Social class and the written and unwritten rules of competitive college admissions: A comparative study of International Baccalaureate schools in Ecuador.

A Dissertation

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Tiago H. Bittencourt

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Dr. Joan DeJaeghere, Co-adviser

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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my wife and better half, Gaby for accompanying me throughout this journey both as a loving partner and a peer who was always willing to hear me ramble about my study. You are a formidable wife and mother, and an inspiration to me.

To my son, Rafael, for being a living reminder that hugs and balloons are infinitely more important than any theory or body of literature.

Abstract

In 2006, the Ecuadorian Ministry of Education signed an agreement which sought to gradually introduce the International Baccalaureate's (IB) Diploma Programme (DP) into as many of the country's 1400 publicly funded secondary schools as possible. The initiative was premised on the belief that the quality of public education could be significantly improved if public school students had access to the education experiences and credentials which in Ecuador were historically restricted to private schools catering to affluent students. While subject to critique by several civil societies, the initiative generated a significant amount of enthusiasm and was widely perceived as an early indication that the public-private divide which marred the country's educational system and cemented pervasive forms of inequality was finally being rectified.

Undergirding the DP initiative is a crucial assumption; that increasing access to prestigious educational programs is an important and effective way of addressing inequality. However, as numerous scholars have shown, access alone is not enough to ensure equality and generate social mobility (see Apple, 1996; Aronowitz, 2003, 2008; Jack, 2018). Rather, an overt focus on access may ignore and even conceal the forms of advantage that are unevenly distributed within different segments of society (Tan, 2008). Issues ranging from the materiality of teaching and pedagogy (Vavrus & Salema, 2013) to the practices and "informed agency" of affluent parents and students (Brantlinger, 2003) are equally important and, if left unconsidered, can greatly diminish or even negate the promise a policy such as the DP initiative upholds. This dissertation interrogates this standing assumption by examining the social and cultural processes that produce and maintain inequality, and therefore interfere with the DP initiative's stated intent.

Through process-tracing and a multi-sited ethnography of a low-income public school and an affluent private school, I found that although sponsored by Ecuador's Ministry of Education, the DP was not recognized as a valid credential for admission to local universities. Due to this existing policy disconnect, students from both schools strictly viewed the DP as a means of gaining access to universities abroad. As a result of this shared aspirational goal, it was possible to discern important differences in how students thought through and engaged with the application process for universities abroad. These differences highlighted the formative role of students' familial backgrounds and institutional membership, suggesting that while access to DP allowed students to share similar desired goals, circumstances outside the confines of the classroom were more likely to determine whether these goals would indeed be accomplished. In sum, while public school students were encouraged to aspire to study abroad, they were not afforded the support or have the means to effectively engage with the required application and admission processes. The gradual realization that their dreams were likely to remain unfulfilled led students to experience to a mash of affects (Berlant, 2011) which included frustration, disengagement and acquiescence. These affective responses not only conflicted with the DP initiative's intent of equalizing opportunity, but in many ways served to reinforce existing patterns and systems of inequality.

The findings of this study are not intended to discredit the DP initiative – admonishing a seemingly well-intentioned policy is a common but often unfruitful endeavor. Moreover, given the study's design, any assertion of representation would be misleading, and therefore the impulse for generalization should be significantly tempered.

Rather it is to showcase the grounded productions and the ensuing shortcomings which limit and even counteract the policy's intended goal of addressing social inequality and equalizing opportunity. While the study was envisioned as a direct response to a specific initiative, the emerging insights speak to issues of class culture and the "internationalization" (Knight, 2004; 2015) of public education. Specifically, it will address the relationship between social class and conceptions of "responsibility", and instances of what Bourdieu (2007) terms as "capital conversion".

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Chapter 1: Introduction

> ¿Qué tienen en común 201 colegios públicos de Ecuador con el prestigioso Instituto Le Rosey de Suiza, donde se educaron miembros de las élites de toda Europa? Aunque a primera vista no haya muchas similaridades, en ambos casos se ofrece el mismo programa de enseñanza, el Bachillerato Internacional (BI) [What do the 201 public schools in Ecuador have in common with the Le Rosey Institui, where members of Europe's elite are educated? While at first glance not much, in both cases they offer the same educational program, the International Baccalaureate] (Sputnik, 2018).

Students were seated and mostly silent. Roberto was resting his head on his desk, arm outstretched, and hand dangling over the edge. His bleary eyes were wide open, staring blankly at the metal lockers near the classroom door. Perhaps sensing my presence, he slowly raised his head and turned to my direction, offering a nod and a slight smile. He returned to his previous position, motionless, and only proceeded to move at the sound of the siren which indicated that the 7:00 o'clock first period was about to begin. Once it did, he once again raised his head, slowly arched his back, removed a notebook from his bag and then waited for the teacher to arrive, pencil in hand. His day had started early and included a one-hour commute on Quito's notoriously busy trolleybus, beginning in the southernmost stop of Guamaní. It would also end late, with an afterschool English class, another long commute and a significant amount of homework.

Roberto was ambitious. The farthest he had ever travelled was Ibarra, a smaller city where his father was currently working as a security guard for a bank. Yet, he dreamed of studying physics at Oxford – the hallowed university once attended by Stephen Hawking and other illustrious figures. Although unsure of its feasibility, this dream felt significantly closer the day he was accepted to the International Baccalaureate (IB) Diploma Programme (DP). Joining a small cohort of academically accomplished and

highly dedicated students, Roberto would now have access to the same education program as a number of elite private schools from around the world. As a low-income public-school student in Ecuador, this was an opportunity that he was ready to fully embrace. Fatigued, he did not complain; the extra workload and decreased sleep were sacrifices that he was willing to endure.

As a student of the Unidad Educativa Carlos Tobar, Roberto is the beneficiary of an ongoing policy initiative which aims on introducing the DP into as many Ecuadorian public secondary schools as possible (Barnett et. al, 2013). First signed in 2006, the initiative was premised on the belief that the quality of public education could be significantly improved if public school students had access to the education experiences and credentials which in Ecuador were historically restricted to private schools catering to affluent students. While subject to critique by several civil societies such as the country's highly politicized teachers union (Resnik, 2014; Terán, 2012), the initiative generated a significant amount of enthusiasm. For many it was an early indication that the public-private divide which marred the country's educational system and cemented pervasive forms of inequality was finally being rectified. This prevailing sense of enthusiasm was consistently reinforced by the widely circulating news reports and political speeches which claimed that Ecuador's public schools were now abiding by "international standards" and comparable to institutions abroad. Quality was viewed as being improved and opportunities, previously restricted to private school student, broadened.

Undergirding the DP initiative is a crucial assumption; that increasing access to prestigious educational programs is an important and effective way of addressing

inequality. However, as numerous scholars have shown, access alone is not enough to ensure equality and generate social mobility (see Apple, 1996; Aronowitz, 2003, 2008; Jack, 2018). Rather, an overt focus on access may ignore and even conceal the forms of advantage that are unevenly distributed within different segments of society (Tan, 2008). Issues ranging from the materiality of teaching and pedagogy (Vavrus & Salema, 2013) to the practices and "informed agency" of affluent parents and students (Brantlinger, 2003) are equally important and, if left unconsidered, can greatly diminish or even negate the promise a policy such as the DP initiative upholds. Or worse, a focus on access has the potential to generate a sense of "blighted hope or frustrated promise" (Bourdieu, 1984), where students' aspirational goals, which are enticed by the initiative, are confronted by seemingly insurmountable realities present on the ground.

Following the inquiry: Research questions and design

This dissertation interrogates this standing assumption by examining the social and cultural processes unfolding in two distinct schools offering the DP; a low-income public school and an elite private school. My goal was to better understand how these processes interacted and at times interfered with the DP initiative's stated aim of equalizing opportunity by broadening access to educational provisions once restricted to affluent students enrolled in select group of private schools. Although focused on two distinct schools, my inquiry strived to be processual, considering the interactions between historical conditions, the existing educational policy landscape, the schools' institutional practices, and students own lived experiences.

This multi-scaled approach was guided by an emergent design, premised on the belief that methodological rigidness could greatly limit my ability to uncover the

unexpected and explore the spontaneous (Marshall & Rossman, 2006). As a result, my research questions were largely iterative, requiring both adaptations and additions throughout the extent of the study (see Bartlett & Varus, 2018). For the purpose of clarity, I have decided to cluster the research questions into two groups. The first group of questions guided my engagement with the DP initiative and my early entry into the public and private schools. They were:

Q1. What were the social and historical conditions that allowed the DP initiative to be envisioned, deliberated and implemented?

Q2. How does the DP configure within Ecuador's educational landscape and relate to other policy initiatives?

Q3. What practices, values, and shared understandings are being produced as a result of the encounter between the DP and the contextual arrangements of both schools?

Q4. What motivates students to enroll in the DP and how is enrollment perceived to contribute to their aspirational goals?

Once immersed in the schools, it quickly became evident that an existing policy disconnect between the DP and higher education institutions within the country greatly narrowed the perceived utility and meaning students ascribed to the program. Due to the DP's lack of currency as a diploma for admissions to local institutions, students from both schools almost exclusively enrolled in the program in the effort to access universities abroad. The second group of research questions responded to this insight and examined how students thought through and engaged with the required application processes for study abroad, paying special attention to the mediating role of their

institutional membership and familial background. Moreover, it focused on the different ways a prevailing concern with study abroad informed classroom practices and students' engagement with the DP's internationally focused curriculum. The research questions were:

> Q5. How are students prepared to engage with higher education institutions abroad? What resources do they draw on in their efforts to become competitive applicants?
>
> Q6. How does study abroad inform how teachers approach and students engage with the DP's internationally focused curriculum?

Methodologically, I addressed these questions through two complementary approaches. The first entailed a form of qualitative process tracing (see Befani & Mayne, 2014), which aimed to both discern the circumstances that enabled the DP initiative's promulgation and situate the policy within a broader educational landscape. The second was ethnographic in approach and focused on the lived experiences and meaning-making processes of students from both schools as they participated in the DP and engaged with their higher education goals. The public school, which I call Unidad Educativa Carlos Tobar (UECT), was one of the first authorized public school to offer the DP. The other, St. Thomas Bilingual School (St. Thomas), is an exclusive private institution with monthly tuition fees that were approximately $1,000. Although socially and economically different, both schools catered exclusively to Ecuadorian students and were located in the same city, only a few miles apart.

Framing social class

By engaging with homologous comparisons (Bartlett & Vavrus, 2017), I was able to distinguish and gain explanatory insights into how the DP initiative connected two socially distinct spaces while allowing numerous important differences to remain. It also allowed an approach to inquiry, which drew on and critically engaged with social class, as its main analytical category. It is important to stress, however, that while social class is being discussed as a focal phenomenon, as a concept it must be conceived as emerging from a complex historical process that includes racial, gendered, and colonial dimensions. However, heeding to Willis' (2004) advice "that unless there is a moment in our analysis that separates larger forces and relations, we are in danger of presenting a depthless view of the world" (p. 171), I will not attempt to explicitly discern these different dimensions and their implications for social class in the context of Ecuador (although these dimensions will inevitably surface). Rather, as Noblit (2008) suggests, through class analysis, my goal is to examine the grounded practices and understandings that allow inequality to be reproduced, where social class serves as an important entry point into the broader issue of hierarchy.

I am conceiving social class as being dynamic, emerging from the interplay between objective structures and subjective experiences marked by varying degrees of reflexivity. This form of dialecticism, as Weis and Fine (2013) explain, consists of a process where "structures produce lives, at one and the same time as lives produce, reproduce, and at times contest the same social/economic structures" (p. 224). In this sense, social class is both dynamic and emergent, struggled over and realized in the daily lives of individuals as they navigate a wide variety of settings, including their own families and institutions such as schools.

Given my ethnographic approach, for this study I emphasized students' experiences as they engaged with the DP and prepared for higher education. The goal was to see the structuring processes at work by examining the actions and collective strategies students followed in their daily lives as they attempted to either maintain or enhance their social positions. To help guide and provide language to my inquiry, I drew on Bourdieu's "theory of practice", paying special attention to the concepts of capital, field and habitus (see Chapter 2). Broadly speaking, Bourdieu provides a flexible model of structural inequality, allowing researchers to capture specific "moments" of social reproduction. Although these moments are merely a parcel of larger patterns, they provide insights that can be generative for theory.

Collaborative advantaging and fragmented capital

Drawing on Bourdieu's framing of social class and building on previous discussions on the relationship between class culture and schooling, in this dissertation I make two conceptual contributions aimed on spurring new conversations and furthering existing understandings of social reproduction. First, important differences between both sites stemmed from a fundamental question; who is responsible for the achievement of students' aspirational goals? At UECT, achievement was conceived as being individual and predicated on students' resilience, ingenuity and personal merit. The school was viewed strictly as a site of academic instruction, where anything occurring outside the confines of the classroom was beyond its scope of responsibility. Conversely, St. Thomas was embedded in a complex feedback loop (Demerath & Mattheis, 2015) where students' aspirational success both informed the school's social standing and justified its hefty tuition fees. As a result, St. Thomas provided a wide array of services and engaged with a

number of practices intended on enhancing students' competitive advantage. This included an ongoing effort to scrutinize and "decode" the higher education application process; promoting complex "technologies of recognition" such as scholarships and credentialing competitions; and purposefully identifying extra-curricular opportunities aimed on strengthening students' applications. I use the term "collaborative advantaging" to describe this symbiotic relationship between students' aspirational goals and the school's status, arguing that these different understandings of "responsibility" not only guided institutional practices but also informed classroom dynamics and the interactions between students, teachers and administrative staff.

I also build on Persell, Catsambis, Cookson Jr. (1992) argument of "capital conversions" and how consistent forms of capital may benefit one social group and not another. This study addresses a similar issue, noting the mechanisms that enhance the DP's immediate value for St. Thomas students, and greatly limits it for UECT students. Focusing on the immediate, however, does not consider that capital conversion may be occurring in different and even multiple moments in time. While this study does not capture anything occurring beyond the immediate, it does identify signs that suggest the potential for future forms of conversion. To this end, I suggest thinking about the DP as affording UECT students with "fragmented capital": a form of capital that has the potential to be valuable but is disconnected and lacks immediate access to the institutional mechanisms that confer it value. I argue that the idea of fragmented capital is not only useful for the context of the study, but in thinking about broader initiatives aimed on internationalizing the educational experiences of low-income students.

Overview of chapters

This dissertation is composed of ten chapters. In Chapter 2, my goal is twofold: to detail the IB's institutional history, framing its current expansion within a broader policy and reform movement focused on internationalizing public education; and to expand on the previous discussion on Bourdieu's theory of practice, by examining its conceptual foundation and its current use by social reproduction scholars. Chapter 3 details the methodological considerations and approaches to data collection and analysis. I pay close attention to Weis and Fine's (2004, 2012) Critical Bifocality, a theory of method which strives to make visible the linkages through which structural conditions are enacted in individuals' lived experiences.

Chapter 4 employs a form of process tracing which endeavors to map the sequence of events and rationales that compelled the Ecuadorian Ministry of Education to consider the DP as an educational alternative for its public schools. The goal of this chapter is not only to further contextualize the policy initiative, but also to showcase the structural arrangements that directly inform the implementation of the program and students' own experiences. Drawing on government documents, political speeches, news articles and secondary literature, I focus on the historical conditions and the individual deliberations that allowed the policy to be rendered, highlighting how the implementation of the DP in public schools was in many ways the outcome of the personal experiences and convictions of a very small group of people. Moreover, I accentuate the existing policy disconnect between the DP and higher education institutions in Ecuador.

A common pitfall of an approach which strives for comparison is that in the effort to foreground similarities and differences, the contextual richness of each site of study is often either neglected or lost during the write-up. In an effort to capture the nuances of

the participating schools, I devote Chapters 5 and 6 to describing the sites of study, detailing the rhythms, routines and dynamics of each. In these chapters, I employ a writing style aimed at bringing the reader with me as I walk through the school and enter the classrooms, where much of my time was spent. The goal is to provide a comprehensive foundation that can help inform and substantiate the ensuing comparative process.

In addition to detailing the contextual richness of the sites of study, the aforementioned chapters identify an important point of departure for comparison; students shared desire to pursue higher education abroad. Chapter 7 examines the distinct ways students thought through and engaged with the application process, noting their own personal initiative and the formative role of their institutional membership. Here I will contrast St. Thomas active attempts to "decode" the higher education process and socialize students into the "rules of the game", with the perception within UECT that students were solely responsible for their higher education aspirations, evidenced in the grounded concept of "buenos buscones" [good searchers]. These glaring differences provide an important premise for what I am referring to as "collaborative advantaging".

Chapter 8 considers how these different forms of engagement with higher education admissions inform pedagogical decisions and shape classroom dynamics. In the effort to prepare students for the multiple demands of college admissions, St. Thomas teachers promoted, and students abided by a highly structured and task-oriented approach to instruction that ignored students' social and political surroundings. Meanwhile, UECT classes were highly improvised and consistently drew on anecdotal stories, often only tangentially related to the course content. This form of instruction did not adequately

prepare students for the DP, evidenced in the school's very low pass rates. However, it created an interesting space in which students were able to place the DP content in conversation with their own experiences and understandings. While this space and its ensuing insights are not captured in the IB's evaluative process, they do assist students in creating new ways of relating to both the course content and their learning experiences.

Chapter 9 synthesizes the findings and returns to the overarching premise of the dissertation which interrogates the DP's stating goal of equalizing opportunity. In addition to addressing the specific research questions, I further explore the organizing concepts of "collaborative advantaging" and "fragmented capital", considering their contextual reach. Chapter 10 concludes by providing some final thoughts and discerning the new questions and paths for inquiry that have emerged as a result of this dissertation.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The International Baccalaureate

The IB is an educational organization founded in 1968 in Geneva, Switzerland. While increasingly present in nationally funded school systems, the organization's history is inextricably linked to the international school movement. Specifically, it emerged as a response to a growing demand by an internationally mobile student population for a diploma that had currency across multiple higher education systems, especially in Europe and North America. The result was the creation of an internationally focused curriculum heavily influenced by the principles of experiential learning (Hill, 2002). The curriculum, which was originally offered in only English and French, was based on six core classes plus a compulsory artistic activity. To ensure both rigor and consistency, all classes included a standardized assessment prior to the completion of the program.

During its early years the IB catered to a small group of schools. Growing demand for a high school diploma that was recognized by different higher educational systems allowed the IB to rapidly grow, especially in international schools catering to affluent students. Tarc (2009) notes that the program's rather homogeneous student population led to questions regarding the legitimacy of its claim of promoting international forms of understanding. In response to these critiques, the IB underwent a deliberate effort to "shift away from its 'international school movement' base towards more involvement with national schooling and elite private schooling" (Bunnell, 2011, p. 170). These efforts led to a gradual shift in the program's student composition, especially when national school systems began turning to the IB as both a means of enhancing the

quality of public education and of providing an educational alternative in teaching high-achieving children. Furthermore, many public schools turned to the IB as a form of distinction, a means of gaining cachet in their local markets and of providing their students with a form of positional advantage upon graduating (Doherty, 2013; Resnik, 2012; Yemini and Dvir, 2016).

With an ever-expanding number of schools incorporating the IB curriculum into their practices, the organization began reconsidering both its role and purpose in education. Originally the IB was an educational program that was internationally focused and provided a diploma that was recognized amongst a diverse set of countries and institutions. As such its services were targeting students in the last two years of their high school education. In the 1990s the IB expanded its program to also include students in lower grade levels. In 1994, the Middle Years Program (MYP) was introduced and in 1997 the Primary Years Program (PYP). The previous IB curriculum focusing on the last two years of high school was rebranded as the DP (Tarc, 2009). Furthermore, the IB decided to include Spanish along with English and French as the official languages of both instruction and evaluation, allowing the organization to make headway into many new schools, especially in Latin America.

The expansion of the IB into state-funded schools does not, however, imply that program adoption barriers have been eliminated. To become an IB school is still both costly and time consuming, requiring a rigorous application and authorization process that takes between two and three years. To become authorized to provide the DP, for instance, “schools must demonstrate adherence to the IB’s curricular, pedagogical, mission-based and ongoing professional development requirements” (Saavedra, Lavore,

& Georgina, 2016, p. 347). In addition, schools must demonstrate "that the infrastructure and skills are in place to deliver the programme to the IB's high standards" (IBO, 2016). Moreover, to become authorized as an official DP provides schools in the Americas region, for instance, must pay a $4000 application fee and a yearly fee of $9,500 during the deliberation process. Once authorized, schools are required to pay a yearly fee of $11,650 and undergo regular evaluations to ensure that the standards and practices of the IB are being maintained. Evaluation takes place once every five years and includes a school self-study which aims on identifying the key elements required for continual improvement. The evaluation process also attempts to ensure that DP teachers are using IB approved curricular and pedagogical materials and undergoing ongoing professional development.

The International Baccalaureate in Ecuador

In 1981, the Academia Cotopaxi American International School (Cotopaxi) became the first educational institution to provide the DP in Ecuador. At the time, the DP was only offered in English and French and was still in the early stages of being viewed as a valid degree for admissions into institutions of higher education around the world. As a result, most schools in Ecuador either adhered to the nationally approved curriculum or utilized curricula that was already recognized by institutions of higher education such as the Advanced Placement (AP). In 1983, however, the IB introduced Spanish as one of its authorized languages of instruction and assessment (IBO, 2016). The availability of an international curriculum in Spanish coupled with the growing recognition of the DP as a valid degree for admission into higher educational institutions abroad, led to the program's gradual expansion amongst the country's private schools. Examples of these

schools included the Colegio Americano de Guayaquil (1985); Colegio Internacional SEK-Ecuador, Quito (1989); Colegio Americano de Quito (1990); Colegio Internacional SEK-Ecuador, Guayaquil (1990); and Unidad Educativa Albert Einstein (1996).

In 2003 the Metropolitan District of Quito initiated a pilot program in the Unidad Educativa Municipal Sebastián de Benalcázar (Benalcázar), allowing it to become the first public school authorized to implement the program. Benalcázar's early success with the DP motivated the signing of the 2006 "Inserción de Bachillerato Internacional en colegios fiscales del Ecuador", an initiative which sought to introduce the program into 22 public schools, one in each of the country's provinces including sparsely populated regions such as the Zamora Chinchipe and Pastaza. As will be discussed in greater length in Chapter 4, in 2012 Ecuador's Ministry of Education proposed a new and more ambitious iteration of the initiative, with the goal of introducing the DP into as many of the country's public schools as possible. Currently, there are 199 public-schools and 71 private school accredited by the IB, meaning that Ecuador trails only the United States and Canada as having the most IB schools in the world.

The internationalization of public education

The recent growth and appeal of the IB is largely premised on a prevailing concern that an international dimension in education has now become a prerequisite for competitive engagement within a knowledge-based global economy (Weenick, 2008). Indeed, as Yemini (2014) argues, integrating an international and/or intercultural dimension into education is "no longer a luxury, [but] an essential part of all education system reforms" (p. 472-473). Initiatives aimed on "internationalizing" (see Knight 2004, 2014) public education have taken varied forms, and often entail a number of tensions,

including the perceived threat that public education, "a realm formerly held under the sole jurisdiction of the nation-state" (Dvir, Yemini, Bronshtein, & Natur, 2018, p. 937), is being inflected by global forces and values (see Bunnell, 2009, 2011).

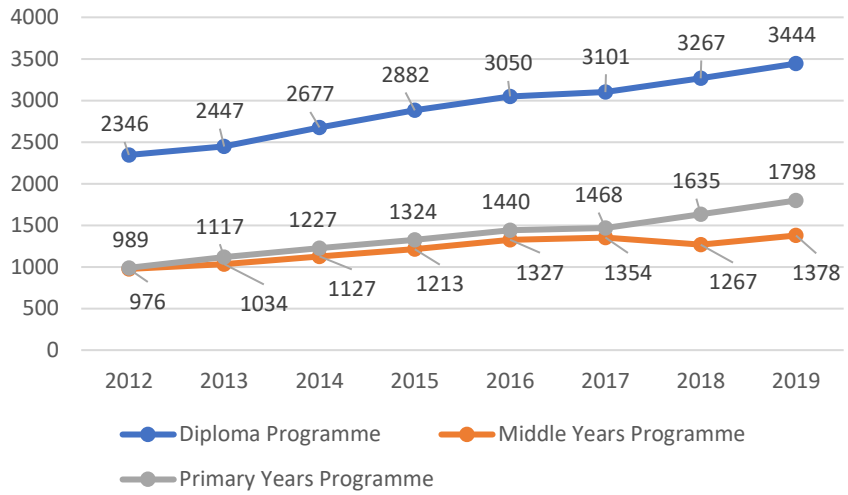
Some countries, such as the members of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), have decided to engage with internationalization by either modifying or adding to their existing curriculum with the goal of enriching "students' intercultural awareness and understandings" (Fielding, 2012, p. 31) through foreign language acquisition and internationally focused content matter. Others, as is the case of Ecuador, have established contractual arrangements with private providers such as the IB. Steiner-Khamsi and Dugonijic-Rodwin (2018) argue that this type of public-private partnerships takes on two distinct forms. The first consists of offering an elective or international track within public schools. The second focuses on establishing private international schools and using them as "hubs of innovation to serve as models of emulation for surrounding schools and catalysts of change for the entire public education system" (p. 596). Through the concept of "percolation", Resnik (2012) contends that broad changes occur in both instances as the values and pedagogical approaches present in a program such as the IB will either be purposefully incorporated or will inevitably seep into the national curriculum.

Amongst the private providers which include the Advanced Placement (AP) and the Advanced Level (A Level), the IB has established itself as the most widespread. Over the last 7 years, IB programmes have experienced close to 54% growth (see Table 1). The IB's appeal largely rests on its prestige as an academically rigorous and quality-assured approach to international education (Bunnell, 2010; Doherty, 2013; Yemini & Dvir,

2016). A number of scholars have supported notions of academic quality and rigor, arguing that IB students are better prepared for postsecondary coursework (Green and Vignoles, 2012; Taylor & Porath, 2006); have higher standardized test scores (Saavedea, 2014; Paris, 2003); and display higher critical thinking skills (Cole, Ullman, Gannon, & Rooney, 2015).

However, rapid growth, as Resnik (2012) convincingly argues, is not only predicated on the perceived benefits of the IB's academic approach. Growing rates of adoption are also a result of the IB's curricular and programmatic flexibility. This is especially true about the DP, a program which can be a school-wide initiative or modular, co-existing with other programs. Furthermore, the IB allows "school-based syllabi", where schools are allowed to "develop a course that is not otherwise offered by the IB and that meets the particular needs or interest of their students" (IBO, 2016). For instance, "Brazil created a Brazilian studies program to address national history requirements, and Argentina recently created the bilingual Bachillerato bilingue Modalizado en Ciencias y Letras program" (Resnik, 2012, p. 262). Flexibility, as Resnik contends, allows countries to forge contextually appropriate assemblages to justify and legitimize the incorporation of the IB.

Figure 1. Growth of IB programmes (2012-2019)



Source: IBO (2017)

Although programmatically flexible, the DP does maintain an abiding overarching structure. This includes a curriculum based on six academic areas (Language and Literature, Language Acquisition, Sciences, the Arts, Mathematics, and Individual and Societies) and a central core composed of a Theory of Knowledge course; an Extended Essay; and a creativity, action and service project. The central core is envisioned as a means to develop a coherent approach to learning that unifies the subject areas (theory of knowledge), encourages experiential learning (creativity, action and service), and engages in independent research on a topic of global significance (extended essay). At the end of the DP students are required to complete a written exam for each academic area. Exams are evaluated on a 7-point scale by an external examiner. The IB diploma is only granted to students who successfully complete the program's core components and obtain a minimum combined score of 24 points in the formal evaluation. The current global pass rate is 70.05%, with an average score of 28.51 (IBO, 2020).

As a result of ongoing efforts to internationalize public education, the IB has drastically expanded to include a greater diversity of schools and students. IB programs

are currently available in over 5,200 schools spread across 156 countries. Moreover approximately 56% of IB schools are now publicly funded (IB, 2017), many of which serve low-income students (Conner, 2008). Multiple studies have begun to engage descriptively with the concept of social class, noting that while growing in number, low-income students remain highly underrepresented (Dickson, Perry & Ledger, 2017; Doherty, Luke, Shield & Hincksman, 2012; Perna et. al, 2014). However, questions about how students social class backgrounds may mediate their experiences with the IB remains largely neglected. This study addresses this existing gap by promoting a purposefully comparative approach which foregrounds social class as its main analytical lens.

Theorizing the concept of social class

Social class is an ambiguous concept which is used to both describe and explain a wide variety of contexts and experiences. Its inconsistent usage has made ongoing debates highly confusing, compelling some to even suggest that social class has become anachronistic and no longer reflects social structuring or individual experience. Pakulski and Waters (1996), for instance, argue that recent changes in the global economy have made the concept increasingly permeable, thus eliminating the clear boundaries necessary for an effective approach to analysis. By insisting on explaining current phenomena through the concept of class, they contend that "sociologists risk missing an appreciation of a changing world" (p. 20).

The permeability of class is attributed to changing patterns of production and consumption characteristic of post-modern societies. These changes include the collapsing of hierarchical distinctions between elite and popular culture, where cultural resources have become increasingly democratized and accessible to a larger segment of

the population (Crotty, 1998). The collapsing of hierarchical distinctions has also enabled the rearrangement and juxtaposition of previously segmented representations, resulting in the proliferation of new and varied forms of meaning (Barker, 2012). Usher and Edwards (1994) contend that the blurring of distinction has created "a world where people have to make their way without fixed referents and traditional anchoring points" (p. 10), including socially organizing features such as class.

The absence of fixed referents and stable collective moorings has led to an increased emphasis on notions of plasticity and individual self-fashioning. This in turn means that "class, seen as a matter of old ascriptive ties, is often literally written out of the argument" (Lawler, 2005, p. 798). Gergen (1991) exemplifies the emphasis on plasticity conferred by a post-modern condition with his understanding of pastiche forms of identity. He argues that individuals are constantly "borrowing bits and pieces of identity from whatever sources are available and constructing them as useful or desirable in a given situation" (p. 150). Similarly, Giddens (1995) contends that traditional forms of ascription are being replaced by the ongoing need for individuals to negotiate a growing diversity of lifestyle options. Through the concept of "identity as a reflexive project", Giddens (1995) postulates that identity has become something that must be "routinely created and sustained in the reflexive activities of the individual" (p. 52). McLaren and Scatamburlo-D'Annibale (2004) summarize these changes in approach by stating that in a "post-everything society, the problem of class has been supplanted by 'new' concerns with identity and difference – categories that are considered more appropriate to the 'postmodern' condition" (p. 43).

While conceptual critiques abound, there is ample evidence that household income is still one of the best predictors of students' school performances and future earnings (see Duncan & Magnuson, 2013; Quillian, 2012; Rivera, 2015; Sirin, 2005; Spencer & Castano, 2007; Sutton & Soderstrom, 1999). In fact, as Reardon (2011) shows, the achievement gap between high- and low-income families is continually widening. In light of this evidence, there is a growing concern amongst both practitioners and scholars that if social class is dismissed as an organizing feature of contemporary life, it will become increasingly difficult to challenge durable and systemic forms inequality (Grusky & Sørensen, 1998; McLaren and Scatamburlo-D'Annibale, 2004; Van Galen & Nosbit, 2007). As Khan (2011) argues, ongoing efforts to discredit the importance of social class greatly diminishes the concept's potential for collective identification and politics. The challenge is therefore to engage with the concept in a manner that acknowledges the effects of economic restructuring and growing access to cultural consumption, but is still able to maintain social class' ability to explain and even mobilize.

A Bourdieusian framework

Bourdieu (1977) provides an important theoretical starting point for an understanding of social class which acknowledges these ongoing changes. Instead of conceiving social class as being an economic group vying for control within a system of production, he viewed it as status groups composed of distinct practices and cultural dispositions which are learned and developed through engagement with institutions such as the family and the school. Unlike Marx, his inquiry did not take collective politics as its starting point. Rather it focused on individual actors interactions within normative

sociocultural systems and their efforts to either maintain or enhance their positions within a status hierarchy. An interest in individual agency within sociocultural systems prompted a theoretical approach which went beyond the subjective/objective dichotomy present in two dominant intellectual traditions; structuralism and existentialism. Rather than viewing subjectivity and objectivity as distinct analytical moments, Bourdieu proposed an approach that considered the dialecticism of objective structures and subjective experiences (Morrow & Torres, 1995). This approach is reflected in Bourdieu's "theory of practice", an analytical framework which guided this dissertation and consists of the concepts of capital, field, and habitus.

Capital. Bourdieu argues that capital can present itself under three fundamental guises; economic; social; and cultural. Economic capital retains its traditional meaning as a "mercantile exchange" and encompasses anything that is immediately and directly convertible into money. Social capital, on the other hand, refers to the potential resources that can be generated through an individual's membership to a particular group or institution. Finally cultural capital is manifested in a wide variety of form, and includes such things as "verbal facility, general cultural awareness and knowledge, aesthetic preference and educational credentials" (Yang, 2014, p. 1524). To further refine the concept, Bourdieu argues that cultural capital exists in three predominant states: embodied (a long-lasting disposition); objectified (a cultural good or product); and institutionalized (a qualification or credential). Bourdieu (2007) contends that "economic capital is at the root of all the other types of capital", viewing social and cultural iterations as being merely "transformed, disguised forms of economic capital" (p. 91). A shared root implies that through a form of labor, conversion is possible, and capital can

be transmuted from one form to another, a process which Bourdieu refers to as “capital conversion”.

Field. Field is a relational configuration of specific forms of capital and practices, where participants engage with one another in an effort of either maintaining or improving their social position. A countless number of fields exist within a social sphere and while fields may overlap, each is defined by its own set of tacit and explicit rules. The presence of a shared set of rules allows activities taking place within a field to follow regular and orderly patterns, particularly pertaining to how capital can be accumulated and subsequently invested. In addition, each field has ‘distinction’ or “quality which are expressions of the volumes and type of cultural or economic capital at stake in the specific field” (Thomson, 2008, p. 72). This means that each field has forms of capital whose currency is to some extent restricted to it.

While undergirded by rules, fields are not static. They are dynamic, where the terms and conditions of participation are constantly being struggled over by its many participants. King (2000) argues that individuals who know the tacit rules well are able to “elaborate and improvise upon the themes which it provides and in the light of their relations with others” (p. 419). Therefore, an examination of the particularities of human activity within the boundaries of a specific field is not restricted to the different strategies individuals employ in their attempts to acquire different forms of capital. Instead, there must also be an attempt to scrutinize how individuals may bend or even change the tacit rules undergirding the field in question in an effort to obtain different forms of personal advantage. Karabel’s (2006) historical tracing of the admissions practices of Harvard, Yale and Princeton showcases how shifting understanding of “merit” have changed the

terms of the field of higher education, ultimately benefitting socially dominant student populations.

Habitus. Habitus is defined as the formative relationship between individuals and the socio-cultural environment they are part of. It is the learned set of preferences or dispositions thoughtlessly acquired through familial upbringing and early socialization by which a person orients to the social world. Given that habitus is rooted in familial upbringing, individuals' positions within a social structure directly inform the types of dispositions they will unconsciously internalize through early habituation. These dispositions include not only tastes, preferences and physical demeanors, but also what life-trajectories are conceived as possible and which ones are perceived as impossible. Given that habitus is conditioned by structural circumstance, the concept is argued to have a collective dimension where individuals similarly positioned within a social structure are likely to be habituated with comparable orientations and dispositional stances (Waters, 2007).

In sum, habitus is the bodily inscription of objective structures, which conditions social action without necessarily determining it. While prefaced as a means of bridging the structure and agency divide, the concept has also been widely critiqued for being "either another version of determination in the last instance, or a sophisticated form of functionalism" (Jenkins, 2002, p. 82). Edgerton and Robertson (2014) note that since "habitus operates largely 'behind the back' of the individual, [it leaves] little room for conscious, rational behavior; and that, as a consequence of its immutable and pre-reflective nature, habitus leaves little purchase for individuality, innovation, and social mobility" (p. 199). The unconscious and pre-reflective aspects of habitus presume that

individuals would mechanically repeat the same social practices present in their early socialization, thus reproducing the objective conditions of their position within social space. Although this may often be the case, Reay (2004) contends that creative and transformative process do emerge when individuals experience sufficient levels of disjuncture between their habitus and the field of social practices they are engaged in. Therefore, even though the concept of habitus may signal to different forms of reproduction, it does not foreclose the possibility for both social and individual change – although it acknowledges its unlikelihood. As Bourdieu (1993) notes, habitus should be conceived as having the power of adaptation where it "constantly performs an adaptation to the outside world which only occasionally takes the form of radical conversion" (p. 78). Jack's (2018) distinction between the "privileged poor" and the "doubly disadvantaged" provides credence to habitus' potential for change, noting how low-income students experiences later in adolescence and outside the home greatly inform their ability to move between cultural worlds and adapt to university settings.

A theory of practice. Central to the theory of practice is a belief that individuals' actions (or practices) cannot be reduced to either habitus, field or capital, but rather emerge as a result of their interrelationship. In *Distinction*, Bourdieu (1984, p. 101) conceives of practice through the formulation:

$$[(\text{habitus})(\text{capital})] + \text{field} = \text{practice}$$

As Maton (2008) concisely states, practice results from "relations between one's disposition (habitus) and one's position in a field (capital), within the current state of play of that social arena (field)" (p. 51). In other words, practice is the consequence of how habitus and capital interact within the context of a specific field.

At the heart of Bourdieu's theorization was a concern about power, especially on how dominant groups are able to both amass scarce resources and also determine why certain social practices are more highly valued than others. With a focus on schools, Bourdieu's work sought to analyze the internal logics that allowed France's educational system to simultaneously reproduce and legitimate existing social structures (Shirley, 1986). The conceptual tools and epistemological underpinnings of Bourdieu's theory of practice have directly informed numerous scholars who are committed to discerning both the intentional activities of students and families, and the concealed (tacit) mechanisms within schools which allow social structures and distinctions to be reproduced. Or, as Foley (2010) asserts, the analytical openings enabled by Bourdieu has "launched a full-blown class culture analysis of schooling" (p. 200).

While numerous studies have departed from similar theoretical assumptions and intended goals (see Armstrong & Hamilton, 2013; Bathmaker, Ingram & Walker, 2013; Friedman, 2013; Jack, 2016; Khan, 2011; Rivera, 2012; Stuber, 2013), the following section highlights a select group of scholars whose emerging insights have greatly informed my own thinking and subsequent engagement with the data collected for this dissertation. The goal of the review is not to assume transposability; the selected studies' insights and conclusions are directly predicated on socio-historical conditions that differ greatly from both UECT and St. Thomas. Rather, it is to both showcase the possibilities of a class culture approach to analysis of schooling and highlight the emerging language which helped frame and guide my engagement with the practices unfolding in both sites of this study. The scholars to be reviewed each provide nuanced insights into how dominant groups are able to secure unequal advantages and maintain their social

positions through schooling. Their arguments, however, signal to three overarching (and intertwined) conclusions:

1. There is a broad alignment between institutional values and dominant groups' cultural norms.
2. Advantage is secured strategically, through the intentional activities and informed agency of parents and students.
3. Although largely governed by dominant groups' cultural norms, school have marks of distinction based on their social makeup and institutional histories.

Cultural norms and institutional alignment

Scholars such as Lareau (2000, 2011) have argued that dominant groups' advantages are largely predicated in an existing alignment between their cultural practices and institutional expectations. Building on Bourdieu's understanding of habitus, the argument is that as result of early socialization, students develop socially distinct beliefs, habits and preferences. Although catering to a diverse student body, schools are not neutral fields. Rather they abide by implicit expectations of what behaviors and dispositions are needed to succeed. These expectations are rarely taught and are often only vaguely apparent through a school's "hidden curriculum" (Anyon, 1980). As a result, students from dominant groups who from an early age learn the "rules of the game" are "better able to meet teachers' expectations and reap the rewards for doing so" (Calarco, 2018, p, 4).

The alignment between institutional practices and dominant groups' cultural norms is best exemplified in Lareau (2011) seminal examination of the relationship between social class and childrearing practices**.** Through intensive naturalistic

observations Lareau found classed-based differences regarding the organization of daily life, language use (see also Bernstein, 1975; Heath, 1982), and the way family members interact with social institutions such as schools. Outside of institutional settings each childrearing approach presented its own benefits and drawbacks. However, within institutions such as schools these distinctive rituals of family life were assigned significantly different social value. For instance, children of different social class backgrounds developed distinct understandings and approaches to interacting with authority figures (see also Foley, 2010). While this often prompted a sense of entitlement amongst students from dominant groups, it also enabled important practices of self-advocacy and instilled social competencies needed for future employment such as maintaining eye contact and feeling at ease with authority figures.

The alignment between institutions and socially dominant groups' cultural norms also creates deficit accounts of students whose backgrounds do not cohere with what is constituted as normative. As numerous scholars have argued, the stereotypes that accompany these deficit accounts has often meant that low-income students are more likely to be disciplined (see Gregory, Skiba & Noguera, 2011; Kupchik, 2009; Raffaele & Knoff, 2003), underestimated by their teachers (see Jussim & Harber, 2005) and provided fewer opportunities for high quality and advanced coursework (see Oakes, 2005) than their socially dominant counterparts. These assumptions have real effects on students' academic engagement and is argued to have a direct influence on the persistence of the achievement gap between students of different social class backgrounds.

Intentional activities and informed agency

Aware of the cultural alignment between schools and dominant social groups, scholars such Brantlinger (2003) argue that advantage is equally related to the intentions and strategies of individuals. This includes different forms of institutional intervention where parents from dominant social groups are able to request that their children be unfairly placed in advanced tracks (see Lewis & Diamond, 2015); appropriate special education resources for children who do not have special needs (see Demerath, 2009); and enroll their children in high performing schools (see Ball, Bowe & Gewirtz, 1996). Brantlinger (2003) provides the concept of "informed agency" to describe how social stratification is not a chance occurrence, but rather the result of dominant social groups' abilities to leverage their capital profiles and ensure that their children are granted numerous advantages in schools, sometimes unfairly.

The concept of informed agency is commonly employed to describe parental strategies aimed on securing unequal advantages. Calarco's (2018) study of a socially diverse primary school showcases how children undertake a similar process, intentionally employing their cultural resources in the effort to secure personal benefits. Through the concept of "negotiated advantage" Calarco argues that students from dominant social groups are able to secure advantages by being incessant and pressuring teachers to grant assistance, accommodations, and attention in excess, even in instances in which teachers are inclined to reject students' requests. These behaviors are argued to be the result of a "complex chain of interactions" (p. 9) which begins with a culture of self-advocacy nurtured at home.

Access to resources and support

Reay (1998) contends that although schools are governed by similar overarching logics, they are also mutually shaped and reshaped by their constituents. Schools have histories and are capable of changing as a result of the many influences incurred over time. Building on Bourdieu's notion of habitus, she argues that institutions catering to different social groups are therefore likely to reflect distinct schemes of perception and taken for granted assumption. To address these differences, Reay proposes the concept of "institutional habitus" as a means of explaining not only the differences in practices between socially distinct schools, but also the operating logics that emphasize and prioritize different educational aims and aspirational goals (see also Reay, David & Ball, 2011). While highly subject to critique for overstretching and reducing the explanatory power of Bourdieu's concept of habitus (see Atkinson, 2011), institutional habitus provides an important starting point which recognizes that while students' educational experiences are informed by their social class backgrounds, it is also mediated through their institutional membership.

Institutional habitus presumes that schools are diverse not only in their access to material resources, but also in the norms and values that are instilled and negotiated through everyday interactions. Byrd (2019) contends that these norms include important assumptions about organizational capacity and who the students are and what they aspire to accomplish. Indeed, as evidenced in Ingram's (2009) comparative study of two socially distinct schools, these assumptions inform classroom practices and understandings of whether academic dispositions are worth cultivating.

