"We don't Recruit, We Educate": High School Program Marketing and International Baccalaureate Programmes

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Abstract

Public education reformers have created a widespread expectation of school choice among school consumers. School leaders adopt rigorous academic programs, like the International Baccalaureate (IB) Diploma Programme (DP) and Career Programme (CP), to improve their market position in the competitive landscape. While ample research has investigated the nature of school choice policies, few studies have looked directly at marketing language or materials to probe the meanings of the sales pitches used by schools to recruit students for selective enrollment programs. This study aimed to develop understandings of meanings that emerge from the marketing discourses of specialized secondary programs. It draws from document analysis (Prior, 2003) and multi-modal social semiotics (Hodge & Kress, 1988; Kress, 2010) to investigate the marketing of IB Programmes in two U.S. high schools. American schools operate within the quasi-market education system and engender business ideologies meant to attract program participants and supportive parents. The policy discourses of school choice are maneuvered into marketing narratives to shape the 21st century student-subject.

Keywords: *school choice, public schools, recruitment and marketing, the International Baccalaureate, semiotic analysis*

Introduction

Schools in the U.S. face competition for students in both the private and public sector (Anast-May, Mitchell, Buckner, & Elsberry, 2012). In the last two decades, the political lightning rod (Davies & Quirke, 2005) of school choice policy has opened up schools in all sectors to the forces of the market. Those who favor the choice system extol it for providing consumers with the freedom to choose what is best for their children (Chubb & Moe, 1990). Those who oppose argue that the free market does not yield success for anyone who works hard and that failure is not just a consequence of making the wrong choices in the vast supermarket of educational products (Apple, 1980/2004). In a marketized system, schools seek the best customers to consume their educational products (Adnett & Davies, 2005; Lubienski, 2006b), and, as such they increasingly depend upon marketing materials to promote specialized curricula and programs (Lubienski, 2007). Likewise, families increasingly call upon consumer behavior to engage in children's schooling (Lubienski, 2006b). It is common in the private school world for graphic design and

advertising agencies to be hired as consultants and create schools' marketing materials (Zimmerman, 2008); however, promotional efforts have also taken place in the public sphere. For example, in 2006 the United States launched a marketing campaign in China, the "Electronic Education Fair," to draw Chinese university students to U.S. schools (West, 2008).

Marketing is used to generate consumers of a product portrayed as desirable, and in the school sector, this means filling student seats (students as consumers) as well as improving market position (Lubienski, 2006a). Schools in this framework become rankable with benchmarked indices and accountability data. This study presumes a deeper understanding of schools' positions in the marketized system can be gained from close investigation of public school marketing materials and discourses. We asked the following:

1) How do marketing discourses convey information about schools' positions and goals within their communities?
2) How do marketing materials and marketing language convey the values of school programs in the choice system?

This empirical study investigates marketing programs in two International Baccalaureate (IB) schools in one U.S. state. One school is situated in the state's largest metropolitan area and the other within an urban area on the state's peripheral boundary, both offering the IB Diploma Programme (DP; or the IBDP) and IB's newer Career Programme (CP; or the IBCP)—the original moniker was the IB Career Certificate (IBCC). Marketing data for this study focus specifically on recruitment for the CP. We asked how the schools encourage participation in their Career Programmes, why this participation matters, and how the marketing messages are sustained in classroom experiences. We interrogated the ways marketing materials informed the identities of the schools, the academic program, the students, and their communities. Our investigation includes actual marketing documents as well as interview and field note data to interrogate not only how students are brought into the CP, but also how students, once in the programs, are provided with the promised products.

This paper begins with a review of research on educational quasi-markets, including the IB's offering of academic programs within this market. It continues with a discussion of literature on school marketing and competition as well as an analysis of how high-status curricula affiliate with Bernstein's (2000) concept of pedagogic identity. Bernstein is useful when theorizing how the IB Programmes hold an exchange value in the market, promising to improve the competitive positioning of schools and students. The next section offers a methodological approach on document and multi-modal semiotic analysis. Then, the findings of the data analysis are presented, followed by a conclusion and suggestions for further research.

Literature Review

As school choice expanded in the United States, so did the need for schools to engage in marketing processes (Anast-May, Mitchell, Buckner, & Elsberry, 2012). School choice policies and practices emerged in the late 1970s and early 1980s as a response to political narratives about the inability of public schooling to provide high quality education for U.S. students (Gintis, Cox, Green, & Hickox, 1991). Influential texts like Chubb and Moe's (1990) *Politics, Markets, and America's Schools* helped to spread the notion that the government's monopoly on the service of schooling was at the root of the problem, and that a competitive market, responsive to

consumer demands, would result in improved educational service for all (Webb, Gulson, & Pitton, 2014). Ball (1990) pointed out that without financial exchange, however, the education sector would never become "a real market" (p. 90). Over a decade later, and well into a period of policy changes that opened up schools to market forces in many countries, Lubienski (2006b) reaffirmed the difference between the *school market* and the *laissez-faire market*, and explained the term "quasi-market" (p. 249) as a more accurate term to apply to the exchange structure of the marketized school system. An educational quasi-market, according to Levačić (1995) might be characterized by elements of choice but still be regulated and subject to high levels of government control. The term was originally applied favorably to support a British reform agenda maximizing local control of education and expanding parental choice. Whitty and Power (1997) and others have applied it critically in research analyzing the effects of school choice and marketization on increased social inequality and reduced access.

The core tenet of free-market school policy through this transformational period, from the early 1990s to the present, has been parental choice, driven by the belief that choice will create competition and result in quality improvements (Ball, 1990; Bartlett, Frederick, Gulbrandsen, & Murillo, 2002; Condliffe, Boyd, & Deluca, 2015). School choice was relatively slow to catch on and was not seen as a particularly widespread phenomenon in U.S. school districts as of the early 2000s (Robenstine, 2000). However, specialized secondary-level programs like the IB's Diploma and Career Programmes, which offer alternatives to traditional curriculum and promise advantages for students, create choice systems within individual schools and stimulate competition among academic programs as well as students and their teachers (Khazem & Khazem, 2014). In this study, the educational quasi-markets were considered for the choice and competition they created both between schools and within schools.

As the ideal of school choice within the public sector expanded, the pressure to allow market forces to act upon public schools reshaped the ways schools were managed. Both human and capital resources were reallocated in response to the demand for competition, with some of these resources funneled into promotional efforts. School personnel, though typically trained as educators and not business managers, now must market their schools in order to raise their profiles on local and state league tables (Anast-May, Mitchell, Buckner, & Elsberry, 2012). In many secondary schools, programs such as IB help to achieve these goals.

