seems to be sufficient," said the director. The director trains the non-

Chinese agents, while the China Program coordinator interacts with Chinese agents through “email, telephone, chat rooms, correspondence, visits, and meetings,” he said.

I was able to interview an agency manager with whom Middleton has a contract and works closely. This U.S. agent manages a network of sub-agents in various countries abroad, and sub-agents working for this agent manager receive 50% of the agent manager’s commission from Middleton when a student enrolls. When asked about sub-agents, the Middleton director noted that it was a “tricky” issue. He went on to say,

We have two big agents that we use, I mean, big in terms of they provide a lot of students to us, and they both have sub-agencies and not just in their main country. They have sub-agencies in other countries that they use as kind of like a network. And I think for the most part they both do a really good job, so it's not to say that sub-agencies are—that anyone should be leery of them, but I certainly think it requires some more homework, which is probably why people are hesitant to work with them.

The sub-agent phenomenon is very interesting when viewed conceptually using the intermediary organization lens because in this agency case, there are actually two intermediating organizations between Middleton and prospective international students.

Using this type of agency manager adds another layer of communication for training and disseminating information to sub-agents, posing one more risk for misinformation to be given to students. The agent with whom I spoke noted that they have three ways of doing training with their subagents:

One is we really encourage them if they're going to be at all productive to go to not only our website that has the information on each institution, but to the institution's website. Second, we have some training going on with each new agency. Not every agent within the agency, and we don't use that session to talk about 70 different institutions.

Third, he noted that if there is a new program they think will be particularly interesting to prospective students, then he will email agents “just talking about that program and encouraging them to think about that, and a scholarship that's available through that, and more of the details about it.”

For Middleton students applying through this particular agency, the student would work in-country with a sub-agent, and then the sub-agent would send all of the materials to the agency manager who would then send the application materials to Middleton University. The agent manager described it as “we're the touch point with the institution, and they're the touch point with the student.” The main agency office has a database that has information about each school and what the application requirements are. In his telling,

The sub-agent understands exactly what needs to be in the packet because we have a database, and behind a password are all the requirements for, pick your institution. Middleton, for undergraduate, for graduate, they can know exactly what is required, and for Middleton, it would require a housing deposit if the student is going to live on campus, and there's a housing form that they fill out. We've got that in the database, so all the agent has to do is print it out and include it in the packet. If they need anything to complete a packet, it's right there.

Middleton provides an agent manual for training purposes, and I analyzed this eighteen-page document to ascertain what type of information is included for agents. The agent manual is divided into four sections: (1) background information and highlights, (2) undergraduate admission requirements, application information, tuition and fees information, scholarship opportunities with financial levels, degree programs and summaries, (3) graduate information with the same sub-sections as the undergraduate section, and (4) program information for their English Language and Culture program, structured to help students become proficient in English. The first section provides some of the same information about the school found on their website such as location, setting, size of school and city, international student enrollment, accreditations, and faculty numbers. There is a specific, and very brief, subsection for agents with eight recruiting bullet points phrases such as: no application fee to apply, merit scholarships off of tuition for bachelor and master degree students, safe and secure campus, prestigious accreditation, and English language program on campus.

The degree program descriptions are short (approximately 150 words or less) with only very basic information, and a good portion of the descriptions are the same information found in the student recruitment brochure I was given. The agents are receiving, more or less, the same information about the degrees that students receive in a brochure. More information about degree programs may be provided by Skype trainings, recruiting brochures, as well as the institutional website, but as a stand-alone degree offerings document, the agent training manual is, at best, a handy summary. Despite this, there is important financial information provided to the agents that is not published in the student brochure, which I will discuss later in this chapter. As Middleton looks to improving in the future, they are “going to have a separate web page on our main page for agents, for agent resources, agent training, and also a nice application for anyone who would like to be a part of our agent network,” said the director.

Assessment

Sound assessment of institutional agent networks is certainly an important piece for moving the practice in a constructive direction. Middleton uses their orientation program to survey students about their agent experience, during which they inquire about which agency the student worked with during their process. For students struggling with English competency, this format may not allow for full disclosure of their entire agent experience. The director tries to do an annual review with non-Chinese agents each year, and the faculty member reviews Chinese agents’ performances annually where it is examined whether or not they were successful at bringing in students. The China faculty coordinator said, “We cancel the contract with those that are not successful.” The agent manager I interviewed also tracks the sub-agents working with his company. In his words:

We have visited some of our agents, but not all of them. So that's sort of how we go through the process of getting references and trying to make sure that they are going to

function well, and then we start them on a six month probation. And depending on their both productivity and if we see anything that seems odd, identity, you know, fraudulent or anything else like that, then we don't continue on the other six months.

Productivity is a complex way to look at agent performance, and it can be measured many different ways, such as the number of applications received from an agent, the number of students who enrolled from the agent over various time periods, or the quality of students. The Middleton director analyzes productivity holistically:

I mean, from my point of view I'm never looking at how many students someone brings in. I really think there's two things. Part of it is how many students someone brings in, but that's not to say if it was one or two quality students that we would discontinue our work with them, but we're also looking at how well the students retain. I think that's the most important part.

Of course, if students only come for a semester (or less) then the school has invested in numerous ways for students who are not persisting. Institutions want agents who have truly helped the student to find the best fit because a school wants to produce graduates who strengthen alumni networks and help build a brand and spread the word to others about their school experience.

4.5 University Facets of Recruiting an International Population

Managerial Capacity

Small staffs are typical of historical liberal arts colleges, and Middleton is no exception. The international admissions department is housed in the enrollment management division, and the director works closely with the international student services office, which is also a one-person office. These two offices share one graduate assistant plus a few undergraduate student workers. The director of international admissions manages all processes prior to the student arriving on campus for orientation, at which point the director of international student services takes over. When I visited Middleton's campus, university leadership was in the process of

combining several areas—international admissions, international student services, the English as a Second Language (ESL) program, and multicultural affairs—into one building to create an international student center. The director noted:

We don't have the budget to go out and hire anyone else, so collectively we're trying to be a little bit more united in cross-training so that we can help, but the student services director does a ton of things in terms of health insurance, and licenses. We even help students with find off campus housing, and there's a number of things.

This administrative restructuring highlights interstitial change within the university, as traditional boundaries among units blur in order to manage student services that are necessary for this type of revenue generation. While Middleton does not have budget right now for expanded managerial capacity, the director expressed hope that if enrollment kept increasing through using good agents to bring in high quality students who were paying tuition on time that it would allow them to hire more staff, which would in turn help them to improve managing the agent network.

A Student Experience

The traditional application and enrollment process is affected when students use an agent. A Chinese student majoring in psychology whom I interviewed shared her thoughts about agents with me and described her application process working with a large agency in Beijing. She began by conversing with me about the agency phenomenon in China, as large numbers of students use agents in this country (Bartlett & Fischer, 2014; Coffey, 2014; Hagedorn & Zhang, 2011), often because of lack of confidence, English ability, or family dynamics. Relating her lack of confidence in the American college application process, she described how her father contacted a friend of his in Beijing to get agency recommendations, finding her agent with her father's help. The student said about hiring her agent, "You pay the money, you get confidence." Her parents paid 15,000 Chinese yuan (at the time of writing, this was approximately 2,400 USD) to her agency, which did not have a pre-existing contractual relationship with Middleton.

Her agent provided services such as career aptitude tests, visa preparation, as well as consulting with her about school profiles and geographic locations to narrow a list of six schools. From that list, she picked three schools to apply to, and the agent assisted with editing her personal statement. “I definitely wrote down for myself first. I will write down the rough draft for them, and they help me to edit it,” she clarified. She then expressed dissatisfaction, “But I’m not satisfied with the version they made for me sometimes. I would just with them say maybe this will get better or something.” She indicated that she worked with one agent throughout the process, implying the agency business structure was not segmented by functional area where multiple agents work with a student depending upon which stage they are at in the application process. Her service package was one of the more basic ones, as she noted that you could pay more money for fuller service to apply to higher ranked schools.

She applied to Middleton because she had come into contact with the China Program coordinator through a friend and met with him, giving her previous knowledge of Middleton before she hired an agent. When asked about her agent experience as a whole, she expressed both satisfaction and discontent. Using an agent was helpful to her in the beginning because of her lower level English abilities, and she became good friends with the agent who assisted her. On the other hand, she exhibited keen awareness of potential bias on the part of the agent. “It was a frustrating kind of process because no one can really tell you what you should do. You have to not fully trust—fully trust the agency, but you really have to focus on yourself,” she explained. She went on to say that you have to “think in their point of view, why they would like you to choose that [school] or not.” Later in the interview, she said that in general it was difficult for her to “trust people.” Overall, this student expressed her satisfaction with going to school at Middleton and that it had been a very good fit for her.

Middleton leadership seemed to recognize what services are needed to provide a supportive international student environment so that students do have positive college experiences. However, the director emphasized that “not everything is really up to speed with what it needs to be” for their large Saudi population and because of this Saudi students prefer to live off campus so that they can cook for themselves and have an appropriate space for their daily prayers. Free airport pickup service is provided for students as there is no public transportation, but there is no temporary housing available for those seeking to lease an off campus apartment once they arrive in town. Typically, those students stay at a hotel within walking distance until they can find something to lease in a town without a plethora of housing options.

The larger city community also plays a role in welcoming students to campus. A cultural center in the town serves as a conduit to bring together international students, businesses, and professional associations for a welcoming ceremony that the mayor and state representative have previously attended. Data suggests there seems to be a genuine community interest in integrating international students.

Financial Impact

Middleton University’s website shows that tuition during the academic year 2014-15 was \$21,510 for a full-time enrolled undergraduate student. With other expected costs, such as housing on campus, meals, and health insurance, the cost per year was over \$32,000. Middleton requires that prospective undergraduate international students be able to pay at least one nine-month academic year of the \$32,000 expenses according to the agent manual. Costs are lower for graduate students—around \$23,000 in estimated expenses for an academic year. Middleton does offer international student merit undergraduate and graduate scholarships to those students not

participating in government sponsorship programs. The director of international enrollment said that compared to other universities it was “pretty generous.”

During the 2012-13 academic year, 61% of full-time first-time undergraduates received institutional grant aid. International undergraduates are eligible to receive various levels of aid based upon GPA, and all international students without government sponsorship do receive merit aid. A Hanover (2010) research report emphasizes that financial inducements, such as scholarships, are central for a successful yield. These scholarships are initially awarded at the beginning of the students first semester of enrollment based upon students’ credentials upon entrance and are applied each semester until graduation based upon academic performance. Table 4 shows the merit aid levels for undergraduate international students.

Table 4: Middleton’s undergraduate scholarship levels

GPA	Dollar Amount
2.50-3.00	\$2000
3.01-3.50	\$3000
3.51-3.79	\$5000
3.80-4.00	\$6000

Awards for international graduate students are based upon the same GPA scale, but range from \$1,500 to \$4,000. Almost all international students receive either \$3,000 or \$5,000 awards. In some cases, administrators will assess a student’s financial need, but in no cases do they offer full scholarships for international students.

Due to certain information restrictions, it is unclear how much revenue Middleton actually generates from international students. However, from documents, one can get a sense of some of the financial benefits of international students in general. For example, as previously mentioned, there were 110 Saudi Arabian government sponsored undergraduate students.

Estimated calculations show that for the academic year 2014-15, based upon their yearly average tuition charge of \$21,510, and assuming that all 110 Saudi students returned for the spring semester, Middleton will collect approximately \$2,366,100 in tuition dollars from this population this academic year. Over a four-year period of enrollment for this group, if all students persist and tuition cost remains stagnant, this would be in excess of \$9,400,000 in tuition dollars collected.

The tuition dollars collected from students who use an agent to find their way to the institutions is a more murky issue. As discussed previously, commission payments are not standardized, and merit scholarships for some students must be taken into account.

“Approximately half” of Middleton international students who are not government sponsored by Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, or Nigeria use agents to find their way to campus noted the director. The total population for these three countries during Fall 2014 was 117 students, leaving a pool of 143 students who could have used an agent in the process. With the information I was given for the study, it is impossible to know how much revenue the school is generating from the students who used agents.

It is perhaps useful to examine what some hypothetical payouts to agents may look like based upon examples I was given. In some cases the school pays a flat rate with subsequent semester payments to agents, as mentioned previously. In this case, the school might pay \$1,000 for the first semester, and then \$500 for each subsequent semester the student is enrolled in an example given by a participant. In this scenario, if an agent recruits a student who studies for four years until graduation, then a commission payment could total \$4,500 or more to the agent, depending upon summer enrollment status. A percentage payment must take into account any merit aid the student receives as Middleton calculates based upon net tuition, but as an example,

undergraduate tuition for one semester of the 2014-15 academic year is approximately \$10,800. If a student receives a \$3,000 merit aid award for the semester and the agent is contracted at a 20% commission rate, then the agent payout for that semester would be \$1,560. Payments therefore could cover a wide range of fiscal responsibilities to which the school commits.

4.6 Private Sector Operations: Whose Self-Interest Is Served?

At this point, it is perhaps useful to provide more context about agencies in order to understand the private sector operations and transactions. Agencies operate based on transactions with students and institutions. It is their best financial self-interest to maximize profits from these transactions and “double dip” by receiving payments from both sides. On the side of the institutions and students, there are no differences in the types of agencies each hire. Some agencies do not charge a fee to students and work only off of commissions from institutions that they are contracted with through an established relationship. This type of agency could be the best for a student to work with from a financial perspective because a student will not have to pay a fee to the agency. However, it is the best self-interest of an agency that does not charge students for the students they work with to go to a university that they are contracted with so that they receive a commission payment. In many (and some would argue most) cases, students may have no idea that institutions and agencies are working together, and therefore may not fully understand the financial exchanges and the conflict of interest that can possibly occur. Whether or not students chose an agency that charges them an up front fee has no bearing on whether or not an agency receives a commission from institutions with which they have a formalized relationship.

For agencies that charge both institutions and students, it is always in their financial best interest for a student to enroll at a school with which they have a commission contract because

they essentially get paid twice for their services. Therefore, it is a possibility that agencies could influence a students' decision-making process based upon what is best for the agency financially. It is likely that it varies from agency to agency, depending on what employees know the commission rates from various institutions. In a small mom and pop operation, it could be more likely that an agent would know the exact details about financial exchanges, while in a large multi-national corporate agency this information may be held only at the highest levels of management. It could also be in the best self-interest of agents to collude with other agencies in order to maximize fees and financial exchanges. For example, agencies in a specific geographic area could communicate about how high to set student fees for a particular service such as personal statement writing assistance. While there is no concrete evidence from this study that collusion is occurring, it should be mentioned as a possible business practice and that it is not out of the realm of possibility.

4.7 Middleton Case Analysis

As has already been stated, under academic capitalism theory, institutions are driven to undertake increasingly market-like behaviors as they seek out new external revenue streams to support organizational operations (Slaughter & Leslie, 1997; Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004). While the Middleton case certainly exhibits academic capitalist behaviors within the context of international student enrollment, it has not adopted these practices as early as some other institutions across the country. Nevertheless, developments in the academic capitalist behaviors at this institution are evident in expanding new circuits of knowledge, interstitial organizational emergence, growth of intermediating networks, changes in managerial capacity, and market behaviors. Certainly, the degree of growth in each of these areas is unique to the case context at Middleton, yet the application and analysis of the case that I outline below may provide insight

into a particular breed of historically liberal arts colleges that are eager to enter the struggle for their share of international enrollments in hopes that it will elevate their campus financially, academically, and internationally.

New Circuits of Knowledge

New circuits of knowledge are created in several primary ways through agency-based recruitment on this campus. First, there is the circuit created by a Middleton-agent-student relationship, and this network not only expands knowledge within different sectors and nation-states but also throughout the knowledge commodification process. Students, the raw material in the cross-border higher education commodification, can be “bought and sold” in the marketplace by universities and agents (Kauppinen, Mathies, & Weimer, 2014). When international students enroll at Middleton, they are taking their knowledge from their home country to the United States and the Middleton campus, and during the course of four years (more or less), students are taught new knowledge that expands this circuit in whatever discipline they might study before returning to their home country or going elsewhere. Agents are key facilitators in this process for Middleton.

Additionally, there is also a circuit produced by Middleton-foreign government-student networks. Although not the primary focus of this study, it is worth noting the role that these government partnerships, emphasized by participants, play in growing knowledge through the educational process, while at the same time bolstering the financial and international profile of Middleton University. For example, the Saudi Arabian student population at Middleton is sponsored through the King Abdullah Scholarship Program in Saudi Arabia. This type of circuit emphasizes the blurring of boundaries with various entities and the state, as the state seeks to gain from cross-border education. In this case, it is both the nations of Saudi Arabia and the

United States who seek to gain from these exchanges, as well as the institutions of higher education and students themselves.

Yet another new knowledge circuit is facilitated by the Middleton-professional association-agency organizational relationships that Middleton has built over the past years. In this circuit, Middleton has ceded some of its evaluative processes to these associations, as agencies undergo the professional associations' certification processes. While Middleton clearly still evaluates its agents, there is a different type of scrutiny cast when they have knowledge that agencies have been certified through ICEF or AIRC.

Interstitial Organizational Emergence

Interstitial organizations serve to bring together various units or sectors in order to manage operations related to revenue generation (Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004). Slaughter and Rhoades cite examples such as technology transfer units and economic development offices, but the concept of interstitial bodies manifests itself very differently in the area of international student recruitment, simply because of the nature of the activity. At Middleton, organizational interstitial emergence began in a very targeted way when the institution asked a Chinese faculty member to run recruitment operations in China. Although this did not bring whole administrative units together, Middleton was able to capitalize on this faculty member's expertise to try to capture their portion of the Chinese market. This illustrates interstitial emergence at a more individual rather than departmental way. Departmental interstitial emergence is only in a nascent stage, as units housing different international student services were only beginning to be consolidated under one organizational structure when I conducted my site visit there. Considering the size of the institution, it is possible that interstitial emergence will be less complex than it is at some large research institutions, given that at smaller institutions units may

work more closely together due to staff size, as well as smaller student populations. The size of the institution makes communication and work more easily coordinated at Middleton, yet even though organizational complexity is perhaps less pronounced, the increase of the international student population, partly due to agency-based recruitment, has necessitated a reexamination of how the institution provides support services to their international population. In other words, to best capture the resources that international students bring to campus, Middleton administration have had to examine their organizational structure in relation to the needs of this growing population, which has necessitated interstitial emergence, although in a fundamentally different way from interstitial growth related to intellectual property, such as patents through innovative discovery.

Intermediary Organizations

In the case of international student recruitment, intermediary organizations such as agencies, professional associations, and even other national governments serve to connect institutions of higher education to students, although the influence of these intermediary organizations may vary according to the motivations and capacity of the institution pursuing this type of international activity. Because Middleton utilizes an armchair recruitment strategy most of the time, intermediary organizations likely play an increasingly emphasized role in international recruitment. Agencies, functioning as intermediary organizations, assist greatly in finding students to apply to Middleton, as the campus tried to increase its international enrollment. Metcalfe (2010) surmises that intermediary organizations can be active participants in “micro-markets” by facilitating the sale of services to members and non-members. Using this concept, agents can be understood as brokers who facilitate the service of educational sales to students and institutions alike. “In other words, the helper organizations are in the dual business

of building bridges and serving as customs agents to control the flow of people and goods across the bridges” (Metcalf, 2010, p. 515). Through this control, competition and marketization is increased in international student recruitment, while at the same time promoting collaboration across non-profit, for-profit, and government sectors.

Because of the success that Middleton leadership has observed on their campus, the use of agents as intermediary brokers will likely be increased. Utilizing intermediary organizations for vetting agents and for the actual recruitment that agents conduct, allows Middleton to pursue strategies that it was unable to do previously. Intermediary organizations are a vital component of Middleton’s internationalization strategy.

Managerial Capacity

Academic capitalism theory proposes that new circuits of knowledge, interstitial emergence, and intermediary networks will necessitate, at least to some level, an increase in managerial capacity in order to manage new market activities (Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004). Agent networks are time and labor intensive to manage (barring a managerial approach that leans toward laissez faire), and in many cases could require extra administrative staff. An increase in international enrollment, in Middleton’s case influenced heavily by agency-based recruitment, can also demand an increase in student support services. Academic capitalism leads one to an understanding that there should be every reason for managerial capacity to be increased, yet this has not manifested itself at Middleton. There is one person who manages the international student support services. In 2010, a position overseeing international enrollment management was created, but beyond this, no other purely administrative positions are dedicated to international recruitment, enrollment, or agent management. Given that Middleton does not send staff frequently abroad to recruit, due to their agency and government partnership emphasis and a

lack of resources, it may be viewed that there is not a need to increase administrative capacity in this area. Alternatively, there may be an unwillingness to invest the resources gained by enrolling international students back into administrative capacity, although this is unclear from the data collected for this study. What is apparent, however, is that managerial capacity is lacking, particularly as the institution looks to grow its international population and to expand the agent network.