Although not framed through the concept of institutional habitus, Demerath (2009) showcases how an affluent school's culture of personal advancement is both

developed through a long history of community and individual adaptations informed by economic anxiety and normalized through everyday routines and interactions. His study highlights the formative role of institutions in conferring unequal forms of advantage, many times in morally questionable ways. This includes expansive recognition programs which produce artificial credentials aimed on strengthening students' higher education applications, a process described as "hypercredentialing".

In contrast, Bok's (2010) demonstrates how prevailing understandings of low-income students aspirational goals largely restricted the availability of cultural and social resources needed to pursue higher education. Drawing on Appadurai's (2004) understanding of aspirations as being cultural traits rather than individual dispositions, Bok deploys the concept of "scripts" to denote the resources that provide students direction in their efforts to achieve their desired goals. While resource can be drawn on from a variety of locations including students family and peer networks, the school remains an important organizing site. Through a study of a low-income school, Bok found that students were often presented with minimal scripts and were thus uncertain on how to pursue their aspiration goals. The lack of information required students to intuit and improvise, not knowing how their efforts would subsequently be rewarded. While not explicitly centered on the concept of institutional habitus, Bok's study showcases how institutional membership works in conjunction with students familial background in shaping their imagined futures and aspirational goals.

Summary

This literature review began by exploring the IB's growth, from a niche program predominantly catering to international schools to a popular option for countries aiming

on internationalizing their educational systems. As a result of this expansion, students enrolled in the IB have become increasingly diverse, both in terms of national and social origin. Despite the growing number of low-income students being educated through the program, the concept of social class has largely been neglected within the existing literature.

This dissertation endeavors on addressing this gap, by employing a purposefully comparative approach which foregrounds social class as its main analytical lens. Social class, however, is a contentious concept which has been argued as being anachronistic and unreflective of current patterns of economic structuring and cultural consumption. Yet, it remains central to ongoing debates about educational attainment and employment opportunities. The call to revitalize the concept to better reflect current historic conditions has spurred an acknowledgement that social class can no longer be solely viewed as a description of an individual's position within a system of production. Rather it must also grapple with issues of culture, where social class is viewed as being ascriptive, but also lived, struggled over and realized by individuals.

Within the field of education, Bourdieu's theory of practice has become foundational for scholars interested in deploying an understanding of social class which is dynamic and emerging from the interplay of social structures and subjective experiences. It has spurred a scholarly movement commonly referred to as the "class culture analysis of schooling" (Foley, 2010), which strives to examine how the social and cultural processes unfolding within schools has actively contributed to the reproduction of inequality. This burgeoning body of literature has not only identified and theorized the processes which contribute to social reproduction, but also provided a rich conceptual

repertoire which includes terms such as institutional habitus, hypercredentialing, negotiated advantage, and aspirational scripts.

These concepts greatly assisted my efforts to make sense of the social and cultural processes unfolding at UECT and St. Thomas. They also serve as the building blocks for the concepts of "collaborative advantaging" and "fragmented capital" which I am proposing through this study. The following chapter will discuss my methodological approach to this dissertation, highlighting its alignment with Bourdieu's theory of practice. I will begin by discussing my epistemological assumptions, which are very much grounded on the principles of social constructionism.

Chapter 3: Research methodology and methods

Aligned with Bourdieu's theory of practice, my research is rooted in a social constructionist epistemology. Social constructionism has its roots in the sociological theories of Berger and Luckmann (1966). As an epistemological stance it contends that knowledge is not the byproduct of objective observations but is fabricated and negotiated through social interactions. An emphasis on social interactions means that all understandings are contextually bound, "dependent upon the particular social and economic arrangements prevailing in that culture at that time" (Burr, 2015, p. 4). Given its contextual boundedness, knowledge can never be constituted as fixed. Instead it must be conceived as fluid, where historical, cultural, temporal and even linguistic variances will directly impinge on the manner in which meaning is ascribed to experience (Gergen, 1991).

As a research paradigm, social constructionism emerged as a response to the neglect of matters of individual agency in functionalist thought. It maintains that individuals' understandings are not the result of systemic determinism, but rather the byproduct of a dialectical relationship between lived experiences and social structures (Hruby, 2001). Individuals are still viewed as being molded by social institutions but are also perceived as having the necessary agency to maintain, modify or even reshape societal norms (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). Burr (2015) claims that this reciprocally constitutive relationship between individuals and society creates a relational understanding of individual agency. Individuals are argued as being both "agentic, always actively constructing the social world, and constrained by society to the extent that [they] must inevitably live [their] lives within the institutions and [existing]

frameworks of meaning" (pp. 210-211). Individuals, as a result, are understood as both the creators of societal norms and consequently the subject of its constraints.

Social constructionism, therefore, attempts to disrupt the structure/agency dichotomy by stressing their mutually constitutive relationship. As such, its focus is not on individual forms of understanding as purported by a constructivist stance. Rather, it endeavors to discern the different webs of meaning and modes of understanding that are constructed and negotiated through social interactions. Although often mistaken as purporting a relativist view of reality, social constructionism does not make any ontological claims. Its focus is purely epistemological, centered on how knowledge is constructed and understood through social interactions (Andrews, 2012).

An emphasis on a relational epistemology that foregrounds social interaction is not only social constructionism's primary appeal, but also the source of its staunchest critiques. Cerulo (1997), for instance, contends that an emphasis on the relational often "underemphasizes the role of power in the classification process, mistakenly suggesting a multidirectional flow of influence and agency" (p. 391). In other words, research based exclusively on a social constructionist approach runs the risk of merely describing the different forms of understanding that emerge from relational endeavors, rather than examining why certain understandings gain ascendancy, while others do not.

Critical bifocality

To mitigate the neglect of matters associated with power, Burr (2015) suggests that social constructionism should intentionally incorporate a Foucauldian understanding of discourse in its deliberation of how knowledge is fabricated, sustained, and naturalized. Gee (2011) provides a useful distinction between common views of

discourse as “language in use” (little d discourse) and more critical conceptions which acknowledge and foreground the relationship between language and power, where not all utterances are equally recognized (big D discourse). Usher and Edwards (1994) define this critical form of discourse as being a system of possibilities which determines what can be said and what cannot. It determines “what it is to be a speaker, an author, or a knower, and with what authority these positions are held” (p. 90). Discourse as a result is exclusionary, authorizing certain voices to speak, while silencing others. The exclusionary nature of discourse conditions the meanings individuals ascribe to their own experience and even shapes how individuals perceive their position within a larger social fabric. The concept of discourse, therefore, refutes the plausibility of a “pristine experience”, claiming that experiences are “always bound up within the traces of our textual inheritances” (Weinberg, 2014, p. 74).

Research which attempts to frame social practices and interactions within discursive fields requires a methodological approach which is idiographic, yet conscientious of the influence of large-scale processes on the way individuals are positioned as certain types of subjects. In response to these considerations, Weis and Fine (2004, 2012) propose Critical Bifocality as a theory of method which strives to make visible the linkages through which structural conditions are enacted in individuals’ lived experiences. Critical Bifocality was developed as a reaction to growing critiques that ethnographic research in schools often treats the site of study as being hermetically sealed, ignoring how larger structures of power informed participants’ lived experiences.

Through this theory of method, Weis and Fine (2012) promote an approach which aims to document “the linkages and capillaries of structural arrangements and the

discursive and lived-out practices by which privileged and marginalized youth and adults make sense of their circumstances" (p. 174). In order to link structural arrangements with lived experiences, research in education must make a deliberate effort to connect ethnographic findings premised on thick descriptions with wider contextual and historic understandings. This is accomplished through a form of analytical oscillation, "between engagement and distance, explicitly committed to deep situatedness and yet shifting perspectives as to the full composition" (Weis & Fine, 2004, p. xxi). In response to the call for analytical oscillation, I decided to employ two complementary approaches to data collection and analysis; process tracing which focused on policy documents and larger historical processes, and ethnography which examined lived experiences as they unfolded within two socially distinct schools.

Process tracing

Process tracing is a method which interrogates a sequence of linked intermediate effects that explain how actions and conditions lead to a certain outcome (Befani & Mayne, 2014). Although the aim is to analyze trajectories of change, the starting point is descriptive, providing a "detailed snapshot of a series of specific moments" (Collier, 2011, p. 824). Process tracing can occur backwards, from observed outcomes to potential causes. Or forwards, from hypothesized causes to subsequent outcomes (Bennett, 2010). The goal is not to make a definitive claim of causality, but rather to make valuable inferences, which places a hypothesized causal mechanism in relation to the available evidence.

Similar to Schneider, Estarellas and Bruns (2019) approach, I employed a strictly qualitative process tracing, which drew on multiple data sources including government

documents, political speeches, news reports, data on learning assessment, and secondary literature to understand the socio-political context which prompted the emergence of the DP initiative. My primary aim was to track the sequence of events, logics and rationales that enabled the DP to be viewed as an emblematic policy initiative by Rafael Correa's self-proclaimed post-neoliberal government. In doing so, I situated the DP within a broader policy landscape, highlighting the historical and contextual circumstances that allowed the initiative to be promulgated. I employed a forward form of policy tracing, identifying the acute financial crisis of the 1990s as an import point of departure. In addition to situating the policy, my engagement with process tracing illustrates the contextual backdrop which directly and indirectly informed both sites of study.

A multi-sited ethnographic approach

Ethnography is a theory of method which first emerged in the field of cultural anthropology. As an approach to research it is used as a means to examine the patterns of behavior and beliefs of members of a shared culture-group. Achieving this end usually entails the researcher's immersion in the site of study and the use of a multi-instrument approach to data collection which includes a combination of participant observations, interviewing and archival research (Wolcott, 2008). The goal of an ethnographic approach is to provide "rich, holistic insights into people's views and actions, as well as the nature (that is, sights, sounds) of the location they inhabit" (Reeves & Hodges, 2008).

Through a class culture conceptual framing, my aim was to understand how the existing social-process occurring at the school-level, interacted with the DP initiative's stated goal of equalizing opportunity. Ethnography is a methodological approach that enabled an examination that focused on uncovering the hidden rules and taken-for-

granted assumptions of two distinct social spaces. As will be detailed in the following sections, over the course of five months, I employed a series of data collection techniques, including participant observations, informal and formal interviews, and artefact analysis. The use of two sites of study allowed my inquiry to be explicitly comparative, striving to examine how experiences with the IB unfolded in locations that are distinct yet complexly connected.

Site Selection

To examine the relationality of students' experiences and daily practices in the DP and how they implicate social class practices, I conducted research in two schools in Ecuador. The schools were selected based on two overarching considerations. First, both schools were required to be accredited IB schools providing the DP. The IB, however, notes that accreditation is only but the first step of an ongoing process that includes regular evaluations that are conducted on a five-year basis. To ensure that the selected schools had sufficient experience implementing the program, only schools that had successfully undergone the first five-year review were considered.

Perhaps even more crucial to the study, the schools' student demographics had to differ among dimensions of social class, including students' familial backgrounds, material access, consumption habits and previous educational experiences. Given the complexity of the concept and the dearth of school demographic data, I had to resort to a conceptual heuristic in my attempt to make selection decisions. I borrowed Bourdieu's (1996) understanding of social space which posits that social differences are both continuous and multidimensional. Social space is therefore "an invisible set of relationships which tends to retranslate itself, in a more or less direct manner, into

physical space in the form of a definite distributional arrangement of agents and properties" (p. 12). The structure of the social space is premised on the distribution of various forms of capital (economic, cultural and social), where individuals physically situated near each other tend to have similar capital profiles. In the context of my study, the underlining assumption was that students enrolled in the same school were more likely to have access to similar forms of capital. While potentially problematic, I was cognizant that the concept of social space was only valuable as a form of entry. Once in the schools, I would have to be mindful that social diversity amongst the student body could and did exist.

To ensure two significantly different social spaces, I based my selection decision on the prospective schools' cost and admission requirements. In relation to cost, I sought a free public school and a private school with restrictive tuition fees. I defined restrictive tuition fees as being anything greater than the country's average nominal monthly wage of $437.44 (Trading Economics, 2018). The focus on admission requirements was premised on a concern that selection criteria such as entrance examinations could lead to social stratification amongst public institutions (West, Ingram, & Hind, 2006). As a result, I sought a public school that maintained an open admissions policy based on a lottery system rather than an entrance exam or place of residence. Familiar with the critiques of the school choice movement and its role in perpetuating inequality (Ball, Bowe, & Gewirtz, 1996), I was aware that a lottery system is far from being a perfect proxy for equality of educational opportunity. Although imperfect, I believed that these selection criteria allowed for visible social differences between both schools.

Based on these considerations I identified UECT and St. Thomas as ideal sites for this study. UECT was one of the first authorized public school to offer the diploma programme. As explained in Chapter 5, it is a school of historical renown that underwent significant changes as a result of the most recently promulgated constitution. Consistent with the school's own assessment of its social makeup which included terms such as "estrato bajo y medio bajo" [poor and lower middle-class], I will refer to UECT as being a public school which catered to low-income students. Although the school did not have official student demographic data, the administrative staff estimated that most students came from households which earned $600 a month and only one parent was formally employed.

Meanwhile, St. Thomas was an exclusive private institution with prohibitive monthly tuition fees that approximated $1000. As explained in Chapter 6, due to a substantial wait list, the school devised stringent admission procedures which included mandatory enrollment beginning in kindergarten. Aligned with students and teachers own assessment of the social makeup of the school, which included terms such as upper middle-class and rich, I will refer to St. Thomas as being an "affluent private school". Although the school did not have official student demographic data, the administrative staff noted that most students' parents either owned their own businesses or were employed by important multinational companies.

Gaining entry. Prior to the start of the study, my main concern was gaining access. As Calacro (2018) argues, in an era of school accountability, teacher, students and even parents are subject to an increasing amount of scrutiny. I feared that my request and the rather critical undertones of the topic could be met with suspicion and resistance by

the multiple stakeholders that were required for the study to take place in its intended form. In late October of 2017 I wrote an introductory email to the deans of both schools with a brief description of the study. The dean of St. Thomas immediately responded, agreeing to participate in the study but stressing that I would not be allowed to videotape or take pictures while I was at the school. The dean from UECT, on the other hand, did not respond.

After two more emails to the dean of UECT went unanswered, I was struck by a wave of panic. I began searching for other IB public schools but feared that I would similarly be met with silence. I had previously heard from people working at a local university that gaining access to public schools was becoming increasingly difficult. In early January, I was required to travel to Ecuador to attend to a personal matter. Upon arriving in the country, I immediately called the school in an effort to schedule a last-minute meeting with the dean, stating that I was a doctoral candidate from the University of Minnesota. Fortunately, the dean did not have anything scheduled for Friday afternoon, and I was given a half-hour appointment.

Fernando was an affable man who quickly noted his love for soccer. He was in his sixties but came across a much younger. Now and then, in the briefest of glimpses did his true age become apparent. This was especially true when he laughed, a wide-grinned laugh that revealed numerous missing teeth. Born in a small rural town, Fernando spent most of his career at the school, first as a teacher and only recently as a dean. His appointment to the deanship was tumultuous and slightly contested. The former dean resigned in late September of the prior year. Unable to find an immediate replacement and unwilling to prolong the search, the school decided to nominate him for the position.

He was given an interim title with the expectation that a new dean would be hired by the beginning of the following school year.

While hard to confirm, it is my belief that these specific circumstances are what enabled my access to the school. Given his short-tenure and his interim title, Fernando was not concerned that my observations and conclusions about the school could reflect poorly on his work as an administrator. In fact, he welcomed my presence hoping to gain an outsider's perspective of the many issues the school was currently experiencing. As will be discussed in chapter 5, UECT was being intervened by the Ministry of Education due to a slew of recent internal issues, which included incidences of sexual assault, academic irregularities, and administrative instability. At the end of our meeting we co-signed a letter of support in which Fernando agreed to grant me access to the school's IB program, while I agreed to write a report about my findings. Obtaining a letter of support provided a much needed but momentary sigh of relief. My concerns now shifted to how I would be received and positioned by the teaching staff and student body of both schools.

Field relations. When I arrived at UECT and St. Thomas in early March, I made a pointed effort to be as clear and honest about my research project as possible. Every time I introduced myself, I also provided a quick synopsis of my project, emphasizing my interest in the relationship between social class and students' experiences with the IB. Furthermore, I carried a small executive report of the study which I would distribute when pressed for further details. Such honesty is essential for ethnographic research. Although imperative, I knew transparency could potentially lead to some resistance.

Much to my surprise, teachers from both schools did not view me with suspicion or feel threatened by my presence. They took interest in my research topic and allowed

me to observe classes at my convenience. In an effort to reciprocate their generosity, I offered to be of service inside the classroom in any way they saw fit. Some teachers accepted my offer and attempted to integrate me into the day-to-day activities of the classroom, asking me to contribute to class debates, proctor exams, work with small groups, and provide feedback on students' projects. Others preferred that I remained as a silent observer, sitting quietly in the back of the room.

My efforts in being transparent were also directed towards the student body. Initially students from both schools were more curious about who I was than what I was doing. Given my noticeable Portuguese accent - especially when I tried to roll my r's in Spanish - I was often asked about my impressions of Ecuador and my favorite local dishes. As my presence was slowly normalized, students gradually began asking more questions about my purpose and role at each school. These questions shattered my illusion that I was effective in my bid for transparency. One student from St. Thomas, for instance, inquired "why can't we ask you about your research"? More concerning, a group of students from UECT once asked "por cuanto tiempo trabajas con la OBI" ["How long have you been working with the IB"]?

While writing my field notes of these particular interactions, I quickly realized that the rapport I was building with students inside the classroom was not translating into a sense of comfort or openness outside of it. Despite my short-lived efforts, the hierarchical relations implicit in the researcher-student, outsider-insider and adult-adolescent relationships were limiting my efforts of engaging in open and meaningful conversations with the students. Disrupting these implicit hierarchies became a priority

and I knew that this would only be accomplished through a greater level of interaction outside of the classroom.

In the appendix of the seminal piece *Ain't no makin' it: Aspirations and Attainment in a low-income Neighborhood,* MacLeod (1995) describes the importance of basketball in his attempt to build rapport with his research participants. I had MacLeod's experiences in mind when a group of students asked if I would like to participate in their weekly Friday afternoon soccer matches. At first, I was hesitant; I hadn't played soccer in years and was concerned of how I would fair against youthful students who played often. Ultimately, I accepted, thinking that while I could gain respect if I were impressive on the pitch, a lousy effort could make me more endearing.

Soccer provided stories and material for inside jokes. It also allowed space for conversations that were unrelated to the classroom. While it is naïve to think that my position as a researcher-outsider-adult vanished once I was on the pitch, it did lessen the perceptual distance that existed between myself and the students. The growing rapport that began through soccer also opened doors for new forms of engagement. Soon students were asking if they could practice their English with me during breaks, a proposition I readily accepted. Others wanted to hear about my experiences with the SAT and applying to universities in the United States. By the time the student interviews began, there was a greater level of comfort and willingness to talk.

Data Collection

Data collection took place over a five-month span, beginning in the month March and concluding at the end of July. Originally the goal was to visit each school twice a week, allocating one day for writing and reading. After a mere two-weeks at the schools,

I quickly realized that I had to adjust the frequency of my visits. Classes were often cancelled at the UECT, many times without prior notice. In an effort to mitigate these unexpected cancellations, I decided to increase the frequency of my visits to the school. As a result, I established a schedule of visiting UECT every Monday, Wednesday and Friday, while reserving Tuesday and Thursday for St. Thomas.

For the first two months of the study I conducted classroom observations, attended school events such as assemblies and competitions, and engaged in informal conversations with students, teachers and administrative staff. During this stage of the study, I also made a concerted effort of compiling a wide variety of artefacts, which included transcribed assembly speeches, yearbooks, class materials and flyers. Consistent with Merriam and Tisdell's (2016) advice, these early data sources allowed me to learn "enough about a situation to formulate questions for subsequent interviews" (p. 111). While I continued observing classes through the extent of the study, in the month of May I began scheduling semi-structured interviews with staff and a select group of students. Interviews took place interspersedly throughout the remainder of the study, concluding in the month of July. A detailed description of each data collection method will follow.

Observations

Between both schools, I observed a total of 150 class hours. For the first weeks my observations focused exclusively on the physical layout, classroom activities, and the interactions amongst students and between students and teachers. The goal of these early observations was to familiarize myself with the setting and the participants' daily routines. As I gradually became situated with the rhythms of the classroom, my observations began focusing on pedagogical decisions. I paid particular attention to the

different ways the internationally focused course content was contextualized. This was accomplished by observing how students invoked personal experiences and how teachers attempted to deliberately connect the course content to the students' own contexts. Throughout the classroom observations, I made a concerted effort of preserving interactions in their original form, quickly writing verbatim what each participant uttered. The following excerpt from a UECT Theory of knowledge (TOK) class exemplifies my approach to writing classroom observations:

> The teacher emphasized that these papers should focus on the theme, noting that the natural sciences provides distinct and important advantages that other knowledge systems don't. He stated that unlike "el sistemas de arte, sistemas religiosos, sistemas indígenas, las ciencias naturales es lo que deja sobrevivir millones de personas" ["the systems of art, religious systems, indigenous systems, the natural science allow the survival of millions of people"]. After reading another student paper that the teacher felt did not properly address the assignments' prompt, he stated "por que mi topo aquí [forehead] es para siempre recordar el tema. Es como yo escribí la biografía de [Francisco Reyes] y empezó a hablarde Don Juan. Hay similitudes pero no es relevante"" ["why do I touch myself here [forehead] it's to always remember the theme. It's like I write a biography of Francisco Reyes and I begin to talk about Don Juan. There are similarities but it's not relevant"], which lead to laughter from the students.

In addition, I wrote copious field notes of the observations and interactions I had outside of the classroom. These included informal conversations with students and staff, observations during school events such as assembly and competitions, and descriptions of the layout of the school. Drawing on Jackson's (1990) concept of a "hidden curriculum", I also attempted to discern the different disciplinary and behavioral expectations that circulated informally throughout the schools. I focused on how these expectations were established and reinforced through message systems such as posters, flyers, school announcements, yearbooks and even dress policies.

Participant selection

After spending two months observing classes and building rapport with students and staff, I began making important selection decisions about who I would like to interview. Since the main focus of the study was to better understand student experiences with the program, I decided to begin the interview process with the staff. This would allow me to gain a new layer of insight prior to conducting student interviews. I interviewed staff members who were either directly or indirectly associated with the DP. This included school deans, DP coordinators, college counselors and teachers. Between both schools, a total of 10 staff members were formally interviewed.

Once staff interviews were finalized, I began working in conjunction with the DP coordinators of both schools to identify potential student interviewees. Students were selected based on a few overarching considerations. First, I was interested in an equal distribution of female and male students. Second, I wanted students with varying levels of academic performance. All students enrolled in the DP were considered high performing, however, I wanted some range within my sample. Between both schools a total of 24 students were invited for interviews, although only 21 brought signed informed consent forms. Students were in the first year of the DP and were engaged with the three core requirements (Theory of Knowledge, Extended Essay and Creativity, Activity, Service) in addition to the program's subject specific courses. In an effort to preserve participants' anonymity, all names used in this study are pseudonyms and direct references to students' family lives were either excluded or purposefully made vague.

Interviews

Both staff and student interviews were semi-structured and employed questions that were open-ended, non-judgmental, and aimed at allowing "unanticipated statements

and stories to emerge" (Charmaz, 2006, p. 26). In total 31 interviews were conducted, each lasting anywhere between 30 and 90 minutes. Staff interview questions were individually crafted and were guided by what I had noticed during observations and what I had gathered through informal conversations (see Appendix 1). For instance, a reoccurring theme at St. Thomas was the negative perceptions students held about pursuing higher education in Ecuador. This topic was broached with all interviewed staff members of the school, but more thoroughly discussed with the college counselor. Similarly, in UECT it became apparent during classroom observations that students had very little experience writing essays prior to joining the IB. The theme of the potential disconnects between the government mandated Bachillerato General Unificado (BGU) curriculum and the DP was discussed in length, especially with the teachers. While questions differed for each staff member, all interviews included the topics of school culture, expectations of students' futures, and experiences with the DP.

Student interviews followed a similar process but included the added layer of insight gained through the staff interviews. Although the themes broached with students from both schools differed at times, there was a greater consistency in the questions asked. All interviews inquired about students' family life, social life at the school, motivations to enroll in the DP, experience with the DP, and future aspirations (see Appendix 2). Between students and staff, all but one interview was digitally recorded and transcribed. The lone exception was a student from UECT who preferred not to have his voice recorded but allowed me to take notes during the interview process. After listening to the interview recordings, when needed I approached interviewees with follow-up and

clarification questions. Anything occurring after the interview session, however, was not recorded.

A note on language

In the subsequent chapters it will be evident that both Spanish and English were used throughout the study. During the data collection process, I made a concerted effort to conduct interviews in the language of choice of my participants. I prefaced all interviews by asking interviewees what language they would feel most comfortable in. All interviews in UECT were conducted in Spanish, including a staff interview with the school's English teacher. Conversely, all interviews in St. Thomas were conducted in English. During the writing of this dissertation I was required to translate both interview transcripts and field notes in order to make them available to an English-speaking audience. Translations, however, are never a simple or objective process. As Simon (1996) argues, the solutions of the many dilemmas that may emerge when translating are never found in dictionaries. When translating, one must "constantly make decisions about the cultural meanings which language carries and evaluate the degree to which the two different worlds [one inhabits] are 'the same' (p. 137). The process of translating, therefore, entails not only the transference of meaning from one language to another, but the production of a whole new understanding of a text (Temple & Young, 2004). As a result, I decided to keep all quotations in their original form providing my own translations in brackets. This decision was motivated by a personal effort to preserve interviewee voices in their original form, untampered. It was also a means of promoting some form of transparency, providing bilingual readers a glimpse into my own meaning-making process.

Data Analysis

As is common in research that draws on ethnographic methods, my observations and interviews yielded a large amount of data. In an effort to engage with the data in a meaningful and productive way, I employed two different yet complimentary approaches to analysis. The first step was inductive. In the evenings after translating the day's jottings into more comprehensible field notes, I would write emerging ideas into a journal. These journal entries eventually became analytic memos, which were written in an effort to identify patterns in the data and to adjust the data-collection process to best address emerging lines of inquiry. As much of what was going on in the schools defied my early assumptions, I spent a considerable amount of time attempting to recalibrate not only my observation and interview protocols, but also how I positioned myself as a researcher.

In July while students were finishing their final exams, I was in the midst of the arduous task of transcribing interviews. Once finalized, I underwent a process of data immersion which consisted of reading, reflecting, writing and re-reading my field notes and interview transcripts. Following what Denzin (1978) refers to as "inspection", I began to question preliminary findings that seemed to have some range and power by both identifying disconfirming evidence and setting it against the existing literature. This allowed me to test alternative explanations and ascertain what emerging ideas seemed well elaborated and what seemed incomplete. For instance, I compared the grounded concept of "buenos buscones" with existing discussions on "grit" and "hustle", noting both the commonalities and points of difference.

I used the themes that emerged from this process to develop a coding scheme. I made the effort to use in-vivo descriptors such as “being more”, “rules of the game”, “inchar el curriculum” and “dicotomía” as labels for my codes. Following Lofland’s (1971) scheme, codes were categorized as setting, activities, meanings, participation, and relationships. This allowed the second step to analysis, which involved using the created scheme to formally code transcribed interviews, classroom observations, field notes and artefacts. Using NVivo 12 software, I initially coded the data from each school separately. During this process, I revised and at times expanded the coding scheme to better reflect the nuances of the data. For example, I expanded the code “rules of the game” to include a subset of codes which I labeled as “awareness of the rules”, “socializing to the rules”, “effects on relationship to schooling”, “creating a personal narrative”, and “hinchar el curriculum”.

Once both schools were coded, I began the comparative process. I based my approach on Stake’s (2006) proposed guideline for analyzing cross-case data through “merged findings”. This consists of first writing assertions that are common to both sites (i.e. students’ main motivation to enroll in the DP is the desire to pursue higher education outside of Ecuador). This is followed by writing assertions that are unique to each site (i.e. St. Thomas students are socialized since an early age to better understand the explicit and implicit rules of competitive college admissions). The final step consists of understanding how the similarities and differences combined produce specific arrangements of how social class is being produced and reproduced through students’ experiences of schooling broadly and with the DP specifically. The emerging

arrangements served as the core chapters of this dissertation and the premise for the guiding concepts of "collaborative advantaging" and "fragmented capital".

Comfort and discomfort in the field

Prior to the start of the study I struggled articulating how my own subjectivity would inform the research process and any potential findings. I was aware that my previous experiences as an IB teacher in an elite private school in Ecuador had direct implication on how I perceived privilege and what I constituted as effective teaching. I knew that I held a presumptive stance that was critical of the advantages elite students are afforded due to their membership and access to particular social spaces. Like many researchers whose motivations are underlined by principles of social justice, I saw my work as an attempt to reveal the mechanisms that perpetuate inequality. In doing so, I created a perception of self which aligned with those which are disadvantaged due to circumstances beyond their control.

These perceptions were constructed from a distance. Although I attempted to maintain this understanding of role and position, once in the field I was confronted with very particular instances where aspects of my subjectivity which previously were dormant and unacknowledged, suddenly became awake. This sentiment was especially true at the UECT. As I interacted with staff and students at the school, I consistently felt compelled to strip my personal narrative to the barest of details, in an effort to mask the numerous privileges I had and which I assumed they didn't. As a result, when asked about my background, I always provided a staid story of a young Brazilian boy, son of a primary school teacher, who earned a scholarship to study in the United States, and there remained. Regardless of my efforts, my narrative always oozed of privilege, many of

which I had not readily acknowledged or accepted. These privileges made me self-conscious and at times uncomfortable.

My discomfort did not only surface but was put on full display one morning during a classroom observation. Throughout the first few weeks of the study, I had parked my car in the staff parking lot. It quickly became evident that the car I was driving was more expensive than those driven by the staff. Aware of this, every time I arrived or left the parking lot I tried to remain as inconspicuous as possible. One afternoon as I was about to leave the main gates, I saw the Theory of Knowledge teacher walking at a distance. I drove out of the lot, hoping that he was lost in thought and had not seen me. The next day while taking attendance in class, he paused and stated "felicitaciones Tiago, tienes un carro del putas" ["congratulations Tiago, you have a fucking great car"], which was accompanied by some laughter. I gave a shy smile and a slight nod, and proceeded to look down at my notebook, trying to avoid any form of eye contact.

My experiences at UECT were in stark contrast to those in St. Thomas, where my presence was largely unnoticed. There, I was often greeted as "licenciado"[1] by the security and maintenance staff who must have assumed that I was just one of the many foreigners employed by the school. Students who inquired about my own personal narrative did not find it unusual. In fact, since I attended universities similar to the ones they aspired to, I was easily able to find talking points in my efforts of building rapport. For the majority of my time at the school, I felt at ease.

I believe these feelings of comfort and discomfort are not only important to acknowledge, but to also reflect about their potential implications for the research

[1] A title given to anyone who has a college degree

process. What I found was that discomfort made me more vigilant, ready to observe and dissect the smallest of details. Comfort had the contrary effect, allowing many meaningful occurrences to go unnoticed. I became aware of this during the first weeks of data collection, when I compared my field notes from both schools. My notes of UECT were noticeably more elaborate and focused on the minutiae of daily routines such as attendance that were only briefly noted in my St. Thomas notes. This realization forced me to recalibrate in order to avoid what de Jong, Kamsteeg and Ybema (2013) describe as being "bogged down in a myopic gaze or becoming blind by the overly familiar" (p. 169). It also reaffirmed the anthropological maxim that the researcher should always strive to make the "familiar strange and the strange familiar".

As the study progressed and these realizations became clearer, I made an active attempt to always compare my field notes not only for content, but for writing style and extent of detail. I also attempted to provide the same level of transparency about my autobiography as I did about the premise of my research project. I spoke about the opportunities I was afforded as a student attending an elite private school. I mentioned the importance of my high school college counselor, who actively advocated on my behalf and was crucial in securing funding for my undergraduate studies. I also was open about the struggles and challenges I experienced as one of the few students enrolled in the school who was part of a tuition-waiver program. I recounted how small details, often unnoticed by my wealthier peers, made my experience of schooling significantly different than theirs.

From the experiences I shared, what most sparked UECT students' interest was my experience navigating the complex landscape of higher education and securing a

scholarship. Given the school's lack of a college coordinator, a number of students approached me for advice. Being transparent about my autobiography enabled this new form of relationality, where I was not only requesting my participants' time, but was also able to be of service and provide my own. My role as the impromptu college counselor even allowed me to informally meet students' parents, who were eager to discuss their children's prospects for study abroad. Much like their children, parents knew very little about universities abroad and even less about the application process.

The advice I was able to provide was limited, which prompted me to contact the college counselors of St. Thomas for guidance and materials. They graciously provided a number of documents which explained and detailed some of the nuances of the application process such as early decision, acceptance rates, test scores and the scholarship process for international students. These materials are now in the school's IB department and are hopefully being of some use to the students.

Missed opportunities

Prior to the start of the study, I naively hoped that one of the outcomes of my presence and work could be the creation of a greater level of proximity between both schools. At the time this idealization did not seem farfetched; although socially distinct, the schools were only separated by a handful of miles. During the first month of the study I approached an UECT administrator and proposed an event where students from both schools could convene to discuss their experiences with the IBDP and their future aspirations. The administrator proved reluctant, noting the numerous logistical and bureaucratic hurdles. Dejected, I did not insist further. However, unrelated to my efforts, an opportunity did arise for students for students from both schools to convene.

St. Thomas is well known for its extensive Model United Nations (MUN) program, where the school's students participate in numerous events, including a yearly trip to the Hague. During the year of this study, UECT was scheduled to host a local iteration of MUN, open to all schools of the city but predominantly attended by other public institutions. St. Thomas' MUN coordinator was not only aware of the event but was in the midst of preparing a group of students for participation. As will be seen in Chapter 6, the decision to attend an event hosted by a public school was novel and students seemed excited about the prospect. One student even noted, "it's going to be interesting. You know I live right by [UECT] and I walk by it like every week, but I have never been inside. I am excited to see what it's like". Two weeks prior to the event, the main news outlets of the city reported an ongoing scandal involving a number of allegations of sexual assault against a UECT teacher. Upon hearing about the allegation, St. Thomas' MUN coordinator decided to cancel the school's participation, noting "I don't know if I am going to let our kids go to the MUN. I am not sure I feel comfortable with all the things that are going on".

The goal of convening students from both schools was to provide both structure and a space for them to share their experiences and reflect on how their own social backgrounds may mediate their experiences of schooling broadly, and with the DP specifically. The hope was that through these discussions, students could engage with meaningful reflection and attempt to grapple with the same questions that I was hoping to address with this study. As a result of this missed opportunity, I was unable to gain an added layer of insight that could either help direct, challenge or corroborate my comparative analysis. While the emerging insights from each site of study could always

be discussed with participants through follow-up questions, the comparative process was ultimately a lonely endeavor.

Chapter 4: Between political rhetoric and policy implementation: The IB in a "post-neoliberal" Ecuador

On February 9th of 2006, the Ecuadorian Ministry of Education and the IB signed a joint agreement entitled "Inserción de Bachillerato Internacional en colegios fiscales del Ecuador". The agreement strived to introduce the DP into schools spread across the country's 22 provinces. A total of 17 schools successfully fulfilled the required accreditation process and were thus allowed to be part of the IB's every growing corpus of World Schools. While this early agreement was modest in scope, it provided the necessary foundation for a new iteration of the agreement which was signed in 2012. Spearhead by former president Rafael Correa, this second iteration focused on introducing the DP into 120 new schools each year and aimed on having 500 fully accredited public schools by the end of 2017. If successful, over a third of Ecuador's public secondary schools would have included the DP in their academic provisions.

The scope of the initiative was novel and rightfully generated excitement in both the Ecuadorian Ministry of Education and the IB itself. During a ceremony attended by members of the IB community and Rafael Correa, the IB Americas' Regional Director, Drew Deutsch, emphasized this sentiment by stating that as an organization they were "honored that Ecuador [held] the IB's programmes in such high regard and that President Correa, the Minister of Education and others have selected the IB as a significant education reform measure to improve the quality of education for all Ecuadorians" (International Baccalaureate, 2015). Deutsch's quote and other avows of success circulated widely within the IB community, actively portraying the partnership as a model for other national governments to replicate. Even participants from this study

noted how often they used to encounter information about Ecuador during international IB workshops[2].

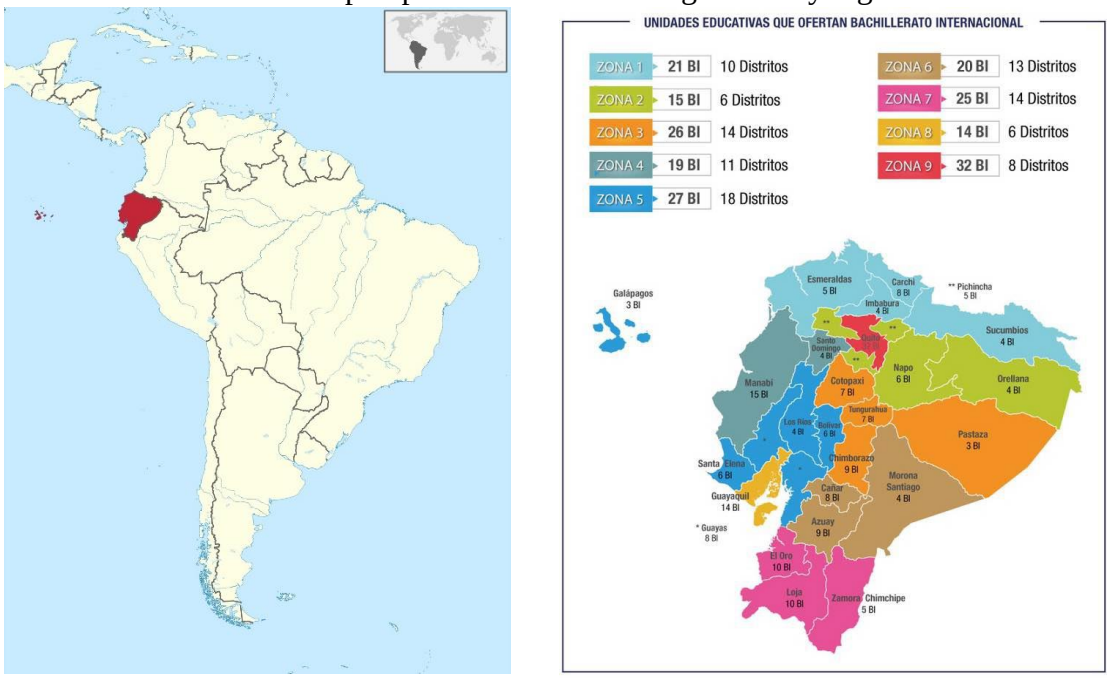
The goal of reaching 500 schools never came to fruition. Rather than dramatically expanding the number IB World Schools in the country, since 2018 the Ecuadorian Ministry of Education is undertaking an evaluative process to determine the future direction of the country's ongoing agreement with the IB. The current minister of education, Monserrat Creamer, recently suggested that the high cost of the program demands a more thoughtful approach not only for expansion but even for maintenance. She stated, "por el tema financiero, en el sistema público optimizamos recursos. La idea no es eliminar nada, pero sí evaluar; ver en qué casos el programa funciona" ["due to financial reasons, in the public system our goal is to optimize resource. The idea is not to eliminate [IB schools], but to evaluate; to see in which cases the program works"] (Rosero, 2019). This shift in tone, from unbridled enthusiasm to a sense of caution, is prompted by the consistently low IB exam scores of public-school students. In 2016, for instance, only 14.15% of IB students in public schools were conferred the IB diploma.

Much has changed since the first iteration of the IB agreement was signed in 2006. While it seems unlikely that Ecuador will ever reach its original goal of 500 fully accredited schools, the IB's growth in the country remains remarkable. There are currently 199 public-schools (see map 1) and 71 private school offering at least one IB program, meaning that Ecuador currently trails only the United States and Canada as having the most fully accredited schools in the world. However, what makes the

[2] The school's MYP coordinator noted: "You know in previous professional development seminars and even in MYP meetings I attend each year in the US, Ecuador was always highlighted as a model case that could be followed in other countries. But that was a while ago. More recently there hasn't been much reference to Ecuador."

Ecuadorian case truly exceptional is that it is occurring in a context which presumably would be ideologically reticent to the values and meanings often ascribed to the IB's approach to education. Unlike the IB's liberal-humanist approach to education (Hill, 2006; Tamatea, 2008; Van Oord, 2007) and close association to neoliberalism and individual forms of advantaging (Bunnell, 2016; Doherty, 2013; Yemini & Dvir, 2016), Ecuador espouses a post-neoliberal approach to governance premised on the principles of material redistribution, plurinationalism and environmental sustainability. In fact, the expansion of the IB in 2012 was spearhead by former president Correa, who famously decried neoliberalism in his inauguration speech, claiming it to be a "perverse system [that] destroyed our democracy, our economy and our society" (as cited in Arsel, 2012, p.154).

Map 1.
Ecuador map & public schools offering the IB by region



Source: Ministerio de Educación (2020)

This apparent discursive tension provides an important point of entry in understanding the motivations and conditions that enabled the DP to not only be available in public schools, but an important cog in Ecuador's larger education project. What this chapter proposes is what Beach (2017) and others refer to as "qualitative process-tracing" (see also Befani & Stedman-Byrce, 2016), which endeavors to track the conditions, logics and sequence of events that allowed an educational program associated with Eurocentric epistemologies and neoliberal impulses to become the approach of choice of a government which rejected (at least rhetorically) these very ideals.

Drawing on government documents, secondary literature, news articles, political speeches and interviews, this chapter will dress the following research questions:

Q1. What were the social and historical conditions that allowed the DP initiative to be envisioned, deliberated and implemented?

Q2. How does the DP configure within Ecuador's educational landscape and relate to other policy initiatives?

In addition, the ensuing discussion will serve to showcase the structural arrangements that directly inform schools engagement with the IB and students' own experiences with the program. To begin, I will detail the political and economic context in which the policy emerged. This requires taking a step back and examining the acute financial and political crisis that began nearly a decade before the IB agreement was first signed. As will soon be discussed, the Ecuadorian crisis greatly redirected the country's political trajectory and had social ramifications that are still highly manifest.

La larga noche neoliberal (the long neoliberal night)

Neoliberalism is a polysemic concept without a singular and well-defined referent. In a very strict sense, it refers to a macroeconomic doctrine based on the elimination of state's protectionist policies in order to free the "movement of finance, trade, and labor across national boundaries; the implementation of competition policies across public and private sectors aimed at creating efficiencies; [and] the privatization of a range of former state activity" (Robertson & Verger, 2012, p. 23). Hall, Massey and Rustin (2013) similarly describe neoliberalism as being a "bundle of ideas [that] revolves around the supposed naturalness of 'the market', the primacy of the competitive individual, the superiority of the private over the public" (p. 13). While neoliberalism may be premised on similar overarching ideals, it has been loosely used to describe a wide -array of phenomena which include "structural adjustment policies in the Global South; post-socialist transformations in Eurasia; the retrenchment of the welfare state in Western democracies; the production of selves and subjectivities; and the ways that culture and cultural difference are commodified to accrue profit" (Ganti, 2014, p. 91). Indeed, as showcased in DeJaeghere's (2017) study of entrepreneurial education in Tanzania, fissures within the concept allow it to be continually inscribed with new rationalities, ideas, meanings and even contradictions. These fissures emerge as different social actors interpret, adapt and selectively implement policies in an effort to address specific historical moments and fulfill varying purposes and needs.

