School Choice, Teachers' Work, and Professional Identity

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Abstract: Teacher professional identity, or what it means to be a teacher, informs the types of schools teachers seek for work. With the marketization of schools in the US and abroad, teachers' professional identities are changing. However, we know little about how teachers negotiate—and renegotiate—their professional identities during the job search in contexts with school choice, such as charter schools. This study uses qualitative interview data from 46 teachers in San Antonio, Texas, where over 25% of students attend charter schools. Our findings illuminate the job search as a critical juncture where teachers evaluate their professional identity as they make choices about the sector—charter or

traditional public school—and/or school organization they prefer. In particular, the choice context legitimated flexibility and fluidity in teachers' professional identity as teachers moved between sectors to find jobs, even if the school did not align with their personal or professional values. We also found that employability and teachers' perception of the job market played an important role in how teachers strategically presented their professional identity on the job search. Findings offer implications for teacher education and teacher workforce policies.
Keywords: teacher professional identity; teacher labor market; school choice; qualitative analysis

Elección de escuela, trabajo docente e identidad profesional

Resumen: La identidad profesional docente, o lo que significa ser docente, informa los tipos de escuelas que los docentes buscan para trabajar. Con la mercantilización de las escuelas en los EEUU y en el extranjero, las identidades profesionales de los docentes están cambiando. Sin embargo, sabemos poco acerca de cómo los docentes negocian y renegocian sus identidades profesionales durante la búsqueda de empleo en contextos de elección de escuela, como las escuelas chárter. Este estudio utiliza datos de entrevistas cualitativas de 46 maestros en San Antonio, Texas, donde más del 25 % de los estudiantes asisten a escuelas chárter. Nuestros hallazgos iluminan la búsqueda de empleo como un momento crítico en el que los docentes evalúan su identidad profesional al tomar decisiones sobre el sector (escuela pública autónoma o tradicional) y/o la organización escolar que prefieren. En particular, el contexto de elección legitimó la flexibilidad y la fluidez en la identidad profesional de los docentes a medida que los docentes se movían entre sectores para encontrar trabajo, incluso si la escuela no se alineaba con sus valores personales o profesionales. También encontramos que la empleabilidad y la percepción de los docentes sobre el mercado laboral jugaron un papel importante en la forma en que los docentes presentaron estratégicamente su identidad profesional en la búsqueda de empleo. Los hallazgos ofrecen implicaciones para la formación docente y las políticas de fuerza laboral docente.
Palabras clave: identidad profesional docente; mercado laboral docente; elección de escuela; análisis cualitativo

Escolha da escola, trabalho dos professores e identidade profissional

Resumo: A identidade profissional do professor, ou o que significa ser professor, informa os tipos de escolas que os professores procuram para trabalhar. Com o marketing das escolas nos EUA e no exterior, as identidades profissionais dos professores estão mudando. No entanto, sabemos pouco sobre como os professores negociam – e renegociam – suas identidades profissionais durante a busca de emprego em contextos de escolha escolar, como as escolas charter. Este estudo usa dados de entrevistas qualitativas de 46 professores em San Antonio, Texas, onde mais de 25% dos alunos frequentam escolas charter. Nossas descobertas iluminam a busca de emprego como um momento crítico em que os professores avaliam sua identidade profissional ao fazerem escolhas sobre o setor – escola charter ou escola pública tradicional – e/ou organização escolar de sua preferência. Em particular, o contexto de escolha legitimou flexibilidade e fluidez na identidade profissional dos professores à medida que os professores se deslocavam entre os setores para encontrar emprego, mesmo que a escola não se alinhasse com seus valores pessoais ou profissionais. Constatamos também que a empregabilidade e a percepção dos

professores sobre o mercado de trabalho desempenharam um papel importante na forma como os professores apresentaram estrategicamente sua identidade profissional na busca de emprego. Os resultados oferecem implicações para as políticas de formação de professores e força de trabalho de professores.

Palavras-chave: identidade profissional docente; mercado de trabalho docente; escolha escolar; análise qualitativa

School Choice, Teachers' Work, and Professional Identity

School choice, along with other global educational "policy technologies" have significantly reshaped teachers' work and identities (Ball, 2003; Lingard, 2009). Evidence suggests that school choice policies and associated reforms (e.g., standardized curricula, expanded market-based reforms, high-stakes evaluation) have created an audit or performance culture of efficiency and productivity in teachers' work (Anderson & Cohen, 2015; Ball, 2003; Day & Gu, 2007; Henry & Dixson, 2016). With school choice a permanent feature of the global educational landscape (Goodwin, 2020), this policy context may force teachers to adjust their professional identities—beliefs about what it means to be a teacher—to align with national agendas and discourses.

In recent years, the rise and spread of global populism has sharpened national discourses around school choice. In fact, although support for school choice, and specifically charter or non-governmental schools that are publicly funded but privately operated, has been traditionally tied to conservative ideology and desires for limited government (Horsford et al., 2018; Kitzmiller, 2020), Shakeel and Maranto (2020) contend that school choice is "the ultimate populist reform" because power and authority rest with parents, not institutions. Populism is broadly understood as a political orientation that divides people into groups (i.e., the "underdog" against "those in power"; Laclau, 2005), although notions of populism coincide with principles of school choice like individualism, deregulation, and competition. With the re-emergence of global populism, this special issue explores how populist discourses interact with teachers' work.

To understand teachers' work experiences in current school choice contexts, we depart from broad applications of populism, instead adopting a narrower lens of teacher "micro-populism." Watson (2020) asserts teacher micro-populism is a "a small-p populism" (p. 3) that constitutes the implicit or embedded scripts and messages about teachers and their professional identities that go unnoticed or get taken up by those in power (i.e., policymakers, district or school leaders, hiring administrators etc.). Watson (2020) situates grassroots teacher activism in the United Kingdom, particularly on social media (#RedforEd or #EduTwitter) as evidence of a teacher micro-populism promoting an "us" against "them" national discourse. Because "teachers do not operate in isolation; [but] work within social and organizational contexts at school, department, state, nation and global levels," (Mackenzie, 2007, p. 93) these national discourses are also filtered to the local and personal levels, influencing the decisions teachers make about their work. We draw on this notion of teacher "micro-populism" to examine what 'popular' discourses about teachers and teaching get taken up as teachers navigate a school choice policy context as they search for jobs. Prior work suggests that teachers in these contexts construct or alter their professional identities to match the sector (here referred to as traditional public schools or charter schools) where they work, ultimately creating oppositional notions of what it means to be a 'traditional public school' or 'charter school' teacher (Torres & Weiner, 2018; Weiner & Torres, 2016).

Despite national differences in local teacher labor market contexts (Cannata, 2011; Parding et al., 2017), we argue that the teacher job search is an important site in which teachers' professional identities are activated and re-formed as they consider the values, beliefs, knowledge, or skills

underlying specific positions or schools. Yet, the job search has largely been overlooked in global scholarship on teacher professional identity. Rather, existing studies highlight the diffuse, ongoing nature of how professional identity is constructed, formed initially in preservice or teacher preparation programs, and then reinterpreted 'on the job' in schools (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009; Carrillo & Flores, 2018; Flores, 2020; Nickel & Zimmer, 2018). Whether a teacher is a first-time job seeker, a current teacher seeking a different school more in line with their professional identity, or a career switcher looking for new opportunities, the job search enables teachers to identify preferences critical to their professional identities. Understanding the nature of the teacher job search in a choice policy context is necessary so as to fully unpack the complexities of school choice in relation to teachers' work and identities. School choice policies are presumed to expand teachers' options (Jackson, 2012), but research from various contexts (e.g., Australia, South Korea, United Kingdom, and United States) illustrates that such reforms complicate teachers' decisions about school sectors as they weigh factors like administrative workload, work-life balance, accountability and evaluative measures, and overall well-being (Fitzgerald et al., 2019; Kim, 2019; Thompson & Cook, 2017). Examining sectors in Australia (government and non-government schools), Parding et al. (2017) also suggest a choice policy context can produce "lock-in effects" that keep teachers within a specific sector or working in specific schools within that sector. These findings have implications for the teacher job search and how such reforms reconstitute teachers' professional identity as they search for jobs, but have not yet been studied.

