

Teachers' Perceptions of Intra-School Choice in Secondary Schools
and its Impact on Professional Interactions

By

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Chapter 1

Focus of Inquiry

I am a secondary school educator and full-time graduate student in a Masters of Educational Administration and Leadership program in British Columbia. Currently, I have taught in the Burnaby School District (#41) as a secondary school teacher for the past nine years. Prior to my career in teaching, I worked in guest services for premiere hotel and resort properties for several years. I have also spent time working in Human Resources for both the private and public sectors in Ottawa. Throughout the past nine years, I have enjoyed creatively teaching business studies to senior students, and have recently changed my position to a district-based program teaching Hospitality Management in addition to teaching Advanced Placement (AP) Economics. My master's program has provided me with an appreciation of the challenges and policies surrounding the provision of public school education in British Columbia. I have become more aware of the stances of stakeholders in public education in our province. This has immensely added to my knowledge surrounding political influences in education, from the perspectives of teachers, teacher employers, students, parents, and the community in terms of how public education should be provided and for whose benefit.

I have had a particular interest in the effects of course choice by students since the beginning stages of my teaching career. Although some aspect of course choice has always been present in British Columbia's graduation

requirements, from the time I had graduated from high school eight years prior, I had personally observed a great influx in the variety and amount of courses available for students to choose from. Once I started my undergraduate degree specializing in Business Education, my colleagues in the Business Education cohort and myself were continually reminded of the fact that Business Education was a “dying area” with strongly decreasing enrollment, and marketing our courses was as important as developing our curriculum. General conversations at our provincial specialist association meetings focused on strategies to attract students to business education courses. Within my department, I am always reminded of this pressure each January. Returning from winter break, department members work feverishly to teach our students the most fun and popular topics within our curriculum. This is due to the fact that January is the time that students are preparing for course selection for the following year. I often witness conversations by staff about the inequalities between curricular areas in terms of the degree to which time must be spent marketing courses to both students (in school) and parents (on parent’s course selection evening). Traditional “academic” courses such as Mathematics, English, Social Studies and Science are guaranteed student enrollment due to the fact that their courses are required for graduation. “Elective” areas such as Business Education, Visual and Performing Arts, Home Economics and Technical Education are left to claim their “market share” of students through continually innovating and marketing their courses. Such a phenomenon has also been reflected in the research of

Hargreaves and Macmillan (1995), who state that, when subjects are designated as an elective only, often teachers have to work hard to promote their subject.

This pressure to retain students became of particular interest to me this past year, through discussing school choice as a topic within my graduate program while at the same time enrolling my own son in Kindergarten in a Burnaby elementary school. Although familiar with the contestable data of school rankings from the Fraser Institute, I still found myself researching their information on my local elementary schools. Discussions with parents in my community related to the reputations and offerings of elementary schools, of choice programs, and of the credibility and effectiveness of each school's administrator and teaching staff. Through my parent network, I witnessed endless conversations on school choice for their children. Parents were, in essence, "shopping" for an elementary school, and they were assigning values to school programs, largely in terms of their child's future economic status, all before their child had entered the system. School choice by parents has also been reflected in the research of Gewirtz, Ball & Bowe (1995), in that parents and students are often choosing courses in the educational hierarchy to reproduce their own cultural, social and economic advantages.

In observing parents reaction to choice of school for their five year old, I often thought of the relationship between this inter-school competition (competition between schools) and intra-school competition (competition

within schools). Competition for education in terms of schools and programs is now “ideologically endorsed and practically facilitated by open enrollment...and parental choice” (Gewirtz, Ball & Bowe, 1995, p.23), and, as a teacher, I have observed this element of competition between schools permeate student choices among subject areas within secondary schools. The difference, though, is that the school has a team of staff to work towards the marketability of the school within inter-school competition, however an elective teacher is often struggling on their own in terms of intra-school competition. From my own experience, this competition for students, a scarce resource, has brought negative repercussions to some teachers' working conditions. Time is diverted away from developing curriculum and spent on increasing course or subject area marketability. In the schools in which I have taught, I have encountered teachers, worried about losing students to competitors, also discouraged by the erosion of collegial practices such as collaboration with colleagues, inter-disciplinary initiatives, and a positive working environment in terms of socially interacting with colleagues. In my experience, competition for students seems to be negatively impacting teacher collegiality in secondary schools.

Connection to School Funding & Graduation Requirements

It can be argued that there has been more of a market-driven approach to the provision of public education in British Columbia with the election of the

British Columbia (B.C.) Liberal party in 2001. Part of their education platform was to make education flexible for students by promoting school choice, in terms of opening up school catchment boundaries and offering several flexible schooling choices for students outside of the traditional classroom. This mandate decidedly promotes the aspect of *choice*, both *between* schools, by opening catchment areas for students and *within* schools, by increasing the offering of educational programs for student graduation. In my experience, this has increased the pressure for competition in schools.

The creation of a competitive market for B.C. schools is rooted in the changes made to the funding formula used for B.C. schools along with the parallel introduction of the agenda of school choice. When the BC Liberals came into power in 2001, they changed the funding formula used for public schools from a program and cost-based funding approach to a capped per-pupil student based funding formula (Beresford & Fussell, 2009). Under this new program, funding operating grants given to schools are determined primarily by the number of students enrolled in a district, thereby allocating funding that schools previously received for specific programs and services into a basic per student allocation (Beresford & Fussell, 2009). Secondary schools are given funding based on the number of blocks (courses) that they are taking; each eligible full course (four credits) is funded as 0.125 FTE (full time equivalent) (BC Ministry of Education Policy Document K-12 Funding, 2010). This block allocation has increased competition between schools as those schools with declining

enrollment are consequently finding themselves with declining funding. Once students are enrolled within a school, this funding approach further propels a competitive environment between courses. A major flaw in the current funding formula is that it assumes that the number of students is the determining factor of costs, however, the reality is that there are a number of education costs that districts need to cover that are irrelevant to the number of students enrolled, such as utilities and support staff (Beresford & Fussell, 2009). A teacher will receive the same salary regardless if there are 20 or 30 students in their classroom. Therefore, in order to be fiscally responsible and accountable for their public funding, it is in a school's best interests to have each classroom filled to capacity. This being said, many students in secondary schools are finding courses cancelled that are unable to meet the class size limit as necessitated by Bill 33, the Class Size and Composition policy. Because of the move to a per-block funding allocation, teachers find themselves increasingly competing for students to keep the funding that comes with that student, thereby also maintaining the courses they teach. This increase in competition seems to contribute to a decline of collegial ethos between teachers in a school.

Competition between teachers and curricular departments is further propelled by the amount of course choice within the requirements to graduate in British Columbia. British Columbia's high school graduation requirements are quite often under scrutiny. Under the current graduation program, only one visual or performing arts, home economics, technology or business education

course in either Grade 10, 11 or 12 is required to graduate. With the immense amount of choices available, there still remain a finite number of choosers. I have also observed that, with this current competitive, market-driven approach to education in our province, it seems as though there is pressure for students to enroll in elective courses with more economic marketability. This is reflected in the findings of Susan Robertson (2000, p. 177) that as “parents (are) consumers in the schooling marketplace, (and) in exercising a choice, must be guaranteed that the product they purchase can potentially be exchanged for economic security, cultural recognition and preservation, and political power within society.” In discussions with students, they have often correlated value of courses to their economic value in society. With a choice-driven approach to education, teachers often find their role changing to that of an entrepreneur. The expectation is for teachers to work “within a new value context of ‘risk entrepreneur’ and shaper of tastes, where image and impression management are now more important than the educational process” (Ball, in Robertson, 1995, p. 140). Without doing so, these teachers could find themselves facing a decline in enrollment in their subject area, which could further perpetuate competition within schools. It is my concern that the development of an intra-school quasi-market could erode collaboration, trust, and collegial ethos within secondary school environments. Being an elective subject teacher, I am interested in researching the extent that the establishment of a quasi-marketplace within a

school impacts the role of a teacher, teachers' working conditions, and collegial practices within secondary schools.

Purpose of Research

The purpose of this research study is to develop an understanding of the impact of educational policies that promote competition between subject area courses and how this internal organizational competition between departments and teachers for students potentially impacts the behaviour and professional interactions of secondary school teachers. This research will study how the perceptions of teachers regarding the pressure to be competitive, thereby attracting students, impacts their professional interactions with their colleagues on the continuum between collaboration and competition. The research will be conducted by using a case study approach in one secondary school located in the lower mainland in British Columbia. Specifically, the proposed research seeks to answer the following questions:

- What are teachers' perceptions regarding the school ethos in relation to the relative degree of collaboration and competition between departments and between teachers in secondary schools? What do teachers believe contributes to this ethos?
- How does the pressure to attract students manifest itself within specific departments and between specific teachers in terms of interactions with colleagues along a continuum between collaboration and competition?

Rationale

The focus for my research will be on determining if, from the perspective of teachers, the educational policy changes in British Columbia based on the

element of choice between and within schools have impacted the nature of teachers' professional interactions within schools. Through my research, I will be examining how the introduction of choice within schools has influenced the degree of collaborative and/or competitive practices of teachers. Competition between schools for students was driven by the change in funding allocation complemented by the dissolution of school boundaries, making them virtually non-existent. In 2002, the BC Liberals amended the School Act 2(2), stating that "a person may enroll in an educational program provided by a board of a school district and attend any school in British Columbia if (a) the person is of school age, (b) the person is a resident in British Columbia, and (c) the board providing the educational program determines that space and facilities are available for the person at the school in which the educational program is made available. Such policy changes have given parents "new rights, duties and responsibilities all welded together into a 'language of choice'...(thereby allowing parents to) actively choose a school rather than allow 'allocation by default'" (Gewirtz, Ball & Bowe, 1995, p.21). What has evolved is essentially a marketplace of schooling, one based on policies rooted in educational choice, in terms of where to educate our children, and also in what curricular disciplines.