As a result, neoliberalism has undergone a process of conceptual stretching allowing it to occupy a fluid terrain of meaning although often lacking adequate definition and consistent use (Venugopal, 2015). The multiple meanings that have been ascribed to the concept compelled Ferguson (2009) to assert that without greater

specificity and precision in usage, research on neoliberalism may yield "empty analysis" (p. 171). As a response to Ferguson's request, this study defines neoliberalism as a policy initiative that endeavors on achieving what Jessop (2002) refers to as a regime shift, where new economic and political principles are introduced and later incorporated as the primary form of governance.

Consistent with larger trends in Latin America, in the 1980s Ecuador began a gradual shift away from an economic development strategy based on national protectionism and import substitution industrialization towards one premised on neoliberal ideals. Ecuador's early engagement with neoliberalization employed an approach which Willamson (1990) defines as emerging from "a mixed mind" (p. 398), where instances of fiscal austerity and privatization were coupled with protectionism and government spending on key industries. Neoliberal approaches to governance, however, were fully adopted after Sixto Durán Ballén was elected in 1992. As president, Durán Ballén established the National Council of Modernization, which oversaw the privatization of state-run industries, promoted market liberalization policies such as the elimination of import taxation, and drastically reduced state spending. This resulted in the privatization of key industries and public goods such as telecommunications, electricity, potable water, and petroleum (Varela, 2013, p. 45). In addition, Durán Ballén proposed a series of institutional reforms that focused on revising the country's legislative and legal frameworks and included the introduction of a "stock market law, a banking law, a customs reform law, a tax system law [and] a government budget reform law empowering the finance minister" (Hey & Klak, 1999, p. 79). Similar policies emphasizing market liberalization were further promoted by Durán Ballén successors,

most notably by Abdalá Bucaram. These reforms promoted a highly export-oriented economy and allowed foreign direct investment to dramatically increase "from $192 million in 1991 to $530 million in 1993 to $830 million in 1998" (Gamso, 2010, p. 32). To further promote exports, banking regulations were loosened allowing a boom in lending, heightened risk-taking in credit, and growing operational costs (Martinez, 2006).

A cascading series of events, which included plunging oil prices and devastating El Niño floods, highlighted the shortcoming of an export-oriented economy with weak regulatory power (see Vos, Velasco & de Labastida, 1999). The result was an acute financial crisis which crippled the country's economy. Between 1998 and 2000, for instance, Ecuador's economy contracted by 7.3%, foreign investment fell by 34.7%, imports declined by 38.4%, and the Sucre devalued by 66% (Jokisch & Pribilsky, 2002). In addition, the crisis completely destabilized the country's banking system and led to the issuing of numerous state-funded bailouts aimed on avoiding complete financial collapse.

In an effort to lessen the strain of the financial crisis, the Ecuadorian government implemented a number of economic reforms. This included freezing bank accounts to prevent capital flight and slowing rates of inflation by substituting the country's currency with the U.S. dollar (Wang, 2016). In addition, numerous austerity measures were issued which included sharp cutbacks on social spending, especially in education. For instance, while in 1981 government spending on education was 5.4% of GDP, by the year 2000 it had decreased to 1.8% (Isch, 2011). While the effects of these measures were widespread, they were most strongly felt by the country's poor and indigenous communities who struggled to convert their highly devalued Sucres into U.S. dollars. Overall the crisis and the ensuing government response had disastrous social effects

where poverty rates skyrocketed to 40% of the population and unemployment rates reached 15% (Jokisch & Pribilsky, 2002). At the apex of the crisis the United Nations ranked Ecuador as the poorest country of the hemisphere.

The financial crisis was coupled with a period of political turmoil – or what Valenzuela (2004) refers to as "presidencies interrupted" – where between 1997 and 2007 "Ecuador saw seven presidents, three of who were toppled as a result of civic unrest" (Arsel, 2012, p. 154). Moreover, the country witnessed a high turnover rate within the ministry of education with a total of eleven ministers over the same ten years (Schneider, Estarellas, & Bruns, 2019). As a result of prolonged financial and political instability, the country's traditional political parties were weakened and perceived with a heightened level of suspicion. According to a 1999 poll, "only 6% of the population support[ed] political parties, and a meager 11% ha[d] faith in the Congress" (Lucero, 2001, p. 60). Subsequent democratic audits in 2001, 2004 and 2006 all indicated that the public felt alienated from politics and viewed politicians as being inherently corrupt (Larrea Oña, 2007). Kennemore and Weeks (2011) assert that this profound lack of confidence in the country's traditional political parties created room for new political actors to emerge. This was especially true in 2006 when Rafael Correa, a U.S. trained economist and former university professor, entered the presidential race as a "quintessential outsider, with no previous experience in electoral politics or partisan affiliation" (Conaghan & de la Torre, 2008, p. 271).

La Revolución Ciudadana (The citizen's revolution)

During the 2006 presidential electoral cycle, Rafael Correa campaigned as the self-proclaimed leader of a citizen's revolution that aimed on disrupting what was termed

as the partidocracia (partyarchy) - the various traditional political parties that predominated Ecuadorian politics since the 1970s. Attuned to the prevalent feelings of political alienation, Correa promised to establish a participatory model of governance that allowed "citizens to exercise power, take part in public decisions, and control the actions of their representatives" (de la Torre, 2014, p. 458). Furthermore, he vehemently rejected previous neoliberal reforms and criticized the economic pragmatism of previous administrations which prioritized technical imperatives while failing to consider the importance of ideology and social well-being. Instead of proposing policies whose sole intent was to reduce inflation and foreign debt, Correa promised an uncompromising commitment to the poor and marginalized sectors of society even if this required defaulting on the country's foreign bonds and compromising Ecuador's standing within the international community (Tibocha & Jassir, 2008).

To achieve these aims, Correa argued for the creation of a new constitution that would redesign governmental institutions and reestablish the state's role in regulating the economy. As Correa's campaign gained traction, he received support of a newly established political party known as Alianza Pais which consisted of a coalition of more than 30 social and political organizations. The party identified itself as adhering to Bolivarian and 21st century socialist ideologies and was closely aligned to the movements propelled by Hugo Chavez in Venezuela and Evo Morales in Bolivia. With political support and a highly resonating campaign message, Correa was elected with 56.7% of the popular vote. Upon being elected Correa promised that through a constitutional reform he would put an immediate end to the "long and sad night of neoliberalism" (Conaghan, 2008, p. 46).

Sumak Kawsay and the post-neoliberal alternative

Following on his campaign promise, Correa and members of the country's constituent assembly proposed a new constitution based on an alternative approach to development inspired by the concept of Sumak Kawsay. Walsh (2010a) claims that Sumak Kawsay emerged as a result of the social, political, and epistemic agency of indigenous movements in the Andean region. Its focal aim was to collectively construct a new equilibrium that included "quality of life, democratization of the State, and attention to biocentric concerns" (p. 18). Becker (2011) refers to Sumak Kawsay as being an "explicit critique of traditional development strategies that increase the use of resources rather than seeking to live in harmony with others and with nature" (p. 50). To achieve harmonious living amongst different groups of people and with nature, the proposed constitution sought to address the material and representational forms of inequity that were argued as being colonially produced and exacerbated by neoliberal policies.

In regard to matters of material and representational inequality, the proposed constitution promoted redistribution and plurinationalism as two of its foundational principles. Redistribution attempted to address not only the high levels of material inequity, but also what was perceived as a historical urban bias. In response, the government proposed to reverse rural disinvestment policies supported by previous administrations and to foresee the "democratization of credit, technology, technical assistance and training programmes to assist rural dwellers, who frequently are small farmers, many of them indigenous and Afro-Ecuadorian" (Radcliffe, 2012, p. 242). In addition, resources would be allocated to funding local forms of government in rural communities, indigenous communes would be exempt from paying property taxes and

revenues would be redistributed through appropriate taxes, revenues, and subsidies (Annonymous, 2017).

Plurinationalism, on the other hand, sought to transform the state in order to overcome Ecuador's "monocultural national identity premised upon European norms" (Radcliffe, 2012, p. 244). As a concept, plurinationalism is not only an acknowledgement of cultural diversity, but also the legal and political recognition of the "diversity of peoples and cultures, including respect for different visions of development and social and political organization" (Becker, 2011, pp. 54-55). Walsh (2009) argues that plurinationalism is a state-project that attempts to transform "the structures and institutions in order to recognize the political and cultural diversity, and community-based forms of authority in order to consolidate unity in diversity" (p. 78). This implies that historically marginalized systems of life, education and economy were not only acknowledged by the state but were now also legally protected. On a policy level, a plurinational approach included direct representation of indigenous and Afro-Ecuadorian nationalities in the national congress; granting indigenous communities control over their own territories; the recognition of indigenous forms of justice; the rights of community media where indigenous and Afro-Ecuadorians had priority in acquiring radio frequencies; and also including Shuar and Quechua as official languages along with Spanish (Becker, 2011; Jameson, 2011; Radcliffe, 2012). Moreover, it entailed expanding the meaning of science and knowledge "to include ancestral knowledge – defined as also scientific and technological -, and requiring that these knowledge and sciences be part of the educational system from elementary school to higher education" (Walsh, 2010b)

By reducing material and representational inequality, the proposed constitution strived to create a new society in which diverse individuals would "recognize, understand and value one another – as diverse but equals – with the goal of making possible reciprocity and mutual recognition, and with this, the self-realization and construction of a social and shared future" (Walsh, 2010a, p. 19). In principle, this would allow historically marginalized communities to "speak" based on their own frames of reference and not those established by national elites located in urban centers. Radcliffe (2012) refers to this as providing the necessary preconditions for "subjects – defined by diverse cultures, cosmovisions, and life-histories – to create and maintain meaningful, mutually-respectful dialogue" (p. 244).

It is important to stress that plurinationalism opposes the flattening effects of neoliberal multiculturalism. Unlike multiculturalism, the goal is not to include historically marginalized groups into existing structural arrangements (thus maintaining the status-quo). Rather it stresses the need to critically examine the conditions and techniques of power that marginalize, racialize and discriminate. As Walsh (2010a) contends, this requires a state of permanent dispute in which matters related to cultural identity, difference, autonomy and nation are consistently troubled and discussed. Schools were envisioned as being the ideal space in which such struggle could occur. Within the proposed constitution education was conceived as being crucial for Correa's state project and was thus articulated as being the main priority of policy making and investment. In a plan of government published during his campaign, Correa framed education as follows:

> Una educación de calidad para todos y todas y a lo largo de la vida, implica una reforma permanente y profunda del aparato educativo, la cual será viable siempre

> y cuando se promueva el desarrollo del pensamiento complejo, la investigación transdisciplinaria y la incorporación selectiva, pero firme, de las tecnologías de información en las que se mueve y se moverá el mundo. La educación se constituirá en la piedra angular sobre la cual se sustentará nuestro compromiso de alcanzar el desarrollo humano integral [A quality education for all and throughout one's life, implies a permanent and profound reform of the educational apparatus which allows and promotes the development of complex thinking, interdisciplinary research and the selective but firm incorporation of technologies which move and are moved by the world. Education will constitute the bedrock which will sustain our commitment to reaching the holistic development of the human] (Alianza País, 2006, p. 44).

In 2008, a referendum was held where nearly 70% of the Ecuadorian electorate approved the constitution. The constitution's preamble purposefully signaled Correa's government's intent to redirect the country's trajectory by denouncing colonialism and invoking concepts such as Sumak Kawsay and Pacha Mama. Furthermore, the importance of education was clearly embedded and articulated within the constitution. Article 26, for instance, states:

> La educación es un derecho de las personas a lo largo de su vida y un deber ineludible e inexcusable del Estado. Constituye un área prioritaria de la política pública y de la inversión estatal, garantía de la igualdad e inclusión social y condición indispensable para el buen vivir [Sumak Kawsay]. Las personas, las familias y la sociedad tienen el derecho y la responsabilidad de participar en el proceso educativo [Education is a right of persons throughout their lives and an unavoidable and mandatory duty of the State. It constitutes a priority area for public policymaking and state investment, the guarantee of equality and social inclusion and the indispensable condition for the good way of living [Sumak Kawsay]. Persons, families and society have the right and responsibility to participate in education].

Transformations and continuities in Ecuadorian education

The priority given to education was in part a reaction to the woeful consequence the financial crisis had on public schools. Austerity measures and reduced government spending contributed to a public education system that was widely underfunded, low performing and ill-equipped to absorb a growing population. In 1999, at the height of the

crisis, the total net enrollment rate for secondary education was 44.6% and only 28.8% for students living in rural regions (Viteri Diaz, 2000). Furthermore, Ecuadorian students had low standardized test scores in both Mathematics and Reading. For instance, in the 2006 Segundo Estudio Regional Comparativo y Explicativo (SERCE) exam, Ecuadorian sixth graders were considered one of the lowest performing in the Latin American region (see Table 1).

Table 1.
SERCE (2006) Test for Sixth-Grade Students in Latin America

	Math	**Reading**
Argentina	513	506
Brazil	499	520
Chile	517	546
Colombia	493	515
Costa Rica	549	563
Ecuador	**460**	**447**
Guatemala	456	451
Mexico	542	530
Paraguay	468	455
Peru	490	476
Dominican Republic	416	421
Uruguay	578	542
L.A. Average	492	494

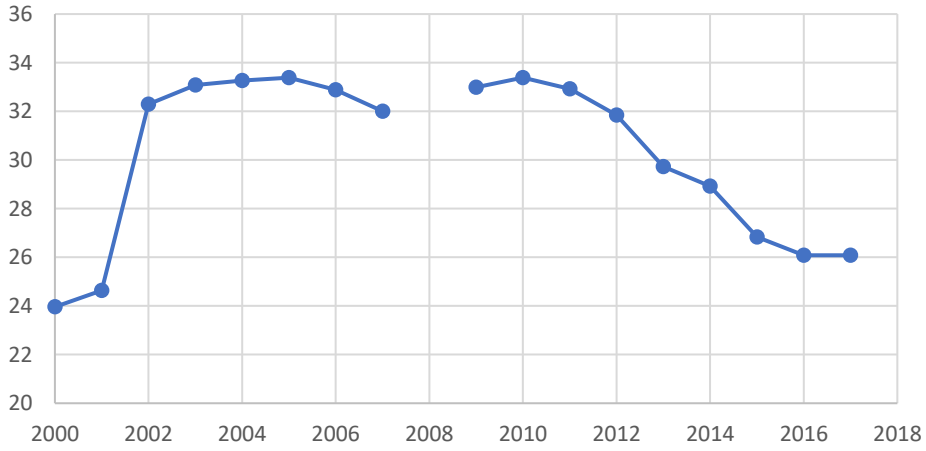
Source: Schneider, Estarellas, & Bruns (2019, p. 260)

Although the causes of Ecuador's low-test scores are both numerous and complex, two contributing factors are worth emphasizing. Due to reduced government spending on education, during the financial crisis students often did not have access to scholastic materials. For instance, at the height of the crisis of the 1,657,963 students enrolled in public primary schools, only 356,837 received their school texts (Isch, 2011). Furthermore, inadequate working conditions and low wages compelled the country's highly politicized teacher's union to orchestrate a number of strikes. Strikes led to long

periods of school closure, exemplified in 2003 where “teachers were present in school only 62% of their contractual hours” (Schneider, Estarellas, & Bruns, 2019, p. 12).

The precarious conditions of Ecuadorian public schools generated a sharp demand for private education, especially amongst urban middle-class families. As the crisis subsided, middle-class families rapidly moved their children into private institution. In 2005, for instance, 33% of all secondary school students were enrolled in private schools, a number which was presumably much larger in cities such as Quito and Guayaquil (see Table 2). Consistent with the literature that stresses the importance of middle-class advocacy in public education (see Brantlinger, 2003), the exodus of middle-class students from public institutions compelled Tamayo (2014) to argue that during the financial crisis and its immediate aftermath Ecuadorian public schools were “politically orphaned” (p. 14).

Table. 2
School enrollment, secondary, private (% of total)



Source: World Bank (2017)

Buoyed by popular support and increased financial resources due to burgeoning oil prices, Correa’s administration had unusual latitude to undertake a series of reforms aimed on improving the quality of the country’s public education and subsequently

diminish the existing public and private divide (Schneider, Estarellas, & Bruns, 2019). Correa's approach to educational reform was primarily outlined in two major government decrees; the Plan Decenal de Educacíon (PDE) and the Ley Orgánica de Educacíon Intercultural (LOEI). The PDE was signed in 2006 by Correa's predecessor, but ratified during the first year of his presidency. It consisted of eight policy goals, four of which focused on expanding access to education: universalizing early childhood education; universalizing primary education; increasing high school enrollment to 75%; and eradicating illiteracy by improving adult education. Three policy goals centered on quality: improving schools' infrastructure and equipment, improving quality, equity and implementing a national assessment system; enhancing the prestige of the teaching career and the quality of teacher training. The final goal committed to annually raising government spending by 0.5% of GDP, until the country reached 6%.

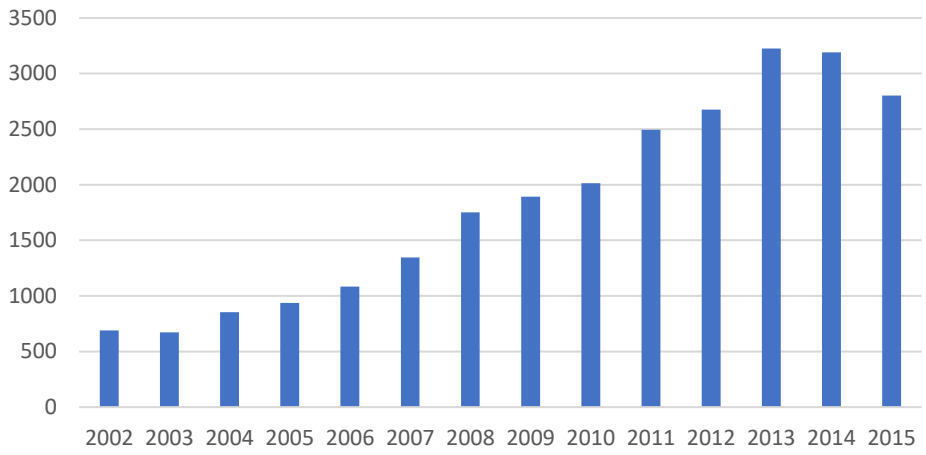
The LOEI was signed in 2011 and expanded on the PDE and provided a new legal framework for education. Schneider, Estarellas and Bruns (2017) argue that the LOEI was constituted of three main pillars. The first expanded the power of the government over the education system by drastically decreasing the power of the country's teacher union and addressing matters related to corporate interests. The second addressed matters of access by stimulating school construction, expanding teacher hiring and introducing measures to stimulate enrollment such as free textbooks, uniforms and meals. Lastly, the LOEI further emphasized the importance of quality by enforcing three main strategies: implementing policies that would attract, maintain and motivate the best possible teacher candidates; redefining the core objective of the education system to better reflect the undergirding principles of Sumak Kawsay by ensuring an educational service that is

culturally and linguistically appropriate for all nationalities and indigenous people; and mainstreaming the concept of interculturality into the entirety of the education system. Although recognizing the importance of linguistic and cultural diversity, the LOEI promoted a singular and unified education system as evidenced in article EE, which states:

> Unicidad y apertura: El Sistema Educativo es único articulado y rectorado por la Autoridad Educativa Nacional, guiado por una visión coherente del aprendizaje y reconoce las especificidades de nuestra sociedad diversa, intercultural y plurinacional [Oneness and openness: The education system is exclusively articulated and governed by the Autoridad Educativa Nacional, guided by a coherent vision of learning which recognizes the specificities of our diverse, plurinational and intercultural society].

Together, the PDE and the LOEI spurred significant changes to the country's educational system. Changes included dramatic increases in government spending on education (see Table 3); teacher policies that promoted a rapid turnover of the teaching corps, where older teachers were replaced by "a younger and better-trained cohort" (Schneider, Estarellas, & Bruns, 2019, p. 279); a systematic engagement with evaluative measures (both national and international) to track learning; and considerable modifications to the country's curriculum, which included the creation of the Bacchilerato General Unificado (BGU), a program that encompasses the last three years of high school and whose requirements are mandated for both public and private schools.

Table 3
Government Spending on Education (millions of US$)



Source: Index Mundi (2017)

According to a number of metrics these changes had a positive net effect on Ecuadorian public education. For example, in the 2013 SERCE exam, Ecuadorian sixth graders showed considerable gains in both Mathematics and Reading, placing near the Latin American average in both (see table 4). Enrollment rates also, grew between 2005 and 2016 from 53 to 87%. Furthermore, recent scores from the 2018 Program for International Student Achievement (PISA) placed Ecuador on par with Brazil and Peru, countries it previously trailed by a considerable margin (Schneider, Estarellas, & Bruns, 2019).

Table 4.
TERCE (2013) Test for Sixth-Grade Students in Latin America

	Math	**Reading**
Argentina	530	509
Brazil	519	524
Chile	581	557
Colombia	515	526
Costa Rica	535	546
Ecuador	**513**	**491**
Guatemala	488	489
Mexico	566	529
Paraguay	456	469

Peru	527	505
Dominican Republic	437	456
Uruguay	567	532
L.A. Average	511	596

Source: Schneider, Estarellas, & Bruns (2019, p. 260)

Nestled in these changes, however, were number of continuities that have been subject to a considerable amount of scrutiny and critique. In an effort to both better organize public education and ensure that all schools had adequate facilities, for instance, Correa's administration implemented a policy of fusion which sought to join numerous smaller schools into a larger institution often referred to as "Unidad Educativas del Milenio". The overarching goal was to reduce the number of total schools from 19,023 to 5,189 institutions (Granda Merchán, 2018). As Mignolo and Walsh (2018) note, in the process "more than ten thousand community-based schools were closed, doing away with local, socioculturally and linguistically appropriate schooling, including Indigenous bilingual education" (p. 67). The closing of community-based schools in favor of larger "Unidad Educativas del Milenio" significantly impacted indigenous communities who not only lost educative autonomy, but in many cases were required to be uplifted in order to be closer to their newly assigned schools. Granda Merchán (2018) argues that the policy of fusion "fue procesado y vivido por las comunidades como un intento del gobierno de quitarles sus escuelas y apropiarse de su educación" ["Was processed and lived by the communities as a means of the state to take away their schools and appropriate their education"]. (p. 306-307).

In a speech given in recently built Unidad del Milenio Bosco Wisuma to a predominantly Shuar community, Correa justified the government's decision to close previously existing community schools, stating:

> La Amazonía tiene aún muchos problemas. Afuera de la escuela ya han hecho un piso de cemento. Señor Gobernador no puede haber asentamientos en cualquier lugar. Ya se está formando un pueblito aquí afuera. Todo el apoyo para los comerciantes, pero sin desorden. En esta escuela hay cerca de 1 000 estudiantes. Se cerraron nueve escuelas con 110 estudiantes. Así no se puede tener bibliotecas, laboratorios, adecuadas canchas deportivas. No hay cómo poner maestros en la secundaria y se perpetúa el círculo de pobreza y exclusión. En el siglo XXI se condena a la gente con mala educación. En esta escuela hay personal docente completo. Profesores de inglés, informática, educación física lo que no se podía hacer en esas escuelas pequeñas. Los que no estén de acuerdo me mandan una lista. Ya empezaron los demagogos a decir que hay que defender las escuelas comunitarias, esas que eran escuelas de la pobreza [The Amazon region has a lot of problems. Outside the school we built a concrete floor. Mister governor there can't be settlement in any place. They are already starting a small township out there. All my support to the merchants, but without disorder. In this school there are 1000 students. We closed 9 schools with 110 students. Like that you can't have libraries, laboratories, adequate sporting facilities. You can't put teachers in high school, and this perpetuates poverty and exclusion. In the XXI century people with poor education are condemned. In this school we have a full teaching staff. We have English teachers, technology, physical education, things which we couldn't have in these small schools. Those who are not in favor send me a list. The demagogues have already started saying that we have to defend community-based schools, these which were schools of poverty] (El Comercio, 2014).

This speech and other portrayals of community-based education as "schools of poverty" evidenced that despite existing claims of rupture, colonial and neoliberal logics still actively operated within Ecuadorian education.

These logics were further evidenced in the case of Amawtay Wasi, the Intercultural University of Indigenous Nationalities and Peoples of Ecuador. Founded in 2000, the university was conceived as a way to:

> shake off the colonial yoke, confront intellectual neocolonialism, and revalue the knowledges that during millenniums have given coherence and personality to Andean peoples. Its project has been to consolidate a space in higher education that helps dismantle the supposed universality of Western knowledge, confronting this knowledge production with that of indigenous peoples. Amawtay Wasi's fundamental task is to respond from epistemology, ethics, and politics, to the decolonization of knowledge (Mignolo & Walsh, 2018, p. 69).

Despite the university's stated aim of providing a new way to approach knowledge which draws on Andean philosophical and epistemic principles, it was subject to the same accreditive process as other universities, which were premised on dominant and Western Eurocentric understanding of learning and knowledge production. Amawtay Wasi was officially closed by government officials in 2013 on the grounds that it did not meet the minimum standards of quality as outlined by the state's National Council of Evaluation[3].

With these continuities and others in mind, critics have argued that the decolonial promise of the 2008 constitution and Correa's administrations claim to "end the long neoliberal night", were either short-lived or the outcome of empty political rhetoric. Rather than recognizing and attempting to undo the numerous structural hierarchies which include racial and epistemic dimensions, public policy and increased government spending seemed to be undergirded and exclusively geared by matters of class redistribution (Lind, 2012). In response to the ongoing critiques that his administration was merely redistributing within existing structural arrangements, Correa began gradually shifting his tone away from the immediacy of rupture towards a more gradual process which contented that the elimination of poverty was a necessary precondition for the creation of a new social, political and economic order (Mignolo & Walsh, 2018).

The urgency of class redistribution became an organizing feature in Correa's political discourse. It was clearly reflected in his portrayal of Ecuadorian society as being the byproduct of a sharp social divide between an affluent minority and a historically

[3] The university was recently granted the opportunity to resume its activities in 2020. The reopening of Amawtay Wasi is conditioned on a number of variables which include reestablishing the mechanisms of how administrative and teaching staff are selected, changing the provided curricular content, and redefining the university's community-public administrative approach. To make the necessary changes, the university will work closely with the Secretaría de Educación Superior, Ciencia, Tecnología e Innovación (Senescyt) (Senescyt, 2018).

marginalized majority. During public appearances Correa often employed derogatory terminology, characterizing the affluent minority as being ignorant, incompetent, and completely disconnected from the cultural and material realities of the majority of the population. For instance, while speaking to the people of the small agrarian district of Chillanes, the president stated, "pregunten a los pelucones dónde queda Chillanes y van a creer que es en Centroamérica" ["ask the pelucones where is Chillanes and they will believe it is in Central America"] (El Comercio, 2016b). Pelucones, a colloquial term which references the landed aristocracy of the 19th century, was routinely invoked as a means of discrediting the voices of urban elites who were often perceived as being Correa's staunchest critics.

Inserción del Bachillerato Internacional en colegios fiscales del Ecuador

An additional continuity, which was much less scrutinized, was Correa's decision to maintain the previous administration's minister of education, Raul Vallejo. The decision to maintain Vallejo was premised on two main considerations. First, Vallejo along with his vice-minister of education Gloria Vidal were responsible for developing the PDE, a policy which Correa heavily endorsed. Second, Correa was eager to stabilize the Ministry of Education after nearly a decade of instability and high turnover.

Along with being an active voice in favor of educational reform, Vallejo was well known for his close association to the IB. Prior to embarking on a political career, he was the principal of the Unidad Educativa Albert Einstein, an elite private school which included the IB in its' course offerings. Motivated by a belief in the educational benefits of the program, Vallejo proposed that the DP - which had historically been restricted to a select number of prestigious private schools - be included in the course offerings of high

performing public schools throughout the country. In 2003, upon being appointed the councilor of the Metropolitan District of Quito, Vallejo initiated a pilot program in Benalcázar, allowing it to become the first public school authorized to implement the program. The pilot program was small in scope and allowed 25 of the most promising public-school students of the city (20 from Benalcázar, and 5 from neighboring schools such as Fernández Madrid, Quitumbe and Espejo) to enroll in the program.

In 2005 Correa's predecessor, president Alfredo Palacio, nominated Vallejo as the new Minister of Education, and Teodoro Barros, the former principal of the Benalcázar, as the General Director of the Education System. Together Vallejo and Barros proposed an initiative which sought to replicate the successful pilot program of Benalcázar into a wider array of public schools. On February 9th, 2006, the Ministry of Education of Ecuador and the IB signed an agreement to introduce the IBDP into 22 public schools throughout the country. Referred to as the "Inserción de Bachillerato Internacional en colegios fiscales del Ecuador" initiative, the agreement outlined the academic, procedural, infrastructural, technological and financial requirements each school would have to accomplish to be authorized to implement the diploma programme (Ministerio de Educación, 2009). As part of the agreement, the Ministry of Education of Ecuador was responsible for appointing an official liaison between the Ministry of Education, the IB and the member schools; ensuring that each school had the necessary funds to not only carry out the authorization process but also to ensure the program's sustainability; and conducting a stringent selection and monitoring process, keeping updated statistics on student participation and outcomes. The Ministry of Education also promoted a policy known as the "Estrategia de Apadrinamiento" in which private schools (Padrino) with

experience implementing DP were paired and provided mentorship to public schools (Ahijado) who were in the process of receiving authorization. Although this private-public linkage was largely unstructured and ineffective (Barnett et al., 2012).

Once authorized each school was required to enforce a stringent admissions policy, where only students with exemplary academic, disciplinary and leadership records would be allowed to enroll in the program. According to the agreement 0224-13, enrollment in the IB was predicated on the following requirements:

1) Poseer una trayectoria académica y disciplinaria destacada que se refleje en los puntajes más altos obtenidos en la institución educativa de origen [possess an exemplary academic and disciplinary track record which reflects the highest scores of the students school of origin];
2) Expresar por escrito, la voluntad de cursar el Programa del Diploma y asumir los compromisos que éste demanda; esta petición deberá estar debidamente firmada por el representante legal y la o el estudiante [express in writing the desire to enroll in the DP and commit to the demands; this petition must be signed by the students and his/her legal guardian];
3) Poseer liderazgo estudiantil expresado en la participación proactiva en actividades grupales de beneficio social, educativo, cultural o comunitario [possess student leadership demonstrated through proactive involvement in group activities that have social, educational, cultural or communitarian benefits] (Espinosa, 2013).

Meaning that while the IB would be available in a greater number of schools, it would only be accessed by a limited group of students.

While the IB agreement was signed nearly a year before Correa's presidential inauguration, it was under his administration that most schools underwent the costly accreditation process needed to implement the DP. In 2010 Vallejo left the Ministry of Education and shortly after was awarded the position of Ecuadorian ambassador to Colombia. Although Vallejo was responsible for both envisioning and spearheading the IB initiative, his departure from the Ministry of Education did not hinder the foundations growth in Ecuador. In fact, in 2012 Correa not only reasserted the country's commitment to the IB but drastically expanded the initiative, promising to annually select 120 new public schools to begin the accreditation process. Through the Compromiso Presidencial No. 17270, Correa declared the IB to be an emblematic topic (tema emblemático) of his administration, promising to reach 500 fully accredited public schools by the year 2017.

The expansion of the DP: Logics and justifications

The scaling of the DP was heavily critiqued by a number of civil society organizations, particularly the country's teacher union. It was viewed as an alienating program that imposed "foreign cultures and ideologies via education" (Resnik, 2014, p. 105) and was also argued as being a means of creating new forms of inequality since not all students would have access to the program (Terán, 2015). These critiques were propelled by a concern that the IB initiative not only failed to present a substantive challenge to existing neoliberal practices but could also inadvertently reinforce the representational and material inequalities that the government had so vehemently claimed to combat (Becker, 2012). Underlying this stance was a belief that the presence of the IB in public schools provided evidence of the ideological vestiges that remained in place and directly conflicted with the overarching premise of the 2008 constitution.

Although multiple stakeholders and rationales likely informed Correa's decision to dramatically expand the original IB agreement, this section will focus on two logics which although interrelated served very distinct purposes. The first reflects the previously discussed importance of class redistribution as a foundational premise for policy and a necessary precondition for a new society. In a speech given in the outskirts of the capital city of Quito, Correa articulated why the IB cohered with the idea of redistribution and should therefore be prioritized as a policy initiative and be viewed as an important component of his administration's larger state project. He stated:

> Que las escuelas privadas sean solo por factores culturales, como el Alemán, el Americano, o la Condamine, que es de franceses, pero no por su calidad. Que nadie vaya a una escuela privada en busca de calidad. No me hablen de democracia y de libertad mientras no haya igualdad de oportunidades [Private schools should be based only on cultural factors, like the German School, the American School, and the Condamine, which is French. It should not be based on quality. No one should go to a private school in search of quality. Don't talk to me about democracy and freedom while there isn't equality of opportunity] (El Comercio, 2016).

Under this framing, the historical divide between private and public education actively contributed to pervasive forms of inequality which threatened the very premise of a democratic society. The only way to effectively establish an egalitarian society was to improve the quality of public education and in doing so remove the need for private institutions.

The IB initiative was viewed as contributing to this overarching goal in two ways. First, it was an attempt to equalize opportunity by removing the financial barriers that allowed certain educational experiences and credentials to be the restricted purview of elite private schools. In this sense, low-income students enrolled in public schools would, in principle, have access to the same experiences and ensuing opportunities as affluent

students in private schools. As Xiomar Torres, the undersecretary of Educational Foundations of the Ministry of Education, stated:

> Es una apuesta que ha hecho el Gobierno para mejorar la calidad, invertir en educación. Para nosotros es una apuesta importante, es una inversión alta, pero que nos beneficia, ya que nos implica mejorar la calidad de los grupos más vulnerables [It is a bet that the government has made to improve quality, to invest in education. For us it's an important bet, it's a large investment, but it will be beneficial since it means improving the quality of education for the groups of students who are the most vulnerable] (Sputnik, 2018).

Second, and consistent with what Resnik (2012) refers to as "percolation", the belief was that the curricular and pedagogical approaches central to the DP model would inevitably seep into classrooms implementing the country's national curriculum. The hope, as explained during a workshop in Guayaquil, was that an ongoing engagement with the IB's curricular and pedagogical approach would enable a system-wide transformation, where "en este nuevo modelo alineado al BI el docente deja de ser un transmisor de conocimiento para convertirse en un facilitador del aprendizaje" ["in this new model aligned with the IB, the teacher ceases being the transmitter of knowledge and becomes a facilitator of learning"] (Paucar, 2015). As a result, while the IB would indeed be experienced by a small group of students, the long-term benefits would be shared by all.

In addition to being viewed as a form of class redistribution, the decision to scale the DP initiative served an additional purpose more closely related to governance. It served as a means of establishing domestic and international credibility by engaging with what Steiner-Khamsi (2010) has denoted as "externalization" and "reference society". These twin concepts refer to how an instance of policy borrowing can be mobilized as a means for a country to establish an "external reference to which [its] educational system

is compared, then aligned" (p. 332). In public appearances and political speeches, Correa consistently used the IB initiative as a means of distancing himself from previous administrations and aligning the country's schools with those located in countries often perceived as having high quality public educational systems. For instance, in a nationally broadcasted speech, Correa stated:

> Miren el cambio de época. Antes de nuestro gobierno había cero colegios públicos con el Bachillerato Internacional, que es el más prestigioso del mundo. Aquí en Chillanes, la Unidad Educativa Chillanes tiene Bachillerato Internacional. Más de 200 colegios públicos tienen el BI. Solo es el segundo país de toda América, después de Estados Unidos, en tener mayor cantidad de colegios con BI y en 2017 seremos el primero porque tendremos 500 colegios públicos con BI [Look at the change of times. Before our government there were zero public schools with the IB, which is the most prestigious in the world. Here in Chillanes, the Unidad Educativa Chillanes has the IB. More than 200 public schools have the IB. That is the second most in the Americas, behind the United States, in having the most IB schools. In 2017 we will be first, because we will have 500 IB schools] (El Comercio, 2016b).

Furthermore, in a speech given in the predominantly Montubio city of Catarama, he asserted "la certificación de bachillerato internacional es igual en Alemania, Suiza, etc. Es decir, la educación pública a nivel internacional" ["Being certified by the IB is the same in Germany, Switzerland, etc., that is to say, a public education at an international level"] (El Comercio, 2015).

Focusing on Ecuador's adherence to the PISA for development (PISA-D) program, Addey (2019) noted that the decision appeared "to have less to with improving education as [it did] to demonstrate which club Ecuador belonged to" (p. 9). Although the IB initiative seems to be undergirded by concerns of quality, Correa consistently expressed a greater interest in the policy's symbolic value than in the actual educational gains it afforded (see Prosser, 2018). This is reflected in the need to constantly assert the number of schools that have the IB, rather that stress the academic gains the program has

provided. It is also further iterated by Correa's decision to rapidly expand the IB's reach in public schools despite students' underwhelming performance and test scores (see table 6). For instance, prior to the 2012 decision to rapidly expand the IB initiative, the pass-rate for DP public school students was only 21.49%, a number which significantly lags the global average of 70%.

Table 5.
IB test scores (2011-2016)

Year	IB Public Schools			Students Evaluated	Certified	Diploma	%
	Total	Highland	Coast				
2011	15	7	8	216	187	29	13.43%
2012	17	9	8	228	179	49	21.49%
2013	18	10	8	251	194	57	22.71%
2014	18	9	9	272	209	63	23.16%
2015	25	15	10	442	299	143	32.35%
2016	142	70	72	2615	2245	370	14.15%
Total				**4024**	**3313**	**711**	**17.67%**

Source: Ponce & Intriago (2017)

Conaghan and de la Torre (2008) refer to Correa's approach to governance as being in a state of "permanent campaign", where "government becomes an instrument designed to sustain an elected official's popularity" (p. 267). Based on public appearances and political speeches, the IB initiative – much like the country's adherence to PISA-D – seem to be motivated by a desire to mobilize public opinion, where the actual educational benefits become somewhat subsidiary. The tone behind the IB initiative began to gradually shift once Correa completed his second term in office and was replaced by Lenin Moreno. Although Moreno had previously served as Correa's vice-president and campaigned on a platform of continuity, he actively distanced himself from Correa's administration upon being elected. As Schneider, Estarellas and Bruns (2019) note, the acrimonious split between Correa and Moreno has "created uncertainty about reform sustainability" (p. 275).

An uncertain future

When discussing the IB with a former member of Ecuador's Ministry of Education, I was informed that the decision to expand the initiative had a number of detractors. Within the ministry it was often perceived as being "Correa's personal project". A current St. Thomas administrator and long-serving IB trainer and evaluator in Ecuador interviewed for this study echoed this stance, highlighting the lack of coherence between the IB policy and other educational reforms in the country. He stated:

> I think, you know, you have to create buy-in before you do it. And you know there wasn't even buy-in in the ministry, I feel like this was an initiative that was run by one or two people, right? The rest of the people within the ministry were creating policy that contradicted most of the IB policy, right? It feels bad because I know a lot of people within the IB that worked tirelessly, [member of the IB] and others workshopped, evaluated, you know, they spent a good 5 plus year in this country, and the future doesn't look very bright.

With Correa no longer using his political clout to uphold the policy initiative, IB's role and future has become somewhat uncertain.

A recent news article published in El Comercio best encapsulates the current state of the IB in Ecuador. On one hand, the article questioned the presence of the IB in public schools, noting both the high cost of the program[4] and students' consistently low pass rates. Monserrat Creamer, the current minister of education, echoed this stance and has publicly stated that the Ministry of Education is currently assessing whether it should eliminate the program from low performing schools. Undergirding this stance is a belief that government spending can be redirected in a more opportune way. On the other hand, notable figures such as Juan Ponce, director of the Facultad Latino Americana de Ciencias Sociales (FLASCO), have argued that removing the IB would be misguided,

[4] The Ecuadorian government spends $836.28 a year on student enrolled in the BGU compared to $1,585.76 on students enrolled in the IB (Trujillo, 2019).

highlighting that although IB test scores have indeed been low, students enrolled in the program have shown considerable gains in both Reading and Mathematics.

The status of the IB in Ecuador is further jeopardized by the country's current financial woes. High oil prices enabled Correa to dramatically increase spending on social programs from 5% of the GDP in 2006 to 9.85% in 2011. An expansive public budget coupled with a recent swing in commodity prices has triggered a new financial crisis. In response, Moreno has sought funding from the IMF to soften the effects of the crisis and has instilled a new round of austerity measures, which has discontinued many social programs and includes a highly polemic decision to cutback government subsidies on fuel. This decision led to large-scale protests orchestrated primarily by indigenous groups and poorer segments of the Ecuadorian population (see Bristow & Kueffner, 2019). It also showcased that despite the recent social gains prompted by Correa's public spending, that stratification and social tensions are still widely prevalent and likely to worsen (Gachet, Grijalva, Ponce, & Rodríguez, 2017).

Aware that the country's financial state and ongoing concerns about student test scores will ultimately preclude further expansion of the IB, members of the Asociación Ecuatoriana de Colegios con Bachillerato Internacional (ASECCBI) have deliberated different ways the program can be improved in current member schools. In a recent interview, the executive secretary of ASECCBI, Patricio Cevallos, highlighted that although issues such as improving students' English proficiency and broadening professional development opportunities are important, the most pressing matter relates to an existing policy disconnect between the IB initiative and higher education admissions. Unlike countries such as the "United Kingdom, Australia, France and Spain, and in some

states in Canada and the United States where universities allow graduates of the DP to apply for degree studies" (Resnik, 2019, p. 345), Ecuador does not have an existing policy that recognizes the DP as a valid credential for university admissions. Instead students are required to not only go through the highly demanding DP, but also comply with the requirements of the national curriculum and the higher education entrance exam (Ser Bachiller). As Cevellos explained:

> En el país faltan muchas políticas coyunturales que les dé la posibilidad a los estudiantes de colegios fiscales a acceder a universidades públicas con mayores beneficios. Es importante que se dicten políticas que les permita a los estudiantes más destacados acceder no solamente a la universidad sino a becas de excelencia […] A nivel del Ministerio de Educación hemos tenido acercamiento para que nos puedan ayudar a que se reconozcan los valores que tienen los estudiantes con Bachillerato Internacional. Falta que las universidades públicas valoren y den opciones de admisión y de homologación [We lack conjunctural policies which give opportunities for public school students to gain admission to public universities with greater benefits. It's important to have policies which allow the higher achieving students to not only gain admissions to university but also have scholarships. We have approached the Ministry of education so they can help us recognize the merits IB students have. Public universities, however, have to value and give admissions and recognition] (El Norte, 2018).

Currently, only a handful of private universities grant coursework credit for passing IB exam scores. These institutions include Universidad San Francisco de Quito, Universidad de las Américas, and Universidad Internacional del Ecuador.

Arriving at the schools

Correa's legacy is widely present in schools across Ecuador. His policies are imprinted in the infrastructure, curricula, uniforms and classrooms of schools across the country. The sentiments mobilized by his political rhetoric are still active in public discourse and clearly evident in both sites of study. Even though the quality of public education under his administration did indeed improve, the sharp divide between state-funded and private institutions remains relatively intact. Currently 27% of all secondary

students are enrolled in private institutions and similar to trends across the continent the divide is almost entirely based on students' socio-economic backgrounds (Murillo & Garrido, 2017). Furthermore, while Correa's policies were effective in reducing poverty in absolute numbers, income and property concentration increased, where according to one study the share of GDP from the country's wealthiest group rose from 32.5% in 2003 to 44% in 2010 (de la Torre & Ortiz Lemos, 2016)

Many of Correa's policies have been scrutinized under Moreno's administration and the possibility of revocation looms. This includes the DP initiative, once publicly unquestioned and viewed as an emblematic theme of Correa's administration. Criticism and calls for change are now emanating from within the Ministry of Education, raising serious questions about the DP's future in the country. It was under this policy context, one characterized by competing ascriptions of value that I arrived to UECT and St. Thomas. The following two chapters will provide detailed descriptions of the participating schools, focusing on the meanings and values ascribed to the DP and students engagement with the program. It will be guided by the research questions:

> Q3. What practices, values, and shared understandings are being produced as a result of the encounter between the DP and the contextual arrangements of both schools?
>
> Q4. What motivates students to enroll in the DP and how is enrollment perceived to contribute to their aspirational goals?