Since its inception in 1968 as a European educational organization for transnational families, the IB has grown its presence in the English-speaking world and become, as Bunnell (2011) stated, "undeniably Anglo-centric. In July 2009, the United States, Canada, England, and Australia accounted for 61 percent of the IB World presence" (p. 66). Doherty (2009) pointed out how in the mid-2000s the IB in Australia was produced in media accounts and parent information documents as a "brand of distinction" (p. 82) and marked as a niche program to attract upwardly mobile families to choose its programs. Doherty (2009) and Doherty and Shield (2012) provided strong examinations of how school choice policies, curricular markets, and branding worked together to enable rapid growth of IB in Australia. Similarly, Bunnell (2011) traced the ways in which policy conditions and public attitudes embraced the IB programs and resulted in the United States holding the market share of IB programs in the world, with the vast majority of these, 89% as of 2011 (Doherty & Shield, 2012) in publicly funded schools.

Bunnell (2011), in his analysis of how the United States came to dominate the IB market, attributed the U.S. growth to several factors, among which were the pressure in national and state education policies on schools to produce global citizens (p. 67) and a long-term presence, dating back to the 1950s, of international education in American schools. Another important and more

recent factor is the perception that the IB DP is "the route to academic excellence" (p. 72). The American media perpetuates this notion as publications such as *Newsweek* produce annual lists of "best" high schools dominated by schools with IB DPs or large Advanced Placement programs.

While the work of the authors above does not centrally focus on the role of promotion in creating populations of IB students, marketing emerges as an implicit thread across these literatures. Bunnell (2011) was primarily concerned about the narrowing of the notion of international education as the IB aimed to serve the needs of its biggest customer, the United States. Doherty (2009) and Doherty and Shield (2012) problematized the ways in which curricular branding overshadowed local, democratic schooling. Branding and competition yield perceptions of rank among different programs and curricula.

Lubienski (2007) analyzed how marketing practices function in the marketized school system and shifted the argument from whether education should or should not be treated as a consumer product and noted that "*it is being positioned exactly as such* in competitive environments" (p. 122, emphasis in original). Lubienski called for more research on how schools characterize and advertise their services, especially to one another, claiming that more investigation could yield better understandings of how market forces convey the goals of public education.

Nevertheless there is a paucity of literature examining specific ways schools advertise themselves or their programs. Miron and Nelson's (2002) study of charter schools noted that an investment in promotion of a school was not necessarily accompanied by educational innovation. Ammerman and Wuttke (2014) provided a step-by-step guide for recruiting and retaining young string players in school orchestra programs, using marketing theory to help school orchestra leaders populate the program. Marketing terms such as brand loyalty were deployed to frame the school orchestra program as a choice product and the students as consumers. Suggestions for keeping loyal customers and growing the brand included strategies like making students believe "orchestra is the in-group" (p. 25). In both articles, marketing was used to increase participation in programs. No connection could be found linking increased participation with improved quality of educational programs.

However, in this limited literature on education marketing, a connection between marketing and the presumption of quality of education programming does emerge. To draw students into educational programs, marketing materials must stimulate potential consumers' future ambitions and aspirations, suggesting students' ideal futures and signifying that choice programs will help students meet their goals better than any other option. Marketing ensures, likewise, that the public has knowledge of the existence of choice programs. Educational program marketing raises awareness of educational options and thus has a pedagogical effect. Educational marketing instructs the public about available choices and shapes educational consumers.

Reese (2007) discussed Virginia's Arlington Career Center as a model of program marketing, with its posters advertising the career and technical education (CTE) programs as "artistic and eye-catching…each one spotlights an individual student success story—a success story that is due in large part to the experience the student had at the career center" (p. 14). Advertisements attracted students to believe they would garner success in the career options offered at this center. Reese emphasized that program marketing must make communities aware; the message must get out or a program's good cannot be realized. Marketing must convey a curricular product's desirability and its value. Well-designed posters, logos, websites, community information meetings and even television commercials are not only necessary to the success of education systems in terms of enrollment; these materials construct programs' quality. Quality is construed in terms

of how programs promise to position participants advantageously and ideally. Schools, school districts, and even nation-states utilize the principles of marketing to construct educational value. In their construction of value, educational marketing practices position students in idealized relationships with the educational products they consume. Educational products become equated with students' unrealized potential. In this way, marketing practices may be read as explicit verbal and visual renderings of schools' "pedagogic identities," a concept Bernstein (2000) theorized and which several scholars (Cambridge, 2012; Doherty, 2010; Resnik, 2008) have applied to the IB's secondary programs.

Pedagogic identity, according to Bernstein (2000), precedes the formation of personal identity in marketized society. The state can project a desirable pedagogic identity through its educational reforms, with this identity aiming to orient subjects within the social order. Pedagogic identity embeds a society's possible careers within "a collective base" (p. 66). This base is composed both of and by the social order, the constellation of cultural and governmental forces that comprise social norms and possibilities. Bernstein analyzed the ways in which states' education reforms were used to constitute official pedagogic identities, which sometimes competed with local identities (Bernstein, p. xi). The career of a student, according to Bernstein, is a "knowledge career, a moral career and a locational career" (p. 66) and is situated in a social base ordered and institutionalized by the state. U.S. educational institutions now attempt to maximize their profiles in the arena Bernstein (2000) termed the *decentered market* of the neoliberal state. School districts shuffle resources for targeted student recruitment and, also, to "meet external performance criteria," and "optimise [their] position in relation to similar institutions" (p. 69). The decentered market identity likens education to a form of connoisseurship or consumption (Power, 2006). Bernstein proposed another form of decentered pedagogic identity, *therapeutic*. The decentered therapeutic identity focuses on the formation and control of the self as a "personal project" (p. 73). Cambridge (2012) argued that the IB Programmes have attempted to project a "'progressive' decentered therapeutic identity" (p. 50), but the IB is also "assailed by market forces…[and] being driven towards a neo-liberal decentred (market) identity" (p. 50).

Both IB's secondary level programs, the DP and CP, now instantiate the market model of soft-skills training for future workers, and newer IB school-based activities are geared toward the socio-emotional and cognitive values of self-improvement, flexible thinking, teamwork, and the like. Bernstein's (2000) decentered therapeutic identity emerges through these programs as they embed the idea of individual planning and self-management. "Here the concept of self is crucial and the self is regarded as a personal project," Bernstein wrote (p. 73). At the center of the neoliberal project is the entrepreneurial self; a constant loop of training and retraining, skilling and reskilling marks the "new citizen." Nikolas Rose (1999) clarified, "life is to become a continuous economic capitalization of the self" (p. 161). In order to strengthen one's credentials and expertise in scarce and highly competitive labor markets, young people need improvisational strategies for managing risk.

