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Understanding Site Selection of For-profit Educational Management Organization Charter Schools

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Abstract: The rise of for-profit EMOs often becomes evidence of substantial shifts in the governance of education, through which schooling may become privatized and commercialized. This study is designed to understand the economic behavior of for-profit educational management organization charter schools, by focusing on their site selection decisions as a critical factor in making a profit. Using the locations of for-profit EMO charter schools in Michigan, the study examines determinants of the location decision on charter school markets, with the choice set of potential school districts. This research finds changes of the odds ratio in the percentage of for-profit EMO charter schools, logged expenditures per pupil, and in the proportions of African-American populations, populations who have experienced higher education, and unemployed populations. Provided that for-profit EMO charter schools make a site selection decision according to areas with certain characteristics, the spatial disparity of access to charter schools can raise issues concerning unequal educational opportunities.

Keywords: for-profit; educational management organization; charter school; location

Entendiendo la selección de local de organizaciones charter de organización educativa con fines de lucro

Resumen: La aparición de EMO con fines de lucro a menudo se convierte en evidencia de cambios sustanciales en la gobernanza de la educación, a través de los cuales la escolarización puede tornarse privatizada y comercializada. Este estudio fue elaborado para entender el comportamiento económico de las escuelas charter de organizaciones de gestión educativa con fines lucrativos, concentrándose en sus decisiones de selección de local como un factor crítico para obtener ganancias. Utilizando la ubicación de escuelas charter EMO con fines de lucro en Michigan, el estudio examina los determinantes de la decisión de localización en los mercados de escuelas charter, con la elección de los distritos escolares potenciales. Esta investigación encuentra cambios en la razón de posibilidades en el porcentaje de escuelas charter EMO con fines lucrativos, gastos registrados por alumno, y en las proporciones de poblaciones afroamericanas, que tienen educación superior y poblaciones desempleadas. Dado que las escuelas charter EMO con fines de lucro toman una decisión de selección de local de acuerdo con áreas con ciertas características, la disparidad espacial de acceso a escuelas charter puede plantear cuestiones sobre oportunidades educativas desiguales.

Palabras clave: con fines de lucro; organización de gestión educativa; escuela charter; localización

Entendendo a seleção de local de organizações charter de organização educacional com fins lucrativos

Resumo: O surgimento de EMOs com fins lucrativos muitas vezes se torna evidência de mudanças substanciais na governança da educação, através das quais a escolarização pode se tornar privatizada e comercializada. Este estudo foi elaborado para entender o comportamento econômico das escolas charter de organizações de gestão educacional com fins lucrativos, concentrando-se em suas decisões de seleção de local como um fator crítico para obter lucro. Usando a localização de escolas charter EMO com fins lucrativos em Michigan, o estudo examina os determinantes da decisão de localização em mercados de escolas charter, com a escolha de potenciais distritos escolares. Esta pesquisa encontra mudanças na razão de chances na porcentagem de escolas charter EMO com fins lucrativos, gastos registrados por aluno, e nas proporções de populações afro-americanas, que têm educação superior e populações desempregadas. Desde que as escolas charter EMO com fins lucrativos tomem uma decisão de seleção de local de acordo com áreas com certas características, a disparidade espacial de acesso a escolas charter pode levantar questões sobre oportunidades educacionais desiguais.

Palavras-chave: com fins lucrativos; organização de gestão educacional; escola charter; localização

Introduction

As recent school policies triggered by market metaphors put weight on competition among educational service providers, educational marketplaces are facing growing diversification in management with the involvement of non-traditional educational organizations, such as profit-oriented entities and philanthropic agencies. Proponents of marketization in education have argued that such mixed-mode markets, where for-profit organizations coexist with non-profit ones (Marwell & McInerney, 2005), could be the best way to deliver schooling on the grounds that competition among service vendors brings about better services, lower prices and higher satisfaction. Echoing this promising potential, outsourcing the management and operation of public entities from private organizations is becoming increasingly common in the public school systems. We specifically call this “private organization or firm that manages public schools, including district and charter public schools” an educational management organization, or EMO (Miron & Gulosino, 2013, p. 2). While the previous business model simply contracted with private organizations to sell school supplies or provide transportation services, the currently rising EMOs closely engage in in-class instruction by providing ready-to-use academic activities and tools (Miron, 2008).

In particular, the appearance of EMOs fuels the expansion of charter schools, which are publicly funded but *privately managed* (Bulkley, 2005; Engel, 2000). Many state charter school laws allow private companies and firms to take part in competitive education markets in the attempt to depart from a “one-size-fits-all” model (Miron, Evergreen, & Urschel, 2008; Scott & DiMartino, 2010). EMOs with specialized knowledge and professional experience have supported the establishment and management of charter schools, which are provided with limited administrative and instructional support from school districts in exchange for relatively greater autonomy. The potential of monetary benefit from leasing contracts with charter school founders has attracted profit-oriented EMOs to enter into charter school markets, as well as charter school management organizations derived from the non-profit sector in the late 1990s.