The B.C. Ministry of Education is offering more choices to students by providing flexibility and choice in schooling for parents and their children. Instead of children traditionally starting Kindergarten at their neighbourhood school, choices now include public and independent (i.e. private) schools,

online learning, community, traditional or alternative schools, Aboriginal education programs, French immersion, special needs options, full-day Kindergarten, pre-school, distributed learning, and specialized programs in fine arts, dance, sports or trades (Schooling Options for My Child, the B.C. Ministry of Education, 2011).

Educational choice, as mandated by the BC Liberal party, is embedded in a market-driven educational system. Just as choice commodifies purchases made by consumers, choice in schooling often commodifies education. Parents, given a choice for their child's schooling, seem to be attracted to those school and subjects that derive future benefit. "Commodified education in the market-friendly model of schooling is about establishing the conditions that guarantee advantage within society in an increasingly competitive world" (Robertson, 2000, p.177). A residual effect of such competition is the impact on teachers, and their new role of entrepreneur. In the field of business, it is unlikely that competitors seeking market share work collegially and collaboratively within the same building, however, in a school, this level of professionalism is not only expected, but also necessary. It seems important to then ask teachers if their evolving role as an entrepreneur impacts their professional interactions in the workplace.

In many professions, colleagues work together for their personal and professional benefit. The presence of a collaborative environment in education can be extremely powerful to our practice. Research has shown that

collaborative and collegial practice among teachers has proven successful for continuous improvement, adaptability, staff development and general success in schools (Little, 1982), however, in traditional secondary schools, lack of meaningful conversations and little interaction have created practices that result in “highly individualistic environments where collaboration is espoused but is unlikely to be made a reality” (Gideon, 2002). Research has shown collegiality and collaboration is a base requirement for community building, within and between classrooms. “Collaboration results in the construction of empowering communities within schools, which is subsequently reflected in classroom interactions and students learning” (Irwin & Farr, 2004, p. 344). Knowing the importance, yet absence of collaboration within a school, this research will investigate to which extent competition between teachers and/or departments have altered the nature of professional interactions between teachers within a school.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

Research on the impacts of choice *between* schools as a policy direction to reform public education is somewhat extensive in terms of implementation and impacts that school choice has on the social capital of students and the marketing initiatives of schools themselves. However, there is an absence of research on the impact of choice as a policy direction *within* schools in terms of the effects that course choice and competitive pressure can have on the

practice of teachers. Gewirtz, Ball & Bowe (1995) state that there has been a trend from a set of values, known as 'comprehensive' values to a set of competing values termed as 'market' values. Gewirtz, Ball & Bowe understand comprehensive values in education to be exemplified by cooperation amongst schools, an emphasis on student need, and education led by agenda of social and educational concerns. Gerirtz, Ball & Bowe exemplify market values in education as competition between schools, an emphasis on student performance, and education led by an agenda of image and budgetary concerns. With this trend towards market values, teachers' time and energy has been diverted from educational to marketing activities such as decoration of school buildings, production of publicity materials, and attendance at school public events (Gewirtz, Ball & Bowe, 1995). The trend towards market-based values, including school choice, is embedded in the greater context of neoliberal ideology as policy framework for educational reform, one that promotes efficiency in the allocation of resources through choice and competition between schools.

In the following literature review, I will first present the notion of neoliberalism and focus on one of its main dimensions: school choice and competition as they relate to the reform movement in public schooling in British Columbia. Second, this literature reviews the relevant studies that address issues related to the impacts of neoliberal policies, mainly the school choice agenda and resulting emerging competition.

Neoliberalism as an emerging policy framework in education

In his book, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism* (2005), David Harvey defines neoliberalism as

a theory of political economic practices that 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. The role of the state is to create and preserve an institutional framework appropriate to such practices" (p. 2).

McGregor (2009) differentiates between classical liberalism and neoliberalism by writing: "while classical liberalism promises individual freedom from state controls, neoliberal impulses favour state powers that actively shape the kinds of individuals that help optimize the economy" (p.345). It seems as though school choice policy follows neoliberal policy framework, in that

individuals make choices about how much they will consume, they are choice maximizers. However, the choice model makes the assumption that being an educational consumer is (or should be) a universally valued category and that schooling is primarily about individual consumption (for job preparation) and not about public goals (such as the production of citizens) (Robertson, 2000).

In terms of education, neoliberals approach schooling from a commodity-based standpoint. Education is "bought by customers, (students and parents),

and sold by suppliers, (schools and others)" (Poole, 2007). From this market perspective, schools are viewed as training grounds for future workers and consumers, as well a multi-billion dollar industry offering great profit opportunities (Poole, 2007), and the policy of school choice is founded in such a framework.

Neoliberalism emphasizes the importance of economic ideals above all others, and is exemplified in education through market (school) choice. Adnett & Davies (2005) explain that "increasing school choice and greater competition between schools were seen as key mechanisms for increasing allocative, productive and dynamic efficiency", indicating that market choice has been an important stimulus in market-based reforms of schools in many countries (Adnett & Davies, 2005, p. 109). It can be argued that Campbell and his government's changes to educational policies in British Columbia exemplify their desire for this efficiency. With the election of the Campbell government in 2001, several changes have occurred in British Columbia public education to both better 'train' students and attempt to profit from schools. Examples of such changes are exemplified through policy changes in terms of

"efficiency and accountability for student outcomes (usually measured by standardized test scores and other measures like graduation rates), choice for parents (e.g., charter schools, vouchers, within-district school choice), and privatization (e.g., public funding for private schools, user-pay fees, contracting with private firms to operate public schools, private-

public partnerships for school construction, school-business partnerships)" (Poole, 2007).

Education can be thought of as a commodity; just as we shop for and purchase basic products, parents could shop for their children's education. Gone are the times when students naturally attend their neighbourhood school. Choice involving location, language schools, academies and a school's academic performance are determining a child's educational future.

The educational decision making process does not end when a student enters their chosen school, as a form of 'shopping mall' is appearing within schools themselves. Although the benefit exists that "increased choice better enables students to labour market signals" (Adnett & Davies, 2005, p. 116), there are issues related to the impacts of the choice agenda on the diversity of curriculum received by students, the competitive and collegial practices between teachers, and the school organizational structure as a whole. In what he calls "conservative modernization" critical educator Michael Apple (2006) argues that "schools have been colonized by a market ethos of 'what counts' as important texts and authority" (p. 22). How do policies that are designed to introduce a market element into the provision and management of education impact what is perceived as important knowledge and hence, how does this change the diversity of education received by students? In addition, how does this impact affect elective courses and collegial ethos within schools?

Impacts on British Columbia High Schools

The following research discusses the neoliberal understanding of how public school should be provided, reflected by the presence of school choice policies. A discussion surrounding the basis for this policy framework is important, as there lies potential for such policy directives to impact relationships, both between parents and their children, and between teachers and their professional interactions with colleagues.

As research conducted by Apple has indicated, it would seem that the potential disparity between a student's interests in terms of course choice and what is deemed valuable economically could create dissonance between parents and their children. Apple (2006) writes,

“because so many parents are justifiably concerned about the economic and cultural futures of their children in an economy that is increasingly characterized by lower wages, capital flight, and insecurity, neoliberal discourse connects with the experiences of many working class and middle class people” (p. 22).

Parents are further pressured by industry, which are best likely to be rewarded by neoliberal educational principles. Merrill Lynch is the wealth management division of the Bank of America. In their 1999 report titled “The Book of Knowledge: Investing in the Growing Education and Training Industry”, they state, that [to improve education],

“a new mindset is necessary, one that views families as customers, schools as “retail outlets” where educational services are received, and the school board as a customer service department that hears and addresses parental concerns. As a near monopoly, schools escape the strongest incentives to respond to their customers – the discipline of the market”.

With parents seeking an education to strengthen their child's economic future, they could likely be influenced by a report produced by financial advisors.

Commodification of education is shown through parents school choice, as [parents] want to be able to choose schools as they would any basic commodity, and an increasing number are moving their children from the public to the private system, or are schooling them at home (Ungerleider, 2003). Parents are essentially looking to ‘purchase’ something for the greatest economic return on their investment. In regards to intra-school elective choice, Adnett and Davies (2005) state “in so far as there are different benefits to different educational outcomes, we would expect higher enrollments in subjects with higher perceived labour market returns” (p. 114). However, Levine and Zimmermann, in Adnett & Davies (1995) have researched the correlation between course selection and future earnings, saying, “mathematics is the only secondary school subject to have a positive effect upon earnings” (p. 114). Parents could incur an equal challenge when they allow their children to choose an educational path based on their own interests, not in terms of richness of learning and curriculum, but in terms of societal stigma. Parents who

“indeed choose less ‘valued’ programs are pathologised as failing to care for their children” (Robertson, 2000, p.47). Parents who employ choice and display the characteristics of an ideal consumer also construct the image of a responsible parent (Gewirtz, Ball & Bowe, 1995). Because they do not want to be characterized as irresponsible or not caring for their children, parents are often led into thinking of the market-driven provision of education.