Chapter 5: ¿Vas a subir al Bachillerato Internacional o bajar al BGU?

On my first visit to UECT, I couldn't help but notice the glaring contrast between the school and the buildings that surrounded it. The pale-yellow walls of the school's three-story building were dwarfed by the numerous recently constructed skyscrapers and luxury apartment buildings. When the school was built, the region in which it is located was mostly rural and sparsely populated. Now, it is a bustling financial center where many multinational companies have their offices. This rapid growth has been accompanied by a sharp rise in the property value of the neighborhood, leading to an ongoing debate as to whether the school should be moved to a different location. The move, however, has yet to come to fruition and the school has remained in the same location, largely untouched.

The contrast between UECT and its surroundings is in many ways symbolic of the school's standing in the educational landscape of Ecuador. UECT was once considered the country's premier educational institution. Its students consistently outperformed their public and private school counterparts in national examinations and competitions. The school's prestige was further iterated by the numerous accomplishments of its alumni, who can still be found in high-ranking positions in both industry and government. While still highly regarded, over the last 10 years the quality of the school's educational provisions has significantly deteriorated. This ongoing decline was brought to the public's attention in 2016 when the Associación de Padres de Familia staged a large protest outside the school's gates demanding changes to the school's infrastructure and administrative staff.

According to Fernando, the current interim dean, the school's decline was triggered by the 2008 constitution promulgated by former president Rafael Correa. Prior to the 2008 constitution, UECT was classified as an experimental school, allowing it to implement its own curriculum and establish its own hiring and admissions processes. As a result of this autonomy, the school attracted and admitted only the highest performing students of the city. In an effort to standardize public education throughout the country, the Ministry of Education modified UECT's experimental status, requiring it to abide by the same operating norms as other public schools. This included implementing the state mandated curriculum known as the Bachillerato General Unificado (BGU), following the hiring and labor requirements determined by the Ministry of Education, and eliminating all prerequisites for admissions which previously included an entrance exam.

Replacing the entrance exam was a lottery system intended on providing all prospective students an equal chance of being admitted to the school. Juan José, a former student and current DP history teacher, explained that the lottery system has gradually changed the school's social composition. He noted:

> Este colegio tuvo tradicionalmente estudiantes de estrato medio, incluso medio alto… luego se va abriendo a otros sectores sociales, y en estos años mucho más notoria, su marca de un colegio público de estrato medio bajo y bajo, ¿sí? Con pocos casos de estudiantes de estrato medio [Traditionally, this school had middle class and even upper middle-class students. Later it became open to other social sectors and in these last few years it become more notorious as a public school for lower income students, right? With few cases of middle-class students].

Consistent with arguments stressing the importance of middle-class advocacy in public education (Apple, 1992; Ball, 1994, Brantlinger, 2003; Tooley, 1999), the changing social composition of UECT has been accompanied by a reduced school budget.

Budget cuts are most visible in the school's infrastructure, which is in dire need of upkeep. The school librarian noted that after years of neglect, the municipality decided to rebuild a section of the school building where the library and the computer lab were previously housed. During a tour of the school facilities, I observed:

> At the entrance of the library were a series of metal bookstands and inside the library all the books were stacked on the floor. As we left, we ran into the librarian who said that the entire building was going to be demolished and a new one was going to replace it. The last time the building had received any maintenance was over 15 years ago and this was evident in the chipped yellow paint found throughout the school's exterior. The library was being transferred to a small warehouse in a nearby building. The new library would not be ready until 2021. The librarian turned to me and said, "aqui estamos todos desmotivados" ["here we are all discouraged"].

The staff's discouragement was not limited to the school's dilapidated infrastructure. A less visible effect of the ongoing budget cuts could be found in the many whispered qualms teachers had about their wages. Historically, teachers at UECT earned higher wages than their public-school peers. In an effort to standardize teacher wages in public schools, the municipal government implemented a 10-year freeze on the wages of UECT teachers that only recently expired. For many of the longer tenured teachers the wage freeze did not inhibit access to a middle-class lifestyle. For the newer teachers, however, it meant rigid monthly wages of $900, the equivalent of approximately two minimal salaries. The low and rigid wages offered to UECT teachers compelled many to seek employment elsewhere, especially in local private schools.

The school's financial woes also limited the number of professional development opportunities it could provide. To circumvent these financial limitations, the school's administrative staff and teachers promoted a series of creative measures aimed on raising funds. One of these initiatives required IB students to sell raffle tickets in a bus stop with

high levels of pedestrian traffic located across the street from the school. The administrative staff even promoted a no-uniform day, where students who paid $1 were allowed to wear the clothes of their choosing. When announcing the event, a staff member explained:

> Este jueves va a ser la segunda vez en la historia del colegio donde los estudiantes no van a tener que usar sus uniformes. Los estudiantes pueden escoger lo que quieren usar. El motivo es que nosotros vamos a tener una capacitación de los docentes por causa de las cosas que están pasando con el ministerio, pero no tenemos el presupuesto. Hemos pedido la ayuda de los estudiantes. No es obligatorio pagar, pero estamos pidiendo que cada estudiante done 1 dólar. Si no quieres pagar, tienes que venir con el uniforme. Se pagas puedes usarla ropa que deseas [This Thursday will be the second time in the history of the school that student won't have to wear their uniforms. Students can choose what they wear. The reason is we need to have a training for the teachers because of what is going on with the ministry and we don't have the budget. We are asking the help of the students. It is not mandatory to pay, but we are asking that each student donates 1 dollar. If you don't want to pay, you have to come [to school] with the uniform. If you pay, you can use whatever clothing you wish].

Limited financial resource and the changes spurred by the 2008 constitution are not, however, the sole causes of the school's decline. Over the last years the school has experienced a slew of internal issues which include incidences of sexual assault, academic irregularities, and administrative instability. For instance, within a four-year period the school had 5 different deans and 7 different vice-deans. As the complaints of both teachers and parents mounted, the Ministry of Education decided to intervene. Beginning in 2018, an intervention team was created with the goal of ascertaining the extent of the ongoing problems and subsequently creating a plan to strengthen the school's administrative, academic and legal processes.

The intervention was a heated topic amongst the school's staff. Many teachers openly welcomed the intervention team, acknowledging the school's many problems and believing that significant changes were necessary. Others, however, viewed the

intervention team with both skepticism and suspicion. Jaime, a chemistry teacher who worked in both the BGU and the IB, described the intervention as being a form of political reprisal due to the school's reputation of being both critical and outspoken, especially during Correa's administration. He stated:

> Somos un bode espiratorio. Los problemas que pasan en el colegio pasan en todos los colegios municipales. Nos estáncastigando porque la gente aquí es crítica y no tienen miedo de opinar. Están haciendo un ejemplo de [la Unidad Educativa Carlos Tobar]. Es todo político y cuando vienen las elecciones van a decir que solucionaran los problemas del colegio [We are a scapegoat. The problems that take place in the school are occurring in all the other municipal schools. They are reprimanding us because people here are critical and are not afraid to express their opinions. They are making an example of [UECT]. It's all political and when elections come, they will say they solved all the problems of the school].

Regardless of its merits, the intervention received considerable media attention. Many news outlets stressed the need of the intervention, while lamenting the decline of a school which is still often described as an emblem of Ecuador.

Despite the school's ongoing internal turmoil and the negative press that has accompanied the Ministry of Education's decision to intervene, UECT is still widely portrayed as a high quality and prestigious public school. This perception is reflected in the endless lines of parents patiently waiting outside the school's gates with the goal of placing their child's name in the upcoming admissions lottery. Enrolling in UECT is viewed by many parents as a steppingstone to higher education and subsequently a middle-class life. Macarena, a quiet and studious student who always sat in the front row, exemplified this dream when she described why she wanted to enroll in the school.

> Macarena: Bueno es que mi sueño era, desde antes entrar acá al colegio. Porque tenía renombre, y yo quería estudiar aquí desde chiquita, ese era mi sueño. Hasta hacía hojitas que decían que estudio en [la Unidad Educativa Carlos Tobar] hipotéticamente, y me iba a trabajar en la computadora y hacía mi currículo. Entonces ahí ponía: "estudio en [la Unidad Educativa Carlos Tobar] [Well my dream was, even before entering here in UECT. Because the school was

renowned, and I wanted to study here since I was small, this was my dream. I would even create these hypothetical sheets of paper that said I studied in UECT and I would go and work on the computer and create my CV. So, there I would write "I study in UECT"].

Tiago: ¡Que chévere historia! [What a great story!]

Macarena: Aja, pero pensé que no iba a entrar porque es bien difícil, por lo que hacían por sorteo y esas cosas, entonces dije "una en un millón, como voy a entrar" y si pasé, por suerte [Yes, but I never thought I would get in because it's very difficult because they do a lottery and these things, so I said, "it's one in a million, how will I enter?" and luckily, I passed].

The school's unwavering prestige is partially associated with its longstanding relationship with the IB. UECT was one of the first public schools to include the DP in its curricular offerings. Many attribute the schools' early success with the DP as being an important reason for the rapid expansion of the "Inserción de Bachillerato Internacional en colegios fiscales del Ecuador" initiative. Despite the ongoing turmoil the school still maintains a 55% yearly pass rate in the DP examination, a number which far exceeds the public-school average. While the school's association with the IB is both a source of pride and prestige, it has also inadvertently created tensions within the school, especially amongst the student body.

Heading to the 3rd floor

Every morning at approximately 6:45 a.m., students from UECT will walk through the main gate, cross a small parking lot and enter the school building. All students are required to wear the school uniform, which consists of either grey dress pants or a skirt, a white button shirt, and a navy-blue sweater with the school's name and emblem. At 7:00 a.m. a siren will ring, indicating the start of the first period. Upon hearing the siren, students will leave the main open patio found at the center of the school and quickly run to their respective classrooms.

Students enrolled in the state-mandated national curriculum known as the BGU will head to the first and second floor, where the majority of the school's classrooms can be found. DP students, on the other hand, will head to the smaller third floor which consists of four classrooms, a computer lab and an administrative office. For the remainder of the day, DP students will remain separated from their non-DP peers. Not only are DP classrooms physically removed, but due to the larger amount of coursework and the greater demands of the diploma programme, DP students are required to follow a distinct school schedule which includes a later dismissal and smaller breaks.

The strenuous schedule did not seem, however, to discourage students from applying to the program. Every year approximately 100 students will take part of a semester long application process, which includes writing a letter of intent, obtaining teacher recommendations, taking an entrance exam, and being interviewed by the school's IB coordinator. Given that the government sponsors all fees associated with being an IB student, the school is required to place a hard cap on how many applicants are accepted to the program. As a result, only 50 new students are accepted to the program each year.

While the DP confers a significant amount of prestige to the school, the clear boundaries between DP and non-DP students was often viewed as a cause of concern. Fernando argued that in many ways this separation had disrupted the school's sense of identity. He stated:

> Hay una dicotomía ahí en cuanto, a pesar de que el bachillerato internacional de hecho es diferente con el bachillerato nacional. Pero eso genera dentro de la institución como una brecha, como una división, una separación entre esos dos bachilleratos, el nacional y el internacional. Y eso ha golpeado a la identidad de la institución, ¿verdad? Entonces en este momento ya no existe más [la Unidad Educativa Carlos Tobar], lo que existe ahora es una unidad educativa que tiene

> este tipo de oferta de servicio [There is a dichotomy in terms of, even though the international baccalaureate is in fact different from the national baccalaureate. But within the institution this creates a gap, like a division, a separation between both baccalaureates, the national and the international. And this has rocked the identity of the institution, right? So, at this moment there is no longer the UECT, what exists is an educational institution which provides these types of services].

The school dichotomy spurred by the presence of the DP was acknowledged by students from both tracks. Students enrolled in the national curriculum often felt they weren't as highly regarded by the school's teachers and administrative staff. Conversely, the added pressures of being in the DP made many students feel excluded from the activities and social events sponsored by the school. As Julia, an outgoing student who enjoyed playing soccer in her free time, explained, "como que, en el colegio mismo, había reuniones o así, y sacaban a toda la generación, menos al BI, porque "BI tienen que estar en clases". Pero eran programas de inclusión o cosas así, entonces nosotros nos sentíamos excluidos" ["Like, even in the school, there were meetings which they would take the whole grade level except the IB, because "IB has to be in class". But these were programs of inclusion or something like that, so we felt excluded"].

The perceived differences between the two curricular tracks also led to some palpable tensions amongst the school's students. The distinction associated with the IB was often internalized by the student body, routinely leading to offhand comments that reflected feelings of superiority amongst DP students. Macarena noted that these sentiments exacted a significant strain on the relationship between DP and non-DP students. She claimed:

> La connotación del término "internacional" cambia demasiado al bachillerato general unificado. Entonces ahí se crean, muchas de las veces se creen mejores que los otros estudiantes limitando las capacidades que ellos también tienen, porque no quiere decir que estés en BI y seas mejor que los de BGU, no. Y también porque el hecho de creerse a los otros estudiantes les molesta que se

> crean lo mejor entonces ahí ya se crea una discordancia total [The connotation of the term "international" changes a lot the BGU. There it creates, many times think they are better than the other students, which limits the potential that they also have. The fact that they think they are better, bothers the other students and this creates a complete discordance].

Maria, an English teacher who receive most of her training through a government sponsored program in St. Vincent and the Grenadines, added that upon enrolling in the program, DP students inevitably cut social ties with their peers. She stated, "o sea el BI se han visto en años anteriores que rompe sus lasos con sus amigos, ya no se llevan, ya no se conocen, ya no… Esa es, esa es la vida del BI, rompe lasos*"* [In previous years you can see that IB students cut ties with their friends, they don't get along, they no longer know each other, they don't… that's the life of an IB student, of cutting ties"].

Similar to the student body, tensions could also be found amongst the teaching staff. For many years the school maintained a policy that only the most accomplished teachers were given exclusive appointments in the IB program. According to Eduardo, the DP coordinator, this created problematic dynamics amongst teachers. He stated, "había unos roces tremendos. El BI es una isla, una isla total…Muchos, muchos de los profesores no querían unirse o no querían participar en nada de lo del BGU" ["There used to be a tremendous amount of friction. The IB is an island, a complete island. Many of the teachers did not want to join or want to participate anything that had to do with BGU"]. In an effort to diminish the existing friction amongst the teaching staff, the school decided to revoke the aforementioned policy thus requiring all DP teachers to also teach classes in the BGU.

While the new policy did improve relations amongst the teaching staff, it also generated some new forms of dissatisfaction. The large class-sizes and rigid curriculum

of the BGU frustrated many of the teachers who had grown accustomed to the flexibility and intimacy of the IB. Francisco, one of the longest tenured teachers of the school, highlighted this frustration when he stated "la malla curricular del BGU es extenuante y mal, mal planteada. Y bajar, bueno bajar digo porque nosotros estamos acá arriba y los cursos estos están allá. Es una, es un sofocamiento a mí, me cansó" ["the curriculum of the BGU is exhausting and poorly planned. And to go down, well down because we are up here, and those classes are down there. Its, its suffocating, I am tired"]. Many teachers voiced their dissatisfaction with teaching in the BGU, often portraying it as an inconvenience while also describing the students as unmotivated.

Although unhappy with their dual assignments, teachers noted that these sentiments had no bearing on their teaching. Upon voicing his dissatisfaction, for instance, the Spanish teacher added the caveat "a mi me molesta a ir a las clases allá, pero lo hago bien. Puedo estar irritado, pero yo tengo que hacer bien. Y les hago reír, trato de que ahí guaguas que entienden comprenden y les gusta*"* ["it bothers me to go give classes there, but I do it well. I may be irritated, but I have to do it well. I make them laugh, I try to have the kids there understand, comprehend and enjoy the class"]. Students, however, provided very different portrayals and often noted that teachers' dissatisfaction created considerably different classroom dynamics. Comparing his experiences in both programs, Nicolas noted, "no sé, yo sentía que como que BGU, como que, sí nos enseñaban las materias, pero a veces como que mucho quemeimportismo de los maestros. Entonces teníamos a veces todo un día libre. Veníamos al colegio por nada, literal" ["I don't know, I felt like in BGU, like, yes, they taught us the course material but sometime the teachers seemed very indifferent. So, we sometimes had the whole day free.

We would literally come to school to do nothing"]. Furthermore, classes in the BGU were more likely to be cancelled, often with little warning. This was the cases during the DP exams. I noted the following:

> During the third period [Jaime] was asked by the IB coordinator to serve as a proctor for the upcoming session of the IBDP exam. He asked if I wanted to accompany him, to which I agreed. Before heading over to the gymnasium where the exam was taking place, we stopped by an 8th grade philosophy class he was scheduled to teach. He entered the classroom and told students to read 3 pages in their textbooks and underline the key ideas. He quickly left, ignoring a student who had a question from the previous day's assignment noting that he was in a rush. Unlike in [St. Thomas], there was no substitute teacher.

Juan José attributed the ongoing tensions amongst both student and teachers to the perceived exclusivity associated with being part of the DP. He argued, "somos estudiantes, profesores del mismo colegio, pero a su vez somos parte de un programa que se precia de exclusivo, de elitista dentro del mismo colegio pero que en la práctica no es tanto así" ["we are students, teachers of the same school but in turn we are part of a program which prides itself on being exclusive, elitist within the same school but in practice it is not always like that"]. The physical location of the IB coupled with notions of exclusivity and distinction led to the saying "te bajas el BGU y te subes al BI" ["you go down to BGU and you go up to the IB"]. The commonly invoked trope encapsulates the perceived difference between both curricular tracks, implying that those enrolled in the DP are experiencing some form of upward trajectory, while those in the BGU are heading in the opposite direction.

Entering the classroom

Once on the third floor, the two classrooms nearest to the staircase were assigned to students enrolled in the first year of the DP. Students were divided into two groups, and each remained in the same classroom during the entire school day. While enrollment

in the DP conferred students with a certain level of distinction, it was not accompanied with access to improved classroom spaces. Juan José described the classrooms as being "en condiciones pedagógicas deficientes, son aulas estrechas, son pisos que se retuercen porque las tablas están viejas, las condiciones físicas son las mismas con las que se trabajan en el BGU" ["in deficient pedagogical conditions. Classrooms are narrow. The floor creaks because the wooden planks are old, the physical conditions are the same as the ones we work with in BGU"]. In addition to the restricting physical space, classrooms provided only limited access to technology. Like the rest of the school's classrooms, the only technological devices available were an old television with a built-in VCR system and an Epson projector hanging from the ceiling. Furthermore, classrooms were not wireless enabled, and internet could only be accessed in the administrative offices and the school's two computer labs. When internet was needed in the classroom – as was common during English classes – teachers relied on a handful of students who owned mobile phones. The question "¿quien tiene megas?" ["who has internet data?"] was routinely asked by both teachers and students.

As teachers were quick to note, narrow classrooms with limited technological access were not favorable to an educational approach that emphasized the importance of group-work and research. Rather, the physical structure of classrooms at UECT were conducive to a teacher-centered pedagogy, an approach which was still very prevalent in the BGU. The differences in pedagogical approach between the DP and the BGU was a common talking point between teachers. Maria, the English teacher, explained that unlike the DP, English classes in the BGU consisted almost exclusively of lectures and grammar worksheets. She stated, "el BGU les enseñan un inglés social, coloquial que está basado

más en gramática. O sea, es más gramática porque son grupos muy grandes de 40, 42 estudiantes entonces la habilidad de hablar para ellos no es tan productiva" ["in the BGU they teach a social English, colloquial which is based on grammar. That is, it's more grammar because they are larger groups of 40, 41 students so the skill of speaking for them is not that productive"].

Consistent with what Resnik (2012) refers to as "percolation", some teachers tried to introduce the pedagogical approaches, such as essay writing and classroom discussions central to the DP into BGU classrooms. However, the large class sizes and the ministry of education's stringent requirements often inhibited these efforts. Francisco, a long-tenured and outspoken teacher, highlighted the difficulties he experienced in his attempt to introduce activities and assignments that focused on critical thinking and communication skills in the content heavy BGU classes. He complained:

> Francisco: Si, porque allá las destrezas es muy difícil evaluar. ¿Como evaluó cuando… imagínate las pruebas son de qué? Son de verdadero y falso u opciones múltiples. ¿Sí? Y, como hago yo en filosofía para decirle, ¿a ver haz un ensayo? Y mi corro 106 ensayos a calificar. Y la ley te ordena que tienes que hacer exámenes de base estructurada con opciones múltiples [Yes, because there, skills are very difficult to evaluate. How do I evaluate… imagine the tests, what are they about? They are true and false and multiple choices, yes? And how do I in philosophy tell them 'do an essay?' I will receive 106 essays to grade. And the law orders you to have exams based on multiple choice questions].
>
> Tiago: ¿A si? [Really?]
>
> Francisco: Entonces, en que rato, ¿en qué rato le pongo a racionar el muchacho? Y una destreza fundamental es racionar, es escribir y saber leer. ¿A qué rato le hago leer? [So at what point, at what point do I put the kids to reason? Reasoning is a fundamental skill, writing and knowing how to read. At what point do I get them to read?]

Other than Alejandra, who referred to her experience with the DP as being "un BGU extendido hasta las dos de la tarde" ["a BGU which is extended until 2 in the afternoon"], students were quick to acknowledge the significant differences between both

programs. Macarena explained these differences as being not only pedagogical, but also in how both programs conceive the purpose of education. She argued:

> El BI es muy diferente al BGU. Además, las materias que se dan y el enfoque que tiene el bachillerato internacional es muy diferente al BGU. Porque en BGU, por ejemplo, es todo lineal. Pruebas tipo ABC, o solamente opción múltiple y nada más. O también se centran solamente en los temas lineales y no hay aplicación. En cambio, en BI, es algo muy notorio que me he dado cuenta a lo largo del tiempo, que dan por ejemplo la materia, las bases, y buscan una aplicabilidad, no solamente la memorización. Más bien es buscar la aplicación de eso para buscar un fin o un objetivo diferente [The IB is very different from the BGU. In addition, the course that they give and the focus that the IB has is very different than the BGU. Because in BGU, for example, it's all linear. ABC type exams, and only multiple-choice questions and nothing more. Also, they focus only on linear themes and don't have application. On the other hand, in the IB it's something very notorious that I have realized over the time that they provide, for example, the content, the foundation and search for application, not only memorization. Better yet, it's to search application of this in order to search for a different end or objective].

While students welcomed these changes, the differences between both programs made the transition from the BGU to the DP very difficult. Teachers commonly described this transition as being a *choque* [shock] for the students. Not only did the students' workload dramatically increase, but they were also introduced to a new pedagogical approach and expected to comply with assessment criteria which they had very little experience with.

The most notable byproduct of the disconnect between the BGU and the DP, was that students entered the DP without ever have written an essay. This was brought to my attention during a TOK class, when Francisco was returning student papers. As he called students to the front of the class to pick up their graded assignments, he stated "hay 2 o 3 ensayos que estan muy buenos, el resto está muy mal. Tienen la opción de revisar para el lunes se no les queda la nota que está en el ensayo" [there are 2 or 3 essays that are very good, the rest is very bad. You have the option to revise your essays for Monday, if not the grade on the essay will remain.]. As he returned the paper, he held one in the air and

said, “mira, este está todo rojo. Se está roja están fregados” [look this one is all in red. If it’s all in red, you are screwed]. At the end of class I approached the teacher to inquire about this notable interaction. With the tone of a vent, he explained “nunca han hecho un ensayo. Están aquí en primero, segundo, tercero, cuarto y solo en quinto empiezan a escribir ensayos. Este año les masacran para que después en sexto puedan ya escribir un poco mejor” [“They have never written an essay. They are here in 7th, 8th, 9th, 10th and only in 11th grade do they start writing essays. This year we massacre them so that later in 12th grade they can write a little better”].

During the first year of the DP, teachers made a concerted effort to emphasize essay writing and critical reading. The transitional *choque* students experienced was sometimes overwhelming and compelled many to leave the program within the first few weeks of the academic year. Maria noted that some students even left within the first days of the program. She stated “hay chicos que desde el inicio están uno, dos, tres días y regresan al BGU. Como ellos dicen, ‘para estar más frescos’. Entonces es un choque total. Es un choque de empezar a escribir ensayos, empezar a defender su punto de vista, empezar a decir lo que tu opinas” [“There are kids who since the start, they are here one, two, three days and they return to the BGU. Like they say, “to be more chill”. So, it is a total shock. It is a shock to start writing essay, start defending your point of view, start stating your opinion”]. Those who did remain, however, were usually able to notice significant improvements, especially in their writing abilities. This was the case with Darwin, a quiet student who enjoyed playing basketball. Recalling the first essay he wrote in the DP, he noted “yo me acuerdo haber llegado y el rector, no sé si lo conoce, me pidió que hagamos un ensayo. Malísimo, y ahora lo leo y fue malo, sin conectores, sin

argumentación, entonces como que sí, en BGU no nos enseñan ese tipo de cosas" ["I remember having arrived and the dean, I don't know if you know him, asked me to write an essay. Terrible, and now I read it and it was really bad, not connecting sentences, no argument. So yeah, in BGU they don't teach these types of things"].

In many ways, the first semester of the DP was a process of severing previous ties and creating new forms of association. Due to the increased workload and prolonged school schedule, students were compelled to cut their social ties with their BGU peers, cementing closer and more intimate relationships with the other students enrolled in the program. Furthermore, given the DP's focus on critical thinking and communicative skills, students were required to learn a new approach to education that in many ways directly opposed their previous experiences. While the DP invoked a form of educational rupture, there was much that remained the same. This is especially true regarding the implicit messages regarding the disciplinary and behavioral expectations for student that were common in BGU classrooms and also present in the third floor.

Competing messages: Obedience and critical thinking

Prior to the start of my study, I had scheduled a meeting with Fernando, the interim dean, aimed on discussing the overarching goal of my project and the conditions of my access to the school's classrooms, students and staff. As much hinged on the outcome of this meeting, I decided to arrive a few minutes early. Fernando was finishing another meeting and I was asked by his secretary to remain seated in a small reception area. As I waited, I couldn't help but notice a small poster hanging outside Fernando's door. It had a blue background and a cartoon of a child raising his hand in the center. On

the top right corner, it stated "pido el turno para hablar*"* which translates to "I ask my turn to speak".

Messages of student obedience and authority in what Anyon (1980) describes as the "hidden curriculum" could be found throughout the school. These messages were most notably displayed in the school's slogan, which stated "aquí se dice y se enseña solo la verdad" ["here we speak and teach only the truth"]. The third floor where the DP was housed had its own message systems which seemed intent on disrupting matters related to authority and student obedience by stressing the importance of self-advocacy and independent thinking. This included materials designed and developed by the IB, such as the Learner Profile, as well as posters created by the teaching staff. In the DP administrative office, for instance, there was a poster containing a quote from the cynic philosopher Diogenes of Sinope which explicitly troubled ideas associated with the adulation of, and submission to authority figures[5]. Juan José acknowledged the intentionality of these messages and the hope that they could encourage values such as critical thinking amongst the student body. In a vehement critique of the school's slogan, he stated: "yo rechazo mucho ese slogan… ¿La verdad de quién? La verdad no es absoluta, la verdad te responde a un contexto histórico" ["I very much reject this slogan. The truth according to who? The truth is not absolute, the truth responds to a historical context"].

The DP was often described as an island with its own codes and message systems. It was not, however, impervious to the norms that circulated throughout the rest of the

[5] The quote from Diogenes of Sinope stated: pasó un ministro del emperador y le dijo a Diógenes: Ay, Diógenes! Si aprendieras a ser más sumiso y a adular más al emperador, no tendrías que comer tantas lentejas. Diógenes contestó: Si tú aprendieras a comer lentejas no tendrías que ser sumiso y adular tanto al emperador

school. Many of the routines and interactions taking place reflected notions of authority and student obedience. This became immediately evident during my first classroom observation. Accompanied by the teacher, I entered a small classroom located near the staircase. As we entered, the students who were seated in rows immediately stood and remained both silent and still. The teacher proceeded to unpack and place her materials on the front desk. Finally, she greeted the students and indicated that they could once more be seated.

The presence of competing message systems had direct implications for student experiences and classroom dynamics. Teachers were adamant about the importance of critical thinking, and unlike in BGU classrooms, students' opinions were often solicited. Students opinions, however, were only manifested when solicited by the teacher. In moments of ambiguity and potential discord, students were reluctant to speak. Throughout my classroom observation there were very few moments in which students disagreed or challenged a teacher's didactic authority. In the rare instances in which this did occur, students were quickly silenced, their assertions dismissed and the teacher's authority re-established. This was the case in a TOK class where I observed the following interaction.

> The slides continued and included Chaos theory. The teacher intervened and asked students, "quien son los primeros dioses de los griegos?" ["who were the first Greek gods?"]. After no one responsed, the teacher added "ellos hacían referencias al caos. Eran los dioses Cromos y Cosmos" ["They made reference to chaos. There were the gods Cromos and Cosmos"]. A student added, "ellos no son dioses. Son titanes" ["they aren't gods. They are titans"]. The teacher quickly defended himself stating, "en la historia hay muchas versiones. Hay las versiones en el cine y las versiones en los diferentes libros de filosofía. La versión que yo cuento, ellos eran dioses" ["in history there are many versions. There are the versions in the movies and there are the versions in the books of philosophy. In the version I am telling they were Gods].

Even in moments of perceived injustice, students struggled to self-advocate and their protests were either silent or resigned. One noteworthy moment which reflects students' lack of self-advocacy transpired during an early morning English exam. Due to recent budget cuts, teachers were not allowed to print course readings or exams for their students. Instead, they often emailed an electronic version the night prior and students were expected to arrive at the school with a printed copy. Since many students did not own a printer at home, they relied on the school's copy center. On the day of the exam, the copy center was functioning at under capacity since two of its printers were experiencing technical difficulties. Under these conditions, I observed the following:

> The test was 17 pages long and consisted of 4 articles, reading comprehension questions, and a small essay. Many of the students were not in the class as they had gone to print copies of the test in the school's copy center. One of the students came back and told the teacher that the copier was broken, and it might take some time to get the copies ready. Approximately 10 students were without an exam. The teacher said, "la prueba es para todos, lo resto no sé qué van a hacer. Tienen dos horas, so let's get started" ["the test is for everyone, the rest I don't know what they are going to do. You have two hours"]. Shortly after the start of the exam, the teacher told me that she had been summoned for a meeting with the inspectors and the dean. She asked if I could remain with the students and proctor the exam, to which I agreed. As students were working, two boys remained whispering to each other. Eventually one of them came to me and asked permission to see if his classmates were almost done with the copies. A few minutes after leaving, the student returned without the exam, sat down and quietly read a book. Eventually a first group of students arrived 45 minutes after the start of the class with copies of the exam. A second group arrived 10 minutes later. When the teacher finally returned there were only 20 minutes remaining in the class. She circled around the classroom and answered a few questions from the students. After the teacher went back to her desk, she quickly looked at her phone and notified students that they had only four minutes left. One student jokingly said "how to write an essay in four minutes…" As the time expired, the teacher packed up her things and asked students for their exams as she had to leave. Students rushed to put their final thoughts on paper and turned in their exams. Although some students were not even close to being finished, they did not ask for an extension.

Feelings of resignation were exemplified and visibly manifested on a white board located in a small reception area in the DP administrative office. The board was filled with student messages, mostly written in English. While many of the messages were blurred, the most prominently featured and written in the largest font stated "what if you are an IB student? What if you don't have an extended essay or a history investigation? Just shake it off". The notion of "shaking it off" coheres with arguments promoted by Lareau (2011), Calarco (2018), and others that highlight how working-class students struggle to push-back against institutional expectations, even those that are to their detriment. Rather than confronting the source of dissatisfaction or seeking guidance on how to instill some form of change, students often silently acquiesced and simply "shook off" their frustrations. As will later be discussed, these silent forms of resistance contrast the practices and perceptual stances embedded within the concept of "collaborative advantaging".

For DP students, "shaking off" usually meant accepting that their experiences with the program were bound to be imperfect and fraught with problems. Darwin highlighted this sentiment when responding to whether the IB was meeting his early expectations. He noted, "sí, la verdad es que sí. Claro, no puedo esperar algo perfecto, pero sí" ["yes, the truth is that yes. Of course, I can't expect something perfect, but yes"]. There were other instances in which students were unable to "shake off" their frustrations yet remained silent. This was particularly true of a small group of students who grew increasingly irritated with the numerous class cancellations. Rather than voicing their displeasure, they opted to leave the program entirely. This decision caught the administrative staff by surprise, unaware of the extent of students' displeasure. During a

meeting I had with Fernando, he expressed how he was startled to hear of the students' decisions. He stated, "ayer estuve en sub-rectorado con los papás de esa niña, y ellos dijeron que habían encontrado una solución para el problema. Van a cambiar de colegio. Y eso me duele bastante" ["yesterday I was in the vice dean's office with the parents of a girl, and they told me that they had found a solution to their problem. They are going to change schools. And this hurts me a lot"].

Students' motivations to join the program

Although frustrated with the numerous class cancellations and overwhelmed by the quantity of work, most students were committed to finishing the program and graduating with an IB diploma. The source of this commitment was a point of my own personal curiosity. Unlike in a growing number of universities in the USA and Canada (see Resnik, 2016), institutions of higher education in Ecuador do not recognize the IB diploma as a valid credential for admissions. Operating under the assumption that public school students in Ecuador did not aspire to study in universities abroad that recognized the IB diploma, I struggled to understand why students were willing to undergo the numerous sacrifices required to succeed in a program that did not directly assist them in their higher educational pursuits. This operating assumption was premised on an understanding that low-income students did not conceive of study abroad as being a feasible due to the inordinate costs associated with both applying and attending. Through informal conversations and later in interviews I began inquiring about student motivations.

At first students described their decision to enroll in the program as being centered on the desire for a challenging educational experience and the opportunity to

engage in activities which could lead to personal growth. Diana, for instance, described her motivation as follows:

> Yo cuando estaba en primero, me acuerdo de que un día nos llamaron a, como que, a una reunión en el teatro. Y recuerdo que nos hicieron sentar a todos, y a los de la generación para hablarnos de que consistía el programa. La verdad es que a mí me llamo bastante la atención porque me pareció un programa que me iba a ayudar a mí para crecer como persona, porque no únicamente, únicamente no se basaba en los, lo del estudio, sino también eran varias experiencias como lo de CAS. Y a mí eso me llama bastantísimo la atención [when I was in 10th grade I remember that one day they called us, like to a meeting in the theater. I remember that they sat us all down from my generation to tell us about what the program consisted of. The truth is that it really called my attention because it seemed to me that it was a program that would help me grow as a person, because not only, not only is based on studies, but it was also a series of experiences like those in CAS. And to me this caught my attention].

In similar fashion, Luis, the son of a police officer who enjoyed fixing cars, explained "mi motivación fue superarme, y por los conocimientos también" ["my motivation was to grow as a person and for the knowledge as well"].

As conversations about motivations to join the program developed, students' responses began to challenge my initial assumptions. Students were very well aware of the currency the DP had outside of Ecuador. Fernando explained that in an effort to encourage students to apply to the program, the school highly emphasized the numerous opportunities the DP could afford students abroad. He stated, "bueno la motivación de ellos generalmente es porque se les venden la idea que con el diploma pueden acceder a cualquier universidad del mundo. Eso les atrae mucho, es lo engancho, ¿no?" ["well the motivation for them generally is.. because they sell this idea that with the IB diploma you can access any university around the world. This is very appealing to them, it's the hook, no?"]. Some students, such as Darwin, noted that prior to applying students received information which was often misleading. He explained that prior to enrolling many

students assumed that successfully completing the DP would guarantee a scholarship to study abroad. In a longer exchange he noted the following:

> Tiago: ¿Y cuál fue su motivación para aplicar? [And what was your motivation to apply [to the IB]?]
>
> Darwin: La verdad es que desde que entre siempre me llamo la atención. De ahí mi mamá como que me incitó a entrar al colegio, entonces como que si estaba interesado en el programa. Solo que, si tenía un poco de desinformación, pero siempre quise entrar [The truth is that since I arrived it has called my attention. Then my mother like motivated me to come to this school, so like we were interested in the program. The only thing is that there is a little bit of disinformation, but I always wanted to enroll].
>
> Tiago: ¿Desinformación en qué sentido? [Disinformation in what sense?]
>
> Darwin: Desinformación porque, no sé, no sabíamos mucho del programa. No sé, quizás, de que podíamos obtener con el diploma. Porque no es verdad que solo con el diploma de aquí uno tiene una beca o algo así, es más complicado que eso [Disinformation because, I don't know, we didn't know much about the program. I don't know, maybe of what we can accomplish with the program. Because it is not true that with a diploma from here you will be given a scholarship, it is a lot more complicated than that].
>
> Tiago: ¿Y antes decían que con el BI se daban becas para estudiar afuera? [And before they were saying that with the IB you would receive a scholarship to study abroad?]
>
> Darwin: Si, se corría la voz por los pasillos de que si te podías ir a otro país y así esas cosas [Yes, that's the rumors that went through the hallways, that you could study abroad and stuff like that].

As will be discussed in great length in chapter 6, the realization that the perceived promise of study abroad may go unfulfilled and thus the DP merely provided students with a "fragmented capital" was highly demotivating and led to a mash of affects which included pragmatism and surrender.

When I first arrived at the school, a number of students were wavering on whether to remain or leave the program. Andrea was one of the students who was leaning towards withdrawing from the program and returning to the BGU. Her argument was that the IB

was a lot of work and did not focus on preparing students for the entrance exam needed for admission to Ecuadorian universities. When asked what motivated her classmates to remain in the program, she explained, “mis compañeros tienen la mentalidad de salir del país, estudiar en Rusia, España, Estados Unidos, quiere decir en otros países. Y la mayoría que van a quedar en el BI tienen como objetivo ingresar a universidades en otros países” [“my classmates have the mentality to leave the country, to study in Russia, Spain, United States, meaning in a different country. And most of those who are staying in the IB have the objective of being admitted to universities outside of the country”]. The prospect, however slim, of pursuing higher education abroad proved to be the main motivation to first enroll and later remain in the program.

Chapter 6: We live in a bubble separate from the rest

Far from the towering buildings and the noise of the city's financial center, lies St. Thomas' campus. Located in the northern part of the city, the school consists of an interspersion of large concrete buildings, patio spaces and meticulously groomed gardens. Connecting the numerous buildings is a labyrinth of hallways heavily decorated with student work and pictures of recent school activities. All hallways converge at the school's main building, which is comprised of a cafeteria, a teacher lounge, numerous administrative offices, and an open but roofed auditorium. On my first day at the school, multiple red lanterns were hanging from the auditorium's ceiling. Although at the time empty, the auditorium would soon be filled with numerous singing and dancing elementary school students celebrating, albeit late, the Chinese New Year.

St. Thomas is one of the oldest private institutions in the country. It originally served a niche group of students who were either seeking to acquire the necessary knowledge and language prerequisites to be admitted into universities abroad or were preparing for a vocation in the country that required bilingual competency. During the aftermath of World War II, demand for bilingual education surged. To accommodate this growing demand, a new campus was constructed which included ample space for academic and extracurricular activities. Although the school was highly sought after by parents and its language program renowned, it was not considered an academically rigorous institution. The school was routinely outperformed by a number of public institutions - including UECT - in national examinations and academic competitions. As one former student recalled, St. Thomas graduates were often ill-prepared for the

demands of Ecuadorian higher education, especially in Mathematics and Science. He noted:

> When I was in my first year in the Politecnica in the 1970s, students from [UECT] and [other public school] were by far the best prepared. Then came the students from some of the private schools in Quito and only after the students from [St. Thomas]. I remember my first year I struggled greatly while the students from [UECT] had an easy time.

Despite relatively low scores on national evaluations, St Thomas remained highly sought by middle-class families who viewed bilingual proficiency as a means of improving their children's life chances.

The financial crisis and the accompanying middle class exodus from public institutions had significant consequences for St. Thomas' standing within Ecuador's education landscape and its student composition. As the quality of public education rapidly declined, the school was able to position itself as one of the premier institutions of the country. Furthermore, it experienced a new growth in demand for enrollment, which elicited a very different response compared to the previous surge. Rather than build a new campus and expand its student body, the school decided to gradually increase tuition, reaching a current rate which for Ecuadorian standards is highly prohibitive. In addition, it implemented stringent admissions policies which included mandatory enrollment in kindergarten and legacy preferences. As expected, these decisions had significant implications for the school's student composition. John, a long tenured administrator, noted these changes and described the current social make-up of the school as follows:

> Our students' parents have been part of this school and grandparents have been part of this school. So, I think it's a very strong upper class, Quito identity, you know. I think with the relationships there amongst the students and, the larger community you know, I think sometimes it's almost a closed identity. There is a lot of tradition, a lot of something here that would make it really difficult if new students were to come.

Despite the widespread acknowledgement that St. Thomas catered to highly homogenous student population, the lack of diversity did not seem to be an area of concern, evidenced by the absence of any form of diversity statement in the school's website and promotional brochures. This lack of concern was further iterated by the St. Thomas' scholarship program which was entirely restricted to students already enrolled in the school.

The St. Thomas school bubble

Students were cognizant that St. Thomas catered to a very socially homogenous student population. Although most did not ascribe critical descriptors to the school such as "closed identity", they did invoke terms such as "family" and "bubble" to suggest varying degrees of insularity. Some, such as Luiz, did not perceive insularity as being problematic, rather portraying it as the natural byproduct of the social composition of the school. Others, however, were more critical and felt that their affiliation to the school was personally limiting. Julia, a high achieving student heavily involved in the school's music department, argued that a byproduct of the school's lack of diversity was the creation of a template of behavior that students felt pressured to abide by. She stated, "it's like you make yourself fit-in in this template and that happens to everybody. So, everybody is like in the same group instead of exploring different things". David echoed this sentiment, observing, "it's funny, people here they tend to have to be put into some type of norm of behavior. There are always these small variations, but at the end we are pretty homogenized".

The lack of diversity was evident during recess breaks. Wearing similar Abercrombie sweaters, students would convene in the different patio spaces scattered throughout the school. There seemed to be a genuine sense of congeniality amongst

students; groups were large, conversations were animated and loud. These types of interactions were not restricted to the school day. In addition to a rich social life which revolved around house parties and included heavy drinking, students often travelled to the same vacation destinations and even spent their holiday breaks together. This became evident after Easter break, where I noted:

> On the way out of the first period I spoke to one student. I asked him how he was doing, and he mentioned that he was very tired. “I guess I am just recovering from the vacation.” When I asked him what he did, he replied “I went to Casablanca (a coastal resort town in Ecuador). Everyone was there. Even [the college counselor] was there”. Going to Casablanca is the vacation destination of most of the students at the school. I spoke to one teacher who has two daughters at the school and asked what she did over the break. She replied that she stayed in Quito, but her daughters went to Casablanca with her brother-in-law. When I asked why she didn’t go, she replied “I rather stay here, then have to see all my students drinking and partying together at the beach.”

The existing sense of camaraderie amongst student was not only the result of social proximity. The school made an avid attempt to promote social events aimed on “bringing the kids together”. These events spanned through the entirety of the academic year, and included music galas, sporting events, art festivals, travel opportunities and social outings. Carnival is the most elaborate and consists of three days of festivities which culminates in a school-wide dance where each class is responsible for choreographing and participating in an elaborate routine. During these events parents will be heavily involved, many reliving their own experiences at the school.