With the growth of charter schools administered by EMOs, differences among charter schools by management type have been well-documented (H. Brown, Henig, Lacireno-Paquet, & Holyoke, 2004; Fuller, Gawlik, Gonzales, Park, & Gibbings, 2003; Lacireno-Paquet, 2004; Morley, 2006). Yet, the findings on school budgets, student enrollment patterns and test scores have resulted in controversial questions over success and failure of the autonomous public schools operated by for-profit EMOs. For example, the extant research points out disparities in charter school enrollment patterns according to management orientations, so heightens the concern that for-profit EMO-operated charter schools are more likely to serve a lower proportion of minority and disadvantaged students (Ertas & Roch, 2014; Henig, Holyoke, Brown, & Lacireno-Paquet, 2005; Lacireno-Paquet, Holyoke, Moser, & Henig, 2002; Miron, Urschel, Mathis, & Tornquist, 2010; U.S. Government Accountability Office, 2012; Zollers & Ramanathan, 1998). A number of studies indicate that students in profit-oriented EMO charter schools have mixed, or often worse, academic growth (Byrnes, 2009; Educational Policy Institute, 2005; Garcia, Molnar, & Barber, 2009; Gill, Zimmer, Christman, & Blanc, 2007; M. A. Mac Iver & Mac Iver, 2006; Miron, 2008; U.S. Government Accountability Office, 2003).

The discouraging statements established in a wealth of literature on EMOs, however, do not provide fundamental information concerning charter schools under profit-oriented organizations. In contrast to non-profit EMOs built upon philanthropic objectives and altruistic orientations, EMOs driven by the principle of profit maximization reckon with instructional activities as a moneymaking commodity to be sold to families. This inherent preference toward monetary incentives groups customers into potentially profitable ones or not, and values marketplaces that are likely to be

financially rewarding in the future. When a certain fraction of EMOs align their educational activities more with maximum returns for investments rather than with benefits to children, their fiscal motives are deliberately integrated with a site selection decision for better access to desirable customers in convenient regions. Given that service vendor location serves as a gateway to service utilization, the involvement of for-profit EMO operated charter schools in traditional public school systems has the potential to create EMO charter school deserts or oases. Although the growing number of profit-driven EMO charter schools calls for empirical scrutiny of their locations behind market features and the resulting impacts on students, there is a dearth of knowledge on the decision about where profit-oriented EMOs open their business. Relatively little research has been devoted to shedding light on what market characteristics lead for-profit EMOs to engage in education markets ultimately serving the public good. Since the privatization in other public service sectors has consistently challenged issues such as social inclusion and civic engagement (Warner & Hefetz, 2002), this study examines locational decision as a critical consideration in generating profit. This may offer a glimpse into the economic behavior of particular EMO charter schools, whose initial objectives are to maximize profit.

Research Background

In the US, the number of enrollments in charter schools operated by private management organizations, which are run for profit or operated on a non-profit basis, has reached about 44% (Miron & Gulosino, 2013). The number of for-profit EMOs also increased to 97 by operating 840 charter schools and serving about 460,000 students in the 2011-12 school year, in comparison with the 2001-02 school year where 36 for-profit EMOs ran 368 charter schools (Miron & Gulosino, 2013; Miron, Urschel, Yat Aguilar, & Dailey, 2012; Molnar, Wilson, Restori, & Hutchison, 2002). Though for-profit EMOs are steadily expanding their market share of charter schools, a growing body of research on profit-motivated EMOs has focused little on underlying questions of who they are, what stimulates their engagement in public education, and how they respond to quasi-market structures. This section reviews the manner in which business and industry utilize profitable opportunities in markets for public services, and outlines how their economic behaviors may be replicated and modified in the education sector.

For-Profit Entity Behaviors in Not-For-Profit Markets

Inspired by the ideological argument for efficiency and effectiveness of public services delivered by competitive markets, a number of local and state governments in the US have transferred activities and functions from public spheres to private organizations, only leaving authorities to governmental agencies (Starr, 2014; Wettenhall, 2003). This blurring distinction between public and private domains not only challenges the traditional approach to distinguishing public and private organizations by ownership, funding and control, but also demands empirical research on the potentials and pitfalls of competitive environments (Boyne, 2002; Bozeman, 1987; Rainey, 1979). Therefore, apart from the examination of productivity in public-private partnerships through contracting and outsourcing, the increasing involvement of non-governmental organizations in public service delivery invites investigation into how well their behaviors and the corresponding consequences demonstrate alignment with public values, such as accountability, equity and responsiveness (Besley & Ghatak, 2003; Le Grand, 2007; Warner & Hefetz, 2002). In the neoliberal era, searching for a synergy through competition and collaboration between governmental agencies and diverse providers, profit-seeking enterprises engaging in a complex joint market have been required to share responsibility for equal access to and utilization of services (Bozeman, 2007; T. L. Brown, Potoski, & Van Slyke, 2006; Warner & Hefetz, 2002). Proponents of market

mechanisms have claimed that the rise of privatization in public service fields would not necessarily result in the destruction of equity unlike a zero-sum game (Freeman, 2003; Reitz, 2008).