In their article “Neoliberalism and Education”, Davies and Bansell (2007) discuss the impacts that government neoliberalist policies have had on the actions of citizens and their values. They write, “all human actors to be governed are conceived of as individuals active in making choices in order to further their own interests and those of their family. The powers of the state are thus directed as empowering entrepreneurial subjects in their quest for self-expression, freedom and prosperity” (p. 249-250). Ungerleider (2003) agrees, stating that “Canadian politicians increasingly reinforce the mistaken idea that public schooling is primarily a commodity for individual consumption rather than a process designed to benefit society.” It seems that families’ lived experiences are embedded in neoliberal policy in that self-expression and freedom are embedded in prosperity. There explains the rationale behind school course choice based on perceived economic output.

Just as the implementation of school choice from the Liberal government has created a competition between schools for students in British Columbia, teachers within schools seem to be competing for students in their courses. This

competitive practice could impact the relative degree of collaboration within a school as teachers find themselves competing for a scarce resource.

Curricular areas in secondary schools are a type of micro-environment within schools, joined together by commonality in curriculum, and, at times, similar views on the aims of education. They are "shaped, and held in place in important ways by the characteristics of their subjects, by the policies of the larger system, and by the politics of the academic marketplace" (Santee Siskin & Warren Little, 1995, p. 101), however, Santee Siskin & Warren Little (1995) remind us that this does not account fully for the ability of individual teachers, subject communities, or departments to create or forecast change within schools. Through their research, Santee Siskin and Warren Little (1995) describe how, within different schools, departmental communities can have distinct differences in terms of climate and ethos, yet remain able to promote and facilitate such changes.

Despite the growing amount of policy frameworks promoting choice and competition between schools, there seems to be little research to explain the impact that this competitive pressure in schools has on departments and teachers. One would think that perhaps this element of competition for students would have negative repercussions on collegiality and collaboration between teachers, as secondary schools already "operate in ways that make collegial sharing difficult" (Hill, in Santee Siskin and Warren Little, 1995, p. 76). With the potential migration of students to courses with perceived economic return,

enrollment could decline in the elective subjects, creating the loss of knowledge and jobs in the elective areas. In order to maintain their courses, teachers' time may be spent on marketing efforts rather than enriching and developing curriculum, because in order to survive, teachers need to attract resources, including pupils (Penney & Evans, 1995). The role of the teacher is changing, as is the role of an educational leader. With the marketing of schools becoming a fundamental aspect of a headteachers' role, there is a tendency for headteachers to become increasingly distanced from teaching and their staff (Gewirtz, Ball & Bowe, 1995). Coincidentally, teachers are increasingly finding themselves "balancing a series of acts on high stakes wires: between the old commitment of welfare and the new commitment oriented toward the enterprise and entrepreneurialism" (Robertson, 2000, p. 167), thus showing the neoliberal impact on both teachers and educational leaders' work. This pressure between teachers "appear[s] to be isolating departments within schools and threatening curriculum development and the ability of schools to provide a broad and balanced curriculum to all pupils" (Penney & Evans, 1995, p. 15).

Ultimately, what is created through this change in education and educational policy could be an openly competitive internal market within secondary schools. Adnett and Davies (2005) discuss the impact of this competition on the work of teachers. "There is a danger that greater within-school competition could reduce teachers' collegial ethos and lead to a switch from producing school-wide schooling outputs to those that are attributed to

individual teachers" (p. 117). They discuss the topic further, stating that "intra school competition may also encourage opportunistic behaviour among teaches and heads" and "reduced cooperation and a weakening of 'collegial ethos' may harm non academic schooling outcomes and reduce resistance to further intensification of working loads, making a 'rat race' equilibrium more likely" (p. 110). In addition, competition seems to have very little influence on quality programming. Ungerleider (2003) writes, although one purpose of promoting choice is to promote excellence through a competitive school environment, "it does not appear to have much to do with improving the quality of programs."

Paradigmatic Connections in Education

To fully understand the emergence of neoliberally based education, one must look at the paradigm of our current educational system. The impact that neoliberalism has on intra-school competition, ultimately jeopardizing our collegial ethos within schools, is rooted within critical theory. The "historical realism [of critical theory is] virtual reality shaped by social, political, cultural, economic, ethnic, and gender values, crystallized over time" (Guba & Lincoln Yvonna, 1990, p. 424). It is my view that this change in our economic values is ultimately impacting our cultural values, as society may begin to change their perception of what makes forms *culture* within graduates in British Columbia. The opposing opinions in our value system are rooted in critical theory as "critical theory researchers see research as a political act because it not only relies on

value systems, but challenges value systems" (Usher, in Glesne, 2011, p. 10). The challenge of our values lies in the fact that the connection between neoliberalism and school choice alters with different perceptions of the issue at hand. The foundation of this issue, though, is power. "Critical theory research tends to focus on issues of power and domination and to advocate understanding from the perspective of the exploited and oppressed" (Glesne, 2011, p.10). Exactly, who has the power, and who is exploited and oppressed, changes with varying perceptions. Criticism exists due to the feeling that only policymakers hold power. "There is considerable evidence that the development of neoliberal discourses, policies, and practices has been concertedly financed and engineered by those with a great deal to gain financially from the resulting labour practices and the flows of capital" (Davies & Bansel, 2007, p. 248).

Researchers such as Apple and McGregor (2006 & 2009) criticize from a student standpoint, feeling as though the neoliberalism movement will ultimately exploit and oppress our students, as they will not receive a well-rounded, holistic education through their public schooling. This could potentially create a society whose success is defined economically and value is placed on an individual's personal wealth.

Countering the negativity surrounding the influx of neoliberal policies, Adnett & Davies (2005) do state that there are several ways in which intra-school competition does improve the effectiveness of secondary schooling.

“First, it may improve the match between curriculum, teacher effectiveness and students' abilities, aspirations and preferences. A better match may generate further benefits if it results in increased student motivation and effort. Second, increased choice has the potential to reduce free riding among teachers and heads” (p. 116).

There are researchers, though, that believe that this shift towards neoliberalism is inevitable, and, “on the other side of the conspiracy lies an innocent romanticism regarding the natural evolution of social process and social change” (Davies & Bansel, 2007, p. 248). Hence, the education system will be required to engage in a paradigm shift to meet the challenges of a new millennium (Cheng, 2005). In studying globalization and its paradigmatic implications on education, Cheng (2005) proposes an educational paradigm to meet the economic issues present in society, stating

“the economic effectiveness issue concerns whether the existing educational policy can meet the needs of new economic development in the new millennium and how education should be changed to prepare the new generations for the knowledge driven and technology intensive economy” (p. 141).

The effects of neoliberalism, the education of students, and the impact on schools are also situated in the functionalist paradigm, as described by Ardalan (2009). Within the functionalist paradigm,

“free individuals can pursue their own political and economic interests, which in turn will improve the welfare of their society. Each individual tries to find the most lucrative employment for his capital. Although he acts based on his own advantage, and not that of society, his action naturally and necessarily leads to the most advantageous outcome to society” (p. 9).

Neoliberalism is grounded in this paradigm, as individual and societal economic welfare is deemed imperative in the optimization of the economy.

The Missing Connection

Although literature exists that relates neoliberalism to education as a whole, and how it relates to the holistic education of students, few researchers have investigated its impact on schools as a community. A market approach to education could potentially negatively impact a school and its teachers, yet “the mechanisms of the market, the operation and effects of competition for both teachers and pupils within schools have been largely overlooked” (Penney & Evans, 1995, p. 13) and “the effects of the introduction of the education market on the relationships between schools remains unexplored” (Penney & Evans, 1995, p. 14). Santee Siskin and Warren Little (1995) confirm this gap in literature of intra-school competition in schools by stating that “subgroups” within schools remains unexplored” (p. 136) while Adnett and Davies (2005) feel that school choice (inter-school competition) has taken the front seat in

comparison to intra-school competition. "In contrast to the vast school choice literature, there is relatively little analysis of choice within schools" (p. 109).

Chapter 3

Methodology & Research Design

Research Design

This research is using a case study design of one secondary school involving document analysis and individual interviews. Yin (2009, p. 18) describes a case study as "an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident." Using Yin's (2009) definition of case study research, a case study methodology was selected for my research largely because intra-school competition is a fairly contemporary phenomenon in schools today, one in which historical data is not available. It is therefore advantageous to look at this subject in-depth, within several contextual conditions, such as teachers' curricular area and experiences of each teacher's perceptions of collaborative and competitive practices in schools today. Case studies are often used to explain a present circumstance; 'how' or 'why' something occurred. Using a case study can then assist in the correlation of a competitive environment to collaborative practice – i.e. how intra-school competition impacts the collaborative and competitive ethos within a school. Using a case study will also allow for more in depth responses and direct observations from participants regarding their teaching

experiences and perceptions of collaboration and competition in their schools, as respondents will be given the opportunity and time to communicate their experiences. The effect of intra-school competition is a complex phenomenon in education. As such, participants could produce highly variant responses. The ability to analyze such variant responses from participants is better examined through a case study approach as the researcher can thoroughly evaluate each given response. Essentially, research in the field of intra-school competition is extremely limited and a case study approach will allow for a more exploratory, thorough and descriptive investigation of the research questions, resulting in a more comprehensive understanding of intra-school competition and its relation to collaborative practice.

