Curriculum tracking and the achievement ideology at an American urban public school

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Abstract

This thesis presents a case study of how curriculum differentiation operates at Lincoln High School, an urban public school in the Midwestern United States with a highly regarded International Baccalaureate (IB) program. I use a mix of qualitative and quantitative methods to investigate the systems of beliefs and practices that structure Lincoln's tracking system.

Like many American high schools, Lincoln has rejected the traditional practice of assigning all students to overarching curriculum 'tracks' on the basis of their measured aptitude, instead allowing students to choose between courses covering different content at different levels of difficulty in most academic subjects. The school thus offers an excellent opportunity to examine within-school stratification in light of the declining popularity of traditional tracking and the increasing degree to which students control their own coursetaking. Within-school stratification is particularly worthy of continued attention because it qualifies the mythology of the American dream, which holds that schools give students from all backgrounds an opportunity to achieve upward social mobility. I use interviews, observations, and document analysis to explore how curriculum differentiation structures academic and social hierarchies at Lincoln, what teachers and students believe about how to achieve school success and upward mobility, and how Lincoln reconciles its egalitarian ideals with the continued existence of *de facto* tracking.

I argue that Lincoln's approach to curriculum differentiation strikes a tenuous balance between academic excellence and equity for all students. Although student choice dominates the course scheduling process, Lincoln's curriculum still bears many of the hallmarks of tracking: the IB structures a clear academic and social hierarchy of courses, and students tend to follow predictable patterns of coursetaking within each subject, with few opportunities for upward mobility. Nonetheless, teachers and students almost unanimously subscribe to the local achievement ideology, which holds that any student, regardless of prior academic achievement, can and should participate in the IB as long as he or she is willing to work hard. This radical promise of equal opportunity allows participants to characterize Lincoln as a force for equality and social justice. However, the school's continued reliance on sorting its students, even in the face of evidence that tracking reproduces racial and class inequalities, suggests that the achievement ideology serves primarily to legitimate stratification, not to undo it. These findings have important ramifications for research in tracking, detracking, and stratification, and for practice in all schools seeking to negotiate the tension between excellence and equity.

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Chapter 1. Introduction

> I just think you need to be organized. That's about it… You don't have to be smart, I think. I think it's more of being focused. So a lot of kids aren't able to focus as well, and if you're not able to focus, you're not going to be able to stay organized and have what it takes to be full IB… I don't think I'm that smart, and I've had [perfect grades] since fourth grade. I just do my work.

This is how Wilma,[1] a tenth-grade student at Lincoln High School, explains the secret to success in the International Baccalaureate (IB), her school's most demanding curriculum. By any definition, Wilma is a high-achieving student: she takes a heavy load of academic courses, maintains excellent performance in school, serves on the advisory council of a youth-led non-profit organization, participates in athletics and cross-country running, plays the piano, and is a gifted painter. Although she does not characterize her story in these terms, as a young African American woman who aspires to attend university, study physics, and perhaps become an architect or an engineer, Wilma also represents the promise of upward mobility and equality through education in a city and a country where African Americans are persistently underrepresented in most professional careers and in the middle class. Wilma's story reflects a common theme at Lincoln, an urban state school with a well-regarded IB program: nearly every student and teacher expresses agreement with an effort-based achievement ideology that holds that any student who works hard enough, regardless of his or her innate talent, can succeed in the school's most difficult and prestigious curriculum, colloquially known as the 'full IB'. Her faith that hard work in high school will prepare her for higher education and a professional career, too, typifies the American belief that public education gives everyone, regardless of background, a fair chance at improving their position in the world.

Yet if academic success and upward social mobility are simply a matter of 'just doing one's work', why do large numbers of Lincoln students opt out of most or all of the school's IB course offerings? This question is particularly intriguing because the IB is not just Lincoln's most difficult curriculum, but also its highest-status one: students and teachers routinely express the normative view that IB courses serve the school's central

[1] To preserve participants' anonymity, I have used pseudonyms to refer to all people, places, and institutions in the findings.

purpose of providing a rigorous academic education, while less demanding 'regular' courses enjoy none of this symbolic approval. Nonetheless, like many American schools, Lincoln persists in offering what scholars call a 'tracked' or 'setted' curriculum, with courses in most subjects available at multiple levels of difficulty. Every year, large numbers of students take advantage of the school's easier course offerings, despite the associated disadvantages in social status and academic rewards. The persistence of tracking raises another question about the structure of schooling and its relationship to society: if schools are meant to equalize the life chances of students from diverse backgrounds, why do they separate students to receive different instruction in different subjects? The most common answer to this question rests on the assumption, embedded in much of the scholarly literature on tracking, that students possess different levels of intrinsic intelligence, and therefore schools are justified in sorting them for different futures. Wilma's widely shared faith that attitude, not aptitude, determines academic success raises an intriguing challenge to this conventional view.

This thesis presents a detailed case study of Lincoln High School, a state school located in a midwestern American city called Springfield, in order to explore how schools balance the tension between excellence and equity. As an urban school that enrolls large numbers of low-income and minority students, Lincoln is an unlikely candidate to offer the IB, a demanding curriculum initially designed to meet the educational needs of privileged students in elite international schools. This unusual juxtaposition of program and context supports students and teachers' proud claims that Lincoln is an agent of equality, offering disadvantaged students a chance to move up in the world by acquiring a prestigious IB diploma. Yet the high-profile success stories of academic awards, scholarship offers, and admission to highly selective universities that sustain Lincoln's reputation do not necessarily represent the experiences of all students, thanks to the diversity of educational experiences made possible by Lincoln's stratified curriculum. My analysis probes beyond the surface of Lincoln's reputation, investigating the degree to which the success of the school's IB program obscures and even demands the continued sorting of many students into less academically and socially rewarding courses. I address three research questions: To what extent is Lincoln's curriculum stratified, both academically and socially? What do students and faculty believe about how to succeed in this tracking system – in other words, what is the local achievement ideology? Finally, why does Lincoln persist in tracking its students, even though its achievement ideology insists that every student is capable of succeeding in IB classes?

Rationale

The link between education and life chances, implicit in Wilma's narrative, is so common a refrain in research and policymaking that it hardly needs to be stated here. In the United States, census data indicate that educational attainment is positively correlated with earnings and negatively correlated with unemployment rates (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2013; Julian and Kominski, 2011; Ryan and Siebens, 2012). The financial returns of higher education, in particular, are substantial: Americans who hold a bachelor's degree or higher earn an annual median income over $20,000 greater than those with only a high school diploma (Zaback, Carlson, and Crellin, 2012). Consequently, educational attainment is widely viewed as a crucial element of upward social and economic mobility (Blau and Duncan, 1967; Sewell, Haller, and Portes, 1969; Sewell and Hauser, 1975). More recent research confirms that holding a bachelor's degree substantially enhances individuals' chances of upward mobility, measured by both family income and family wealth, and protects them against downward mobility (Pew Economic Mobility Project, 2012).

It should come as no surprise, then, that education is at the heart of the debate about how to explain and remedy social and economic inequality. This logic generally echoes the powerful argument – first advanced by Horace Mann, a pioneer of universal public education in the United States – that public schools are 'the great equalizer of the conditions of men' (Mann, 1848).[2] In this view, just as educational attainment is essential to individuals' chances for social mobility, improving access to high-quality education is essential to eliminating the pernicious influences of race, class, and other immutable characteristics on a person's life chances. In the United States, education has been especially important in attempts to ameliorate the persistent and troubling disadvantage of African Americans and Latinos vis-à-vis whites and, increasingly, Asian Americans. The centrality of *Brown v. Board of Education*, the 1954 Supreme Court decision outlawing racial segregation in schools, to the American civil rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s, and the continuing battle over affirmative action a generation later, both suggest the significance of education in the struggle to achieve equality for African Americans

[2] This view is by no means uniquely American: witness, for instance, the United Nations Millennium Development Goal of 'promot[ing] gender equality and empower[ing] women' by equalizing girls' and boys' participation in education (United Nations, 2010), or Prime Minister Tony Blair's description of investing in education as 'the best social policy, helping create a Britain where work and merit, not privilege or class background, decide how far you go' (Blair, 2005).

(Kluger, 2004). Widespread concern about the 'achievement gap' between black and white students (see, e.g., Chubb and Loveless, 2002; Coleman, 1966; Hemphill, Vanneman, and Rahman, 2011; Jencks and Phillips, 1998; Kosters and Mast, 2003; Vanneman et al., 2009) underscores the continued salience of education in the elusive pursuit of racial equality.