As U.S. school reform centers upon discourses of employability via college and career readiness, the IB Programmes promise to elevate students' status with credentials to promote postsecondary success and career advancement. Resnik (2008), too, argued the curricular objectives of the IB Programmes anticipate a pedagogic identity "concomitant with the occupational demands of the new economy" (p. 153). The cognitive skills required by top global managers engaged in problem solving activities are exhibited as the psycho-emotional predispositions of self-reflection, critical thinking, and lifelong learning, among others. According to Resnik (2008, p. 161) these identities are developed in the IB core, using the Approaches to Learning course

and related community service activities, to convey "the main tenet of IB curricula ...'learning to learn' so that students can adapt the skills to any new learning environment or context in which they find themselves" (p. 155). Likewise, the IB's Learner Profile, offering ten attributes—soft skills—taught in the core courses of both the DP and the CP, appears to project Bernstein's (2000) therapeutic identity and encourage the constant remaking of the neoliberal self (Cambridge, 2012, p. 50). Within the U.S. context, the IB's secondary level programs are situated within a collective base valorizing school choice and competition and urging its youth to ensure their competitive advantage as future workers in the knowledge economy. In the next section, we explore the methodologies of document analysis (Prior, 2003) and multimodal semiotic analysis (Hodge & Kress, 1988 & Kress, 2010). These enabled us to investigate the marketing materials of two IB high schools in one U.S. state and to ask how the schools framed the pedagogic identities of the IB Diploma and Career Programmes.

Methodology

Data included visual marketing materials and verbal marketing discourses culled from interviews with IB school administrators. To analyze this data we employed aspects of Prior's (2003) document analysis as well as multimodal semiotic analysis (Hodge & Kress, 1988; Kress, 2010). We considered the intersections of choice policy discourses and curricular program marketing. Our approach investigated written and spoken texts as semiotic acts influencing the social system and able to both reproduce and change "the sets of meanings and values which make up a culture" (Hodge & Kress, 1988, p. 6). Bernstein's (2000) theoretical concept of pedagogic identity aligns with the analytical strategies of Prior, Hodge and Kress, and Kress. All are grounded in the notion of action embedded within a social order and interpretable within the social context.

We analyzed the data and organized their common themes to construct the marketing dossier for each school. The dossier is "a collection of statements drawn from various sources" (Prior, 2003, p. 92). In this research texts, visual artifacts, and interview transcripts centering on how IB Programmes were advertised to students and parents comprised the dossier. At each school, school choice and marketization were accepted practices.

Prior's (2003) document analysis methodology focuses on the study of how documents function within their social settings, not just "what [documents] contain" (p. 4). Prior equates the importance of documents with that of human speech. He advocates treating them as fluid, formed by social actors and determined by collective forces. As such, analysis of documents for social research involves a focus on what documents reference rather than just on the meanings of words, phrases, or documents themselves. Prior recommends the study of not just documents but also those who use them, so we combined our analysis of marketing presentations with interviews. Looking closely at multiple layers, Prior found it possible to interpret the discourses documents communicate. For Prior, discourse was the social construction of an idea, the rules and principles that buttress social worlds and determine the relations of social power that govern experience. Prior's methodology asks researchers to see documents as social discourse.

Additionally, Hodge and Kress (1988) and Kress (2010) in conjunction with Prior (2003) provide a macro-social framework for examining IB schools' marketing strategies. Hodge and Kress's social semiotic approach to multimodal communication provides ways to situate data in their social contexts. Multimodal communication signifies cultural technologies "of representation, production, dissemination, and the affordances and facilities that they offer" (Kress, 2010, p. 19). In other words, communication responds to social and technological developments.

Kress's research helps to situate our study in the increasingly marketized world characterized by "the rapid shrinking, the disappearance even, of a public domain where a consensus about forms of social interaction might exist" (p. 18). Contemporary communication is situated in a world in which global markets generate "social fragmentation as a means of maximizing the potentials of niche markets" (Kress, 2010, p. 20). For this research, visual and verbal marketing materials function to attract students to participate in IB programs, which reinforce class positions in the stratified market of schooling programs (Doherty, 2009). Neoliberal society reframes the citizen as consumer, and according to Kress, the "subjectivity of 'consumer,' embedded in market-led conceptions of *choice*, has fundamental effects on possibilities and practices of communication when contrasted with those of 'citizen'" (p. 20, emphasis in original). The marketing materials from School 1 and 2 aimed to draw consumer/family into school programs promising social advantage.

This contextual setting forms the background for our reading of the marketing dossiers for the two schools. Prior (2003) urges researchers to study not just documents but where and how documents are used, because a document constitutes "an event or phenomenon of which it is a part" (p, 68). Likewise, Kress (2010) advocates that meanings be determined not just from linguistic analysis of texts but also from examining the "*interests of the sign-maker…*[and] the *environment* in which meaning is made" (p. 57, emphasis in original). Within this framework our analysis of the marketing materials considered the political and economic influences of neoliberalism alongside the local communities. The quasi-market system seeks to create competition between schools and also to increase the competitive nature of curricular options within schools. The data represent the social construction of the IB Programmes and the students within the schools. The collective marketing dossiers of each school are read as a narrative of marketization and school competition. Both schools use their marketing documents to attract students into the same programs, the IB DP and CP. However, the ways in which their marketing narratives differ provide insight into how individual productions of meaning interact with broader systems of meaning (Hodge & Kress, 1988). In these cases, marketing narratives imagined ideal outcomes for students—as well as ideal students distinctly framed at each school.

Competition and ranking pressures drove the marketized system of the two schools. Both schools engaged in marketing efforts to recruit and retain high-quality IB students. At the time of the study, both schools had adopted the IB's two upper-secondary programs, the DP and the CP. In each case the DP was a well-established offering within the school and the CP was relatively new. Both schools had well-established CTE programs. Each school had at least two years of experience offering the CP, which was available worldwide starting in 2011. Researchers collected marketing documents and conducted interviews to investigate how (a) marketing discourses convey information about schools' positions and goals within their communities and (b) marketing materials and language convey the values of school programs in the choice system.