Site of the Case Study

The Burnaby School District is positioned in the centre of Metro Vancouver. Burnaby is the third most populated urban centre in British Columbia with an estimated population of 195,000 (City of Burnaby, 2011). As of September 30th, 2010, the Burnaby School District serves a student population of 23,716 full-time equivalent students from Kindergarten to Grade 12. The total number of full-time equivalent students includes 13,059 students in 41 elementary schools and 10,657 students in 8 secondary schools and alternative secondary programs (Burnaby School District, 2011).

The Burnaby School District offers students a wide variety of choice in terms of the programs offered. At the secondary level, this variety includes

French immersion programs, online courses, school to work programs, summer school, workplace training, apprenticeship training, industry certification, and specialty programs such as Advanced Placement, Learning Through the Arts, Soccer School and Hockey School. When choosing to attend a traditional on-site secondary school, students are also offered a myriad of choices for courses to fulfill their graduation requirements. Historically, Burnaby School District secondary schools offer over 100 elective courses to students in grades 11 and 12. Because of such program and course choices available to students, secondary school teachers in the district are challenged to develop and maintain marketability for their classes, curricular department, and their school in order to attract students. For these reasons a secondary school is an appropriate site to ascertain the degree of impact that intra-school competition has had on the nature of collaborative and competitive actions between teachers.

Recruitment Method

This research seeks participation by teachers from one secondary school in the Burnaby School District. Interviews would be conducted with three participants who teach traditional academic (non-elective) subjects such as English, Social Studies, Mathematics, and Science, and three participants who teach traditional elective subjects such as Home Economics, Business Education, Technical Education, and Visual and Performing Arts.

Conducting research with teachers in various curricular areas will provide relevant information from a variety of curricular perspectives regarding teachers' perceptions of the relative degree of collaboration and competition between departments and between teachers in a secondary school. School choice may have impacted different curricular areas to varying degrees. Some subject areas in a school could historically have higher, or lower, than average enrollment, or some departments could have the advantages of stronger leadership direction and/or more resources available to them including financial assistance from the school or parent participation. Interviewing teachers from various disciplines will also enable me to compare and contrast the different pressures that different departments perceive in relation to attracting students. My research goal is to gain qualitative insight into collaborative and competitive practices of teachers practicing within a choice context in a secondary school.

A letter requesting approval to conduct the study will be sent to the Superintendent of Schools for the Burnaby School District in January 2012. Following approval, a letter will be sent to the Principal of one secondary school inviting their teachers to participate in the study. If the school declines the invitation, another secondary school will be invited and this process of recruitment will continue until a school is found.

Data Collection

Following the identification of the school, a letter, together with a consent form, will be sent via email to teachers of the participant school inviting them to

take part in this research. Six participants will be randomly selected for interviewing from teachers who have indicated that they would like to participate in the research: three from traditional academic teaching disciplines, and three from traditional elective disciplines. Signing of the consent form will take place at the time of the interview. Prior to beginning the interview, the consent form will be thoroughly explained and participants will be given the opportunity to ask any questions regarding the study.

Interviews will be conducted at a site and at a time that is convenient for the participant. Interviews will take approximately 45 minutes and data will be recorded using audiotape (if the participant consents to be recorded), and through note taking.

Analysis of Data

Data analysis of the qualitative interviews will be conducted through thematic analysis, identifying themes and patterns within each respondent's interview and across interview data for all participants (Glesne, 2011).

Comparisons made from the respondents will be used in identifying patterns within the themes of competition and collaboration within schools. These themes and any other emergent themes will be given code names and responses to each of the main interview questions will be coded according to these generated codes. Inferences relating to my research questions will be derived from the evolution of themes, patterns and data within the research.

Ethical Considerations

All efforts have been made to reduce risk and maintain the anonymity of all participants in this research study. Anonymity of research respondents will be enhanced by removing all identifying information, including personal names and the school name from the interview transcripts and final report. Participation in this study is completely voluntary and participants may choose to withdraw from this study at any point of the research process without penalty of any kind. Although direct quotations may be used in the final report, respondents will be given pseudonyms. Demographic information such as age and number of years teaching experience will be represented through a range of years and not a specific number. All data will be collected and analyzed by the researcher and stored in a password-protected computer. Electronic copies will be stored in a locked filing cabinet in the alarm-secured office of the research supervisor and be retained for a period of five years. All copies of the data will be shredded or demagnetized five years after the end of the study.

Limitations of the Study:

There are some limitations to this study. Firstly, there is the potential for a low response rate to participate in the research. Although participants will be assured anonymity, the personal nature of discussing relationships with colleagues may discourage respondents from participating. A second limitation pertains to the potential bias or influence by the respondents. Teachers in

various departments could have personal relationships with colleagues that may influence their perception of their professional relationships. This lack of objectivity could lead to skewed results in the research. Because of such, further research on teachers own perceptions of the impact of inter-school choice may be beneficial in providing a more comprehensive understanding of the nature of teachers' professional interactions. Finally, a limitation to this study could be my own bias as a researcher. As an elective area teacher, I could be predisposed to findings and positions that I have experienced as an educator. As such, I need to remain completely transparent in my communication and findings about my social and political location as a researcher.

Dissemination of Findings

The Superintendent of the Burnaby School District and all research participants will be given a copy of the final report for their perusal.

Chapter 4

Results & Discussion

The following chapter is designed to offer a plausible understanding of the impact of policy directions such as the dissolution of school boundaries and per-pupil funding on the professional behaviours of secondary school teachers. This understanding is grounded in the interviews of seven research participants describing how they perceive competitive pressure in their school; the inter-school pressure in competing for students, and the intra-school pressure

between departments and between teachers, specifically to design and implement marketing techniques in order to maintain or increase enrollment in their courses and curricular area.

Site Profile

Western Secondary School (a pseudonym) is the site used in this case study. Located in the northeast corner of the city, Western Secondary is made up of approximately 1300 students who live both in Burnaby, and in a neighbouring city. The community is primarily middle-class, with the average income per family for this school being \$57,900 per year. The school is located in an ethnically diverse area of Burnaby. According to the City of Burnaby Neighbourhood Profile, immigrants comprise 39% of the neighbourhood population surrounding Western Secondary and have immigrated primarily from China, South Korea, Pakistan, the Philippines and Hong Kong. Western Secondary enrolls 4.9% of its students in English as a second language classes. The school offers a variety of programs designed to reach a diversity of students from throughout the district, inclusive of both the advanced scholars attending the school and the special needs students that comprise 8.2% of the school population.

The school is home to two of the Burnaby School District's ACE-IT programs (Accelerated Credit Enrolment in Industry Training), one trades program, and one tourism program, where students come from throughout the district to learn specialized industry training programs and earn industry certification. In addition,

between 75 and 100 international students choose Western Secondary to study and live with host families in the community. The school also offers a focused sports academy, founded in 2008, in collaboration with a nearby university. Students enrolling in the sports academy are able to match their academic interests with their passion of sport, under the supervision of university coaches. Taking advantage of the developmental opportunities and training facilities available at the university allows students to focus on their sport more so than in a traditional secondary school program.

In addition to the choices available to students, such as district program offerings and availability of a sports academy, Western Secondary offers a high percentage of honours classes in English, Mathematics, Science, and Social Studies. Advanced Placement (AP) courses are also offered in English Literature, Calculus, Statistics, Chemistry, Physics, Biology, Environmental Science, European History, Human Geography, Economics, and Psychology. Typically, over 100 Western Secondary students write over 200 AP Exams each year, with a high percentage of students receiving a score of over 3 on a 5-point scale. AP courses are an important feature of this school, as its neighbouring secondary school, and its largest competitor for students, is home to one of the largest AP programs in the country. Perhaps due to its large honours and AP program offerings, Western Secondary took one of the top two spots for the school district in the Fraser Institute's annual school rankings this past year, based on provincial exam results and graduation rates.

Research Participant Profile

Seven participants were interviewed for research in this study. Four of the participants teach traditional academic subject areas, and three participants teach traditional elective area subjects¹. All seven research participants are Caucasian women and have an average teaching experience of 15 years. The traditional academic teachers interviewed were Lisa, Andrea, Michelle and Jennifer (pseudonyms). Lisa is a Social Studies departmental leader whose timetable includes teaching AP courses, and has been teaching for approximately fourteen years. Before her teaching career, she worked several years in a part-time customer service position within a unionized environment and also worked with special needs students in an after school program while attending university. Andrea is also a Social Studies honours teacher with approximately twenty years teaching experience. With a wide variety of part-time work experience prior to teaching and while attending university, including retail and writing positions, she now brings that experience into her varied curriculum. Michelle has been teaching a wide variety of junior and senior Mathematics courses for approximately thirty years. Prior to teaching, she worked in a plethora of positions. Working both full-time and part-time in the private and public sectors of government, retail, and insurance, she had some work experience prior to becoming a teacher. Jennifer also teaches junior and

¹ For the purpose of this study, traditional academic subject teachers include English, Social Studies, Mathematics or Science teachers. Elective subject area teachers include Art, Business Education, Home Economics, Music, Physical Education, Languages (French, German, Spanish), Drama and Technical Education teachers.

senior Mathematics, including AP courses, and has been teaching for approximately fifteen years. Other than a short time working in a part-time retail position through university, Jennifer had no work experience prior to becoming a teacher.