Summary

It is clear from this case data that Middleton leadership places importance on international enrollment as a strategy for internationalization to compete in a globalized higher education arms race. Because of Middleton's context—rural location, institutional size, managerial resources, and an absence of rankings status and international brand—the school really has no other choice than to utilize an armchair recruiting style to capture markets they would not otherwise have the opportunity to capitalize on in order to internationalize. Because the institution is not supported by public state dollars, the search for new revenue streams has forced the institution closer to the market (Slaughter & Leslie, 1997; Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004). The thrust of Middleton's agent activity is also extending to gaining accreditation for and expanding their ESL program. ESL programs “are heavily agent driven” the director said. This exemplifies that Middleton will continue to utilize these strategies, as they move towards the goal of 500 international students on campus. Yet, it should be noted that this thrust is not being attempted haphazardly without concern for regulation. The director stated:

I just think it'll be interesting in the coming years to see what gets approved and how it gets approved, and what is policy and what's not policy. In Australia, and England, they were using agents for years and years and very good models, but I definitely think there should be some structure to who gets to be an agent and who can be approved and how you're able to work with them. But I think there should also be more on the back end of what universities are allowed to and which are not, because I think that's a big part of the

problem is a lot of the less reputable universities who kind of take advantage of these agencies or signing poor contracts with them and those types of things. It'll get interesting. I don't know. I see it as a two way street between the universities and the agency. I think there's some fault on both parts, but someone will eventually step in, I'm sure, and tell us exactly how we have to do it. I'll just wait for that day I guess.

Academic capitalist processes have moved Middleton to undertake agent based recruitment, yet, as this quote illustrates, this has brought new challenges and uncertainties in navigating relationships that span sector differences in order to capitalize on the benefits brought on by an increased international population.

4.8 Pike University Context

Pike University is a picturesque, unpretentious traditional college campus, located in a small college town. Many faculty and campus offices are located in older, small houses on the fringes of the main thoroughfare dotted with newer brick buildings. The landscaping is impeccable, making the campus look like a movie set. In 1975, Pike opened the first English Language Institute for international students, marking the beginning of what would become a long and rich history of welcoming students to campus. Noticeable on Pike's campus were international students on their way to English classes for the summer Intensive English Language Program (IELP). Other than these students, campus was still for summer break.

International student recruitment and services was historically housed within the division of student affairs, and then, due to administrative restructuring was moved to the enrollment management division in 2013. The Office of International Admissions and Services, now situated under the vice-president for enrollment management's purview, oversees international recruitment, enrollment, and student services. Currently, there are nine professional staff members who comprise the office operations. These staff members work with recruitment,

application processes, SEVIS¹⁴ compliance, credential evaluation, orientation, and student services. There are also a handful of graduate assistants and undergraduate student assistants working in the office, and I was able to speak with five of them through participant interviews. This is a well-staffed department for an institution of this size, as even the director acknowledged that they were the “dream team that a lot of institutions would like.” As I spent time in their office, a stand-alone building dedicated to only to this unit, it was apparent that it was always bustling with student after student coming in to speak with one of the staff, even during the summer. On the surface, it resembled a well-oiled machine from my outsider’s perspective, and it was obvious that it was a place of care and assistance for the international student population.

When I was planning my time at Pike, I was offered an opportunity to stay in one of three hospitality houses designated only for international students arriving on campus who would be sorting out their permanent housing upon arrival. This gave me an opportunity to get some sense of what it might be like to be an international student arriving for the first time on campus. When I arrived, I was met by one of the several international graduate assistants who live in and manage the international hospitality houses. This Vietnamese graduate student was very gracious and showed me into the house, which had a couple of bedrooms with bunk beds and desks and one shared bathroom. There was also a living area, kitchen, and basement with laundry facilities. It struck me as a comforting place to be as a newly arrived international student, especially staffed with international graduate students who were house “moms” and “dads.” Newly arrived students can stay in these gender segregated facilities up to ten days for \$20 per night. In addition to providing peace of mind upon arrival, it also allows for students to start forming community

¹⁴ The Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS) is housed in the Department of Homeland Security. It is a web-based system used to maintain data on international students who hold F, M, or J visa status through legal entry to the United States.

and developing potential roommate relationships as they either wait to move into permanent campus housing or off campus housing.

Pike University enrolls approximately 4,000 undergraduate and graduate students. Pike's twelve-month full-time equivalent enrollment (FTE) for 2012-13 was 3,940. During the spring 2014 semester, Pike University enrolled a total of 418 students through the IELP (136), undergraduate (124), and graduate (158) programs. Like many schools, students may be conditionally admitted to degree programs through the IELP if their TOEFL¹⁵ scores are not high enough to be admitted directly to a degree program, and IELP helps to recruit students to degree programs. The leading sending countries to the university are Saudi Arabia (139), India (107), China (80), and Japan (22) although 33 nationalities are represented in the student body from other countries such as Brazil, Nigeria, Serbia, and South Korea to name a few. The institution is approaching their international student enrollment capacity, as a vice-president explained to me, "We have sort of said that 500 is a good number and that we would like to stay around that, given our current enrollment." Next, I provide data regarding Pike's comprehensive recruitment strategy.

4.9 A Seasoned Recruitment Strategy

Pike has recruited and enrolled international students for over thirty-five years, suggesting that the institution began their early foray into increased international student marketization as academic capitalist processes began to take hold in the 1980s. As a result of this, international recruitment is in advanced and multifaceted stages at Pike, and it includes heavy and diverse involvement from staff. The director at Pike noted,

Our recruitment strategy is very complex. We do the IIE fairs....this year we're going to be very strategic as far as diversity. We want more diversity. We go to school visits. We go to all kinds of fairs, like when [staff member] is in Vietnam, he'll go to a fair and so

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we do fairs, we do agents, we do advertisements, we're on Baidu, we do a lot of U.S. Journal. We do events abroad. The agents used to be the number one draw, and I would say that's changing because a lot of students know who we are. We do these things for branding mainly.

Pike has been fortunate enough to have strong managerial and financial capacity, enabling them to travel frequently on behalf of the university to speak with students directly or to directly manage agency or government intermediaries in other countries. This type of recruitment is more productive than arm chair recruiting because it allows recruiters to learn new perspectives, develop cultural appreciation, and gives parents a level of comfort if they know a university staff member (Kallur, 2009). At Pike, there are four staff members who do the majority of the recruitment travel—two recruiters, the director, and the vice-president of student affairs. They have traveled to (or will be traveling to) countries such as China, Vietnam, India, Brazil, Thailand, Hong Kong, and Mongolia, to name a few. Staff members' responsibilities are divided into territories, and their travel is based upon geographic areas under their purview. One recruiter, a China specialist, noted that in the two years he had worked at Pike he had “been to Vietnam three times” and that he goes to “China twice a year for spring and fall, especially March and October.” Another said, “I do international travel twice, three times a year.” Data shows that this travel is multi-purpose. When staff members travel abroad, they meet with current or prospective agents in the other countries. Agent office visits and meetings can take up a significant portion of time with one recruiter noting that during a recent trip to India she “met 40 agents in three weeks.” Another part of it is attending educational fairs where they may meet with students and parents directly or provide support to their agents who are attending the fair. In addition, occasionally faculty members will travel abroad to speak about their specific academic program. In 2012, the American Council on Education reported that 59% of U.S. masters

institutions funded institutional staff to travel abroad for undergraduate international recruitment in 2011, an increase from only 41% in 2001.

Staff at Pike also spoke of the importance of government partnerships to their international enrollments. “We have a large Saudi student population, and we don't have to go abroad to Saudi Arabia right now since we're getting so many government sponsored students” said an international recruiter. Pike’s largest population in the Spring 2014 semester were Saudi students divided among undergraduate (45), graduate (28), and IELP students (66) for a total of 139 out of the 418 international students enrolled that spring. The director noted in regards to the Saudi population, “I mean, we’re over a percentage that you’re supposed to have, and it’s because we do a good job here.” No participants indicated that Pike had been able to take advantage of other Gulf Arab government partnerships, such as Kuwait and Oman. However, one recruiter acknowledged, “I would love to get into like Qatar, and Kuwait, and Oman. We just haven't been there.” This recruiter was however going out and meeting with some embassies to try to begin to nourish various partnerships, and she noted that a recent opportunity has opened up to work with Egypt for government-sponsored students through USAID. Additionally, they are working to try to bring some Libyan government sponsored students to campus through a recruiting agency in that country.

Pike University has a historied past regarding the adoption of agents in the recruitment process, which impacts their university sophistication using this strategy. One university administrator stated, “We’ve been using agents for thirty-five years when it wasn’t okay, supposedly, to use agents.” Participants noted that Pike leadership long ago decided that agent recruitment was a strategy they would pursue regardless of the national perception in higher education of this practice. Presidential leadership was particularly important to Pike pursuing this

strategy. “The use of agents and recruiters goes all the way back to when the first president asked that we start recruiting. We’ve been using agents the entire time, so we’ve really never not been using them,” stated a staff member.

Moreover, in interviews, individuals also noted Pike was not the only school using agents at this time; however, schools may not have been willing to share their practices due to the stigma attached to use of agents. A staff member who has been working at Pike for over three decades, and in the area of international student services and recruitment since the late nineties noted, “Well, I can tell you years ago, many schools used agents, but they’ll never tell you that they did, Lindsay. They did.” The history of international student enrollment was obviously a point of pride for individuals I interviewed, and several individuals emphasized the important role of international students on campus. “I think it’s in our DNA,” said one participant.

4.10 University Leadership Perspectives on Agents

University administrators acknowledged that the benefits and challenges agents provided to campus are the main impetus for their utilization. Quite simply, the agent business and market has grown because of the services they can provide to institutions—services the institutions may not be able to achieve solo. Institutional leadership recognized this. A Pike administrator said:

The biggest benefit is we can be at more locations. We can have our name out there; they can brand us. If you work with ethical, good agents, it can be a very good thing for you. You can get students that you would never have the opportunity to get. And I think that’s the best use of agents, by being in all these different countries, that you can never have a travel budget for.

Agents have also paid off in other ways for Pike. A vice-president I interviewed recalled a situation in which there was a mental health issue with an international student, and an agent was able to help in a situation by serving as a “conduit” between the university, hospital, and parents,

illustrating another perhaps less common way in which an agent served as an intermediary for the university. The individual recounted:

[The agent] played a critical role in helping us navigate through all that to bring it to some type of successful closure where the parent could get over here, reunite, and take the daughter home. Without that recruiter, that process would have probably taken at least three or four times as long, and I'm not sure how it would have finished.

Face to face contact is also a reason that Pike likes to utilize agents. It is more financially feasible to have agents on the ground in a country than to have a university staff member full-time in country. A Pike participant discussed this:

The other thing for me though, you know, let's say you have a student in Vietnam who's interested in Pike University. Yes, you can have our people from international admissions talk to them. You can have them Skype them, you can do all those easy things, but having a recruiter in the home country who's from Vietnam who can sit down with the student and mom and dad and truly talk in their dialect about what it means to go to Pike, what it means to be in the United States, what it will mean to study abroad. I don't care how good a school is, you can't do that without having someone on site. So your option is either you use a recruiter or you hire people to be on site. Well, the latter is financially impossible. So the recruiter is an inexpensive way to do it and have that extra level of support, and so that's been very helpful to us.

Clearly, agents provide benefits to campuses, yet these are not straightforward relationships that require no maintenance. Issues of ethics and transparency, finances, communication, productivity, assessment, and training are ones that are at the forefront of the national debate about the use of private third party agencies. A participant shared,

I'm concerned that because enrollments are declining, the international market is being seen as *the* market. So what that, why that concerns me, is in our case, we've been recruiting international students for decades. It's not new. I am worried about the schools that have never done it, who will then basically partner with unscrupulous people overseas because they want to bolster their enrollment.

The director also noted,

The negative is you can never, for sure, one hundred percent know what they're actually saying. You have to do your due diligence to make sure that you have trained them. That you have given them the tools to be successful. And if you are in the country, you need to

visit them. So, the negative is you never know a hundred percent. You just never know. You do the best you can. But the positives I think well outweigh the negatives.

Due diligence for managing and training agents is certainly an important facet. In the next section, I provide insights regarding the complex relationship between this institution and its agents.

4.11 Collaborating with an Agent Network

Certifying, Signing, and Compensating Agents

There are three people in the international office who are able to “certify” or vet agents to recommend them for a contract, or “letter of agreement” as it is termed at Pike. The two trusted international recruiters had, within the last year when I spoke with them, been granted the opportunity, and responsibility, to certify and either recommend or not recommend agents for contracting to the director. In addition, the director has the final authority to certify and sign agents, giving the final approval for who will be signed. A vice-president of the university described the director’s role in signing letters of agreement as follows:

She has that latitude, the reason being, her tenure. Over 30 plus years of doing this. Now, if we had a brand new director of international admissions tomorrow that would change. Then we would probably be going through a process where you know, yes, you can do this initial vetting then it needs to come to the vice president so they can look at it and make a decision. But because of [the director’s] experience, quite frankly she knows more about a recruiter than I would ever pretend to know.

This statement exhibits the trust placed in the director to run international operations, and her autonomy to manage the agent network for Pike. When asked how many agent relationships the office manages, the director replied it was “probably between fifty and a hundred that are active.” Opinions vary regarding how many agents are appropriate to work with at an institution, but the bottom line is that this is very much dependent on your staffing capabilities, recruitment needs, and your ability to manage the operation in a way that is transparent and ethical.

One of the managerial responsibilities of these letters of agreement is determining commission payments—how much and when it will be paid. The director bluntly stated:

When it comes to negotiating commission payments to agencies, there is no negotiation; it's a flat rate. We pay a flat rate. They have to register, enroll and pay their first semester bill in full. Once that's paid there is a process, there's an invoice, and we wire transfer the funds to the agent... Well, I wait until the last day of withdrawal because I won't pay them before that because [students] could leave.

Pike University pays a flat rate between \$2,200 to \$2,800 for each student brought in by an agent out of a budget line set aside for agent commissions. Half of the commission payment is paid before the semester, and the other half is paid after the student has completed the first semester. The director noted, "I would say we pay on the low side. A lot of schools pay 10% to 30% a year. We pay a onetime flat rate. If you're going undergraduate, we don't even pay 10%, so our commission is competitive, but low." Pike University works with IDP Education, a large Australian company with offices worldwide, for some of their recruiting services. This agency requires that schools pay a 10% commission, so the flat rate is an exception in this case. The flat rate at Pike is important because of the burden of tracking students, agents, and commissions. All of these facets can become quite complex and cumbersome, requiring significant staff time. As the director explained, "Ours is flat rate mainly because I've got to do it all, and it's a lot of work. And I'm not going to baby sit that."

Commissions are structured a variety of ways, as was evident in the previous case, and students who are conditionally admitted into an English intensive program can also bring up different issues if they matriculate into an undergraduate or graduate program. Some companies may require a fee for each semester a student is in an English intensive program, and another one if they matriculate into an undergraduate or graduate program after that. If that is the case, an institutional staff member could be tracking payments for numerous semesters. At Pike

University, when students apply, their agent should note on the application that they are the assisting agent, and as well, all agents with whom Pike has an agreement are required to send an invoice. If the agency fails to send an invoice by a certain point, then no commission is wired to the agent.

Training

Training is a combination of in-person visits to agency offices, conversations at conferences, and Skype, phone and other online training platforms. A variety of staff members are involved in these trainings, depending upon who is attending conferences and participating in foreign travel. One of the international recruiters is responsible for doing most Skype trainings with non-Chinese agents, while another Mandarin speaking international recruiter is responsible for China.

Each agent receives a Pike folder, which contains various profile sheets, and also a flash drive that has each brochure, as well as scholarship information. Agents review this electronic information, and the director said, “The reason we do that, they go back, they review the flash drive, and they can say, ‘This program works. This program works. I need more brochures’, and so we’re very strategic in what we’re mailing them. Instead of just mailing them a packet.” The 68-page agent training manual is also included on this flash drive and distributed when needed. This manual includes the following: (1) mission statements, (2) general admissions information, (3) international scholarships details and requirements, (4) fast facts and programs of study listing, (5) rankings information, (6) tuition and fees breakdown by academic program, (7) admission procedures for undergraduate, graduate, and intensive English programs, (8) credential requirements with some specific country information, (9) screenshots of online application status verification, (10) application checklists for students of all study level and

major, (11) immigration information, and (12) hospitality house information. The document contains overall detailed step-by-step instructions on how a student applies to the institution. In many cases, an agent is actually doing all of the submission for the student (to be discussed later in the chapter), which is why this manual is extremely important.

Institutional leadership emphasized the importance of attending the ALPHE and ICEF conferences as part of relationship building for training purposes. The vice-president of student affairs explained:

So, most of those times when [director] and I go to those, part of the meetings are with people we already have relationships with, so it's your chance to sit down with them again and just sort of, ok let's talk about our new materials, our new offerings, a little bit about us, what's going. But then, we also have slots for brand new people, so we can sort of see is this someone we would like to work with. There's that. That's critical. You have to have that.

Administrators also discussed sharing their university materials as an important preemptive strategy, so that agents are not creating their own materials not approved by the university. There was an expressed need to firmly regulate what agents are using and how they are using it through training; therefore, face-to-face contact is imperative in their operation. One of the recruiters was in China for an education fair on a weekend, and then during the week on Monday through Friday he traveled to visit different agents and train them to “make sure that they don't send out the wrong message to the student.” When this recruiter travels to China he stated that he conducts, “Twenty to thirty agent trainings. Maybe more than that.” A new agent market for this institution is Mongolia, as they now have a couple of Mongolian students enrolled. A staff member was planning to travel to Mongolia to meet with agents because they had not yet been trained.

Another staff member also discussed her agent training experiences with me. She was especially concerned with walking agents through each step in the application process when she

does Skype or other online platform trainings. “I walk them through like with a screen shot or even share my screen and say, okay, this is what you need to do,” she stated. In addition, the knowledge level of the agents with whom she speaks varies, as well as the purpose for the training. For some, training is a corrective action because there is a problem in the application process or something is going wrong in how the agents are explaining Pike University to a student. In other cases, training might be for a basic introduction to the school. Still other scenarios may warrant training in order to bring Pike University to the forefront of agents’ minds as they recruit students, as this recruiter related to me:

Some of them that I just did Skype trainings with were agents that we had agreements with, but the agency wasn't even aware that we had an agreement with, or they weren't very active. So it was kind of more like to rekindle that relationship and to help them, and kind of give them a push moving forward. Kind of refresh them. Keep us in their mind.

Additionally, training offers opportunities for staff to learn more about the agencies. In some cases, the trainer may find out about other offices the agency operates in another country. “For example, one that I just had a Skype training session with yesterday, they said they have an office in Ecuador, and I'm going to Ecuador in the fall, so I was like, wow, that's great. If I wouldn't have asked, I wouldn't have known,” said the staff member.

Communication was a recurring subject in conversations about working with agents. The importance of it in working with agents, as well as the difficulty of it both came up. One staff member noted that agents sometimes send the same email to various people within the office trying to obtain a response. These agents now feel they have a personal relationship with her and contact her directly, when in the past they may have contacted others individually or collectively. Unfortunately, sometimes this can result in miscommunication when agents do not understand the division of labor within the office.

Performance Standards

Agents are of course expected to help institutions recruit students to enroll, and schools must carefully consider what relationships are beneficial for them, which involves assessing an agent's job performance. Performance typically encompasses a number of factors such as number of students recruited and enrolled, student quality and retention, and student satisfaction and fit. Pike University's staff members assess performance yearly and "severs ties with the ones that haven't brought anything in," said the director. Yet, this is a complex and varied process among agents, as it depends upon the country, agency size, and longevity of the relationship between parties. It is not simply a matter of saying each agency has to bring in five students per year; in fact, asking about agent performance can be a "loaded question because it's hard to gauge" one participant stated. The director explained to me, "If I had one agent bring between three and five from let's say...let's pick on Singapore... I'd say that's wonderful, or Thailand, that's wonderful. If I had an agent that over a few years only brought in three to five from India, I'd say they're just mediocre." She went on to explain that they have had a relationship for over twenty-five years with one very reputable agent who has probably brought in at least 300 students over time to Pike. The longevity of this relationship stands out, as it becomes obvious that agent relationships may take years to have peak productivity. In China, the Chinese specialist works very closely with about ten agencies, even though they have agreements with others as well. He described that for every fall intake each of these ten agents may send two or three students to Pike.

Another participant addressed the issue of student intention noting that many students have dishonest intentions when working with an agent. She related this scenario to me:

We'll have a really good agent that might send us 15 students, and let's say half of them transfer. Normally, we would look at that and say, okay, we'll maybe re-evaluate that

relationship with that agent. And possibly give them a warning. Like hey, your students are transferring. What are you doing? But it's like if we know that the agent is a really good agent, it's like you almost have to start looking at the student intention more than just what the agent is doing, and it's hard for agents to gauge the student intention... They might not have family in the US. They might have a strong reason to go back, things like this, but it's still really hard to gauge the intention of the student.