Urban public schools like Lincoln are crucial sites in this debate, because they serve high concentrations of students from low-income families and historically marginalized racial and ethnic groups (Lippman, Burns, and McArthur, 1996). Concerns about the adequacy of state schools in large, inner-city districts are varied and longstanding. Urban public schools lag behind the national average on virtually every metric of students' academic achievement, including standardized test scores, dropout rates, graduation rates, and readiness for university (Balfanz and Letgers, 2004; NCES, 2009, 2010, 2011b; Roderick, Nagaoka, and Coca, 2009; Swanson, 2009). They also tend to have less qualified and experienced teachers, less funding per student, and less adequate facilities than other schools (Betts, Ruben, and Danenberg, 2000; GAO, 1996; Kozol, 2005; Lankford, Loeb, and Wyckoff, 2002; Peske and Haycock, 2006). To the extent that disadvantaged students are concentrated in urban public schools, then, such failings are particularly troubling because they impede the 'equalizing' mission of public schooling.

However, this concentration of disadvantaged students also makes urban public schools a particularly promising site for reforms aimed at both improving achievement and reducing inequality. The long and questionably successful history of urban school reform has produced an impressive array of proposals to change everything from school governance to teacher training to parent involvement (for overviews, see Hess, 1999; Mirón and St. John, 2003). The initiatives most relevant to our purposes might be termed 'curricular reforms', which are concerned with what is taught and how.[3] Popular proposals to reshape the American curriculum in the last century have ranged from 'socially efficient' education intended to train children for their predicted adult roles to

[3] Various typologies of urban school reform efforts use slightly different terms for this category. For instance, Shipps defines 'performance', 'empowerment', 'market', and 'employment' regimes for school governance, with performance regimes focused on 'chang[ing] the pedagogy and culture of schools' (2003: 852). McDonnell (1989) describes reforms that redistribute authority, impose accountability, change curriculum and instruction, and build links between schools and communities. Flaxman et al. (1998) list nine types of common urban school reforms, including 'schools with a focus', such as a distinctive curriculum or instructional approach.

the child-centered, project-driven curriculum designed by John Dewey for the University of Chicago Lab School (Kliebard, 1986). More recently, some educators have begun to call for the restoration of a traditional, rigorous liberal arts curriculum, including the study of literature, culture, history, and foreign languages as well as math and science. Liberal arts educators contend that recent reforms – particularly the No Child Left Behind law, which sanctions schools for poor performance on standardized math and reading tests – have led to a dangerous narrowing of the American curriculum (Joseph et al., 2011; Ravitch, 2010). They argue that, in order to prepare students for life in a democratic society, schools need to embrace goals like critical thinking, ethical judgment, cultural literacy, and love of learning, and that a liberal arts curriculum is the best way to achieve these goals (Common Core, 2009; Finn and Ravitch, 2007; Finn, Ravitch, and Fancher, 1984; Hess, 2008; Hirsch, 1987; Ladner, 1984; Ravitch, 2010).

Although the IB – the centerpiece of Lincoln's own curricular reform effort – was founded in a very different context than the test- and skills-driven environment criticized by American liberal arts educators, it prescribes a curriculum that has much in common with their aims. Common Core, an American organization that supports liberal education, has explicitly endorsed the IB, and others have praised it as an exemplary liberal arts curriculum (Conner, 2008; Kroll, 1984; Mathews and Hill, 2005). More generally, the IB's reputation for rigor has increasingly caught the attention of reformers seeking to improve the quality of academic curricula in underperforming schools (Conner, 2008; Mathews and Hill, 2005; Saavedra, 2011; Spahn, 2000). Yet little research to date has investigated how the IB actually operates in these settings. This is an important oversight, because curriculum as written does not necessarily translate directly or predictably into classroom practice. Schools are complex systems, and a wide variety of factors, from available resources to teachers' interpretations, transform written curriculum documents into what students and teachers actually experience in the classroom. Qualitative, descriptive studies are thus necessary to supplement theorizing about the purposes of curriculum with understanding of how it is put into practice (Joseph, 2011). The persistence of curriculum tracking suggests that attention should also be devoted to the questions of which students participate in the IB and how they come to enroll in those courses. As an urban public school enrolling majorities of non-white and low-income students, Lincoln High School serves a population for which school is particularly important as a route for upward mobility; as an IB school, it embraces a

promising but untested approach to improving academic achievement. These characteristics make it a particularly intriguing site for study.

Scope and aims

This project, then, embraces three major aims. First, it addresses a narrowly defined gap in the empirical literature by adding to our understanding of how the IB works in urban public schools, particularly in light of the persistence of tracking. Compared to the fee-paying international schools in which the IB was first introduced, urban public schools serve a much less socially and educationally privileged population, and they have far fewer material resources; both of these differences might reasonably be expected to affect curriculum implementation. Yet the IB's rapid expansion in this unlikely context has thus far attracted little attention from researchers (for exceptions, see Kyburg, 2006; Kyburg, Hertberg-Davis, and Callahan, 2007; Mayer, 2006, 2008). Further empirical research on how the IB works in urban public schools can make valuable contributions to schools, which must weigh the potential benefits of curricular reform against the costs of implementing the IB,[4] and to the IB itself, which has embraced the goal of expanding access to a more diverse group of students (IBO, 2006a). Insofar as the IB qualifies as a liberal arts curriculum, these findings are also relevant to the broader strategy of improving schools through introducing more liberal curricula. While statistical generalization from Lincoln to other urban schools or IB schools is obviously impossible, such a case study can nonetheless contribute to scholarship by 'naturalistic generalization' (Stake, 1995; Yin, 2003) and by adding to the body of concrete, contextualized knowledge available to researchers (Flyvbjerg, 2006).

Second, this thesis contributes to a well-established tradition of research on 'tracking' and curriculum differentiation. A large body of research has established that tracking tends to exacerbate the differences in academic performance, social status, and behavior between high- and low-achieving students, with ethnic minority and low-

[4] In addition to the effort required to implement the IB curriculum, becoming an IB school requires a substantial financial commitment. As of 2013, a school in the United States seeking authorization to offer the Diploma Programme would pay an application fee of $4,000 (about £2,600) in the first year of the application process and a candidate fee of $9,500 (£6,250) in each of the next two years. Upon receiving authorization, the school would then pay an annual fee of $10,660 (£7,000) to maintain its IB authorization. Schools may incur additional costs in employing an IB coordinator, sponsoring teachers' participation in IB professional development workshops, purchasing IB publications for teachers, and mailing examinations, among other auxiliary expenses (IB, 2013c).

income students put at a particular disadvantage. In response to growing concerns about the implications of tracking for equity, many schools have implemented 'detracking' programs, ranging from eliminating low-track courses altogether to offering students the opportunity to choose their own courses. Lincoln's policy of allowing students to choose their own course schedules and its incremental approach to eliminating low-track courses offer an example of how one school negotiates detracking. However, the research on this practice – and particularly on how students choose between tracked courses – remains limited. My findings contribute to the emerging body of research on detracking by presenting a richly detailed picture of Lincoln's evolving tracking system. In particular, my focus on how Lincoln teachers and students reconcile their school's practices of curriculum differentiation with their apparently egalitarian ideals offers one explanation for why tracking is likely to persist despite criticisms that it reproduces social inequality.

Finally, this thesis speaks to even broader questions about equal opportunity, social mobility, and the democratizing function of public education. Public schools play a critical role in the mythology of the American dream, which holds that every individual has an equal opportunity to move up in the world. Yet this idealized view is difficult to reconcile with our growing awareness that most schools sort their students for instruction in a way that reinforces the divide between high and low achievers, sometimes as early as the primary grades. This thesis helps to challenge the view that schools are simply neutral training grounds offering every student an opportunity to prepare for competition in higher education and the job market, arguing instead that stratification *within* schools is an important precursor to stratification in the larger society. It also offers an answer to the rarely explored question of why students and teachers continue to accept within-school stratification, despite its increasingly obvious contributions to inequality. Finally, it suggests a point relevant to more broadly defined studies of social mobility: that the way in which merit is defined makes a particularly important contribution to participants' acceptance of stratification in an ostensibly meritocratic social order.

It hardly needs to be stated that, thanks to its focus on a limited set of research questions and its selection of a single research site, this study is limited in a variety of ways. Most obviously, as a single-case study, it is not intended to support statistical generalizations about urban schools, IB programs, tracking systems, or any of the other categories of institution to which Lincoln belongs. The propositions advanced here must be tested and refined in other settings before they have any legitimate claim to represent

experiences beyond Lincoln. Although this study is deeply intertwined with questions about academic achievement, it also does not draw any conclusions about how the IB affects students' intellectual growth or whether it is better than any other curriculum; the measurements of cognitive ability and prior achievement available to me are simply too limited to sustain such an inquiry. The study occupies a similar position with respect to research on school culture, school reform, and achievement gaps: although my findings implicate all of these fields, I do not claim to make an authoritative contribution to any of them. Finally, although research on beliefs about social mobility provides a useful framework for investigating how Lincoln participants think about coursetaking, I do not specifically address the conventional definition of social mobility in terms of occupation, income, and socioeconomic status; I operate on the widespread assumption that academic attainment, including IB participation, generally facilitates upward social mobility, but interrogating this assumption falls well beyond the scope of this study. Nonetheless, this project contributes to research about how the IB works in urban public schools, within-school curriculum differentiation and associated reforms, and the role of schooling in an unequal society.