Three elective area teachers were also interviewed: Linda, Diane and Ellie (pseudonyms). Linda teaches French, an elective subject within British Columbia secondary schools from Grades 9 through 12, and has been teaching for approximately ten years. Prior to attending university, she worked full-time in the private sector administration field. Diane, a Home Economics teacher with approximately five years experience, worked with special needs children and adults part-time while in university studying to become a teacher. Lastly, Ellie is an Art teacher with approximately fifteen years of teaching experience. When working as a special education assistant and as a teacher's aide for several years, Ellie entered university with the encouragement of the teachers she worked with to then become a teacher herself.

Traditional Academic and Elective Subject Areas

Traditionally, core subject areas such as English, Social Studies, Science and Mathematics were thought of as academic, non-elective subjects. However, the line between traditional academic subject areas and elective subject areas has become blurred, especially for Grade 12 level courses. If students have taken the required Language Arts (English), Mathematics, Social Studies and Science courses until the Grade 11 level, the only remaining

mandatory, non-elective course they have to take in order to graduate is Language Arts. Come Grade 12, students now have seven elective courses at the Grade 11 or Grade 12 level that they can choose in order to complete their graduation requirements. Although by this time, students have completed their compulsory courses for Social Studies, Science and Mathematics, these departments have now grown to offer as many, if not more, elective courses in their curriculum. This movement into elective courses by traditional academic departments has blurred the line between what are and are not considered elective subject areas. As an example, Table 1 shows the Grade 12 elective course choices offered within the Language Arts, Social Studies, Science and Mathematics departments at Western Secondary:

Table 1: Grade 12 Elective Courses Offered by Traditional Academic Departments at Western Secondary School

Language Arts Grade 12 Elective Offerings	Social Studies Grade 12 Elective Offerings	Science Grade 12 Elective Offerings	Mathematics Grade 12 Elective Offerings
• Academic Reading and Writing 12	• AP European History 12	• AP Chemistry 12	• AP Calculus 12
• AP English Literature and Composition 12	• AP Human Geography 12	• AP Physics 12	• AP Statistics 12
• Writing 12	• AP Psychology 12	• AP Biology 12	• Calculus 12
• English Literature 12 Honours	• AP Micro & Macro Economics 12	• AP Environmental Science 12	• Pre-Calculus 12
	• BC First Nations Studies 12	• Biology 12	• Foundations Math 12
	• Comparative Civilizations 12	• Chemistry 12	• Apprenticeship & Workplace Math 12
	• Economics 12	• Physics 12	
	• Geography 12		
	• History 12		
	• Law 12		
	• Psychology 12		
	• Social Justice 12		

With the Social Studies department offering twelve Grade 12 elective courses, in comparison to the seven courses offered by Business Education, four offered by Home Economics, three by Technical Education or five offered by Physical Education, the term “elective” has taken on a more complex meaning to include all subject areas. It can be argued that, in essence, departments and their courses are competing both within their department and between departments for student enrollment, particularly at the Grade 12 level. Although this research is not specifically designed to study the impact of Grade 12 elective choice, it is at this level where most elective courses are offered. Two reasons that could account for this are that, in Grade 12, students have the ability to choose the most elective courses, and second, students at all grade levels are actually able to enroll in Grade 12 elective courses. Therefore, student enrollment can occur from several grade levels. Offering Grade 12 electives has the potential for the greatest return in terms of enrollment.

Competition Experienced by Teachers

Irrespective of their academic or elective teaching background, the teachers of Western Secondary all felt pressure in some form to maintain, or increase enrollment within their curricular area. Through questioning the research participants, it seemed as though the sources and intensity of the pressure varied greatly among teachers. There are several layers to the competition experienced by teachers, ranging from the inter-school pressure for Western Secondary to compete for students to the intra-school pressure of

competition between department units and between individual teachers. The following discussion is an attempt to develop an understanding of the nature of inter and intra-school pressures to compete and how such pressure is experienced by research participants.

Inter-School Competitive Pressure

Teachers appeared to be aware of the pressure that schools have to compete for students. Each teacher interviewed seemed to understand that the aspect of choice between schools and competition is merely a result of the impact of school choice and the dissolution of school boundaries. However, teachers at Western Secondary appeared to take a twofold approach to this provision of choice and competitive pressure for schools. Inter-school choice seemed to relate either to factors external to a teacher's control, such as government policy, or to a school's marketability, which some teachers attempt to influence through enhancements of their course offerings. Through this influence, teachers are therefore hoping to attract new students and keep current students interested in particular programs at the school.

Two external pressures, government policy changes to school boundaries and school rankings by the Fraser Institute, were named by some teachers as placing pressure on schools to compete for students. Although teachers were aware of the concept of school choice in the provision of offerings of programs and courses *within* schools, it was only the traditional academic teachers who correlated choice to the provincial policy change regarding school boundaries.

With the research participants having, on average, 15 years experience teaching, perhaps this connection by only academic teachers is due to the fact that, once school boundaries were dissolved, they perhaps felt pressure to enhance the marketability of their own elective courses. This would then increase the overall attractiveness of the school. Elective teachers have always worked in a system that placed more intra-school pressure on marketability for enrollment on their courses, and hence, it could be that the opening of school boundaries and consequent pressure for schools to compete was not as paramount in their curricular areas.

Lisa, Andrea, and Michelle, each an academic area teacher, sourced the erasure of school boundaries as a driving force behind competition between schools. Lisa repeated Ungerleider's (2003) notion of the commodification of education through school choice. "We have those, call it what you want, business evenings, where parents school shop since the opening of cross boundaries".

Although they had to succumb to the dissolution of school boundaries, the teachers surprisingly did not seem resentful to the change in government policy. It was just a matter of fact; an external change that necessitated schools to react accordingly. Michelle, the respondent with the longest teaching career, particularly noticed a change with the dissolution of school boundaries, and noted the policy change for the need for schools to compete.

"I noticed a change when the government policy regarding school boundaries changed. Prior to that date, schools really in a sense had a guaranteed community of students to draw their population from and once boundaries were open, and parents had choice."

Although one would think that the commodification of the educational marketplace and the resulting pressure for schools to compete would generate cynicism of the policy change by teachers, Michelle took the perspective of parents, in essence, shopping for their child's education. "Some parents are looking for academic programs, or particular programs. Some parents are looking for programs that – they like the idea of the choice, and look for a program that will meet their son or daughter's need." Linda echoed this from a school's perspective: "I think schools, when they realize the population they are serving, they need to cater to the needs of their population, so they offer what they feel best serves their population."

Although the teachers seemed aware of the demands that market choice has placed on schools, oddly, not one teacher correlated this pressure as being due to the provincial funding formula now being strictly driven by enrollment. It seems as though teachers are unaware of the current funding formula used by the provincial government and the impact that enrollment can make to the funding available to schools.

Teachers in this research study were asked to describe factors that cause parents to choose between schools for their child(ren) within a choice-oriented

environment, as listed in Table 2. With the exception of the external school rankings list comprised by the Fraser Institute, teachers cited internally driven factors such as the reputation of a school, based primarily on courses and programs offered, and word of mouth from other parents as factors that teachers believe parents use to choose a school for their child.

Table 2: Factors Influencing School Choice and Frequency of Response

FACTORS INFLUENCING SCHOOL CHOICE	FREQUENCY OF RESPONSE (out of 7 respondents)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reputation of the school <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>What courses and programs are offered</i> • <i>If it is a "good" school (general behaviour of students)</i> • <i>Results in standardized testing</i> • <i>Reputation of academic excellence</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5 (Andrea, Jennifer, Diane, Ellie, Linda)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Word of mouth / talking to and taking the advice of other parents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 (Andrea and Jennifer)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fraser Institute rankings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 (Andrea and Diane)

It may seem that with change in government policy beyond the control of schools and teachers, schools work within their control by altering the provision of programs and courses within the school in order to attract families. Teachers' opinion of internal provisions on course offerings having considerable impact on the influence of school choice could perhaps explain the growth of elective offerings to students, particularly within the traditional academic areas. Jennifer, teaching Mathematics, solely referenced this when asked her experience in terms for competition for students between high schools in Burnaby.

“I think schools try to offer as many courses as possible in order to remain competitive that way. We started off offering AP Statistics because other schools have it and we wanted to keep the students that we have here.”

In order to successfully compete for students in the school choice context, the teachers interviewed mentioned several effects that have occurred on the provision and offerings of programs and courses within Western Secondary. Outlined in Table 3, teachers seemed aware of the changes competitive pressure has placed on the organization and nature of secondary schools.

Table 3: School Choice Effects on Provision of Programs and Courses and Frequency of Response

SCHOOL CHOICE EFFECTS ON PROVISION OF PROGRAMS & COURSES	FREQUENCY OF RESPONSE (out of 7 respondents)
• Schools offering more courses, such as Advanced Placement	• 5 (Michelle, Andrea, Jennifer, Linda & Diane)
• Schools offering more specialized programs, including sports academy programs for market niches.	• 4 (Andrea, Jennifer, Linda & Diane)
• Schools offering more language programs, such as French Immersion and Mandarin core programs	• 1 (Andrea)
• Ensuring that schools offer more than just academic programs	• 1 (Lisa)

Western Secondary has attempted to meet each niche within the marketplace by offering a sports academy, a variety of elective subject areas and a vast amount of honours and Advanced Placement courses. Jennifer was not alone in thinking that AP courses were important in attracting students from

both within and outside the school community. Andrea also noted the importance of and draw to AP courses by stating that

“Burnaby has more AP courses than any other district in Canada and that is because we are trying to offer the things that students, well, a lot of times what parents, want. [Competition is] not just affecting schools within a district, but also schools from between districts. I know we lose some students in our district to a neighbouring city because they have the International Baccalaureate program, and we gain some from another city because we have more AP.”