Relatedly, prior work has largely examined teacher professional identity in traditional university-based teacher preparation programs (Coward et al., 2015; Dang, 2013; Flores 2020; Rodrigues & Mogarro, 2019) and in traditional public schools (TPSs; Beauchamp & Thomas 2009; Carrillo & Flores, 2018; Sachs, 2001; Yuan & Lee, 2016). Comparatively less attention has been paid to how teachers' identities are shaped in alternative programs or in different school environments, such as charter schools (Weiner & Torres, 2016), even though evidence suggests contextual and situational dimensions of teachers' work environments influence their identities (Beauchamp & Thomas 2009; Parding et al., 2017). Furthermore, we know little about how these elements of school choice influence teachers' professional identities during the job search process. To address these gaps in the literature, we explore the following questions:

1. How do teachers understand and construct their professional identity when applying for jobs in a context with school choice?

   a. What factors play a role in shaping their professional identity?
   b. How do these factors differ by teacher characteristics and the school type where they apply or end up?

Consistent with prior work, we found that teacher professional identity is influenced by personal or intrinsic, situated, and professional factors (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009; Beijaard et al., 2004; Flores & Day, 2006; Sachs, 2001). However, by studying aspects of professional identity during the teacher job search in a unique choice policy context, our study sheds new light on how teachers' professional identities are formed and reformed, at times, constantly in flux as teachers encounter labor market competition between sectors. We also identify ways the job search mediates teacher "micro-populism" as teachers manage competing discourses about what it means to be a 'traditional public school' or 'charter school' teacher. Ultimately, we show that the process of searching, identifying, and selecting jobs is not separate or isolated from how teachers construct their professional identity, but one that provides a window into teacher professional identity development.

Literature and Framework
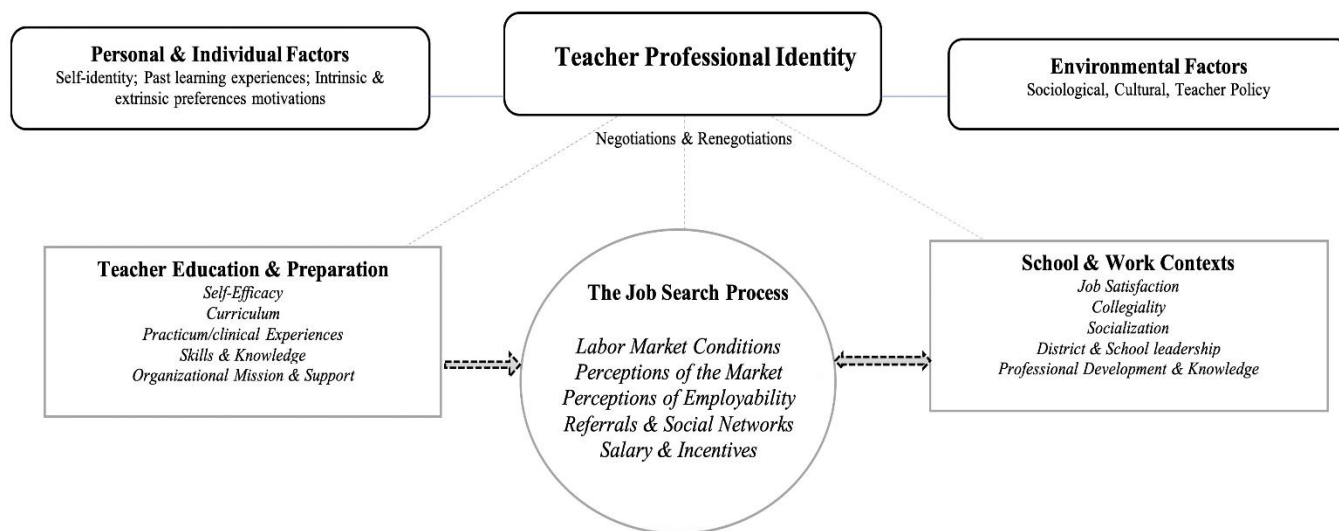
Teacher Professional Identity

Research on teacher professional identity includes numerous conceptualizations (e.g., Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009; Beijaard et al., 2004; Flores & Day, 2006; Sachs, 2001). We draw on Yuan and Lee's (2016) definition of teacher professional identity, which allows us to analyze how professional identity is shaped by choice policy contexts. In their summary of this work, Rodrigues and Mogarro (2019) state:

> Professional identity depends on an individual's perception of his/her actions, his/her understanding of the profession and the place s/he occupies in society. Therefore, this identity is fluid, dynamic and multifaceted. It is formed through sociocultural situated practical experiences and it depends on the complex negotiation between professional experiences and external factors. Thus, it has an intellectual, rational, social, political and emotional nature. (p. 6)

Similar to other conceptualizations, Yuan and Lee (2016) emphasize teacher professional identity as dynamic and multi-dimensional wherein personal and individual factors (e.g., race, gender, age, life stage) as well as environmental factors (e.g., populist agendas, teacher policies) guide processes of professional identity development (see Figure 1).

Figure 1
Conceptual Framework

In some studies on professional identity, race/ethnicity, class or socio-economic status, gender, and other markers of personal identity are often left unexamined. However, Yuan and Lee (2016) argue this is a critical omission because teachers' professional identity and their perceptions of the profession correspond to teachers' view of their status in society. Teachers of color, for example, might be reluctant to apply to majority white schools where they will be significantly underrepresented, facing the possibility of being 'othered' or made hypervisible (Bristol & Goings, 2019). Similarly, younger teachers, are more inclined to view teaching as a temporary, exploratory job (Weiner & Torres, 2016). The gendered nature of teaching may also influence the professional

identities of male teachers and where they apply for jobs, particularly for Black male teachers who often contend with cultural tropes positioning them as "disciplinarians" or "role models," (Brown, 2009; Pabon, 2016). These studies highlight unclear distinctions between personal and professional identity (Beijaard et al. 2004; Zembylas & Chubbuck, 2018) and we seek to capture this overlap in Figure 1 by connecting professional identity to multiple aspects of teachers' work and life experiences.

Teacher Professional Identity Development in Preparation Programs

Although personal characteristics and teachers' past experiences, including their roles as students, impact professional identity development (Coward et al., 2015; Flores & Day, 2006), research consistently underscores the importance of teacher preparation programs. Beauchamp and Thomas (2009) state teacher education programs are "the ideal starting point for instilling not only an awareness of the need to develop an identity, but also a strong sense of the ongoing shifts that will occur in that identity" (p. 186). As teachers undergo preparation, they wrestle with and are shaped by the formal and informal curriculum they receive, pedagogies of how to teach, and the interactions they have with students, supervisors, and faculty as they learn and develop how to be a teacher (Flores, 2020). Although not an exhaustive list, Figure 1 highlights self-efficacy, curriculum, the enactive experiences of practicum or student teaching, and organizational mission and support as important components of professional identity within teacher preparation (Coward et al., 2015; Dang, 2013; Nickel & Zimmer 2018; Thomas & Mockler, 2018).