The immediate impression of camaraderie was affirmed by the school’s staff who routinely noted how much the students cherished these existing dynamics. During interviews, however, students provided contrasting narratives, often expressing frustration with what was portrayed as a very closed-minded social environment. After describing her recent experience in a youth leadership conference, Stefanie evidenced this

frustration when she added “people were so open, they were so, I don’t know, friendly. None of them were part of this social bubble, closed, they were all just normal people. It was refreshing. And then coming back here, it was like ‘nope, I have to get out’”. During an informal conversation, a senior who had recently been accepted to a university abroad echoed this sentiment. In my field notes I wrote:

> When I asked him if he was excited to leave, he replied “Yes, I’m very excited. People there are much more open-minded then people here. All people here want to do is follow. Look at the food truck trend. One day, one person likes food trucks and then everyone else does as well. Then one person stops and then everyone else does as well”.

Students’ frustration with the lack of diversity in the school was exacerbated by their perceived inability to seek experiences occurring outside of their immediate social circle. Issues especially pertaining to safety often dictated where students could go and what activities they could engage with. Paula, the daughter of a well-known public figure, argued that given parental concerns, St. Thomas students were often disconnected from their immediate surroundings. She noted, “we live in a bubble and our parents protect us. And we are in a place where we don’t take buses. We don’t take taxis…we have drivers, or our parents come. And I think that closes us to the reality we live in”.

Safety concerns were visibly manifested in the school’s infrastructure, evidenced by the high walls, barbed fence wire, and the numerous security guards who roamed the campus’ perimeter. It was also reflected in the school’s rather limited engagement with its immediate surroundings. St. Thomas was not part of any consortium of Ecuadorian schools nor did students attend events hosted by public institutions. As will be seen in the next section, the academic and sporting events St. Thomas did participate in, were solely

hosted and attended by other elite private schools many of which were located in neighboring countries.

Networks, associations and the International Baccalaureate

All through the first weeks of March, the school was undergoing a significant amount of upkeep. Maintenance staff dressed in recently purchased uniforms could be seen scurrying from building to building, adding fresh coats of paint to the walls in the most need repair. In a few weeks, the school would be hosting a conference to be attended by approximately 500 teachers and administrative staff from similar private schools from across the continent, including a number from Brazil. A week prior to the start of the conference a member of the St. Thomas' administrative staff entered each classroom in order to ask for the students' cooperation in the effort of keeping the school orderly. Students were specifically instructed to keep their backpacks in their lockers rather than scattered through the hallways. The administrator noted that during the days of the conference, all backpacks that were left unattended would be taken to the dean's office.

On the first day of the conference, a tent was set-up in the senior class patio. Coffee and refreshments were available throughout the day for a select group of attendees registered to participate in pre-conference events. During the first recess, pre-conference participants convened and spoke to students who were part of the National Honors Society (NHS). These students were dressed formally for the occasion, with NHS sweaters and either slacks or a skirt. Setting the tone of the conference was a keynote entitled "the power of yet, the tyranny of now". A few teachers from St. Thomas were scheduled to present. A 10th grade English teacher, for instance, would be sharing her

approach to grading which discouraged giving zeros or penalizing late work. She explained “by not giving students second opportunities and simply giving a zero you are not encouraging them to do the work necessary to gain mastery in the skills of the class”. Although focused on topics associated with growth mind set, student-centered learning and technology in the classroom, the conference also represented a broader opportunity for private schools from across the continent to convene and share their best practices.

St. Thomas is officially part of a network of elite private schools in the region. The events the school’s students, teachers and administrative staff attend are predominantly hosted by member schools and usually requires international travel. In order to maintain its standing as a member, St. Thomas is required to undergo routine visits which seek to ascertain whether its educational approach aligns with the overarching requirements established by the network’s governing body. This includes following an internationally focused curriculum, being recognized by a major accrediting agency such as the Council of International Schools (CIS) and promoting English as the primary language of instruction. The emphasis on English as a language of instruction ultimately requires member schools to employ a largely expatriated staff. In the case of St. Thomas, around half of the school’s teachers were expatriated and were mostly from the United States or Canada.

While St. Thomas adheres to the educational practices and hiring processes commonly found in international schools, the school catered to an exclusively Ecuadorian student population and was required to follow the academic requirements stipulated by the country’s Ministry of Education. This includes fulfilling the curricular requirements of the BGU and adhering to the evaluative processes outlined by the LOEI. In instances

of misalignment between the stipulations of the Ministry of Education and St. Thomas' own desired approach, the school was often able to negotiate and establish grounds for exception premised on notions of equivalency. There were a number of areas, however, in which the school was unable to establish equivalency, such as promoting its own academic schedule, fully determining students' rules of conduct, and engaging with its own grading policies. The school was highly critical of these restrictions, where both teachers and administrative staff were quick to highlight the negative impact it had especially on student behavior. One administrator, for instance, attributed the high incidences of student absenteeism to the lax policies required by the Ministry of Education. She stated:

> the biggest problem that, that the teachers share in their concern is [students] discipline, their dedication. Absenteeism is very high here at this school. But I think that also has to do with rules of the ministry of education where pretty much, you know, if your parents send a letter and say, 'they are not coming to school', that is all we need.

Absenteeism was indeed a reoccurring theme during classroom observations. There were a number of instances in which the large number of absences compelled teachers to adapt their lesson plan and even reschedule their examinations. During one literature class, for instance, I observed the following interaction:

> After the activity, the teacher asks the students when they want to take their next quiz. Students don't have a consensual date. The teacher asks if student will be going next week to the [other private school] college fair, which will take place on Wednesday. A few students say they will. One student reminds the teacher "[name] and me won't be here on the week of the 13th and the week of the 21st . Oh, and [other student who was currently absent] won't be here either. We are all going to the [sports] tournament". Frustrated, the teacher responds "that's the last week of the partial. Well no one is ever really here. Just [name] and [name]. Well and [name] is pretty predictable." Another student adds "I will be here" "Ok, and [name] as well. So, I guess the four of us will just have to have a discussion on our own"

In addition to determining a number of the school's procedures, the LOEI requires all students to enroll in courses such as "Educación para la Ciudadanía" and "Realidad Nacional[6]" who's content and materials are developed by the government. While mandatory, these classes are often underemphasized by the school and neglected by the students. As Julia, an 11th grade student, noted, "there are these extra classes which are not given that much importance, like Ciudadanía we have 2 times in a 6-day calendar. So, it's like 'oh we have Ciudadanía, it's like an extra'". For most students these classes were a nuisance and distracted from the school's core curriculum which was entirely centered on the DP.

When discussing the role of the DP in the school, the high school principal emphatically stated "this is an IB school. Whether students pay and take the test or not, everyone is part of the IB". Unlike UECT, St. Thomas did not view the DP as an additional course offering, but rather perceived it as an integral component of the school's approach to education. In addition to providing the entire IB continuum (PYP, MYP and DP), the school obliged all students to complete the DP's main course requirements, even those who were not officially registered in the program and therefore ineligible to receive the IB's graduating diploma. Along with the coursework, all students were asked to submit an extended essay and complete the main components of the internal assessment which includes an individual oral presentation.

Although not required, St. Thomas students were highly encouraged to graduate with an IB diploma. Since parents were responsible for covering the registration and examination costs, all students were eligible to enroll. The school, as a result, did not

[6] Citizenship and National Reality

implement a formal application process, nor did it take into consideration students' previous academic performance. As Victoria, the current DP coordinator explained, students simply had to demonstrate that they were dedicated to their studies and committed to fulfilling the requirements of the program. She stated:

> A lot of schools the kids sign up for the IB at the end of 10th grade. But since I feel there is such a huge different between MYP and DP, we allow them to be in the program because we give the IB curriculum to all students. Give them 6 months to see how they feel and if they feel like they are going to be able to do it without a lot of stress, if they feel they are motivated and if they are dedicated, because that is one thing I do ask them. I need dedication, this has to be their first priority. So, after that process, in January they sign up on a google doc and they tell me "yes [Maria] I would like to do the full diploma programme". We meet with all the teachers and there we go over individual students and the teachers share if they have any concerns. With that information I go back and meet with those individual students that want to be in the program and that teachers are concerned about. I tell them the information that the teachers have given to me and I tell them that they have 6 months to prove that they really want to do this.

Despite the low requirements for enrollment, each year less than a third of the approximately 150 students will decide to officially join the program. The added requirements and increased workload were often viewed as being the main cause of the relatively low rate of enrollment.

Given the varying levels of requirement and the different workloads, in previous years the school attempted to separate students who were fully part of the DP from those only engaging with the coursework. A number of issues, specially related to scheduling, compelled the school to revoke the policy and allow classes to be comprised of both student groups. Numerous teachers complained about the decision noting that it negatively impacted classroom dynamics. In a longer exchange, John, a former teacher and current administrator, provided the following insight:

> John: And you know the challenge at our school, there are a lot of different models of DP, right? Is we have a lot of the DP and non-DP students in the same classes with the same teachers, so…
>
> Tiago: Yeah you can kind of tell sometimes who are doing the DP and who are not
>
> John: Yeah and you can also tell classes that are mostly diploma and classes that aren't mostly diploma, right? Those are the most difficult ones for the teacher, right? Where you have 3 or 4 DP and 10 non-DP, you know how do you teach that course? It's challenging.
>
> Tiago: And the non-DP students you can kind of sense a level of disengagement. What do you think causes that?
>
> John: For the non-DP students?
>
> TB: Yeah
>
> John: Well, I mean they know that they are not tied to the same evaluation standards as their peers. A lot of the work that they take they say doesn't really apply to them. They feel that it is not necessarily what they need, or they have to do.

Students' motivations to join the program

Every year St. Thomas will host a number of informational meetings with 10th grade students aimed on discussing the benefits of fully enrolling in the DP. During these meetings teachers and administrative staff will actively attempt to shift the conversation away from the DP's currency in universities abroad towards the educational benefits students can gain from fully enrolling in the program. The goal of these meetings is to encourage all students to apply, even those who do not aspire to study abroad. As Victoria, the DP coordinator, explained:

> Students will approach me and say, "I am staying here so why should I do it?" You know I try to talk to them, and the message that is trying to go out there is you do not do the IB just to get into university. You do the IB because you want to challenge yourself and no matter what university you go to, it's going to help you. It might not help you in credit, but it's going to help you understand that, that

> expectation, that rigor, that discipline that you need to be successful at the university level.

These informational meetings, however, had little effect on the student body. Students were very aware of the existing policy disconnect and the DP's lack of recognition in local universities. Since all were required to engage with DP coursework, students planning to remain in Ecuador for their higher education struggled to identify the added benefit to fully enrolling in the program. Philip, one of the school's college counselors, highlighted this belief arguing that the ongoing disconnect limited the school's attempt to enroll more students into the program. He stated:

> Most of the students who will stay in Ecuador they will choose not to do the DP because they say it won't give them anything. That's the main thing I hear, if they are going to stay here, they say, "why am I doing the IB?" Because Ecuador, which has always been interesting to me and you probably know more about this than I do, I would like to hear your perspective, but I know that under the Correa administration like Ecuador was trying to get this mission of getting the most IB schools, possibly in South America if not the world and that's a great project but the universities have to follow suit. And say, you know, "we are going to give you credit or we are going to give you scholarship" or give them something for having done that.

The DP students interviewed for this study ascribed strictly instrumental value to their enrollment, describing it as a means of increasing their chances to be accepted in prestigious universities abroad. Mario, for instance, described his decision as follows:

> Yeah. I don't feel like I will get anything else in particular about the diploma as opposed to getting my education, just through the normal school curriculum. I don't think there would be much of a difference. Maybe it will prepare me for, sort of to handle my responsibilities better but it's not something that I, it's not a motivation to take the diploma to gain those skills. It's just a byproduct, I would say. And my main motivation is to strengthen my [resume].

Similarly, Stefanie, an artistically gifted student, referred to St. Thomas students' perceptions of the program as:

> Stefanie: I think this whole IB thing, for us it is like a motivation to get out.

Tiago: Right. If you were not planning to study abroad, would you still do the IB?

Stefanie: No

Tiago: Not a chance?

Stefanie: No, why? It's the extra effort and for nothing.

Of all the interviewed students, Paula was the only one who planned on remaining in Ecuador for her higher education. The decision was based on her desire to pursue a career in medicine, a field of study whose structure and licensing process differs greatly from those in the United States and elsewhere. Although departing from very different higher education goals, she shared the same enrollment rationale as her peers stating "if I didn't like medicine and I didn't do the IB, I was like in between. I couldn't do anything outside, and I had to follow something that I didn't want to. So that's why I did the IB".

Entering the classroom

St Thomas' classrooms were spacious, with ample room to reconfigure students' desks and seating arrangements. While classrooms varied in size, all included an overhead projector, an interactive whiteboard, a desktop computer, surround sound system, and a storage space for students to place their backpacks and materials. In addition, all classrooms were wireless enabled, and students were encouraged to bring their own technological devices to school. Although most students owned their own iPad or laptop computer, the library did have a check-out service for those who didn't.

Unlike UECT, teachers were assigned their own classrooms and were therefore allowed to decorate and display student work. Some teachers kept decorations to a minimal, and only included the mandatory materials developed by the IB such as the Learner Profile and the Approaches to Learning. Others were more enthusiastic about decorating their rooms and included a wide variety of materials in addition to the

mandated posters and student work. The literature teacher, for instance, had figurines of famous authors such as Shakespeare and Oscar Wilde hanging on the walls in their original boxes. As the teacher noted she periodically purchased figurines on Amazon and intended on adding Emily Dickson to her growing collection.

Once students took their seats and instruction began, contrasting levels of classroom engagement were immediately evident. While DP students were anxious and in a perpetual state of exhaustion, non-DP students seemed disinterested and unwilling to work. What was most notable was how vocal some non-DP students were about their reluctance. The contrast between DP and non-DP students is probably best exemplified in the following observation:

> The class gets louder, with one student standing and playfully talking and hugging another student. Interrupting the boisterous chatter, the teacher notifies the students that the class is about to end. Prompted by this reminder, a visibly anxious student approaches the teacher and asks for an extension on the upcoming assignment. The teacher rejects this request and says, "I am not sure everyone was working", indicating that students were not using class time appropriately and therefore did not deserve an extension. Frustrated, the student complains "but it's the same people of always, they never work." Another student who had spent the whole class period doodling, turns to the teacher and with a grin says, "I didn't work." In the tone of a desperate plea, the anxious student states "[teacher's name] no, really? Tengo tanto trabajo. Tengo un proyecto para ciudadanía y mi grupo no hizo nada y ahora mi toca hacer todo sola [I have so much work. I have a project for citizenship class and my group didn't do anything and now I have to do it all by myself]." To which the teacher replies, "That is the story of my daughter's life. ¿Y por qué vas a hacer todo? Haga su parte no más [And why are you going to do it by yourself? Do only your part and no more]."

IB students were highly critical of their non-IB peers. They consistently referred to them as "vagos" (slackers) and often sought to enroll in classes which catered primarily to IB students[7]. Those in classes which were predominantly attended by non-

[7] A similar finding about the perceptual differences between IB and non-IB students can be found in Sunyol & Codó, 2019.

DP students were often frustrated and expressed a loss in motivation and a gradual sense of disengagement. This was especially true of history, a class widely perceived to be the least demanding and therefore had the highest ratio of non-DP students. This sentiment was manifest during an observation, where a DP student intent on pursuing a career in history expressed both her regret and frustration with her decision to enroll in the class:

> Students resume their group work which consists of writing an outline for an essay on Selma. The teacher gives them 20 minutes to finish. Students work on their computers and on lined paper the teacher had provided. Most groups work on their assignments, although two groups of boys remain either playing games on their phones or listening to music. One student, for instance, has his backpack on his desk, which covers the phone he is playing on. Another student plays music out loud, which elicits a few complaints. The teacher is sitting at her desk and speaking to a student who had recently returned from California where she was touring different colleges with her mother. The teacher explains the essay structure to the student, focusing on the need for the student to contextualize the historical moment, write a thesis statement and define key terms in the introduction. The student returns to her desk and begins writing a draft of an introduction. She lets out a loud sigh and seems frustrated as she works. She then turns to me and states, "I don't really like this class. I love history and think I will study it in college, but people don't take this class very seriously. A lot of people choose it because they think it is easy and they end up not doing anything. I have lost a lot of motivation here".

Instances of disengagement and disruption were much rarer in classes catering predominantly to DP students. While there were significant differences in classroom dynamics, all courses at St. Thomas shared a similar pedagogical approach which was based on principles of student-centered and inquiry-based learning.

Given their previous experience with both the PYP and MYP, students were accustomed to the underlying evaluative and pedagogical approach of the DP. Students also had ample experience writing essays and felt prepared to successfully engage with the program's numerous writing requirements. When discussing her transition to the DP,

Julia felt surprised of the extent her previous experiences equipped her to succeed in a program which was widely perceived to be academically difficult. She noted:

> I have been writing essays since like primary and of course you go developing certain kinds of skills. Because I remember at the beginning, I thought the DP was going to be so different, I am going to start at 0. But, then in my English diagnostic test for example I got a really good score like in an essay, and it was the type of essay that they take at the end of the DP. So, I realized that throughout these last years I have actually developed, and I am not at 0 when starting the DP.

Despite being part of the entirety of the IB continuum and feeling prepared to engage with the academic demands of the DP, students still struggled with the transition noting that the increased workload was often very difficult to manage. Even Mario, the class valedictorian, conceded "it's a lot harder. I have a lot less free time now and I feel like I struggle this year at times. When last year I felt no challenge at all".

DP students portrayed themselves as being stressed and often noted how little they were able to sleep. Not only were feelings of stress and fatigue invoked during interviews, but they were also imprinted on students' bodies as they walked through the hallways and made their way to the different classrooms. For instance, one morning as I waited for the history teacher to arrive, one student approached me with labored steps and very dark bags under her eyes. When I inquired about her visibly fatigued appearance, she explained:

> I was up late last night working, and it got to the point where I couldn't concentrate, so I decided to take a two-hour nap. Right now, I am just running on caffeine […] I just had a shot of expresso and I might need one later. It might be too much though.

Stress and fatigue were so prevalent, that students' mental and physical health were viewed as a cause of concern amongst the school's administrative staff. Victoria, the DP coordinator, described DP students as being "emotionally [a] disaster. These kids get physically sick. They get weak, they have nervous breakdowns".

Students consistently described personal sacrifice as a necessary prerequisite to successfully fulfill the requirements needed to be awarded the IB diploma. Although they consistently discussed how little they slept and how hard they worked, students also engaged with both subtle and obvious behaviors in the effort to obtain extensions, increase their grades and decrease their workload. These practices and their ensuing effects are a component of what I am referring to as "collaborative advantaging"

Negotiations and student self-advocacy

Contrasting the notion of "shaking it off" prevalent in UECT, St. Thomas students were incessant in their attempts to push back against institutional expectations and bend existing rules in the effort to gain some form advantage. This was acutely evident during a recess break when two students approached a teacher to discuss the grades they received on their speeches. After pleading their cases and insisting that their scores should be increased, the teacher finally ceded, awarding each a few additional points. Once the students left, the teacher expressed her frustration noting "antes un estudiante recibía un 7 y no se quejaba. Ahora reciben un 9.5 y hacen de todo para recibir algunos puntos extras ["before a student received a 7 and did not complain. Now they receive a 9.5 and do everything they can to receive a few extra points"].

While teachers often ceded to students' requests, they did so begrudgingly. Many felt unsupported by the school's administrative staff and believed that if a teacher's decision was sufficiently contested, it would ultimately be overturned. A recent event which was highly polemic and heavily discussed amongst the teaching staff exemplified this prevailing sentiment. Renata explained:

> He was taking the mock exams [for the IB] and he did not finish. The exam is timed, and students who don't finish are not supposed to be given extra time. The

> teacher supervising the exam collected the exams and did not given the student any extra time. So, he went to the principal and then the administration claiming it wasn't fair that he was not given extra time because he had not seen the second section of the exam. He was granted an exception and he was given extra time, and this is a student who got accepted to attend [a prestigious university].

Referring to the same incident, another teacher noted "we have all the resources to be academic, but the administration often sends some problematic messages that go against it. And the students know that if they insist enough, they will eventually get what they want."

Teachers often lamented the limits to their authority. They did, however, cherish the casual and informal relationships it enabled them to have with their students. Robert, an DP English teacher, described this type of relationship as being endearing, where students "are very good about greeting their teachers, asking how they are doing". Furthermore, teachers often encouraged this type of relationship, viewing it as an important step to creating a positive classroom community in which student feel comfortable to actively participate in discussions. Students also acknowledged the informal relationship they had with their teachers. Mario asserted that "people see their teachers as friends and treat them as friends. Sometimes what an American teacher would consider disrespectful is expected in this school. Like referring to some as tu en vez de, instead of usted[8]".

The casualness of student-teacher relationships is probably best exemplified during an afternoon TOK class where I observed the following:

> The teacher who also heads the school's Model United Nations' program took a delegation of students this afternoon to attend a conference in a nearby private school. Reading from the provided lesson plan, the substitute teacher notified students that they were to continue working on their projects focusing on art as a

[8] Informal "you" rather than the formal "you"

means of protest. One student asked the substitute if instead of working on the project they could go watch a volleyball tournament the school was currently hosting. The substitute teacher said that they couldn't as they were required to fulfill their task. The student then asked the substitute that if he got the teacher's permission would they be allowed to go, which the substitute agreed. The student took out his cellphone and called the teacher. After a brief conversation he placed her on speaker phone and asked the question. The teacher said that if it was ok with substitute they were allowed to go. The substitute agreed, and the class was dismissed.

While these forms of interaction were the norm at St. Thomas, students were cognizant that they were both unique to the school and considerably different elsewhere.

When discussing the comparative premise of this study, David, an 11th grade student, rightfully observed "I think one difference you are going to find is that we express our opinion more. Like we complain about our grades all the time and we joke with our teachers and even challenge them sometimes". These existing differences between St. Thomas and UECT students engagement with their teachers and with institutional norms serve as an important premise for the concept of "collaborative advantaging". The following chapter will further build on these differences by examining how students thought through and engaged with the shared aspirational goal of study abroad. It will address the question:

Q5. How are students prepared to engage with higher education institutions abroad and what resources do they draw on in their efforts to become competitive applicants?

Chapter 7: You ‘gotta’ play the game

During my morning commute to St. Thomas, I would always drive past a school perched on the edge of one of the city’s main highways. Draping a small portion of the main building was a banner noting that the school was now accepting student applications for the upcoming academic year. Everything about the school seemed new, including the freshly painted white wall that separated the main building from the ongoing traffic. Positioned centerfold on the wall was the large emblem of the IB accompanied by the slogan “abriendo las puertas del mundo”, which translates to opening the doors of the world. As the study progressed and my commutes to St. Thomas became more habitual, the newness of the school lost its noteworthiness and eventually was blurred into its predominantly grey and green surroundings.

The slogan, however, stuck with me and became a point of personal intrigue. Given the premise of the study and my previous engagement with Taylor’s (2002) and Appadurai’s (1996) works on social imaginaries, I was curious about how the world and its many “doors” were understood by students inhabiting distinctive social spaces and experiencing significantly different material realities. In this attempt to pursue conceptual sophistication and identify points of difference and potential dispute, I failed to acknowledge the very literal purpose of the slogan. More than anything it was a promise that with the IB, students would be able to cross international borders and experience life outside of Ecuador. Implied was that to access the world, students would first have to walk through the doors of international higher education.

As the previous two chapters showcased, this is a promise that the students took very seriously. Although experiencing considerably different social, material and

institutional realities, students from both schools framed the IB's currency outside of Ecuador as the primary reason to first enroll and later endure the numerous personal sacrifices the program required. While students' experiences were adjoined by a similar point of departure, almost everything that proceeded differed significantly. The goal of this chapter is to closely examine some of these differences and consider their implications for the IB policy's overarching intent of equalizing opportunity. It will focus on how students from both schools think through and engage with the application process. Drawing on the concept of institutional habitus (Burke, Emmerich & Ingram, 2013; Reay, 1998), I will examine students' behaviors as it is mediated through the school and their own social backgrounds. In other words, how are students from distinct social class backgrounds differentially prepared to engage with the application process and what resources do they draw on in their efforts to become competitive applicants?

St. Thomas and the push to leave

At the end of a small hallway were the offices of the college counselors. St. Thomas had two full-time college counselors who dedicated their time exclusively to assisting students in their applications to universities abroad. Their offices contained a series of resources, including College Admissions books and SAT/ACT preparatory materials. Scattered around the walls were small flags bearing the names of prestigious institutions, as well as posters showcasing the scenic campuses of the private, liberal-arts colleges many of the school's students will eventually attend. Every year most students at St. Thomas (both DP and non-DP) will apply to study abroad, with many seeking to gain admissions into highly selective universities in the United States and Canada.

Study abroad was ubiquitous, reflected and visibly present throughout the school. It could be seen in the bulletin boards announcing the upcoming college fairs the school was scheduled to host. It could be found on the sweatshirts featuring the names of the different universities students hoped to attend. It could be heard during graduation speeches, where members of the school's administrative staff would enumerate the long list of institutions students had been admitted to, even those they chose not to attend[9]. The ubiquity of study abroad was contrasted by the glaring absence of any reference to local universities. In addition to lacking a visible presence, the school provided limited assistance to students seeking higher education opportunities in Ecuador. This absence was widely acknowledged by the students. As Julia noted, "you never hear anything about universities here, like I have no clue about them". Although absent and largely

[9] Exemplar from the 2016 graduation speech: "We are proud of the class of 2016. You have been accepted in some of the finest universities of the world, done well on your exams and show to reflect what we expect of our graduates. Some of the schools you will be attending next year are: American University, Babson College, Bard College, Bates College, Bentley University, Boston College, Boston University, Brandeis University, Briar Cliff University, California College of the Arts, Carleton College, Columbia University, Connecticut College, Dalhousie University, Davidson College, El Paso de Cinema, Emory University, European Institute of Design in Barcelona, Flagler College, Fordham University, Georgia Tech University, Georgetown University, Georgia State University, Harvard University, Haverford College, IE University, Institute Tecnologico de Monterrey, Kalamazoo College, Kenyon College, Lake Forrest College, Lafayette College, Lawrence Technological University, Lawrence University, Louisiana State University, Loyola University New Orleans, Macalester College, Manhattanville College, Miami Dade College, Michigan State University, New England Institute of Technology, New York University, Northeastern University, Northwestern University, Oberlin College, Ohio Wesleyan University, Ontario College of Art & Design, Pace University, Pennsylvania State University, Pepperdine University, Pomona College. Pontifica Universidad Católica del Ecuador, Purdue University, Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, St. Louis University, Santa Fe College, Savannah College of Art and Design, School of the Art Institute of Chicago, St. Thomas University, Suffolk University, Syracuse University, Temple University, Texas A&M University, The American University of Paris, The Catholic University of America, The George Washington University, Trinity University, Tufts University, Universidad de las Americas, Universidad Internacional, Universidad de Navarra, Universidad de San Francisco de Quito, University Loyola Andalucia – Sevilla, University of Arkansas, University of Calgary, University of Edinburgh, University of Miami, University of Minnesota – Twin Cities, University of North Dakota, University of Notre Dame, University of Pennsylvania, University of Rochester, University of South Florida, University of Sothern California, University of Texas – Austin, Tulane University, University of Tulsa, University of Virginia, University of Washington, Washington & Lee University, Wesleyan College, Vanderbilt University, Vassar College, Villanova University and Virginia Tech.

ignored, approximately half of the schools' students did in fact attend higher education institutions in the country.

The lack of guidance for students remaining in Ecuador was highly predicated on how local universities were perceived within the school. There was a wide-held belief amongst both students and staff that St. Thomas was the unofficial feeder school to the country's most prestigious university, Universidad San Francisco de Quito (USFQ). Within this belief was a view that even the students who were barely able to graduate were all but assured admissions. In an informal conversation I asked one of the college counselors what the application process was like for students interested in enrolling at USFQ. In response "[Steve] slowly took his fingers to his wrist and with a wry smile stated, 'does he have a pulse?'". Emilio, a shy student who hoped to study abroad in Canada, echoed this perception when he stated, "like I haven't seen anyone who hasn't entered [USFQ]".

In part due to this ease of admissions, students often viewed remaining in Ecuador as an undesirable choice reserved primarily for students who were low-achieving and uncommitted to their schooling. Even the prestigious USFQ was often discussed with a certain level of derision. As Mario explained:

> like Universidad San Francisco it's a good school, but that tends to be considered the last option. Like, like, "I couldn't go elsewhere, so I will study at San Pancho" which people like to call it. It's sort of a [stutter] derogative term, San Pancho, it's like you know, it's like I'm going to San Pancho and everyone laughs[...] if they hear a student they know they can afford an education elsewhere, they just assume they are staying here because they are lazy or something like that.

Students pursuing careers in medicine and law which required them to remain in the country were rightfully frustrated with these depictions. As Paula noted, "I think they give us this idea here that other places are better than here. That the education here is

nada que ver [has no value]. So, I think that we are all in some sort of way pressured to go outside".

Most students agreed that they felt varying degrees of pressure to study abroad. Some, such as Stefanie, were emphatic in their assertions, stating "people kind of expect you to leave, especially if you are… For instance, if I stay here it will be a disappointment to everyone". Others, such as Esteban, acknowledged the pressure but diminished its overall impact:

> I think that most people want to leave, and most people are expected to leave if they do well here in school. The ones that don't do well, are expecting to stay here. And the ones that do feel that pressure to leave. So yes, I feel that pressure, but I always wanted to [leave], so it is not really pressure.

Although nuanced differences existed, all interviewed students expressed a concomitant personal desire to study abroad and a social pressure to do so. They also highlighted how their experiences within the school and with their own families highly informed their decisions.

When discussing the relationship between students' experiences in the school and the desire to study abroad, Paola argued that students "I don't know if it is trained, but they [St. Thomas] have educated us to want to go out". When probed for a specific example of how this "training" occurs, she stated:

> Many people come from outside, like the teachers, so they explain their experiences, so we are used to that. We are not used to people telling us to go to San Francisco, for example, or to la Internacional, because people here are not educated there so they can't tell us the good things about that. So, we have this negative perception because we are influenced by the international people.

Others stressed how being educated through an internationally focused curriculum instilled a desire amongst the student body to leave the country. Emilio Andrade, for instance, made the connection between the school's curriculum and study abroad,

claiming “when you have the perspective or the knowledge of what happens outside, I do think it influences in you wanting to leave or you wanting to go and see”.

This form of socialization was often implicit, conveyed through the absences of the school curriculum and in teachers’ own experiences. Although mostly subtle, there were a few occasions in which the unspoken goal of instilling a curiosity about the world and a desire to leave Ecuador were made abundantly clear. This was especially evident during an English Language class, when a group of students asked whether they could attend a school event taking place during the class period. Annoyed by the request, Robert declined, and the following discussion ensued.

> Robert: This is the first school where the reality is, we miss class for sports, carnival, [fine arts event]. Is this logical?”
>
> Student 1: This is a different way of learning.
>
> Student 2: Sports happen in the hour of class because we are representing the school. There aren’t lights in the field, so we can’t do it at night.
>
> Robert: I have over 20 years of teaching […]
>
> Student 1: How old are you?
>
> Robert: Don’t interrupt. I have taught in 6 different schools around the world. I was hired not only to teach you, but to also bring you the larger world. This doesn’t happen in other schools. In England […]
>
> Student 1: But we are in Ecuador
>
> Robert: But we don’t have to be limited to Ecuador.

The idea of not being “limited to Ecuador” is a powerful one and captures this form of socialization students consistently alluded to. This idea will be further discussed in the subsequent chapter about how St. Thomas students related and engaged with the DP’s internationally focused curriculum

Students’ families had a much more complex relationship to study abroad, characterized by feelings of both ambivalence and uncertainty. On one hand, parents did

not want students to forego the numerous resources and opportunities St. Thomas afforded. Luiz highlighted this sentiment when describing how his parents would react if he were to remain in Ecuador for his higher education. He stated:

> If I go to my parents, like "I want to stay", I don't think they would have a problem with that. Yes, like "I want to stay", they would tell me, "oh you have a lot of opportunities. You are at this school and this school offers you the programs to go outside, you should take advantage". This is something they have told me before.

On the other hand, parents were expressing a growing level of concern with the professional opportunities students surrendered as a result of leaving the country. As Phillip, the college counselor, explained:

> the parents are worried that if they go study outside of Ecuador, they are going to miss out on those contacts that they could be making at the USFQ. From my understanding this is still a country very much of who you know. And I think that is very concerning. I have students say that if they go abroad, they are going to miss on all the contacts they could have made, not just from this school but also from the students they would meet at the USFQ that will help them later get a job in this country.

This concern was shared by students and evidenced in David's deliberation of whether to apply to universities in the United States and Canada. After detailing the appeal of study abroad during an informal conversation during recess break, he proceeded to note the numerous drawbacks of leaving Ecuador, stating "something that I am aware of is that the value of staying is that you can get connections, which in a 3rd world country is very important, sadly".

This reigning concern did not, however, seem to deter students from being active in their attempts to gain access to universities outside of Ecuador. Unlike the perceived ease of admissions to local institutions such as USFQ, students viewed admittance into universities abroad as being uncertain and highly competitive. Prompted by this

uncertainty, students felt obliged to do whatever it took to "gain an edge" and be able to "standout". The following section will detail some of the different ways the school prepared its students to both navigate the complexities of study abroad and become competitive applicants. It will focus on the services and opportunities the school provided in an effort to allow students to "gain a leg up".

Gaining a leg up

Philip, one of the college counselors, was finally able to take a momentary sigh of relief. It was early May and most students had already received decisions on their college applications. For the last couple of months, the school's two college counselors had worked assiduously writing cover letters, reviewing personal statements and meeting with both students and parents to help guide them through the decision-making process. Despite being portrayed as a relatively weak graduating class, St. Thomas students were once again able to gain admission and receive scholarship offers from prestigious universities from around the world. The most widely discussed and celebrated offer was from a student who received a full scholarship to enroll in NYU's branch campus in Abu Dhabi. As one administrator noted this was "the highest dollar amount scholarship a [St. Thomas] student has ever received".

Although the counselors worked very closely with the senior class, preparing students for the college application process was a school-wide effort which began as early as the 9th grade. At this point students received their first formal "college talk", where the counselors along with other administrative staff discussed the benefits of study abroad and what is required to become a competitive applicant. These conversations stressed the importance of grades and urged students to begin preparing for the PSAT.

Furthermore, students and parents were introduced to Naviance, a platform the school used to keep "track of statistics and data of what students got into what universities". Through Naviance students obtained a tangible frame of reference in their efforts to establish concrete goals for their remaining years at St. Thomas.

Along with receiving guidance from St. Thomas' counselors and administrative staff, students were able to attend numerous college fairs the school hosted. Each year representatives from approximately 250 different universities visited the school, providing students with valuable information about the application process, admission requirements, and the availability of financial aid. More importantly, students who were considered "good fits" were offered the chance to attend smaller events with the visiting representatives, where they could ask questions and share their own personal experiences and academic interests. While seemingly inconsequential, these smaller events were of the upmost importance. They allowed students to personally meet the representative who would be reading their application and could potentially advocate on their behalf during committee decisions. Echoing Stevens (2009) insights, through these interactions St. Thomas students ceased being anonymous applicants and became "*people*, with faces and physical demeanors and personalities" (p. 84).

To ensure that students fully benefited from this opportunity, the college counselors engaged with some important techniques which reflect what Goffman (1959) famously referred to as "impression management". This included preparing students beforehand, by identifying what experiences they should discuss and helping determine what questions they should ask. The goal was for students to appear noteworthy, allowing them to be remembered by university representatives once applications were submitted.

When summarizing the importance of these events, Philip stated, “so that’s another huge leg up that our students have, the fact that they have met that person who will be reading their application”.

College fairs were also an opportunity for the school to establish personal and long-lasting relationships with university representatives. Through years of personal interaction, the college counselors were able to gradually “build trust” with different institutions. As Philip noted trust-building was integral for the application process and provided significant benefits to St. Thomas students. He explained:

> When they see an application from our school, they know us, and we host them, and we treat them well. They know that we, our letters of recommendation I think they respect. And we find, and when we tell them a student “is one of the few I have seen in my career”, we are not lying, we are not embellishing that. We really believe it. I think we have that trust that we built up. But I think if you are an applicant from a school that doesn’t send a lot of students abroad, they might wonder you know, “well this, this might be more of a risk to take. We don’t know the college counselor there” … there is a lot of talent all over the world and I think it also has to do with the personal contacts [other college counselor] and I make around the world with universities. He has been doing this for I think about, [he] has been doing this for maybe 18 years…So, they know, they trust our word. Which goes a long way too.

Conceivably, these personal relationships allowed St. Thomas students’ accomplishments and recommendation letters to be less rigorously scrutinized. This institutionally mediated form of social capital further eased the admissions process, granting students an additional advantage.

Along with the numerous benefits of hosting college fairs, St. Thomas’ teachers and staff deliberately identified opportunities and provided experiences for students to strengthen their college applications and improve their chances at admissions. This included promoting innumerous competitions which both recognized and credentialed student participants. Reminiscent of what Demerath (2009) describes as

"hypercredentialing", these technologies of recognition allowed students to formally "signal" to admissions committees that their academic interests and prowess were not restricted to the classroom and carried real-world value. Students, for instance, determined to pursue a career in economics or business could accentuate their interest and commitment to the field of study by participating in the yearly interschool Bolsa de Valores [Stock Market] competition. Similarly, students interested in technology and the arts could take part in the Concurso Proyecto Multimedia [Multimedia Competition].

Due to its frequency, competitions were extremely difficult to track. For instance, when I asked John, a school administrator, about a poetry competition I was hoping to attend, he responded "I have no idea. There are competitions here every week, it's hard to keep up. Last week we had the Galo Plaza which was organized by the language teachers". Although both numerous and thematically diverse, students were advised to engage with these events in a purposeful and strategic way. Rather than explore varied interests, the guiding recommendation was for students to use competitions and extracurricular activities as a means to establish a consistent track record. As Philip explained, the value of these types of activities was that it enabled students to create a cohesive personal narrative which could easily be traced and discerned by college admissions officers. He stated:

> Our recommendation though is that they find one or two activities and just stick with it throughout high school. Sometimes students they might, for example, 9th grade I have seen a student they were on the volleyball team and then they quit that. 10th grade they are part of the speech contest, 11th grade MUN. They do a bunch of different things which ends up being a very impressive looking resume, but at the end it just shows a lack of commitment on their part, right? I think the university, they just want to try to peg a student, you know. Like we have a great student from [St. Thomas] who is a trumpet player… [these] types of things I think really go a long way. They must have a thread through their application.

When discussing the persistent forms of inequality that undergird the college application process, Stevens (2007) argued that the "relatively weak student flows from less-advantaged high schools to selective colleges are not a function of race or class discrimination per se. They are, rather, the consequence of variation in the organizational infrastructure linking students to selective schools" (p. 83). While the goal of this study is not necessarily to corroborate this assertion, the previous discussion does offer important evidence of the role schools play in linking students to selective institutions of higher education. As a result of its purposeful practices, St. Thomas not only provided students with innumerous opportunities to strengthen their applications, but also actively attempted to socialize students from an early age to better understand the requirements and logics of college admissions.

Philip referred to the combination of understanding the logics of the admission process and purposefully pursuing opportunities and experiences as "playing the admissions game". He was especially emphatic with students seeking to enroll in highly competitive universities, often telling them If you want to "get into a school that is accepting less than 15 or 10%, these hyper selective schools, you gotta play the game", implying the importance of adhering to clearly established ground rules and patterns of expected behavior. The following section will examine how students embedded within this institutional context thought through and engaged with the application process. In addition to the opportunities the school provided, I will examine the supplemental resources and creative practices students drew on in their attempts to successfully "play the game".

Playing the game

Dressed in gray slacks and a red sweater, Mario arrived for our scheduled interview. A highly regarded student and the recipient of one of St. Thomas' academic scholarships, he had just returned from the Bolsa de Valores competition where his team placed in first. After a few introductory questions and a discussion about the IB program, our conversation shifted to his future aspirations. He discussed his "drive to aim high" and affirmed his intent to seek admission into highly regarded institutions in the United States, including a number of ivy league universities. While discussing these ambitious goals, Mario also referred to the different opportunities he pursued in order to strengthen his application. This included joining the NHS, engaging with community service and applying to an engineering pre-college program in the Netherlands. After listing these activities, he added:

> there is this saying here, "hinchar el curriculum[10]", so do whatever I can. [Like the pre-college], I really didn't apply because I think it's going to be an experience that changes me, that I can get something out of. It's just something that goes on my curriculum.

"Hinchar el curriculum" provides an important organizing concept in the attempt to discuss St. Thomas students' understandings of, and approach to the college application process. On one hand it demonstrates a refined attunement to the growing holism of college admissions, where extracurricular activities and additional credentials are rightfully viewed as important components of an application. Students actively participated in school sponsored events, especially those that conferred some form of formal recognition. They also leveraged their access to external resources and opportunities in the effort to strengthen their application. Julia, for instance, noted how

[10] Roughly translated: to pad the CV

she engaged with activities both within and outside of the school in the effort to improve her chances of being admitted to her university of choice.

> Tiago: And what have you been doing to prepare for your application?
>
> Julia: Well I already have started filling out the common application and just making sure I have like a lot of activities and stuff that can help me. So, like I have been in piano classes, I also applied for the Beca de liderazgo [Leadership scholarship], so just trying to do as much as I can.
>
> Tiago: And are you in National Honors?
>
> Julia: Yeah, National Honors Society, just trying to build up my curriculum.

On the other hand, "hinchar el curriculum" showcases a somewhat perturbing aspect of students' decision-making. As reflected in Mario's explanation, students largely felt compelled to behave disingenuously, engaging with activities and pursing experiences that did not always align with their interests. This is probably best exemplified by Stefanie who was rejected by the NHS due to her lack of experience with leadership. In response, she applied and later attended the "The Global Young Leadership Conference", an international summit which occurs yearly in the United States. While the experience was personally rewarding, it was only prompted by a fear that her lack of demonstrated leadership could be detrimental to her immediate academic success and future college applications.

Through the guidance of the college counselors, St. Thomas students were able to strategically pursue activities aimed on either accentuating their strengths or addressing any potential shortcomings in their academic track record. It is important to stress that the activities students sought outside of school were often both time consuming and highly costly, demanding significant parental involvement and financial investment. This is especially true with pre-colleges, an increasingly common extracurricular activity amongst St. Thomas students which required international travel and included expensive

tuition fees. Attending a pre-college over the summer was a chance for students to experience first-hand a university campus by engaging with course work and living in the dorms. For Fernanda it was also a means of signaling her allegiance to a particular school.

> During the TOK class while students were serving themselves tacos, I sat next to one student who was on her computer. I asked her if she was going to eat, and she said she didn't have time. She then pointed to her computer screen which was a webpage for a pre-college at Cornell. She told me that she was accepted and that she was going to study design as well as music writing. I asked about the music writing and she said, "I really like music writing, but I know I won't study it later. I guess it's just to get it out of my system." I asked her if attending a pre-college summer would help her chances of getting in the school. She said, "It helps a little, but I also have legacy at the school since my mom graduated from there. My mom said that this is a good way to show the school that I am into it, and not places like Harvard, which is true. I want to go to school and have fun and not have to worry about someone stealing my notebook. I like Yale, but I don't like where it is, its surroundings."