AP courses were frequently determined by Western Secondary teachers to be a major marketable commodity for schools. The focus on AP courses within the Burnaby School district perhaps represents Adnett and Davies' (2005) view of expecting higher enrollments in subjects with higher perceived labour market returns. In addition to their rigorous academic curriculum and international recognition, AP courses give students who succeed the ability to obtain university credit for AP courses taken in high school; giving them the ability to join the labour market earlier, and at less of a cost.

Overall, it seems to be that teachers are conscious of the competitive pressure on schools to alter their provision of programs and courses in order to increase the marketability of their schools within a school choice climate. This awareness by teachers to market schools as a choice for students parlays into

the department's role of offering courses within a school, especially in offering advanced courses within the traditional academic curriculum.

Conversations with administration and consequent administrative pressure for teachers to assist in the marketability of a school seemed to expose a new layer to the presence of inter-school competition. Teachers responded to the administrative pressure to increase marketability quite differently than to external forces such as government policy changes. Being quite polarized in the effects of administrative pressure, there was evidence of teachers understanding, and at times agreeing with administrative pressure on teachers, however there was also outright resistance and probable resentment for such pressure being brought to a teacher's position.

Teachers at Western Secondary seem to perceive their administration as being fairly straightforward in response to the pressures of inter-school competition. One avenue for schools to increase their presence in the inter-school marketplace is through course selection evening. Two course selection evenings are held at Western Secondary each January; one for Grade 7 students and their parents who are choosing a school to attend next year for high school, and one for both current and potentially new students in Grades 9-12 and their parents to assist in the selection of courses for the next school year. Although she teaches highly marketable courses for the school, Andrea decided not to attend course selection evening this past year. In response to her absence, Andrea's administrator told her that "course selection isn't for

administrators, it is for teachers because of the competition between departments for students.” Disagreeing with her administrator, she responded “I know why course selection started – it started because there is competition now between schools.” It seems as though Andrea feels that increased marketing activity for schools assists the school itself, but not necessarily the teacher. However, Andrea and her administrator are disagreeing on the same goal. Students attending Western Secondary benefit both the school and the teachers in terms of funding, and in terms of enrollment. Course selection has been happening in secondary schools for a great deal longer than school choice. It would seem that more pressure has been placed on Andrea to publicly market her courses because of their draw of academic students to the school. This has likely happened with the parallel pressure on the administrator's role to maintain enrollment in order to maintain school funding.

Andrea's colleague Lisa, however, agreed with the view from administration. “Yes. We get pressure – administrative pressure to promote our courses. And rightfully so.” Lisa's opinion of competitive pressure is perhaps viewed from a departmental leaders' lens in having the responsibility to maintain courses within her department. This view could be from increased conversations on a school planning level, or to maintain staffing levels within her curricular area. Diane, an elective teacher, opted to attend the course selection evening. Although not directly asked to attend by her administration, she was approached to discuss the focus of the evening. “A few weeks ago, on

parent night, course selection evening,...my Vice Principal mentioned it to me that this was what it was pretty much about – that parents were choosing which school to take their kids to." Possibly, by reinstating the focus of the evening, the administrator was reiterating the importance of maintaining enrollment within Western Secondary.

Although teachers feel pressure from administrators to compete, it seems as though some teachers perceive it as normal, justified practice in secondary schools, while other teachers are more outright resistant to its presence. There are likely several reasons for this, which could include the history of the relationship between the administrator and the teacher, and the teachers' individual challenges with competitive pressure in the past.

Intra-School Competitive Pressure

Competitive Pressure Between Departments

Irrespective of curricular area, teachers at Western Secondary did seem to experience pressure between departments, however, not necessarily in the way that literature has indicated. Competitive pressure between departments seemed to take on two characteristics. First, as being more proactive, instead of reactive, by departments designing marketing activities and strategies to maintain enrollment and staffing, and second, as departments competing against each other within respectful and ethical boundaries.

When teachers were asked about the competitive pressure on their department, responses indicated some resistance of the idea of inter-

departmental competition. When discussing departmental competition, and its impact among colleagues, Michelle stated:

“I think your question suggests that there is pressure to compete to begin with, so it is a loaded question, but I do think that it is different for different departments....Again [asking if pressure to compete affects interactions between departments], it assumes there is pressure to compete. I am not certain if I accept the premise.”

With indication of competitive pressure in literature, such as Penney & Evans' (1995), view that, in order to survive, teachers need to attract resources, including pupils, the interview questions were formed to investigate the teachers' perceptions of such pressure. In reviewing the interview protocol, weakness was reflected in the absence of investigative questions that left open-ended whether or not competitive pressure existed between departments. Michelle's recognition that the question was leading could be due to her not perceiving competitive pressure, however, it could also be due to her position as an academic, non-elective teacher. When asked if she has ever had to cancel her own courses due to low enrollment, she did mention witnessing a couple general mathematics electives that were not successful, however she also mentioned “because I am in Math, and most students have to take a Math course and it is not an elective area, there are very few courses that we offer as an elective.” Michelle's response seemed rooted in challenging the existence of departmental competition, however it remains unknown whether it is due to the

non-existence of competitive pressure, or the fact that competitive pressure has not impacted the Mathematics department due to its mandatory enrollment or limited number of elective courses.

The ability for departments to protect themselves from departmental competition was alluded to through departmental teachers describing their subject area as unique. Respondents from Mathematics, Social Studies, Art, and Home Economics all described their curricular area as unique; however in various ways. Mathematics teachers stated that they are in a unique situation because they have a very high enrollment rate, Social Studies feels unique because of their specialty courses, Art because of their room layout and teaching style, and Home Economics (particularly foods classes) because of their ability to offer an applied program in which students actually get a hunger satisfying result at the end of the class. Although there was no specific mention to departments developing uniqueness in order to safeguard against direct departmental competition, it seemed as though it was used as an action taken by departments to resist the existence of competitive pressure. Although resistant to the idea of competitive pressure, it seems as though departments are well aware of its presence within the school and the need to compete, thus leading to development of marketing activities aimed at maintaining and/or increasing current enrollment within their department.

Teachers held distinct opinions as to whether the development of marketing activities aimed at maintaining and/or increasing enrollment was

actually a requirement of their job as a teacher. Diane, teaching Home Economics, "personally just see[s] getting students interested in my courses as part of the job" while Andrea, teaching Social Studies answered, "I think you can probably tell by my disdain[sic] – it is not my job" when asked how she feels about the marketing of courses. In continuing the discussion of marketing courses, Andrea mentioned,

"I tell [students] what the course is [about], that is a fair thing to do especially because it is not like it used to be, where if you did not like a course you could just drop it. Because there was too much movement at the beginning of the year, so now when you are in a course, you are in it."

It would seem as though Andrea's distaste of course marketing is due to personal feelings that students should not be persuaded to take courses that they may not be interested in, however it could also be due to her inexperience in marketing, having taught several courses in the past with mandatory enrollment. However, Diane's opinion of marketing being a part of her job could be due to the fact that, as an elective teacher, she is accustomed to marketing her courses in order to maintain student enrollment. Teachers could differ on opinion of marketing courses with different expectations of the role of a teacher. It could be likely that teachers feel their time should not be "spent on marketing efforts rather than enriching and developing curriculum" (Penney & Evans, 1995), which could contribute to resistance of marketing practices.

Forming strategies and techniques to market programs and courses to students at Western Secondary was common, though, and has seemed to manifest itself in a variety of ways. The strategies, outlined in Table 4, seem to fall along a continuum dependent on the amount of time and effort involved in the planning and execution of the strategy.

Table 4: Strategies Used by Teachers to Increase Enrollment and Frequency of Response

STRATEGY USED TO INCREASE ENROLLMENT	FREQUENCY OF RESPONSE (out of 7 respondents)
• Go to other classes to discuss course options or speak to own classes about successive courses	• 4
• Attending course selection night for parents	• 4
• Assigning 'popular' teachers to new or developing courses	• 3
• Designing courses that are modern, current and/or potentially controversial in topic matter	• 2
• Designing courses that are meaningful and relevant to students	• 2
• Designing courses with a timetabling niche (after school / offered every second year)	• 2
• Planning strategic yearly department events (for example, Arts Night, Arts Demonstration Week, Cooking Competitions)	• 2
• Traditional marketing such as posters, display cases, and bulletin boards	• 2
• Inviting students and classes to come and see demonstrations	• 1
• Offering courses that give more perceived economic benefit to parents (for example, AP courses in which students can receive college or university credit)	• 1

By being able to directly target their market, the most common strategy used among the teachers is to go to other classrooms and 'talk up' their elective class. Taking little preparation on behalf of the teacher, quite often this 'direct marketing' takes place in Planning 10 classes, or classes within the same

curricular area. Planning 10 is the ideal class for teachers to present; teachers will have a captive audience since the course is mandatory for all Grade 10 students, and it is the class in which course selection is completed. Perhaps more importantly though, is that Planning 10 at Western Secondary does not belong to any specific curricular area, and the blocks are all taught by a teacher independent from any particular department. Although teachers are competing for student enrollment, they are circumventing overt competition by not directly marketing a course in another department teacher's classroom. Planning 10 thus provides a neutral ground for competitive practice to occur between departments. In promoting Home Economics, Diane explained using this strategy. "Another thing we do is go around and talk to classes. This year, we went to Planning 10 classes and talked about what Home Economics is...just try to get the information out there for the kids." Planning 10 classes therefore provide the opportunity for both cooperative and competitive practices between departments, in that courses can be marketed without fear of visual, direct competition to colleagues.