Much of the existing work on professional identity development explores traditional preparation programs where teachers typically undergo teacher education in an institution of higher education. This omits a large proportion of teachers in alternative pathways or programs. By deregulating traditional pathways, alternative programs are viewed as part of broader market-based reforms and global discourses reshaping teachers' work and identities (Cochran-Smith & Villegas, 2015). In the US, approximately 77% of teachers were prepared through traditional pathways in 2018 (Partelow, 2019), but globally, programs like Teach for All, which is represented in 60 countries since 2007, demonstrate the spread of alternative pathways and ideologies associated with meritocracy, credentialism, and economic competition (La Londe et al., 2015). Thomas and Mockler (2018) show that teachers from programs like Teach for America (TFA) (the U.S.-based affiliate of Teach for All) exhibit sub-identities as "all-stars," "outsiders," "apprentices," "TFA Corps Members," and "free agents"—identities they argue are distinct from traditionally prepared teachers. The messages teachers receive in teacher preparation programs (alternative or traditional) can therefore unfold in the choices teachers make about where to work and how they construct their identities.

Teacher Professional Identity in Charter Schools

The situated contexts of where teachers work—their in-service experiences—and the dynamic experiences teachers have with school leaders, colleagues, students, and other school stakeholders also influence their identity (See Figure 1; Carrillo & Flores, 2018). To highlight these on-the-job experiences, the choice context, and how market logics inform professional identity, we draw on a smaller body of work focused on charter schools. Two studies of teacher professional identity in charter schools demonstrate that charter teachers largely construct their professional identity in contrast to perceptions they hold of TPS teachers (Torres & Weiner, 2018; Weiner & Torres, 2016). Based on interviews with 19 charter teachers, researchers found charter teachers form professional identities "as highly skilled, dedicated, and deserving of stature," but view TPS teachers

as "lacking cache and rigor" (Torres & Weiner, 2018, p. 75). Researchers attributed these different perceptions to many charter teachers receiving their preparation in alternative programs.

Although teachers in TPSs similarly express dissatisfaction or confront tensions about their identity (Bristol & Goings, 2019; Dunn & Downey, 2018; Pabon, 2016; White, 2020), charter teachers are likely to encounter different work and professional frictions because charter school organizations in the US typically offer fewer rights to unionize, less transparency, and use more temporary contracts (Jabbar, Chanin et al., 2020; White, 2020). One study found that charter teachers had difficulty balancing aspects of their personal and professional identities due to demanding charter school environments, which ultimately contributed to teacher burn-out and attrition (Torres & Weiner, 2018).

Teachers in "no-excuses" charter schools might experience particular challenges with their professional identity. The no-excuses charter model represents a smaller share of the U.S. charter school market and emphasizes an ethos that poverty is not a barrier to academic achievement. By embracing an approach of "no-excuses" to student discipline, teacher accountability, and performance, many no-excuses charters are organized around longer work days, year-round schooling, and regimented schedules (Golann, 2018; Kershen et al., 2018). This distinction among charter organizations and models is necessary because White (2020) suggests overtly market-oriented models—like no-excuses charter schools—subscribe to managerialist approaches tied to large management organizations that differ from standalone or independent charter schools, which "are usually smaller in size, founded by educators or community groups, and whose networks are grounded in the school's geographic community and leveraged to formulate curriculum and pedagogy" (p. 361). Teachers in no-excuses charter schools exhibit a range of teacher sub-identities including conformers, imitators, adaptors, and rejecters (Golann, 2018), but these identities appear to interact with school demographics. With more students of color enrolled in no-excuses schools, Kershen et al. (2018) suggest that teachers positioning their professional identities as "enforcers" are more inclined to view children of color from a deficit-based perspective. These collective findings indicate that organizational differences within the charter sector have implications for autonomy and decision-making power—components of teacher professional identity—as well as teachers' attitudes about students and communities. When teachers' preferences for particular organizational contexts or school culture are misaligned with their professional identity, research suggests they will exit the workforce or search for new jobs (Dunn & Downey, 2018).

The Job Search and Professional Identity

The final component of our conceptual model highlights the job search process as another site in which teachers' professional identities are activated and re-formed. Here, we consider labor market conditions that influence applicants' perceptions of the market and their employability as well as teachers' use of networks to access jobs (Figure 1). As previously noted, personal factors dictate teachers' job preferences (e.g., salary, school level, district-type) and where they look for jobs. For example, career switchers from other fields or sectors, who are typically older and more experienced, may look for jobs and construct a teacher professional identity consistent with or contradictory to professional identities and values they previously held. Similarly, teachers who envision a long-term career in education, but not necessarily in the classroom, may search for districts or schools offering opportunities for growth and professional development as they consider their future goals and aspirations (Barrick et al., 2013). Associated job search efforts and activities also overlap with personal and intrinsic factors related to teachers' meaning-making process about their professional identity.

Although current research has largely neglected the job search as an important channel shaping teacher professional identity, studies examining differences between how teachers in TPSs and charter schools select jobs offer some insight. Evidence suggests teachers who choose to work in TPSs seek work environments with positive reputations, job security, geographic location, unionization, and school context familiarity (Boyd et al., 2008; Cannata, 2010; Jabbar et al., 2019), while charter teachers place higher value on school mission, autonomy over teaching, small school size, influence over school policies, type of instructional approach, and tuition/loan forgiveness (Cannata, 2011; Cannata & Peñaloza, 2012). Additionally, since new teachers will likely seek out employment opportunities consistent with professional identities developed in their teacher education programs (Boswell et al., 2012; Thomas & Mockler, 2018), job search effort and intensity may also differ by preparation pathway. Prospective teachers from some alternative programs are more likely to leverage their professional networks by tapping into established relationships with individual principals or charter schools (Jabbar, Cannata et al., 2020). In addition to network use, preparation pathways might influence teachers' perception of the market as teachers construct choice sets reflecting "high-status" or "low-status" job opportunities corresponding to their current or future professional identity (Torres & Weiner, 2018).

Although a choice policy context, along with an array of marketplace options for teacher preparation, intensifies competition for teachers (Carruthers, 2012; Hoxby, 2000; Jabbar et al., 2019), it also affords teachers greater flexibility to pursue jobs in line with their professional identity. However, teachers' job options are moderated by labor market factors like salary and benefits, systems for hiring (i.e., centralized or decentralized), information transparency, or licensure and certification requirements (Jackson, 2012; Parding et al., 2017). Scarcity, or the availability of jobs, may also force teachers to compromise key job preferences related to their professional identity (Cannata, 2010; Jabbar et al., 2019). At the same time, shortages may draw teachers to contexts they previously undervalued or did not consider (Williams et al., 2021). Therefore, labor market conditions and national policy discourses complicate teachers' perceptions of their employability and how they present their professional identity when navigating the job search.

By linking disparate bodies of research on school choice, teacher professional identity, and the job search, we argue that the teacher job search is salient to teachers' professional identity as teachers seek to understand who they are, the beliefs they espouse, and the organizational missions or values they prioritize when selecting a job in a choice policy context.