Staff described other scenarios in which they must be vigilant about agent job performance. It was evident throughout the interview transcripts that no two problematic situations are the same. In some cases, staff felt that agents were pushing students toward majors that Pike was strong in, even when the student preferred a major the school did not offer. One staff member reported being particularly troubled by this when she visited an agent office and had the opportunity to speak with a student who was being pushed toward the Pike MBA program, but she really wanted to study microbiology. The staff member intervened, and told the student “we don’t offer a masters in microbiology, but I know a really good school that does.” It was fortuitous the staff member happened to be at the agent’s office during this time, but of course it raises the issue of accountability, as university staff cannot always have their eyes and ears in the agency offices. Nevertheless, situations such as these emphasize the need for drop-in office visits by university staff. As one participant said when I spoke with her, “There's nothing like being in someone's office, and seeing how they really deal with their students because how they're dealing with students is also a reflection of us. We're putting our reputation on the line as well.”

These drop in visits were identified by numerous participants as being important in agency evaluations. Pike is able to put resources toward staff members being able to conduct various visits in many countries when they attend ICEF or ALPHE conferences or travel to conduct training or to meet with prospective agents. “And I go to their offices, so I can see what kind of office is this. Because if I run into a really bad office, that will be the last time we use them,” said the vice-president.

Pike staff members speak to students informally about their agent experiences as they filter in and out of the office when they arrive on campus. Focus groups are conducted about a month after each semester begins to discuss student experiences and also to distribute a survey, and students are asked if they can continue to be surveyed about their experience longitudinally. While this formal assessment is essential, for the most part, staff discussed gathering better information from students informally versus a formal assessment process. In some cases, agents may specifically instruct Pike students to go into the office and talk with staff members about their experience. One staff member indicated “you can get a lot more out of them” in a conversational setting versus asking questions on paper. Other students may have had issues with an agent, whether it is one that Pike has a formal agreement with or not and are upset about their experience. The director explained,

Believe it or not, if a student used a bad agent, they’re the first one in my door. They’ll come in and talk and tell me about that. They’ll tell me that agent “Did this. They charged me for this. They told me this school was in a big city,” and I can tell you that’s rare...very rare but it happens.

Because of the size of the school and the international student population, staff members are able to rely very much upon personal interaction with students to assist in gauging agent performance and student experience. At other large institutions, this may not be feasible because of the population size.

4.12 Institutional Impacts

The Student Application Process

Typically, the student application process is different when using agency-based recruitment. A general scenario is that a student chooses an agency to work within their home country to help them select schools to apply to and then assist them in doing the actual application; in some cases, as discussed previously, students may pay a fee and in other cases

not. Agents provide a range of services, and may provide different packages of services based on price level. Services may include career aptitude tests, guidance with determining a pool of schools to apply to, personal statement consultation, preparation for visa interviews, and travel arrangements to name a few common ones. Pimpa (2003) stated, “The concept of a ‘one-stop shop,’ in which a full-range of information, counseling, application, and visa-processing services are offered to students wishing to study abroad, applies to many agents” (p. 180). The intensity of assistance and contact between the student and agent also varies with some students speaking to their agent daily and others much more infrequently. Students who participated in this research all related the frequency of contact between them and their agent, which varied. An Indian student with whom I spoke said,

Once the process started, I actually had to like physically had to go to their office maybe once or twice, but just after that it was all over the e-mails and phone calls, and I spoke to them I think—I think my entire process was done in around two months, so in that, I think I spoke to them four or five times. I had to physically go to the office twice.

Another Vietnamese student related that she met with her agent “really often, maybe once or twice per week. Or maybe more than that.” A Nigerian participant said, “I was always talking with her. I had her phone number. I had her contact on her BBM so I could just chat her, and she was very responsive, very responsive.” All of the students with whom I spoke related their agent experiences to me, which were as varied and unique as the students themselves.

Popular news media outlets, such as *The Chronicle*, *Inside Higher Ed*, and *The PIE*, have all reported on students’ experiences with agents as they navigate the application process. The staff and students interviewed at Pike provided insights and first-hand experiences regarding this process. Unsurprisingly, personal experiences and opinions varied with some having more positive experiences than others.

When asked how involved agents were with the actual application process, a staff member said, “Once [students] sign a contract, the agent will do everything on behalf of the students.” Pike University’s application has a field where the agent or student will put the agent contact information so that the institution knows with whom the student worked prior to being accepted and enroll. In some cases the student will submit their online application, and in other cases, the agent will submit the online application for the student. One recruiter noted the prevalence of agent use in China. He explained:

I see agent as the barrier between university and students in China. I mean, in all the other countries, like the Indian students, they can contact university directly because their English is good. They can understand. Other places, all over the world, I didn't see any—I mean any—situation like China.

Using an agent in China is an expensive proposition for a parent or family member. A staff member who had used an agent to find Pike University for his own undergraduate degree explained, “The agent's fee, eight years ago that's like 10,000 US dollars or even more than that, 15,000 US dollars, but now it's 5,000.” Because of China’s one-child policy, most parents (and likely their grandparents too) are willing to spend their life’s savings for the best education for their only child (Bartlett & Fischer, 2014; Xinyu, 2011). For other students, the agent fee was much less. A Nigerian student paid her agent \$400, while a Vietnamese student paid hers \$1,000. An Indian student informed me that her agency only worked off of commissions paid to them by schools, so the sole fee she personally paid was a mailing fee for them to submit her documents. These fee payments, and particularly the average Chinese fee, illustrates that only those who are financially and socially mobile are able to afford this service. In fact a study by Hagedorn and Zhang (2011) found that the second most important indicator of whether or not a Chinese student would use an agent was family income. The higher the family income, the more likely the student was to use an agent.

Students noted they decided to hire agents for various reasons, but largely because they did not know how to navigate the American higher education system, indicating the importance of intermediaries who can navigate foreign language barriers for students. One graduate assistant from Nepal noted in his home country there is a “lack of information.” Another participant who worked as a graduate assistant in the office explained that for her situation it was “better to use an agent because we actually don’t know that much about the situation and how to apply.” Her agent experience had been a smooth and positive one. She went on to speak about the students who apply to the university and said,

They might think it is better to use an agency, just for the simple fact that they don't really know what is happening or what to expect. They may think that it will be safer and the percentage of being successful, being accepted might be like a little bit higher.

I also spoke with two Nigerian graduate students, one who used an agent and one who did not. They explained to me because Nigeria uses a British schooling curriculum, the American system of schooling is very different and takes some getting used to. The main difference between these two individuals and their decision to use or not use an agent stemmed from their innate personal characteristics. One described herself as “lazy” and unwilling to take on the tasks of finding a school and learning the application process herself, even though there was no language barrier since the official language of Nigeria is English. She was more than willing to pay for agent services. On the other hand, the other student described herself as the “queen of research” and was willing to find the information she needed and learn the application process herself.

A student assistant with whom I spoke related her story to me about how she made her way to Pike University from the Philippines. She chose not to use an educational agent because she did not like “paying an agent to process everything.” Additionally, she spoke of the ease of

finding information herself, presumably because she spoke English fluently, as English is one of two official languages in the Philippines and is the dominant language of instruction.

Another student from India described how hiring an agent helped mitigate the confusion she felt about what country to study in, what schools to apply to, and what degree program she wanted to pursue. She had met a Pike staff member at an agency sponsored fair, and then, she ended up submitting her application through the sponsoring agent for no fee except the mailing charge mentioned previously. In addition, she also applied to two other institutions through this agency.

For all of the positive experiences that Pike students have with their agents, the staff also related scenarios that bring up ethical concerns during the application and enrollment process that they must deal with every semester. Participants spoke of Bangladeshi agents who would send 100 applications per night to the department, receiving phone calls from headhunters going to airports to meet international students and trying to get the highest bid from schools, agents who charged a student the school's application fee although it is free for international students, document authenticity issues, and agents who only show the student certain acceptance letters for schools with whom they have contracts. Students do not always have the truest of intention either and may lead an agent and school to believe they will enroll and persist, but in reality, become a "runner"—using their obtained visa to get into the U.S. then to go somewhere else. Even students mentioned some challenges working with agents. One student stated,

Yeah, I would say something I think is a challenge working with agents is that sometimes they might want to push to you what you don't want. What I mean by that is, probably you have a particular school in mind, you want to apply to, but they are not working with that school. They don't want to go through the stress of contacting a school they are not familiar with. They will try to tell you, okay, no, you can't go to this school. Go to this school. I'm like, why? You should be concerned about what I want, not what you want. And then sometimes they want to push courses to you that are not your choice of study.

This statement certainly highlights a concern about which many educators and others have voiced trepidations. Unfortunately, it is an issue that is very hard to mitigate, and institutions may end up with students who are not necessarily the best fit at the institution, in some ways ceding authority of the type of student who applies to intermediaries. Therefore, institutions must provide strong oversight for their agent networks.

Rankings

Scholars have discussed the place of international rankings in global competition (Bowman & Bastedo, 2011; Cantwell & Taylor, 2013; Hazelkorn, 2014; Marginson & van der Wende, 2007). Hazelkorn (2014) noted, “The emergence of global rankings in 2003 has had a revolutionizing affect on the perceptions of world order” (p. 246). Administrators emphasized the importance of rankings in the recruitment game and the difficulties universities who are not ranked and are not research universities might face, particularly in China. The director stated, “In China, if you don’t use an agent you can say goodbye to students. Let’s be honest for a school our size because we’re not nationally ranked. When you are not ranked...I hope you’re interviewing a school that’s ranked. It’s very different; they don’t have to work as hard.” Schools who are in the top rankings already have an international brand and students clamoring for entrance, which allows them to not place as much (or any at all) importance on agent recruitment. In China, parents are particularly concerned with a child going to a highly ranked school, but this is partly because many Chinese parents are unable to judge American schools on any other metrics. The Chinese recruitment specialist emphasized the ranking is “above everything in China.” This means that agents may feel pressure to get as high a ranked school to accept the student as they can. It can also impact what other school characteristics they emphasize to parents and students. The same staff member went on to explain:

And that's because all those agents, they're just promoting their company like that way and trying to get highest rank. They print out all those brochures and even books, give them to the students, a list of US News rank every year, updated that, and they pay less attention on like how big this university is, what's the size, what's the class size, and what's their strongest major, and their location, how about the local economy or everything. They just ignore those.

The rankings obsession was not mentioned regarding any other country besides China, calling into question what cultural aspects may be influencing this.

Financial

Pike University provided two program pricing information sheets to me that outlined tuition costs, as well as scholarship information for the 2014-2015 academic year. Undergraduate tuition for the year was \$29,716, and for students who planned to live on campus, cost was approximately \$40,000 including fees. During the 2012-13 academic year, 100% of full-time first-time undergraduates received institutional grant aid. For international undergraduate students, there are four levels of merit scholarships which they may qualify to receive. See Table 5 for details.

Table 5: Pike's undergraduate scholarship levels

GPA	Dollar Amount (per year)
3.5-4.00	15,000
3.0-3.49	14,000
2.5-2.99	10,000
2.0-2.49	8,000

Scholarships are awarded initially based upon high school GPA, and all international students receive a scholarship, as you have to have at least a 2.0 GPA to be considered for admission.

Scholarships are authorized for fall and spring semesters but not the summer session.

Additionally, scholarships are available for graduate studies and IELP, but the amounts are \$2,000 or less depending upon the program. "We're not cheap, but we have to have those

scholarships, mainly in China. That's why it was started because without a scholarship on the I-20, it's difficult to get the F1 visa, and plus, parents like bragging,” said a participant. Students who are government sponsored are not eligible to receive aid. The director explained to me that at whatever the scholarship level the student is awarded is guaranteed for all four years “mainly for the transparency of budget planning.” As long as a student remains in good standing, they retain their starting scholarship level.

International students are profitable for the university, and the director emphatically noted the financial benefits were “huge. Not just for the school, for the community. They are renting apartments. They’re setting up house. They’re getting groceries every week. They’re buying cars. For the university, it’s huge.” As discussed in the previous case, government sponsored students are especially lucrative, as a participant explained that having 100 Saudi students was like having 200 domestic students. In the spring of 2014, there were 139 Saudi students enrolled in the IELP, undergraduate, and graduate programs. Yet, as financially beneficial as it may be, the director also noted:

But financially, you can see that we put in a lot of resources that take care of the international students. We have free tutoring at all levels, all the way through graduate school for all students. Not just international. So, while it may be very lucrative in some ways, it is taxing on others. So, as an institution, yes, we do realize the financial benefits. But they also bring a worldwide perspective to our students because the majority of our students that are domestic here have never been abroad. Their hometown maybe doesn’t have any international people because we go to the pockets; I mean, it’s rural here.

A vice-president echoed the value of having a diverse campus and that this was the main benefit ahead of financial gains,

“That’s not really what is driving it for us. We have got to have diversity. We’re in [location]. If we don’t have these international students, our diversity level is very low. I mean just by virtue of where we are and where we pull from. Having the international students creates a whole different campus environment, so our primary mission is to get them here for those reasons.

I was unable to obtain information regarding the exact cost of recruiting an international student or the value of overall financial gains. For some schools, it is simply very difficult to track the cost of recruiting an international student. Darrup-Boychuck (2009) describes this dilemma asking how do institutions account for things like foreign currency fluxes, word-of-mouth recommendations, and research in various national markets? The case illustrates that all of these recruitment strategies combine to contribute to Pike's financial wellness, as well as their diversity initiatives.

Student Support Services

One of the benefits of being on a small campus with a large staff and manageable international student population is that administrators are able to provide a level of attention and services that might not be feasible at a large institution. Staff informed me that they help students find doctors, daycares, schools for children, and off-campus housing. In some cases, they also take students to the store when they arrive, and a shuttle service is provided three times a week to the grocery store and mall. Student participants related other stories about how staff had helped to welcome and assist them. "We had a snowstorm at that point, and [staff member] waited for me for four hours at the airport," said one graduate student. The hospitality houses were especially important to students, as students spoke of having a home to go to when they arrived and welcome baskets with food. One student said, "I'm not sure that we'll get the same services if I go to another school." Because the hospitality houses may be full when a student arrives, the school puts them up in a hotel for the same cost per night (\$20) as the hospitality houses so that those students do not feel they have been treated any differently. For students, these initial arrival support services were very important, and they spoke less of other support services needed throughout the rest of their college experience.

NACAC's website (n.d.) specifically emphasizes the need for institutions who are involved in international recruitment to provide services such as residence life arrangements, faculty training, immigration support, language training, academic support, and campus programming to integrate international and domestic students. Pike's campus also has an intercultural center where there are programs and initiatives to provide intentional opportunities for international and domestic students to interact. In addition, the services and admissions department does activities and trips related to American culture for international students to help them learn and acclimate to the culture, and of course, there are other student activities that international students participate in to get involved.

4.13 Pike Case Analysis

Interstitial Organizational Emergence

Recently, interstitial unit consolidation was undertaken at Pike. International student services and international enrollment were both housed within the student affairs division but were still separate units prior to 2013. In 2013, the university established a division of enrollment management where the international admissions unit was situated. The international admissions department was consolidated with the international services unit to create international admissions and services in an effort to streamline processes for international recruitment, enrollment, and support. This allowed for all personnel working with international students to be housed under one department, enabling the institution to better manage activities and resources generated from aggressively pursuing international markets. This illustrates how interstitial organizational emergence can lead to expanded managerial capacity.

When examining interstitial emergence on an individual level across the institution, it is evident that some faculty members are involved with recruitment, specifically traveling to speak

about their respective degree programs. Yet, this was not very emphasized in the data, suggesting that there is centrally much control over international recruitment and admissions perhaps not allowing for as much interstitial emergence across campus.

Intermediary Networks

Pike University relies on intermediary agent networks to help them find interested international students, but this reliance is not as influenced by the certification processes of AIRC and ICEF as it may be for other institutions. Data suggests that Pike does not place full reliance on agent certification processes as a criteria for agent selection, and in many cases, Pike staff vet their own agents independently of professional organizations. While Pike administrators acknowledge that these certification processes are beneficial, concern was expressed about the really good agents who may not pursue certification but still conduct quality work. Just because an agent does not pursue any type of accreditation, does not mean that Pike is uninterested in working with those entities. With this said however, administrators still use these professional associations to meet with agents and also to connect and follow up with already contracted agents. Interview data suggests that Pike personnel try to have significant oversight of their intermediary agency networks by conducting site visits to agency offices as frequently as possible. They do rely on agents as intermediaries to assist in student recruitment, although the administrative ability they have to send personnel overseas to recruit may decrease, even if only slightly, their dependence on agents.

Expanded Managerial Capacity

Pike University certainly exhibits greatly expanded managerial capacity from pursuing the international student market. University leadership values and supports having an international student population, investing necessary human and financial resources needed to

make it a successful endeavor. In summer 2014 when I visited campus, there were nine departmental staff members for 418 students. One of these positions had been recently added in order to manage a new summer camps program for international students, another indicator of market expansion to which Pike responded with increased managerial capability. This investment in managerial capacity has empowered the department to move beyond an armchair recruitment strategy as staff members travel to target markets to nourish intermediary partnerships and actually meet with students themselves. Student support services benefit from this capacity, possibly assisting in the persistence to degree of this population. Expanded managerial capacity also allows for more individuals to know and be aware of their agent activities, in a way providing more layers of oversight. More administrative management has allowed for more market engagement, blurring the line between non-profit and for-profit even more (Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004).

4.14 Cross Case Analysis

While both Pike and Middleton are historical liberal arts colleges (now classified as masters colleges), located not far from each other in rural areas, and enroll close to 4,000 students, their internationalization histories and academic capitalist processes vary. This is not to say that there are not similarities in how they engage with agency-based recruitment because there are similarities, but it is perhaps the differences in these two cases that are most striking. In this section, I cross-analyze these two cases by highlighting some of the most important similarities and differences through the theoretical lens of academic capitalism.

New Circuits of Knowledge

A similar pattern of new circuits of knowledge exists for both of these institutions, albeit with different individuals involved in the circulation of global knowledge. In general, patterns of

knowledge in the context of agency-based recruitment can be viewed in the following ways depending upon which relationships are being examined:

1. Institution $\leftrightarrow$ Agent $\leftrightarrow$ Student and Family
2. Institution $\leftrightarrow$ Agent $\leftrightarrow$ Sub-Agent $\leftrightarrow$ Student and Family
3. Institution $\leftrightarrow$ Professional Association $\leftrightarrow$ Agency

While these relationships illustrate new circuits within the international student recruitment process, it does not illustrate exchanges of knowledge and new circuits that are facilitated by international students' learning and how this learning circulates globally. However, through both Middleton and Pike's market activity lines between non-profits (institutions), agents and sub-agents (for-profits), and students (raw material and consumers) are blurred, and this exhibits that knowledge and operations are no longer solely controlled by the academy (Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004). Both Pike and Middleton exhibit similar knowledge patterns most likely due to how the agency recruitment industry operates, but data indicates that Pike may rely less on the third circuit with professional associations than does Middleton due to different resource capacities. It should also be noted that these circuits of knowledge can vary based upon factors such as institutional type, the nationality and cultures of individuals involved in the process, agency structure, familial involvement, administrative units, and so on. While globalization has made the flow of new global knowledge feasible, academic capitalism has shifted how these circuits are formed for historic liberal arts colleges.

Interstitial Emergence

Both institutions exhibited interstitial change by reorganization and streamlining of administrative departments, although this took place slightly earlier at Pike than at Middleton. The leadership of these institutions recognized the need to try to streamline all international services from recruitment to on campus support in order to manage and support growing international student populations. Even though both campuses were keen on doing this, Pike's interstitial emergence is more advanced in operations than is Middleton's.

One apparent difference between the two institutions is the role of faculty members interstitially connected to international recruitment activities. At Middleton, as previously mentioned, the professor who is the China program coordinators manages all of the Chinese agent network and recruitment activities. Additionally, he also meets with students when he goes to China twice a year. The institution utilized his talent and willingness to be engaged in these types of activities before an office devoted to international admissions and recruitment was established. Additionally, other faculty members at Middleton travel for the institution, many times in place of sending administrative staff. This helps to form connections and relationships across the institution, drawing in more talent to assist in recruiting.

At Pike, all of the recruitment is controlled centrally by the international recruitment and services office; while faculty are involved in travel when asked to assist with recruitment, there are no faculty members as heavily involved as Middleton's China program coordinator. Pike has been recruiting internationally for a long period of time, and it could be that faculty members who may have been more directly involved in the early days have been managerially phased out. Alternatively, it could be that university leadership wants recruitment very centrally controlled or wants busy faculty members to focus on teaching and research.