Findings

School 1 is located in an affluent district in the state's largest metro area and receives a state ranking well above average. White students make up 70% of the student population; the remaining populations consist of Hispanic, Asian, and Black students. Less than 15% of the school's students are classified as economically disadvantaged (eligible for free and reduced price lunch). School 2 is located in a district on the periphery of the state and receives a performance score in the average range. Black students comprise over 55% of the school's population;

the remaining populations consist of Hispanic, White, and Multi-racial students. Over 65% of students are considered economically disadvantaged. For students at each school, participating in IB programs was a choice. School 1 did not restrict participation in its IB programs; marketing materials targeted the entire school population. Students could choose to join either program at any time before the programs officially started in 11th grade. The population of IB students at School 1 aligned demographically with the school as a whole. School 2 was a magnet school, and it marketed its IB programs to all eighth-grade middle school students in the district. Students had to apply to participate, which involved completing an exam, an essay, and an interview. A limited number of students from within and outside the school's attendance zone were admitted to the IB magnet program, which started in ninth grade. Once students at School 2 completed their first two years of an IB preparation curriculum, they could continue, if eligible, in either the Diploma Programme or the Career Programme. School 2's IB participants did not match the school demographics, however, with a larger percentage of White students participating in IB than present in the school as a whole. Both School 1 and School 2 utilized similar marketing strategies to attract participants to one of the two programs.

PowerPoint presentations used to promote the schools' IB programs served as central data sources for this study. IB coordinators developed the presentations for semi-annual parent information sessions. The schools' websites and email lists announced the voluntary sessions. Additional data sources included interviews with IB faculty, program coordinators, and administrators. All data were analyzed using Dedoose, a secure, password-protected qualitative analysis program. In keeping with the ideas of Prior (2003), we developed thematic codes (see Table 1.0) based upon what aspects of the social body were referenced in the texts and images of data sources. Since the data influenced and shaped the schools' communities, codes were designed to give substance to underlying features of the communities, such as their values, hopes, and concerns. We treated the multi-modal data semiotically, that is, as signs constructed within the social context of each school and intended to do particular kinds of work (Kress, 2010).

Table 1.0. Codes

List of Codes

Code	Description
Adding school products	CP was a relatively new product in each school
Advising as advertising	During advisement sessions, IB coordinators had to market IB Programmes
Attractiveness of IB for both student and school	Student involvement in IB Programmes also benefits schools
A way to improve during district expansion	As districts change, pressure exerted on schools to grow and attract the best students
A way to improve during financial crisis 2009	When financial crisis affected budgets starting in 2009, schools perceived low-cost program adoptions as ways to continue improving despite budget crisis
Belief in the products/ administrators support for IB	Administrators expressed strong support for and belief in what IB Programmes had to offer
Competition between programs	Tension between students about which IB Programme to choose
Competition between schools	Schools within both districts competed for the most

	high achieving students
Competition for state rank	Both schools sought to gain an edge in state ranking
CTE teachers as advertising	Popular teachers drew students into best CTE programs and IB CP
DP harder than CP	Tension between perception that DP was more challenging and thus superior program
Education as recruitment	Faculty resisted idea that they were recruiting students; instead they were educating them
Future benefits offered for students	Programs offered all espoused future benefits
International competition	Faculty were aware of perception of U.S. educational failure compared to higher-ranked countries
Parents' goals	Parents' goals for their children varied across schools
Providing edge in competetive world	Strong emphasis on the competition for college spots and jobs beyond the school walls
Social Worlds	Refers to cultural characteristics of each school
State scholarship	Refers to tuition scholarship for high achieving students at in-state colleges
Student-consumers' identities	Students were customers served by academic offerings
Unadvertised challenges	Challenges with IB Programmes administrators did not disclose to parents and students

We compared codes across data sources (see Charmaz, 2014) and used memos to generate links between codes to form the corpus or the "logonomic system" (Hodge & Kress, 1988, p. 4) of signs that shaped each school's marketing discourse. A logonomic system is a control mechanism regulating the function of semiotic messages. It is:

> a set of rules prescribing the conditions for production and receptions of meanings, which specify who can claim to initiate (produce, communicate) or know (receive, understand) meanings about what topics under what circumstances and with what modalities (how, when, why). (p. 4)

Examining the codes (Table 1.0) enabled researchers to see how marketing materials and discourses functioned as a logonomic system regulating the meanings of the IB CP and how those meanings were received by students and their parents.

Initial coding and memo writing enabled excerpts to be regrouped according to common themes. Then excerpts were arranged in these new groupings, reread as documents unto themselves, and viewed as representative of how the IB CP was produced within each school (see Table 2.0). Marketing discourse positioned the CP as a desirable option for students. The complex of codes revealed a distinct narrative of program promotion for the IB Programmes at each school, with underlying logonomic systems that controlled the meaning of the CP's desirability.

Table 2.0

Common Themes (Codes Re-grouped)

Common theme	Original codes
Marketization	Adding school products

	Advising as advertising
	Attractiveness of IB for both student and school
	Belief in the products/administrative support for IB
	CTE teachers as advertising
	Education as recruitment
	Future benefits/advertising discourse
	Parents' goals
	Student-consumers' identities
	Unadvertised challenges
Competition	Competition between programs
	Competition between schools
	Competition for state rank
	DP harder than CP
	International competition
	Providing edge in competitive world
	School Improvement
	State scholarship
School improvement	A way to improve during district expansion
	A way to improve during financial crisis 2008
Social Worlds	School 1 cultural characteristics/social imaginaries
	School 2 cultural characteristics/social imaginaries

Through this analytical process, the data helped us see the ways that marketing defined relations between the IB CP and the DP, the IB and the school as a whole, and the identity of the ideal student at each school. Each school's marketing narrative is linked to a larger narrative of neoliberalism and marketization of schooling.

This section continues with an explication of the four major themes, marketization, competition, school improvement, and social worlds, and a discussion of the marketing narratives, undergirded by logonomic systems of each school. We use these themes to analyze the documents' references and their social-semiotic qualities (Prior, 2003; Kress, 2010; Hodge & Kress, 1988). Prior (2003) explained the dossier as a "collection of statements drawn from various sources, [functioning] as a mirror on events" (p. 92). The marketing dossiers of School 1 and School 2 demonstrate how the forces of competition and marketization, the discourse of school improvement, and the imaginaries of social worlds act upon the schools, but also how they, the documents, function as actants in the narrative of choice schooling.