Still, much work to date has suggested that private sectors threaten public interest values with regard to accessing and utilizing public services in quasi-markets (Andrews & Entwistle, 2010; Andrews & Van de Walle, 2013; Robinson, 2007; Warner & Hefetz, 2008). Many researchers have found that transfer of public money to private entities fails to keep the balance between private interests and democratic values, and causes unintended harm to vulnerable populations in the contexts of military and prison (Gran & Henry, 2007; Minow, 2005; Ravitch, 2013). Such criticisms, that processes and outcomes by private organizations in public domains undermine social justice, have more often targeted for-profit organization than not-for-profit entities. Non-profit organizations with diverse missions, including charitable objectives and religious motivations, potentially contribute to social inclusiveness and justice (DiMaggio & Anheier, 1990; Weisbrod, 1988), and indeed several studies evince advantages and benefits of non-profit status organizations in public services (Amirkhanyan, Kim, & Lambright, 2008; Cleveland & Krashinsky, 2009; Ferris & Graddy, 1999). On the other hand, the distinct organizational orientation toward profit maximization often becomes incompatible with collective purposes required in publicly offered products and services. Private entities with the focus on economic incentives can maneuver strategies to reach out to favorable targets while lowering operating costs and enhancing customer satisfaction. (Besley & Ghatak, 2003; Boyne, Powell, & Ashworth, 2001; Garrity, Garrison, & Fiedler, 2010). However, such tailored strategies to offer service access to profitable customers do not justify the generic goal of obtaining financial gains dedicated by for-profit entrepreneurs. The rising delivery of public services by profit-seeking entities cannot be completely free from discourse of public interest related to equitable access for service utilization (Cameron, 2004; Haque, 2001; Heen, 2004; Sinclair, 2003; Tilak, 2008).

Impact of Location on Access to Quasi-Markets

As widely used management behaviors for profit maximization, price competition and location selection deserve more attention as illustrative evidence (Hotelling, 1929). However, the story becomes complicated in the case of profit-seeking organizations, specifically those that offer public services and are operated with public money. Because tax-based services and facilities are not initially aimed at yielding a surplus over operating expenses, most public domains regulate and fix prices in terms of equitable access to services through increasing affordability. For-profit entities serving public services are also restricted from attracting customers through differentiated price policies. Thus, as a location decision functions as a major proxy for obtaining financial advantages in competitive contexts, profit-seeking organizations may more aggressively value location in order to position themselves closer to desirable customers.

The real problem, as a number of studies have indicated, is that location has historically delivered identifiable information with reference to race, ethnicity, income, education, wealth, and other factors (Bader & Krysan, 2015; Clark, 1992; Emerson, Chai, & Yancey, 2001; Highsmith & Erickson, 2015; Jargowsky, 2014; Krysan, Couper, Farley, & Forman, 2009). Profit-oriented service vendors, seeking to identify who are financially profitable customers, can make judgments about potential markets on the basis of the demographic and socioeconomic features in a specific place, regardless of service benefits and demands. Their behavior holds great potential for empowering a certain group of people to exercise choice in markets, or allowing limited access to given student populations with special needs in disadvantaged areas (Le Grand, 2007; Savas, 2005; Starr, 2014). In other words, the location decision designed for profit maximization in not-for-profit market leads to

an over- or under-supply of for-profit organizations in particular regions, which in turn would lead to uneven distributions of public services by provider types.

With regard to the concern about businesses' reactions caused by locational advantages and disadvantages, market theorists have maintained that spatial patterns of for-profit entities in public service sectors do not matter. In the past, full access to specific service options has been bounded within pre-designed zones invoking the classic argument of voting-with-one's-feet, whereas current open marketplaces could allow customers with free will to choose any service option across areas without geographic restrictions or interferences (Chubb & Moe, 1990; Tiebout, 1956). Nevertheless, previous research consistently demonstrates that choice can only work properly under the circumstance where users have access to markets within their adjacent neighborhoods (Briffault, 1996; Le Grand, 2007; Levett, 2003; Nechyba, 2010). Particularly taking into account most beneficiaries who are less likely to travel farther away to shop for public healthcare and education (Field & Briggs, 2001; Hastings, Kane, & Staiger, 2005; Neutens, 2015; Roghmann & Zastowny, 1979), a geographical imbalance between supply and demand may give rise to the lack of competition and the declining quality of services in public service markets (Brekke, Siciliani, & Straume, 2011; Kain, 1992; Van Slyke, 2003). The manner in which corporations respond to market forces through site selections may undermine the foundation of public services pursuing public purposes.