Intermediating Networks

Of all of the tenets of academic capitalism theory, the consideration of intermediating networks is perhaps the most apparent given that agency-based recruitment is founded upon the concept of having a middle-woman for the business model to work. The concept of having an intermediary is precisely why students and universities may choose to use an agent. They mediate or negotiate a college application process for students and find prospective students for institutions. For both Middleton and Pike, utilizing intermediary organizations are, without a doubt, a crucial part of their recruitment strategies. Both rely on agencies, foreign governments, and other entities to assist in bringing international students to campus, and they also rely on professional associations to navigate relationships between their institution and the agencies.

Yet, intermediary organizational reliance exhibits itself in distinctive ways and to different degrees on the campuses. Middleton has the greatest degree of reliance on intermediaries, and university administrators value and place great confidence in AIRC's certification process as a way to vet the agencies with which they sign agreements. For Middleton, this helps to remove some uncertainty in the agent vetting process, and they seem more likely to work with AIRC certified agencies than those that do not possess this certification. Therefore, AIRC as an intermediary organization influences their agent selection process to a fair degree. Moreover, because Middleton is an armchair recruitment school, they rely significantly on intermediaries to conduct work abroad to be able to recruit international students. Simply put, without intermediaries they would not be able to conduct much recruitment due to resource constraints.

For Pike, because they do have more resources, their work with intermediaries varies to some extent from Middleton. One important factor, related to the impact of professional

associations on their recruitment, is that Pike has a history of international recruitment spanning approximately thirty years. This time frame has allowed Pike to develop processes that may not have been impacted as much by newer professional associations and companies that act as intermediary groups. For example, while Pike is a member of AIRC and they value the certification process this organization supplies, many of the agencies they work with have been in existence long before AIRC was founded and do not plan on seeking certification. Because of the long standing relationship Pike has with these agencies, it will continue to work with them no matter if they are AIRC certified or not. Additionally, because of the size of Pike's staff, they are able to provide what seems to be more direct oversight of their signed agencies, perhaps enabling a lesser dependence on professional association agency certification processes.

Managerial Capacity

One of the more obvious differences in these two cases is the distinction in managerial capacities. While Pike has a decades long history of successful international recruitment, resulting in staff expansion, Middleton's growth in this area has come more recently and so far, has not resulted in much staff expansion at all. This influences the type of recruitment strategies each of these institutions pursues. Middleton is a self-described "armchair recruitment" institution, while Pike has a robust staff travel schedule contributing to a more complex and broader recruitment strategy. Pike has more staff members who are working with agents, decentralizing their agent management more than Middleton whose agent management is held by two people. Decentralization is not an option for Middleton because of lack of resources or perhaps a not yet large enough international student population, placing the power to make decisions about which agents to use, training, commission payments, and strategy in the power of two people. In the Pike office, the director has the ultimate authority, but recommendations,

travel, training, communication, and decision-making are spread out over four main people with other office staff assisting on the periphery. This allows for growth, but it also can present more risk for communication lapses.

Managerial capacity seems to be a key component for appropriate agent management. It is unclear from my data what exactly constitutes an appropriate number of staff to manage agency-based recruitment, as it does depend largely upon how many agencies you work with, how many personnel work at these agents, what other recruitment strategies you use, which countries you are targeting, your application process, and so on. However, even with this lack of clarity, what is clear is that in order for agency-based recruitment to have a chance of being successful, an institution must be willing to invest in resource development at the outset in hopes that being able to successfully manage this type of recruitment will have larger pay offs in the end.

CHAPTER 5

PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS

5.1 Introduction

American higher education encompasses over 4,000 institutions that vary widely based on a number of characteristics (mission, size, selectivity, finances, research activity, and so on). Scholarship has considered the vertical stratification of U.S. institutions (Winston; 1999, 2004), as well as heightened segmentation within research universities (Rosinger, Taylor, Coco, & Slaughter; in press; Slaughter & Cantwell, 2012). Research universities sit at the top of the institutional food chain, but even within this category, there is definitive prestige stratification with the much-esteemed Association of American University members holding the top positions, while research universities with less cachet usually occupying the less prestigious places within the upper echelons.

In recent decades, public funding for higher education has declined (Desrochers & Wellman, 2011; Doyle & Delaney, 2009; Rizzo, 2006). Public institutions bring in greater and greater amounts from non-state sources (Slaughter & Leslie, 1997; Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004; Weisbrod, Ballou, & Asch, 2008), and as U.S. higher education has moved closer to the market, this has given American research universities the distinction of being “the most heavily marketized in the world” (Slaughter & Cantwell, 2012, p. 585). For example, technology transfer, trademark licensing, luxury student housing, and research parks (to name a few) are all examples of increased marketization and ways in which institutions can stimulate revenue generation. This increased marketization has affected research universities and four-year colleges

differently and provides distinctive opportunities for generating revenue in these sectors.

Weisbrod et al. (2008) explains that research university faculty and doctoral students who have specialized research skills have “potential for luring governmental and corporate research grants and contracts that are beyond the reach of four-year colleges...” (p. 70). By contrast the four-year colleges may be able to focus energies on providing specialization for local business and government that research universities may not see as consistent with their research agenda (Weisbrod et al. 2008).

Certainly, American research universities are viewed worldwide as the model for success and are considered highly prestigious. For those that hold high standing within recognized (for better or worse) rankings systems, international student recruitment is made easier, as these rankings at the very least give international students and their families a way to assess institutions they may otherwise be unfamiliar with in a foreign country. Hazelkorn (2011) states, “In the absence of institutionally generated comparative material, rankings have arguably and controversially become the accountability and transparency instrument by which students – especially international students – governments and other stakeholders acquire such information” (p.13). Well-regarded public research universities may find it easier to attract international students than some other types of institutions.

In this chapter, I examine agency-based recruitment at two large public research universities and present each case separately and follow a similar format to chapter four. I provide thick case description of the institution and international recruitment operations, followed by an analysis using an academic capitalism framework. At the end of the chapter, I also provide a cross-case analysis to further develop my analysis.

5.2 Bingley University: The Setting

Located in a sizeable city, Bingley University is a large bustling urban main campus that is home to over 40,000 undergraduate and graduate students. Bingley's twelve-month full-time equivalent enrollment (FTE) for 2012-13 was 30,521, and state appropriations for 2013 were \$5,451 per FTE. During the same academic year, 53% of full-time first-time undergraduates received institutional grant aid.

Its location provides convenience for students with proximity to an international airport, large ethnic communities, and public transportation. Students can also find plenty to do off campus by taking advantage of festivals, concerts, sporting events, shopping, and other events afforded by large metropolitan areas. When I arrived on campus, summer orientation was taking place, as new students and parents roamed the campus learning their way around and attending orientation sessions. Like many other large research institutions in the U.S., athletics facilities are prominent on campus, nestled among large academic buildings, the student union, and library. Perhaps this is the picture that foreigners have in mind when they think of American higher education in today's world—research buildings, very large campuses, state of the art technology, and well-funded athletics. According to Marginson's (2006) competition segmentation, within a national context, Bingley could be placed into the "segment two" aspirant research institution category. In this segment, less prestigious institutions continue to pursue status in the most elite echelon (segment one) but are unable to break through. When Bingley's position is examined within a global context however, Marginson's work suggests that all American doctoral granting institutions (like Bingley) are in the highest segment, giving them an advantage over many other institutions worldwide.

In Fall 2013, Bingley's large international student population (3,407) represented over 130 countries. More graduate students (1,860) enrolled than undergraduates (1,058) with the Chinese population being the largest (1,181)¹⁶. The Chinese population is followed by India (945), South Korea (203), Canada (66) and Saudi Arabia (59). According to a participant, strategic emphasis on international recruitment began in 2006, with a specific focus on undergraduate recruitment. An administrator noted in reference to the international population, "Ten years ago, almost every [international] student on this campus was a graduate student."

This public research institution offers over 300 different degrees at the undergraduate and graduate levels. In Fall 2013, total enrollment (including OPT classification) by field of study shows that engineering, business, and visual and performing arts enroll the most international students; however, these fields of study shift slightly depending upon whether it is undergraduate or graduate enrollment. Overwhelmingly, engineering enrolls the most graduate students, over 600, while the business fields and visual and performing arts enroll between 200 to 260 international students each in their graduate programs. At the undergraduate level, business takes the lead with close to 300 international students, while the liberal arts and sciences, general studies, and humanities areas enroll just under 120 together. Engineering enrolls about the same with just under 120 students. Additionally, business and engineering also enroll the most OPT classified students with 103 and 163 respectively, indicating the importance of practical training in these fields.

¹⁶ There were three international student categories listed in the data supplied to me by the institution: undergraduate, graduate, and optional practical training (OPT). OPT represents a special allowance for students who are on F-1 visa status to work to get practical training for their degrees. For example, an engineering student may complete a co-op to fulfill academic degree requirements. There were 489 students classified as OPT, which is both graduate and undergraduate. I was unable to obtain the exact breakdown of student classification within the OPT category, making the total undergraduate and graduate figures incomplete. I do however include the OPT category within the top sending country figures.

Bingley is ranked by several entities, which does give an advantage in the international market by strengthening the university brand and making the institution more known to students. Luke (2005) notes that international education engages many practices of various corporate industries, such as global branding. In fact, both the undergraduate and international graduate admissions brochures highlight various rankings on the first page, making it clear that this is an important aspect of recruiting and selling the institution. It is evident from examining recruitment brochures, as well as the international admissions and services websites, that the school is very focused upon international recruitment efforts. For example, the undergraduate admissions website is translated into thirteen languages, and prospective students can also take a virtual campus tour in one of ten languages other than English. In the next section, I examine the institution's recruitment strategy and vision.

5.3 A Targeted and Deliberate Recruitment Vision

In 2006, the hiring of a new vice-provost for international affairs began to drastically shape international enrollment and initiatives at Bingley University, as this individual enacted an international recruiting plan for the university. This initiative has gained support as a university-wide initiative and is led by the person who now holds the vice-provost for international affairs position "in consultation and collaboration with the vice-president for enrollment management, the dean of the graduate school, individual colleges, deans and department heads," said a participant. Leadership at the university holds that the initiative must involve all partners in order to sustain and support international population growth. Another person explained that Bingley is not a historically global institution, and it is obvious that the institution is trying to change this.

Institutional administrators have made a targeted effort in recent years to bolster undergraduate international enrollment. Study participants told me when this initiative began, the

institution had around 250 undergraduates and now there are over 1,000. Prior to 2006, “international was on no one’s radar at all,” said the director of international admissions. It was during this time when administrators noted Bingley was having some enrollment and financial issues, so it was the right time to try something different. The director of international admissions explained that there was no international admissions area. It took two years for that area to be created, but it was finally funded and has grown substantially since those initial years when it was a one-person office. The creation and growth of this unit illustrates the academic capitalist tenant of interstitial growth, as new units emerge to manage new organizational activities (Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004).

International admissions and international services are two separate offices that both work on recruitment management, particularly with agents. While this does not illustrate an interstitial emergence in the truest sense of the concept, it does show that there has been a blurring of unit boundaries to manage international student recruitment. International admissions reports to the vice-provost for enrollment management, while the services side reports to the vice-provost for international affairs. It is a complicated structure that one participant called “this kind of weird collaboration.” While I will discuss managerial capacity later on in this chapter, it is important to understand how international enrollment initiatives are situated within administrative departments.

Administrators emphasized the benefits of bringing a large international population to campus. One administrator, in particular, stated these benefits quite clearly:

The first [benefit] is at the end of the day, you want the best and brightest students in your programs, and if you're not looking outside of...the boundaries of the U.S., you're missing a substantial segment of quality students who can help bring up the academic quality of your programs, and so that's a top priority...Second, every school is interested in diversity, and the diversity has to go again, beyond the borders of the U.S. It's one thing to have minority students enrolled. It's another to have students from 120 different

countries across the world, and the interactions that those types of students can provide to your U.S. students is invaluable... And then again, another benefit is, everybody is always worried about their brand, and their reputation. And to us, in this day and age, you can't just be worried about what your reputation is in your local area or the U.S. It's your brand recognition and reputation throughout the world, and you need students from the world to help you build that brand reputation and recognition. I think one of the bottom criteria and one that people try to not talk about, but it is a reality is, it is a financial benefit to have students from around the world as well. They pay out of state tuition. They're going to live in your housing, and it provides a tremendous economic benefit not only to the university but to the surrounding community.

Certainly, the school as a whole has recognized these recruitment benefits, and administrators have aims to guide the school into the top 25 schools in the U.S. for international enrollment, which currently means adding about “1,500 more international students,” a participant explained. Currently, they expect undergraduate and graduate enrollments to grow, but some academic programs are at capacity, which means that administrators will focus concentration on the other academic programs where there is room for international growth.

Enrollment numbers indicate large populations of Indian and Chinese students, not atypical of national trend numbers. As Bingley plans for the next several years, they are beginning to spend “a lot of time and money in places like Latin America. We'll probably start getting a lot more involved in Eastern Europe pretty soon, and even some of these other markets in Southeast Asia like Indonesia,” said the director of international admissions. Some staff emphasized that they are also waiting to see what will happen in South America as those countries develop and markets open up. In summary, Bingley administration has over the past nine years made substantial moves to capture their share of the international market and is now thinking strategically about new markets in order to capitalize on opportunities in order to continue to be competitive in the international student market.

5.4 Managerial Structure

The administrative structure charged with overseeing international recruitment, and therefore agents, is dispersed over two different administrative units as noted previously. The international student services unit, consisting of nine full-time professional staff, reports to the vice-provost for international affairs, and the director of this unit described their role in this way:

Sometimes it's hard to define what we do because essentially we do everything for the students, whether it's be their immigration lawyer, their mom or dad, their academic advisor. We do a little bit of everything, but the primary role that we play is one of an immigration lawyer basically, for lack of a better term. We are the office that helps them with their visa documents, gives them the information they need to apply for the visa to enter once they're here, makes sure that they maintain legal status with the U.S. government...so a large part of what we do is regulatory in nature. A big part of what we do also is helping them get acclimated to U.S. culture and understand what it's going to be like to live in the U.S. and study at a U.S. institution to help them acclimate and succeed as best they can, so that includes programming, and coffee hours, and friendship programs, and all of those types of things.

Not only does this office provide necessary support services for international students, they also have a role in agency-based recruitment. The director of international services noted that his office fulfills the role of “selecting [agents], [negotiating] the contracts, [and] paying the commissions.”

The international admissions office (housed in undergraduate admissions) is situated under the vice-provost for enrollment management and works primarily with undergraduate international admissions because graduate admissions is decentralized through the various academic colleges. This office sets priorities for the Bingley recruitment strategy and works in conjunction with the services side on programs such as international orientation, along with immigration issues, housing, and course registration. The director of international admissions noted that “the international admissions office is really the international enrollment management office,” indicating that the breadth of their operations extends beyond only the admissions

functions. Of course, this unit plays a large role in agency-based recruitment. The director of international services said that the international admissions unit “essentially manages the agent network, and who are our agents and how they're trained...following up with students about their satisfaction with the agents and all of those types of things.” The administrative structure promotes, as one participant stated, “a decentralized agent management approach.”

There are thirteen international admissions staff members listed on the school website. In a seven-year period, international admissions has grown from one person to ten in the main campus office illustrating large managerial growth as emphasized in academic capitalism (Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004). Rhoades (2014) extends our understanding of managerial capacity within the academic capitalist framework to understand that it is not upper-level management that has grown the most in the past three decades, but actually, individuals (many of whom possess masters and Ph.D.s) who serve in support positions across the university. The individuals within international admissions are an example of the increased role these professionals play in higher education. In order to further understand this, I expound briefly on staff job roles in this office.

The director of international admissions is the face of the office, as he interfaces with constituents across campus and does the majority of international travel; he also sets recruitment strategy. Day to day operations in the office are managed by the associate director. Every staff member in the office has a function and a territory that they manage. For example, one of the admissions officers manages communication efforts, oversees the International Ambassador Program, and recruits students from the Middle East and Northern Africa. A participant in this study is a China specialist; she oversees all of Bingley's China operations. The territory managers are the ones who communicate more with the agency counselors about specific student

application questions, events, and marketing materials, while unit directors and agency management discuss broader strategy, new markets, and overall organizational relationships.

In addition to the staff working on the Bingley main campus, there are also on-site personnel who are based in other countries (included in the thirteen total staff). These staff members are native to the country in which they live and work, but they function as a Bingley admissions staff member with similar roles and responsibilities based upon their assigned country. There is one head staff member with two support staff in China (with intent to increase this to five staff in the future) and one staff member based in India and another one based in Vietnam. On-site personnel assist with managing Bingley's agent network, as well as meeting directly with students who choose not to hire an agent. They also represent Bingley at recruiting events and high school visits. Therefore, these professionals serve a two-fold role for Bingley: admissions counselor and agency network manager.

Bingley does not search for and employ these in-country staff members directly; instead, the institution purchases managerial packages from international education organizations and agencies. The associate director of admissions explained, "We buy a package. The package includes office space for that person, marketing budget for that person, travel budget for that person, and that person's actual salary and fees." Here, it is important to emphasize that even though a particular in-country professional may technically be contracted through an agency, they are salaried and do not work on commission. Moreover, they report to the Bingley main campus admissions staff.

I interviewed one of the Chinese on-site personnel who had been working for Bingley for almost a year at the time of the interview. He described the various responsibilities of his work and his two supervisees as attending different education exhibitions around the country to talk

with students and their parents, visiting agency offices to conduct site visits and training, partnering with local high schools to talk with students about opportunities at Bingley, and managing local PR and social media platforms.

These on-site personnel also visit Bingley's main campus, in most cases at least once a year, in order to know what the campus environment is like and to meet face to face with domestic staff. Bingley main campus staff members also meet with on-site personnel when they travel to these countries. Main campus and on-site individuals are in contact at least once a week, sometimes more to discuss updates and issues. This type of expanded managerial capacity illustrates the role that intermediary organizations can have in actually providing workers for expanded recruitment, as organizations outside of Bingley are contracted to provide this labor. In the future, one director said, "Ultimately, I think we'd like to see between seven and ten people on the ground in various countries. In some areas it's not for a particular country. It might be for a region like the Middle East."

5.5 Managing a Substantial Agent Network

The institution began using agents in 2006, when the international enrollment vision was enacted. Interview participants indicated that Bingley has contracts with approximately 40 agencies some eight years later. This number however is not indicative of the scope of offices with which Bingley works because many of these companies have branch offices scattered within the country or among many countries. The director of international admissions noted, "When you add up all their branch offices, it's like 400 offices." For example, one organization on their agency roster has "70 locations in 3 or 4 different countries," the director went on to say. Bingley maintains a web page where agents can self-report their contact information to be posted publicly on the school site, and the webpage currently lists 203 agency headquarters and branch

offices, indicating that this list is not all encompassing, probably due to the fact that the information is self reporting and depends how agencies list their branch offices. For example, several agencies in various countries only list their headquarters office even though they have numerous offices scattered throughout the country (or countries). The agencies listed on the website are located in 24 countries (plus Macau and Hong Kong). Later in this section, I discuss how relationships with all of these entities are maintained, but first, I turn to how agency-institution agreements are initiated.

Agreement Initiation

Bingley University has an online application where agents seeking to work with the institution can apply to represent the school. The application includes such things as basic contact information, other U.S. institutions for which the agency recruits, whether or not the agency is AIRC certified, and why the agency would like to represent Bingley. While the institution is not currently expanding its agency network, when applications are being considered, administrators try to process approvals (or denials) within 30 days, but this timeframe depends upon time of year and staff availability. This electronic automation of applications assists in streamlining the initial inquiries from agents. A study participant described the variables that go into deciding whether to accept an agency into their network, “First and foremost, it starts with what is their experience in the U.S. market. Do they understand it? Do they have other schools that they've successfully recruited for? Right now a key variable for us is certification by the American International Recruitment Council.” Although AIRC was not in existence when Bingley started using agency-based recruitment, “Today, we won't entertain signing an agent that is not certified by the AIRC,” explained the director of international student services. There are however, agencies working with the school that are not AIRC certified due

to the longevity of the relationship. Both directors of the units involved go over agency applications they receive to see if the agency is AIRC certified and with which schools the agency already has contracts. References are checked at these schools, and then site visits are conducted. In some cases, the on-site personnel in India, China, and Vietnam make the initial visit to the agency and report back to main campus. If an on-site personnel member is unable to go, then a staff member from either international services or admissions travels to the agency office. The institution has moved to be more dependent on AIRC as a certification intermediary and is also very involved in AIRC as a whole. One participant in this study serves as an external reviewer in the AIRC certification process, which means travel to visit agencies that are going through AIRC's certification procedures. Bingley very much values the work that AIRC does and the role that AIRC plays as an intermediary between institutions and agencies.