For others, such as Esteban, it was an opportunity to demonstrate their curiosity and willingness to engage with academically challenging course material. As he explained:

> [my pre-college] is in Brown and it is two different courses. One of them is fluid dynamics, it's like physics. And the other one is astrochemistry. The courses I chose because I thought they were interesting. But yeah, the pre-college itself in general I am doing for [the] college application.

While a popular choice, not everyone attended a pre-college program. The high cost[11] and added coursework discouraged many students and families. This is not to suggest that students who did not attend pre-colleges sat idly over their summer breaks. Rather they remained intentional in their pursuits, seeking local experiences which could strengthen their applications, but at a fraction of the price. As Esteban explained, during the summer that preceded the start of their senior year, students mainly chose one of two

[11] A four-week residential pre-college at Brown, for instance, costs $7,154.

options. They "either go to a pre-college and if not do some community service, to go to like the jungle to help the people there. So, people that are not going to pre-college they are doing that".

The idea of travelling to the jungle to participate in community service provides an additional insight into how St. Thomas students are "playing the game" of college admissions. It not only reflects the perceived transactional value of the notion of "noblesse oblige[12]" common to elite institutions (see Dunne & Edwards, 2010), but also an understanding that the "place" in which the experience unfolds carries considerable importance. Cognizant of universities' interest in geographic and experiential diversity, students seemed intent on pursuing opportunities in locations that were both out of reach for the majority of the applicant pool and rich in symbolic sentiment. The "jungle" in this sense served as a prime activator for a number of tropes such as notions of adventure, indigeneity and the unknown. Although students were not always able to pinpoint why the "jungle" was the location of choice or ascertain the symbolic value it provided, they expressed a shared belief that it would confer benefits that other and more immediate forms of community services wouldn't. Luis, for instance, provided the following rationale:

> Tiago: I heard that a lot of students either do pre-college or community work.
>
> Luis: Community, yes. I'm not doing [a pre-college], but I will do community work like this summer. I am going to do community work in the Oriente [Amazon region of Ecuador], but I am still planning
>
> Tiago: And why the Oriente?
>
> Luis: I think it's something that really sounds different, that sounds important. Like something that people will be impressed when I apply to college.

[12] The view that privileged individuals have a responsibility to be generous to those with less privilege

Dedicating one's summer to community service in the jungle or other "exoticized" locations provided students with important fodder for their admissions essay. It was a means of engaging with something different but not too far removed, distant yet still close to home. While students were often able to convincingly weave these experiences into a larger personal narrative, some readily recognized the somewhat farcical nature of the endeavor. Speaking of the summer he spent volunteering in the Galapagos Islands, David made two important concessions. First, he acknowledged that while the experience was personally rewarding, his presence and service were unnecessary. Second, unlike the common symbolic sentiment a place such as the Galapagos invokes, his experiences were somewhat mundane and lacked any semblance of personal sacrifice or transformation. After listing the different types of activities he engaged with in preparation for the college application, he stated:

> David: Yeah, and that's it. Oh, and CAS, the vacation before this school year I went to Galapagos. And it wasn't through a volunteer organization, I wasn't in any way affiliated, I didn't work with any organization or stuff like that. But rather I went to the family of my friends' parents and there I did do some voluntariado [volunteer work] but like by myself you know. I helped out in art classes in Puerto Ayora.
>
> Tiago: Did you like it there?
>
> David: Yeah, it was nice**.** Of course, the school was one of the best ones in Galapagos.
>
> Tiago: So, your presence wasn't necessarily needed?
>
> David: Yeah exactly. There were already a lot of good teachers, even foreigners that were teaching there.
>
> Tiago: Oh yeah?
>
> David: Yeah, there are a lot of high class Quiteños. Not a lot, but a substantial amount of high-class people of Quito that even live there**.** So, it was not like it was an incredibly brave act on my behalf, but it was nice. I liked it.

"I am here to get a good grade"

Students were actively pursuing opportunities such as competitions, pre-colleges and community service to strengthen their college applications. They were, however, aware that all these attempts would ultimately be extraneous if their grades and SAT scores were not up to par. Cognizant of the importance of grades, students demonstrated a nearly obsessive concern with their grade point averages (GPA) and class rank. This form of "grade fetishism" (Heidemann, 2017) was best evidenced by two students who spent their lunch break studying for the upcoming SAT. After a brief greeting, the following interaction ensued:

> One of the students was very stressed about the SATs. She said "I have a really high GPA – I have a 97 right now. I am worried that my SAT scores will discredit my GPA. I know I am not going to do that well, especially in Language. I need some type of scholarship if I am going to study outside of Ecuador. I could go to Europe, but I want to go the USA." The other student added, "I hope my SAT scores do the opposite." When I asked him what his GPA was, he said "It's a bit lower, I have a 96. I think to be competitive I would need a 98**.**" I asked him, "to a college admissions person, what do you think the difference is between a 96 and a 98?" He replied, "that the 98 is better."

As highlighted in the previous chapter, students responded to this prevailing concern by both working hard and actively attempting to negotiate grade adjustments, assignment extensions and extra credit opportunities. An overt focus on grades also directly informed students' decision of whether or not to enroll in the IB. Students such as Esteban, who were confident in their ability to maintain a high GPA, knew that with the DP their chances at admissions could be greatly improved. He described his rationale for enrolling as follows:

> I am going to school in the US and I have heard that it might, that the IB is not something they take so much into consideration. But I have also heard that they, like top universities want you to do the hardest, like the most arduous programs that can be done in school. So, that's why I am doing it.

Others, however, were wary that the higher demands of the IB and the program's

summative evaluations could be detrimental to their chances. Rather than enroll in challenging coursework, they sought easier classes which included lower work demands and evaluative standards. While students interviewed for the study were all enrolled in the DP and confident in their abilities to maintain a high GPA, through informal conversations it became evident that for many the decision to not enroll in the IB was highly strategic. This stance was exemplified during a college fair I attended:

> At 10:00 AM there was an open college fair in the main auditorium near the school's entrance. The fair consisted of 10 universities from Canada, including Ryerson and UBC. When I arrived, there were a number of students visiting each of the booths, asking clarification questions and receiving written pamphlets which included admission requirements. Two seniors were walking around the college fair, which was somewhat odd given that application deadlines had long passed, and most decision letters had already been received. I approached them and asked if they already knew where they would be studying, and both mentioned that they would be going to Canada but were still waiting on scholarship offers. I proceeded to ask if they did the full IB. Both of them stated that they didn't, with one noting "I didn't do the IB. I don't like it at all. It requires a lot of extra work, the Extended Essay and CAS. It also has an exam that if you fail you are done… I didn't do the IB and because of that I have a high GPA. That's the only reason I got into all the universities I got in to".

St. Thomas students were acutely aware of the logics that undergird a successful college application. Their experience of schooling was in many ways a byproduct of a number of strategic decisions aimed on strengthening their application and improving their chances of being admitted. This included the grades they should strive for, the experiences they should pursue and the credentials they should obtain. Most students uncritically accepted this reality. Engaging with these activities was in many ways, as Pope (2002) argues, the simple act of "doing school". Of all the interviewed students Julia was the only one who spoke openly about the detrimental effects the college application process had on students' experiences of schooling. She stated:

> It was a good thing that I was doing service way before this whole thing [college

> application process] because now you see people going to help and everything. But it's not the true intention of helping. And yeah in education it has become, and also that is the thing with grades, it's become a thing of I am just here to get a good grade, to have a good number, a good score and then it will help me in the future, with college, with a job. But not because I want to come to learn, to have a better understanding of the world. Like the motivation for learning and for education has vanished, its more about a motivation to have a good grade. So, honestly, I don't like the education system at all because I think that grades take away el gusto [the joy] in learning, it's just something that you have to get through, get done.

Through their understanding of the "rules of the game" the vast majority of the students were able to successfully navigate the application process and largely gain admission into the universities of their choosing. Although seemingly beneficial, "playing the game" had a number of drawbacks which were often obfuscated by the prestigious names of the universities students were admitted to. As Julia suggests, it created a highly instrumental approach to schooling where personal curiosity and the joy of learning were not sufficiently encouraged. The following section will contrast St. Thomas' early socialization and hyperawareness of the college admissions process to the experiences of students at UECT.

"Se van allá los que buscan"

The sixth period was about to begin and the IB classroom was empty. As I awaited at the doorstep, I noticed Francisco, wearing a light blue jacket and carrying a black backpack, slowly making his way. With a furrowed brow and squinting eyes he peered into the classroom and asked "y donde estan los guaguas?" ["and where are the kids?"]. Prompted by the sound of cheers emerging from the nearby soccer field, he asserted "ah cierto tienen estes partidos de football hoy entre los chicos de quinto y sexto. Bueno ya que no vamos a tener classes, si quieres podemos ir a la oficina para conversar un ratito" ["oh right, they have these soccer matches today between the juniors and the

senior. Since we won't have class if you want we can head over to the office and chat for a while"]. We proceeded to walk towards the IB office where we found a small room available for use. Although I had a number of topics I was hoping to broach, Francisco had a firm grip on our conversation. Mirroring his teaching style, he embarked on long-winded monologues which were only tangentially related to the questions I was asking.

He spoke at length about the school, the students, and the numerous changes he witnessed during his 35-year tenure as a teacher. He remembered nostalgically the period of time in which the school was widely considered one of the leading educational institutions of the country. He adamantly critiqued the Correa administration and noted how the labor requirements of the LOEI negatively impacted the teaching profession and were central to the decline of the school. He was particularly incensed by a stipulation which required teachers to remain in the school during their contracted hours, venting:

> los de BGU cumplen 30 horas de trabajo en clase y el tiempo que sobra digamos tiene que permanecer aquí. Entonces el señor Correa nos obligó a nosotros, nos encerró, cuando la catedra debe ser abertura. Gente que piensa libremente. Nosotros cuando llevamos en corregir exámenes, en corregir tareas, en preparar clases. No hace falta que nos encierren para hacer eso. No, no…yo pienso que la educación es un arte y es una ciencia, pero es una ciencia abierta. No es el encierro típico del obrero, no es el encierro en la fábrica. Nosotros no somos productores de estudiantes. Yo necesito una miente libre y una miente libre de profesor hacía que ese colegio sea excelente [Those from the BGU fulfill 30 hours of class time and the rest of the time they have to remain here. So, Mr. Correa has obligated us, we have been enclosed when the teaching profession should be open. People who think freely. We spend time grading exams, grading assignments, preparing for class. We don't have to enclosed here to do so. No, no… I think that education is an art and it is a science, but an open science. It is not enclosed like worker or enclosed like the factory. We are not producers of students. I need a free mind and the free mind of the teachers is what made this an excellent school].

In the midst of one of these monologues, he made an observation which provided both insights into UECT students' engagement with higher education institutions abroad

and language to better frame how this process unfolds. After detailing the experience of a student who was attending a public university in Finland, he noted:

> Lamentablemente no hay un seguimiento, el bien estar estudiantil no hace seguimiento y como política de aquí tampoco tiene un seguimiento para decir donde están nuestros estudiantes y como les está yendo… nosotros tenemos 51 estudiantes [en el BI]. De los 51, no son tres o cinco, es mucho, tres van al extranjero. El resto se queda aquí. Este en cambio es la cuestión económica, claro. Se van allá los que buscan no por tener dinero, pero porque son buenos buscones, ¿no? [Unfortunately, there is no follow-up, the student well-being [department] doesn't do a follow-up and as an internal policy we don't do a follow-up to say where our students are and how they are doing. But we have 51 students [in the IB], of the 51 it's not 3 or 5, no that's too much, maybe 2 go abroad. The rest stay here. This of course is an economic reason. Those who do go is no because they have more money, but because they are good searchers, right?].

"Buenos buscones" is multilayered and reflects a number of existing concepts which suggest that personal characteristics allow individuals to circumvent structural limitations. It invokes ideas associated to "grit" and "hustle" (Duckworth et al. 2007), implying that students' perseverance and commitment to long-term goals are what enable the search to be successful. More importantly, it frames enrollment in higher education institutions abroad as being the sole result of dispositional traits, placing the locus of responsibility exclusively on the student and thus ignoring the role the school may play in facilitating or even enabling the process. The centering of responsibility exclusively on the students is in stark contrast to the practices common at St. Thomas which I refer to as being premised on the principle of "collaborative advantaging".

The following section will examine how the "buenos buscones" ideal is reflected and at times challenged by students as they think through and engage with the applications process. I will focus on two overarching commonalities amongst UECT students approach to applying to universities abroad. First, they viewed the applications process as being an individual pursuit and did not fathom the possibility that anyone other

than themselves or their families could play a significant role. Second, students relied heavily on social media and word of mouth as a major source of information, receiving only partial accounts of what the application process entailed. In the midst of students' efforts to creatively search for information, I was gradually viewed as a potentially valuable source given my own experiences with higher education in the United States. Unlike St. Thomas were I merely observed the unfolding of a process, at UECT I slowly became part of it.

Los buenos buscones

As part of the TOK class, students were required to prepare and deliver power point presentations on the different Areas of Knowledge[13]. During a class period in early May, students were discussing the natural sciences, surveying the interrelationship between different fields of study. At the end of each slide, the teacher would interrupt and ask an open-ended question aimed at stimulating classroom discussion. For instance, during a slide on the relationship between astronomy and physics, the teacher asked, "Cuál es la importancia de estudiar astrofísica? ¿Para qué sirve? ¿Por qué poner tanta plata? Tenemos que saber porque nos sirve [why is it important to study astrophysics? What is its purpose? Why put so much money into it? We have to know how it serves us"].

The presentation slowly proceeded, finally reaching the topic of chemistry. Before students were able to present the information highlighted on the slide, the teacher interjected, and the following interaction ensued:

Francisco: ¿Alguien piensa en estudiar química después de graduarse? [Is anyone

[13] The IB identifies 8 areas of knowledge (mathematics, natural sciences, human sciences, history, religious knowledge systems, indigenous knowledge systems, the arts and ethics)

thinking about studying chemistry after they graduate?]

Student 1: Yo quiero hacer biotecnología y química [I want to do biotechnology and chemistry].

Francisco: ¿Donde? [Where?]

Student 1: Todavia no sé [I still don't know].

Francisco: ¿Y tienen eso en el Ecuador? [And do they have this in Ecuador]

Student 1: No sé, tal vez en la San Francisco [I don't know, maybe in San Francisco]

Francisco: Pero mejor en el extranjero. Tienes el Tiago aquí como contacto [It's better to do that abroad. You have Tiago here as a contact].

When I first jotted this interaction, I mostly focused on the clarity and specificity underlying the student's enounced future field of study. However, returning to my field notes during analysis, this interaction became noteworthy for two significantly different reasons. It was the first instance in which I was "hailed" into the phenomenon of interest, not as a researcher but as a valuable source of information. The student's statement and the teacher's response also provided an inkling - later confirmed during interviews - as to why students' sought opportunities outside of Ecuador. In addition to matters associated to "quality", universities abroad were viewed as providing areas of study that were unavailable in local institutions.

This appeal was evidenced in Paola's account of why she wanted to study abroad. The eldest of seven children, much of her free time was spent caring for her younger siblings. Through this experience she became interested in embarking on a career as a children's book illustrator. When discussing her future aspirations, she noted "es que artes es una carrera que no tiene mucho, mucho apego aquí en las universidades del Ecuador, entonces el estudiar arte afuera, si uno se esfuerza, yo creo que es una gran oportunidad" ["It's that art is a major that doesn't have much traction here in Ecuador.

So, studying arts abroad, if one really works hard, I believe it's a big opportunity"].

Macarena provided a similar rationale, explaining her desire to study abroad as:

> En las carreras de aquí de Ecuador no se especializan en lo que yo quiero. Yo quiero estudiar en el extranjero porque ahí hay las universidades que se especializan, universidades de negocios, universidades de economía, y ahí solamente centrarnos en el tema y en la carrera que voy a seguir porque eso me sirve para mi futuro [The majors here in Ecuador are not specialized in what I want. I want to study abroad because their universities have specialties, business universities, economics universities, and they only focus on the topic and the major that I want to pursue because that is useful for my future].

While not all interviewed students provided this degree of certainty about their academic areas of interest, study abroad was unanimously discussed as being professionally motivated, where the educational experiences and credentials obtained outside of Ecuador could afford students with numerous career benefits.

Unlike St. Thomas, UECT did not host college fairs or employ a counselor. In fact, students were unaware that other schools provided such services. When asked whether the school provided students any form of guidance, Diana offered the following response:

> Tiago: ¿Y hay alguien aquí que te ayuda con las aplicaciones? [Is there anyone helping you with your applications?]
>
> Diana: ¿En el colegio? [At the school?]
>
> Tiago: Sí [Yeah]
>
> Diana: ¿Cómo así te ayudan? [What do you mean they help you?]
>
> Tiago: Por ejemplo, en el otro colegio hay dos personas que ayudan los estudiantes escoger las universidades para aplicar y también ayudan preparar el material para las aplicaciones [For example, in the other school they have two people who help students choose the universities they want to apply to, and they also help prepare the required materials] .
>
> Diana: Ay que hecho pedazos. Yo solo tengo una carpetita ahí en mi casa [Oh that is messed up. I just have a small portfolio there at my house].

In the absence of guidance, students relied exclusively on their own initiative and enterprise to learn about universities abroad and the application process. One common approach was to use social media platforms to search for local college fairs. Macarena noted how group pages and paid advertisement on Facebook helped her initiate her search. She stated:

> A ver, la primera, no sé, es que yo en internet, por ejemplo, en Facebook sale que por ejemplo a alguna compañera le haya gustado eso, o sale publicaciones sugeridas. Entonces sale "Si quieres estudiar en Canadá" o ferias así o todo eso, dice regístrate, Hilton Colón, o todo eso. Entonces yo ahí busco y me entro y me registro y de ahí así. Entonces como ya, no sé cómo se maneja Facebook porque dependiendo de las relaciones que tenga entre una página u otra ya le empiezan a salir más sugerencias de esas páginas. Entonces ahí empieza a aparecer las diferentes ferias que yo puedo ir [Let's see, the first time, I don't know, it's that in the internet, for example, on Facebook it shows, for example that a classmate like this or it shows suggested postings. So, it shows up, "do you want to study in Canada" or college fairs like this. So, it tells you to register at the Hilton Colon and all that. So, like I don't know how they manage Facebook because it all depends on the relationship a page has with another one, but it started showing more suggestions of these types of pages. So, there it started showing the different fairs I could attend].

While providing students with an important first step in their searches, social media had a number of drawbacks. The information students received was often either misleading or unfitting with their needs. Andrea also heavily relied on Facebook to initiate her search. Given her limited financial resources, she registered to attend college fairs which promised to help prospective students learn about scholarship and grants. To her disappointment, she was unable to find suitable opportunities or resources, mentioning:

> es que también he visto bastantes publicaciones en Facebook que existen varias ferias donde te dan becas. Por ejemplo, fuimos a una feria para ver las universidades de otros países. Y el problema es que solo, si eran otras universidades, pero ofrecían becas solo para maestrías, no desde el comienzo […] Mis amigas también buscaran, pero igualmente no tuvieron una buena

información porque solo brindaban becas para, en si solo para seguir las maestrías. Entonces lo que ellas quieren es becas para las universidades desde de lo principio [I have also seen a lot of publications on Facebook that there are a lot of fairs where they give you scholarships. For example, we went to a fair for universities from other countries. And the problem was that yes, they were from other countries, but they offered scholarships just for master's programs and not from the beginning. My friends also searched, but they also didn't have good information because they only offered scholarship to pursue a master's degree. So, what they wanted were scholarship for the beginning].

Other students were more pointed in their searches, going directly to the websites of prestigious universities they had heard of through popular media. Daniel, for instance, was determined on studying medicine at John Hopkins, a university he first learned about by watching the television series *House*. A great admirer of Stephen Hawking and the movie *A Theory of Everything*, Roberto was intent on pursuing a physics major at the University of Oxford. As he explained, he was able to garner some information from the university's website but was still uncertain of what the application process entailed. He noted:

Roberto: Cuando nos hicieron la introducción al programa nos dijeron que solo con el BGU no tendríamos una participación competitiva en las universidades del extranjero y con el BI tendríamos más oportunidades. Para ingresar al Oxford yo necesitaría al menos un 39 en las pruebas del BI y un 7 o en física avanzada o en matemática avanzada [When they did the introduction to the program (IB) they said that just with the BGU we would not have a competitive engagement with universities abroad and with the IB we would have more opportunities. To enroll at Oxford, I would need at least a 39 in the IB exams and a 7 in either advance physics or advanced mathematics].

Tiago: ¿Y hay alguien que esta te ayudando con el proceso de aplicar a las universidades del extranjero? [And is there someone helping you with the process of applying to universities abroad?]

Roberto: En verdad, no hay nadie me orientando. Yo estaba leyendo esta información en la página de la universidad. También vi que además de tener los 39 en el BI tendría que hacer pruebas de la universidad y una entrevista. No sé cómo haría todo eso, tal vez tengo que contactar la embajada de Gran Bretaña [The truth is that there isn't anyone guiding me. I was reading this information on the university's webpage. I also saw that in addition to a 39 in the IB I would have

to complete exams from the university and do an interview. I don't know how I would do this, maybe I have to get in contact with the United Kingdom's embassy].

Students' searches yielded incomplete information and often created more questions than answers. In an effort to clarify these uncertainties, many students sought my advice informally over recess breaks, during our scheduled interviews and even afterschool. Darwin, for example, had questions about deadlines wondering whether he would be able to submit his application prior to receiving his IB evaluation scores. The following exchange occurred during our interview:

Darwin: La verdad es que yo quería viajar a otra ciudad a estudiar [The truth is I want to travel to another city to study].

Tiago: ¿En el Ecuador? [In Ecuador?]

Darwin: No, no, en otro país [No, no, in another country].

Tiago: ¿Y ya estás en el proceso de averiguar y aplicar? [And are you in the process of finding out about the application process?]

Darwin: La verdad es que sí, he estado buscando universidades, pero es un poco complicado. Eso también quería hacerle una pregunta a usted [The truth is that yes, I have looked for universities, but it's a bit complicated. This is something that I wanted to ask you]

Tiago: Claro, con mucho gusto. [Of course, with pleasure]

Darwin: Cuando yo ingreso a las universidades nos piden un puntaje mínimo, entonces hablan de una escala de puntajes para universidades, entonces yo no estoy seguro si es que tengo que esperar. Por ejemplo, acabar el bachillerato internacional para aplicar, o puedo ya hacerlo desde ahora [When I enter the universities, they ask for a minimal scores, so they talk about a scale of scores, so I am not sure if I have to wait. For example, finish the International Baccalaureate and then apply, or should I do it now].

Tiago: ¿Para dónde? [To where?]

Darwin: Estaba buscando, tengo tres opciones, ya sea Estados Unidos, Canadá o Alemania, aunque es complicado por el idioma [I was looking for three options, so the USA, Canada or Germany, although it would be complicate due to the language].

> Tiago: Entonces en los Estados Unidos por ejemplo tu aplicas, y después te aceptan. Pero a veces te aceptan de una manera condicional, y después mandas las pruebas del BI [So in the United States, for example, you apply and after they accept you. So sometimes they will accept you conditionally and after you send your IB scores].
>
> Darwin: Ah, después [Oh, later].

Other students, such as Macarena, were open-ended in their questions, seeking more comprehensive advice on how to engage with the application process. After she inquired about higher education in the United States, I offered to create a list of potential universities based on her desired area of study and limited financial means. I consulted with the college counselors at St. Thomas and identified five universities that could be of interest. Accompanied by her mother we met at a coffee shop in early July where we discussed the different options and their admission requirements and deadlines. Shortly after our meeting concluded, I wrote the following in my field notes:

> I created a list of 5 potential universities which took into consideration the student's limited financial means. After explaining the difference between regular admissions and early decision and sharing some current data on admission rates the counselors at [St. Thomas] had sent me, I discussed the concept of need-blind schools. I told the mother that we could have one need-blind school and although acceptance would be a long shot, it could well be worth the try. [Macarena] seemed hesitant and slightly discouraged. Throughout the entirety of the meeting she seemed enthusiastic about studying abroad but overwhelmed about all she would have to do over the summer. She had yet to take the TOEFL and had only recently learned about the SAT. She repeatedly stated that her English language skills were weak and while maybe she could pass the TOEFL, the Reading and Writing components of the SAT would be extremely challenging. With a tone of resignation, she noted how much she had to work over the summer and wasn't sure if she would be able to fulfill all the needed requirements, stating "en sexto rendimos las pruebas externas, las internas y el Ser Bachiller. Entonces aparte estudiar para el SAT está demasiado" ["In 12 grade we take the external exams, the internal exams, the SER Bachiller. So in addition, studying for the SAT is way too much"]. Her mother repeatedly provided words of encouragement reminding [Macarena] that she had been taking after school English classes for three years and she was already almost fluent. She also agreed that a need-blind school was a good idea. The school I had chosen was the University of Massachusetts,

> Amherst. I took out my laptop and proceeded to show where the university was located geographically, since both Macarena and her mother were unfamiliar with the United States. The mother was surprised and commented that it must be very hot there given its proximity to the ocean.

Despite these clarifying efforts, students confessed being frustrated by the process. Most noted that no matter how long they searched they were unable to positively ascertain what was expected from them. Others, such as Macarena, were overwhelmed by the numerous requirements and felt like even before starting, she had already run out of time. As Daniel highlighted, frustration led to a growing sense of demotivation amongst the student-body which had important ramifications for both their engagement with the DP and their future aspirations.

> [hay muchos] estudiantes que, o sea, que quieren entrar en universidades de prestigio en el extranjero, pero no saben cómo. Entonces, quizá la falta de información que te dijo eso, el hecho de no saber cómo aplicar, o que puntaje tiene que sacar también puede generar desmotivación. Y les vuelve a conformistas y dicen "ok, ya que no sé cómo hacerlo y me queda poco tiempo, entonces mejor me preparo para quedarme a estudiar aquí en Ecuador mismo o hasta hacer otra cosa" [There are a lot of student which, like, want to enter prestigious universities abroad, but they don't know how. So maybe the lack of information which I tell you, the fact of now knowing how to apply or what score we need to get generates demotivation. And they become conformist and say "ok, since I don't know how to do it and I have only a little time, that maybe its best that I prepare myself to study in Ecuador or even do something else].

Students seemed to react to these mounting frustrations in very distinct ways. Some became disillusioned by the process, leading them to seriously consider leaving the DP program and return to the BGU where the workload was lower, and the curriculum directly reflected the requirements of the *Ser Bachiller* university entrance exam. Others, however, remained steadfast, believing that if they remained patient in their searches and diligent in their work, their dreams of studying abroad could still come to fruition. This commitment was in part enabled by the widely circulating story of Haide, a former

student who through hard work and determination was able to gain a full scholarship to a public university in Finland.

"La guambra está en Finlandia"

It was early April and I finally felt relatively accustomed to the rhythms and routines of UECT classrooms. During this particular day I was scheduled to observe a double-period history class. Students were in the midst of a unit on World War II and had recently learned about the Gestapo and concentration camps. The class began with a short video which provided a brief overview of the Nazi Party. Once the video finished, the teacher announced that students would spend the remainder of the class period working on a writing activity in small groups. As students arranged themselves into groups of 4, the teacher distributed a sheet of paper with the prompts students were expected to respond.

After giving students enough time to get settled in, the teacher began circling the classroom to see if groups were on task or needed help getting started. Noticing that all groups were working, the teacher walked towards his desk where a pile of ungraded worksheets awaited him. As he reached his desk, he turned and once more faced the students, and proceeded to make the following remark.

> Estos ensayos que hacemos en la clase son muy importantes. ¿Donde está la Haide? Ella ahora está estudiando en Finlandia con una beca. ¿Y cómo eran los exámenes para la universidad? Era solo ensayos. Si ustedes quieren estudiar en el extranjero tienen que saber cómo escribir un buen ensayo, tienen que hacer como hizo la Haide [These essays we do in class are extremely important. Where is Haide? She is now studying in Finland with a scholarship. And what were the university entrance exams like? They were all essay. If you want to study abroad you have to know how to write a good essay, you have to do like Haide did].

During the subsequent months of the study, it became increasingly evident that Haide's story had both a commanding effect on students and circulated widely within the

school. It was framed as UECT greatest success story: a dedicated and hardworking IB student who through sheer determination was able to receive a full scholarship from a public university in Finland. During interviews teachers fondly recounted her accomplishment and referred to it as evidence that although knowingly difficult, IB students could indeed enroll in prestigious universities abroad with significant financial assistance. Francisco, for instance, framed Haide's story as follows:

> Otra excelente estudiante que yo tenía algunos años, la presidenta del consejo estudiantil, Haide que fue mi alumna en filosofía, ella está en Finlandia. Ella tiene unas palabras muy buenas. Regresó para pedir papeles para cuando ya tenía que irse y le digo "te invito que hables con los chicos de quinto." Y entró a quinto curso y ella decía que si no fuera por el [Francisco] yo no estaría en Finlandia. ¿Por qué? Allá le tomaron las pruebas, no tuvo que ir allá. Le dijeron, "a ver video conferencia." Ponga allí tu [sound daranran], escribe ensayos, escribe ensayo de tal cuestión [sound tatata] y ella muy, muy buena, buena. Manda. Y con los ensayos calificó. Y a Finlandia, que estamos hablando de un sistema excelente y exigente. La guambra está en Finlandia… Hay guaguas que no solo se proyectan al BI porque quieren ir a la universidad, se no saben que es mejor oportunidad el BI para proyectarse al extranjero [Another excellent student I had a few years ago, who was the president of the study council, Haide who was my student in philosophy, she is now in Finland. She had some beautiful words. She came back to get paper for when she had to go, and I told her "I invite you to speak to the juniors". She came to the junior class and said "if it were for [Francisco] I wouldn't be in Finland. Why? There they took the exam; she did haven't to go there. They told here, "Let's see, video conference. Put there your [daranran], write essay, write essays of the following question [tatata] and she did very, very well, well. Sends it. And with the essay she qualified. And we are talking about Finland, an excellent and rigorous system. The kid is in Finland… There are kids that not only join the IB because they want to go to university, but they know that it's a better opportunity in the IB to go to universities abroad].

According to the teachers, Haide's story was a roadmap for other students. It showcased that hard work and refined writing abilities were integral for admission to programs abroad. Combined with the notion of the "buenos buscones" it also conjured notions of merit, indicating that through certain dispositional traits and academic proficiencies, students could replicate Haide's success. Conversely it conveyed ideas of

personal responsibility, where failure to enroll in a program abroad was presumedly reduced to one's own shortcomings. Maria captured this prevailing sentiment highlighting the importance of students' own initiatives: "es una frustración para ellos, y ahí es la queja del BI. Sin embargo, el BI hace una parte y nada más. Y ahora depende de ellos, como se preparen y como hagan para poder calificar a universidades extrajeras" ["It's a frustration for them and that is the complaint about the IB. Nevertheless, the IB does one part and that is it. It is now up to them, how they prepare themselves and what they do to qualify for universities abroad"]. Returning to the analogy from the beginning of the chapter, while the IB opened the doors to the world, it was up to the students to take the necessary steps to walk through. This understanding that students were solely responsible for their aspiration is in stark contrast to what I term as "collaborative advantaging".

For students, Haide's story served a different purpose. It was predominantly a silver lining, something to grasp onto in the face of seemingly unsurmountable obstacles. It did not distract nor diminish the numerous constraints students were experiencing. Even when drawing on the story, students still acknowledged the uncertainty and difficulty they experienced in the attempt to better understand the application processes and meaningfully engage with it. Daniel, for instance, invoked Haide's story in an effort to reassure himself that his dream of studying abroad was indeed possible. He noted:

> Daniel: En el caso del BI, si te dicen que hay posibilidades de ir a estudiar fuera del país y es lo que el programa espera, pero quizá no hacen los mismo en apoyarnos en eso, diciendo "Ok, ustedes pueden salir, tienen las posibilidades, tienen oportunidades sacando buenas notas en el diploma". Sí nos dicen que con las notas podemos sacar becas parciales para estudiar fuera del país. Y sí es verdad, pero quizá tal vez nos falta no sé ejemplo de chicos que han logrado a salir y superarse fuera del país. Hay el caso de la Haide [In the case of the IB, yes they say there is a possibility to go and students outside of the country and it's

> what the program expects, but maybe they don't do the same to support us with this, saying "ok, you can leave, you have the possibility, you have opportunity getting good scores in the diploma". Yes, they tell us that with grade we can get partial scholarship to study outside the country. And yes, it is true, but maybe we lack, I don't know, example of students who were able to leave and succeed outside the country. There is the case of Haide].
>
> Tiago: ¿Que fue a estudiar en Finlandia? [Who went to study in Finland?]
>
> Daniel: Sí exacto ella. Eso quizá es el mejor ejemplo, una de la más grandes hasta ahora de gente que estaba en el BI y ha logrado a ir a fuera… No sé exactamente como salió o como hizo, pero estaba en el mismo colegio y programa que nosotros, entonces sí es posible [Yes, exactly her. This is probably the best example, one of the biggest one up to now of people who were in the IB and were able to go abroad. I don't know exactly how she left or how she did it, but she was in the same school and program as us, so it is possible].

While Haide' story provided hope, it was highly measured. Those who were still actively pursuing opportunities abroad were cognizant that the odds were stacked against them. After using Haide's example to justify his desire to study abroad, Roberto recognized, "tal vez tengo expectativas demasiadas altas" ["maybe my expectations are too high"]. Students, such as Daniel, were beginning to demonstrate that the silver lining was already beginning to unravel. As suggested in the concept of "fragmented capital", many students were struggling to ascertain the value of the DP outside of the confines of UECT.

"Ya no quiero estar aquí, mejor me voy"

Unlike their peers who remained steadfast in their pursuit of higher education abroad, a growing number of students became increasingly frustrated and discouraged throughout the extent of the study. Discouragement had a number of important consequences which impacted both the classroom and the DP as a whole. In the classroom it led to decreasing levels of engagement. By the last month, students were noticeably less participative in classroom discussions and less diligent in their assignments. This was especially true during English class where students were becoming

more unruly and open to using humor to both distract and consume class time. During one class, for instance, I noted the following interaction:

> The English class began with the teacher giving student back their homework. The teacher then asked students about Oscar Wilde, stating "what can you tell me about him". Students were expected to have read the story "The Happy Prince" and written a short summary about the text. The teacher called on one student to provide a summary, and the student answered "chuta, es que yo hize un resumen de Happy Feet" ["damn, it's that I did a summary about Happy Feet"] referencing the animated children's movie. The comment led to general laughter and prompted other students to make comments as well. The teacher seemed disappointed and told the student that she had sent them an email with the pdf.

These changes could be attributed to the end of the school year, a time notorious for disengagement. However, when I asked Paola about these changes in student behavior she noted:

> La verdad es que estamos bastante desmotivados. Y se puede comparar hasta en las notas, porque nosotros empezamos como que con full ánimo, y con las notas bastante altas, y ahorita creo que nadie tiene las notas como en un principio. Entonces si es claro, como que la disminución de ganas que hubo ya no estamos tomando las clases en serio [The truth is we are very unmotivated. And if you compare even the grades, because we began with a lot of enthusiasm and with very high grades and now, I think that no one has the grades we had in the beginning. Therefore yes, it is clear, like the reduction of enthusiasm that occurred, now we are not taking classes seriously].

Julia echoed this sentiment, adding that demotivation compelled numerous students to consider leaving the program all together, stating:

> Julia: Ya no se siente como esas ganas de estudiar. Los profesores entonces, hay algunos que sí tratan, y es como que, aunque no sea mucho, si nos motivan a seguir y así, pero hay otros que no [We don't feel that desire to study. The teacher then, there are some that try and it's like, even if it's not much, they motivate use to continue and all that, but others no].
>
> Tiago: ¿Esto es algo que es general entre los estudiantes, esta desmotivación? [Is this something that is widespread amongst the students, this demotivation?]
>
> Julia: Sí, por lo menos en el F, en mi curso, si es general. Como que la mayoría de los estudiantes ya están desmotivados, dicen "ya no quiero estar aquí, mejor me voy", o "mejor salgamos". [Yes, at least in F, in my class, its widespread. Like the

majority of the student are unmotivated, they say: “I don’t want to be here, it’s better if I go” or “Its better if we leave”].

The extent of students’ demotivation became evident one afternoon during an emergency meeting led by the CAS coordinator and attended by all first year IB students. Much to the surprise of the teachers, the last period of classes was abruptly interrupted, and all 51 IB students were asked to convene in one of the classrooms. Given the rather sensitive topic of conversation, I was unable to transcribe the interactions of the meeting verbatim. Instead I wrote the following field note once the meeting had finished and students were dismissed.

> Different student representatives stood in the front of the room and were soon joined by the CAS coordinator. The meeting dealt with a number of issues. The first had to do with students not complying with the school’s dress code. The CAS coordinator referred to it as a form of unnecessary rebellion and told students that they should follow the determinations of the school inspector. The second topic had to do with some general level of dissatisfaction with the program and some ongoing complaints. The CAS coordinator spoke about how he had heard that some students were unsatisfied and thinking about dropping the program. In the past he would have gone out of his way to convince students to remain in the program, but he realizes that he must respect their decisions. He told the students that enrollment fees for each student costs the school $1,500. If students were not going to take the program seriously or thought they were not benefiting from being in the IB, that it would be best for them to return to the BGU because this would provide the school with additional funds to purchase, for instance, a membership in Turnitin, something the school currently does not have.

As Diana explained, shortly after this meeting UECT administrators once more convened all DP students to gauge how many planned to remain in the program for the following year. She recounted:

> Diana: La otra vez nos vinieron a preguntar al curso por orden de lista de los que quieren salir, aproximadamente, o sea… [The other time they came to ask our class by the order of the roll class who wanted to leave, approximately, that is to say…]
>
> Tiago: Aja [Right]

Diana: Y solo estaban, máximo creo que 12 personas que dijeron sí, el resto de mi curso de 25 personas 12 dijeron que si, y el resto dijeron que no o no sé [And there were only, max I believe 12 people who said yes, the rest of my class of 25, 12 people said yes and the rest said not or I don't know].

Of the students interviewed for this study, one had already notified the administrative staff that she planned to leave the DP and return to the BGU. Two additional students were strongly considering following suit. Although providing slightly different rationales, they all discussed the difficulty navigating universities abroad and the DP's lack of currency in local universities, what I will later discuss through the concept of "fragmented capital". Furthermore, they were concerned that given the IB's internationally focused curriculum, if they remained in the program, they would not be aptly prepared for the *Ser Bachiller* exam and would ultimately be at a disadvantage compared to their BGU peers. Andrea explained:

Andrea: Entonces las pruebas del SENYCYT te sirve para las, para que entras en las universidades públicas y eso es de acuerdo con un puntaje. Entonces el puntaje te dice, si tienes un buen puntaje puedes quedar en una universidad en Quito, o sea en si en Quito como la Católica o la Politécnica. Pero si tienes un mal puntaje en la prueba te sale una universidad no sé cómo en Ambato o así. Entonces es super complicado. [So the exams of the SENYCYT they serve the, for you to enter public universities and this goes according to a score. So the score tells you, if you have a good score you can stay in a university in Quito, in other word in the Quito like the Catolica or the Politecnica. But if you get a low score in exam you will go to a university, I don't know, like in Ambato or that. So it's very complicated].

Tiago: ¿Y de qué manera ellos describen que el BI puede ayudarte con estas pruebas? [And what way do they describe the IB as helping you with these exams?]

Andrea: Ah es que ellos dicen que es un preuniversitario y que te da conocimientos para dar un buen puntaje en las pruebas del SENYCYT. Pero el problema es que en las pruebas del SENYCYT te dan de historia del Ecuador y son temas muy distintos dos que nos dan acá. Entonces eso también es un motivo para cambiarme [Oh, they say that it's a pre-university and that it gives you the knowledge to get a good score in the SENYCYT exams. But the problem is that

> the SENYCYT exams they give you Ecuadorian history and they are themes that are very different from what we get here. So that is also a reason for me to leave].

Although still debating whether to leave the program, Diana provided a very similar rationale. In addition to being concerned with the misalignment between the DP and the *Ser Bachiller* exam, she also noted that the increased workload and extended class time were important considerations. In a longer exchange, she explained her thought process which although not definitive seemed to be leaning towards abandoning her goal of pursuing a degree in illustration abroad to instead focus on exploring her higher education options in Ecuador. She stated:

> Y además, como un pro de salir del BI es que tendría más tiempo para realizar, como que, más actividades extracurriculares, que el otro año voy a necesitar, como por ejemplo el preuniversitario. Yo en tercero quiero, a penas, o sea a penas entre en septiembre quiero ya empezar el preuniversitario. Y además yo, tomo clases de inglés de lunes a jueves, y también es como que si es que regreso a BGU y salgo a la una, tendría como una hora y media de ventaja para yo realizar más actividades que, que me ayuden a mí misma. Y además es la preocupación de la prueba de Ser Bachiller, ya que por ejemplo las estudiantes de BI cuando llegan a tercero tienen que dar las pruebas externas, pero el problema es que algunas de las mallas curriculares de, para dar las pruebas externas que pide el BI no son iguales a las de BGU, y por ejemplo podría ser el caso de historia que en las pruebas para el Ser Bachiller te toman la historia del Ecuador, mientras que aquí te toman, por ejemplo estábamos viendo Primera Guerra Mundial, Segunda Guerra Mundial. O sea, cosas exteriores. Y, además, cosas como por ejemplo matemáticas. Yo estoy en el programa de estudios matemáticos, y también es como que, a comparación de mis compañeros de BGU también me va a faltar un poco en el área de las matemáticas porque, el licenciado [name] enseña demasiado bien, y para lo que yo estoy siguiendo que es estudios matemáticos he aprendido bastantísimo, solo que me faltaría en algunas áreas como son, razonamiento lógico, que igual son necesarias para las pruebas del Ser Bachiller. Entonces eso si me preocupa bastante [In addition, one pro about leaving the IB is that I would have more time to take part, like in more extracurricular activities, which in the next year I will need, like for example a pre-university (preparation course for the SER Bachiller). In 12th grade I want, as soon, like as soon as I enter in September, I want to start a pre-university. Also, I take English classes Monday to Thursday and also if I go back to the BGU I will leave at 1, I would have an hour and a half advantage to do all these activities which, which help me. Also, there is the concern of the SER Bachiller, since for example the students of IB when they get to 12th grade they have to do the external exams, but the problem is that the curricular content which the IB external exams ask for is not the same as BGU. And for example, it could be the case of history

> where the SER Bachiller exam asks about Ecuadorian history, while here for example we are seeing World War I and World War II. So, like things from the outside. Also, things like for example Mathematics. I am in Mathematical Studies and also it's like in comparison to my peer in BGU I am also going to be lacking a little in the area of Mathematics because, the teacher [name] teaches very well and for what I have done in Mathematical Studies I have learned a lot, but I lack in some areas such as logical reasoning which are necessary for the SER Bachiller. So that worries me a lot].