Site Selection of For-Profit EMO Charter Schools

As service users in education markets, parents are more likely to enroll their children in geographically accessible schools and be satisfied with having one or more schools within not-too-distant areas (Burgess, Greaves, Vignoles, & Wilson, 2015; Glazerman, 1998; Goldring & Hausman, 1999; Hanushek, Kain, & Rivkin, 2004; Hastings et al., 2005; Le Grand, 2007; Marshall et al., 2010; Rhodes & DeLuca, 2014; Theobald, 2005). Despite having with no exclusionary zoning policies, proximity has been a factor in utilization of school options in educational markets (Keddie, 2016; Lubienski, Lee, & Gordon, 2013). Furthermore, some level of stability in charter school markets, derived from little student mobility and government restrictions on school establishment and licensing, can reinforce the importance of locational incentives in charter school positioning (Betts, 2005; Gulosino & Miron, 2017; Hastings et al., 2005; Renzulli & Evans, 2005). With this in mind, it is not surprising even if for-profit EMO-operated charter schools become highly dependent upon the analysis of a place in which the organizations are able to yield financial gains in territories subdivided by race, ethnicity, poverty, education, employment and occupation (Conn, 2002; Jargowsky, 1997; Lichter, Parisi, & Taquino, 2012; Massey & Denton, 1993; W. J. Wilson, 2012). For example, charter schools initiated by for-profit firms in Washington, DC, were located in census tracts with fewer populations of Hispanic origin, more households with homeownership, and more vacant school buildings (Henig & MacDonald, 2002). A number of for-profit EMO charter schools in the US were more likely to be situated in economically advantaged regions with more homeowners and fewer Title-I eligible families (Robertson, 2015). A large proportion of some charter schools operated by EMOs running for profit employed certain recruiting strategies associated with spatial attributes, by opening their business in areas with more non-disability students and socioeconomically advantaged families (Estes, 2004; Gulosino & Lubienski, 2011; U.S. Government Accountability Office, 2012; Zollers & Ramanathan, 1998).

Of course, market strategies used by profit seeking EMOs are not solely responsible for charter school locations. State laws and local policies to promote the establishment of charter schools in an attempt to serve more at-risk children stall the market entry decision of for-profit EMOs. The capacity and inclination of communities can limit the discretion of profit-oriented EMO

charter schools on site selection. Nonetheless, extant evidence on spatial preferences of charter schools consistently raises concerns that EMOs seek to yield a high return on investment through neighboring students in need of less costly and time-consuming services (Gulosino & d'Entremont, 2011; Gulosino & Lubienski, 2011; Lubienski, Gulosino, & Weitzel, 2009; Robertson, 2015). In spite of its considerable contribution, the current studies provide insufficient insights into distinct market behaviors presented by EMO charter schools. The findings, mainly drawn from enrollment data of student and family characteristics and locational information derived from resident attributes, take no account of potential markets for prospective demands and the size of competitors. A few studies have illuminated the profit-making schemes of educational organizations, by investigating how educational service providers were sensitively responsive to the dynamic of schooling markets (Gulosino & Miron, 2017; Weber & Baker, in press). They generally indicated that the inclination to strengthen revenue sources over expenditures constructed the geographical cluster of charter schools operated by profit-making management organizations by suggesting the high dependence upon financial resources. Though there remains the fundamental difference that their studies relied on private schools as non-profit organizations, Downes and Greenstein (1996, 2002) studied the locational decision of existing and newly opened private schools. Their studies found that private schools assigned different value to student demographics and the characteristics of school districts and neighboring areas in competitive environments. In enhancing research on the role and limitation of for-profit entities in not-for-profit markets, their research results offer a noteworthy and comprehensive approach to seeking monetary incentives in educational markets in terms of the foundation of public schooling.

Data and Methods

This study is not intended to describe simple locational characteristics of for-profit EMO charter schools by comparing with other market competitors such as non-profit EMO charter schools and private schools. Rather, this study shifts interest toward economic behaviors in order to better understand differentiated engagement in profit-seeking. By focusing on the state of Michigan with the largest for-profit EMO charter school markets, this allows us to explain how for-profit EMO charter schools differently respond to market attributes.

Charter School Contexts in Michigan

Legally known in the state as “public school academies,” a charter school in Michigan is “a state-supported public school under the state constitution, operating under a charter contract issued by a public authorizing body” (Michigan Department of Education, 2012). Like other states establishing charter school laws, Michigan charter schools that do not charge tuition shall not discriminate applicants on the basis of their race, ethnicity, intellectual or athletic ability, and disability status in admission processes. Excluding very few exceptions, enrollment in the charter schools is open to all children who reside in Michigan, and is not limited by the political boundaries such as attendance zones and school district borders. The Michigan Revised School Code allows multiple authorizers, such as the governing board of colleges and universities and intermediate (essentially county-level) school districts, to issue a charter school contract and oversee the school. Michigan charter schools can make the management agreements on administrative and instructional services with for-profit business corporations. The first charter school in Michigan opened in 1994, and by the 2010-11 school year Michigan was operating about 270 charter schools, serving 7% of all Michigan students. The Detroit metropolitan area has the highest charter school market share among school districts serving more than 10,000 students in the United States following New Orleans and District of Columbia (National Alliance for Public Charter Schools, 2012). In Michigan,

with this highly competitive charter school market, over 70% of total charter schools are operated by either non-profit or for-profit EMOs. This market proportion initiated by EMOs is over two times higher than the national average of less than 30% of charter schools being run by education management organizations.