Training and Development

For agencies operating in China, India, or Vietnam, the on-site personnel are primarily responsible for training those agents in their offices whenever possible. On-site personnel maintain as much contact as they can through phone calls, Skype sessions, and office visits, but even this can be quite an administrative load given that some agencies have many branch offices in addition to “a lot of [agent] turnover,” noted one in country personnel member. Additionally, and similarly to the cases in chapter four, Bingley home campus administrators also conduct many Skype and webinar trainings for their agent networks. Moreover, main campus administrators travel quite frequently and make a point to stop in and visit agents as much as possible. NAFSA and AIRC conferences also serve as a point of contact for training and development with agents, underscoring yet again, the importance of intermediary associations as conduits of information. Participants noted that frequent communication is necessary to have an

agent network that operates well and at full capacity. One participant explained, “You have to invest in the process, and ultimately, you're only going to get back out of it what you put into it.”

Another administrator noted,

The most challenging part is, I think, just having the resources necessary to have the continual relationship and training and communications with them that are necessary to make it work. We're certainly way farther down the road than we were when we started it. Example A being the...people we have in three different countries on ground, in country. That's extremely beneficial.

The international admissions office conducts “90%” of the training, noted one participant. In addition to in person training, one on-site personnel member noted that Bingley sends out a newsletter to all agents, and for the Chinese agents, this newsletter is translated into Chinese so that the information can be circulated among the agency teams in their native language. This staff member noted that “the relationship is very, very important in China,” so staff members work hard to maintain these relationships.

Some of Bingley’s agents do use sub-agents, and administrators make clear that ultimately, students applying with help of a sub-agent reflect the managing agency’s brand and reputation. Therefore, Bingley expects that the main agent will train the sub-agents according to how administrators conduct training with the main agents. As discussed in chapter four, sub-agents introduce another level of intermediaries into the process, divvying up control even more.

Assessment

Like Middleton and Pike, Bingley administrators note that defining agent success looks differently with each agency and is dependent upon many metrics. One individual stated, “We’re certainly not going to hold a mom and pop one location agency to the same standard that we would a large multi-national agency.” Ultimately, administrators are interested in how the

student performs while in school throughout the four (more or less) years as one indicator of success. A participant described it this way:

First, the easy answer is, look at conversion rates, but that's certainly not the end all be all for determining the successful, and in fact, it's not just that they've got a student here. The ultimate test is how well did that student do once they got here? Did they matriculate? Did they have academic difficulties? Did they graduate? And really, we're just now in our evolution of all this to the point where we can start seeing those types of results, now that the students have been here in some cases four or five years, but that certainly is a key criteria in determining the success...we have to look at this holistically in determining how well an agent is doing.

Bingley analyzes reports that are run once a year which produce information on which agencies sent which students and how these students are performing academically.

In the area of student experience assessment, Bingley utilizes a tool call the international student barometer (ISB) survey every fall semester, which is a global survey instrument, created by a private company and used by institutions worldwide. The director of international services related this about the ISB,

On that survey, it asks them for their experiences for everything from admission, to arrival, to how they're getting along with faculty, but part of that, there is a segment that says did you use an agent to apply, and if so, then there's a series of questions, who is the agent, what was your experience, were they professional? All of those types of things, and if not, please tell us who they are so we can follow up with them.

After this initial survey, administrators follow up with students when necessary and also reach out to students to ask additional questions about their agency process. Moreover, "We ask our agents to make sure they're getting data collection from their folks after the fact on what they think, and that's in fact a requirement of AIRC certification, and so we're looking at that data," said a study participant, indicating some type of reliance upon AIRC for assessment data.

Part of the assessment process is also trying to learn what portion of the international student body is using agents, and more specifically, what portion of students are using agents who have official agreements with the university, given that students can hire agents privately.

This has been a difficult piece of information to gain accurate information about related the director of international services. He went on to say,

Our best estimate is probably between 15% and 20% of our students are using agents to help apply. The more interesting data from that is of those who are using agents...how many are using the agents that we have contracts with? Because that's the point of doing this. You want the student to know who you have trusted relationships with and who have trained staff and are knowledgeable about your university. What we're finding is by and large there's still a reasonable percentage of students who are telling us they're using agents, just not our contracted agents. And that's because Uncle Bob knows somebody at this agency or their friend at school used that agency. So to us, that's the biggest challenge, getting the students to recognize that these are the agents, if you're going to use one, that we want you using, because we know they're trained. We know what they're telling you, and they will help you and be professional about it.

Although Bingley posts on its website which agencies it formally works with, this does not guarantee that an international student will find this information and be able to ascertain what it means, thus making it a challenge to connect students to agents with whom Bingley has trained. Assessment overall for this issue is a difficult and sometimes onerous task, yet it is one of the most important pieces of the process.

Ethics and Transparency

Interviewees spoke extensively about ethics and agency-based recruitment; it was obvious from their comments that the institutional administrators value discussion about ethical practices. They were particularly concerned about students' best interest, as well as standards to promote best practices across the industry. Administrators' involvement in AIRC is an effort to promote best practices nationwide. A participant stated:

It's about higher education in general in your state and in the US and making sure that there is an industry that's understood, the best practices and standards are followed...if you're not going to do that, don't get involved in this, and making the industry as solid as it can be, and that those are, I think, the two lessons that we can learn from Australia and the UK. That's how they approached this as a national type of initiative with regulations and standards and best practices. That's sort of the idea behind the AIRC given that at the moment there's no federal momentum to try to do a U.S. initiative for all this.

Bingley's efforts to focus on ethics and transparency are underscored as staff members are very

involved in doing site visits and forming close relationships with agents as discussed previously. However, one can never have full and perfect information as to how individuals are operating in their job responsibilities. As much concern as an institution may have for promoting sound ethical behavior, Choudaha (2013) states, “It is nearly impossible to manage or enforce the ‘code of conduct’ on agents and their network of subagents in other countries” (p. 5). The ethics of this practice are the most difficult to regulate, and at the present, other countries have taken more national steps to regulate the industry than has the U.S.

5.6 Navigating the Financial Labyrinth

Historical Financial Context

For agency-based recruitment at a large public research, there has to be political investment for utilizing this practice from numerous constituents, and in addition, finances must be invested in order to be able to pay commissions to agents in the very early stages. One participant noted, “No institution just has a pot of money that's sitting there. Oh, okay, we can pay some agents from this then, right?” At Bingley, the largest hurdle in the beginning was to get finance administration to approve taking a portion of tuition revenue in order to pay agents for there to be financial gains later down the road. In addition to settling this issue, administrators supportive of agency-based recruitment had to educate people on campus about the agent industry. Participants spoke of the perceptions that some on campus have about the ethics of the practice and that those who know the industry and support it administratively have to convince naysayers that it is a legitimate practice. One director described the situation like this,

The bigger challenge was then over time convincing everybody else around the university who had questions and concerns about this that this is a legitimate practice. We're going to do it right. Ultimately, what changes minds are history in the industry, and the fact that you've got a kid who came through an agent, who came and succeeded and graduated. Then suddenly graduate program X is like, oh, okay, I see the benefit to this. This kid was recruited by an agent, he came in, did a great program, and now he's successful in

whatever the field is, and so I see the value in this now. Those kinds of things only come with history and experience and demonstrated results.

Participants credited a former high-level administrator with being the one who was able to negotiate the financial and political components; one staff member called him “a business person.” Having someone with a clear vision for what this type of recruitment could mean for the university was fundamental in Bingley’s resource development and agency-based recruitment growth.

Student Tuition and Scholarships

Tuition for a full-time out of state undergraduate student is approximately \$26,000 per academic year, while tuition for an in state student is approximately \$11,000. Merit scholarships are available for international students, and roughly 40% of international undergraduate students entering receive aid, according to university officials. The school’s website states that international awards range from \$1,000 to \$25,000 per academic year, and the average award is \$9,000 per academic year. These merit scholarships are renewable for up to eight semesters for freshmen and four semesters for transfer students. There are three requirements outlined on the website that scholarship recipients must meet to maintain eligibility for the award each semester: (1) maintain a cumulative 3.2 GPA, (2) maintain full-time status and academic progress, and (3) complete 15 hours of community service each semester the scholarship is received. As one would expect, competition for full scholarships is very stiff; one staff member noted that for fall 2014 there were only three international students who received full scholarships.

One of the students I interviewed spoke of his scholarship as being one of the main reasons he decided to attend Bingley. He recounted, “I took a math placement test before I came here, actually before I decided to come here. I took a math placement test online, and since my mathematics was pretty good in high school, so I scored pretty high, and then I got a 50%

scholarship here. That was also one of the most important reasons why I came here.” This student struggled with the adjustment to college and particularly becoming accustomed to classes in English; as a result, his first semester GPA was below a 3.2 putting him in danger of losing his scholarship. However, administrators gave him one more semester to pull his GPA up before canceling his scholarship, and this student worked hard and earned a 4.0 his second semester bringing up his cumulative GPA above a 3.2. While not every student can achieve this academic turnaround, it does illustrate the difficulties that many international students face adjusting to their first semester of study abroad.

Financial Structure and Institutional Reward

Administrators noted that they spent a lot of time analyzing financials in years past to determine their net tuition revenue to know if using agents and other strategies were profitable. And in fact, it has been very profitable for the institution. For the 2013-14 academic year, one director noted the “net tuition revenue...from international undergrads was well over \$16 million.” This of course is extremely important in a time of decreased state support for higher education. The director of international services explained:

Well, you know, there's certainly an investment that has to be made to have the infrastructure necessary to make it work. Ultimately, at the end of the day we're a non-profit obviously, but at the end of the day, you're generally not going to invest in a process that's costing you money...And so while there is significant investment that is necessary, if we weren't reaping the rewards enough to at least cover the cost, we certainly wouldn't be doing it. In general, the philosophy is you're working with people who are finding you students who would never find you without their help, and so definitely, it is a financial benefit to be using agents as, again, part of your strategy. In no circumstance should agents be your only strategy.

Financial accounting systems have not necessarily allowed for as much reinvestment into international recruiting initiatives as administrators would like. This has mostly been due to how the university has chosen to budget. One participant explained, “It used to be, we were called a revenue generator, and the idea was that as we increased revenue or hit certain thresholds, then

we would get automatic reinvestment from [Bingley]. That never happened.” Now, Bingley uses the performance based budgeting model, “which doesn’t account for central offices like admissions,” said a director. “Enrollment keeps going up, and [the international services director] doesn't get anybody else to help with immigration issues. The writing center doesn't get an automatic increase to help with all the people that need tutoring help,” said the same individual.

It is apparent however that international initiatives are well supported at Bingley, which administrators acknowledged in interviews. Yet with this type of budgeting system, the director of international admissions noted, “the mechanism to get money is really inefficient.” Directors must spend a lot of time dealing with internal politics trying to push budget requests through the process. One administrator noted that determining what funding people were interested in was like “trying to read political tea leaves” or “getting a bill through congress.” These budget requests take time to run through bureaucracy, and as a result international admissions and international services may not be able to act as quickly on opportunities with business partners as they would like.

Commission Standard

As discussed in the previous chapter, institutions vary widely in how they contract and financially compensate agents for their services. Bingley has a standard contract for all agencies and pays a flat rate of 9% of paid tuition, meaning that if a student gets a scholarship then the agent only receives a commission from the remaining amount. The commission is paid in two installments—one at the beginning of each of the first two semesters of enrollment. The director of international services manages and facilitates the payment process, and he explained,

The most difficult thing in the commission payment process is dealing with agencies that are multi-national and have dozens of branches, so their ability to make sure that all of their agents know when you help a kid apply to Bingley, you're supposed to fill out this form and send it in to them...so it can be a challenging effort, but we've got it under

control as much as we can at this point.

Between 15%-20% of Bingley's students are using agents to help them to apply, and some students apply using agents who are not contracted with Bingley, meaning that the institution will not pay a commission on these should a student be accepted and decide to enroll.

Institutional administrators noted that it is hard to track who is using an agent when the agent is not contracted through the institution.

Bingley knows that the agencies that they work with vary on whether or not they charge students and if they do, by how much. A participant explained:

Some agencies do not charge Bingley applicants. Some charge a fee, and yet others may give a percentage discount. Ultimately, we let the agency determine what they're going to do. We certainly want to know what they're doing and how much they're charging in addition to that, and we would certainly have discussions with any agency that we know is charging rather large fees, plus getting a commission from us. That's something that we have to monitor as well.

Administrators described frustrations with agents not letting them know by the deadline which students they assisted, and they also noted that many agencies are very decentralized and do not have coherent financial systems. One individual exasperatedly noted that, "They'll claim a commission from somebody that started two years ago." The same individual also related that some agencies have business managers who "keep all the contracts in a locked cabinet; the staff don't even know what they are." These comments indicate that perhaps some agents in large agencies may not be aware enough of the financial structure to send students to the highest bidder as some critics claim. Another staff member stated, "Some are very centralized, like they have a headquarter [that] every document would go through." Organizational structures and management styles of agencies very much impact the financial procedures of institutions.

5.7 Student Vignettes

I interviewed four international undergraduate students for this case. Two were Chinese students who had used agents to find and apply to the institution; another student was a British student athlete who had used a sports agent to eventually end up playing for the institution. The fourth student was from Vietnam, and he had actually applied to the school independently. However, he worked at an agency in Vietnam as a summer staff member, so because of his work experience, I included his insights into working for an agency into this study. I highlight some of their personal experiences in this section.

Two of the students found their agencies based upon personal referrals from friends, and the third student used what he termed “Chinese Google” to review information and testimonials about agencies to narrow it down to an agency he wanted to work with for the process. However, he was still intent on learning more about this agency. He told me,

Even though after I read a lot of reviews...because [it] costs a lot of money to use an agent, I went to their office to check about them. It was really good, a good agent. Just wanted to make sure they are really doing this business not cheating your money or something.

This student ended up selecting an agency that is contracted by Bingley; however, even at the time of our interview, the student was unaware of a partnership between that particular agency and Bingley. Both of the Chinese students indicated that they relied heavily on agents to assist with their applications, as well as what school might be a good fit for them. Hagedorn and Zhang’s (2011) study about Chinese students and agents showed that in their sample 69% of Chinese students used an agent to study abroad. Though agents assisted him throughout the process, when asked about his decision to enroll at Bingley, one student emphatically stated, “I decided on my own,” indicating that even though agents had supported him heavily throughout the process that ultimately the decision was his on which school to attend. The other Chinese

student told me that he had been accepted to Bingley and one other school that had a higher ranking. After speaking with his agent about the pros and cons of each institution, he settled on Bingley because of its urban location and support for international students. Each of these students paid a significant amount of money (\$3,000 and \$5,000) to receive this assistance, and both indicated that they needed assistance due to their lack of advanced English skills, even though they had English classes in school. One student said, “The TOEFL test was pretty easy for me, [and] I was pretty confident. As soon as I got on a plane and the flight attendant asked me whether I wanted noodles or rice, I didn't understand. Like, am I really going to America?” Both of these Chinese students expressed an overall satisfaction with their chosen agencies, although one of them noted it is “really expensive” to use an agent in China.

Sports agencies are outside the perceived normal operations of an educational agent, as their primary purpose is to place students in athletics programs, and much of the placement of course depends on athletic talent. Therefore, the British student’s process was slightly different than what is being examined in the scope of this dissertation. Nonetheless, I have included it to show the type of operational variation that agencies may have and how international students’ experiences may differ (or not).

This student, much like other students, found his agency through a friend’s recommendation, and the particular agency he used focused on placing international athletes in American universities. This agency charges an up front fee, according to their website, of approximately \$3,700 for full services. The agency sets up exhibition games for coaches to come watch and also publishes online profiles of players for them to evaluate. Coaches and athletic staff can contact players they are interested in, and this student spoke to many universities. The owner of this particular agency is a Bingley alumnus who went through this process, which is

how he came to start his agency. The alumni told this particular student he might be a good fit at Bingley, and ultimately, the student went on a prospective athlete visit and ended up signing at the school. He expressed great satisfaction with his agency and also his Bingley experience.

The final student I interviewed did not use an agency to apply to Bingley. He attended college fairs when he was in high school, gathered information, and then determined which schools he wanted to apply to in the U.S. Subsequently, he contacted admissions offices to find out how to apply, and he applied to several schools and was accepted into “two or three.” He stated that he chose Bingley because they offered him “the best scholarship.” He related that he chose not to use an agency because of family support. His family early on told him that he had to study abroad, so of his own volition he began preparing two years before he graduated high school. When he returned from Bingley to Vietnam for a summer, his mother’s friend who owned an agency that worked to send Vietnamese students to Japan offered him a summer position where he spent the summer months translating and managing documents for the application process. This student noted that “most of the students in Vietnam, they use agencies,” yet for him, he possessed the individual drive and skills necessary to undertake the research and figure out an unfamiliar process. I highlighted a student in chapter four who had also not chosen to use an agent, bringing to light questions about innate student characteristics and familial support that could be a deciding factor on whether or not a student chooses to utilize an agent.

5.8 Bingley Case Analysis

It is evident that Bingley has been increasingly driven to undertake market like behaviors through academic capitalist mechanisms (Slaughter & Leslie, 1997; Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004). Bingley has certainly drastically expanded international student enrollment in order to increase global and national competitiveness, while enriching student diversity on campus. Academic

capitalist behaviors such as, expanding new circuits of knowledge, interstitial organizational emergence, expanded managerial capacity, and use of intermediating networks, all illustrate a push to the market, albeit to varying extents in different areas of international student recruitment and enrollment. Most certainly, the patterns of growth and the certain circumstances of a school make each case unique, yet the analysis below may yield valuable insight into large public research institutions that are strategically (and in many cases rapidly) internationalizing through international student enrollment, specifically with agency-based recruitment as one part of the strategy.

New Circuits of Knowledge

The new circuits of knowledge created through agency-based recruitment at Bingley are similar to what I described in the Middleton case in chapter four. At Middleton, institutional administrative components are all located domestically, although some staff may travel frequently. Similarly, new circuits of knowledge are created by the Bingley-agent-student relationship and by the Bingley-professional association-agency organizational relationship, which rely on domestically based staff. However, the Bingley circuits are broader and unique among the colleges and universities studied. Bingley also has in-country personnel that live and work in India, China, and Vietnam. The in-country personnel add another managerial knowledge layer that keeps and deepens professional knowledge grounded in the foreign country, while providing knowledge to Bingley for their international recruitment operations. Like the other institutions in this sample, Bingley has university-agent-student circuits as well as university-agency-professional organization circuits. However, Bingley's in-country personnel create a contracted, extra loop in the circuit.

Furthermore, the circuits of knowledge surrounding international student recruitment are now partially controlled by various stakeholders such as governments and private industry. These circuits provide clear examples of how knowledge and processes are not solely controlled by the academy anymore (Rhoades, 2014; Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004). Bingley's agent network controls part of the circuit of knowledge within the private sector. In the government sector, Saudi Arabia and Brazil for example, control part of the knowledge circuit with their scholarship programs they use to send students abroad. Bingley (and other institutions) depend on each of these knowledge circuits for their international recruitment strategy and enrollment.

Interstitial Organizational Emergence

Interstitial organizational emergence first exhibited itself at Bingley through the creation of the international admissions area, which grew out of the undergraduate admissions office. This emergence was a direct result of high level administration's decision to pursue international student markets and the need to manage these operations related to revenue generation and campus internationalization (Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004). While international admissions and international services have remained two separate and distinct units in different divisions, there is a blurring of unit boundaries and a sharing of responsibilities related to agency-based recruitment, indicating a partial interstitial emergence that is more than a partnership but not a full consolidation of administrative units. Yet, even though there has not been full consolidation, there is an intricate administrative operation that must be navigated by staff in both units in order to streamline recruitment, admissions, and student support services.

Intermediary Networks

Bingley University relies on intermediary networks throughout the international student recruitment process, and in particular, the AIRC processes and networks. Over the years, various

Bingley administrators have participated in the evolution of AIRC as an accrediting body for agencies, and therefore, some staff members have intimate knowledge of the organization's accrediting process. Currently, the institution will only consider signing agencies who are AIRC certified, indicating a strong reliance on AIRC's vetting process. Moreover AIRC, as well as NAFSA, serve as organizations that facilitate relationship-building and training opportunities between administrators and agents.

Obviously, agencies play a role as an intermediary between students and the institution. It was noted during the case description that only between 15-20% of students apply to Bingley with agent assistance, and it is unknown how many of these students are using institution approved and trained agents, although administrators noted that a reasonable number of students may be utilizing non-approved agencies. This brings to light different perspectives about which intermediaries are ethical and approved, based upon different constituent groups. For example, universities will and do differ in their opinions about the best agencies to use, casting favored status upon agencies based on institutional need and fit. Students on the other hand will determine which intermediaries, in this case agencies, best fit their needs, and here we may see disparities among which agencies a student deems useful compared to which agencies an institution may want them to use. In a sense, this can create an intermediary mismatch between institutions and students.

Bingley, as I noted previously, does post their official agents online, which is a laudable transparent act. Yet, a definitive challenge is helping international students to find these official intermediaries in which Bingley administration places its trust. Many students may rely on recommendations from friends or acquaintances to select their agency, and moreover, may not even know of Bingley University, let alone have the wherewithal to find their official agencies.