Methods

To explore elements of teachers' professional identities during the job search, we interviewed teachers in San Antonio, Texas, a city with a large traditional public sector, but also a robust charter school presence (25% of public-school students attend charters in the city). Our data came from a larger case study that focused on the teacher job search in three cities with varying choice policy contexts. The study was granted ethical approval by the University of Texas at Austin. In that study, we asked a series of open-ended questions to understand teachers' professional training experiences, their motivations for becoming a teacher, and their ideal teaching positions. Although teacher professional identity was not the primary focus, we elicited a significant amount of data about teachers' identities. We then reanalyzed our data in light of this construct. Of the three cities in our larger study, our sample in San Antonio had the largest proportion of new teachers. For this analysis, we were particularly interested in new and early career teachers and the role of teacher preparation on professional identity. Furthermore, San Antonio represents more of a 'typical case' (Miles et al., 2014) than other sites in our study, as it

has seen marketization through the expansion of charter schools, similar to other urban districts, but retains a large and dominant TPS sector.

Teachers in San Antonio can opt to work in three different types of school settings: private schools (operated entirely by private entities, without public funding), TPSs (publicly funded, and publicly operated, overseen by an elected school board), and charter schools (publicly funded but privately operated, by a non-profit organization). We focused on teachers working and seeking employment in the public sector (charter and TPSs) since it employs a larger share of teachers than the private school sector. Although there is significant variation within each sector, some research has shown how charter school workplaces are characterized by lower wages, longer and more unpredictable work hours, and higher turnover, while TPSs often have greater job stability, predictable career paths, and higher salaries (Cannata, 2011; Gulosino & Ni, 2018; Jabbar et al., 2019).

Data Collection

We recruited teachers by distributing flyers at several local job fairs and via email through preparation programs and charter school campuses and school districts. We also used snowball sampling to recruit additional teachers, resulting in a total sample of 46 teachers. We sought to identify teachers currently searching for a position, either their first or a subsequent job, or had recently accepted or started a position, within the past four to five months. Most of the participants were female and 56% percent (*n*= 26) identified as teachers of color, while 20 identified as white. New teachers seeking their first teaching position made up half of all participants. The remaining group were current teachers seeking to switch positions, 14 worked in TPSs, while nine worked in charter schools. Additionally, teachers were split evenly across traditional and alternative preparation programs (See Table 1).

Table 1

Sample Participants

	San Antonio	Total
Overall	All Teachers	46
School Type	Charter Teachers (Current)	9
	TPS Teachers (Current)	14
	Prospective Teachers	23
Race	Teachers of Color	26
	White Teachers	20
Age	under 25	14
	26-35	18
	36+	14
Preparation	Alternative	23
	Traditional	23

The data for this study included semi-structured interviews conducted during 2016–2017, either in person or by phone. We also conducted follow-up interviews with 14 of the 46 participants who had not yet found a position to find out where they landed. Each interview was audio-recorded, transcribed verbatim and lasted approximately 45 minutes. Using an interview protocol, teachers were asked a series of descriptive questions about the schools they preferred and the specific

characteristics they sought in schools. To capture a broad range of conceptualizations related to teacher professional identity (i.e., personal, situated, and professional factors), teachers were also asked about their preparation and work experiences (e.g., How did you choose your teacher preparation program/pathway? How has/did your student teaching experience help you decide what type of school you want to work at?), their goals and career aspirations (e.g., Where do you see yourself in terms of your career in five years?), and teaching motivations (e.g., Why did you decide to become a teacher?). See Appendix A for the full interview protocol.

Data Analysis

We analyzed the data thematically using a coding strategy of inductive, data-driven codes and deductive, literature-based coding. Data analysis was an iterative process comprising two phases. In phase one, researchers first established intercoder reliability by coding select interviews in Dedoose software and by writing analytical memos to facilitate group consensus and insight. We returned to the data iteratively to clarify, revise, and refine codes. With this initial coding scheme, we coded the data and then created data-analytic matrices to organize excerpts by themes (Miles et al., 2014). This initial coding phase primarily focused on the teacher job search process.

Phase two of the analysis emphasized constructs related to teacher professional identity. Collectively, we identified relevant categories from the analytic matrix related to teacher professional identity and our conceptual framework (e.g., school conditions, mission, career aspirations, why teach, etc.). To make new meaning of these categories, we re-read all excerpts, segmenting the data to capture the essence of these excerpts, dimensions of professional identity, and emerging themes. We then organized themes by condensing areas of overlap, paying close attention to teachers in different school sectors and preparation programs. We took several steps to ensure trustworthiness including a multi-phase coding process, ongoing mutual reflection, and group debriefing. Additionally, to introduce new insight and soundness in our analysis, the research team involved two members who participated in original data collection, and one researcher who was not a part of data collection, but only the analysis. While deep familiarity with participants' perspectives is a strength of our project, the third researcher provided validity checks by ensuring prior assumptions and interpretations did not cloud the current analysis.

Findings

We organize our findings around three key themes related to how teachers construct their professional identity when applying for jobs in a choice policy context: 1) personal and intrinsic factors; 2) situated factors; and 3) professional and labor market factors. Although these factors have separate influences on teachers' professional identity during the job search, the policy context amplified how teachers negotiated and confronted these aspects of their identities as they looked for jobs across sectors (e.g., charter or TPSs). Specifically, findings confirmed that the school choice context contributed to teachers constructing oppositional teacher identities (i.e., traditional vs. charter) that reify 'popular' discourses about each sector. The school choice policy context also intensified instability in teachers' professional identities and their ability to exert agency in choosing jobs that aligned with their values. This instability, coupled with labor market uncertainties, fractured teachers' sense of self, forcing them to adapt or choose jobs misaligned with their professional identities.

Personal and Intrinsic Factors

Motivations to Teach

Understanding teachers' motivation to teach is an essential and intuitive process of identity development (Zembylas & Chubbuck, 2018). Regardless of sector, teachers linked their motivations to teach to their core values. In this way, the choice context had less influence on why they pursued teaching, rather, teaching simply reinforced who they were as individuals. The following quote from an alternatively prepared, current TPS teacher exemplifies this entanglement of personal and professional identities:

> I decided to become a teacher because I had a heart for helping people learn new things ever since I was little. I had a knack for teaching people, whether it be at church or teaching piano lessons, I was very good at interacting with kids of all ages.

Others similarly expressed that they viewed teaching as a "kind of ministry" or "kind of a mission field," which meant teachers felt called to serve in schools they perceived were under-resourced or schools enrolling more low-income students, students of color, or students with special needs.

Teachers of color, in particular, formed professional identities as role models, which informed the types of schools they sought. A teacher identifying as Latina and American Indian shared that she was motivated to pursue teaching because of her desire to "give back to the country that helped educate me, because my parents are both immigrants from Ecuador." Although she studied computer science and wanted to teach coding, she found a job teaching Spanish at a charter school instead. Her professional identity as a Latina role model far outweighed subject-area preferences during the job search because being a Spanish teacher enabled her "to see the growth of a second language and appreciation of a culture that's really theirs [the students'] [but]… along the line the language was lost." These moral commitments reflected ways teachers viewed themselves as public servants or agents for social change. They also highlighted teachers' willingness to modify their job preferences to enact these identities and moral commitments.

Given teachers' formative experiences in preparation programs, we found that preparation programs often reinforced teachers' personal commitments to social change. For example, one teacher who "always had an inclination to careers that had more of a social impact" was specifically drawn to Teach for America (TFA) because of its mission:

> I applied [to TFA] and I think what really resonated most with me is just their mission of social and educational equity…The lens that TFA had on education wasn't that this is a job that you go to do to teach kids. It's more or less you're doing this as someone who's going to, we call it, transform education by making it more equitable.