Alejandra was also debating whether to remain in the IB or not. She was discouraged by the program's lack of currency in local universities and the growing realization that due to the prohibitive costs and numerous admission requirements, study abroad would be highly improbable. After listening to her complaints, I posed a hypothetical question, inquiring whether students' frustration would be acquiesced if the school hired a college counselor dedicated solely to guiding students through the application process and identifying different funding opportunities. The scenario I proposed was perceived as inconceivable and Alejandra did not even view it as being worthy of consideration. Rather than provide a response, she proceeded to discern why my hypothetical solution was unrealistic, citing both the ongoing struggles of public schools and even UECT recent history. She argued:

> Alejandra: No es algo de lo que el colegio, de lo que los colegios públicos puedan preocuparse, porque además de tener que pagar sueldos de profesores, de tener que organizar cursos de cuarenta generaciones de doscientas personas, no tienen ni la infraestructura, ni el capital, ni el tiempo, ni la paciencia, ni la dedicación para ponerse a ayudar a chicos que, bueno, probablemente en años anteriores debieron pensar, varios de estos chicos como son de un estrato, bueno, el [UECT] antes era un colegio de… [It's not something that the school, that public school can worry with, because in addition to paying teacher salaries, having to organizing class of 40 students and grade levels of 200, they don't have infrastructure, nor the capital, nor the time, nor the patience, nor the dedication to put themselves to help kids who, well, probably in previous year they though these kids come from a strata, well, UECT before was a school of…]
>
> Tiago: Clase media [middle class]

> Alejandra: Si, ajá, de un estrato socioeconómico alto, entonces no había la necesidad de que hubiera una persona designada para ayudar a los chicos porque muchos venían de familias de diputados, de abogados reconocidos, entonces ya salían del colegio, estudiaban abogacía y los padres metían una carpeta por ahí. Creo que después cuando se volvió realmente público quizás muchos profesores pensaron "No, habrá chicos que ni siquiera quieran estudiar la universidad" y después creo que pensaron que, si ya somos bastante grandecitos para andar emborrachándonos, creo que también somos bastante grandecitos para preparar nosotros mismos la carpeta, pero no es así, o sea, no es el caso [Yes, right, of a high socioeconomic class, so there wasn't the need to have a person designated to helping the kids because they came from families of congressmen, of well-known lawyers, so they left the school, studied law and their parents just sent their portfolios around. I believe that after it became truly public, maybe many teachers thought "No, there are kids who don't even want to study in the university" and later I think they thought that since we are big enough to run around getting drunk, I think that we are also big enough to prepare our own portfolios. But it's not like that, like, that is not the case].

Alejandra's response was noteworthy for a number of reasons. First, she highlighted the very real material constraints that undergird public education and ultimately relegate my hypothetical scenario to the realm of fantasy. Large class sizes, unsatisfactory infrastructure and disgruntled teachers all indicate that public schools are already functioning beyond their capacity. More importantly, she raised on interesting point that addresses the perceived connection between students' social class backgrounds and notions of institutional support. Implied in her response are that affluent students do not need institutional assistance given their families' rich capital profiles. Conversely, low-income students do not want institutional assistance given their low academic aspirations. As this chapter showcases and Alejandra later concluded, that is not always the case.

Chapter 8
"Are we also Third Culture Kids?"

It was early April, and St. Thomas had just hosted an interschool speech contest. The theme of the contest was the environment and students were required to discuss a modern-day problem and provide an actionable solution. Students discussed a wide variety of topics which ranged from palm oil in Brazil to recycling plastic bottles. After all speeches were given and the judges had deliberated their decisions, a ceremony was held during which pictures were taken by the school's official photographer, certificates were awarded to all participating students, and an assortment of sandwiches, juices and chips were served to all in attendance. The event eventually wound down and the room in which it was held began to empty. Before leaving, I decided to approach the high school principal to congratulate her on yet another successful event. Not only was it carefully organized, but St. Thomas student had performed admirably well, wining a total of 5 awards, three of which were first place prizes. With a smile the principal responded, "sometimes I wish we didn't always win. Sometimes I feel like the other schools get discouraged."

As I was leaving the room, I was approached by the school's MYP coordinator. Due to a recent reshuffling of administrative positions, he was scheduled to become the new DP coordinator the following academic year. We left the room together and proceeded to walk past the auditorium, where a number of university representatives were setting up their stands. Prompted by this sight, he turned to me and said "you know I am going to have to talk to the students next year about the IB. These universities are now requiring a minimum of a 30 or 31 on the IB exam for students to be accepted. So, a student who has an 82 out of 100 GPA and did not do the IB can be accepted, while a

student who has 93 GPA but low IB exams will not. Not all students should be taking the IB, you know, there can't be mediocre work. It's a problematic message to send, but it has to be done."

At the time, the imperative – it has to be done - stood out and made me wonder about its source and potential implications. The longer I remained in the school the clearer it become that concerns with college admissions and their numerous prerequisites had a significant command over the school. This reigning concern was productive; St. Thomas students were admitted each year to prestigious universities around the world. However, as the MYP coordinator openly recognized, it also led to messages and subsequent practices that were admittedly problematic or at the very least questionable.

The goal of this chapter is to shift away from what is gained through an active abidance of the logics of competitive college admissions and the practices of collaborative advantaging, to focus on what is negated and the possibilities that are forfeited. It will address the research question:

> Q6. How does study abroad inform how teachers approach and students engage with the DP's internationally focused curriculum?

I will engage with this question in two complementary ways. First, I will examine how a shared awareness of the "rules of the game" directly informed how St. Thomas classes were organized and what pedagogical devices were employed. While successful in its goal of preparing students for the multiple demands of college admissions, such as the DP exams and the SAT, it relied on a highly structured and task-oriented approach to instruction which limited the possibility for spontaneous discussions. As a result, students were not given, nor did they regularly claim space to process the internationally focused

curriculum and make connections that considered their immediate surroundings. Although cognizant that this approach was in many ways detrimental and distanced students from local reality, it was framed as needed for achieving the desired goal of college admittance.

In contrast, UECT's classes were highly unstructured and relied on improvisation, anecdotal stories and discussions which often were only tangentially related to the course material. This approach did not appear to be effectively preparing students for the IB exams, evidenced by the schools' paltry pass rates. It did, however, create an interesting space in which both students and teachers were able to actively place the DP course content into conversation with their own lived experiences and understandings. Through this approach, students were able to find personal relevancy in a curriculum that often prioritized events, experiences and understanding that were distant from their immediate surroundings. In other words, improvisation allowed a curriculum which harbored the potential of being personally dissonant and even alienating (Gardner-McTaggart, 2016) to become somewhat familiar and locally relevant.

Before showcasing the data exemplars, I would like to stress that the goal of this chapter is not to endorse UECT pedagogical approach or chastise St. Thomas'. Rather it is to highlight that an over abidance on the rules of competitive college admissions and the DP summative exams carries an important cost. This cost is not captured in existing evaluative mechanisms nor does it seem to hinder students' higher education prospects. It does, however, have personal ramifications, which relate to issues of citizenship and belonging. As will be discussed in the subsequent chapter, while these costs are at a first

instance personal, they also extend into other domains and feed into existing patterns of stratification and ongoing processes of social reproduction.

"Hurry-up you have lots of work to do"

Located permanently on the left side of the large white board was the St. Thomas' literature's class daily objectives. It usually consisted of three or four bullet points, each listing a goal and the corresponding activity. Most classes would begin with the teacher drawing students' attention to the whiteboard and proceeding to explain what was planned for the day. During one particular class period, students were scheduled to take a vocabular quiz, check out their next book, work on a formative assignment about the historical and cultural context of the novel *Out Stealing Horses,* and review a graded sample of the IB written assignment. To ensure that all objectives were successfully accomplished, the teacher provided students with a specific time allotment for each activity. In the effort to remain compliant with the proposed schedule, during this class period the teacher even placed an alarm on her phone to indicate the end of one activity and the beginning of the next.

An emphasis on time and structure was both common in St. Thomas classrooms and reflected a fear amongst teachers that classes would lag, and the required content would not be appropriately covered. Despite students' efforts to gain additional class time to work on their assignments, teachers rarely yielded citing the negative consequences that would be incurred if the course schedule were either delayed or disrupted. The pairing of a devout abidance to the course schedule and a fear of falling behind generated a prevailing sentiment within classrooms that both teachers and students were in an

ongoing race against the clock. This sentiment was well exemplified in the following exchange that unfolded during a history class:

> Teacher: You will be exploring a virtual museum. If you read the instructions there are several things you have to complete. I will be walking around checking your notes. You will explore the museum and pick three things that catch your attention. You will take a screen shot that you will include in your article. The assignments are due tomorrow, printed and on google classroom.
>
> Student 1: Tommorrow? Está muy largo [It's too long].
>
> Teacher: Estas perdiendo el tiempo quejándote [You are losing time complaining]. Let's hurry-up, because you have lots of work to do. Tomorrow we have to start a new assignment and we don't have time to waste.

The fear of falling behind not only informed the pace of classes, but also the type of activities and tasks students were expected to accomplish. Activities were pointed and carried very clearly defined parameters and expectations. In most cases it focused on either clarifying the requirements or honing the needed skills and content expertise to successfully engage with the DP's internal and external assessments. Aligned with this focus, teachers designated a considerable amount of class time to discuss the DP's rubrics, read evaluator comments from previous years, and appraise the work of students who had already completed the program. As exemplified in the following classroom observation, these activities both showcased the undergirding expectations of the IB assessment and provided students with tangible examples of what constitutes successful and unsuccessful work. During a literature class I noted the following:

> Over the course of the previous week, students reviewed a strong version of the written task. Today they were going to review a version that scored much lower. After reading the text out loud, the teacher asked "what observations can we make?" Students noticed that there was a lot of repetition in the text, with one student commenting to the other "dice Kafka tres veces en una oracion" ["it says Kafka three times in one sentence"] Another student argued that while flawed, the assignment showed that the student was familiar with the text. When asked what grade the students would give on the criterion of knowledge, students provided

> fairly high grades, only to be surprised that the external evaluator had given such a low grade. The teacher noted, “it’s really important that you show the examiner that you are aware that this is a product. You have to learn to do a good job with criterion c [appreciation for language]. If you get here [English HL] and don’t do well in this, you will do really unhappily. Plot and things like that you hopefully picked up in elementary or middle school. The goal in this class is to help you with the language and to make sure you are able to not only summarize, but also analyze. One student noted that the sample assignment “did not work with specific textual evidence, he paraphrased a lot”, which the teacher noted also negatively affected the final grade. The teacher proceeded to read the evaluator’s comments which were very brief. The one point the evaluator made was the sample assignment lacked a link to style and language. The teacher emphasized that the students should be mindful of this when they write their own sample assignments.

The perceived pressure of time and the emphasis on the undergirding expectations of the IB assessments led to a highly instrumentalized approach to instruction. Content was often approached as a medium through which concepts could be applied and skills cultivated. As a result, course content was often stripped of its social and political significance. Even texts that were overtly political were sanitized and viewed as a means to clarify assessment expectations and discuss key course concepts. This was particularly evident in how a highly polemic speech given by Donald Trump was both approached and discussed during an English Language class.

> The teacher distributed a handout [artefacts] which gave an overview of the upcoming course topic and assignment. Students read the overview out loud. Once done, the teacher stressed Part 1 and Part 2 which focused on how language is used in cultural contexts and the theme of language and mass communication. A big component of both sections was political speeches. The teacher decided to play a speech given by Donald Trump in order to demonstrate the importance of language. He asked students to think about how the message was being delivered. The teacher played an audio recording of an excerpt of Trump’s speech in Alabama where he criticized the NFL and the players for knelling during the national anthem. Once finished, the teacher asked students to identify the different stylistic devices found in the speech and discuss their importance. After a few groups shared their thoughts on the use of symbolism and tone, the teacher proceeded to discuss the importance of repetition as a rhetorical device in political speeches, replaying the section he was referring to.

“Sometimes we neglect certain social issues”

A highly task-oriented approach to instruction coupled with the DP’s international-focused curriculum created some interesting dynamics within St. Thomas classrooms. One noteworthy consequence of this combination was that Ecuador was rarely invoked in the classes observed for this study. While the content of the different observed classes did not focus or address the historical processes or social events of the country, there were innumerous instances in which direct parallels could have been drawn. For example, the history class spent an entire month on a unit on the United States’ civil rights movement. During this month, students surveyed the major events, learned about the key actors, worked on group projects, and wrote an argumentative essay answering the prompt “who was the most significant individual during the Selma campaign”. Throughout the unit, neither the teacher nor the students made any reference to Ecuador’s peasant or indigenous movements, despite the existence of numerous overlaps. Similarly, in a TOK lesson about art as a means of protest, the teacher discussed the importance of numerous art pieces including Pablo Picasso’s Guernica. Yet, she did not mention Ecuador’s most renowned artist, Oswaldo Guayasamin, whose work exemplifies the ongoing struggles of indigenous and poor communities throughout Latin America.

When Ecuador was referenced it was done in passing by the students, in either a humorous or self-deprecating manner. The use of humor was exemplified during a discussion about the symbolic significance of cats in the novel *Kafka on the shore*:

> After the conversation ran its course, the students posed the next question which was “Do you think cats have a symbolic significance in the book or do they simply represent Murakami’s love for cats?” This question led to greater discussion and disagreement. Some students believed that the cats did not have

> much significance, with one student stating "We can find symbolic significance if we wanted to, we can infer. But I think Murakami just wanted cats in his book." Other students disagreed and stated, "Cats serve as a means for us to understand a transition in the plot." As the student furthered her explanation, she used one of the vocabulary words, bequest, which the teacher noted and congratulated her. Another student said, "we all have seen that cat that waves up and down. Cats mean good luck in Japanese culture. Good luck and prosperity. But there is also the Yokai which are shapeshifters and represent more of an evil side. They bewitch and manipulate their owners. There is even a story of a cat that ate the mother and daughter." With this turn to the cultural significance of cats, one student stated, "I think Japanese readers will have a better understanding of the importance of cats. If we had a spirit animal, like a cat in Japan. If an Ecuadorian author includes an animal, it would be [pause]" to which a classmate interjected "el cuy!" which led to laughter.

An Andean guinea pig which is consumed mostly in rural parts of the country, the cuy is known to disconcert foreigners who visit Ecuador. The student's suggestion drew on this shared understanding, providing a moment of comic relief in what was a serious and academically engaging discussion.

In other instances, references to Ecuador reflected a critique which simultaneously highlighted local shortcomings and distanced students from a reality which was perceived as lacking. This was especially true with students use of the concept "third-world" as a designation to describe the country's position in the world. For instance, in a TOK discussion about the #metoo movement in the United States, students referred to sexual harassment in Ecuador in the following manner:

> Student 1: Also complimenting looks, I think it's too radical. It's like a man can't say anything without it being sexual harassment
>
> Student 2: You are going to extreme. Most times a man say a woman looks good, it's because of her ass or her boobs. Also, the times women walk down the street and men whistle. When that happens, women don't feel comfortable.
>
> Student 3: It's also because we live in a third-world country. In the USA it doesn't take place. It happens here because people are less educated.

Both the teachers and the school's administrative staff were cognizant that Ecuador was largely absent from the classroom. Some, such as Robert, acknowledged that in the attempt to best prepare students for the DP examinations, teachers often neglected local issues and did not encourage students to seriously engage with their immediate surroundings. He explained, "we neglect certain social issues going on in the country. And they may actually have a better awareness or knowledge of, for instance, of African Americans than Afro Ecuadorians or indigenous". John, a former English teacher and current administrator, dismissed the importance of local engagement, arguing that it did not correspond with students lived experiences. Rather than lament the absence of Ecuador in the classroom, he implied that the IB's internationally focused content was more aptly aligned with students' social realities, stating:

> Yeah and you know, I would say some of our Ecuadorian teachers have lamented the fact that our kids know so little about the country, about the history, about the culture, the literature. But, you know, that's not their identity. I mean let's not kid ourselves, a lot of their parents they work around the world. They know Miami before they know anywhere in their own country.

"We know US presidents before we know our own"

As discussed in Chapter 5, students agreed with the premise of John's assertion. Words such as "bubble" and "separate from the rest" were often invoked to describe their very insular personal lives. These social experiences coupled with students' unyielding desire to study abroad allowed the neglect of local issues to remain uncontested. In fact, as Alejandro Fernandez explained, students actively contributed and even reinforced this neglect by remaining disengaged and actively expressing disinterest in the one class that addressed local matters, *Educación para la Ciudadanía*. After conceding that Ecuador remained largely absent from St. Thomas classrooms, he added:

> There is this class called Educación para la Ciudadanía, which is a class which is mandatory [by the] government. It is like the only class that teaches us about our country, about the laws, about the history. And I think many people, including myself, don't take that seriously this class. I thought, "what is this going to help me"? This happened more in the beginning, like "why am I taking this class, I won't stay here so I have nothing to do with this class." It is almost like a waste of time.

The overt preoccupation with college applications created a belief that anything that was not captured by existing evaluative measures was not worthwhile of knowing. Students, as a result, struggled to identify how learning about local matters could contribute to their aspired goals of studying abroad. While this perception held true, there seemed to be a growing acknowledgement that this approach to schooling had important personal and social ramifications. Paula, for instance, expressed concern of the potential long-term implications of students' ignorance of the country.

> Tiago: After observing classes, the IB is very, the curriculum is very focused on things that are happening far away, not here in Ecuador. And a lot of times Ecuador is not in the conversation in classes.
>
> Paula: Never
>
> Tiago: Never? And how do you feel about that?
>
> Paula: The thing is because I always wanted to leave Ecuador, I never noticed. But then like we have to know, like in humanities classes they taught us like the president of the United States. And we knew the presidents of the United States before we knew Ecuador's presidents. Like for example, anything, we know stories from China, we know the World Wars perfectly, we know the Cold War, we know the Crusades. We know everything about other countries, but we don't know our own […] I think [the] school somehow has closed our minds to think in some sort of ways. I think it makes us feel like we are a small country, so not that important than other countries. So, I don't know, it feels kind of like Ecuador is meaningless in some points. And it's hard because we all feel like we are carrying this label on our forehead that says undeveloped country. And it's hard, and we want to leave that instead of embracing it and changing it.

Implied in Paula's comment was a belief that students' lack of local engagement and knowledge had important implications for both their willingness and ability to be active

citizens. Not only did St. Thomas students experience of schooling foment a desire to pursue opportunities elsewhere, but it simultaneously generated a sense of rejection, one premised on notions of both inadequacy and incompatibility.

Others echoed Paula's statement, expressing a shared concern that a lack of knowledge about Ecuador instilled both a desire to leave and a disinclination to actively contribute to the betterment of the country. Julia, for instance, criticized St. Thomas' neglect of local matters and identified what she believed were potentially long-lasting implications. She stated:

> I think in education too, because if we were to put more emphasis on what is here, people would be more encouraged to stay in the country. But you know how many friends tell me that, "I just want to leave, and I am going to go live outside of the country for good." I think that is part of the reason why the country is in such a bad state because everyone wants out, instead of staying and actually working for the country.

Despite these expressed concerns, students did not attempt to intervene in the classroom or find means to further their engagement with local matters. Even in instances in which students did have a choice in establishing their own subjects for research, they almost exclusively opted for topics occurring outside of Ecuador often citing both personal interest and the greater availability of "reliable" sources. Luiz, for instance, claimed that it was "easier" to conduct research about an issue outside of Ecuador since he would be able to find more "valuable and reliable information".

Within my observations, there was one lone exception when a group of students decide to engage with the topic of indigenous movements in Ecuador as part of a group project on art as a means of resistance. During a gallery style presentation, I approached the group and the following interaction ensued:

> The group working on indigeneity created a six-minute video that focused on the stigma related to the indigenous identity. When I asked the group about their topic, they stated that indigenous culture is part of the Ecuadorian identity, but it's one that people are ashamed to own and discuss. I probed on why that was the case and one of the students answered, "I think it's something that happened historically. During Spanish colonialism they made indigenous culture seem inferior as a way of justifying their position." When I asked what their motivation was in choosing the topic, they answered that it was something that was very common in Ecuador and not really discussed. On a later occasion, I approached one of the group members to further inquire about his motivation in choosing the project's topic and his main takeaways. After discussing what he learned, he added "we don't discuss for example the meaningfulness of movements like the indigenous movements, civil rights movements. Like people don't know. I worked on this project and like even I still don't know. I just know her name but, Transito for example was an indigenous civil rights activist who was really important, and we have never talked about her. And so, people like yeah don't know, like they may know a little bit about things like presidents or dictatorships, you know, or crisis and stuff like that. It's not so much about things that are also very important but are perceived as peripheral".

The disconnect between students' stated concerns and their lack of addressment can be explained in a number of ways. For Stefanie it was the result of empty rhetoric, where students' complaints about their education and lack of local engagement was mostly disingenuous. She argued "we don't have much connection to our country. And we all try to say that we do and that we are concerned, but it's not true". While disingenuity is plausible, the likelier explanation is that students' lack of knowledge of local matters was a problem whose urgency was outweighed by the immediacy of college applications. At St. Thomas, the importance of college admissions predominated, relegating everything else, even matters that were acknowledged as important. Returning to the quote that introduced this chapter, these were the types of sacrifices "that had to be done". In contrast, at UECT tea

Tripas Mishqui and the role of improvisation

It was the last period and UECT students were visibly restless. The history teacher had yet to arrive and with each passing minute the chatter within the room became louder and the students more animated. When the history teacher did finally arrive, students immediately became silent. The teacher placed his bag on the desk and proceeded to address an ongoing rumor which had circulating widely amongst the students and within the school's broader community. He stated:

> Yo sé que hay un boom noticiero y los papás están preocupados por los rumores. No van a interrumpir las actividades. Intervendrán del ministerio de educación, pero las denuncias ya fueron tratadas. El lunes próximo van a cancelar clases, pero es por el día de la lectura y día de la familia. Todo lo demás seguirá normalmente" [I know there has been a boom in the news and parents are worried about the rumors. They are not going to interrupt the school's activities. The ministry of education is intervening, but the complaints have already been addressed. Next Monday classes will be cancelled, but it's because of the Reading day and Family day. Everything else will continue normally].

Over the previous days, UECT had been heavily featured in numerous local media outlets. The first reports detailed an ongoing case against one of the school's teachers who had been accused of sexual assault. Although the school responded promptly by suspending the teacher indefinitely, the negative press caught the attention of the Ministry of Education who decided to formally intervene. In addition to citing a concern for the physical well-being of UECT students, the intervention sought to address ongoing academic irregularities, administrative instability, and the absence of an adequate special needs program. As a result of the intervention, UECT received a one-year probationary status and would be subject to regular visits by a team assembled by the Ministry of Education who were tasked with observing classes and interviewing teachers and administrative staff. The probationary status alarmed students who expressed concern about their futures in the school. Rumors spread and ranged from the

impeding decision to completely overhaul the teaching staff to the immediate suspension of all academic activities until the main points of contention were properly addressed. While these rumors were gradually quelled, the intervention produced a general sense of uncertainty.

As the weeks progressed it became evident that these overarching fears were unwarranted. Once widely discussed between students, the intervention gradually waned as a topic of conversation. It did, however, become a point of contention amongst teachers who realized that the proposed solutions would either significantly increase their workload or change many of the practices they had grown accustomed to. One requirement, for instance, was for teachers to begin differentiating their assignments and providing accommodations for students with special needs. Although in agreement with the premise of the requirement, teachers complained that they did not have the necessary support mechanisms to properly serve their special needs students. As one teacher noted:

> Por las leyes de inclusión ahora tenemos estudiantes que necesitan adaptaciones curriculares, algo que antes no había en el colegio. Pero imagínate, tengo una clase de 40 estudiantes, y tengo un estudiante, no sé qué tiene, pero no puede leer, o lee un párrafo y no puedo ni hacer un resumen. Ahora quieren que yo haga una adaptación. Yo no tengo tiempo y tampoco sé cómo hacer eso, nunca fui capacitado. Hay gente que estudia eso toda la vida y tampoco saben qué hacer. ¿Como esperan que yo haga algo? [Due to the laws of inclusion now we have students that need curricular accommodations, something that did not exist previously in the school. But imagine, I have a class of 40 students, and I have a student, I don't know what he has, but he can't read, or he reads a paragraph and can't summarize it. Now I have to provide a curricular adaptation. I don't have time and I don't know how to do this; I was never trained. There are people who study this their whole lives and they don't know what to do. How do they expect me to do something?]

Teachers were also unnerved by a proposal still under consideration regarding lesson plans. Given the schools gradual academic decline, the inspection team discussed different measures of teacher accountability, which included the mandatory submission

of weekly lesson plans (planificaciones). Most teachers, especially the older ones, were highly vocal in their critiques, portraying the proposal as being demeaning, intrusive and an unnecessary form of surveillance. Although expressing skepticism as to whether submitting lesson plans would improve academic standards, Maria conceded that much of the emerging dissatisfaction stemmed from the additional workload the proposal would require. As she explained, most UECT teachers did not write lesson plans and relied heavily on unstructured lectures and improvisation as a means of instruction.

The reliance on improvisation as a means of instruction was clearly evident during classroom observations. While classes did have an overarching objective, teachers heavily relied on anecdotal facts and personal stories which were often only tangentially related to the subject matter. As a result, unlike at St. Thomas, the pace of classes was very difficult to predict, and lessons were often extended into numerous class periods. The following excerpt took place during a TOK class and exemplifies this form of improvisation. While discussing the different facets of the natural science Area of Knowledge, the class quickly diverged and focused on students' eating habits and preferences. The discussion took a large portion of the class period, requiring the lesson to be resumed the following day.

> When the topic of applied chemistry was discussed, the teacher added "somos todos una reacción química [pointing to his stomach] todos los días" ["We are all a chemical reaction every day"]. He then asked students, "quien le gusta las tripas mishqui" ["who likes tripas mishqui?"]. One student made a face which led the teacher to facetiously ask, "¿No te gusta? ¿Es muy indio para ti? ¿Por si acaso eres racista?" ["You don't like it? Is it too indigenous for you? Are you by any chance racist?"]. The student responded, "no me gusta la textura y tampoco el sabor" ["I don't like the texture or the flavor]. Another student added, "as veces son malas, pero las tripas mishqui de La Floresta son buenasas" ["sometimes they are bad, but the tripas mishqui from La Floresta are really good"]. The teacher then asked "y quien le gusta el hornado?" ["and who likes hornado?"]. Most students stated that they did, although one student said, "a mi no me gusta" ["I

don't like it"], which led another student to jokingly state "fuera de mi país" ["get out of my country"]. After a brief discussion of where to find the best hornado in the city, the teacher proceeded to discuss the concept of "floral intestinal", adding "traemos un gringo al Mercado de Santa Clara y comemos una corvina con papa. Nosotros seguimos y ellos va directo al baño y no salen" ["we bring a gringo to the Santa Clara market and we eat sea bass with potatoes. We carry on and they go to the bathroom and don't leave"] After a small pause, the teacher asked "¿que deberian comer antes de los examines?" [what should you eat before an exam?"]. A student responded, "habas, chochos, frutos secos" [fava beans, lupini beans and dry fruits"], the teacher added "tambien nuezes, mani y pasa son muy buenos para el cerebro. ¿Qué es la vitamina C? es un producto químico. El cuerpo tiene la habilidad de regular cuanta vitamina C puedes consumir. Entonces si ustedes están comprando en la tienda estas pastillas de vitamina C que son muy sabrosas, y están tomando bastante, están jugando su plata fuera. La vitamina A es diferente. Si consumes mucho puede producir enfermedades. Mucho de los países que tienen mejor calidad de vida es que comen eso. Nosotros comemos en el desayuno, pan y café. El café tiene un problema que te prende, pero después te apaga. Se vas a tomar un Red Bull o un V220, es burro. El azúcar también tiene este defecto" ["Also nuts peanuts and raising are very good for the brain. What is vitamin C? it's a chemical. The body has the ability to regulate how much vitamin C you can consume. So if you are going to the store and buying these Vitamin C tablets that are very tasty, and drinking a lot of it, you are throwing your money away. Vitamin A is different. If you consume too much it can make you sick. In a lot of countries that have a better quality of life, it because they are eating this. For breakfast we eat bread and coffee. Coffee has this problem it wakes you up, but after it shuts you down. If you are going to drink a Red Bull or a V220, your stupid. Sugar has this same problem"]. The teacher then gave a story of his niece who had tried to commit suicide by taking prescription pills. She suffered from depression which was caused by a chemical imbalance. He then asked students to list the chemicals that the brain produces, which led to very few responses. At this point the siren sounded and the class ended.

Improvisation as a mode of instruction was in stark contrast to the highly structured and time-sensitive approach found in St. Thomas classrooms. In many ways, the absence of both planning and structure negatively impacted students, as teachers did not cover the same breadth of content as their St. Thomas counterparts, and students were not prepared for the DP exams in the same purposeful way. Improvisation did, however, create an interesting space within UECT classrooms where students and teachers were

able to pivot discussions away from the DP's internationally focused curriculum towards their own lived experiences and immediate surroundings. As the previous example suggests, this form of pivoting wasn't always productive and led to some seemingly inconsequential discussions. However, amidst this noise were important moments of meaningful conversation, where the internationally focused content was used to critically examine students' social realities. These moments, as will be showcased in the following section, were mostly spontaneous and enabled by the lax approach to planning and teaching common in UECT classrooms.

"Are we also Third Culture Kids?"

Much has been written about the growing importance of improvisation in teaching. Sawyer (2011), for instance, argues that numerous pedagogical insights can be gleaned from the staged and improvisational performances found in the fields of music, theater, and dance. In these fields, improvisation is not fully free flowing or unhindered. Rather it is disciplined by pre-determined structures, meaning that improvisation is "less 'free' than the popular imagination would have it" (Erickson, 2011, p. 113). Effective improvisation within the classroom is argued to occur when the teacher creatively navigates within existing structures such as the curriculum and the lesson plan. This form of navigation, as Beghett and Kaufan (2011) argue, involves creatively reworking the "curriculum-as-planned in relation to unanticipated ideas conceived, shaped and transformed under the special conditions of the curriculum-as-lives" (p. 96).

At UECT there seemed to be an underlying intent behind teachers use of improvisation. As Juan José claimed, teachers were cognizant of the importance of

engaging the internationally focused curriculum and discussing it in a manner which was relevant and relatable to the students. He stated:

> Acá tratamos de vincular eso, aunque nos falta, ¿sabes? Con los temas que abordamos, en historia, por ejemplo, en historia mundial en nivel medio del siglo veinte y eventualmente tratamos de vincular con lo que acontece en nuestro país en esa época, por ejemplo, en la Segunda Guerra Mundial. En medio de la Segunda Guerra Mundial ocurre un conflicto entre Ecuador y Perú, la guerra del 41. En esa guerra perdemos la mitad del territorio ecuatoriano. Vincular por ejemplo la lucha por los derechos civiles en Estados Unidos, ¿no cierto? En la década de los 60 con lo que ocurre en Ecuador, con la lucha del campesinado ¿si? Tratamos de hacer eso, yo creo que todavía debemos poner énfasis, pero sí, siempre nuestra referencia, nuestro arraigo está acá [Here we try to make these connections, even if we are lacking you know? Like the topics we broach in history, for example, in world history in the middle of the twentieth century and eventual we try to connect it to what is happening in our country in this time period. For example, in World War II, in the middle of Work War II, the Ecuador and Peru conflict, the war of 41 occurs. In this war we lose half of the Ecuadorian territory. We try to connect the civil right struggles in the United States, right? In the 60s, with what happen in Ecuador, with the struggle of the peasant, yes? We try to do this, I believe we should put even more emphasis, but yes, our point of reference, our anchor is always here].

While grounded in an overarching principle, improvisation was often undisciplined, relying on spontaneity and intuition, while losing sight of the intended outcomes of the IB curriculum. In this sense, the lack of lesson planning hindered the potential of UECT teachers' use of improvisation.

Despite these shortcomings, this approach to instruction enabled notable moments in which both students and teachers were able to engage in meaningful conversations about topics that more directly informed their lived experiences. These moments were mostly initiated by the teacher but included ample student participation. In history, for example, students were required to read an article on the independence movements that occurred during the Cold War, focusing on the example of Algeria. The class began with students reading outload different sections of the article, many of which focused on the

topic of violence. During the activities and exchanges that ensued, the teacher twice shifted the conversation away from the case of Algeria to discuss issues that were more locally pertinent. As a result, while the class was intended on overviewing decolonization movements during the Cold War, it ultimately became a discussion about matters of power and coloniality in Ecuador, both past and present. The following excerpt details these two shifts, highlighting both how they occurred and what they entailed.

> The teacher drew a parallel between Algeria and Israel, stating "en Israel es la misma cosa. Son 70 años de resistencia de los palestinos frente al genocidio sionista. Gaza por ejemplo no es un territorio y si una prisión" ["In Israel it the same thing. Its 70 years of Palestinians resisting a Zionist genocide. Gaza, for example, is not a territory but a prison"]. After being asked what independence meant in these circumstances, the teacher responded, "en muchas maneras salió el amo colonial y entró el hombre de maletín y muchas veces fue peor" ["in many ways the colonial master left and in came the man with briefcase and in many cases it was words"]. He noted that this process was curious and, in many ways, paradoxical. Another student asked, "y las potencias pierden mucho con el proceso de descolonización?" ["and do the main powers lose a lot with the process of decolinization?"]. The teacher responded that only to a certain extent, but they were in most cases able to maintain their influence through business. He also noted, "hay una continuidad de una lógica de sumisión. Es bueno hablar de las cosas que pasan cerca de nosotros. Aquí en Ecuador solo 100 años después de la independencia la población indígena empiezo a tener derechos con el Huasipungo" ["there is a continuation of a logic of submission. It is good to talk about the things that happen near us. Here in Ecuador only 100 years after independence does the indigenous population begin to have rights with the Huasipungo"]. Some students were unfamiliar with the Huasipungo policy, which led to an overview of what it entailed […] The teacher screened a short clip of the film The *Battle of Algiers* and noted that it was often critiqued for emphasizing the stereotypes that were created and perpetuated of Algerian people. One studented raised her hand and said, "estos estereotipos pasan bastante cuando hay poblaciones grandes de inmigrantes. Eso está pasando aquí con los venezolanos y en la España con los ecuatorianos" [these stereotypes happen a lot when there is a large population of immigrants. This is happening here with the Venezuelans and in Spain with the Ecuadorians"]. Another student added "creo que es porque la gente tiene miedo del cambio, de infectarnos con otras culturas" ["I believe it is because people are afraid of change, of being infested by other cultures"]. After a few more comments, the discussion broached the topic of how colonized individuals in many cases moved to the country of the colonizer in chase of a

> dream and were often “rechazados” (rejected). The teacher noted how that was the case in Ecuador, where a large exodus of individuals moved to Spain during the recent crisis. He then provided an example of a relative who was part of this immigrant wave and struggled greatly once arriving in Spain. After concluding the story, he asked the students if they had heard of the term “4to mundo”. One student answered stating “vivir en el 4to mundo es cuando vives en los barrios pobres en las ciudades más desarrolladas, como en Nueva York y Madrid” [“living in the 4th world is when you live in por neighborhoods in the most developed cities like New York and Madrid”]. The teacher added, “es un mundo que aparece solo un tanto después” [“it is a world that appears only a bit later”]. One student then posed the question of whether full Independence was actually possible. The teacher argued that while independence did occur, power dynamics still remained the same. He stated, “aquí en Ecuador por ejemplo somos independientes, pero estamos sometidos. Que hacemos aquí es consumir, no producimos conocimiento” [“here in Ecuador for example we are independent, but we are subjected. What we do is consume we don’t produce knowledge”]. He then turned to look at me and stated “por ejemplo, en relación al PhD no tenemos aquí, y los que tenemos no son del mismo nivel que tienen en otros sitios” [“for example in relation to the PhD, we don’t have it here. And the ones we do have are not at the same level as in other places”].

These forms of interaction were not restricted to history and occurred in all the classes observed for this study. For example, prompted by the teacher, a TOK student presentation on the natural sciences, quickly became a discussion about economic development and knowledge production in Ecuador. During the presentation I noted the following:

> The presentation included slides entitled “las características de la ciencia, ciencia es especializada, y el conocimiento es comunicable” [“the characteristics of science, science is specialized, and science is communicable”]. On this last slide, the teacher interjected and said, “en el norte se desarrolla el conocimiento, mientras aquí no. Dime algún científico de América Latina?” [“in the north they develop knowledge, while here no. Tell me on scientist from Latin America?”]. At this point he asked each student to name a scientist. After all students named at least one scientist, the teacher noted that all of them were either from the United States or Europe. This led the teacher to state, “aqui cual es el motor? ¿Siempre dicen las vías de desarrollo, pero que estamos haciendo para producir conocimiento? Nada. ¿Crees que China produce conocimiento? ¿Quién aquí tiene un celular hecho en Ecuador?” [“here what is the motor? They always say the path to development, but what are we doing here to produce knowledge? Nothing.

> Do you think China produces knowledge? Who here has a cellular phone made in Ecuador?"] After no one raised their hand, the teacher provided a story of how he broke his iPhone 4 screen on a recent hike. He thought the screen would cost little, but it turned out that it cost nearly $80. After the story, he stated "en Ecuador producimos esto [pointing to the phone]? Aquí ensamblamos, pero no producimos. ¿Que exportamos que es producido aquí en el país? Exportamos rosas, plátano y petróleo. Antes exportábamos refrigeradoras para la comunidad Andina, pero ahora ya no exportamos más" ["in Ecuador do we produce this? Here we assemble, but we don't produce. What do you export that is made in the country? We export roses, bananas and petroleum. Before we used to export refrigerators to the Andean community, but we don't export them anymore"]. After a short pause he posed the question "a quién pertenece el conocimiento? Piensen los que hacen todas las patentes que existen en países como los Estados Unidos y Inglaterra" ["who do knowledge belong to? Think about who makes all the patents that exist in countries like the United States and England"]. He asked one student directly, who responded "es imposible desvincular el conocimiento con los intereses de las grandes empresas" ["its imposible to unwravel knowledge from the interest of the big companies"]. Another student added "el conocimento solo se encuentra en revistas caras y de suscripción, entonces no es para todos" ["knowledge is found in these expensive journals which require subscription, so it's not for everyone"]. The teacher concluded the discussion stating "el conocimiento es poder, y es un poder económico" ["knowledge is power and it is an economic power"]

Whereas teachers usually prompted these shifts, students also played an important role making connections between the internationally focused course content to their own lived experiences, something that was entirely absent from St. Thomas classrooms. The most notable instance was during an English class on Third Culture Kid (TCK). After reading two short articles on the topic, students were asked to list the advantages and disadvantages of being a TCK. They raised points such as "TCK acquire a good sense of belonging and they expand their minds to accept different types of understandings and cultures" and "they don't have a specific place to develop their identity. Also, their communication maybe in a professional space. Could have problem creating good relations with other. Could be discriminate by others". These points were drawn directly from the course readings and merely demonstrated students' reading comprehension in

English. The topic, however, was highly distant from students own experiences, given that none had ever left the country. While distant, the conversation took significant turn when the following points were made:

> After a number of arguments about the advantages and disadvantages of being a TCK, a student stated "I think we are TCK because we are a mixture of natives with other cultures and countries. Do you feel you experience these disadvantages?" In response to this comment, another stated contented "you ask If I feel like a TCK. Being a TCK is about mobility and traveling. It's true we have tradition and customs of many cultures. But I am only in Ecuador, so I am not a TCK." Agreeing with this statement, another student said "we are a mixture of Spanish conquerors and native. Then the whole world is TCK, because everyone was conquered at some point." After a quick discussion and a few clarification questions about the importance of mobility in the TCK framework, one student questioned whether TCKs needed to move between countries or if it also included moving between provinces. He argued that the provinces in Ecuador were extremely diverse allowing people that moved between provinces to have similar experiences as those moving between countries. To emphasize this point he provided a brief example of his mother who was born in a different province and moved to Quito as a child.

UECT students willingness to draw on personal histories to engage with the internationally focused concepts were in stark contrast to St. Thomas, where lessons were often devoid of any personal references.

"Nosotros tenemos más raíces"

During both student and staff interviews, I was open about my budding comparative insights. For instance, when discussing the absence of Ecuador with St. Thomas students, I shared how both UECT teachers and students routinely grounded the internationally focused curriculum into their own lived experiences and social realities. Conversely when discussing these contextualizing efforts with UECT students, I noted how Ecuador was almost entirely absent from St. Thomas classrooms. St. Thomas students were surprised by this insight and were curious as to how and why this form of contextualization occurred. Maria Hidalgo, for instance, wondered whether

contextualization was stipulated by the Ministry of Education, asking "is that something that the state imposes onto them?".

UECT students and staff, on the other hand, predominantly viewed this observation as being both evident and symptomatic of a cultural and social divide between wealthy Ecuadorians and the remainder of the country. Juan José Sanchez, for instance, simply nodded when I shared my insight, later describing private school students as being "hijos de la elite que siempre miran hacia el norte, no hacia el sur. Su referencia está en otro lado, no acá" ["sons of the elite that always look up to the north, not to the south. Their frame of reference is in another place, not here"]. Macarena echoed this stance when she noted:

> O sea, yo considero que, en sí los colegios particulares, como se supone que son de una clase social más alta, se deslindan de lo que en sí es Ecuador y las tradiciones. Por el simple hecho de tener más dinero a veces lo que le hace es cambiar su mentalidad. Que ya no son ecuatorianos. Y desean irse por otro lado que es al nivel internacional. Pero deberían mantener eso. Porque en los colegios particulares en que más se centran, es en el dinero o en sí viajar o en otras culturas. Pero si les hacemos hablar de Ecuador, o indígenas o afroamericanos, lo que ellos hacen es un poco de repudio y alejarse de ellos por lo que no son iguales. Entonces es público y privado, como que en el público para nosotros tenemos más raíces y en sí lo que es Ecuador. Entonces también es la condición del dinero, porque nosotros en sí vivimos, como es en realmente Ecuador. Y sabemos, por decirlo así, las huecas de Ecuador, los lugares de Ecuador. O saber dónde comer, el simple hecho de comer en la calle o comer en los rinconcitos que les llamamos aquí. Pero en cambio para un estudiante de colegio particular, solamente restaurantes refinados, o restaurantes de otros países, o sushi, por decirlo así. Pero no saben en sí lo que es Ecuador y deberían tener presente eso porque cuando ellos se vayan al extranjero, por ejemplo, van a preguntar ¿cómo es tu país, como es tu cultura? y ellos se van a quedar sin decir nada porque prácticamente han estado toda la vida pensando en salir al exterior y no centrarse y saber lo que es Ecuador para poder después salir a otro país [Well, I believe that private schools, since they are suppose to be of a higher social class, they forget what Ecuador and its traditions really are. For the simple fact that they have more money sometimes it changes their mentality. They are not Ecuadorian anymore. They hope to move to another place internationally. But they should maintain this. Because in private schools they focus more on money or in travelling or in other cultures. But if we ask them to talk about Ecuador, about

> indigenous or Afro-Americans, what they do is show contempt and distance themselves because they are not the same. So the public and private, like in the public we have more roots in what is really Ecuador. So also because of the condition of money, because we live in what really is Ecuador. And we know, so to speak, the local eateries, the places of Ecuador. Knowing where to eat, the simple fact of eating street food or eating in the corner shop as we call it here. On the other hand, private school students only go to refined restaurants or restaurants from other countries. They eat sushi, so to speak. But they don't know what Ecuador really is and they should acknowledge this because when they go abroad, for example, people will ask "what is your country like, how is your culture?" And they will be left with nothing to say because they have spent their whole live thinking about leaving the country and not grounding themselves and knowing what Ecuador it to then be able to leave to another country].

It would be disingenuous to suggest that this existing social and cultural divide is produced by students' school and classroom experiences. In many ways, what occurs within the classroom is merely a reflection of what was previously discussed, and Macarena poignantly observed; students lived experiences and material realities produce very different forms of local relationalities which transpose into the classroom. Classroom experiences do, however, contribute to this divide, cementing the numerous differences that exist between the low-income and affluent students of this study. As St. Thomas students readily conceded their insular social lives was accompanied by an educational approach which neglected local matters. In addition to pedagogical differences, this chapter endeavored to showcase the encounters between the DP and these two distinctive social spaces, highlighting the ensuing meanings and attributions an internationally focused curriculum receives. At UECT, through both teachers and students' initiatives, the internationally focused curriculum was a means to better understand students lived experiences and immediate surroundings.

The following chapter will focus on matters of significance. It will begin by providing a short synthesis of the finding and will proceed by placing the key insights in

conversation with overarching the premise of this study of whether the introduction of the DP into public schools achieved its stated goal of equalizing opportunities. It will conclude by considering how the answer to this question may be extended to other contexts and may even contribute to understandings of policy-borrowing and existing theories of social reproduction in education.