Argument

Chapter 2 reviews literature in the two bodies of scholarly work to which this thesis contributes: the theoretical framework of social mobility and the empirical literature on curriculum differentiation. I begin by discussing the ideology of meritocracy, which holds that individuals earn their places in a stratified society according to some combination of ability and effort, and its widespread acceptance in the United States, in the form of the rhetoric of the American dream. Although the 'contest norm' (Turner, 1960) associated with this ideology holds that public schooling prepares everyone to compete on equal terms for jobs and further education, the reality of curriculum differentiation – the practice of sorting students for instruction in different subjects, at different levels of difficulty, or both – challenges this belief. Research on this practice, commonly known as 'tracking', indicates that the competition for academic resources and social status begins *within* the school, and that the inequalities in academic performance between high- and low-track students become greater over the course of schooling thanks to a variety of intentional and unintentional practices. More troubling, the sorting process by which students are assigned to different courses and tracks is not perfectly meritocratic; even as student choice has become increasingly important in determining tracking placements, low-income and minority students remain

underrepresented in the top academic tracks at most schools. The major task of this thesis is to explain the seeming contradiction between Americans' faith that education works as a 'great equalizer' and the widespread practice of curriculum differentiation.

Chapter 3 outlines the methods I have used to explore this contradiction, writ small, at Lincoln High School. I have adopted an inductive, primarily qualitative approach, borrowing heavily from the traditions of grounded theory and case study research, with the aim of producing a detailed study of one institution and generating hypotheses that can be tested and refined in other contexts. This chapter describes the principles governing my selection of research methods, the evolution of my research questions, and the procedures of data collection and analysis. I also discuss considerations of ethics and trustworthiness, particularly those arising from my own prior involvement at the case study site. These methods are necessarily limited, owing to the selection of a single case study site and the subjective bias inherent in any interpretive study; consequently, they do not support the kind of statistical generalization that has traditionally been the hallmark of useful research in the positivist tradition. Moreover, the inductive approach to analysis means that this study does not fit neatly into any single theoretical framework or body of literature. Instead, I have attempted to prioritize the voices of participants in generating a rich account of how tracking works at Lincoln, with the goal of enriching our understanding of how schools and other social institutions negotiate the competing imperatives of promoting equity and rewarding talent and effort.

Chapter 4 describes the context of the present study. It begins by presenting a short history of Lincoln High School, focusing on its evolution from an unremarkable neighborhood school to the best academic institution in its school district. The IB, which Lincoln began to offer in 1978 as part of an effort to reverse the flight of white families out of the district, has played a central role in this transformation. I next describe the IB, which has evolved from an experimental program hosted largely in 'schools for rich kids' (Tarc, 2009: 253) to a formidable force in international education, offering its curricula to over 1.1 million students at 3,633 national and international schools in 146 countries (IBO, 2013a). I devote special attention to the ongoing tension between elitism and inclusiveness in the IB's history, particularly in its unexpected expansion into urban public schools in the United States. Finally, I turn to a closer examination of how curriculum differentiation worked at Lincoln in the 2011-12 school year, when I conducted my fieldwork. Although the school has taken substantial steps in recent years to reduce the degree of stratification in its coursetaking options, its curriculum remains

both horizontally and vertically differentiated, particularly in math and science, suggesting the need for a closer look at precisely who participates in the IB and how students make their coursetaking choices.

Chapter 5, the first of three findings chapters, sets out evidence that Lincoln's curriculum remains a deeply stratified system, with students' coursetaking choices closely linked to their places on the school's academic and social hierarchy. The distinctions between course levels and track positions described in Chapter 4 are deeply value-laden; staff and students alike praise high-track courses for their academic rigor, while they denigrate low-track courses as 'fluff classes' offering little worthwhile content or 'dumping grounds' for uninterested students. These stereotypes reflect both formal designations of track level and insider knowledge about particular subjects, teachers, and classes. Empirical data from classroom observations and student coursetaking records indicate that there is some truth in these stereotypes: compared to their low-track classmates, students in IB and other high-track courses enjoy the benefits of faster and more complex instruction, exposure to higher-status and more challenging content, less disruptive classroom environments, and higher-achieving classmates. Moreover, analysis of student records reveals that, despite Lincoln's official policy of open enrollment in most IB courses, coursetaking in each subject tends to cohere into predictable patterns over time: in keeping with Rosenbaum's (1976) tournament metaphor for tracking, students who start school in high-track courses may persist in the high track or drop down to low-track courses, but those who take low-track courses early on have a much lower chance of moving up to the IB level at any point in high school. Collectively, this evidence suggests that, although offering the IB may confer a great deal of prestige on Lincoln as an institution, not every Lincoln student shares equally in these academic and social rewards.

Yet, as Chapter 6 demonstrates, Lincoln students and teachers widely accept curricular stratification as fair. I argue that the key to this acceptance is embodied in the local version of the achievement ideology, which holds that any student, regardless of his or her prior academic achievement, can succeed in the IB with sufficient hard work. Students explain their course choices in terms consistent with the effort-based achievement ideology, emphasizing their own rational weighing of the costs and benefits associated with taking IB courses while downplaying the contributions of peer pressure, teacher gatekeeping, academic readiness, and prior coursetaking. Participants do not stop at accepting their school's academic and social hierarchy; many go so far as to

characterize their school as a force for equality in society, because its ostensibly meritocratic system for sorting students allows students from relatively disadvantaged backgrounds to achieve upward academic and social mobility through the prestigious credential of the IB. Their striking faith in equal opportunity and upward mobility through hard work presents the central paradox of this thesis: why do students and teachers accept and endorse inequality within the school, despite their deep commitment to promoting equality beyond the school?

Chapter 7 attempts to resolve this paradox. I begin by arguing that the local achievement ideology legitimates curricular stratification, just as the ideology of meritocracy legitimates social stratification. The emphasis on the primacy of effort in Lincoln's achievement ideology is particularly potent here: as long as effort is defined as entirely within the individual's control, everyone, regardless of background, has an equal chance at achieving academic success and social mobility. I next turn to an analysis of the conversation surrounding the underrepresentation of black male students in Lincoln's IB programs, one of the most vexing challenges to the school's commitment to social justice, in order to demonstrate a potentially problematic implication of the achievement ideology: the emphasis on hard work shifts the burden of academic improvement from the school onto the student. Finally, using participants' comments on proposed changes to the structure of tracking and the admissions standard, I demonstrate that Lincoln's system of curriculum differentiation emphasizes the school's function of sorting students over its responsibility to improve their academic achievement. This view of courses as ends rather than means, and the underlying assumption that the school has little power to change students' merit, explains the persistence of tracking at Lincoln, despite its apparent dedication to social justice.

Chapter 8 concludes by summarizing the findings of this thesis and discussing its implications for research and practice. I explore how the Lincoln achievement ideology represents a novel approach to balancing excellence with equity in a stratified society. I then discuss the implications for the study of curriculum differentiation and of social mobility, and I suggest some possible avenues for future research. I close with a few tentative recommendations for practice, both for the International Baccalaureate and for Lincoln High School.

A note on terminology

For the sake of clarity, and particularly in light of the many differences between American and British English, it may be helpful to close this chapter with a few notes on

my usage of certain terms that describe school structures and individuals' identities. In Springfield, as in most American districts, public schools are divided into three phases: elementary school, which encompasses kindergarten and grades 1 through 5 (in which students are typically aged 4 through 11); middle school, which includes grades 6 through 8 (ages 11 through 14); and high school, which includes grades 9 through 12 (ages 14 through 18). Some middle schools have recently merged with elementary or high schools to form 'K-8' or '6-12' schools. The terms 'freshman', 'sophomore', 'junior', and 'senior' are often colloquially used to describe the ninth, tenth, eleventh, and twelfth grades respectively, and to describe students in each of those years. Freshmen and sophomores are 'underclassmen', and juniors and seniors are 'upperclassmen', regardless of gender. High school students are sometimes referred to by the year of their expected graduation, so that a student in the class of 2012 would begin high school as a freshman in the fall of 2008 and graduate in the spring of 2012. Each school year is divided into a fall and spring semester; high school courses can last one semester or a full year. I use the terms 'university' and 'college' interchangeably for postsecondary educational institutions; this term almost always refers to institutions granting four-year bachelor's degrees, although participants may occasionally use 'college' for technical and community colleges, which offer two-year associate degrees and the possibility of transfer to a bachelor's degree program. I use the term 'public school' to describe state-funded educational institutions, a category that includes Lincoln.