By selecting TFA, the teacher prioritized an alternative pathway that she felt aligned with her personal experiences and values about teaching. Preparation programs can also clarify teachers' motivations to pursue teaching. For one traditionally prepared teacher who attended a local university, he mentioned that "I wasn't really sure what I wanted to do, but I took a couple education classes [at university] because I thought I might want to do something with kids and… I had really great professors and really good experiences and I just fell in love with it [teaching]." Along with his intrinsic inclinations for working with kids, the teacher's sentiments demonstrate how experiences in preparation programs can shape motivations to teach.

Prior Personal and Professional Experiences

Teachers' prior experiences as student-teachers, as well as substitutes or tutors, influenced their approach to the job search and, in turn, their professional identities. Teachers strongly identified with the sector they were most familiar—either as students or through student teaching experiences. As one teacher said: "I was in the public-school system myself growing up, so that was part of my wants in the school, in the job and position." Similarly, another teacher stated, "Public school is where I substituted…so me being new, I veered towards what was more familiar to me." Across our sample, we found that teachers with less familiarity with the charter sector, typically prospective teachers—traditionally or alternatively prepared—constructed professional identities that often reflected a 'micro-populist' (Watson, 2020), anti-charter sentiment or, at least, were resistant to charter schools by excluding charters from their initial job search.

Similarly, teachers' early exposure to teaching as substitutes or tutors enabled them to informally conceptualize their professional identity and then, from these experiences, confirm that "this [teaching] is what I want to do." As expected, student teaching was important to forming professional identity, but these prior experiences also helped to confirm the negotiable and non-negotiable preferences teachers sought in schools and how these preferences shaped fluidity in their professional identities. With student teaching experiences in two different TPSs where principals had different leadership styles, one prospective teacher only pursued jobs in the TPS sector. These different experiences revealed that a supportive school environment and a motivating principal were non-negotiable job preferences.

Prior experience also enabled teachers to sort through their preferences across sectors or school contexts. One current charter teacher, for example, described a prior negative experience substitute-teaching in a charter school, which shaped the type of charter organization he preferred. Specifically, the teacher recalled his dissatisfaction with "how things are organized and things are last minute" as well as administrative practices concerning special needs students that were "way behind in special ed." Exposure to these work conditions not only confirmed preferences for organizational structure, but, as a special education teacher, it clarified the types of professional practices and norms important to his identity and professional role.

Overall, the choice policy context had little influence on teachers' career motivations—whether they pursued teaching or not. Rather, as teachers navigated the choice policy context, personal factors and prior professional experiences played important roles shaping teachers' approach to the job search.

Situated Factors

Situated factors, or the context in which teachers work, greatly influence teachers' sense of agency and, by extension, their sense of self (Day et al., 2007). We identify school conditions and student demographics or enrollment, school mission and culture, as well as organizational leadership and administrative support as key situated factors shaping teacher professional identity when searching for jobs across sectors.

School Conditions and Working with Students

In applying and selecting jobs, teachers wanted to work in schools where they believed they would make an impact. Comments such as "I want to give back to a community that didn't have as much" or wanting to "serve the underserved communities and giving them an education that they deserve" emphasized key dimensions of how teachers defined their professional identity in relation to specific school contexts and situated factors within schools. However, some teachers viewed these schools with a deficit lens, which suggests the job search can shed light on teachers' unexamined beliefs about students and their socio-economic and cultural contexts.

By referring to schools with more students of color and low-income students as "inner city," "underserved," or "high-need," such perspectives complicated teachers' intrinsic motivations and the perceptions or images they assigned to themselves as social actors. For example, one career switcher with military experience commented that, although he wanted to work in "higher need schools" and understood students' differential life experiences, students within these schools were "a totally different breed." Rather than acknowledging the assets within these schools, one charter teacher asserted "there's a tradeoff" because, although she is drawn to helping high-need areas, she felt that these schools "may not have as much resources for me to help me move up." Indeed, teachers mentioned that lack of professional and economic resources within high-need schools were professional barriers and explained why they rejected these schools altogether, confirming findings from Parding et al. (2017). Although these comments highlight economic and social challenges associated with working in some schools, we found them incongruous with how many teachers described their motivations to teach, often constructing professional identities as public actors enacting social justice missions. Ultimately, these incongruities expose a complex interplay of teachers' beliefs about teaching and the school conditions they seek.

School Mission, Culture, and Leadership

In contexts with expansive school-choice policies, schools will likely attempt to differentiate by exhibiting different school missions. School mission can be defined as a school's goals or aspirations vis-à-vis curricula, pedagogical styles, and teaching methodologies (Lubienski & Lee, 2016). Teachers primarily interested in TPSs emphasized a broad institutional mission of public schooling by articulating an identity that reinforced their commitment to TPSs. For example, a current teacher seeking to switch districts said, "I'm not really interested in charter schools. I feel like the public schools, there's a lot of areas that we need to improve. That's where I feel like I can do the most good." Several teachers echoed this sentiment noting that their preferences for TPSs was an act of "supporting the effort." Therefore, these teachers formed professional identities linked to the mission of TPSs, rather than specific schools.

Charter teachers, by contrast, emphasized school-level mission, making a clear link between the schools they wanted to work in and alignment with their professional identity. A prospective teacher interested in mostly charter schools mentioned that she assessed "whether it looks like a supportive environment, whether it looks like I'll be a good fit in terms of my background and what I can bring to the table and what I can add to a team." Similarly, another teacher interviewing at a charter school explained that she first examined "their mission, their values, [the charter school's] character traits." Other teachers similarly emphasized mission alignment by visiting school websites to "get a feel for the school and, I guess, their mission" or, as another teacher remarked, "if they sound like they're in line with some of my values." The salience of these missions, however, evolved as teachers progressed in the job search causing some to forgo it altogether.

Differentiation within the charter school sector also offered different types of working environments that appealed to teachers' professional identity. Some teachers preferred mission-driven charter schools, most of which were located in lower-income neighborhoods, because they sought charters that "build character" in students. Another teacher described his expectation for "want[ing] to work at a place where I don't feel like I'm working" and this was especially important because "I'm in a second career now and my thing is, I don't want to work for a place just for the sake of working." A current TPS teacher who was being recruited by a charter school also illustrated how school mission and culture informed her professional identity:

It's just a really great atmosphere and environment not just geared towards learning, but also towards improving social skills and working towards social justice and really

connecting kids to the community and themselves. It's pointing them towards things that are greater than just passing the test or getting through the next period because that's not truly what school is about.

Although these perceptions revealed teachers' expectation for the types of working environments that would shape and reshape their professional identity across TPSs and charter schools, we found teachers largely held similar preferences, despite both groups of teachers often making sweeping generalizations about each sector as they formed oppositional identities.

Some charter teachers were drawn to the organizational flexibility and sense of autonomy they perceived were inherent to charters, thus heavily influencing their job search. One charter teacher described charters as feeling "a bit more open to change… If I want to make a change in my curriculum or need to change anything at any point in the year all I have to do is tell my school leader and he trusts that I know what I'm doing." Relatedly, teachers felt district and state restrictions in TPSs would limit their ability to exercise their professional expertise. One music teacher chose not to apply to TPSs because of these perceived restrictions, noting that: "I get to do music and not have to worry about pressure and contest and all…I don't have to do those things. We really get to just play and enjoy the process of making music." By emphasizing the potential implementation of a unique music program in a charter school without pressures of state accountability, the teacher prioritized autonomy in ways that validated her professional identity as an expert in her subject area.