Marketization

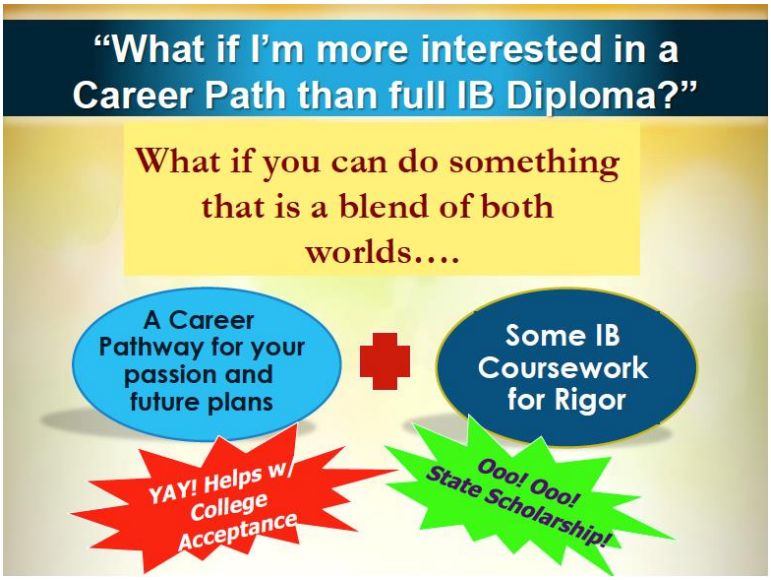
Both schools faced the same challenge: populating two IB Programmes available to students in grades 11 and 12, and both used marketing strategies to garner participation in their programs. School 1 drew in potential students through voice mails and newsletters, advertising the program to attract participants (School 1 IB coordinator, personal communication, January 30, 2015). Participants at School 1 frequently used the language of sales in regards to promoting IB Programmes, along with the terms "competition" and "competitive." At School 2, participants expressed discomfort about the nature of recruitment for different IB Programmes. The IB coordinator stated, when asked about how the school derived their participants in their two IB Pro-

grammes (CP and DP): "We don't recruit for [CP], we recruit for IB. We don't differentiate whatsoever…we recruit as a magnet, in terms of [an] internationally recognized magnet. Um, that is our recruitment, shtick, so to speak" (School 2 IB coordinator, personal communication, January 14, 2015). School 1 marketed two different programs, while School 2 marketed itself as an "IB school."

Marketing strategies alone did not constitute the marketization theme in this study, although marketing is surely an outcome of school choice. Marketization as a thematic construct refers to the transformation of public schooling in which neoliberal consumerism supplanted liberal humanism in the curriculum (Whitty & Power, 1997). In the marketized system, education is a consumer act, conferring benefits for consumers, and the two schools in this research were offering two IB products for students to choose. Both schools offered open meetings for parents and students during which they explained the programs. At School 1, the DP and CP were treated separately; at School 2, the two IB offerings were explained during the same event. IB coordinators use PowerPoint presentations to explain IB Programmes at these events.

The PowerPoints explained the features of the programs while providing estimations of their merits. For School 1, we gained access only to the presentation promoting the Career Programme. For School 2, the same document was used to promote both the Diploma and the Career Programme. The two presentations are notable for their visual contrasts. School 1's presentation on the CP had a variety of eye-catching colors, charts, graphs, and interjections. On one slide, a side comment in a green starry bubble read, "Ooo! Ooo! State scholarship!" suggesting that among the benefits of the Career Programme is its potential to increase the likelihood of participants receiving the scholarship (see Figure 1.0).

Figure 1.0. School 1, Parent's Night Orientation



School 2's presentation had few variations in font or color and all graphics represented IB's digital identity (International Baccalaureate, 2015). The school's visual identity was represented in the font colors of some slides. Essential to the interpretation of multimodal texts, says Liu (2013), is looking at the relationships among visual elements and the meanings associated with them in a particular culture. This lack of visual variation or reference to School 2's commu-

nity in their PowerPoint presentation contrasted with the ample visual detail in School 1's. School 1's sales pitch for the CP was highly personalized; School 2's visual recruitment efforts aligned with the coordinator's claim that at this school it was the "internationally recognized magnet" angle they used to recruit students for IB. IB was an option that could help to constitute the identity of the student-consumer at School 1, whereas at School 2, the IB was promoted *as* the student-consumer's identity.

Competition

Elements of competition in each school's marketing documents included regional competition, within-district, and programmatic competition for students. Intradistrict competition was evidenced explicitly in interviews with administrators. School 2 competed directly "for the same kids" with the high-performing, liberal arts magnet in the district:

> They do a good job and the community knows what goes on over there. From the time those kids get into kindergarten their goal is to go to Liberal Arts Magnet High (LAMH)…A lot of folks their goal is to go here. (School 2 principal, personal communication, February 20, 2015)

School 2 used its IB Programmes to distinguish itself from LAMH, which could explain why the IB's digital identity subsumed the school's identity in the PowerPoint presentation. However, with the introduction of the IB CP, School 2 had another opportunity to attract high-performing students. The IB CP requires students to complete CTE pathways, and CTE programming at School 2 was highly regarded. CTE programming was "a reason a lot of kids come to school every day for those programs" (School 2 principal, personal communication, February 20, 2015). A few high-status offerings, such as the healthcare department, generated a strong student following. The IB CP offered a way for School 2 to gain advantage in its direct competition with LAMH.

CTE offerings at School 1 were considered outstanding, even some of the best in the state. Student organizations connected to prominent CTE pathways such as marketing won international competitions. School 1 used the IB CP to offer its already successful CTE students more opportunities for success. Intradistrict competition was not an emphasis for School 1. Rather, program marketing at School 1 stressed how IB could offer more competitive advantages for high-achieving students.

Structural qualities of PowerPoint presentations indicated the unique ways in which competition manifested at each school. The presentations are similarly designed. Each offered reasons why the program(s) were special, listed program characteristics, and ended with procedural steps. Each document explained the regional uniqueness of the IB Programmes, perhaps to set the schools apart from others in the district. School 2 pointed out that the school was "the first authorized IBCP school in the state." School 1 stated its CP is the only one of its kind in the district. In each case, participating in a "one of a kind" program is offered as a benefit to students. Intraschool competition was subtle in each school's presentation. School 1 provided information about what students had to do in the CP and included a range of details such as information on program scheduling, graduation requirements, and a list of specific benefits (including the state scholarship). Students at School 1 had to consider these details in comparison to other options at the school (such as the IB DP). School 2's document did not address scheduling or benefits, but

it did compare the IB DP and CP. The parallel structure of School 2's presentation provided for symmetrical coverage of the two programs and suggested each had equal value. The emphasis on details and benefits in School 1's document suggested that audiences calculate a form of cost-benefit analysis. School 1's PowerPoint revealed the factor of program competition, whereas at School 2, parallel treatment suggested program competition was deemphasized.