Market Density in Site Selection

Site selection is the business strategy broadly adopted by for-profit firms before they take on specific actions to survive in competitive markets and maximize financial gains (Bartik, 1985; Caves & Porter, 1977; Fuentelsaz & Gómez, 2006; Marwell & McInerney, 2005; Zhang, Sun, & Tang, 2013). Therefore, the examination of market conditions affecting site selection has been critical to the business and industry sectors, and can offer substantial information about what promotes or hinders the evolution of markets. In order to demonstrate circumstances in which organization founders define market opportunities, several scholars have explored the difference in organizational behaviors among incumbents and late entrants by focusing on timing of market entry (Gallego, Hidalgo, Acedo, Casillas, & Moreno, 2009; Lilien & Yoon, 1990; Sinha & Noble, 2005). Exploiting the advantage that a judgment of where to locate is explicitly observable, previous studies have commonly emphasized that location strategies are closely tied to market densities obtained from the evaluation of competitors, as well as consumer features and needs (Bresnahan, Reiss, Willig, & Stigler, 1987; Gentry, Dalziel, & Jamison, 2013; Haveman, 1994; Kumar & Subramanian, 1997). Apart from the demand size represented by density of the population of school-aged children, the volume of service vendors with similar traits located in both physical and competitive distance may determine where educational service vendors initiate business, even when controlling for other potential market characteristics (Carroll & Hannan, 1989; Miller & Eden, 2006; Stretesky, Huss, & Lynch, 2012).

Given the intermingling of market characteristics and densities in site decision, the research design of this study is inspired by the traditional model developed by Bresnahan and Reiss (Bresnahan et al., 1987; Bresnahan & Reiss, 1990; 1991), and at the same time guided by the studies conducted under Downes and his colleagues (Downes & Greenstein, 1996; Downes & Zabel, 2002). To explore market density as a determination of for-profit educational organizations' location in quasi markets, this research works on three assumptions. First, all for-profit EMO charter schools have the same objective, maximizing profit. This study presumes that the solid business objective of profit-seeking directs a certain group of EMOs in competitive landscapes to common economic behaviors. Second, a for-profit EMO charter school competes with educational providers with similar features such as pre-existing private schools and other charter schools. Those selected competitors in this research have discretion over locating themselves for being privately operated. Their decision on site selection takes an influential role in shaping market density in traditional school markets where a district's capacity for serving children decides school locations, opening, consolidations and closures. Last, the catchment area of a particular for-profit charter school is not necessarily limited to the school district in which the charter school is geographically sited. As the past research on spatial characteristics of charter schools has insufficiently pictured market features that lead charter schools to engaging in a local educational market, the last two assumptions contribute to strengthening the significance of this study by paying attention to competitors within potential accessible areas. According to these assumptions, charter school i 's decision on location into school district j is assumed to be represented by the following equation:

$$E_i^j = f(C^j, X^j, C^{-j}, X^{-j}, W_i^j)$$

Equation 1

where C^j is the number of competitors in school district j , C^j is the number of competitors in other school districts in the choice set, X^j is characteristics of school district j , X^j is characteristics of neighboring school districts in the choice set, and ω_i is the error term.

In Equation 1, the manner of defining an appropriate choice set plays a decisive role in explaining what features stimulate individual EMOs to get involved in a particular market, which is expected to allow the maximization of profits. Some studies establish potential choice sets within a given mile radius from homes (Bell, 2009; Burgess, Greaves, Vignoles, & Wilson, 2011; Cobb & Glass, 1999), and a number of scholars identify a charter school's catchment area as the Census geographic units and school attendance boundaries to which the charter school belongs (Garcia, 2008; Ritter, Jensen, Kisida, & Bowen, 2016; Saporito & Sohoni, 2006; 2007; Sohoni & Saporito, 2009). Even though these technical approaches may be a simple and convenient method, they have impeded the progress of research on access to charter schools with non-residence requirements in competitive markets. Therefore, this study proposes two choice sets of potential school districts: 1) the first adjacent school districts of school district j and 2) all school districts within the same county where charter school i is located. This approach expanding accessible markets on the supply side can lessen impacts that individual local contexts respond for or against charter school openings in their communities on site selection. Considering that state governments have mainly legislated charter school rules and regulations, for-profit entities can equally survey the districts in one single state for relatively homogenous institutional backgrounds. The probability that charter school i chooses to enter at school district j among the set of potential school districts is found by a mixed effects logistic regression in R using the lme4 package.

Data. The list of Michigan traditional public and charter schools during the 2010-11 school year was drawn from the Common Core Data by the National Center for Education Statistics, and then the charter schools were categorized into two groups, either for-profit or non-profit ones, based on the list of EMO charter schools which the National Education Policy Center publishes annually. As main competitors of for-profit EMO charter schools, non-public schools in Michigan were retrieved from the Michigan Department of Education. Using the Common Core Data, school district characteristics include graduation rates, dropout rates, logged expenditures per pupil, and the percentages of students who demonstrate proficiency in math, of students who are proficient in reading, of English language learners of students eligible for free or reduced lunch, of African-American students, and of students with Hispanic or Latino origin. Based on the extensive research on segregation and stratification, community features at the census block group level take into account the percentages of African-American populations, of populations with Hispanic or Latino origin, of populations 25 years and over with a high school diploma, of populations 25 years and over who have experienced college education for more than one year, of populations aged 25 to 59 who are unemployed, of families under the poverty level, of housing units occupied by owner, of housing units with no car, and vacancy rates. These community features were extracted from the 2009-2011 American Community Survey 3-year estimates provided by the Census.