With school mission driving the culture and organizational structure of schools, we also found charter teachers experienced conflicts with their professional identity, particularly as it related to work-life balance and the expectations within their charter school environments. In this way, work-life balance reflected teachers' intentional attempts to distinguish their professional and personal identities. An early career charter teacher exemplified this interplay between mission, culture, and working conditions when she mentioned that in her first charter school, "I really didn't have a work-life balance, but it was new and fun so that was okay for me," but after her living circumstances changed and she transitioned to another charter, she realized that work-life balance was untenable. As a result, she was seeking a new position in a TPS because: "I know that I'm not going to teach at [a charter school] forever. It demands a lot." We noted a similar occurrence for a current TPS teacher who had considered a charter school, but decided against it because job sustainability and work-life balance were extremely important to her, arguing that "I think it's harder to accomplish at [charter school] than an ISD [independent school district]." Although all school contexts come with different sets of work challenges, some teachers were less willing to tolerate the additional demands of charter schools, like "com[ing] in on a Saturday to do tutoring or detention," as one alternatively certified, first-year teacher noted, and therefore, they pursued jobs in the TPS sector hoping to find positions more in line with their personal and professional identities. This unwillingness to compromise their values was most evident among current teachers.

Teachers' professional identities were also closely linked to their desire to work in schools with strong school leaders, which emphasized the importance of school leadership in teachers' professional development. Having a strong leader, according to one charter teacher "makes or breaks a successful charter school." Sharing a similar sentiment, a prospective teacher applying mostly to TPSs noted that she wanted to "be under leaders who lead and who inspire." In the absence of strong leadership, several current teachers left their schools in search of a school culture and climate best suited to their professional identities.

Overall, these components—mission, culture, and leadership—were interconnected, shaping and reflecting teachers' professional identity. Leadership, for example, played a key role in school

culture and in whether school mission was enacted in sustainable ways. Key preferences like strong community backgrounds and communication as well as collaboration and wanting to work in a team were school situated factors facilitated by school leadership. Indeed, both charter and TPS teachers emphasized preferences for strong collaborative environments where teachers planned together, created measurements, and collectively analyzed student data. As one current charter teacher explained,

> I just think that when you work with other teachers that you get along with, and you respect, and they respect you and your ideas, I think it shows in your teaching, and it's a direct correlation with how the students perform. ... I think that's super, super important.

A preference for collaborative work environments highlights aspects of teachers' professional identity that are socially dependent, even though such an environment is contingent on situated factors like school culture and leadership. But, in some cases, as one teacher noted, "A lot of us didn't take into account the school culture or the administration or any of those things. We were just looking for a job;" thus indicating the role of labor market factors as a driver of teachers' professional identity.

Professional and Labor Market Factors

Teachers' professional identities are also influenced by changes in local and national policy and the discourses surrounding them (Day et al., 2017). We identified tensions between teachers' formative professional identities (developed in their teacher preparation programs) and the types of opportunities available to them in the labor market. There was a resulting negotiation of identity during the job search process, where the identities they formed in preparation programs were challenged and modified based on labor market conditions. While this was most prominent for teachers entering the job search for the first time, we also saw this with teachers who were switching positions, whereby existing job opportunities combined with their prior experience working in schools also led to identity development or tensions, encouraging teachers to shift their professional identities to secure jobs.

Teachers developed their professional identities in relation to their knowledge of the local education labor market, positions in different schools, and job competitiveness. Teachers were flexible when faced with a competitive market, causing them to become more open to school types (charters or privates), even without much knowledge of them. For example, one teacher noted during the job search, "I'd be open to working [in] a charter school, things like that. I don't really know too much what's the difference." A prospective teacher also rationalized that "since it's my first year, I don't feel that I'm too set on being stuck this way versus another. I feel like I could adjust pretty much anywhere they put me." When asked about preferences for a school sector, another prospective teacher from TFA said she was "just trying to explore my talents and explore potential career paths.... I'm definitely still in an exploratory phase now." Although these teachers willingly constructed expansive professional identities as an "all-around" teacher, as one participant described, others reshaped their professional identities by reluctantly seeking positions in the charter sector.

Most notably, teachers expressed that they had less choice in where to work, and noted desperation at times. Rather than school choice expanding options for teachers, many felt it was less about choosing opportunities, and more about "taking what I can get." Another teacher similarly expressed, "I think they know that I'll take anywhere at this point for a job," referring to the local school district. Although these teachers did not align professionally with charter or private schools,

they saw them as secondary options. One teacher said, "If I can't find a job in these two [TPS] districts, I'm going to try to venture to charter schools and even private schools." Similarly, another teacher had not yet considered charter schools because "I was holding off [as] my last resort. I really didn't want to do the charter school versus private school so that was my last step process." Teachers thus adapted to the choice environment, particularly early on in their careers in order to find a job, but noted that these positions conflicted with or were not always in line with their professional identity.

Teachers' encounters during the job search could also cause them to rethink their teacher identities, priorities, and pedagogical approaches. For example, one teacher seeking to switch schools noted that she went in for an interview at a charter school, and saw that "there's a lot of younger teachers, a lot of them that are freshly out or maybe have two years of experience." The school leader asked the teacher to give an example of a project she would have students work on and said, "Please do not pick the family tree because everybody picks the family tree." Everyone on the hiring committee laughed, and the teacher said, "I'm like, 'What's the matter with the family trees. They're important." She added that she had a "strange feeling," and felt she was "too old," and "felt like I was left out." These job search interactions, even without working in a particular organization, appear to challenge teachers' preexisting beliefs about how to teach and the types of organizations they "fit" in.

Teachers who ended up working in charter schools, however, especially younger teachers, expressed that they liked that they "fit in" and have close relationships with like-minded teachers, many of whom were also younger. One teacher at a charter school said that at her school: "There's a lot of younger people here. The [school] culture tends to attract people who are younger. In that regard, me being young wasn't as huge of a problem as opposed to if I were to go to a traditional [public school] where a lot of the staff probably would've been a lot older and a lot more mature." As previously noted, many of these teachers perceived charter organizations as "more open to change," offering more autonomy where curriculum "is not overseen by anybody specifically" and allowing them to "go by what we want to teach." Through their experiences in charter schools, teachers developed a professional identity that emphasized autonomy, and to some extent, upheld popular discourses of charters as sites of curricular innovation (Lubienski, 2003).

Salary, Benefits, and Identity

Salary informed the identity-building process by shaping conceptions of teachers as workers, on one hand, and professionals, on the other. In the first case, teachers thought about salary and benefits in relation to meeting their vital needs (e.g., health, dental, vision, maternity leave, retirement, and student debt repayment), and, in the second case, they viewed salary as recognition of professional growth (e.g., years of experience, education, complexity of subjects, and performance). In this way, salary shaped the identity-building process and was mediated by school conditions, including benefits and opportunities for professional growth. Teacher professional identity is thus dynamic and tied to environmental factors.

When considering school sectors, teachers reported that TPSs paid more and offered better benefits than charter schools, although TPSs offered less opportunities for professional growth and salary increases. By contrast, teachers who preferred charter schools valued flexibility, autonomy, and its salary structure. For example, one teacher stated: "I know [charter school] has a pay performance that was excellent…[with] anywhere between a 3 to 10 percent pay increase." These salary increases were also tied to promotional opportunities in the charter sector. Indeed, one teacher commented that "Charter schools are very much about getting you better faster. Within charter school networks, you can more or less be promoted quicker." Similarly, an alternatively

certified teacher asserted, "I'm looking for opportunities to grow myself, not only as a teacher, what kind of resources does that school offer me, but also the opportunity to move up into those administrative positions, my goal is to get as high as I can. Get a lot of teaching experience up front." By associating career mobility and advancement chiefly with the charter sector, teachers believed the TPS sector would constrain professional opportunities, further emphasizing micro-discourses of teaching in TPSs "as lacking cache" (Weiner & Torres, 2016).