School Improvement

The previous two sections interpret marketization and competition through interviews and PowerPoint text and images. The school improvement theme emerged through interviews with principals at each school. Principals defined school improvement in terms of the annual score the state awarded. They revealed they adopted the newer IB CP in hopes it might raise their schools' annual scores. Incidentally, the new CP was available for widespread adoption in 2012. At the same time, states in the U.S. applied for No Child Left Behind (NCLB) waivers, which required the promise to adopt "standards for college and career readiness" (McNeil & Klein, 2011, para. 1). New school accountability measurements included more data than the NCLB measures of test performance, attendance, and graduation rates. Among the categories of data in some states' new accountability plans were credits for participation in career education and IB Programmes at the secondary level. Several states directly rewarded schools for students' accumulation of industry certifications and IB participation (Torlakson, 2015). Therefore, the principals in this study seemed motivated to adopt the IB CP to accommodate their schools' needs related to new state accountability schemes.

School improvement was a motivational feature of the marketing dossier of each school and undergirded the promotion of the academic program(s) addressed in the marketing materials. While school principals connected schools' state grades to student participation in IB Programmes, schools' marketing materials made no mention of state scores. This could imply that principals have contradictory understandings of the relationship between program adoptions and marketing for program participation. It also may suggest that IB coordinators, who produce the marketing PowerPoints, understand the function of the IB Programmes differently than the principals who chose to adopt them. Understanding both the presence and absence of the school improvement theme is aided by the work of Kress (2010), who encourages the interpretation of the interrelation of a network of signs. By looking at the relationship between the themes at play in this data, we see that the IB Programmes are used to serve the perceived needs of both students and school administrators. In each case, the program is called upon to satisfy policy pressures that may be separate from educational acts.

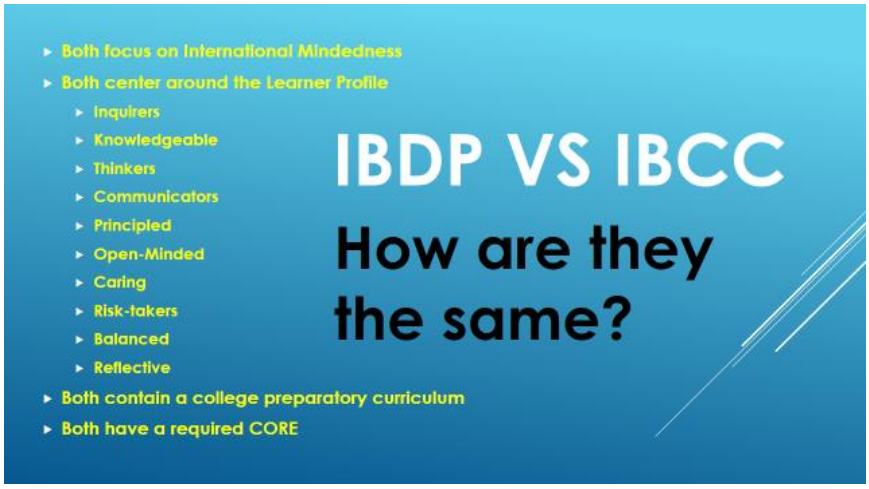
Marketing materials for IB Programmes represented the enactment of neoliberal marketization and competition. The pressure on schools to continuously improve is an outcome of neoliberal policies and practices. Falabella (2014) found that the state accountability model of education policy configured what he called the "performing school" (p. 3), which requires school managers (i.e. administrators) to constantly compete and perform in order to meet policymakers' targets. Falabella noted this pressure led to an over-focus on test-based methods as well as "the intensification of pupil segmentation and exclusion, stronger hierarchical school environments and managerial systems of control, and an increased management focus on school marketing and quick and visible solutions, leaving thorough and long-term changes aside" (p. 4). While it was beyond the scope of this study to specifically investigate what long-term changes might be need-

ed at either School 1 or School 2, our study showed schools used IB Programmes to provide solutions to accountability problems.

Social Worlds

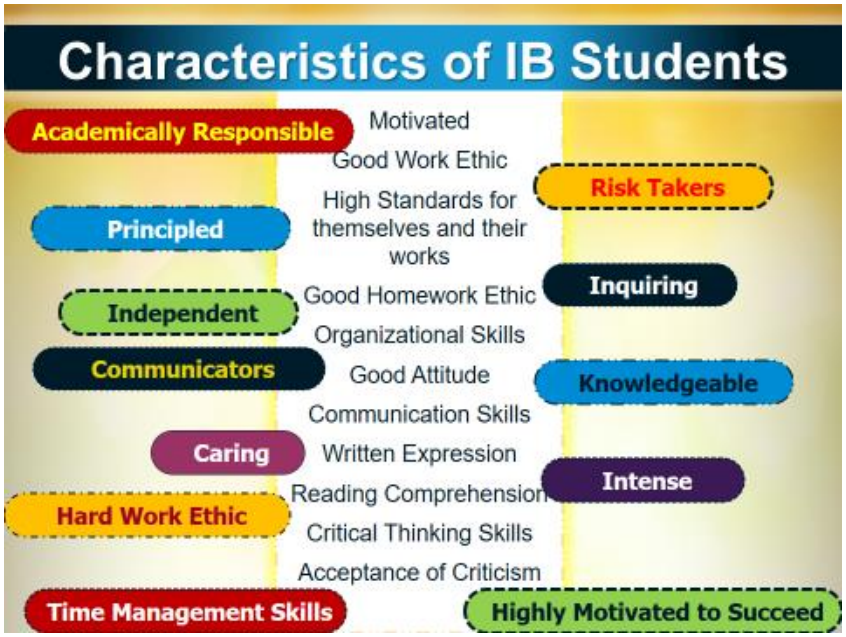
Marketing materials and interview data revealed details of the social worlds of each school and shed light on the faculty's perceptions of their student populations. PowerPoint presentations suggested relationships between IB Programmes and student characteristics. At School 1, the presentation's offer of details and program specifics along with benefits suggested a relationship between student effort and future payoff. The state scholarship was mentioned early, in the third slide, and other benefits were listed on the fourth and ninth. Over 20% of the slides detailed how students might benefit from their IB efforts, compared to zero in School 2's presentation. School 2's presentation focused on program choice (CP vs. DP), and it was structured to create a sense of equality between the two, despite the suggestion, derived from interviews, that the DP was the more rigorous academic option (see Figure 2.0). School 2's presentation implied that identity would emerge from IB participation, whereas, a student identity was presupposed in School 1's presentation.

Figure 2.0. School 2, Parent's Night Orientation



Though characteristics of local students were unevenly deduced from the presentations, each contained explicit references to the IB *Learner Profile* and maneuvered the branded language of the IB organization to suggest qualities they hoped to cultivate in their students (International Baccalaureate, 2013). School 2 quoted the *Learner Profile* in full whereas School 1 blended the *Learner Profile* with other modifiers to personalize it for their audience. Accompanying IB's *Learner Profile* terms "risk taker," "caring," and "communicators" were modifiers like "high standards," "good attitude," and "acceptance of criticism." Modifiers functioned as translations of IB terms, perhaps to make the language less ambiguous for its audience.