The terminology associated with curriculum differentiation is particularly confusing, since different schools and districts tend to use different terms to refer to courses. I use 'curriculum differentiation', 'sorting', 'tracking', and 'ability grouping' interchangeably to refer to the practice of dividing students into different classrooms for instruction. (This practice is more fully defined in Chapter 2.) The term 'track' originally referred to overarching programs of study dictating students' curricular experiences across multiple subjects, such that a school might have a 'basic' track, a 'vocational' track, and an 'academic' track. However, even as schools have shifted to a more flexible, course-by-course approach to student scheduling, many researchers have continued to use the term 'tracking', in part because it reflects the continuing *de facto* association between students' coursetaking in various subjects (Lucas, 1999). Following this practice, I use 'high-track' and 'low-track' as generic terms for course locations. At Lincoln, the high track consists largely of courses designated as IB or pre-diploma (PD), while the low track consists of 'regular' courses with no special designation; however, the reputations

for rigor (or lack thereof) attached to certain courses, discussed at length in Chapter 4, mean that even some IB and PD courses can reasonably be labeled 'low-track'. Other schools might designate their high-track courses as 'honors', 'Advanced Placement' (a course leading to a nationally standardized subject examination, advertised as testing university-level skills and content), or 'college preparatory'; I occasionally use these terms to designate high-track classes in the literature review.

Terms referring to students with special needs account for a large share of the American educational lexicon. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), the major federal law governing education for students with disabilities, requires state-funded schools to identify students whose disabilities demand special educational services and to create an individualized education program (IEP) for each student so identified (Katsiyannis, Yell, and Bradley, 2001). Students with IEPs are variously referred to as 'special education', 'special ed', 'exceptional ed', and 'SPED' students. This group accounts for about 15% of Lincoln's student population. These students' curricular experiences at Lincoln vary widely, depending on their particular educational needs. Following IDEA's requirement that students be educated in the 'least restrictive environment' possible, many special education students take regular education classes, which may include IB classes at Lincoln; this practice is referred to as 'mainstreaming' or 'inclusion'. Some students take 'substantially separate' special education classes in some or all subjects; these classes are reserved for students with IEPs and taught by teachers in the special education department. Finally, some students spend the entire school day in most restrictive placement (MRP) units, available at Lincoln for students with autism-spectrum disorders, emotional and behavioral disorders, hearing impairments, and visual impairments. While I have largely omitted special education *courses* from my discussion of Lincoln's curricular structure, for reasons outlined in Chapter 4, the needs of special education *students* do figure in participants' discussions of tracking and the course selection process.

In describing individuals' racial and ethnic identities, I have tried to identify participants in their own words whenever possible. When describing groups, I have followed the patterns of usage most common at Lincoln and in the scholarly literature. I use the terms 'black' and 'African American' interchangeably to refer to people of African (including Caribbean) descent, 'Asian' for people originating from the Asian continent (though this term is most commonly used in the US to describe people from East Asia), 'Hispanic' or 'Latino' for people of Latin American and/or Spanish-speaking

descent, and 'white' or 'Caucasian' to refer to people of European descent. Most of the studies cited in this thesis rely on individuals' self-reports to determine who belongs to which ethnic group. I occasionally use the terms 'minority' and 'person of color' to describe non-white individuals and groups, and, although non-white students constitute the majority of students at Lincoln, I quote some participants who use the term 'minority' in this sense as well. For the sake of concision, I use 'race' and 'ethnicity' interchangeably where 'race/ethnicity' or 'racial/ethnic identity' are arguably more appropriate (Grosfoguel, 2004). This brief treatment has necessarily glossed over the tremendous complexity of racial and ethnic identity,[5] and I do not mean to endorse the idea that any of the terms listed here is a perfect way of capturing any individual's experience. Nonetheless, sweeping racial categorizations, inaccurate though they may be, are an inescapable feature of American life, and I use them to indicate how race, ethnicity, and identity remain salient, often in troubling ways, at Lincoln and in American education.

The names of all places, schools, and individuals in the findings are pseudonyms. For the sake of brevity, I sometimes use 'he', 'she', 'him', or 'hers' to refer generically to all people, regardless of gender. I use double inverted commas to denote quotations from interview transcripts or participants' language recorded verbatim in field notes, and single inverted commas to denote paraphrased versions of participants' speech recorded in my field notes and direct quotations from published literature. Ellipses indicate that a section of an interview or observation transcript has been removed for clarity or brevity. Except where clarifications are inserted in square brackets, I have reproduced participants' language as exactly as possible, including colloquialisms and grammatical errors. Finally, with apologies to British readers, except when quoting directly from written sources (and mimicking the IB's preferred spelling of 'Diploma Programme'), I have opted to use American spelling conventions.

[5] For more on the historical development and political implications of racial and ethnic identifiers, see Bhopal, 2004; Laversuch, 2007; Rodríguez, 2000; Smith, 1992.

Chapter 2. Literature Review

As American public schools have expanded to serve students with an increasing range of cultural backgrounds, material resources, and academic skills, they have confronted a fundamental question: how should schools forge a balance between allowing talented students to reach their full potential and giving all students an equal chance to succeed? This dilemma is not just an educational issue; negotiating the tension between excellence and equity is one of the enduring tasks of any social and political order. The debate over how schools should accommodate students' differences has critical implications for how students are taught and how academic outcomes are distributed, but it also reflects the context of broader ideological beliefs about the proper distribution of resources in a society.

With this context in mind, this chapter begins by highlighting some relevant features of the meritocratic ideology that dominates most discourse about how society should be organized in the United States and, increasingly, in the United Kingdom. I also outline three related sets of beliefs about how people 'make it' in a stratified society, particularly in the context of schooling: the mainstream 'achievement ideology', oppositional cultures that foster skepticism about how meritocratic schools really are, and critical achievement ideologies that blend an awareness of structural inequality with a renewed commitment to academic success through hard work. I then describe how American high schools have implemented this ideology in the form of curriculum tracking, which separates students into different courses or overarching programs of study according to their interests and prior achievement. This ostensibly meritocratic system of allocating school resources has become increasingly controversial in light of evidence that tracking exacerbates both academic and social inequality through instructional, social, and institutional mechanisms, which may vary significantly from school to school. I close the chapter with a discussion of the 'detracking' movement, which seeks to reform or even eliminate the system of rigidly organized courses, and its implications for the productivity, fairness, and legitimacy of American high schools.

Meritocracy and the American dream

What is meritocracy?

Michael Young's 1958 book *The Rise of the Meritocracy* coined the term to describe a hypothetical future in which society is stratified by merit, not class origin. In Young's dystopian vision, the most desirable educational and occupational opportunities are awarded to the most deserving candidates according to their merit. Merit, in turn, is chiefly measured by IQ tests, with frequent retesting into adulthood providing the chief opportunity for upward mobility. Given the natural variation in the distribution of this narrowly defined form of intelligence, Young's meritocratic society is necessarily a highly stratified one, but people of all classes initially accept stratification,[6] for two reasons. First, the principle that merit should determine social class is universally acceptable, limiting the number of viable arguments against the system: 'Since bottom agrees with top that merit should reign, they can only cavil at the means by which the choice has been made, not at the standard which all alike espouse' (Young, 1958: 99). Second, and more provocatively, individuals are essentially satisfied to occupy the positions that best suit their intelligence; in crude terms, the lower classes are content to be at the bottom of the hierarchy precisely because of their stupidity. In this society, the function of the schools depends on extensive sorting. Comprehensive schools are abolished, and scientific testing dictates the assignment of students to schools that will groom them for their future roles in society.

Young presented his vision of the future as a cautionary one; he aimed to highlight the dangers of solidifying and legitimating inequality on the grounds of an overly narrow conception of 'merit' (Young, 2001). Yet subsequent theoretical and political developments have taken the meritocracy as a desirable goal. Chief among the academic exponents of meritocracy is the sociologist Daniel Bell, who predicted in his 1973 book *The Coming of Post-Industrial Society* that, as technical knowledge and skill become increasingly important to the functioning of modern societies, power will come to depend on technical skill rather than wealth or inheritance, and thus individual education will supplant inheritance or group membership as the primary means for achieving affluence and status. Bell's description casts the rise of meritocracy as an

[6] Eventually, these justifications for inequality lose their hold on the general public: the book concludes with the death of its narrator, himself a member of the intellectual elite, in an uprising against the meritocracy led by disaffected upper-class women and carried out by the masses.

inevitable effect of social and economic change: as professional and managerial jobs require more advanced technical and scientific knowledge, merit becomes a more important criterion for filling those jobs. In this version of meritocracy, educational credentials are the central indicators of merit. Nearly all high-status jobs require university degrees, and the university becomes a gateway to a high-class status, not a reflection of existing social stratification. For Bell, meritocracy emerges as a practical adaptation to the technical requirements of a post-industrial society, but it is also a morally justified system, because status is based on achieved rather than ascribed criteria (see also Goldthorpe and Jackson, 2008; Themelis, 2008).