The second most common strategy was attendance at the course selection evening, also referred to as a 'dog and pony show' by many of the teachers. Course selection evenings are rooted in marketing the school, and at the same time, provide teachers with an opportunity to vie for student enrollment within the intra-school marketplace. The competitiveness between departments to showcase their courses has brought the need for some schools

to introduce parameters to each department's display in terms of allotment of space and time constraints for set-up, therefore discouraging some aspects of competition among departments. Department members must then cooperate in making an informative and attractive departmental booth, while being respectful of the competitive boundaries designed by the school. By teachers adhering to the boundaries, they are showing a cooperative overtone while working in an environment with competitive pressure against other departments for student enrollment.

In preparing for course selection evening, teachers at Western Secondary seemed to work cooperatively as a department instead of competitively as individual teachers. Although they do not share the teaching of the same courses, within the Home Economics department Diane noted the specific departmental effort in dividing the responsibilities to prepare for course selection evening. Between preparing food to entice students and parents alike, making posters, and organizing demonstrations, the teachers spent weeks preparing the event. Although teachers could perhaps increase enrollment in their own particular courses by working individually and without sharing resources, it seems as though the teachers feel that working cooperatively will increase their marketability against other departments.

Two departments, Home Economics and Fine Arts, further exemplified departmental cooperative behaviour in response to the pressure to maintain, or increase enrollment within the intra-school marketplace. Developing school-

wide annual strategic marketing events for students, and taking commitment from the department as a whole, Home Economics has an after school cooking competition where students sign up as a team and compete to win prizes. The Fine Arts department has gone to the extent of producing an Arts demonstration week within the school, highlighting one aspect of the art department each day. Having the band play or students make pottery in the student commons has proved successful for the department. Regarding the event, Ellie said that

“we would take the wheels up to the main foyer and we would teach people how to throw a pot and students would say ‘oh my god, I can do it!’ Of course you can do it! We would then have overflowing classes of sculpture and ceramics.”

The proactive approach by department members in coordinating marketing activities to better compete for students within the school seemed to be in response to avoiding any departmental surplussing (being let go from your teaching position because the supply of teachers exceeds the demand for teachers in one’s curricular area). Even when developing AP courses at Western Secondary, the Mathematics department attempted to balance the needs of maintaining enrollment within the department with the consequence of other departments losing students. Michelle noted

“it is tricky because I don’t try to market the course so that someone can’t take another course, but at the same time I am interested in making sure

that our department blocks don't go down and that nobody in our department group is surplussed or having to be let go."

Surplussing was a very prominent and sensitive issue from the teachers interviewed. Five of the seven teachers interviewed specifically mentioned surplussing as what accounts for pressure to compete within a school. This pressure to maintain enrollment within a department was equivalent between both traditional academic teachers and elective teachers, especially because teachers perceive that surplus of teachers may not only happen when the supply of teachers exceeds demand for teachers within the department. One teacher, Andrea, thought teachers in disagreement with administration were also vulnerable to surplus, albeit an unethical and unwritten practice.

"Surplussing has been, or has become, the new way to get rid of teachers who have a voice of dissent." She also noted the importance of competing successfully for enrollment in order to keep her own specialty courses up and running, an attempt to avoid surplus. "If you don't have a strong contingent in it, then you are expendable." It would seem that both the direct and indirect understanding of surplussing has increased competitive pressure between departments in order to maintain enrollment. In response, teachers have chosen to work cooperatively within a department to maintain the number of blocks in order to preserve current staff.

Cooperative departmental behaviour seems to manifest itself in additional ways in order to avoid any surplus of current staff. Teachers are willing

to make sacrifices in order to maintain enrollment levels. In thinking about allocation of blocks within her department, Lisa explained that department teachers will take large class sizes in some classes in order to preserve a class with low numbers. "At all costs, we try to preserve. We will take a smaller class size with the spin off effects of having larger classes, the number of students in classes, to compensate to keep it alive." Lisa, knowing the difficulty of bringing back a class once it has reached zero enrollment, seems well aware of the connection between maintenance of blocks and avoidance of departmental surplus. This connection could be from Lisa spending each spring attempting to ensure that the enrollment numbers for her department are maintained for the teachers in the Social Studies department.

"You are there to preserve your job essentially. So, if your numbers drop, then you have to look at changes to get those numbers back up again. And I think that, we think about that from a departmental level too. If we all feel that way, then the numbers will be high for everyone."

In discussing the importance of maintaining departmental numbers, Lisa did not specifically mention direct competition with other departments, but the contrary. "For staff, [marketing strategies to attract students] mean jobs and we can potentially avoid surplussing that way. However, it is at the expense of other departments." Lisa seems to understand that her department must remain competitive and attract students within the school in order to avoid surplus. The recognition that this strategy could result in negative repercussions for other

departments places an aspect of understanding between the departments, despite the continual presence to compete with one another.

Although the traditional supply and demand model of surplussing compels teachers to take a competitive approach to maintaining their classes, the unwritten understanding that teachers must remain consistently inventive and current in their course offerings increases the pressure for teachers and departments to compete. As a Home Economics teacher, Diane correlates her fear of being surplussed to competitive pressure caused by the sheer amount of course and program choice available to students within Western Secondary.

“Really, just the fact that there is so much out there, so much choice.

Bottom line is that I know if the Home Economics department does not have enough interest, we lose blocks. We have to find other blocks, or we get less work. So I feel like my job depends on it.”

This presence of choice and competition within Western Secondary increases the importance of cooperation and teamwork within Diane's department in order to maintain the current staffing level within Home Economics. One would think that a teacher would be happy to teach a small class with less classroom management issues and report cards. However, for Diane, she feels badly in this scenario, perhaps alluding to the fact that cooperating departmentally is more important than her own personal benefit.

“If I have a class with only 12 kids, it means that someone else is taking up the rest of the kids and are having classes that are really large. So, as a

team, and as a member of a team, I often feel guilty with those really small classes."

However, interestingly, if Diane is teaching a class with only 12 students, perhaps she should be experiencing more pressure to compete more in order to avoid being surplussed.

Competition between departments seemed to be grounded in teachers' perceptions of professional, ethical practice. Lisa specifically mentions maintaining ethical practice when faced with pressure to compete. "In saying that there is competition, we try to do so as ethically and as fair as possible as these are our colleagues, and it is their jobs too. It doesn't feel good." She continues to describe how pressure to compete affects interactions between teachers and departments. "I think between departments it causes some discomfort. I think sometimes it undermines people's work ethics. I know from personal experience that department heads take it very personally...I think it undermines all the work that, say, fine arts people puts in." Lisa's understanding of the work that her colleagues put forth in developing their own courses shows her boundary of professional ethics and the respect for relationships she has with colleagues within the school. However, despite this respect for colleagues, this does not inhibit the Social Studies department from attempts to increase their enrollment, they just are more aware of ethical and fair practice within a competitive environment.

Competitive Pressure Between Teachers

Initially, this research set out to determine teachers' perceptions regarding the school ethos in relation to the relative degree of collaboration and competition within schools. However, in discussions with teachers at Western Secondary, it seems as though various competitive pressure on teachers does not affect collaboration between departmental teachers. This is not because of tension within the teachers' relationships; it is because of the lack of collaborative practice being present within the school at all. When questioned about collaborative projects between departments, teachers were challenged, with the exception of Ellie who has collaborated with other departments at her past school, to think of examples of collaboration. With little collaboration taking place among teachers at Western Secondary, the researcher is left to wonder if by chance the absence of collaboration can be attributed to competitive pressures that are present, or if the school design has just not allowed for it to occur. Unlike some other schools within the district, the timetable at Western Secondary does not include collaboration time within the timetable for teachers, which could also explain the lack of collaborative work happening within the school.

When asked if competition affects collaboration between teachers, Lisa was the only teacher to mention how competition could impact collaboration, however, it was hypothetical. "I think that sometimes people can be a little bit resistant to collaborating if there is some preexisting tension because of

competition. I would hope that people could clear the air and find the mutual ground I guess." The indirect nature of her response by not providing specific examples of collaboration further exemplifies the absence of collaboration at Western Secondary. Because of such, it remains unclear whether or not lack of collaboration is due to competitive pressure, although Lisa's attitude does show her belief that, even with competitive pressure, teachers could work respectfully to reach mutual understanding.

Within Western Secondary, a level of respect between departmental teachers has arisen; a form of resisting the competitive pressure that exists within the school. One form of this occurring is through the scheduling of blocks outside of the timetable to avoid directly competing with courses in other departments. In reply to whether there is pressure to be competitive with other departments, Andrea mentioned her feelings of competition becoming potentially destructive between departments within a school. "And that is part of the reason why I insisted that [my] enrichment course was outside of the timetable so it wouldn't be taking away from any of the elective courses." Her respect for colleagues was also similar to Lisa's feelings towards colleagues in elective departments. "In a lot of circumstances [elective courses] offer the most outside of the timetable extracurricular stuff for kids, and yet, it doesn't matter how much they put in, they are always competing with university bound kids, and that is too bad." Although still being departmentally competitive, Lisa seems aware of the challenges facing elective subjects and the strategies they use to maintain

enrollment. It seems as though Lisa is also aware of the struggles of students looking to enter university and their inability, at times, to fit elective courses within their timetable.