Chapter 9: Discussion

A growing trend in educational research focuses on examining how school's embedded within specific contextual arrangements respond and/or cope with policy. This trend departs from the assumption that policies rarely determine. Rather they transports intent, which may temporarily stabilize existing process, but is bound to be negotiated and reworked once it enters the "wild profusion of local practice" (Ball S. , 1994, p. 10). A focus on context requires a serious consideration of how a school's unique history, infrastructure, staffing profile, budgetary situation, student population, teaching and learning challenges directly conflates with a policy's expectations (Braun, Ball, Maguire, & Hoskins, 2011), creating new and – at times – unexpected outcomes. Tsing's (2011) metaphor of friction neatly encapsulates this trend, showcasing the productive possibilities that emerge once a policy encounters specific contextual arrangements.

I want to begin this discussion by revisiting the findings to consider what is being "produced" as a result of the encounter between the DP initiative and the contextual arrangements of UECT and how these productions relate to the overarching goal of equalizing opportunities. I have written in greater length elsewhere (Bittencourt, 2020) about the disruptions and new forms of exclusion that have emerged as a result of the DP's arrival into the school. Here, however, I want to focus on the value students ascribe to the DP and the alternative futures they are able to imagine as result of their enrollment in the program. This requires taking a step back and resituating the DP initiative within the larger landscape of education in Ecuador, particularly the existing practices and policies of higher education in the country.

Throughout the study it was evident that the disconnect between the DP and higher education institutions within the country greatly narrowed the perceived utility and meaning students ascribed to the program. As a result of the DP's lack of currency as a diploma for admissions to local institutions, students almost exclusively enrolled in the program in the effort to access universities abroad. It is difficult to assert whether the DP initiative produced a desire for study abroad. Given the primacy of western institutions within a wide cast global imaginary (see Stein & de Andreotti, 2016), the desire was arguably always present amongst the interviewed students, albeit latent. Adherence to this global imaginary and the ensuing desire it provokes can be inferred from both interviews and the numerous classroom observations, especially on how issues of higher education and knowledge production were consistently discussed. As Francisco Reyes notably asserted, "pero mejor en el extranjero" ["but better abroad"], without ever specifying why or even where. Abroad was simply better, a normative and taken-for-granted assumption that remained generally unquestioned.

According to Appadurai (2004), aspirations are relatively evenly spread, where desires for the future are not restricted to an affluent population. Under this framing, the DP did not necessarily "raise" students' aspirations, as the desire for study abroad has arguably always existed. It did, however, produce or enhance a perception of possibility – a belief amongst students that their aspirations were indeed worthy of serious consideration. This perception was produced/enhanced within the school and notably evident during outreach meetings where administrative staff actively attempted to recruit students by both emphasizing the program's currency abroad and recounting the success stories of recent graduates such as Haide. While much of this production occurred within

the confines of the school, political speeches and media portrayals helped reinforce this perception. Slogans such as “abriendo las puertas del mundo” or media portrayals equating Ecuadorian public education with renowned institutions abroad may seem innocuous, but their consistency and wide-spread circulation help cement a prevailing belief that opportunities abroad have now become possible.

Aspirations, as DeJaeghere (2018) contends, are dialectically related to agency. Conceiving aspirations as dynamic, changing over time through action and experience allows for a more thorough examination of how power can inform the relationship or be manifested through the relationship. While I agree with this framing, I would add that this dialectical relationship is not always active and prolonged moments of stasis do exist, where aspirations remain in the background, largely unchanged and unattended. Power, in these instances, becomes less visible, obfuscated by inaction. The presence of the DP in UECT served to set this relationship in motion, compelling students to deposit their intent and agency on a seemingly possible aspiration. How students considered and took action on this aspired goal became a focal point of inquiry and instructive in understanding the policy’s stated goal of equalizing opportunity.

An argument can be made that all ethnographic work is comparative, since the researcher is consistently comparing his or her assumptions and experiences to those of the study’s participants (Bartlett & Vavrus, 2017). However, including St. Thomas and deliberately comparing across locales provided insights that would not have been captured with a single site of study. The goal of this comparison was not to frame the practices occurring at St. Thomas as a “yardstick” for best practices. Nor was it to discern how students’ experiences with the DP unfolded independently in each site of study.

Rather it was to engage with what Sobe (2018) discusses as “criss-crossing” or what Bartlett and Vavrus (2017) refer to as “constant comparison”. That is, to use the emerging insights of how a phenomena and process unfold in one locale, to better understand what is happening in the other. This required not only a constant adjustment of method, but also a willingness to share and openly discuss observations and emerging insights from one site of study with participants from the other. For instance, sharing how St. Thomas students received consistent guidance when engaging with the application process for universities abroad prompted reflection and discussion amongst UECT students about their own engagement and lack of guidance.

Through this comparative work it was possible to identify a number of important themes between the processes unfolding in both schools. Although different, in both cases students directly related the DP to the aspirational goal of study abroad. In the following section, I will focus on the practices, behaviors and modes of thinking that informed the enactment of these aspirational goals but occurred outside the immediate domains of the DP. The goal is not only to reiterate the findings and their implications for the policy’s overarching intent, but also to situate the insights emerging from this study within the broader literature of social reproduction theory, paying close attention to the concept of institutional habitus.

Institutional histories and the availability of “scripts”

Drawing on the work of Bourdieu, Reay (1998) proposes the concept of “institutional habitus” as a means of discerning the impact of social class on an individual’s behavior as it is mediated through an institution. Although subject to critique (see Atkinson, 2011), the concept adds significant analytical depth by providing an

"intervening variable" through which students' decision-making and experiences can be understood. This is not to suggest that through the concept institutions are conceived as determining. As Reay, David and Ball (2001) contend, students' decision-making and engagement with different educational processes - including applications to higher education - are informed by various influences which cannot be separated or compartmentalized. Instead, the purpose of the concept is to stress that the organizational practices and the "expressive order" (see Bernstein, 1975) of an institution establishes parameters – albeit porous – that inform the possibilities of individual experiences. These parameters, as Diamond, Randolph and Spillane (2004) note, are not happenstance, but rather undergirded by logics that are reflective of broader socio-political relations.

For this section I will engage with the concept of institutional habitus in the effort to discern the different ways students institutional membership mediated their engagement with the aspirational goal of study abroad. Although there is much potential ground to be covered, I will focus on what seems to be an important starting point; the connection between institutional history and the creation and the ensuing availability of what Bok (2010) refers to as "scripts". While I will stress the importance of history in the development of "scripts", I will also argue that this specific discrepancy in practice between both schools is part of a larger logic which is in many ways indicative of class-based differences. Particularly, it showcases a significant divergence in how notions of "responsibility" are understood in these two social spaces.

Focusing on low-income students aspirations for higher education, Bok (2010) uses the concept of "script" to denote the cultural and social resources that provide students direction in their efforts to achieve their desired goals. Undergirding the concept

are two general assumptions. First, that scripts are developed and refined through time, where the affirmations and refutations that result from experience all serve to clarify the process and reveal its underlying expectations. Second, that success is highly predicated on individual's ability to produce "actions, movements and enunciations that are, in a certain sense, predetermined" (p. 176). While students may access the information found in scripts from a variety of locations including their family and peer networks, the school remains an important organizing site. Through a combination of institutional membership and familial background, low-income students are often presented with minimal scripts, significantly hindering their chances and likely paralyzing the dialectical relationship between aspirations and agency. With an absence of information, those motivated and still committed to the aspirational pursuit are required to intuit and improvise, with little clarity of whether or how their efforts will be rewarded.

The importance of time in developing scripts cannot be understated and provides a point of contrast between the two schools of this study. As showcased in the findings, St. Thomas was established with the intent of preparing students for vocations abroad, both work and study. This long-lasting engagement coupled with the school's ample financial resources allowed for an ongoing process of refinement of St. Thomas' understanding of the rules of college admissions, one that drew on the school's standing membership in a broad network of similar private institutions; routine engagement with visiting college representatives; and its students' yearly successes and failures in being admitted to prestigious universities abroad which was deliberately tracked on the Naviance platform. For instance, as problematic as John Taylor's statement about discouraging students from taking the IB may have been, it reflects an attempt to adapt

and further improve existing practices to better reflect the demands of admissions committees. To translate this process into the words of my participants, it entailed a consistent effort to scrutinize and understand the "rules of the game".

St. Thomas was not only committed to decoding the logics of college admissions and developing concrete scripts. It was also active in making these scripts available to all students. Through early socialization and ongoing engagement, students were cognizant of the undergirding expectations of college admissions and therefore able to strategically "produce" the evidence necessary to become competitive applicants. As presented in the findings, knowledge of these expectations highly dictated students' decisions-making and subsequent behaviors. It even compelled a form of "fetishism" where students focused on the minutia of different aspects of the application process. Fetishization is reflected in statements such as "I have a 96. I think to be competitive I would need a 98" or "I got a 1370 [in the SAT], but it's not enough, not for what I want. So, I have to take it again." where students actively struggled for gains which are perceivably negligible yet may inform the likelihood of enrollment.

Knowledge of the "rules of the game" and access to highly detailed "scripts" provided St. Thomas students with clearly demarcated paths towards admissions. UECT, on the other hand, is a byproduct of a very different historical trajectory, one which lacks any direct association to study abroad. Even when the school maintained an experimental status and catered to a predominantly middle-class population, its students focused exclusively on local institutions where the requisites for enrollment centered on an entrance exam. While the lack of a track-record of study abroad is not determining, when coupled with the school's limited financial resources and lack of access to school-

networks, it became a point of limitation which greatly restricted the availability of information.

The information that did circulate was often either misleading or incomplete. One commonly held assumption, for instance, was that through the IB, students could obtain scholarships to universities around the world. Although not entirely inaccurate, this type of information provided a simplified caricature of university admissions, one which was immediately debunked once students began seriously attending to the application process. Haide's story, on the other hand, offered a very rough sketch of a "script" many students were urged to follow. As previously discussed, the story emphasized the need for refined writing abilities and the importance of hard work and determination. While Haide's success provided some degree of encouragement, students lamented its lack of actionable advice. In large, students were required to improvise in the effort to obtain some degree of clarity on existing opportunities and their accompanying requirements. This included rummaging Facebook and other social media platforms in search for college fairs, admission requirements and funding opportunities.

The availability of actionable "scripts" was largely predicated on UECT's and St. Thomas's distinct school histories. However, when considered in conjunction with other practices, beliefs and expectations that broadly and differentially circulated in each school, a rather consistent pattern appears to emerge in each site of study. While distinct, these patterns are centered on a unifying question; who is responsible for the achievement of students' aspirational goals? As will be discussed in the following section, at St. Thomas responsibility was dispersed, where numerous actors played important roles in

facilitating the process. At UECT, in contrast, students (and their families) were viewed as being solely responsible for achieving their aspired goals.

Locating the source of responsibility

First developed in the governmentality literature, the concept of "responsibilization" has been widely employed by scholars in the field of education (see Apple, 2001). Conceived as a byproduct of an ongoing process of neoliberal encroachment of social institutions, responsibilization refers to a form of transferal where "individuals have been persuaded to willingly take over responsibility for areas of care that were previously the responsibility of government" (Davies & Bansel, 2007, p. 251). In schools this shift in emphasis is reflected in the growing pervasiveness of discourses of entrepreneurialism, which expects students to consistently produce evidence of market value, or as Apple (2001) states, evidence that "one is in fact making an enterprise of oneself" (420).

Numerous studies have exemplified how a heightened sense of personal responsibility for one's future outcomes is both internalized and enacted by parents and students (e.g., Ball 2003; Brantlinger 2003; Friedman 2013; Lareau 2011). Stevens (2007), for instance, notes how families have begun to fashion an entire way of life "organized around the production of measurable virtue" (p. 15). Meanwhile, Demerath's (2009) study showcased incidents of both stress and incivility that emerged as a result of students' inability to cope with the mounting pressures to "succeed" and the perceived fallouts of "failing". Aligned with the notion of a responsibilized subject, Ball and Olmedo (2013) argue that we are increasingly being "burdened by the responsibility to perform, and if we do not, we are in danger of being seen as irresponsible" (88).

The purpose of this section is not to refute the claims central to the concept of "responsiblization". In fact, students from both schools demonstrated a heightened sense of responsibility for their future goals and even experienced mounting levels of stress as a result. There were, however, significant differences in how the relationship between the school and students' aspirational goals was conceived. These differences were not only manifested in the opportunities and activities provided, but also in how students behaved and interacted with different aspects of their educational experiences. In sum the two sites of study presented contrasting understandings of responsibility, ranging from shared to strictly individual.

As previously discussed, St. Thomas did not merely provide detailed "scripts" for students to follow. Rather, the school actively strived to enhance students' chances at admissions through a series of institutional practices which included promoting competitions which both recognized and credentialed its participants; hosting numerous college fairs; identifying external opportunities such as leadership retreats, volunteer trips and pre-colleges; and building trust and name recognition with different universities abroad. Together these practices were intentionally designed to provide students with a significant competitive advantage, one knowingly unavailable to students in other schools. Furthermore, it reflected a prevailing belief that although individual hard work was indeed required, students' aspirations were collaboratively accomplished, wherein the school played a significant role.

The belief that aspirations were collaborative was acknowledged by students who although adamant of their personal sacrifice and enterprise (i.e. hinchar el curriculum), recognized the multiple benefits the school offered. It can also provide an added

explanation as to why St. Thomas students both vocally and incessantly contested grades and sought accommodations, a process which Calarco (2018) has notably referred to as "negotiated opportunity". Often framed as being part of a broader culture of self-advocacy common amongst middle-class and affluent students, these forms of negotiation may also be predicated on how the purpose and role of schools are conceived in these social spaces. By not assigning adequate grades or granting additional opportunities, teachers are viewed as improperly upholding their end of this implicit agreement. And while teachers lamented the prevalence of these behaviors, they did not feel confident or sufficiently supported to say no. In the end, as one teacher noted, if the students "insist enough, they will eventually get what they want".

It could be argued that St. Thomas' standing within Ecuador's educational landscape and its prohibitively high tuition rates partially rested on its students' ability to enroll in prestigious universities abroad. While there are likely many factors that inform the school's prestige, St. Thomas actively publicized its students accomplishments evidenced in graduation speeches and yearbook postings which listed all the universities students were admitted to, even those they chose not to attend. The agreement between St. Thomas and its students was therefore mutually beneficial and served as what Demerath and Mattheis (2015) refer to as a feedback mechanism, aligning students' aspirational goals and the institution's need and desire for cachet.

In contrast, UECT's engagement with students' aspirational goals was restricted to the educational provisions offered inside the classroom. For example, teachers were adamant about the importance of writing for students' higher education prospects, and therefore made a concerted effort to help cultivate and refine their abilities. The school,

however, did not provide extracurricular activities or offer any form of guidance on how to best navigate the complexities of the admission processes. In fact, students were unaware such services and opportunities even existed. When asked if anyone was helping her navigate the application process, Maria Ullauri notably replied "¿cómo así te ayudan?" ["What do you mean they help you?"].

Maria Ullauri's reply was prompted by a shared and at times grudging belief (see Alejandra Moncayo's critique of public schools) that students were solely responsible for their aspirational goals. This understanding was best exemplified by the grounded concept of "buenos buscones" introduced by the teaching staff and evidence in students' behaviors. Highly reminiscent of notions of grit and hustle (see Gorski, 2016), "buenos buscones" associated successful enrollment to students' ability to identify and pursue existing opportunities, and their resilience when faced with the obstacles they would inevitably encounter. Conversely, failed attempts at admissions were attributed to individual dispositions and personal shortcomings, rather than the structural and even infrastructural constraints many experienced. Maria Espinosa captured this prevailing belief of individual responsibility when she stated, "el BI hace una parte y nada más. Y ahora depende de ellos" ["the IB does one part and that is it. It is now up to them"].

Enrollment abroad and other forms of "success" were believed to be the byproduct of students' resilience, ingenuity and personal merits. These embedded understandings not only informed how students engaged with their aspirations, but also on how they behaved in the classroom and interacted with their teachers. Unlike their St. Thomas counterparts, UECT students did not actively seek extensions or contest their grades. In fact, even in moments of perceived injustice, such as the printer incident

highlighted in the findings, students often acquiesced, accepting the resulting consequences without much complaint. The words “shake it off” written on the whiteboard of the IB office suggest that although acquiescent, a form of resistance did exist. Resistance, however, was largely silent and avoided confronting institutional norms and teachers’ decision-making.

Numerous studies have examined the relationship between students’ social class background and institutional engagement. Through the concept of “informed agency”, Brantlinger (2003) showcased how middle-class parents committed to principles of social equity, wielded their influence and knowledge of institutional norms to secure advantages for their children. Meanwhile Lareau (2011) argued that dissonance between the logics undergirding school-based practices and low-income families approach to child-rearing generate a mutual sense of distrust which inhibit most forms of self-advocacy. It is important to acknowledge that the findings from this study are highly predicated on the characteristics of the two sites of study, notably their public and private statuses. However, it signals to perceptual constructions that reflect class-based differences in schooling that may potentially be extended to other sites of study. Notably, it suggests that although class-based differences are the result of both practices and affects, it may be undergirded by differential understandings of the purpose of schools. At UECT students, teachers and administrative staff conceived of the school strictly as a site of academic instruction. At St. Thomas it was a site of “collaborative advantaging”.

Equalizing opportunities

The “Inserción de Bachillerato Internacional en colegios fiscales del Ecuador” signed in 2006 and greatly expanded under Correa’s administration was envisioned as

means of improving the country's educational system and equalizing opportunities between public and private school students. It was aligned with the principle of class redistribution which served as a guiding logic throughout Correa's mandate, markedly evident in the acerbic rhetoric promoted during political speeches and public appearances. The goal of this dissertation was to use two socially distinct schools to examine a core assumption underlying the policy initiative, that broadening access to "quality" education programs historically restricted to elite schools is an effective means to disrupt existing patterns of social reproduction. To this end, I framed my inquiry around the purposefully broad question of: in what ways does the introduction of the DP into low-income public schools achieve its stated goal of equalizing opportunities between students of different social backgrounds? As the prior discussion suggests, the answers to this question seems somewhat bleak.

There was a widespread acknowledgement by both the participants of this study and other important stakeholders such as the members of the ASECCBI, that the existing policy disconnect between the DP and local universities greatly limited the potential value of the program. As previously showcased, the DP's lack of recognition as a valid diploma for admissions narrowed its perceived utility. UECT students did acknowledge that the program provided a number of both tangible and intangible benefits, such as improved critical thinking skills, smaller class sizes, independent learning and the opportunity to engage with research. The program's main appeal, however, was highly associated to its currency abroad, with many students viewing it as a needed prerequisite for admissions. In fact, enrolling in a university abroad was described by UECT students as being the main – and sometimes sole - reason to first enroll and later remain in the

program. Under this perceptual framing, equalizing opportunities denotes broadening access to universities abroad by increasing the number of students who are eligible to apply and subsequently enroll.

Ball, Maguire and Braun (2012) argue that "policy texts are typically written in relation to the best of all possible schools, schools that only exist in the fevered imaginations of politicians, civil servants and advisers in relation to fantastical contexts" (p. 3). As a result, policies often contain important oversights which may directly conflict with its underlying intent. In the case of the DP initiative, while it did provide a prestigious credential that in principal could enhance public-school students' chances at admissions, it failed to recognize the contextual impediments that for most students relegated the promise of study abroad to the realm of fantasy or fiction. Comparing UECT with St. Thomas helped accentuate the school-based practices and shared dispositions that inhibited an equal engagement with the application process. It did not even consider that if accepted, notwithstanding a very generous scholarship offer, most UECT students would have to decline, given the highly prohibitive tuition fees most universities abroad require.

At UECT, the promise of study abroad was likely to be unfulfilled. While many remained committed to the pursuit (grasping to any subtle sign of possibility), a number of students began to realize the improbability of their aspirations and gradually acquiesced. Acquiescence, as hinted in Berlant's (2011) work, can lead to an incoherent mash of affects and actions. In this study, it took a wide variety of forms including resistance, pragmatism and even surrender. Some UECT students, for instance, became increasingly disengaged and resorted to humor as a means to disrupt class time,

substituting academic commitment for the immediate gratification of having a "laugh" (see Willis, 1977). Others, began to question the IB's utility and considered returning to the BGU, a program which boasted weaker academic standards, a disgruntled teaching staff and much larger class sizes. Most alarming, however, were students such as Daniel Lopez whose sense of disappointment and frustration seemed to directly inform how he viewed higher education and life after graduating from UECT. Although not fully elaborated and possibly both reactionary and momentary, the statement "mejor me preparo para quedarme a estudiar aquí en Ecuador mismo o hasta hacer otra cosa" ["that maybe its best that I prepare myself to study in Ecuador or even do something else"] does raise some concerns.

Failed aspirations, as Ray (2003) argues, may lead to "acquiescent contentment", a sense of fatalism where one's social standing is unlikely or even impossible of change. Bourdieu (1984) provides a similar argument noting that failed desires for a better life are "inscribed at the deepest level of their disposition as a sort of 'blighted hope' or frustrated promise" (p. 150). The findings from this study cannot speak definitively or even confidently about the consequences of students' unfulfilled aspirational goals. It can, however, suggest that the DP initiative may include a hidden cost which was not envisioned or appropriately anticipated. In the somewhat disorderly attempt to furnish low-income students with new opportunities, the policy may ultimately help solidify the affective and perceptual systems that underlie existing patterns of social reproduction. Specifically, through the guise of "equalizing opportunity", the policy may further conceal the different ways students' institutional membership and familial backgrounds contribute to the likelihood of achieving the aspirational goal of study abroad. Returning

to the news passage in the beginning of the dissertation, the policy shifts the focus towards the little Ecuadorian public schools have in common with elite institutions, and away from the numerous and arguably more determining differences.

There is an important temporal aspect to the question of equalizing opportunity, which thus far has been ignored. While the DP initiative may not effectively address students' goal of higher education admissions, its value should not be restricted to immediate outcomes and concerns. There is a rather robust literature encompassing numerous contexts which highlights how DP graduates are better prepared for postsecondary coursework and are more likely to persist to complete a college degree (Cole, Ullman, Gannon, & Rooney, 2015; Conley, McGaughy, Davis-Molin, Farkas, & Fukuda, 2014; Inkelas, Swan, Pretlow, & Jones, 2012; Saavedra, Lavore, & Georgina, 2016; Taylor & Porath, 2006). Even through the extent of this study, students were able to name numerous benefits of the program, highlighting their notably improved writing abilities and the learning benefits of small class sizes. Equalizing forces may therefore be taking effect in a further point in students' academic and professional trajectories, presumably once they commence their higher education. There isn't, however, a deliberate effort to ensure that these benefits do accrue. In this sense, equalization is largely left to hope and happenstance.

Fragmented capital and a question of conversion

The findings of this study highlight important issues centered on notions of "capital conversion" (see Bourdieu, 2007). It showcases that although the DP initiative has broadened access to a specific form of symbolic capital, how this form of capital is validated and appraised differs significantly and is highly predicated on students'

institutional membership and social class background. Through their access to detailed "scripts" and ample financial means, St. Thomas students were able to pursue opportunities in which enrollment in the DP provided clear and important personal benefits. Combined with other experiences and academic accomplishments, it helped cement their status as competitive applicants to prestigious universities abroad. Meanwhile, UECT students were required to creatively search for opportunities, since those to their avail did not directly recognize the program. In most cases these searches did not yield suitable outlets, meaning that the DP's instrumental value was largely lost.

The DP, however, should not be restricted to its instrumental value as a university-entrance diploma – although amongst students from both schools it was largely framed in such a way. Rather it should be viewed in its composite, as both a transactional credential and an educational approach which does, as previously suggested, provide a number of implicit benefits, especially when compared to the BGU. While these benefits may not be immediately validated, through chance and circumstance it may present students, at a future occasion, with important benefits and advantages. To this end, I would suggest thinking about the DP initaitive as a means of affording low-income students with "fragmented capital"; a form of capital that has the potential to be valuable but is disconnected and lacks immediate access to the institutional mechanisms that confer it value.

Fragmented capital should not be a guiding logic for education policy. It relies too greatly on a sense of optimism that students will eventually gain access to "fields" which recognize and validate the capital they acquired. As shown in the findings, it may also generate a sense of purposeless and discouragement, as students are unable to pinpoint

how their enrollment will contribute to their aspirational goals and life chances. It does, however, acknowledge that the benefits of a policy such as the IB initiative may be latent, emerging in a future point in time. Returning to the overarching research question guiding this dissertation, while the DP initiative may not be immediately equalizing opportunity, there is chance that it may still have an equalizing effect. While this study lacks a longitudinal approach needed to seriously engage with issues of time and change (what Bourdieu would refer to as the trajectory of capital), it does provide a number of cautionary signs which suggest a degree of pessimism.

Pedagogical insights and lessons from the classroom

Social reproduction is broadly defined as the different structures and activities present in society that allow social hierarchies to be perpetuated. Policies, such as the DP initiative, are envisioned as a means of disrupting existing patterns of reproduction by broadening access to educational experiences and credentials that were historically restricted to an elite student population. Undergirding the policy's intent are two implicit understandings. First, that schools and education more broadly are important compensatory sites and therefore a justifiable source of public investment. Second, for reproduction to be disrupted, it is those situated at the margins that must undergo change. Or, as Van Galen (2007) explains, it is about inviting poor and working-class students to play "the game", rather than scrutinizing and questioning the game itself.

Philipsen (2007) rightfully contends that although important, these understandings fail to acknowledge the role of the non-poor in perpetuating existing structures of reproduction. She argues that patterns of reproduction will only be disrupted when affluent students begin to "take poverty personally and realize [their] role in its existence.

It is a call to stop focusing on the poor alone when we talk about poverty" (p. 277). Philipsen's call is an important one and suggests that policies shouldn't solely focus on broadening the resources and replicating the practices present in affluent communities in low-income spaces. Rather, it requires some level of cooperation, a willingness amongst affluent students to critically examine their own privilege and grapple with questions of how the many advantages they enjoy may in fact be coming at the expense of others. Although rallying in principle, this idealistic request most often falls short in practice, largely because those in power are unwilling or unable to compromise their positions (see Brantlinger, 2003).

Observing St. Thomas classrooms was highly instructive in piecing together some nuanced reasons why this form of critical examination is not occurring. The most evident pertains to the immediate concerns of college admissions, a pervasive preoccupation which dictated many of the decisions taking place within the school. As both teachers and students consistently demonstrated, in the effort to become a competitive applicant in an increasingly difficult field of competition, there was never any time to spare. In fact, there was a prevailing concern of "falling behind" and an active avoidance of whatever could steer a lesson away from its intended objectives. Anything that wasn't captured by existing evaluative structures that contributed to college admissions was consigned as superfluous.

What was most noteworthy, however, was the absence of local considerations or conversations about issues pertaining to Ecuador. As students openly admitted, they were ignorant about their immediate surroundings, often expressing a more comprehensive understanding of the histories of distant places rather than their own. If we think of a

critical examination of privilege through a Freirean (1968) lens of critical consciousness (conscientização), numerous questions can be raised about the feasibility of the request. For instance, can St. Thomas students critically examine their privilege in a manner which is devoid from a specific context? Can students be critically aware of their social positions if they are unaware of the histories that enabled them?

The school and classroom discussions do not create these local forms of disconnect. It is likely the result of students' class-based experiences which are unfolding in a highly stratified society where social class tensions have historically been high. The school does, however, contribute to this perception of divide by promoting a highly international curriculum and fomenting a belief about local inadequacies, perceptions which are arguably enabled by the IB evaluative mechanisms. Statements such as "we don't have to be limited to Ecuador" and the "I think they give us this idea here that other places are better than here" not only reflect students' experiences of dissonance but reaffirm and even encourage such a stance. Students and teachers were cognizant of this form of socializations and even expressed critique and concern. Their actions did not, however, suggest a sense of urgency or an ability to disrupt the modes of practice common in the school. Rather, most seemed heavily ensnared by the "rules of the game" and the demands of competitive college admission that they did not even consider other potential possibilities. Critique, in this sense, was the equivalent of a resigned sigh.

Philipsen's call is both pressing and daunting, as it requires those who are actively benefiting from an existing state of affairs, to change. It requires a reorientation of what it means to be educated, which foregrounds and obligates a reckoning of power and privilege. How this reorientation may occur is uncertain and subject to the imaginative

work of scholars and practitioners. Van Halen (2007), for instance, argues for the development of a more deliberate pedagogy of class, one which recognizes the powerful lessons on class hierarchies which can be gleaned from the lived-experiences of members of school's larger community, including the professional staff whose services are visible but whose stories are not (see also MacKenzie, 1998). Based on the findings from this study I would add that incorporating these stories and discussions has to be done purposefully and can't directly contradict or fully distract from students' immediate concerns, which at St. Thomas was centered on college admissions. Failure to do so may be counterproductive and elicit frustration, disengagement and even rejection amongst the student body. This was evident in how Alejandro Fernandez referred to *Educación para la Ciudadanía*, a course which albeit imperfect attempted to incorporate some degree of community engagement. He notably stated, "why am I taking this class, I won't stay here so I have nothing to do with this class. It is almost like a waste of time".

Balancing students' immediate concerns with the need of a critical examination of power and privilege requires a pedagogical approach which oscillates between evaluative requirements and the histories and experiences that inform a students' social standings. The goal is not to view each component discretely, but rather as part of a connecting whole, where even content which is perceived as distant can be leveraged to better understand students' lived realities. Although largely unstructured and often disjointed, UECT classrooms provide a very rough sketch of what this approach may look like. Through a highly improvised form of instruction which drew heavily on personal stories and anecdotal information, UECT teachers were able to constantly pivot classroom discussion to and from the social realities that directly informed students' lived

experiences. As seen in the previous chapter, conversation about decolonial movements in Algeria – a topic which is seemingly distant – quickly turned into a discussion about Ecuador, focusing on issues of national sovereignty and immigration. Discussion about TCK quickly transformed into a debate about whether the framework could be useful in understanding what it means to be Ecuadorian. While these discussions could have been further developed, they showcase the possibilities that may emerge from such an approach.

It is important to acknowledge that these pedagogical moves are highly predicated on teachers' own subjectivities and lived experiences. St. Thomas' foreign-hire and short tenured teaching staff pose some important obstacles to this pedagogical approach. Nonetheless, while teachers may struggle to direct conversation in a manner which is directly relevant for students, they may create the needed space for these conversations to occur. If we take students' claims at face-value, there is significant interest in engaging with these types of conversations. However, students are either unwilling or not fully equipped to intervene and redirect the highly task-oriented and structured modes of instruction which predominate in St. Thomas classrooms. As Haverly, Barton, Schwarz and Braaten (2020) argue, if teachers are committed to disrupting settled hierarchies, they must be willing to "make space" for students to engage with the course content in creative and even unexpected ways. The teacher is therefore tasked with determining the moments to pivot, identifying instance of curricular aperture where the required course content can be used to pose questions that inform contextually relevant conversation about issues of power and privilege. Even if the starting point of conversation is

ignorance (i.e. indigenous civil rights movements in Ecuador), an examination of what allows students to remain ignorant of such matters can yield important insights.

Chapter 10: Conclusion

This dissertation emerged from a feeling of ambivalence. On one hand, I was encouraged by Ecuador's effort to directly engage with structural forms of inequality by broadening the educational experiences and credentials historically restricted to elite private institutions. On the other hand, I was concerned that these efforts might reaffirm existing structures of inequality by creating an illusion that equity was indeed being accomplished. After engaging with both sites of study what remains is largely a feeling of critique and concern. A belief that in the effort to provide a quick and wholesale solution to educational quality and social inequity, the DP initiative failed to consider students' lived experiences and the social and material realities of Ecuador's public schools. Moreover, it assumed that private schools such as St. Thomas were static spaces whose practices can be fully replicated. As this study and others suggest, schools catering to affluent student populations are in a constant state of flux, creatively finding new ways to ensure that their students maintain their competitive advantage. These changes and adaptations are a result of what I am terming as collaborative advantaging.

While the discussion reiterated the main causes of concern and their theoretical import, for the conclusion I will attempt to recapture that initial feeling of encouragement by thinking through what the DP initiative can become and still achieve. In addition, I will consider the study's limitations and my own methodological regrets. I will finalize by highlighting the lingering questions and the emerging pathways for future research.

The DP initiative at a crossroad

Unlike her predecessor, Ecuador's current Minister of Education, Monserrat Creamer, recently questioned the DP initiative's efficacy in achieving its stated goal of

improving the quality of public education and equalizing opportunity. In response to both public school students' consistently low exam scores and the programs' high costs, she recommended a greater level of scrutiny, casting doubt on the initiative's future. No binding decisions have been made yet. Rather, the Ministry of Education has promoted a case-by-case approach to better understand the impact of the DP on individual schools. Regardless, the original promise of incorporating the DP into all public schools now seems farfetched and the likelier trend is a gradual reduction of IB schools rather than an expansion. The change in both tone and approach suggests that the initiative has reached an important point of inflection.

If the Ministry of Education's goal is to redesign the DP initiative to best serve Ecuadorian public-school students, the findings from this study provide important insights which can inform a potential process of redirection. As evidenced in student interviews and classroom observations, many of the initiative's shortcomings are the result of disconnects between the DP and existing educational policies and practices. The most notable consists of the DP's lack of recognition as a valid admissions credential for higher education; a disconnect which has significantly narrowed the potential meanings students ascribe to the program. Aligned with the arguments promoted by ASECCBI, findings from this study suggest that the creation of equivalency policies which recognize the DP as a credential for admissions would both broaden and change how students perceive and relate to the program. UECT students consistently explained that difficulty navigating the application process for universities abroad coupled with the DP's lack of currency in local universities was the primary reason for both academic disengagement and eventual dropout.

An additional disconnect exists between the DP and the pedagogical practices and curricular focus of the BGU. As UECT teachers both noted and lamented, students arrived at the program without ever have written an essay or participated in a classroom discussion. Students, as a result, often experienced a transitional "choque" upon arrival, struggling to adapt to new classroom dynamics and comply with assessment criteria which they had very little experience with. The time and effort dedicated to remediation often came at the expense of both content and the development of other important skills needed for the DP examination. Considering Vavrus and Salema's (2013) argument about the need to consider the materiality undergirding teaching and pedagogy, it would be unreasonable to expect BGU classrooms to replicate the inquiry-focused and writing intensive approach emphasized in the DP. However, a more proactive approach is needed, one that goes beyond the optimism that the practices of the DP will inevitably seep into BGU classrooms. This could include creative school-based practices such as "teachers teaching teachers" conferences (see Christensen, 2005), but would also require revisiting the existing evaluative mechanisms present in the BGU which are described as being content-driven and predominantly employing multiple choice questions.

Although consistent with a range of policies aimed on addressing social inequity, the DP initiative remains largely a programmatic add-on rather than part of a larger and coordinated educational reform. This current moment of scrutiny and re-evaluation should not merely entail revoking the program from low-performing schools and drawing lessons from those that perform well. Instead, there should be a serious consideration of how the DP configures within Ecuador's educational landscape and relates to other policy initiatives. Addressing the aforementioned disconnects is a start in creating some form of

policy alignment, but the question to be answered should perhaps be more foundational; what does the Ministry of Education expect the DP initiative to accomplish? Engaging with this question now that the initial wave of enthusiasm has settled is likely to yield a very different response to the original and far-reaching view that it would improve quality and equalize opportunity.

Methodological limitations and personal regrets

There are two important methodological limitations to this study. First, while the findings signal to important social processes which limit the initiative's aim of equalizing opportunity, its focus is predominantly on access to higher education. A longitudinal approach which follows students over a longer period of time, into higher education and beyond, could provide a greater level of insight into the efficacy of the DP as a catalyst for social mobility. This is not only a limitation of this study, but a shortcoming of the initiative itself. UECT does not conduct any follow-up with their graduates and the Ministry of Education does not currently maintain any tracking policies. At this point, any overarching statement about the long-term efficacy of the initiative would be premised on conjecture.

A second limitation is more conceptual in nature and entails how I methodologically engaged with a culturalist view of social class. Although ethnographic in approach, the presented data draws heavily on interviews, artefact and in-school observations. A greater depth in detail regarding students' lives outside of school could have provided an important layer of insight as well as an additional source for triangulation. For instance, accompanying Roberto through his daily commute and observing his home life would not only enrich the narrative, but also add to any

discussion about how a policy such as the DP initiative may help conceal the forms of advantage which are unevenly distributed within different segments of society.

In my view, these limitations were predicated on circumstance and resources. As a graduate student pressured by time and concerned with funding, I could not remain in Ecuador indefinitely. Moreover, as a father of an infant, my data collection could not extend past school hours. What I do regret, however, is how I approached and related to the process of research. Perhaps due to my inexperience, I viewed my study as being temporally bounded, with a specific start and end date. When the academic year neared its end, I thanked my participants, shared emerging insights, and simply moved on.

While I am cognizant that a research project does eventually have to end, I lament not making a greater effort to continue cultivating and maintaining the relationships I built through the extent of the study. This would enable follow-up, and the possibility of a future longitudinal study similar to Shirazi's (2020) work on the life trajectories of Jordanian youth as they encounter the frustrated promises of education. More importantly, however, it would allow the possibility for me to become a long-term partner to UECT and a resource for students who greatly desired some form of guidance. Rather, I distributed my contact information and expected students to reach out to me, ignoring both the existing literature on social-class and help seeking behaviors, and the emerging insights from this very study.

Pathways for inquiry

This study serves as an important starting pointing in the effort to think critically about the DP initiative as an approach to educational and social equity. Focusing on students' lived experiences provides a rather pessimistic outlook of what in fact the

initiative is accomplishing. An important next step, as previously mentioned, is to undertake a longitudinal approach which endeavors on examining how enrollment in the DP informed students' academic and professional trajectories. As suggested in the concept of "fragmented capital", the goal would be to ascertain whether students are finding institutional outlets that acknowledge and subsequently validate the cultural capital acquired through the program. While an important consideration for UECT students, this is probably even more pressing for DP students attending schools in remote regions in the country such as Zamora Chinchipe and Pastaza.

Consistent with Resnik's (2012) concept of percolation, a study focusing on teachers with dual appointments in the DP and BGU can provide some insights into how the pedagogical approaches and curricular priorities emphasized in the DP are seeping into BGU classroom. Carefully detailing and critically examining these attempts could directly respond to the undergirding assumption that while the DP is indeed experienced by a select group of students, its long-term benefits are shared by all.

Outside of the policy initiative, this study provides interesting starting points for future research on class culture and social reproduction. One underexplored finding consists of St. Thomas students avid attempts to build narrative fodder for the personal statements essay required by many higher education institutions abroad. This included seeking experiences such as volunteering in the Amazonian region which activated a number of tropes and catered to how Ecuador is often imagined and represented by a larger international community. The personal statement remains a largely undertheorized data source, that can lead to novel insights into how existing patterns of advantage are maintained through narrative construction. In addition to potential contributions to

theory, the ensuing findings can have practical implications that aim on creating a more equitable approach to admissions.

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Appendix 1 (Fernando Interview Protocol):

Gracias por recibirme. Yo quería hacer esta entrevista para entender un poco mejor su perspectiva del colegio, de los estudiantes y del BI.

1) Para empezar, ¿cómo describiría usted el colegio [UECT]?
    a. ¿Y de que maneras el colegio hay cambiado en los últimos años?
    b. ¿Y estos cambios también son en términos demográficos de los estudiantes?
        i. ¿Y cómo describiría a los estudiantes del colegio?
        ii. ¿Y cuál es el proceso de ingresar al colegio?
2) ¿Y cuál es la experiencia del colegio con el programa del BI?
    a. ¿Cuáles son algunos de los desafíos que el colegio tiene implementando el programa del BI?
    b. ¿Que dijeron el personal del BI que vinieron en el mes de Marzo? ¿Hicieron alguna recomendación?
        i. ¿Y por qué vinieron?
3) ¿Y cómo el colegio determina que estudiantes pueden ingresar en el programa del BI?
    a. ¿Y cómo es el proceso de aplicación?
    b. Yo oí que ustedes también reciben estudiantes de otros colegios…
4) Yo se que los estudiantes del BI tienen más trabajo y días mas largos. ¿Cuáles son las motivaciones de los estudiantes para ingresar al programa?
    a. ¿Y cuáles son las diferencias entre el BI y el BGU?
    b. ¿Y los estudiantes del BI acostumbran a ir a la universidad?
5) ¿Y cuáles son algunas de las dificultades que los estudiantes tienen con el programa?
    a. ¿Y qué cree que causa estas dificultades?
6) La última vez que hablamos usted menciono que ha recibido muchas quejas de los estudiantes. ¿Qué tipo de quejas has recibido?
7) Uno de los objetivos del BI es para que los estudiantes desarrollan una mentalidad internacional. El BI define este concepto de una manera bien flexible, dejando que los colegios creen sus propias interpretaciones. ¿Como cree que este concepto es interpretado y operacionalizado en el colegio?
8) ¿Cuáles son los beneficios de que un estudiante tenga una mentalidad internacional?
9) ¿Y cómo el colegio escoge que profesores van a dar clases en el BI?
    a. ¿Y estos profesores reciben algún entrenamiento del BI?
10) Y en relación a la intervención, ¿qué recomendaciones han hecho los representantes del ministerio de la educación?

Appendix 2 (UECT Student Interview Protocol):

Primero gracias por hacer esta entrevista. El propósito de las entrevistas con los estudiantes es entender un poco más de sus experiencias en el colegio, sus motivaciones para ingresar al programa del BI, sus experiencias con el programa y sus aspiraciones para el futuro. Pero para empezar me gustaría saber un poco de su vida fuera del colegio. Entonces si tu pudieras me contar un poco de su familia:

1) ¿En qué barrio vives?
2) ¿Con quién vives?
3) ¿Y tus papas de donde son?
4) ¿Y ellos, que hacen profesionalmente?
    a. ¿Ellos completaran sus estudios universitarios?
5) ¿Como describirías un fin de semana típico en su familia?
6) ¿En su tiempo libre que te gustas hacer?
7) ¿En cuanto a su educación, a cuánto tiempo estas estudiando en el colegio [UECT]?
    a. ¿Y donde estudiabas antes de venir al colegio?
    b. ¿Y por qué escogiste a venir al colegio [UECT]?
8) ¿Cuándo escogiste aplicar al programa del Bachillerato Internacional, cual eran tus expectativas para el programa?
    a. ¿Cómo el colegio te describió el programa?
9) ¿Y cuál fue su motivación en ingresar en el programa?
10) ¿Y hasta ahora como describieras sus experiencias en el BI?
11) ¿Y cómo compararía estas experiencias con las que tenía antes en el BGU?
    a. ¿Trabajos, contenido, pedagogía?
    b. ¿Y tuviste alguna dificultad en la transición del BGU hasta el BI?
    c. ¿Y hay una diferencia entre los estudiantes que siguieran en el BGU y los que están en el BI?
    d. ¿Dicotomía?
12) ¿En términos de contenido, que clases más te gusta? ¿Por qué?
13) ¿Y cuáles menos te gusta? ¿Por qué?
14) ¿Ya tienes un tema para su monografía?
    a. ¿Y por qué escogiste este tema?
15) Uno de los objetivos del BI es para que sus estudiantes desarrollan una mentalidad internacional. Para ti, ¿qué significa tener una mentalidad internacional?
16) ¿Qué quieres haces después que gradúes del colegio?
    a. ¿De qué manera crees que su participación en el BI pueds te ayudar en lograr este objetivo?
17) ¿Cuándo piensas en el futuro, hay algo que te preocupa?
18) ¿Se fueras aconsejar un estudiante de primero que piensas en ingresar en el programa del BI, que dirías?
19) ¿Y para concluir, que planes tienes para las vacaciones de verano?