In fact, many students may not even know that agencies work with institutions in an official capacity. Bingley administrators recognize these challenges, but it is extremely difficult to figure out how to address them. Therefore, in agency-based recruitment at Bingley, the ultimate question may be not which intermediaries institutions are using (certainly this is important too) but how to communicate to and convince prospective international students of which “official” intermediaries to use during the recruitment and application process given that Bingley administrators place trust in their agents to conduct their work ethically. While unofficial agents may well provide comparable, or even better, services to students, Bingley may never know this if there is no formalized relationship. Ultimately however, it seems that Bingley’s scruples regarding this practice push them to, as much as possible, educate students about which agents are official partners.

Managerial Capacity

Of all the tenets of academic capitalism, expanded managerial capacity is the most pronounced at Bingley. As discussed in the case description, there has been a substantial staff increase both domestically and internationally to manage international student recruitment. Moreover, there are also plans for even more international staff expansion, as administrators look to increase on site staff to as many as ten individuals, potentially doubling what currently exists abroad. The breadth of Bingley’s international enrollment achievements, as well as future ambitions, have demanded this capacity, and university leadership obviously recognizes the importance of having enough staff capacity to achieve international enrollment goals. Slaughter and Rhoades (2004) note that this managerial capacity is a consequence of market engagement.

When examining the managerial capacity that Bingley possesses, Kauppinen’s (2012) work on transnational academic capitalism can be extended along this line. In the case of

Bingley, managerial capacity has become highly transnational. While the cases in chapter four show that managerial capacity is transnational in the sense that domestic staff members are traveling to various countries to recruit and that there are foreign nationals working in the main campus office, Bingley's hiring of in country managerial capacity illustrates a level of very advanced transnationalization. Essentially within this institutional case, there are four conduits of managerial transnationalization. The first is domestic staff traveling and working in other countries, the most basic level of managerial transnationalization in the field. Secondly, there are the agent-institution agreements that allow managerial work to become transnationalized through the outsourcing of recruitment work to agents. Thirdly, as with the Middleton and Pike cases, Bingley has a Chinese individual working in the office as a China specialist, providing a specific example of an institutional response to the proliferation of Chinese students in U.S. has proliferated, and ultimately transnationalized managerial capacity specializing in China recruitment operations and support. Finally, as already stated, utilizing in country personnel to assist in recruiting students, managing and training agent networks, and coordinating PR in target markets is another example transnational managerial capacity.

Summary

All of the issues discussed illustrate that Bingley has been clearly influenced by academic capitalist processes, and ultimately, the institution has moved closer to various international student markets in order to become more globally competitive. Bingley's leadership is undoubtedly invested in international student recruitment and enrollment, as is evidenced by a desire to enter the top echelons of institutions with the highest international student enrollments in the country. Bingley is in more advanced stages of navigating agency-based recruitment, and administrators have put much time and energy into automating processes and trying to make the

practice transparent where they can in order to promote ethical standards. The number of years of working with agents has given the institution time to begin to see results from long-term agency relationships. Data suggests that Bingley staff will continue to explore new markets, as staff mentioned future expansion into Latin America, Eastern Europe, Indonesia, and South America. This indicates that for Bingley there is ample room to move even closer to the market and exhibit more market like behavior (Slaughter & Leslie, 1997; Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004). While certainly international students bring many benefits to campus, their tuition dollars are important as well at Bingley. Academic capitalism has promoted a climate in which searching for and obtaining new revenue streams are more important than ever before in higher education (Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004).

5.9 Emmett University Background

Nestled in a small quintessential college town, Emmett University is a large public research institution with close to 30,000 students enrolled at the main campus. Emmett's twelve-month full-time equivalent enrollment (FTE) for 2012-13 was 26,694, and state appropriations for 2013 were \$4,467 per FTE. During the same academic year, 52% of full-time first-time undergraduates received institutional grant aid.

Emmett is in a rural area with the closest metropolitan community (and international airport) being about one hour away from campus. It is obvious that the university is the lifeblood of the town and drives economic health and prosperity. This university and city is home to over 1,800 international students who have chosen to study abroad.

During the fall 2013 semester, the international student population represented 114 countries. There were more undergraduate international students (1,054) enrolled than graduate international students (827) for a total of 1,881 international students that semester. The

international undergraduate admissions brochure states that applicants must have a high school GPA of at least a 3.0 to be considered for admission. At Emmett, students can take advantage of over 250 undergraduate majors and over 200 graduate majors. The most popular majors for graduate international students in 2013 were economics, international affairs, and physics & astronomy, and for undergraduates, the most popular majors were finance, undecided, and economics. Having an undecided major for undergraduates means that students meet requirements for general admittance, but they may not meet the more stringent requirements for a specific major of their choice. Therefore, they can enroll as undecided and take pre-requisite courses in order to try to transfer into their academic program of choice.

Additionally, Emmett also offers an intensive English study program for students who are conditionally admitted to the university or who may simply wish to go to study English. The university's international undergraduate admissions brochure notes that students who have low TOEFL or IELTS scores and are conditionally admitted will be required to enter the intensive English program until they reach the required level of proficiency, indicating that length of English study may vary from student to student. Ultimately however, intensive English training lengthens the time to degree for students who eventually enroll in an undergraduate academic program. About 200 undergraduate students participated in this program during the Fall 2013 semester (included in the total number of enrolled international students). A staff member noted, "I would say probably about half to three-fourths of the students coming in are coming in as conditionally admitted, so they're starting out in our intensive English language program and then progressing into full academics." Students who enroll in the English language program pay a different tuition rate from full-time enrolled undergraduate students, which will be discussed later in this case description.

Historically, the institution had been focused more on international graduate students, but staff members noted within the last five or six years the emphasis has really shifted more to the undergraduate side of recruitment and admissions. Chinese students make up roughly half of the international student population with over 900 enrolled during the fall 2013 semester. Saudi Arabia followed with approximately 175 students, and then India with a little over 100 enrolled. Emmett also has large Ghanaian and Brazilian student populations. Like Bingley, Emmett is ranked through various systems, providing a certain sense of prestige and credibility to international students and their families who may have no other metrics by which to judge a foreign institution. Recruitment began to change in 2006 when Emmett administrators began working with two Chinese agencies; in the next section, I examine the historical progression of Emmett's agency-based recruitment.

5.10 The Road to Agency-Based Recruitment and Increased International Enrollment

Emmett's intensive English program began in the late 1960s paving the way for more international students on campus over the years. As noted previously, up until about 2006, the focus really was on recruiting and enrolling international graduate students. In 2006, the senior international officer at the school, who was also a faculty member, began to support using agency-based recruitment to increase the international undergraduate population, and administrators began to work with two Chinese agencies on a trial basis. The senior assistant director for international recruitment stated, "We worked with them for a year before we got to the point where we were like...we're ready to start doing this formally with a commission structure and contract in place...we were still really ahead of the game in terms of state institutions that were working with agents." A vice-provost noted that in "2005 or 2006, we had eighteen [international] undergraduate new freshmen." Similarly to Bingley, it was one high

level administrator who was able to advocate for the use of agency-based recruitment that really helped to move the school toward this practice in a significant way.

In 2008, Emmett created a vice-provost for enrollment position as part of a strategic planning process, and during the fall of 2008 is when “we started to see a big influx of undergraduate students arriving,” said the senior assistant director for international recruiting and admissions. In particular, there was a very large influx of Chinese students initially. The vice-provost noted:

Most schools are seeing huge growth from China. China is balancing out a little bit...the analogy is...people that put the plates on the stick and keep the plates spinning. So we've gotten the plates spinning pretty well in China, and I'm kind of just hitting it every once in a while just to keep it going. And so what we've done then is moved into other markets...it takes a lot of effort to move into a new market. It's a big world. And to get the plates spinning, so we've been working hard to get different plates in different regions spinning while just letting China maintain. We've actually seen the percentage of our freshmen students go from something like 85% from China down to like 75%, 70% and that's fine with me. We're still getting the numbers, but they're less from China. We've seen a record number of countries represented in our application pool.

Staff members described the student services that had to come with the initial influx of Chinese students. One individual said, “At first, it was a complete and almost overwhelming surprise...this one fall, we all of a sudden got this enormous number of Chinese students in, and it was just like, oh my gosh, what do we do?” This rush of international students placed unexpected burdens on academic colleges (particularly business and engineering), housing, transportation (for airport shuttles), the intensive English program, dining, the student judicial system, mental health services, and admissions. An admissions staff member said,

But, everybody really jumped on board...it's like, okay, well, we have to figure out how we're going to manage this, and if we're going to keep the growth going, which is what we want...I mean, at that point we couldn't be proactive. We had to build the structure after the fact, but everybody has really stayed on top of it and has been really helpful.

The intensive English program worked with both the business and engineering colleges to build bridge programs for students transitioning into those majors. In reference to international support services and academic colleges, one admissions staff member noted, “All of that is really shifting and changing. It’s been pretty neat to watch.”

The institution has partnerships with the governments of Saudi Arabia, Oman, the United Arab Emirates, and Kuwait. In addition, the school is beginning to see more movement from Brazilian students under their government’s scholarship program. In looking to the future target areas for the institution, the vice-provost for enrollment management said,

We'll always still need students from all over the world. I want to get as many as I can, but maybe some of the focus becomes more strategically oriented with our other bigger conversations across campus. Like I mentioned, are there regions we're going to say this is a university priority region...and therefore that means we do recruiting and development...we build [memorandums of understanding] with other colleges. We find other colleges we want to work with. We do special scholarships for those students or recruiting efforts or focus, so I think that's where the next level of the strategy will go. So it's going from take anything to take the right things to take the strategically aligned things.

In the next section, I examine how Emmett’s administrative structure and capacity frames the work that is conducted in international recruitment and admissions.

5.11 Managerial Capacity

International admissions and international student services are separate units and situated under two different vice-provost reporting lines. As mentioned already, the international admissions sub-area (which oversees management of the agent network) within undergraduate admissions is located under enrollment management; the position was shifted from the graduate school when the new vice-provost for enrollment management was created. When I visited campus in the summer of 2014, there were three persons working in this area—two full time professionals working directly with international recruitment and admissions and one administrative assistant. Both of these staff members informed me that a new personnel member

would be joining the team to fill a restructured position later in the summer to relieve some of the workload with credentials evaluation. A review of the international admissions website confirmed this person did indeed join the department bringing the total to three full time professional staff members.

One of these staff members works primarily with recruiting and as the main agent contact, and she also said she does “95% of the travel.” The other staff member manages the application process and works with agents throughout the application process. The staff member who manages the application process noted, “We have some who help around the edges; so, we have our DSO¹⁷. We have processing staff, [and] my supervisor who helps with a lot of the coordination with the rest of the office and things like that.”

The international services side reports to the vice-provost the global affairs side. A review of the organizational structure for the services unit shows four full-time professional staff and several graduate assistants provide support for international students. This support ranges from visa and immigration advising, airport transportation, international orientation, international student organization advising, and international event planning and support.

An examination of managerial capacity indicates that staff expansion has not occurred very rapidly to keep up with an international population of over 1,800 students, at least for the international admissions area. While one staff position was filled last summer, given the growth of the international student population, data indicates that managerial expansion has not occurred at the same rate as international population growth. It is worth noting that it is unclear what an appropriate ratio of staff to international students may be (to be discussed further in chapter six).

¹⁷ Designated School Official is the main contact authorized by the Department of Homeland Security to verify and certify documents for F-1 international students.

However, when I interviewed staff members, no individuals mentioned the need for more staff or workforce growth. Next, I turn to how Emmett's agent network is managed.

5.12 Institutional Agent Management

Upper-level administration at Emmett University supports the continued use of agents. A vice-provost told me, "I like the idea of agents. I think you have to use them carefully. I think hiring agents left and right is not the way to go...[it] could be a very successful model if done correctly." Emmett University administration currently manages an agent network of sixteen agencies that actively work with the institution in recruitment, and these agencies are mainly concentrated in China and then the Arabian Gulf region according to staff members. Now, the institution is looking to expand its agent network. One participant stated, "We're looking at expanding some more with a number of different Indian agents at NAFSA, looking to trying to get some more agents there. Hoping to do the AIRC and then the ICEF conference in Miami and see if we can get some more relationships started there as well." This statement indicates a reliance on professional organizations as an intermediary to facilitate agency network expansion for this institution's recruitment efforts.

Emmett has a standard agreement that has been used with agencies since they first started signing agencies in 2007. One staff member noted that it was time to review the contract, and initial conversations were beginning about taking a look at the current agreement to see if changes need to be made. Currently, it is a standard agreement with a flat rate commission for all agencies that work with the school.

An administrator noted that two of their agencies use sub-agents, and with these two agencies, Emmett requires that communication be streamlined through the main agency with whom they are contracted. "There was an agency that we were thinking about working with, and

[we] found out they were working with sub-agents. But, they were allowing the sub-agents to send things directly, and [we said] that's not going to work,” said one staff member. International admissions requires that all student applications go through the central/main agency before coming to their office, so the contracted agency is able to review and check applications for issues. This requirement is not in the contract because “At the time we came up with the contract, it was so new that we didn’t know anything about sub-agents,” said an assistant director.

Agencies that work with Emmett vary in how (or if) they charge students and families. The agencies are, of course, getting paid a commission by Emmett if there is a signed letter of agreement. In some cases, agencies may send student applications without a letter of agreement, and in this case, there is no commission payment due to lack of formal agreement. An assistant director described the financial exchanges as follows:

The way I look at it is they agent is doing a twofold job. They're representing us and getting what we need, hence our commission to them. They are doing service for the student, so if they charge the student, then I think that's reasonable. I think best-case scenario is where only the school is paying, and it can be a free service to the student. But, I think that it's understandable that they may be charging on both sides.

These statements again highlight the crux of the ethical argument surrounding the use of agents—whether or not payments should be able to take place on both sides. The institution pays a flat rate commission of \$1,000 to contracted agencies for each undergraduate student they assist in enrolling. Commissions are not paid for graduate students.

Agency certification by an outside organization is important to Emmett’s administration. When asked if agencies were certified by AIRC, one staff member responded, “Some of the long standing ones that we have are not, but most of them either have or are starting to go through the process.” One high-level administrator spoke of the importance of having the AIRC certification process to promote ethical and moral practices when he described that the process “kind of knocks out the people that are not as ethical or as moral.” He went on to say,

AIRC certification is fantastic because it's a third party. It's not me doing my own analysis. It gives me the comfort that there's a lot of effort on their side. [Agencies] have to go through to show they're handling the money appropriately, they're handling the students appropriately, they're held accountable if they get bad reports from students...quite beneficial for us in terms of kind of protecting ourselves as well as protecting our dollars we're spending for those students.

As is evidenced by this quote, there is reliance upon AIRC as an intermediary body that provides a layer of vetting that Emmett administration values.

5.13 The Agent Perspective

Of the four agency representatives interviewed for this study, three agents are affiliated with Emmett University. The organizational structure, as well as the purposes and services, of each of the agencies they represent vary to a great extent. Here, I provide a vignette of each to highlight how these agencies operate and their perspectives about the industry.

Brazilian Agency

A Brazilian individual who attended college in the United States, giving him firsthand knowledge about U.S. higher education, founded this agency. The agency started out by being dedicated to helping student athletes attend college (like the student athlete experience I described in the Bingley case). Around 2006, the agency expanded to include students who were not athletes, and since this time, the founder told me that they have worked with almost 1,800 students and currently work with about 350 per year. He noted, “Sixty-five percent of them are just regular students, and the rest are athletes who are going to play college sports.”

There are approximately 25 employees working at the agency, and the founder said, “at least 16 or 18 of them went to college in the U.S. and got their bachelor’s degree there, so they know really well what they’re doing.” The main office is located in São Paulo, and there are various branch offices throughout the country. A review of the agency’s website lists eight regional offices in addition to the main office; the staff in these offices go to high schools to do

presentations and meet with families and students to explain the recruitment and admissions process. The individual I interviewed explained,

We don't work with [universities] specifically. As opposed to some of the other agents that you might have interviewed, our client is the student and the family, so they're the ones hiring us and paying us for the advising, so our job is to find the best schools that are a good fit for the students, just like a college counselor in high school would do. He or she is working for the student. So although we have agreements and relationships with a large number of colleges, our priority is always to find the best possible institution for the student. So we don't have a specific set of schools that we work with. We have students -- the type of schools they go to range from small junior colleges to Ivy League schools depending on the profile of the student.

Throughout the interview, there was a definitive focus on the student as the client, not as an organization representing a university. In fact, the founder noted, “We don’t see ourselves as agents. We see ourselves a lot more as educators.” According to the agency founder, the focus on students as the sole client stemmed from the business’ history of working only with athletes for a period because institutions will not pay an agency to find athletes for them. Therefore, it was a given that the agency would focus solely on the best interest of the student athlete.

Staff members at this agency work very closely with students and families to inform them about the educational process in the U.S. Agencies are not common in Brazil, indicating that the level of marketization has not progressed like it has in Asia. Families may have a different viewpoint about their children studying abroad in the U.S. than do families in other countries, although this could be changing with the Brazilian government’s efforts to help their university students study abroad. For example, the Brazil Scientific Mobility Program funds Brazilian science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) students to study abroad in the U.S. for one year before returning to Brazil to complete their degrees. This has helped highlight study abroad opportunities in the U.S. and facilitated institutional partnerships with the mobility

program, and it has brought more awareness of U.S. study abroad to Brazilian students and families. The company founder noted:

For a regular student, the idea of going to college in another country was never actually popular...it wasn't known. People just didn't know about it. So, in the last two years we've seen a decent increase in the interest of students and families about the possibility of doing their undergrad in the U.S., but it's still not that many students. I would say that less than 2% of high school students from private schools and those families who can afford paying U.S. college tuition. Less than 2% are pursuing their degrees overseas.

This particular agency is seeing a growth in their business as opportunities become more “known.”

The relationship between this agency and Emmett University is not formalized through a contract, as the individual asserted that most of their relationships are “working relationships.” He explained that he has been in touch with Emmett administrators for a long time, and their students have applied to the school but none have actually ended up enrolling. He noted, “Sometimes we have long-term relationships with schools and not that many students have gone there. In other cases, we have dozens of students who end up going to a specific school, in which we have no relationship with.” This agency’s founder exemplified a *laissez faire* attitude toward official agreements outlining commissions and financial arrangements and instead, in our conversation, he was much more focused on helping to fulfill student needs and priorities.

Chinese Agency A

The agency representative highlighted here is an employee at one of the largest agency firms in China; at this agency, he is involved with the student application process, as well as overseeing communication with a group of twenty U.S. partner universities that he is assigned to in his portfolio. This agency, headquartered in Beijing, has over 40 branch offices and over 3,000 employees. This participant works at the headquarters office, where many managerial functions are centralized. Consultants work at each of the branches, interfacing directly with students on

selecting schools to apply to, facilitating application processes, preparing for visa interviews, and so on. Once initial work has been completed at the branch office, the college applications and supporting documents are sent to a central processing area at headquarters for all materials to be checked before they are sent to partner schools across the world with which there are formal agreements. Students are also able to pick schools with which there is no formal partnership with the agency. For this situation, the participant explained, “We will still help them with [the] application, check the application and documents, but just no application status follow-up.”

When students and families decide to work with this agency, they speak with a representative about the various services offered, and then eventually, the parties sign an agreement outlining the details of service. The entire service fee is paid in total at the beginning, although the individual declined to tell me how much money the student fee entails. He did state, “[If] they are not satisfied with the service, they can ask for a refund. If reasonable, we [will] give [the] refund.”

The agency is AIRC certified, which helps to provide more opportunities for communication explained the agent. Being certified provides opportunities for interaction with AIRC institutional members, and he stated, “Some schools will just ask us if you are an AIRC member. If not, [they] won’t talk with you.” In addition to AIRC, the annual NAFSA conferences serve as a place where agency representatives meet their current, as well as prospective, partners.

The agent, as mentioned previously, works to maintain communication with 20 U.S. institutions. All formal agreements are negotiated and signed by his boss, so he does not have the authority to make decisions about which institutions are signed. He is however part of meetings that take place with the schools before agreements are signed. He stated, “Maybe in the first

beginning, we will e-mail with each other, but before the signing agreement we will meet, and they will train us. After the training...I got the information. I got everything you'd need at the school. I can train another consultant." Most of the institutional representatives come to China to conduct training, but if not, he noted that they meet at the NAFSA conference each year. In between conferences and in-country visits by school representatives, he tries to contact each school every two weeks, and if schools have updated information, they contact him when necessary.

Allowing students to make an independent choice about where to attend college was emphasized by this participant. "We don't decide which option is better for them. We just analyze and suggest. [The] student can decide [and] make the decision," he stated. He explained that most Chinese students prefer to attend school on either the west or east coast and that Chinese parents "only pay attention to school rankings." He went on to say,

Even if they know the name, they know the programs that are good, but they will ask what's the ranking of the university? If it is not ranking on the U.S. News [and World Report] they say, no, I don't want to pick that. Okay. That's why we work for the student, and we work for the university. Some schools like us to help them to do the marketing promotion because Chinese parents and students have limited knowledge about that.