While flexibility in charter schools was attractive to some teachers, they also wrestled with aspects of transparency in charter schools' annual contracts. This was "a little bit disconcerting" for one teacher, while another explained:

> Even though they tell you that you're going to get paid more, in all reality once you sign the contract, the pay is not what you're told at the beginning of signing the contract. It's a little more frustrating because I feel like you have to fight more…I think it's more of a challenge now than working at the regular big public schools.

Teachers noted that, compared to charter schools, TPSs offered more security and transparency, which may explain why some engaged in detailed web browsing during the job search before accepting an offer from a private or charter school. Considering the dynamism of teacher professional identity and its interaction between personal expectations and environmental factors, salary and related labor market factors forced teachers to consider whether they were willing to adapt their professional identities to aspects of the charter sector they perceived were unstable or vague.

Professional Development

Opportunities for professional development was another component of the labor market forcing teachers to think strategically about their professional identities as they searched for jobs. These development opportunities included access to induction and mentoring, ongoing training to improve teaching practices, or leadership development at the principalship or administrative level. Teachers defined these goals in accordance with their professional identities as well as their personal expectations for work-life balance.

New teachers often linked professional development opportunities as a way to improve their performance in the classroom. For example, one new teacher stated: "I'm giving it five years to improve and to learn from my mistakes and just keep evolving with the whole teaching thing." However, his professional commitment to teaching was shaped by his ability to hone his teaching skills within a relatively short period of time because if "I'm struggling and I'm not learning much, then I would just do something different." Although teaching is a continuous learning process (Carillo & Flores, 2018; Mockler, 2011), the teacher's assumption that teaching could be learned within five years may explain why other teachers believed that teaching for 10 or more years meant that one could get "stuck." Specifically, "You can be stuck in the same teaching position for seven years [at a TPS] as opposed to [charter school] where if you're really just doing a rock-solid job at what you're doing now you can be within mid-management principal-ship within five, 10 years." Indeed, several teachers less committed to the classroom long-term offered time frames for when they imagined a shift in their professional identity. Therefore, in the absence of strong professional development or opportunities for career mobility, teachers believed these aspects of the labor market could reinforce flexibility in charter schools or constrain them in TPSs.

Investments in Professional Identity

While the job search is a temporary process occurring over several months, our findings indicate that teachers also approached the job search with a future-oriented mindset by considering how their career aspirations map onto pathways for future growth and career mobility. In this way, professional identity is not only based on teachers' past and current experiences, but on teachers' future aspirations as well. Many new and early career teachers hoped to go back to school to get a master's degree to "expand my breadth of knowledge," as one teacher described. However, most aspired to move up in the ranks as instructional coaches, school counselors, assistant principals, or district administrators. Although many teachers felt they would pursue a graduate degree *and* remain in teaching, these career goals reflect teachers' desire for career mobility and emphasize professional identity as a fluid, non-static phenomenon.

Some teachers also envisioned their professional identities expanding outside of K-12 schools as they considered education-related organizations for the future. These goal-oriented teachers constructed their professional identities more broadly because, as one prospective teacher stated, "There's so many different ways to branch out in education." This sense of career mobility was especially appealing to charter teachers. For example, one prospective teacher initially preferring TPSs, took a job in a charter school because: "I know that [in], my school, they do have a lot of career advancement options and it's great and they pay you. They give you bonuses and stuff like that in terms of when you perform well, so that's great." However, career aspirations may be delayed by charter teachers' work context, particularly in charter schools with longer work hours and increasing class loads. Discussing her aspirations of moving into curriculum development, one charter teacher admitted that work demands at her school forced her to postpone her goals because "I think with our move [to] a new building I think that my long-term goals are put on hold, for those short-term goals" [i.e., focusing on students]. Thus, similar to teacher autonomy, the nature of charter schools at times conflicted with how some teachers envisioned their professional identity and goals.

Discussion and Conclusion

The link between teachers' professional identities and job search processes in a choice policy context has received limited attention in the literature, despite research showing that teachers' professional identities—as evident by their job preferences—have a strong influence on where they end up (Cannata, 2010; Jabbar et al., 2019). By examining how choice policy contexts alter teachers' professional identities as they search for jobs, our findings extend theory and research on the sites and spaces where teachers can activate, renegotiate, or adapt their professional identity. Specifically, the process of searching for, identifying, and selecting jobs, and particularly in a choice policy context, contribute to the fluidity of teachers' professional identity as they assess and interact with their beliefs and future aspirations, the socio-economic and cultural contexts of schools, as well as the instability and uncertainty of the labor market. Ultimately, we show that the job search is not separate or isolated from teachers' professional identity, rather it is a critical juncture where teachers evaluate their professional identity as they make choices about the sector—charter or TPSs—and/or school organizations that best align with their professional beliefs and values.

Our findings are consistent with prior work on labor market segmentation in contexts with a significant charter school sector (Cannata, 2011; Gulosino & Ni, 2018; Jabbar et al., 2019). San Antonio, given its choice policy context, represents an important case, as it illustrates that even cities where charter schools are not the majority are changing the relationships between teachers' identities, job preferences, and search processes. Specifically, we find that teachers largely construct professional identities to match positions in the primary sector, that is, jobs in TPSs, which typically

offer greater stability, higher salaries, and predictable career paths. When teachers did not find positions in TPSs or when jobs were scarce, they then renegotiated aspects of their professional identity to find jobs in charter schools—the secondary sector—where positions typically had lower wages, temporary contracts, less transparency, and higher unpredictability (Jabbar et al., 2019). Employability and teachers' perception of the job market therefore played an important role in how teachers strategically aligned and presented a "first-stage" professional identity for their top choices in the primary sector, then subsequently adapted this identity according to their status in the job market. Ultimately, this type of market segmentation can generate ideological polarization related to teachers' professional identity, which, according to Watson's (2020) interpretation of micro-populism can lead to an 'us' and 'them' "populist antagonism" (p. 3). Indeed, studies previously noted that charter teachers and some alternatively prepared teachers formulate professional identity and socialization processes in sharp contrast and in opposition to perceptions of TPS teachers (Torres & Weiner, 2018; Weiner & Torres, 2016) or those in traditional preparation programs (Thomas & Mockler, 2018). To some extent, we found these segmented identities led to sector entrapment, constraining teachers' notions, both individually and collectively, regarding what it means to be a teacher in either sector, rather than the profession at large.

Our findings also confirm that teacher education programs are central for professional identity formation (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009; Flores, 2020; Thomas & Mockler, 2018), particularly as teachers take on the "identity politics" associated with a type of preparation program (Mockler, 2011) that shapes their job search. For example, teachers from TFA approached the job search with strong inclinations towards charter schools, noting that some charter organizations embraced similar missions as TFA. By emphasizing these shared identity politics, Mockler (2011) asserts there is a performative aspect of professional identity that has "the effect of both claiming and producing professional identity" (Mockler, 2011, p. 2). Based on teachers' strong professional views and attitudes about public or charter schools, we also found evidence of this performativity as teachers looked for jobs, constructing oppositional identities that led to an 'us' and 'them' antagonism (Watson, 2020). In doing so, teachers painted each sector with broad strokes, overlooking unique organizational nuances inherent within specific schools. For example, charter school teachers emphasized teacher autonomy as an important component of their professional identity, and accordingly, believed that TPSs would not offer similar levels of autonomy and innovation. Some of these professional beliefs are largely a result of teacher education programs' organizational structure or mission, but, like other scholars (e.g., Brown, 2009; Pabon, 2016; Yuan & Lee, 2016), we also attribute these beliefs to teachers' personal experiences and their social standing in the world as framed by class, race/ethnicity, language, gender and other personal identities.