Figure 3.0. School 1, Ideal IB Student Characteristics



School 2, the magnet school in the peripheral district, separated IB students from non-IB students. Thus, only IB students were exposed to the goals of the IB *Learner Profile*. The IB CP students took a combination of IB and non-IB classes and were the only students in the school who shifted between the IB and the regular education programs. Stark divisions between the two programs became evident. It appeared doubtful that non-IB students in the school received the same aspirational messages as the *Learner Profile* provided the IB students. CP students took some IB classes, which were "serious material" and some regular classes, "that they show up for and make straight As, because they're not challenging" (School 2 IB Coordinator, personal communication, January 14, 2015). With a foot in each world, CP students at School 2 were required to "turn it on off and turn it on," meaning that the uneven levels of rigor were difficult to navigate because one was very challenging and the other was perceived as the opposite. At School 2, there appeared to be only one set of students IB marketing materials aimed to reach.

School 1's social world, on the other hand, was more homogenously high achieving. It appeared that that the focus for all students was on getting ahead, going to competitive universities, and becoming high achievers. IB Programmes, either the CP or DP, appeared to promise an advantage as students appropriated the cultural tropes of a successful IB student (see Figure 3.0). The principal reported, "We're continuously looking for ways to give [students] an advantage over other students coming from similar programs. And our students in these programs are very high achieving students overall" (personal communication, March 4, 2015). Indeed, the principal reported that a capacity crowd of 350-plus attended the IB information night the previous fall, attracting a clientele eager for advanced academic programming and seeking understanding of the comparative advantages in winning prestigious college admissions (see Weis, Cipollone, & Jenkins, 2014).

Discussion

Both School 1 and School 2 spent approximately the same amounts of time attempting to spread the word and encourage participation in their IB Programmes. Explicit marketing efforts took the form of documents (PowerPoint presentations) shown in live parent information nights. IB coordinators created these documents and events to help populate their programs. In this study, marketing helped shape the social setting of each school. Marketing documents for the two schools were socially constructed and revealed purposes and intentions not immediately obvious (Prior, 2003). Marketing dossiers constructed ideal student pedagogic identities (Bernstein, 2000) in relation to IB programs. At School 1, the ideal student was a high achiever who expected elite college admissions and future prosperity. For this student, the IB Programmes were constructed as facilitators of these goals. At School 2, the IB was projected as a proxy for the ideal, and the marketing dossier indicated that students' pursuit of IB credentials would yield ideal identities among students. These students were to become *ontologically* IB to set them apart from their non-IB peers throughout the district.

Color, graphics, quantity of information, and language in the two PowerPoint presentations intersected with interview data to suggest a marketing narrative or what Prior (2003) called a "dossier," for each school. The marketing narratives helped do the "identity work" (Prior, 2003, p. 103) in each school, which functioned as a response to the policy pressure of neoliberal marketization. These narratives drew from larger social discourses related to school choice and markets, as well as the formation of identities within schools and within imagined children.

Coupled with market-driven school choice are school rankings and comparisons based on metrics. State rankings were determined by a combination of standardized test scores and other factors such as IB Programme participation and completion. The results were widely published, often in local newspapers. For both School 1 and School 2, program marketing attempted to draw in participants to an educational experience that claimed it would maximize student potential, but what emerged was a narrative of give-and-take. Students had to be willing to assist with schools' continuous self-improvement goals. The marketing narrative brought market-driven policy discourse to life, forming the ideal "buyers" of IB Programmes.

Market-driven Education Discourse

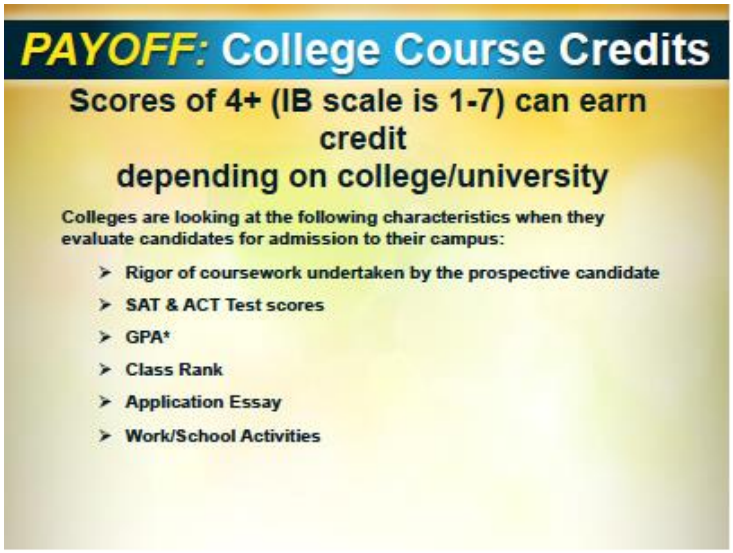
Though School 2's marketing narrative deemphasized competition and rankings, market-driven choice discourse characterized both schools' marketing narratives. School 1, top-ranked in the state, self-characterized as having many high-achieving students who craved participation in special programs, so the IB CP marketing materials had to distinguish that program and make students see it as uniquely special. Bright colors and catchy graphics attracted viewers and made the IB CP seem exciting and appealing. Faculty at School 2 reported another school was the top in their district and expressed frustration that it drew in more resources and high-performing students than their own. School 2's marketing narrative centered on its status as the only IB school in the district. Their PowerPoint presentation, which exclusively utilized the logos and graphics belonging to the IB's digital identity, highlighted its specialness as the only IB school in the region and among the first in the world to offer the CP. Aligning its identity with the IB so completely, the school affiliated with an esteemed, international curricular product to set itself in contrast with the high-performing, but provincial, liberal arts magnet school.

The Student as Buyer

The marketization process generally serves to narrow the choices available by hailing others as most proper, and in this way, school choice discourse may function as a type of ideological state apparatus (ISA) (Althusser, 1970). ISAs function to repress all citizens through violence or ideology, but those whom the ideological state apparatuses properly interpellate into citizens will experience themselves as successful state subjects. To Althusser, this is a circular process in which ideology interpellates the subject and subjects form ideologies, and it is thus an active process. Subjects are called into ideologies, and subjects reproduce the ideologies that have hailed them. Free-market ideology and the ideology of market-driven school choice are imprinted in the social fabric; communities accept these values, or discourses, and then act to drive their imperatives and shape their identities. Brownlee (2013) stated, "educational institutions are shaped and constrained by external power…which in turn shape the subjectivities of subordinate classes through the 'hidden curriculum'" (p. 196).