He provides more information about schools if a student is accepted to more than one place so that students and families can make decisions based on what they think is "more suitable."

This particular agency sends 20-30 students per year to Emmett University, and in total, between 600-700 students to U.S. institutions in general each year. It was noted that worldwide the agency places around 6,000 students per year in various types of educational programs. As evidenced by data, this is a large corporation conducting business in the worldwide educational market. However, the work of this particular individual was very personal for him. He stated, "[What] I like is [to] have some student find the school they really like, and what's more is the

schools we pick for them [are] really suitable for them. I think it's kind of an achievement for me because I help people to get a better education, so I'm proud of that.” Throughout this interview, there was an obvious sense of pride, as this statement exemplifies, that the work of the agency was to help students to further their education.

Chinese Agency B

The next Chinese agent whom that I interviewed has been working for more than five years at a smaller Beijing agency with approximately thirty staff members. He attended university in China and majored in English. Upon graduation he wanted to find a position where he could use his English skills, and in the end, he obtained a position with this agency. In this position, he works directly with students to provide information on the undergraduate admissions process.

The agency was founded in 2004 and specializes in assisting students who would like to study abroad in the U.S. A review of the agency’s website, provided in English, shows that college counseling services for students include school selection assistance, application assistance, visa interview preparation, and study abroad survival skills. The agency advertises that they work with over 100 U.S. partner institutions, and it lists 18 university logos, including Emmett University’s. The company’s information notes that they assisted 50 students in 2004 and that grew to 600 by 2010. I was unable to find or obtain information for how many students were placed more recently. The participant also declined to disclose how much the agency charges students, but they do charge students.

The website advertises its university partner services as: providing institutions with current market information about which programs students are currently most interested in, distribution of PR materials, representation at educational fairs, arrangements of appointments

and speaking engagements when a university representative is visiting China, and so on. The interviewee stated he did not know the commission structure or how many students are sent to Emmett each year as part of the partnership. As part of training to be able to provide services, this individual indicated that he typically travels to the U.S. twice a year to attend conferences and visit university partners. He, along with other agency colleagues, has visited Emmett University's campus three times. "They will show us the campus, and we will meet some students with them already, and the students give us their feedback...that is really helpful for us because we will learn more from the students," he stated. An Emmett University staff member also visits China once a year, providing another opportunity to interface for training and relationship building.

5.14 Finances

For the 2014-15 academic year, undergraduate tuition for international students is just under \$20,000. The admissions brochure estimates that international undergraduates will pay over \$36,000 for tuition and living expenses. For in-state students, tuition was just over \$10,000 per academic year; therefore, international students pay approximately twice the tuition that in-state students do, generating more in tuition revenue. Merit scholarships are available for international students, and the award process relies heavily on GPA and SAT scores. International students must take the SAT in order to be considered for these awards.

Although financial data is not as robust for this case as the other three cases in this study for various reasons, it is perhaps helpful to examine the Chinese Agency A information more carefully. The agent here noted that the agency places between 20-30 students per year at Emmett, and a participant reported that Emmett pays a \$1,000 commission for each student. For the sake of example, if it is assumed that this agency sent 25 undergraduate students this past

academic year, then total received tuition dollars would be approximately \$500,000. The commission pay out would be \$25,000, so the total tuition dollars received would be approximately \$475,000 from this group of students. Keeping in mind that there are currently around 1,000 undergraduate international students, this adds up to a significant amount of tuition dollars received. Agents have not recruited all of these students, so commission payments will not be paid for each student.

In addition, scholarship dollars given by the institution must be considered as well. First year international students are able to compete for the same merit-based scholarship awards that domestic students do for institutional aid. These four-year renewable scholarships range from \$1,000 to \$7,000 and are based upon academic performance. As the amount of scholarship dollars is important in the overall financial consideration of this case, I tried to obtain this information, but administrators with whom I spoke did not know the details of how many students receive merit-based scholarships nor the total amount of scholarship dollars awarded to international students per semester or academic year.

It is important to consider the intensive English program as well, since many students are conditionally admitted through this program. Emmett's website outlines costs for students seeking to enroll in the intensive English program. For a semester English program, instructional costs are approximately \$6,000 and on-campus living expenses are approximately \$8,000, making total tuition and room and board around \$14,000 per semester. This is for students who are enrolling strictly in English language instruction. Thus, for students who enroll in a full academic year of the intensive English program, they would pay approximately \$16,000 in tuition (instructional) fees. Students who are admitted to one of the academic bridge programs (a

combination of English instruction and undergraduate courses) are charged the full university tuition rate for undergraduates (just under \$20,000 per academic year).

While this is only a partial view of the financial picture, it does illustrate, as the other cases in this study do, that the institutional financial gains from international students are significant. Lane and Owens (2012) state, “As full fee-paying students, most international students represent revenue streams to institutions as well as local economies” (p. 220). International students can be seen as economic drivers, as international student mobility edges deeper and deeper into commercialization.

5.15 Emmett Case Analysis

As in other the private school cases, academic capitalist processes can be observed from the case data here (Slaughter & Leslie, 1997; Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004). Market like behaviors are apparent as the institution has sought to internationalize. In this case, administration decided to pursue international student enrollment to reap the benefits and an unexpected number of international students enrolled during the early days; therefore, the appropriate support services were not in place. As a result, the campus had to react by building services and programs to be able to support their international recruitment and enrollment. There has been coordination with agencies, international education professional associations, and in-house operations in order to manage the international student population. All of these interactions form complex networks typifying the very nature of academic capitalism: blurred boundaries between higher education, economies, and nation states (Kauppinen & Cantwell, 2014). The following section, parallel to the preceding cases, will outline analysis based upon the relevant tenets of academic capitalism.

Interstitial Organizational Emergence

There is some evidence of interstitial emergence at Emmett. Of course, the initial growth of an international admissions administrative area demonstrates the creation of a new sub-unit to manage new markets and initiatives (Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004). Additionally, there has been interstitial emergence for academic colleges. Interview data shows that particular academic programs have seen a type of interstitial emergence needed to manage the influx of international students into their colleges. The engineering and business colleges had to formulate and create bridge programs to help students transitioning from the English language program into their majors. A large influx of international students can be burdensome for academic programs, depending upon what type of support is needed. Slaughter and Cantwell (2012) note that interstitial emergence can provide impetus for faculty and non-academic professionals to become involved in academic capitalist knowledge/learning regime as they become part of managing new entrepreneurial activities, in this case, the international student market. In regards to administrative interstitial emergence, there has been no consolidation of units, as the admissions and recruitment area remains administratively separate from the student services side, although cooperation and collaboration may exist at some points.

Intermediary Networks

Like other cases, Emmett administrators expressed a reliance on agents and relevant professional associations as intermediaries that assist in recruiting international students and vetting third party agencies. These intermediaries help to facilitate exchanges on behalf of the institution. Metcalfe's (2010) work conceptualizes the influence of intermediaries, as she asserts that intermediaries facilitate the flow of actors, resources, and commerce, concurrently connecting the state, industry, and higher education. Agents help Emmett to connect with student

markets that might otherwise be unreachable, given current resources, particularly related to managerial capacity. Resource flows for institutions can be seen as knowledge, financial, or prestige (Metcalf, 2010). In particular, when acting as intermediaries, agents help to facilitate these resource flows. Metcalf (2010) states, “Knowledge exchange is key to organizational survival and success in the ‘new economy’” (p. 509). For example, many students may not know about Emmett and its academic programs, therefore an agency intermediary facilitates a knowledge resource flow between the student and Emmett.

Expanded Managerial Capacity

Data shows that recruitment and admissions managerial capacity has not rapidly expanded due to increased international student recruitment and the use of agents. Currently, there are three staff members who work in international recruitment and admissions. At the time of my visit, the individual who primarily works with agents and recruitment travel had been working in the area about nine years and had been there from the start of institutional undergraduate international recruitment. Another staff member whom I interviewed joined international admissions approximately five years before my interview with her. Then, more recently, as discussed previously, a new staff member joined the team as a credential evaluator in a restructured staff position in the summer of 2014. Managerial capacity has not grown greatly, given that it has been roughly ten years since international recruitment was emphasized. In addition, there is a relatively large international population (~1,800) that must be recruited and managed through the admissions process.

There could be several reasons for this, although it is an area where more targeted research would need to be undertaken, as the follow are only suppositions. The first, and perhaps most obvious supposition, could be a lack of financial capability (or willingness) to build staff

capacity in this area. Another possibility is that the institutions could be placing more reliance on agent recruitment versus having a number of staff who travel to recruit on behalf of the institution, as in the case of Pike University for example. Moreover, it could be a struggle over strategic university-wide priorities regarding where administrative capacity should be expanded. It is unclear why, but it is clear that managerial capacity has not expanded as rapidly at Emmett as some other institutions.

5.16 Cross Case Analysis

Both Bingley and Emmett are large research institutions with similarities due to the innate nature of institutional type. Yet, their geographic locations and institutional priorities do contribute to some extent in differences in international student recruitment. While there are similarities in their agency-based recruitment efforts, there are differences as well that affect the scope of operations in international recruitment and admissions. I close this chapter by cross-analyzing various aspects of these two public university cases.

New Circuits of Knowledge

In chapter four, I introduced ways in which the patterns of knowledge associated with individuals involved in agency-based recruitment could be viewed. I re-introduce these patterns here:

1. Institution $\leftrightarrow$ Agent $\leftrightarrow$ Student and Family
2. Institution $\leftrightarrow$ Agent $\leftrightarrow$ Sub-Agent $\leftrightarrow$ Student and Family
3. Institution $\leftrightarrow$ Professional Association $\leftrightarrow$ Agency

Upon review of the cases in this chapter, I find these three circuits to be appropriate and relevant for both Bingley and Emmett. However, in the case of Bingley, I find three more circuits that can exist based upon their managerial structure. For this case alone, I add the following circuits:

4. Institution $\leftrightarrow$ On-Site Staff $\leftrightarrow$ Agent $\leftrightarrow$ Student and Family

5. Institution $\leftrightarrow$ On-Site Staff $\leftrightarrow$ Agent $\leftrightarrow$ Sub-Agent $\leftrightarrow$ Student and Family

6. Institution $\leftrightarrow$ On-Site Staff $\leftrightarrow$ Student and Family

These six circuits illustrate the main ways in which knowledge flows among various actors; however, generalizations should be made with caution given that all student recruitment cases are unique and will vary. Additionally, these circuits do not represent the knowledge a student gains through study abroad and how this knowledge circulates.

Bingley and Emmett share the same structure of the circuits of knowledge that occur in 1-3, although there will be obvious differences with various individuals involved in these circuits. Yet, in some cases, these circuits of knowledge will be influenced by the same intermediaries, such as AIRC, NAFSA, ICEF, and agencies that may work with both institutions. The difference in this area between the two institutions is the layer of knowledge that on-site staff members contribute to the circuits for Bingley. Having on-site staff members contributes greatly to the globalization of knowledge.

Interstitial Organizational Emergence

Both Emmett and Bingley experienced interstitial growth with the establishment of international admissions sub-areas, currently situated within the undergraduate admissions offices, as a response to institutional moves to capture the international student market. These sub-units are now integral to the management of international students, agencies, and

government partnerships. Simply put, without the emergence of these units, this type of work could not exist to the degree (if at all) it does at both of these institutions.

In addition, both universities have retained two distinct administrative units to deal with recruitment and admissions and the student services side. While both units work collaboratively and in coordination with each other, both schools have retained separate administrative structures, indicating that there are perhaps beneficial mechanisms in place by having these units separate, negating a need for interstitial emergence in this area.

One area that was more emphasized at Emmett was the interstitial emergence seen within academic colleges in response to increased international student enrollment. Both the business and engineering schools developed academic bridge programs in response to the needs of international students looking to enroll and succeed in those majors. These examples illustrate how interstitial emergence occurs outside of an international admissions and recruitment context.

Intermediating Networks

In chapter four, I noted that the very practice of agency-based recruitment is grounded on the use of intermediating networks, making this element of academic capitalism the strongest link between theory and practice. The use of agents as intermediaries underscores that they are simply able to provide services that most institutions in the U.S. are unable to achieve solo. There is no doubt in both of these cases that intermediaries are a vital part of international recruitment strategy.

Intermediating networks exhibit themselves similarly on both of these campuses. In many ways, the very basic principles of how institutions and agencies work together are consistent across these two institutions, although there will always be variation based upon such factors as agency size, country, types of services, and so on. Bingley certainly employs the larger agency

intermediating network given they officially work with approximately 40 agencies in a wide range of countries, compared to Emmett's 16 agencies.

Bingley and Emmett have been active members of AIRC since its nascent stages and depend strongly upon AIRC for vetted agencies with which to partner. Metcalfe (2010) states, "Intermediating organizations do not just broker merchant relationships; they also provide members with legitimated vendor lists and product endorsements, either directly or indirectly" (p. 509). In addition, the institutions also depend on the conferences put on by professional associations as a venue to meet with existing agents to conduct training and relationship building. These conferences are also an opportunity to explore new partnerships to add to their existing intermediating networks. These various intermediary organizations have supported both institutions in their international student enrollment growth over the past years.

Expanded Managerial Capacity

Managerial capacity differs greatly between the two schools, even though both began to build international student recruitment processes at roughly the same time. The data shows that Bingley has greatly increased managerial capacity, while Emmett has not. Managerial capacity of course influences how institutions undertake recruitment strategy to pursue international student enrollment goals.

Increased managerial capacity can allow for pursuit of a wider swath of student markets due to the number of individuals who can manage operations. At Bingley, the in-country staff capacity can allow for specialized knowledge, potentially enabling a deeper penetration of the market, as well as more precise training and communication with agents. However, this is an investment that cannot be taken lightly due to the financial burden that it encompasses.

Agent management is decentralized over a wider number of individuals at Bingley, as agents work with various staff members throughout the process. At Emmett, there is one individual who is primarily responsible for meeting with agents, conducting training, undertaking international travel, and managing the network overall; therefore, control over agency-based recruitment is much more consolidated. It is unclear from this research whether a centralized or decentralized management approach is more effective, but this should be more deeply studied in future research. Overall, Bingley's expanded managerial capacity has enabled broader international recruitment operations than is evident at Emmett, which I discuss in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

6.1 Review of the Study

The purpose of this study has been to deepen understanding, both descriptive and theoretical, of the use of agency-based recruitment in the U.S. from an organizational perspective. I examined this from a threefold angle—institutional, agency, and student—in order to provide multiple insights into a very understudied practice that involves all of these constituent groups. In order to guide and deepen this study conceptually, I used the theory of academic capitalism to frame the study (Slaughter & Leslie, 1997; Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004). Academic capitalism proved extremely applicable, and this study was well-served by using this theory to frame findings and deepen understanding about the mechanisms driving institutions to undertake agency-based recruitment as part of their overall international student recruitment strategy.

Throughout this study, I assert that academic capitalist mechanisms and processes have been used by actors in the various universities to drive agency-based recruitment and contributed to its growth within the U.S. Comparatively, the U.S. has lagged behind other countries such as the United Kingdom and Australia in their adoption and regulation of agency-based recruitment in higher education (Engberg, 2013), indicating that although the U.S. is one of the most heavily marketized higher education systems in the world (Slaughter & Cantwell, 2012; Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004), there has been trepidation about the practice, in part slowing this particular avenue to move to the market. Moreover, due to the prestige of the U.S. higher education system,

the country is able to attract international students relatively easily. However, the 2008 economic downturn brought even more decreased funding for education, pushing institutional actors to a renewed search for new external revenue streams. More and more U.S. colleges and universities are adopting this practice, indicating what seems to be increasing growth, possibly influenced in part by the change in NACAC's stance on the issue (NACAC, 2013) discussed in chapter two providing legitimacy to pursue this type of strategy. As agency-based recruitment appears to only be gaining traction despite critics' concerns, it is imperative that more scholarly studies be conducted to be able to understand how and why institutions choose to undertake this type of strategy, how agency networks are managed, what assessment practices are in place, how agencies are regulated, and so on. Therefore, this study endeavored to help to fill a small part of the research gap by exploring from an organizational case study standpoint how institutions utilize agency-based international student recruitment. In the next section, I present my research questions again with a summary of findings from all four of the case analyses for each question.

6.2 Summary of Findings

1) How do university administrators decide to utilize agents in international student recruitment strategies?

Institutional administrators at the case sites explicated two primary benefits from capturing new international student markets: campus diversity and financial gain. These two points were strong motivators for campus administration to seek actively new international populations, and agency-based recruitment was certainly a part of this strategy. Yet, it is difficult from the research data to disentangle whether diversity or financial gain is the driving force for agency-based international recruitment at each of the case sites. Therefore, it is perhaps useful to examine each of the four institutional mission statements to determine if there is a link between

mission and international recruitment activities. Some scholars argue that mission statements can assist institutions in determining which activities advance institutional goals or initiatives, communicating institutional attributes or qualities to external stakeholders, and guiding overall decision making (Drucker, 1973; Hartley, 2002; Keller, 1983; Morpew & Hartley, 2006). Others view mission statements as empty words that ultimately communicate nothing (Morpew & Hartley, 2006).

Review of the institutional mission statements suggests there is not a strong substantive link between mission rhetoric and international student recruitment activities. Middleton and Pike's mission statements do not contain any language regarding diversity, globalization, internationalization, nor any other buzzwords related to this area. Bingley's mission statement notes that it serves the "world" as part of its rhetoric, while Emmett's mission references being distinguished by an international community and diverse campus. This indicates that the strongest link for using agency-based recruitment for diversity purposes could be drawn to Emmett's mission, yet, even this is a tenuous supposition. There appears to be no credible narrative linking institutional missions to driving international student recruitment.

If there exists no substantive link between mission and increased international student recruitment and enrollment, then one could ask if the campus diversity narrative is in reality a covering mechanism for the true financial motivations of the institution. All of the institutions in this study acknowledged that the financial benefits to increased international student enrollment were undeniable, but the institutional administrators at the same time were sure to point out the benefits of bringing international diversity to campus perhaps to assuage some of the more base notions associated with pursuing something for financial gain in academia.

However, it is important to emphasize that the entanglement of enrollment for financial or diversity gains exists in other similar scenarios. This issue can be juxtaposed with public institutions enrolling out-of-state students versus in-state students. It is a strikingly similar narrative. Numerous scholars have examined in-state versus out-of-state tuition finance ramifications (Burd, 2015; Groen & White, 2004; Heller, 2002; Rizzo & Ehrenberg, 2004). For public institutions, out-of-state domestic students can bring a large financial incentive with them just like international students. Many public institutions have come to depend on the tuition revenues these students from other states bring. For example, the University of Alabama now enrolls more out-of-state students than in-state students and has at least 30 admissions counselors spread throughout the United States (Burd, 2015). State divestment in public higher education has not only sent institutions searching for international markets, but also for out-of-state domestic markets. In fact, many institutions now use their institutional aid funds to attract wealthy, high achieving out-of-state students to increase revenues and rise in the rankings (Burd, 2015). It can also be argued that out-of-state domestic students bring diversity to campus that is valuable for the institutions and the student learning experience. Yet, with the current fiscal environment for public institutions, as well as small private liberal arts colleges, it is perhaps more likely that the financial motivators are a primary impetus for utilizing private third party agents in international recruitment with increased campus diversity being a secondary benefit.

Participants at each institution indicated that the initial decision to use agents had been initiated and supported at the highest levels. Both of the private institutions noted their presidents at the time had been intimately involved in the process. At Pike University, the president was the person who decided that international student recruitment should be a priority, and their international student population began to grow as a result of emphasis on the president's agenda.

Middleton University's China program faculty coordinator is the person who suggested the use of agents back around 2000, and the university president was very involved in the development process for the first several years. At the two public research universities, the idea of agents was introduced and promoted by individuals at the vice-provost/senior international officer levels. Data from this study indicates that traction to use agency-based recruitment can be strongly influenced by an "agency advocate"—an individual who has enough campus clout to explain, promote, and support the practice.

Participants noted that agents are able to reach some populations that the institutions themselves would never be able to on their own, a definitive factor in why agents are important to the overall international recruitment strategies at these institutions. As this dissertation has outlined, it is also essential to understand in which countries students are more likely to use agents. In these countries (i.e. China and Vietnam), institutions without name cachet are less likely to be able to recruit students, unless there are agent representatives who can market for institutions that do not have a strong global presence. Therefore, institutions in this study needed their agent networks to help to brand the institution to varying extents, and administrators found this benefit very valuable. Ultimately, the institutions in this study decided to use agents because of the intermediary capabilities they possess to facilitate the "flow of people and goods across the bridges" (Metcalf, 2010, p. 515). International recruitment agents are but one example of the proliferation of intermediary organizations over the past thirty years (Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004).