Teachers at Western Secondary seem to have professional limits to competitive behaviour, and provided several examples of unacceptable boundaries that they are unwilling to cross. Disingenuous marketing of courses as 'easy' seemed to be an ethical boundary for Andrea, leading to tension within a school.

"I think it creates tension, especially when somebody markets their course as 'easy'. "You are not good at taking tests? Oh, we won't take tests. You don't want to do this unit? Oh, we won't do this unit". That causes tension."

Ellie also recollected competitive marketing practices within her school, which seemed to push her boundaries of acceptable professional behaviour. When discussing her general thoughts about marketing courses to students, she was quick to note that her thoughts were dependent on how the marketing was done, and as long as all teachers had the same opportunities. She did, though, remember one questionable marketing practice by a colleague. "Once I remember somebody making something and attaching it to report cards and when I heard about that I was a little upset because who would think that you would be allowed to do that." What was surprising is that increased competitive pressure by colleagues at Ellie's previous school did not enact greater

competitive reaction on her part. With the view of other departments competing unethically, Ellie could have been driven to greater levels of competition for fear of losing enrollment in her own courses or department.

In resistance to competitive pressure, teachers at Western Secondary seem to be policing each other, approaching each other if they feel a competitive boundary has been crossed. Lisa provided an example of being approached by individual colleagues in response to her department's marketing methods:

"I have had people come to talk to me about the way in which – even within our department – how courses are marketed. So, we have refrained now, based on experience, from discussing assessment methods, for instance, someone doesn't do summative testing, we don't say that. We stick strictly to the content because other departments have raised concern about that as well as within our own department."

This example further exemplifies the respectful behavior and professional boundaries present among departments at Western Secondary teachers, despite competitive pressure. Individual Social Studies department members would directly benefit from higher enrollment in the Social Studies department, yet, were also driven to discuss potentially unethical marketing practices with Lisa. The Social Studies department did not need to refrain from discussing assessment methods, yet they did in order to maintain professional relationships among their colleagues.

Michelle echoes the value of professionalism despite competitive practice when being approached by individual colleagues about her department's marketing practices.

“[Being approached by colleagues] has never effected any personal or working relationship, in fact, I was grateful that the person felt comfortable enough to actually come and be forthright that this is a concern. That is a healthy response because then you can put it on the table and talk about it but it never went beyond the professional aspect of having that conversation, it was never taken personally. I have never seen it affect personal relations.”

In essence, through interviewing teachers at Western Secondary, it seems as though the preservation of respectful behaviour and professionalism between teachers are present despite the pressure to compete for students between departments. Competitive behaviour is certainly present for fear of departmental surplus, and although there is presence of marketing strategies within the school, they seem to have little effect on professional interactions and a professional ethos among staff. Instead, they have allowed teachers to set ethical boundaries to working within a competitive environment.

Researcher Reflections

When approaching the topic of intra-school choice in secondary schools and the resulting impact on interactions among colleagues, I did so without

realizing what impact my prior work and teaching experience would have on the ways I would perceive the expected results of the study. I have extensive education and experience working in business. Throughout the time spent completing my Bachelor of Commerce in International Business, I worked for a premiere hotel and resort chain, with the majority of time spent meeting (and often exceeding) sales targets. After moving to Ottawa, I then worked as a recruiter for a human resources organization, with the base of my salary being dependent on sales quotas reached. I currently teach Marketing and Entrepreneurship as a Business Education teacher. The lessons I plan surround analysis and creation of marketing plans and implementation strategies.

Throughout my teaching career, I have prided myself on the marketing of my own courses and the ability to increase the enrollment within my program each year. I have succeeded in resurrecting the Marketing program in two schools in the Burnaby School District, at one school increasing enrollment from under 30 students to over 120 within two years. I take events surrounding course selection very seriously, and view it as a reflection of my professional knowledge and ability to teach business studies. Just as a cooking teacher would show their knowledge in the culinary arts, accomplishing my goals of increasing my enrollment confirms my marketing skills and abilities.

Several aspects of this research project certainly surprised me, primarily pertaining to teachers' perceptions of competition with colleagues. Being an elective teacher, I have always thought of academic teachers as fortunate to

have guaranteed enrollment in their courses. In addition, I would have never thought that academic teachers would employ strategies to maintain enrollment in their courses while being cognizant of the negative repercussions this may cause to elective areas. Ellie, teaching Fine Arts, seemed to agree with my initial sentiment. When asked if she felt competitive pressure impacted professional interactions, she responded by saying

“we complain that those courses always get the students because they are mandatory or core subjects and we have to fight among ourselves for students. So we complain about that. I think it would be really cool to be guaranteed students every year because we are worried about it.”

It would seem that teachers in elective subject areas are incredibly unfamiliar with the number of elective courses that traditional academic curriculum areas have integrated into their curricula and the pressure that this has created on behalf of those departments. The lack of understanding on behalf of the elective teachers has now brought me to reflect on my own understanding of a secondary school's organizational culture.

Personally, I had always thought of competition between teachers and departments as a straightforward, black and white issue, however this research has shown me the various shades of gray. Initially, I had thought that teachers' perceptions of competitive pressure would vary more based on whether they taught an academic or elective subject. But instead, departments are feeling competitive pressure irrespective of what they teach. With each curricular area

within a school seeking enrollment in order to maintain staffing, departments are led to develop strategies and techniques to attract students. Although departments are working against each other competitively, the development of such strategies seems to be respectful in nature. Competition brings a sense of hierarchy within an organization, implying that there are winners and losers. Surprisingly, there seems to be an unwritten code among teachers, a sense of resisting the traditional, extreme competitive reactions that could occur within a business environment. Teachers between departments are working respectfully within a competitive system, adhering to professional ethics in order to maintain relationships with colleagues. Within departments, individualism does not seem to occur, it is more of a cooperative group effort in order for the department as a whole to succeed. From working with departmental colleagues for successful marketing strategies, to being respectful of the challenges of other departments, teachers at Western Secondary seem to be attempting to alleviate some of the potentially destructive effects that competitive pressure can create between departments; in essence contradicting Adnett and Davies' (2005) notion of teachers' collegial ethos being reduced with greater in-school competition.

The differing responses to similar challenges faced by academic and elective area subjects further challenged my own understanding of departmental culture. Lisa and the Social Studies department cooperated as a team to keep certain classes alive, despite the result of other classes within the

department being larger. Linda and the Languages department agreed to phase programs and courses out within the department, therefore letting go of blocks with low enrollment in the hopes of strengthening enrollment in other courses within the department. Instinctually, one would think that the Languages department, having all elective courses, would do all they could to maintain classes, while Social Studies, with several mandatory courses, would be more accepting of losing classes. Instead, this has shown how departmental decisions in response to competitive pressure vary widely. Perception of what is best for the department in order to build enrollment and protect teachers' positions in the long run takes input and cooperation from department members. This seems to reflect the research of Santee Siskin and Warren Little (1995), who have researched departmental communities that can have distinct differences in terms of climate and ethos, yet remain able to promote and facilitate changes within schools.

Course selection has long existed, as well as an internal marketplace within a secondary school. Unless there are special circumstances, the enrollment of secondary schools changes minimally each year, leading teachers to continue to innovate and market their courses for fear of being surplus. The cooperative nature and inherent importance of professionalism and maintenance of ethical practice by teachers of Western Secondary School brought to light that schools do not share many characteristics of the competitive business world I have experienced in my previous careers. Within a

business environment, workers typically exhibit self-serving behaviour in order to meet quotas and sales targets, irrespective of relationships with other department members. This has not shown to be the case in education, where department members cooperate in order to achieve common goals, and despite competitive pressure between departments, staff work within respectful and ethical parameters.

In reviewing my own practice, I have uncovered my own ethical boundaries in terms of what strategies I use to market my programs, just as the teachers interviewed. Both now, and earlier in my career, when the fear of surplus was paramount, I have used marketing strategies to sustain my program, and my position at the school. However, I always ensured that I was respectful of colleagues' time and space; never infringing what I perceived as colleagues student community or space, such as allotted area in the parent newsletter, bulletin boards around the school, or floor area for parent night displays.

In reflecting on the professional pressure to compete in my own position, I now wonder if I am driven to increase enrollment because of the genuine competitive pressure in my school environment to sustain my enrollment, or if it is more due to my own professional experience and personal goals for my curricular area. With questioning my own perceptions of pressure, coupled with the contrasting results from literature and my own research, Adnett and Davies (2005) were likely correct in their feelings of school choice (inter-school competition) taking the front seat in comparison to intra-school competition,

with little analysis being conducted of choice within schools. Certainly more research should be conducted to further determine the impact of intra-school competition on collegial ethos.

This research project has allowed me to step back from my own department and look at the school as a whole; a complex system of departments and individual teachers using personal codes of professional ethics. Teachers are driven to work together to protect positions in a competitive environment, while also doing their best to maintain collegial relationships. Ultimately, I am now more aware of the similar importance teachers place on relationship preservation and self-preservation in schools, and the challenge to maintain both concurrently.

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