Findings

A profit-oriented organization's location decision toward competitive markets can illuminate one shade of multifaceted organizational behaviors, by presenting the procedure to define prospective consumers and gather information about future markets. As this study operationally designs two potential choice sets from the supply side, Table 1 and 2 respectively demonstrate the results of the characteristics of school district, community and number of competitors by choice set. The first market includes only the closest neighboring school districts from the location of for-profit

EMO charter schools, and the second one expands its market size up to the same county where for-profit EMO charter schools are located.

Table 1 shows estimates of the parameters for the choice set of the school district where a for-profit EMO charter school is located and its closest surrounding school districts. In Model I of Table 1, only considering school district characteristics, for-profit EMO charter schools are more likely to position themselves in school districts that outperform in math, spend more money, have more students eligible for free or reduced-price lunch, and serve more minority students, in comparison with the neighboring school districts. However, for-profit EMO charter schools prefer school districts that have lower high school graduation rates and fewer students advanced in reading in comparison with the adjacent school districts. Model I of Table I specifically stresses that a school district's spending increases three times in the odds ratio that a for-profit EMO charter school makes a site selection decision based on the school district, controlling for other characteristics at the school district level. In Model II of Table 1, all community features, except for the proportions of homeowners and housing units without cars, lead to increases in the odds ratios of positioning in a given school district, whereas there is no statistical significance in the unemployment rate and the share of populations with Hispanic or Latino origin. Looking at competitors in the choice set in Model III of Table 1, for-profit EMO charter schools tend to locate their business in competitive school districts where other profit-oriented EMO charter schools and private schools already exist.

Table 1

The estimates for the choice set of the first neighboring school districts

| | I | II | III | IV | V |
|--|------------|------------|-----------|------------|------------|
| School district | | | | | |
| % of proficiency in math | 0.245*** | | | 0.184*** | 0.140** |
| % of proficiency in reading | -0.150*** | | | -0.071* | -0.071 |
| Graduation rate | -0.002*** | | | -0.008 | -0.020 |
| Dropout rate | -0.014 | | | -0.031 | -0.037 |
| Logged expenditure per pupil | 1.409** | | | 1.281* | 2.082*** |
| % of English language learners | 0.002 | | | -0.029 | -0.043** |
| % of students eligible for free or reduced lunch | 0.016** | | | 0.049*** | 0.038** |
| % of African-American students | 0.013*** | | | -0.075*** | -0.103*** |
| % of students with Hispanic or Latino origin | 0.038*** | | | -0.046 | -0.055 |
| Community | | | | | |
| % of African-American populations | | 0.005*** | | 0.082*** | 0.100*** |
| % of populations with Hispanic or Latino origin | | 0.092 | | 0.141** | 0.177*** |
| % of population 25 years and over with high school diploma | | 0.132*** | | 0.163*** | 0.182*** |
| % of population 25 years and over with college education | | 0.124*** | | 0.159*** | 0.165*** |
| % of families under the poverty level | | 0.129*** | | 0.092*** | 0.106*** |
| % of populations aged 25 to 59 who are unemployed | | -0.018 | | 0.033 | 0.043 |
| Vacancy rate | | 0.027** | | -0.006 | -0.015 |
| % of housing units occupied by owner | | -0.049*** | | -0.061*** | -0.081*** |
| % of housing units with no car | | -0.104*** | | -0.078** | -0.128*** |
| Competitor | | | | | |
| % of for-profit EMO charter schools | | | 0.035*** | | 0.055*** |
| % of not-for-profit charter schools | | | 0.020 | | 0.030 |
| % of private schools | | | 0.026*** | | 0.020** |
| Constant | -25.379*** | -11.319*** | -3.106*** | -36.367*** | -38.164*** |

* $p < .10$; ** $p < .05$; *** $p < .01$

Although small changes of the estimates at the fifth and sixth columns of Table 1 are detected when holding competitors at a fixed value, Model V in Table I counts the substantial increase in the likelihood that a given school district's expenditure encourages for-profit EMO charter schools to be engaged in the market in a similar fashion to Model I and IV. The last column of Table 1 shows that the combination of community characteristics and competitor information identifies the three descriptors of school districts, i.e. the proportion of proficiency in reading, the percent of Hispanic or Latino students and the graduate rate, as non-significant. Model V in Table 1 also demonstrates that EMO charter schools with the purpose of profit maximization are more likely to be established in a school district with great proportions of African-American and Hispanic populations. The proportion of English language learners in a given school district, which is not statistically significant in Model 1 of Table 1, contributes to the considerably negative impact on a site selection of for-profit EMO charter schools. Taking into consideration market density leads to the increase in the coefficients for the statistically significant market factors in Model IV in Table 1, except the percent of proficiency in math and the percent of students eligible for free and reduced lunch.

