Public Abstract
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Current ideologies of entrepreneurialism, globalism, and neoliberalism have influenced higher education to adopt a business model. While some view the university as having strayed from its public service role, others see this adaptation as relevant to a global society. Response to these influences is seen in efforts to internationalize campuses and increase revenues by recruiting international students. As competition for international students increases, institutions have begun using commercial agents to recruit, yet this practice is often considered unethical. Because administrators need to make informed decisions in the students' best interests and preserve the reputation of their institutions, this study explored the ethical dimensions of this growing phenomenon.

This multi-case qualitative study examined the experiences of students recruited through commercial agents and institutional personnel who recruit through agents. Interviews were conducted at two institutions with recruiting officers and international students. Other data sources included a survey of recruiting officers from 22 institutions and documents from the institutions, agents, and professional organizations.

As data were analyzed through a framework defining ethical as "other-regarding," four distinct themes emerged—power and control, information flow and accuracy, financial and recruiting benefits, and accountability and trust. A new model evolved to equitably serve each stakeholder. Implications for practice specify guidelines to protect the student's best interests and the institution's reputation during all stages of the recruitment process. Future research would explore the ethicality issue from the agent's perspective or examine the impact of culture on the perception of ethicality in the process of recruitment.