Many teachers conceived of what it means and feels like to be a teacher based on their intrinsic desires to be public servants and make a difference. These notions reflect teachers' articulation of their personal identities and their philosophy of education as well as the broader social and political dimensions of professional identity (Mockler, 2011; Yuan & Lee, 2016). More specifically, the act of making a difference, being a role model, or embracing teaching as an activist project to promote social justice and equity are informed by teachers' personal values (White, 2020). It also underscores agentic aspects of professional identity enacted on the job search as many teachers of color preferred to work in schools with higher shares of students of color. Although we identified some incongruities and underlying deficit mindsets in how teachers articulated their purpose and motivation for why they pursued teaching, we also recognize these incongruities reflect the shifting and unstable nature of personal and professional identities as well as the everyday sense making that shapes and reshapes these identities during the job search.

Our analyses also speak to labor market factors such as salary, benefits, and career mobility or promotional opportunities shaping teachers' professional identity and their job search. We found that personality attributes, motivation, and job search behavior interact with teachers' professional identity and their desire for competitive wages and benefits. Some teachers were drawn to flexible salary structures in the charter school sector and the potential to earn higher salaries or get promoted within several years. As a result, these teachers vigorously pursued jobs in charter schools and were strategic about their job search, often taking on roles as substitutes to make connections and 'get their foot in the door.' Of course, this is intuitive because different salary structures between charter and TPSs are expected to drive competition in choice contexts (Jackson, 2012). However, findings also suggest that the longer teachers interact with the job search, the more unstable their professional identities will become as they negotiate, trade-off, or reshape their identities to secure a job. These negotiations, to some extent, relaxed teachers' staunch attitudes about each sector, abandoning popular perceptions of what it means to be a 'traditional public school' or 'charter school' teacher.

We therefore posit a key contribution of this study by illustrating that the choice context, in part, legitimated flexibility and fluidity in teachers' professional identity as teachers moved between sectors to find jobs, regardless if the school aligned with their personal or professional values. This type of sector adaptability and fluidity in teachers' professional identity was most evident for prospective teachers, who largely preferred TPSs, but only sought charters when job prospects were limited, often at the end of their job search. Current teachers, on the other hand, were more steadfast in their professional identity conceptualization and less willing to make compromises or tradeoffs on their job preferences. Because school conditions and teachers' everyday work experiences have a strong bearing on professional identity (Carillo & Flores, 2018; Flores & Day, 2006; Golann, 2018; Torres & Weiner, 2018), we found that current teachers also had greater clarity about the types of school leaders and work environments they sought. This was especially true for teachers who articulated their professional identity in terms of their professional expertise (e.g., "special education" teacher) or content-area specialty (e.g., art or music). In this way, teachers were actively forming and producing their professional identity, rather than it being shaped by school or external contexts. Thus, our data underscore the dynamic impact of a choice policy context on teachers' work and professional identity as they look for jobs. Some teachers enacted greater flexibility and agency when applying for jobs, constructing expansive professional identities as an "all-around" teacher, while others felt constrained by hiring practices and working environments within charter schools, thus the choice policy context intensified how they negotiated their identities.

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Appendix A. Interview Protocol

Interview Protocol

General/Background
Why did you decide to become a teacher?
Are you currently working in education? Where?

If Current Teacher:
How long have you been a teacher?
How long have you been working at this school?
How long have you been in your current position?
How did you initially find out about the job you have now? (probe for family member, friend, ad, contacted directly)
How did you initially enter the teaching profession? E.g. through what pathway?

All Teachers
How did you choose your teacher preparation program/pathway?
        What appealed to you about it?
How has your preparation program influenced or supported you in the job search?
        Did you student-teach in your program? If so, where? [probe for how that shaped their decisions]

If prospective teacher
Are you currently student teaching? If so, tell me about your experience there.
How has/did your student teaching experience helped you to decide what type of school you want to work at?

If current teacher
Tell me about what led you to search for a new job this year (probe for working conditions, leadership, support, salary, mission, better opportunity, location, etc.)

Job Search
Describe an ideal teaching position. (Probe for grade level, subject, salary, benefits, workload, advancement opportunities, what do you want to get out of your job)
Describe an ideal relationship with your colleagues.
Describe an ideal relationship with your principal or school leadership team.
When do you plan to start looking for a job? (Or if started already, when did you start?)
In which districts are you focusing your job search?
        Do you have any preference for school type (e.g., charter, private, or traditional public)? Why?
        Which schools specifically?
        What about these schools motivated you to consider them?
        Can you list any schools where you would NOT want to work?
        Describe what would turn you off from working at a school?
How do you find out which schools have openings?
How do you contact schools? (Probe: in person, email, phone, formal application)
How will/have you actually apply to each school (e.g., website, sending a resume to a principal)

How have you collected information about potential schools?

> What type of information are you collecting about potential schools?
> What (formal and informal) tools have you used to organize your job search/this information?
> Where have you gone for information (probe: job fairs, district/school websites, job boards, friends/colleagues)?

Apart from completing job applications, how much time did you spend looking at school or district websites during your job search?

> What types of things were you looking for?
> How useful did you find the websites?

Have you interacted with a recruiter or human resources staff member prior to the formal application process? How? When?

Describe any personal and professional contacts at the schools to which you are considering. (Note whether contact is personal or professional.)

> What types of questions have you asked them?
> What information have they shared with you? (probe for provided information, contacted employer on your behalf, connected you with current teacher at the school/district, helped you prepare for interview)
> Have your contacts helped you to connect to people in the school in charge of hiring?

Did this contact change your perception of the school or alter your job search?

> How so? (probe for formal/informal referral systems, etc.)

If already applied

How many teaching positions have you applied to for this academic year?

What was the process of submitting your application? (e.g., website, paper application, central office)

How much contact have you had with each school you applied to (number of times + different types of people)?

Which characteristics of the schools you applied to were most appealing to you? (probe: leadership opportunities)

Did you apply/attempt to apply to schools that were NOT advertising positions?

> Why did you apply to these schools even though there were no posted positions?

What type of schools do you expect to receive job offers from?

People who have received offers

How many job offers did you receive?

What about each offer appealed to you? What concerns did you have, if any, about each offer?

Did you try to negotiate any aspects of the offer?

Why do you think you were selected for this position?

Did you have a connection to any of these schools (probe: personal, professional)?

In what ways did the job search process align with your expectations?

If they have accepted an offer

What factors led you to select this school?

If multiple offers, Did you have a process for deciding between multiple offers?

From the time you applied, to when you accepted your offer, how long was the process?

Was the offer you accepted something that you were originally hoping for?

Can you rank the offers in order of preference?

If current teacher, when did you tell your previous/current school about your decision to leave?
>How did they take it?

All Job Search
How are you currently feeling about the process of searching for a job? [probe: stress, uncertainty]

Have you felt at any time during the job search that your work opportunities have been influenced by your race or ethnicity? Can you give me an example?

Have you felt at any time during your job search that your work opportunities have been influenced by your gender? Can you give me an example?

Have you felt at any time during your job search your work opportunities were shaped by your age? Can you give me an example?

All Teachers
How long do you plan to teach?
Where do you see yourself in terms of your career in 5 years? 10 years?
>Are you doing anything now to pursue those goals?

All
Is there anything else about the job search process that you think is important and that we didn't touch on?

What is something you know now that you wish you had known before the job search?

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