2) How are relationships between universities and agents initiated, maintained, and assessed?

The second research question addresses the relationship mechanics between institutions and agencies, in other words, the practices at each school that allow for a successful (or not) and

continuing implementation of agency-based recruitment. Understanding organizational relationship elements enables the practice to grow based upon knowledge of how the strategy is practically implemented in various institutional environments. In each case study in the prior chapters, I outlined the institution's overall recruitment strategy in order to give a broad context in which to situate the dynamics around the practice in each university's environment.

This study finds that Middleton, Bingley, and Emmett all place a strong reliance on professional associations as intermediary organizations to initiate relationships with private third party agencies. Pike also relies on professional associations, although to a lesser extent than the other three when it comes to initiating relationships. The aforementioned schools currently only consider working with agencies certified by AIRC as they move forward with this strategy, showcasing their belief that this organization's certification process is a very valuable vetting tool for their operations and a factor in whether or not relationships with specific agencies are initiated. AIRC in particular has been able to establish itself as an intermediary organization that some colleges and universities rely on to legitimate a certification process in the absence of any U.S. federal or state regulations for the agency industry. AIRC and its member institutions have, and continue to, contribute to the professionalization process for the industry at large in the U.S.

All of the schools in this study use multiple strategies to maintain relationships with various agencies. Data showed that all employed a combination of on-site training visits, Skype and phone calls, Skype and webinar trainings, e-mails, agent training manuals, and meeting at conferences sponsored by ICEF, NAFSA, and AIRC. This combination illustrates that the technology advances in the new millennium have heavily aided the use of agents, and in fact, without the technology boom agency-based recruitment would be highly difficult to manage.

While the case institutions all used these types of relationship maintenance strategies, there were distinct differences in degrees to which each institution used a particular method to nourish agent relationships, mostly due to managerial capacity. For example, Bingley used in-country personnel as a way to maintain relationships with their agency networks in India, Vietnam, and China, and in addition, their domestic staff and financial capacity is large enough to be able to send staff abroad quite frequently in order to cultivate and support their large agency network. Pike does not have in-country staff, but they do possess a large domestic managerial capacity, enabling on-site visits to take place more frequently than either Middleton or Emmett universities.

The institutions display varying levels and types of assessment regarding agency/agent performance, as well as student experience and satisfaction with their agent experience. The institutional administrators in this study expressed that one of the most important ways in which they assess agencies is by student achievement and persistence. Administrators noted that they expect agents to send students who are able to perform well academically and persist to degree completion. All institutions expressed that successful agencies send students who are able to perform well academically and progress through degree programs to graduation and that this is a significant way that they assess if an agency relationship is beneficial to them or not. Many administrators made interview comments that indicated if agencies are sending students who are unable to succeed academically then it is a problem and cause for reassessment of their relationship with that agency. Agency intermediaries are useful to institutions, so long as they are sending students who are a good institutional fit. If this “requirement” is not met, then universities may terminate an agency and select another intermediary in its place.

3) How are institutions and international students impacted by the use of recruitment agents?

All of the institutions in this research study have been impacted in various ways by the decision to use agency-based international student recruitment, as well as the broader scope of targeting recruitment to various international markets. Interstitial organizational emergence appeared in all of the case sites, although it exhibited itself uniquely at each school. All of the case institutions saw interstitial organizational emergence of international admissions and recruitment offices in order to manage the operations and services that come with deciding to seek out particular foreign markets. Due to their international recruiting history, Pike was the first to see this administrative emergence, while Middleton was the most recent with Bingley and Emmett falling in the middle.

In further interstitial development, Pike combined its international admissions with international student services as a way to streamline managerial capabilities and services, and the consolidated administrative unit was moved under the enrollment management division. This exemplifies how various recruitment strategies, including the use of agency-based recruitment can impact administrative structure within an institution. Although managerial consolidation has not happened at Middleton to the same extent, there is a more concerted coordination as both of their administrative units have moved under one department. Middleton in particular has seen interstitial emergence that has connected faculty members to international recruitment, as one faculty member manages their China recruitment and agency network. This is an example of how a faculty member has become involved with an institutional move to the market in a different capacity than scientific research. Additionally, both Pike and Middleton noted sending faculty members abroad to participate in international recruitment, particularly when there was emphasis on a specific field of study or language area in which the faculty members possessed expertise.

In chapter five, I noted that Bingley had not seen a full consolidation of its two administrative units dedicated to international student recruitment, admissions, and services, but that there was a strong collaboration that indicated a type of partial interstitial emergence, even though the two units remain in separate divisions. Emmett administration mirrors this collaboration with its units, although not as strongly as Bingley. Moreover, interstitial academic program emergence can be observed at Emmett through their business, engineering, and other academic bridge programs that connect with international students. In this way, interstitial organizational emergence becomes institutionalized paving the way for expanded managerial capacity.

Agency-based recruitment increases institutional marketization. Slaughter & Rhoades (2004) note that enrollment management offices now spend large sums of money on viewbooks and advertising. Targeting international markets increases these costs further, as some institutions have materials translated into different languages, pay print costs in another countries, or ship materials from the main campus abroad; additionally, things such as newspaper ads, billboards, and educational fair fees all add to increased cost. Some institutions, like Middleton University, pay an extra fee to agents to cover marketing expenses. Ultimately, agent networks for all of these case institutions are able to market to students who might otherwise be unreachable, increasing brand recognition. The institutions in this study depend greatly on agent marketing to attract international students to their campuses.

As has been discussed throughout this dissertation, institutional administrative roles, responsibilities, and capacity are affected to various degrees by the use of agents to increase international student enrollment. All of the administrative units studied in this dissertation have allocated various staff members' time and energies in part to managing agents. In the case of

Middleton, a faculty member also spends significant time working on agency management. Managerial capacities have been expanded to include labor to work in the various areas of international student recruitment and support. See Table 6 for a comparison of total international enrollment and managerial capacities at each institution based upon the enrollment data provide by each case site.

Table 6: Total international enrollment and managerial capacity

	Semester	Total Intl Enrollment	RASS* Staff	Ratio of RASS* Staff to Intl Students
Middleton	Fall 2014	260	3	1:87
Pike	Spring 2014	418	9	1:46
Emmett	Fall 2013	1,881	7	1:268
Bingley	Fall 2013	3,407	22	1:155

*Recruitment, admissions, and student services full-time staff dedicated to working solely with international students during the semester noted.

While some of these institutions have seen increased managerial costs due to staff increases, the pay offs of bringing in more international students outweigh these costs. Despite the increased managerial burden of using agents, participants in this study believe that the benefits for the institution were greater than the challenges.

Many of the students in my study expressed that they needed an agent to help them navigate the application process because of a lack of knowledge about the American educational system, although there were a couple of notable exceptions to this. Students and families were willing to pay for agent services in order to have a chance to study in the U.S. Certainly, agent critics voice concerns over how much sway agents may have over students' choices about where to apply and ultimately enroll (Altbach & Reisberg, 2013; Choudaha, 2013). Much of this concern stems from financial agreements that institutions and agencies have in their partnerships. Concerned parties have voiced trepidation about "double dipping" and the impact that this could

potentially have on student choice. In this study, only Middleton University outlined in their institution-agency contracts that their agents should not be charging the student if they are to receive a commission from the school. A Middleton administrator stated, “We don’t allow the agent to double dip.” The other three institutional administrations in this study acknowledged that double dipping was occurring in their dealings with agents and students. One administrator said that it was “understandable” that the agencies may be charging institutions and students both based upon the work that they do for each. Another administrator at a different institution noted they let the agency determine what they will charge, but the institution wants to know what that charge is in order to monitor how much the agency is receiving from the student in addition to the commission they could make from the school. These examples illustrate the differences in institutional perspectives on double dipping, which ultimately could be a potential conflict of interest in which students may be caught in the middle. In some cases (perhaps a great deal of them), students may be unaware of these financial arrangements, not even knowing there could be a conflict of interest that could affect them.

Students in my study expressed satisfaction for the most part with their agencies of choice, as well as their experience on their particular campus. It is important to note however that several students expressed their trepidation about selecting the right agency and tried to consciously maintain their independence when selecting schools. I stated in the early part of this study that my intention was not to generalize about the agent-student relationship and experience; instead, I rely on other scholars work to illuminate this perspective (Coffey, 2014; Hagedorn & Zhang, 2011; Pimpa, 2003). With this said, the student perspective in my dissertation was important to highlight issues for future research.

6.3 Private and Public: An Absent Distinction

The findings of this dissertation were divided on the basis of whether the institution was a public or private university as one way to examine whether there might exist any differences between institutional types in the use of this practice. There were some expected differences, as well as some surprises when comparing by institutional type. The most obvious difference was of course the international enrollment numbers. The private masters colleges in my study enrolled far fewer international students due to their institutional size than did the large public research universities, not a surprising find. What was more interesting was the size of the international staffs at each institution, as delineated by Table 6. Generally, one could assume that small private institutions, driven mostly by tuition, may be reluctant to invest back into staff capacity for international student recruitment. Yet, at Pike there has seemingly not been a reluctance to do this, and instead the institution maintains a high staff to student ratio. At the public research institutions, where there are more diverse ways to garner funds including state appropriations (see chapter 5), one could assume they might be more willing to increase staff capacity, as seen at Bingley. However, this has not been the case at Emmett. This indicates that in reality there may not be as clear a distinction between public and private institutions in how revenues from international students are used with regard to staffing.

Additionally, one could assume that the small private institutions may rely very heavily on agents based upon lack of human and financial resources that are available to international recruitment at large research institutions. While Middleton relied heavily on agents, as well as other partnerships, Pike relied less heavily on agents as part of their overall strategy. There was also a clear difference between Bingley and Emmett with regard to how much staff members were able to travel to do direct recruiting versus how much they relied on agents. All of this

indicates that my sample institutions' behavior in these areas may not be divided along an institutional type boundary.

6.4 Implications for Research, Policy, and Practice

As discussed in the beginning chapters of this study, there is no federal or state oversight for the use of agency-based recruitment in the United States, nor are there any international laws that regulate or control the industry. In essence, the industry operates in a “wild west” environment given the weak to non-existent regulatory framework. In the U.S., institutions are completely self-regulating in how they behave in their actions within this industry. An international regulatory framework would be a difficult and complex endeavor with an industry that is difficult to track and operates cross-nationally. How would potential violations be handled when transactions take place across borders? There is also the question of what entity should control regulations and monitor practices. Should it be national governments, private industry, or other organizations?

Moreover, the sheer vastness of the agency network makes regulation cumbersome. Some estimate that there are over 20,000 agencies operating worldwide in cross-national capacities (West & Addington, 2014). Even in this dissertation the agency networks that the institutions used varied in size from 16 at Emmett to between 50 to 100 at Pike. Bingley only contracts with approximately 40 agencies, but when you count the branch offices of each of these agencies, there are more than 400 agency offices in their agent network. In some cases, these agencies may utilize sub-agents as mentioned previously. There are many intermediary layers to these networks, which means that regulatory structures would have to stretch from the institution through an entanglement of many intermediaries (in some cases) until it reached and protected

the interest of the student consumer. The examination of these agency networks also provides an area that is rich for future research.

In this country, professional associations (primarily NACAC and AIRC) have attempted to fill this regulatory void. NACAC has developed a “best practices” guide for using agents (in spite of strongly discouraging the use of agents), and AIRC has created the agency certification process, promoting best and ethical practices. In this way, professional associations as intermediaries have become particularly important to the agency industry nationally and internationally. As an area for future research, studies should be conducted on these intermediaries to more fully understand how these associations may or may not professionalize the industry, as well as how they impact institutions and agents and influence institutional behavior in the work they do with international student recruitment.

My study explored agency-based recruitment based upon AIRC institutional membership. As noted previously, this membership indicates at least a basic level of regard for perpetuating ethical and transparent practices in the industry based upon AIRC institutional requirements for membership. All of my case institutions indicated a certain care and concern about ethical practices relevant to their institutional environment and practices. Perspectives about what is ethical will of course vary, but in general, administrators at my case sites were particularly concerned with finding students who were a suitable fit with the institution and would have an overall good academic experience, while at the same time benefiting the institution.

This study examined the practice at large research institutions and private masters colleges. There are notable institutional types missing such as community college and for-profit institutions. It is important that other institutional types be examined with regard to the practice of agency-based recruitment, as significant differences may exist. Moreover studies must span a

wider breadth in order for results to become more generalizable. On the other side, I was unable to find any scientific studies that focused specifically on the agencies and agents themselves. Moreover, there are no databases tracking agency growth, which provides another area for future research.

This dissertation also illustrates that financial agreements between institutions and agents vary in what rates (flat rate vs. percent of paid tuition) are paid for agency services, demonstrating that the industry is far from standardized with regard to financial practices. It is unclear from this dissertation how institutions and agencies set their financial fee rates at an organizational level. Additionally, fees that agencies charge students and their families when they are hired privately encompass a wide range (from \$400 up to \$5,000 for students in this study). In this industry is standardization of financial arrangements something that should be considered? Would this help to promote ethical practices given the commonplace practice of double dipping? These are questions that should be examined further in order to understand more about the industry and its relationship with higher education.

As illustrated by Table 6, a central question around international student enrollment is what is the appropriate level of staff support based upon the number of international students on campus? Moreover, a related topic is the examination of the number of staff members that it takes to successfully manage an agent network. Academic capitalism underscores that managerial growth is a direct outcome of targeting new markets and revenue streams (Slaughter & Leslie, 1997; Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004), but more discussion and scholarly research should be undertaken focusing on the appropriate amount of managerial growth in this context.

The role of the university and higher education as a job creation entity is also underscored within this research. The private sector has profited from international student

recruitment opportunities presented by higher education systems. Ultimately, the university has created jobs domestically and internationally through outsourcing some of its international student recruitment activities to private third party agencies. Perhaps outsourcing this labor also leaves space for some less ethical institutions to have some plausible deniability by using contracted labor, as they may not be privy to all of the agency actions.

Overall, the agency industry is in its adolescent stages as institutions, students, nations, agents, professional associations, and others attempt to build best practices, regulations, financial mechanisms, and standard procedures. At this point in the United States, it is ultimately up to institutions to self-regulate themselves and monitor the agents with which they work directly. Institutions must be willing to self-assess and be transparent about their practices (particularly financial) as a way to professionalize the industry because, in spite of calls for a stop to the practice, there is no slow down in sight as long as there are new international student markets to capture.

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APPENDIX A

EXPLANATION OF ORGANIZATION NAMES

I use several acronyms to represent professional associations and private organizations that are involved in this field and list them here for reference purposes. The Agents, Language Providers, and Higher Education (ALPHE) conferences are a for-profit endeavor aiming to aid in international student recruitment by setting up opportunities for educators to meet with agents in places all over the world to facilitate business opportunities and partnerships. ALPHE's website advertises that they only accept "the most trusted agents" by obtaining "four references per agent from educators for each participating agent." International Consultants for Education and Fairs (ICEF) is a for-profit entity that assists clients with marketing and international student recruitment. This organization vets agents and also organizes networking events for institutions and agents to meet, among other services. The American International Recruitment Council (AIRC) is a stand-alone quality assurance organization in the United States that works to develop quality assurance in international recruitment, specifically between agents, institutions, and students. This organization has developed a certification process that agencies may voluntarily pursue as a way of obtaining a "seal of approval" and professionalizing the field.

APPENDIX B

INTERVIEW PROTOCOLS

University Administrator

1. Demographic (age, sex, rank, title, etc.)
2. When did you first start working here?
3. What function does your department serve?
4. What are your job responsibilities within this department?
5. Please describe the international student population on your campus.
 - a. How many international students are enrolled currently?
 - b. How many of these are undergraduate and how many are graduate?
 - c. What have been the historical trends of your undergraduate international student enrollment?
 - d. What countries do your international undergraduates come from?
 - e. What majors are they enrolling in?
6. Are you the point of contact for agents? If not, who is?
7. What strategies does your department use to recruit international students?
8. I know you use agents, and I wondered how your leadership made the decision to use them?
 - a. Who had to approve the use of agents?
 - b. How long did it take to make the decision?
 - c. How long has your institution been using agents?
9. Can I ask you a few specific questions about how agents are used on your campus?
 - a. How many agents are under contract?
 - b. How are the contracts formulated and what is included in them?
 - c. Are your agents successful in bringing students who matriculate?
 - d. On average, how many students per year do your agents bring in?
 - e. Are your agents AIRC certified? Why or Why not?
 - f. Do your agents use sub-agents?

10. How do agents learn about your institution?
 - a. Do you have an educational program for them?
 - b. How do you interact with them?
 - c. How do you ensure your agents are giving students correct information?
 - d. How do you monitor them?
 - e. Do you ever receive any complaints about agents?
 - f. Is there a process for agent review?
 - g. Have there ever been terminations resulting in the end of a contract?
11. Is using agents a financial benefit or burden for the institution?
12. Have students services capacity had to be increased due to the growth of international students? Specifically, because of the growth of students being recruited by agents?
13. What are the benefits of using agents?
14. What are the challenges of using agents?
15. Do you foresee the use of agents at your institution growing?

Agent

1. Demographic (age, sex, rank, title, etc.)
2. Please state which agency you work for at this time.
 - a. How did you get into the agency business?
 - b. What do you enjoy about it?
 - c. What do you find challenging?
3. Can I ask you a few questions about the specifics of your agency?
 - a. How long has this agency been in existence?
 - b. How long have you worked for this agency?
 - c. How many people work for this agency?
 - d. What geographic areas are you assigned to?
 - e. Is this agency certified by the American International Recruitment Council?
4. How long have you worked with this university?
 - a. How did you establish a relationship with this university?
 - b. Can you describe the contract negotiation process?
 - c. Once the contract was signed, how did you learn about the institution?
 - d. Did you go through any training about the institution?
 - e. How often do you have contact with the institution?
 - f. How many institutions do you work with?

5. How do you establish relationships with prospective students?
 - a. What are the steps in the process for recruiting students?
 - b. How do you determine if an institution is a good fit for a student?
 - c. What do you do if you have a student interested in two or more schools with whom you have contracts? In other words, how do you avoid a conflict of interest?
6. Do you use sub-agents?
 - a. If so, how many?
 - b. How do you train them on a school?
 - c. How often are you in communication with them?
 - d. Are they effective in recruiting students?
 - e. Does the university know you use sub-agents?
7. I would like to ask a few questions about how prospective students are recommended to the institution.
 - a. Do you recommend students for admission?
 - i. If so, who do you contact?
 - b. Do you have the authority to admit a student?
 - c. Do you assist a student in preparing their admissions application?
8. If a student is admitted and chooses to go to a school you are contracted with, how does the school know it is a student you have recruited in order for you to receive payment?
9. How many students have you recruited for this institution? Of these how many have enrolled?
10. In general, how long does it take for you to establish mechanisms to make recruiting fruitful for an institution?
11. Are you seeing increased business with new clients coming in?
12. Do you foresee any changes on the horizon for the agent business?
13. Why have you continued to work in this business?
14. What do you think your work in this field accomplishes?

Student

1. Demographic (age, sex, class year, major, etc.)
2. What is your home country?
3. How would you describe your experience at college in general?

4. I know you used an agent to assist you in applying to schools in the U.S. I would like to ask you a few questions about this process.
 - a. How did you decide to use an agent?
 - b. How did you select your agent?
 - c. Did your family play a role in your selection of an agent?
 - d. Did your high school play a role in your selection of an agent?
 - e. In what ways did the agent assist you throughout your college selection process?
 - f. How often did you talk with your agent through this process?
 - g. Did you have to pay a financial fee for your agent?
5. How did you choose [insert school name]?
 - a. Did your agent help you choose?
6. Do many students in your home country use agents?
7. Do you know other international students on campus who used agents in their college admissions process?
8. Were you satisfied with your agent and that relationship?
9. Did your institution conduct any follow-up with you when you got to campus about the work your agent conducted with you?
10. If you were to apply to college all over again, would you plan to use an agent again?

APPENDIX C

CODE LIST

A2	Agreement details
A3	Agent services provided
B1	Global branding
C1	Challenges and benefits of using agents
C2	Communication
C3	Student choice of agent
D1	Diversity
D2	Visiting agency offices
E1	Institutional and agent emphasis on ethics and transparency
E2	Expansion of agency network
E3	Future administrative expansion (or lack of)
F2	Focus groups/surveys/student follow up
F3	Institutional finances
G1	Government partnerships
H1	Historical description of use of agents or international student population growth
I3	International support services contributing to student experience
L1	University leadership decisions and perspectives on agents
L3	Enrollment numbers and international population description
M1	Target markets (current and future)
N3	Unethical practices (real and perceived)
O2	Overall agent performance
P2	Professional associations
R2	Reduction of agent network
R3	Rankings
S1	Sub-agents
S3	Student finances
T1	Staff/faculty international travel
T2	Training and development for agents
U3	Organization administrative structure
W4	Wow! Great quote.