Three implications of the meritocratic ideology

An exhaustive intellectual history of meritocracy would be well beyond the scope of this chapter. In particular, I have left aside the much-debated question of whether the United States or any other society actually is meritocratic. For the purposes of my analysis, I am only concerned with meritocracy as an *ideology* – a coherent set of descriptive beliefs about how the world works and normative assertions about how it should work. This ideal is a powerful force in American political and social thought, and it has profoundly influenced how American high schools have organized themselves to accommodate increasingly diverse student populations. This ideal informs three predictions and beliefs that frame the present inquiry: a vision of how society is stratified, rules about how an individual can improve her position in society, and an argument for why even people on the bottom of the system should accept inequality.

The first relevant feature of the meritocratic ideal is that it sanctions, and even demands, some degree of social inequality. Both Young (1958) and Bell (1973) accept the premise that the modern capitalist economy requires a high degree of occupational specialization, and that an increasing share of available jobs will require some technical skill. Moreover, the meritocracy allows for the existence of a *social* hierarchy corresponding to the occupational hierarchy; jobs requiring more 'merit' tend to provide greater rewards in both money and social prestige. The meritocratic ideology thus condones a certain amount of social stratification; it promises equality of opportunity, not equality of result (Bell, 1973). In other words, inequalities in wealth and social status do not violate the principles of the meritocracy as long as they follow from inequalities in merit, tested on a 'level playing field', and not from discrimination on the grounds of race, class of origin, gender, or other ascribed characteristics.

Second, the meritocracy implies a certain *status mobility system* (Turner, 1960), or a set of beliefs about what it takes for an individual to get ahead in society. If society is stratified by individual merit, then a meritocratic status mobility system holds out the promise of upward mobility to anyone who demonstrates merit. The precise requirements for upward mobility, in turn, depend on the definition of merit, and particularly on whether merit is ascribed or achieved. The literature is conflicted on this point: Young's version of meritocracy operates on the presumption that IQ – a fixed, measurable, and hereditary property – is the sole indication of merit,[7] while Bell lists 'technical skills and higher education' as the primary criteria for determining status but acknowledges that natural intelligence and motivation help enable individuals to attain these formal credentials (Bell, 1973: 409). To the extent that the determinants of social mobility fall within an individual's control, the status mobility system in a meritocracy should incentivize drive, persistence, hard work, and other qualities by which an individual might become more meritorious. However, if 'native intellect' or any other immutable characteristic plays a role in determining who gets ahead in society, then we should expect the status mobility system to attribute a diminished role to individual effort.

The definition of merit also influences a third function of the meritocratic ideology: its capacity to *legitimate* social inequality. Daniels (1978) outlines two arguments for meritocracy. The more limited argument holds that, by allocating jobs and positions to the persons most qualified to perform them, a meritocratic society enhances overall productivity and thus, presumably, the well-being of most individuals.[8] The broader

[7] Young's only direct definition of merit comes in a casual comment that that 'intelligence and effort together make up merit (I + E = M)' in the occupational context, and thus that 'the lazy genius is not one' (Young, 1958: 74). However, in practice the fictional meritocracy seems to be organized around selecting and grooming intelligence, not incentivizing effort. As society becomes more meritocratic, IQ testing becomes the basis for everything from educational sorting to selection for civil service jobs. Ultimately, concerted efforts emerge to encourage highly intelligent people to marry in order to produce even more intelligent children, suggesting that merit is not just immutable and quantifiable but also heritable. This definition of intelligence as a fixed quality is certainly not universally accepted, but in this section, for the sake of argument, I use this reductive understanding of IQ to illustrate some of the problematic aspects of a meritocracy based on 'intelligence'.

[8] Daniels further distinguishes between what he terms the 'microprinciple' of distributing individual jobs according to merit, in which the most qualified applicant should be selected for a given job, and the meritocratic 'macroprinciple', which holds that jobs should be assigned to maximize *overall* productivity, even if this means that the most qualified applicant is not necessarily selected for the job he most prefers. The

argument holds that meritocracy is also *just*, on two levels: in the abstract, because it allocates rewards to every individual based on the same criteria, and from the subjective perspectives of *all* participants, even those on the bottom of the social order. This is a tantalizing prospect, because it protects the social order against a significant source of instability; if a society is legitimate even in the eyes of those to whom it provides the smallest share of resources, it is unlikely to face a serious political challenge. Lipset and Bendix (1959) have explored this point from a comparative perspective, arguing that Americans tend to express less support than Europeans for redistributive policies because they are more optimistic about their own chances for upward social mobility. However, the legitimation function of meritocracy also depends on the definition of merit: if a fixed capacity for intelligence plays a significant role in facilitating or inhibiting social mobility, as it does in Young's vision, then the meritocratic ideology necessarily sanctions a high degree of inequality based on arbitrary luck (Rawls, 1999; Themelis, 2008). As Rawls argues, from a moral perspective, 'there is no more reason to permit the distribution of income and wealth to be settled by the distribution of natural assets than by historical and social fortunes' (1999: 64). Such an arrangement might yet be more efficient than any alternative system aimed at equality of outcome, but from the perspective of individuals whose bad luck in the genetic lottery consigns them to the bottom of the social and intellectual hierarchy, it is certainly unfair.

The concept of equality of opportunity lies at the heart of the argument that meritocracy produces a just distribution of resources. As we have already seen, the meritocratic ideology presupposes that different jobs will be rewarded with different levels of compensation and social status (Bell, 1973; Daniels, 1978; Young, 1958), and thus a meritocracy cannot be expected to produce equality of outcome. Instead, the argument that meritocracy is viable to the extent that all individuals have an equal opportunity to compete for jobs and to acquire the credentials relevant to such competition. Daniels further distinguishes between *formal* and *fair* equality of opportunity:

> Formal equality of opportunity obtains when there are no legal or quasibarriers to people having equal access (based on merit) to positions and offices or to the means (education and training) needed to qualify one for access to such jobs. Fair equality of opportunity requires not only that negative legal or quasilegal constraints on equality of opportunity be eliminated, but also that positive steps must be taken to provide equality

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macroprinciple fosters a more efficient distribution of positions to individuals, but in practice it would require a radically different system of recruitment and hiring for most employers. The microprinciple admits a greater degree of inefficiency in job distribution, but it fits more closely with existing systems of hiring and beliefs about fairness.

> of access – and the means to achieve such equality of access – to those with inferior initial competitive positions resulting from family background or other biological or social accidents. (Daniels, 1978: 217)

The higher standard of fair equality of opportunity allows a meritocratic society to more fully satisfy the objectives of efficiency (since overall productivity might be improved by taking special steps to ensure that historically disadvantaged groups can develop the merit required for important or high-status positions) and justice, but it also imposes a heavier burden on schools and other institutions to proactively compensate for inequalities based on accidents of birth. Moreover, this standard may well be impossible to fulfill in light of Rawls' (1999) objection to meritocracy, if variation in the distribution of 'natural endowments' – a morally arbitrary quality – precludes some people from having a genuine chance at winning the highest-status positions, even when such 'positive steps' are taken. The definition of merit, then, is particularly important for those concerned about whether a meritocracy can be considered just.

The American dream: an effort-based achievement ideology

The meritocratic ideology has exerted a particularly profound influence in the United States, where its principles are central to the pervasive ideology of the 'American dream'. The language of the American dream has been marshaled to support a wide variety of sometimes contradictory causes, but Hochschild (1995: 18-24) defines four central tenets that resonate in other descriptions of the concept (e.g., Cullen, 2003; Johnson, 2006; MacLeod, 2009): everyone, regardless of background, is free to pursue success; people can reasonably expect a fair chance of success, given sufficient effort; the *individual* is responsible for his or her success, meaning that rewards should be allocated according to hard work, not need or birthright; and success is worthwhile not just because it promises material rewards but also because it is a cause, an effect, and a symbol of virtue. The promise of equal opportunity for upward mobility through hard work is a potent feature of American political rhetoric: witness Bill Clinton's declaration that 'if you work hard and play by the rules, you should be given a chance to go as far as your God-given ability will take you' (Clinton, 1993; quoted in Hochschild, 1995: 18) or Ronald Reagan's call to ensure 'that each individual has the right to fly as high as his strength and ability will take him' (Reagan, 1964).