At School 1, the ideal student-subject was encouraged to follow one's passions while trying to receive an elite college acceptance and the state scholarship. It appeared that most students started with this level of esteem and then chose academic programs to suit their special, personal needs. Students were vying for "Payoff: College Course Credits" (see Figure 4.0). School 1's students were independent thinkers seeking academic experiences that would "pay," in immediate terms with advanced college credits and later, with good jobs in the knowledge economy. The prospective IB student was a discerning participant in the choice-making process, a young consumer of academic goods leading to future success, a beneficiary of substantial payoff for hard work.

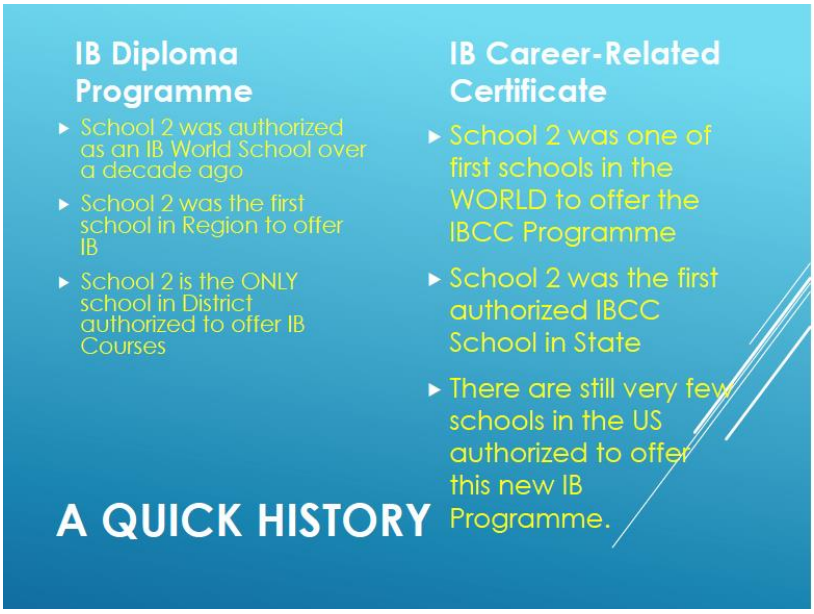
Figure 4.0. School 1, Payoff: College Credits



School 2's student-subject was to become an "IB" subject situated in a special world, the first in the region to offer these opportunities. The emphasis on "firsts" in this school's PowerPoint illustrated the unique position of its IB students, establishing this status before confronting audiences with their two program options (see Figure 5.0). The document narrated for the audi-

ence the qualities of IB student, including international mindedness, college readiness, and all the holistic personal and academic qualities of the *Learner Profile.* The narrative portrayed all IB students, regardless of program choice, as the same. The ideal student subject at School 2 was an IB student first and a program-chooser second. Where School 1's students were special before IB, IB conveyed specialness onto School 2's students. This granting of specialness had salience for students in a district in which one high school was normalized as the best, with all others (including School 2) coming up short.

Figure 5.0. School 2 document emphasizing firsts.[1]



The discourses of market-driven choice policies were maneuvered into marketing narratives at each school to shape the 21st century student-subject. This student-subject in School 1 was constructed in the narrative as a discerning and deserving consumer already shaped in ideal ways. At School 2, the ideal subject was an IB student, and the school's marketing narrative aimed to increase the production of such students while distancing itself from the trope of marketing: "we don't recruit, we educate" (School 2 IB coordinator, personal communication, January 14, 2015). However, it was unclear where the line dividing IB Programme sales pitches and education was drawn.

Conclusion

Critical policy scholars claim that neoliberalism has transformed the purpose of education, pushing human capital formation and the acquisition of careers, credentials, and the promise of personal gain. This emphasis on capital acquisition is evident in the marketing narrative of School 1, signifying students as choosers of options that will maximize their potential for future success in capitalist society. At School 2 life course planning was often vague and referred to

1. The IBCC was previously the name of the current CP.

either as college or "the next level" (School 2 IB coordinator, personal communication, January 14, 2015). However, the idealization of the IB student at School 2 as a member of a unique class, often first generation college-bound, with the first IB school in the region and the only school in the district offering these options aligns with the individualism embedded in neoliberal ideals.

Schools in the United States may be motivated to offer more special programs and more rigor for their students to improve their market position (Lubienski, 2006a), which for many means acquiring more points on the state's ranking system. Both the IB coordinators at the two schools discussed ways their IB programs helped them compete with other high-performing schools within their districts. School choice has become a social expectation. Programs and curricula like the IB are encouraged under what has been called the "diverse provider model" (Scott, 2011, p. 584) based on the neoliberal belief that multiple options in schools are necessary to honor individuals' rights to make educational choices. Scholars have widely criticized these policy shifts for their failure to account for educational inequities, and ample research demonstrates that the middle classes benefit most from choice policies (for example, Reay, 2004; Ball, 2006). This research has looked at the role schools' marketing narratives play in these enactments. In each case, a substantial percentage of the students did not participate in either IB Programme (a greater percentage at School 2).

With federal pressure on states to rank their schools, and with program enrollments, completions, and exam scores bearing upon these rankings, public schools struggle to place themselves in contention for top spots on the charts, which brings along accolades, good press, and public trust. The problem that arises in the competition state is that there is no value any longer in being average, and yet, identity formation, as Prior (2003) pointed out, is all about learning and embodying social norms, in effect averaging them out. To become "normal" is, then, to become average, or ordinary. Prior recalled Sacks' (1984; 1992) notion of the work it takes to be ordinary; to be unexceptional requires we "learn about the routine and the unusual" (Prior, 2003, p. 103) and then use this knowledge to construct and reconstruct identities throughout the life span. Applying this concept of identity formation to social institutions reveals a contemporary problem within education: no school can be ordinary; they must all be extraordinary, or better than others. Marketing narratives at School 1 and School 2 each told versions of the same story. Both schools believed they could become better by offering IB Programmes promising excellence. Students and their parents believed they, too, could become better by choosing these programs. What was construed as excellent was agreed upon by a coalition of public and private entities, pushed down as an ideology of the state, and then taken up by individual consumer-citizens. Most of the consumers, the schools and their pupils, will still be no better than average. Since our policy landscape tells schools this is not good enough, however, these marketing documents, or dossiers, performed a necessary service. They communicated the desired identities of consumer-friendly, market based educational institutions and projected idealizations of contemporary student-subjects. They offered special opportunities to special students who had to become better, who were not yet good enough.

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