Overall, profit-seeking EMO charter schools tend to situate in communities with populations of color and educated adults. The significantly positive estimate of the presence of for-profit EMO charter schools in a given school district, compared to its adjacent school districts, suggests that market research of educational businesses on location corresponds to common factors, rather than filling a market niche in the charter school landscape. In addition, the estimates in Table I do not emphasize structural differences in the variances by choice set solely embedding the first neighboring school districts. Such insignificant variances among the choice sets suggest that the local markets in which profit-motivated EMOs select for their business rest on mostly similar characteristics, irrespective of any disparities among the counties within the state.

Given that enrollment in charter schools is not restricted by where students reside, their families are able to travel to further charter schools in the neighboring school district and even in a more remote one. In other words, for-profit EMOs may broaden an array of competitors and enlarge the pool of applicants for charter schools by expanding their future markets. A location decision by for-profit EMOs involves the process of differentiating all school districts in a particular county and opting for the most desirable one. Table 2 presents estimations of the choice set covering all school districts within the county where a for-profit EMO charter school is physically located. In comparison with Model I of Table 1 on the basis of the choice set of the closest school districts, Model I of Table 2 shows the similar but weak significances in the proportion of proficiency in math and the percent of students eligible for free or reduced lunch and from African-American families. Rather, the estimations for the logged expenditure per pupil and the percent of African-American students in a school district increase with the expansion of potential markets from the provider perspective. At the community level in Model II of Table 2, the probability of for-profit EMO charter schools' decision to situate themselves in a given school district tends to be associated with only four factors: The proportions of African-American populations, populations with Hispanic or Latino origin, housing units occupied by owner, and housing units with no car. While a high density by profit-seeking EMO charter schools and private schools is statistically significant in the choice set of the first adjacent school districts as found in Model III of Table I, all the competitors in Model III of Table 2 partly contribute to attracting EMO charter schools pursuing financial gains.

As presented in Model IV and V of Table 2, market share caused by entities with similar organizational objectives brings about the comprehensive increases in statistical significances and estimated coefficients. There exist significant changes by more than 10%, specifically in the odds

ratio in logged expenditures per pupil, the percentage of African-American populations, the proportion of populations with Hispanic or Latino origin, the proportion of populations who experience higher education for one year and over, and the percent of unemployed populations. Furthermore, the increases in dropout rates and low-income families seem to stall the establishment of profit-oriented EMO charter schools in particular school districts. For-profit EMO charter schools tend to tailor applicant pools by being located in school districts with more populations with vehicle ownership. Reflecting the notion that disadvantaged families were burdened with the cost of travelling to remote schools (Phillips, Hausman, & Larsen, 2012; Reay & Lucey, 2003), availability of personal vehicles could be positively related to increased likelihood of auto trips to school.

All else being equal, school districts with a large number of for-profit EMO charter schools and a small number of non-profit EMO charter schools within the county boundaries are more likely to attract profit-oriented educational service providers. In view of market density that profit-oriented EMO charter schools in Michigan select a school district consisting of varying market competitors, they are more likely to cluster around, not disperse across, certain school districts with a similar type of charter schools. Taken together, this study points out the behavior of the Michigan for-profit EMO charter schools, discouraging children with marginalized family backgrounds in impoverished communities from equally participating in markets.

Table 2

The estimates for the choice set of all school districts within the same county

| | I | II | III | IV | V |
|--|------------|-----------|-----------|------------|------------|
| School district | | | | | |
| % of proficiency in math | 0.122** | | | 0.125** | 0.069*** |
| % of proficiency in reading | -0.026 | | | -0.027 | -0.015*** |
| Graduation rate | 0.002 | | | -0.002 | -0.033*** |
| Dropout rate | -0.019 | | | -0.051 | -0.071*** |
| Logged expenditure per pupil | 2.507*** | | | 1.662*** | 1.371*** |
| % of English language learners | 0.073*** | | | 0.014 | 0.022*** |
| % of students eligible for free or reduced lunch | 0.017*** | | | 0.073*** | 0.050*** |
| % of African-American students | 0.037*** | | | -0.064*** | -0.095*** |
| % of students with Hispanic or Latino origin | 0.002 | | | -0.065** | -0.108*** |
| Community | | | | | |
| % of African-American populations | | 0.034*** | | 0.095*** | 0.132*** |
| % of populations with Hispanic or Latino origin | | 0.070*** | | 0.119** | 0.197*** |
| % of population 25 years and over with high school diploma | | -0.032 | | 0.043 | 0.060*** |
| % of population 25 years and over with college education | | 0.021 | | 0.088** | 0.098*** |
| % of families under the poverty level | | 0.032 | | 0.000 | -0.017*** |
| % of populations aged 25 to 59 who are unemployed | | 0.038 | | 0.060 | 0.107*** |
| Vacancy rate | | 0.026 | | 0.004 | -0.005*** |
| % of housing units occupied by owner | | -0.044*** | | -0.042*** | -0.067*** |
| % of housing units with no car | | -0.089*** | | -0.031 | -0.096*** |
| Competitor | | | | | |
| % of for-profit EMO charter schools | | | 0.072*** | | 0.097*** |
| % of not-for-profit charter schools | | | 0.028** | | -0.014*** |
| % of private schools | | | 0.027*** | | 0.032*** |
| Constant | -36.083*** | -0.191 | -3.249*** | -33.490*** | -23.062*** |