While the ideology of the American dream embraces the meritocratic tenets of equality of opportunity and advancement through individual merit, it has largely avoided the large-scale disillusionment predicted by Young (1958) because its definition of merit assigns a significant role to individual effort: where Young imagined a society stratified

by IQ, the American dream envisions a society stratified by hard work. Many observers have noted the centrality of hard work to the distinctively American 'rags-to-riches' motif (Hochschild, 1995; McGlinn, 2004; Peña, 2012; Weiss, 1969; Wyllie, 1954). References to inherited advantage, good fortune, and formal educational credentials are notably absent from this popular myth. Hochschild (1995: 21) quotes Ralph Waldo Emerson's succinct declaration on this point: 'There is always a reason, *in the man*, for his good or bad fortune, and so, in making money… good luck is another name for tenacity of purpose' (Emerson, 1860: 997). Turner goes further, arguing that in the 'contest mobility' system that predominates in the United States, effort is *more* important than talent: 'the most satisfactory outcome is not necessarily a victory of the most able, but of the most deserving' (Turner, 1960: 857). Such a preference indicates that hard work is not only a means to success but also a moral virtue in its own right.[9] This does not necessarily mean that the role of 'natural ability' is denied entirely, as the statements of Presidents Clinton and Reagan show. Nonetheless, by redefining 'merit' to incorporate some measure of voluntary effort, the ideology of the American dream avoids the determinism of Young's IQ-based meritocracy: if hard work can overcome all obstacles, then the possibility of success is available to everyone, regardless of background or 'natural endowment'.

Education in the meritocracy: the achievement ideology and its discontents

No single institution is more central to the fulfillment of the American dream than the public school system. Americans have long viewed public schools as, in Horace Mann's words, the 'great equalizer of the conditions of men' (Mann, 1848: 669; see also Hochschild and Scovronick, 2004; Johnson, 2006; Rury, 2005). This view has become increasingly popular in the United Kingdom as well, particularly since the shift under New Labour from 'equality of outcome' to 'equality of opportunity' (Goldthorpe, 2003; Goldthorpe and Jackson, 2008; Powell, 2000; Themelis, 2008). Thus it should come as no surprise that the mainstream ideology governing upward mobility in society also applies to school success. Various scholars have alluded to this folk theory of school success, often referring to it as the 'achievement ideology' (see, e.g., Carter, 2008; Hochschild, 1995; Johnson, 2006; Levitin, Quinn, and Staines, 1971; MacLeod, 2009; O'Connor, 1997; for a discussion of a similar ideology in the UK, see Goldthorpe, 2003; Goldthorpe and Jackson, 2008). For MacLeod, the mainstream achievement ideology is

[9] This moral evaluation is also consistent with the argument, notably advanced by the historian Richard Hofstadter (1963), that American culture has long been skeptical of intellectualism and formal knowledge divorced from practical skill.

essentially a restatement of Hochschild's American dream, with a stronger emphasis placed on schooling: 'Behave yourself, work hard, earn good grades, get a good job, and make a lot of money' (MacLeod, 2009: 98). For Turner (1960), it is the view that social mobility in America takes the structure of a contest in which anyone can participate in a fair competition for the prize of upward mobility, and all contestants are kept in the running until truly competitive standards are introduced at the university level. Americans from a wide variety of backgrounds roundly agree that individuals have a fair chance to improve on their position in life by exerting effort in school (Duru-Bellat and Tenret, 2012; Hochschild, 1995; Johnson, 2006; Kluegel and Smith, 1986; Linos and West, 2003). This mainstream achievement ideology thus both echoes the meritocratic ideal's promise that social mobility is within reach for all and points to education as the best, fairest, and most widely accessible way for individuals to develop their own 'merit'.

In principle, the school might fulfill this 'equalizing' function in one of two ways. First, and most radically, the school might promise equality of *result* to all students. By ensuring that all students exit the school with an essentially similar set of skills and content knowledge, schools could make a substantial contribution to equalizing individuals' life chances in the world beyond compulsory schooling. However, this extreme interpretation of the school's equalizing function tends to clash with the emphasis in capitalist societies on competition and free choice.[10] Instead, the ideology of the American dream tends to stress the school's obligation to provide students with equal *opportunity* to acquire the knowledge, skills, and educational credentials necessary to achieve upward social mobility. According to this interpretation, society's responsibility is simply to provide all students with a fair chance at attaining upward mobility through education; the individual bears responsibility for taking advantage of this opportunity through hard work in school.

Although the United States achieved Horace Mann's dream of universal – and compulsory – public education by 1918 (Katz, 1976), a fierce debate continues over whether schooling truly serves an equalizing function. At least since Bowles and Gintis' *Schooling in Capitalist America* (1976) advanced the radical argument that schools reproduce the unequal class structure inherent to capitalism, a persistent chorus of critics has noted

[10] The idea that schools should teach exactly the same curriculum to every student has found much more support in Marxist theory. See, for instance, Bukharin and Preobrazhensky's assertion in *The ABC of Communism*, a 1920 treatise on the Bolsheviks' vision for Russia, that schooling until the age of seventeen should provide unified, compulsory, and undifferentiated preparation for citizenship in a communist society.

that education hardly provides a guaranteed ticket into the upper middle class, thanks to widespread disparities in access to schooling, achievement in school, and returns to education (for recent examples, see Rohde, Cooke, and Ojha, 2012; Sawhill, Winship, and Grannis, 2012; Stiglitz, 2013). Just as the meritocratic ideal loses legitimacy if individuals come to see 'merit' as ascribed rather than achieved, so the achievement ideology tends to lose its hold on students who believe that circumstances beyond their control will thwart their efforts to achieve upward mobility. Students who believe that race and/or class restrict their opportunities to do well in school and work are particularly likely to become disaffected and reject the mainstream achievement ideology. Research in resistance theory and oppositional culture theory, briefly summarized here, demonstrates how skepticism of schools' meritocratic promises is an understandable and perhaps rational response for some groups of students. However, this is not an inevitable reaction: other students embrace 'critical achievement ideologies' that reconcile an awareness of historical injustice with the mainstream emphasis on individual effort.

Resistance theory. Paul Willis' 1977 study *Learning to Labour* is most commonly credited with originating resistance theory, which incorporates students' agency as well as school structures into an explanation of 'how working class kids get working class jobs'.[11] *Learning to Labour* presents an ethnography of the 'working class counter-school culture' embraced by a group calling themselves 'the lads' at Hammertown Boys, a secondary modern school in England (Willis, 1977: 2). Willis argues that the lads' partial insight into the workings of capitalism leads them to understand that success in school will likely not lead them to middle-class jobs, and thus they begin to value manual over mental labor and to appropriate elements of the working-class 'shopfloor culture' to which they aspire. Willis outlines several major elements of the anti-school culture at Hammertown: opposition to authority; rejection of conformists (whom the boys derisively call 'ear'oles'); adherence to the informal friendship group as a sanctuary from authority; minimizing the demands of school on the student's time by skipping school, skipping class, or ignoring the teacher's instructions; 'having a laff' (1977: 29) by playing pranks, mocking teachers, and making fun of each other; fighting, stealing, seeking out sex, and otherwise pursuing 'excitement' outside of the constraints of school rules and social norms; and embracing sexist and racist views that reinforce the lads' sense of their own distinctiveness and superiority. In particular, borrowing from their fathers' worldviews,

[11] McGrew (2011) presents a much more complete discussion of the origins of resistance theory, including substantial evidence that Willis reappropriated critical aspects of his argument from prior research.

the lads glorify manual labor as masculine and denigrate mental labor as feminine, soft, and otherwise unworthy. These working-class students' leveled aspirations for the future influence their behavior in school. Seeing little hope that school will help them achieve the jobs they view as possible and desirable, they reject the mainstream achievement ideology and embrace an alternative culture, in this case drawing on their understandings of dominant values and behaviors among working-class men.

In the classic study *Ain't No Makin' It*, Jay MacLeod (2009) extends Willis' analysis to explain the values and aspirations of two groups of teenage boys living in the same urban American public housing project and attending the same high school. The primarily black Brothers embrace the mainstream achievement ideology. Consequently, they cooperate with teachers, attempt to apply themselves in school, obey the law, and expect that their hard work will pay off in the form of better jobs and upward social mobility. Even in middle age, despite their limited educational and economic success, the Brothers continue to express faith in the achievement ideology, blaming their low performance on their own laziness, stupidity, or lack of motivation. By contrast, the predominantly white Hallway Hangers reject this ideology and see the Brothers' optimism as naïve conformity. They abuse drugs and alcohol, drop out of school or finish it with great reluctance and minimal effort, and expect to end up in menial, poorly compensated jobs regardless of whether they subscribe to dominant norms or devote their energy to 'making a fast buck'. Crucially, the Hallway Hangers have good reason to disbelieve the achievement ideology: because of their own and their families' experiences of frustration in the job market, 'they see a job market where rewards are based not on meritocratic criteria, but on "who you know"' (MacLeod, 2009: 74-75). While the Brothers also come from low-income families with few of the educational or social resources needed to secure good jobs, they are much more optimistic about their employment prospects, in part because they believe that advances in civil rights have made the promise of equal opportunity much more real for them than it was for their parents. MacLeod's analysis demonstrates the importance of beliefs about meritocracy for students' concrete actions: while the Brothers' faith in the achievement ideology leads them to exert effort in school and blame themselves for their subsequent failures, the Hallway Hangers' skeptical view of equal opportunity leads them to preserve their self-esteem by rejecting the achievement ideology and resisting its prescriptions for success.

Oppositional culture theory. While resistance theory focuses on how students from disadvantaged class backgrounds react to the achievement ideology, oppositional culture

theory explores historically marginalized racial and ethnic groups' beliefs about meritocracy.[12] This line of thought is primarily associated with the anthropologist John Ogbu, whose cultural-ecological model identifies two sets of factors responsible for explaining minority education. The first set of 'system' factors includes educational policies, school and classroom practices pertaining to minorities, and the material and social rewards of education for minorities. The second set of 'community' factors relates to forces within a given minority community: how the group evaluates its position in society, what it believes about how to 'get ahead' through education or other means, its degree of trust or mistrust in the schools, and its collective identity and cultural and linguistic frames of reference, which may be defined in opposition to its perception of the dominant culture (Ogbu, 2008; Ogbu and Simons, 1998). This model suggests that black students' low school performance in the United States is an adaptation to their status as a subordinate group in a castelike society which assigns them to low-status jobs and social positions regardless of their qualifications, meaning that formal education promises few instrumental rewards. African Americans' adaptive responses to this social structure help explain their low school performance. For instance, the importance of white patronage to upward mobility for black people encourages the development of 'such personal qualities as dependency, compliance, and manipulation', rather than the 'independence, foresight, initiative, industriousness, and individualistic competitiveness' which the white status mobility system rewards (Ogbu, 1978: 198). Similarly, caste barriers promote the formation and maintenance of a distinct dialect, different cognitive skills, and different levels of motivation to perform in school. In a castelike society, then, disadvantaged minorities respond to social and political inequality by rejecting the achievement ideology and exerting less effort in school.

The most widely cited form of Ogbu's argument appears in a paper with Signithia Fordham, based on research at one high school in Washington, D.C. (Fordham and Ogbu, 1986; see also Fordham, 1996). This form of the argument emphasizes black students' expressive rather than adaptive responses to their low social status. These strategies include developing an *oppositional social identity* as a group distinct from white Americans and embracing an *oppositional cultural frame of reference* that regards certain behaviors and activities as appropriate or inappropriate for members of the minority

[12] The bulk of this research, including most of the literature summarized here, focuses on black students. However, Ogbu's (1978) theoretical model deals with the broader category of 'caste' or 'involuntary minorities', commonly defined to include black, Latino, and Native American people in the United States.

group. In the context of education, insofar as minority students and communities understand schooling as the domain of the dominant white culture and thus as harmful to their own cultural identity, this oppositional cultural frame of reference dictates that learning the curriculum and behaviors endorsed by the school is tantamount to betraying the minority group. Individuals who engage in behaviors that are, according to this frame of reference, inappropriate for members of their minority group experience consequences in the forms of 'affective dissonance', or internal stress caused by the feeling of having betrayed one's identity group in exchange for uncertain rewards from the dominant culture, and social sanctions from other members of their minority group, most provocatively cast as accusations of 'acting white'. The combination of psychological and social pressures against academic achievement, Fordham and Ogbu argue, helps explain black students' below-average achievement. Fordham's (1996) ethnography of one predominantly black Washington, D.C., high school further indicates that some academically successful black students are forced to adopt a 'raceless' persona in order to negotiate these pressures. The 'acting white' or 'oppositional culture' hypothesis, often inaccurately conflated with Ogbu's larger body of work, has captured the attention of the popular press, often in a grossly oversimplified form that blames black communities' 'anti-school' values for their children's lackluster school performance (see, e.g., Gale, 2012; McWhorter, 2008; Morin, 2005; Mydans, 1990).

Critical achievement ideologies. While the oppositional culture hypothesis has captured popular attention as a powerful indictment of the myth of American meritocracy, many critics have argued that it is untrue: attempts to find quantitative evidence that high-achieving black students experience greater social penalties than their white peers have been largely unsuccessful (see, e.g., Ainsworth-Darnell and Downey, 1998; Barnes, 2002; Downey, 2008; Downey and Ainsworth-Darnell, 2002; Farkas, Lleras, and Maczuga, 2002; Harris, 2006; Harris and Robinson, 2007; Lundy and Firebaugh, 2005; Tyson, 2011). Subsequent ethnographic research offers a more hopeful picture, documenting schools in which black students have achieved academic success without sacrificing a sense of racial identity or meeting abuse from their peers. Three examples should suffice to demonstrate how students in a variety of contexts have reconciled a faith in the mainstream achievement ideology with an acute consciousness of the ways in which American society is not meritocratic.

Carter (2008) describes the 'critical race achievement ideology' embraced by nine high-achieving black students at a predominantly white high school. These students

embrace the mainstream achievement ideology's raceless, individualized definition of success as academic achievement leading to upward social mobility, but they also see school success as a collective good in light of their knowledge of 'black struggle' for equal opportunity (Carter, 2008: 483). These students believe that they can achieve success through individual effort and that they are accountable for their own school performance, but they also acknowledge that racism may be a barrier to their success, and they report some direct experiences with racial prejudice in school. Rather than rejecting academic achievement, these students develop a range of adaptive behaviors to facilitate their own school success; chief among these are viewing education instrumentally as a vehicle to achieve their goals of upward social mobility, becoming proficient in 'code-switching' and other culturally competent behaviors, and employing 'survival tactics' (Carter, 2008: 490) to resist racism in daily life. The result, Carter argues, is an achievement ideology that encourages students to pursue achievement because of, not despite, their positive sense of identity as African Americans.

O'Connor (1997) describes a similar achievement ideology in slightly different terms, arguing that the concept of struggle is central to the achievement ideologies of six high-achieving, low-income, black students at two high schools in Chicago. All six students (and all students in the larger study, which included 46 black adolescents) 'emphasized the importance of hard work, individual effort, and education' (608) in explaining their personal theories of how to 'make it' in America, but they also modified this mainstream narrative to incorporate an awareness of how race and class might compromise the effectiveness of these individualistic strategies. O'Connor argues that these students, unlike the others in the larger study, were able to simultaneously acknowledge the reality of institutionalized discrimination and still believe that they could achieve their own goals for upward mobility through hard work because they were aware of their capacity for struggle – the act of individually or collectively resisting discrimination based on race, class, and gender. Most students attributed this political awareness to hearing or witnessing a family member or significant other engaging in such struggle. Lower-achieving students in the study, by contrast, may have been aware of discrimination, but they ignored or dismissed the necessity of collective resistance against oppression. The six adolescents in this study negotiated the tension between the mainstream achievement ideology and their awareness of race and class inequality by having faith that individual and collective struggle could help them overcome and transform these structural barriers to mobility.

Akom (2003) portrays a racialized achievement ideology rooted in a specific organizational context in his investigation of seven high-achieving female members of the Nation of Islam, a primarily African American religious movement that seeks self-determination and collective economic independence for black Americans. Akom argues that the 'organizational habitus' of the Nation of Islam inverts conventional stereotypes of whiteness and blackness: in the 'black achievement ideology' of the Nation of Islam, 'acting white' is associated with a legacy of oppression, while blackness is the original and ideal human state. This racial identity encourages the young women in Akom's study to pursue academic improvement through hard work at school (often using study skills and other forms of cultural capital acquired through study groups at their temple), active participation in classroom discussions, and vocal resistance against what they perceive as oppressive school policies. These findings offer an important counterpoint to the view that accommodation and resistance are necessarily opposed: for these Nation of Islam students, resisting oppressive school practices is an important way of supporting their own academic achievement and transforming, rather than reproducing, an unjust social structure. In all of these examples, students are at least partially aware of the ways in which school and society are profoundly unmeritocratic, yet they still subscribe to the meritocratic achievement ideology's prescription for success through individual effort.

Conclusion

The first half of this chapter has traced the concept of meritocracy from its origins in a sociological fantasy to its entrenchment as a norm governing how Americans think about the role of education in facilitating social mobility. Despite historical inequalities in the distribution of social and material rewards, especially with respect to race, Americans continue to roundly agree that anyone can achieve upward mobility by following a simple formula: 'Behave yourself, work hard, earn good grades, get a good job, and make a lot of money' (MacLeod, 2009: 98). In this ideology, public education provides the best way for working-class students to equip themselves to climb the occupational ladder. However, this line of thought ignores the substantial evidence that schools themselves stratify students, suggesting that they bear a stronger resemblance to Young's (1958) system of selecting and grooming talent at an early age than they do to Bell's (1973) or Turner's (1960) system of equal preparation for fair competition. To rectify this error, the second half of this chapter turns to the research on the sorting of students into different curricula within individual schools, commonly known as 'tracking'. While tracking originated as an ostensibly meritocratic way of accommodating

differences in students' abilities and interests, a growing body of evidence suggests that tracking is a major reason why schools tend to perpetuate and legitimate social inequality rather than ameliorate it.