* $p < .10$; ** $p < .05$; *** $p < .01$

Discussion

The development of EMOs with a goal aligned with financial gains implicitly confirms that private firms' belief that offering core educational services as a commodity is significant enough to produce monetary returns on investment. The rise of for-profit EMOs often becomes evidence of substantial shifts in the governance of education by suggesting a process for schooling to become privatized and commercialized (Bulkley, 2004; Tuckman, 1998). Thus, research on privatization in the public education sphere has contributed to understanding what market factors motivate, or hinder, EMOs to operate publicly funded charter schools and investigate the corresponding consequences. In a similar manner that other business models pursuing maximum profits value site selection in market analysis, EMOs are expected to examine school neighborhoods and prospective competitors within reachable areas. Based on the critical claim that uneven socio-geographies have constructed competitive market hierarchies (Bell, 2007; Gulosino & Lubienski, 2011; Holme, 2002; Lubienski & Dougherty, 2009), this study looks into the manner in which for-profit EMO charter schools in Michigan evaluate particular school districts by taking into consideration competitors within school markets.

Overall, this study shows that profitable services are not designed to bring advantages to all students who reside in areas spanning an entire county, considering that many parents place much emphasis on proximity in choosing charter schools. The Michigan for-profit EMO charter schools are likely to open their business in school districts which outperform in math, have more at-risk students and spend more money for students, compared with adjacent school districts. Even when expanding the list of choice sets from the first neighboring school districts to all school districts within the same county, the differential impacts on the location decision are similarly found in those selected factors at both school district and community level. The research conclusion provides evidence consistent with previous results that charter schools in competitive markets protect their market position by opting for less costly and more easily educated students, and by excluding students from low-income or single-parent families.

Along with the conventional facts, this study confirms earlier findings that charter schools are located in more competitive areas where private schools are already located (Girth, Hefetz, Johnston, & Warner, 2012; Glomm, Harris, & Lo, 2005; Miron, 2008). The findings highlight the significance of competitors specifically attributed to for-profit EMO charter schools and private schools in a similar manner of the close relation between market density and diversification in business and industrial markets (Gentry et al., 2013; Haveman, 1994). Though there are additional calls for further studies on the response of nonprofit EMO charter schools toward market density (Stretesky et al., 2012), the study overall suggests that the denser and more competitive local school markets appear to have more diverse profit-driven educational service providers. Moreover, special attention is called to the finding that for-profit EMO charter schools open their business in school districts with higher expenditures per pupil. Such relative importance of local spending on education primarily represents the way in which charter schools under for-profit business models chase money, in line with the latest finding that profit-oriented charter schools allocate a smaller portion of their expenses to instructional staff (Weber & Baker, in press). Apart from a high likelihood that students who reside in a wealthy school district have greater access to diverse school options, this study shows that the EMOs with the intent of generating satisfactory profit tend to maximize monetary resources through a large reliance on government funding earned by location selection, not through benefit from parent choice upon innovation and diversification in instruction-related activities (Lubienski, 2009; Lubienski & Lee, 2016; Renzulli, Barr, & Paino, 2015; Teresa & Good, in press; U.S. Department of Education, 2016). In other words, the uneven distribution of educational service

providers partly demonstrates that competitiveness and marketability obtained through site selection has become instrumental in reinforcing geographical barriers to school access.

In view of underlying variations among local markets, shopping for schools becomes more or less favorable to children in a particular region (Lichter et al., 2012; Nechyba, 2010; Putnam, 2000). Here, the rising concern is that the site selection decision by profit-oriented EMOs diminishes democratic values and objectives, which are required for public entities. The widespread belief that schooling is a public good has placed for-profit vendors managing of charter schools in the category of public entities, so that educational service vendors operating charter schools have presented specific understanding of bureaucratic procedures by complying with administrative rules and regulations. However, the current processes of privatization in education and commodification of schooling fundamentally challenge the two conditions of non-excludability and non-rivalrousness essential to define a public good (Labaree, 1997; Lubienski, 2006). The empowerment of the demand side in educational markets results in competition for limited seats at quality schools, and the Michigan for-profit EMOs' heavy dependence on profitability financed by local education agencies excludes a certain population in a given area. Under this circumstance, their distinctive behavior of devoting to self-interest of the supply side may be the byproduct of increasing difficulty in positioning the inherent attribute of profit-seeking organizations in appropriate alignment with public values in public schooling. Given that the lack of the comprehension of public values in competitive markets exposes privately owned and run EMO charter schools to struggles between private interests and public purposes (Hansmann, 1980; Labaree, 1997; Lubienski, 2006; Samuelson, 1954), we should carefully question and consider how private firms pursuing monetary gains make a contribution to democratic accountability for equal access (Biesta, 2004; DiMartino & Scott, 2013; Epstein, 1993; Garn, 2001; Garn & Cobb, 2001; Shipps & White, 2009). In rethinking the purpose of parental choice and competition among educational providers in terms of equitable environments as well as efficient structures for public education, discourse about whether to confine schooling provided by profit-oriented firms to a public or private commodity is necessary to establish their role and limitations.

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