Tracking and curriculum differentiation

The practice of separating students into groups of similar achievement levels for instruction has long aroused controversy among educators and researchers. Proponents argue that 'tracking', as this practice is commonly known in the United States, makes teaching easier, allows schools to tailor curriculum to the interests of their students, allows 'bright' students to advance quickly in their studies, and protects 'slow' students from constant unfavorable comparisons to their classmates. Opponents claim that tracking exacerbates educational inequality by directing low-performing students into dead-end courses of study and that it exacerbates the disadvantages facing students from low-income families, racial minorities, and other marginalized groups. This debate raises two critical questions about meritocracy: whether tracking itself helps or hinders the school's function of guaranteeing equality of opportunity in a society based on the meritocratic ideal, and whether the sorting process within schools is meritocratic. This section explores the extensive literature on tracking in the hopes of shedding some light on these two questions. It recounts the historical development of tracking in American schools, describes how tracking exacerbates academic and social stratification of students, and presents evidence that tracking itself incorporates non-meritocratic considerations despite recent efforts at reform. While the evidence on all of these points suggests that tracking overall functions as a form of stratification rather than a 'great equalizer', it also reveals substantial variation between individual schools.

At the outset of this discussion, it is helpful to establish a working definition of the practice in question. I use the terms 'tracking', 'curriculum differentiation', 'sorting', and 'ability grouping' interchangeably to refer to the practice of assigning students within a secondary school to different classrooms with the intention of reducing heterogeneity within instructional groups (Slavin, 1990). This definition includes the traditional practice of assigning each student into an overarching academic, general, vocational, or business track that dictates most or all of a student's schedule, often known as 'tracking' in the US (Lucas, 1999; Oakes, 2005) and 'streaming' in the UK (Ball, 1981; Hargreaves, 1967; Lacey, 1970); it also encompasses the more recent trend of grouping students differently for instruction in each subject, a practice known as 'setting' in the UK (Ball, 1981). It excludes within-class ability grouping, such as the practice of sorting students into

'reading groups' common in primary school classrooms (Pallas et al., 1994; Slavin, 1990), and between-school ability grouping, whether by formal status or by informal reputation. Tracking is among the most persistent and widespread features of the structure of American high schools, and its existence raises one of the most substantial challenges to the claim that public education guarantees fair equality of opportunity (Daniels, 1978) in a meritocratic society.

The emergence of curriculum differentiation

Curriculum differentiation in American high schools emerged as a response to the growth and diversification of the secondary school population. The country's first high schools offered a classical curriculum to the children of elite, affluent Anglo-Saxon Protestants, mostly in New England. With a homogeneous and privileged population, schools saw no reason to teach different curricula to different students. Secondary school enrollment grew quickly in the later decades of the nineteenth century, creating pressure to clarify the relationship between high school and university education. The report of the National Education Association's Committee of Ten (National Education Association, 1894), created in response to this pressure, expressed the belief that the function of high school was to create educated citizens, not to prepare them for specific future goals. The committee recommended the creation of four standardized, horizontally differentiated curricula – classical, Latin-scientific, modern language, and English – but, crucially, specified that students should not be vertically differentiated into college-bound and non-college-bound groups. In this system, high schools were not expected to sort out the most talented students, since only a privileged minority bound for higher education continued beyond the primary grades (Kliebard, 1986; Oakes, 2005).

However, starting in the 1890s, the influx of immigrants from southern and eastern Europe prompted the emergence of a comprehensive system of curriculum differentiation. Mass immigration and growing rates of high school enrollment both expanded and diversified the secondary school population; for the first time, comprehensive high schools faced the problem of catering to students with a wide range of cultural backgrounds and academic abilities. As the 'scientific management' theory popularized by Frederick Winslow Taylor (1911) spilled over from manufacturing to education, many educators embraced the principles of social efficiency, which held that schools could best support the industrial economy by determining the specific occupations to which students were best suited and training them for those jobs. The advent of IQ testing allowed schools to 'scientifically' determine whether a student was

bound for university education or manual labor, while simultaneously reinforcing the idea that some children – particularly those of recent immigrants – were inherently less intellectually capable than others (Kliebard, 1986). This shift marked the emergence of the high school as an arena for meritocratic sorting and selection: supported by a 'scientific' regime of intelligence testing, educators could credibly claim to neutrally assess each student's potential and assign him to the appropriate program of study.

By the 1930s, then, American high schools firmly embraced curriculum differentiation, with the goal of preparing different students for different futures. Students were divided into academic, commercial, vocational, and general tracks, and the academic demands for most students were greatly relaxed. In-depth sequences of courses in a particular subject, for most, gave way to introductory surveys in a wider variety of disciplines. The academic curriculum of the nineteenth century persisted, but the great majority of students now participated in alternative, more 'practical' courses of study (Powell, Farrar, and Cohen, 1985). Over the course of subsequent decades, the content of these alternative curricula shifted, but the principle of separating students based on their anticipated future occupations remained constant. Americanization was a major concern at the start of the twentieth century; schools sought to inculcate new immigrants with 'American' values – virtually identical with those of the white, Anglo-Saxon, Protestant middle class. Vocational, commercial, and agricultural education programs aimed to prepare students to meet the needs of employers and to promote values like hard work and discipline (Oakes, 2005). The 'life adjustment' movement, which emerged in the 1940s, expanded this practical focus to include details of day-to-day life like hygiene and conversation in social settings. Course options continued to expand for low-track students, but thanks to stable university entrance requirements, the college-bound minority continued to follow a fairly rigid academic curriculum. The expansion of 'social promotion', the practice of promoting students from grade to grade on the basis of their age with little regard for their academic performance, accentuated the declining importance of academic requirements for the majority of American students (Powell, Farrar, and Cohen, 1985). Tracking systems imposed a system of stratification on the high school that closely resembled the larger social order. Students judged to have the most 'merit', as measured by the school, were rewarded with the most intensive academic coursework, which would prepare them for prestigious and well-compensated professional careers; those sorted into the lower tracks were explicitly guided into jobs associated with the lower social classes.

Intensifying competition with the Soviet Union prompted the most significant push against declining academic standards since the birth of curriculum differentiation. After the USSR launched the Sputnik satellite in 1957, the US federal government allocated funding for the teaching of science, mathematics, and modern foreign languages, and universities produced a number of new advanced curricula and educational materials, notably the Advanced Placement (AP) program. However, even these reforms posed no challenge to the system of differentiation within comprehensive high schools; they focused instead on improving the quality of education for top-track students. The social unrest of the 1960s and 1970s added to pressures for further differentiation by challenging the primacy of canonical knowledge in the curriculum, and schools responded by adding an even greater array of courses in ethnic studies, social problems, and bilingual education (Angus and Mirel, 1999; Powell, Farrar, and Cohen, 1985). Calls to raise academic graduation requirements resurfaced with the 1983 publication of *A Nation at Risk*, a federally commissioned report on the quality of American education (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983). That report's criticism of the nation's 'cafeteria style curriculum', along with Powell, Farrar, and Cohen's (1985) condemnation of the 'shopping mall high school', constituted the most direct attack on differentiation in decades. Moreover, tracking began to come under fire from the political left, with critics arguing that it effectively functioned to produce *de facto* racial segregation and reproduce economic inequality (see, e.g., Bowles and Gintis, 1976; Oakes, 2005).

This new political consensus did result in changes: in the 1970s and 1980s, most states raised the academic credit requirements for high school graduation, and academic course-taking increased, particularly in mathematics and science, while enrollment in vocational programs declined (Angus and Mirel, 1999; Dalton et al., 2007; Ingels, Dalton, and LoGerfo, 2008; Lee and Ready, 2009; Levesque and Hudson, 2003). Tracking gradually fell out of fashion: by 1981, only a minority of American high schools employed a formal system of assigning students to different overarching academic programs (Lucas, 1999). Student choice replaced school assignment as the primary determinant of course schedules (Lee and Ready, 2009; Lucas, 1999; Powell, Farrar, and Cohen, 1985). These changes might tempt observers to conclude that schools have become more effective 'equalizers', preparing a larger range of students to compete on equal terms for jobs and higher education.

However, this shift did not herald the end of curriculum differentiation. Instead, in what Lucas (1999) has labeled the 'unremarked revolution', unified curriculum tracks gave way to hierarchically organized courses, designated by labels like 'Advanced Placement', 'college preparatory', 'regular', and 'remedial'.[13] Perversely, Lucas argues, this shift may actually entrench curriculum differentiation and associated patterns of stratification: by masking the tracking system's purpose of training and socializing students for different futures, and by employing labels that obfuscate a course's relative prestige and difficulty, course-by-course ability grouping makes it more difficult for students and parents, especially those with less educational experience, to navigate the maze of course choices and college entrance requirements. Although American students are now accumulating more academic credits in high school, more detailed investigations suggest that the 'academic' label offers no guarantee that a course is rigorous or provides adequate preparation for university education (Clune, 1989; Lee and Ready, 2009). Thus, although the rigid system of sorting students into academic and non-academic tracks has largely fallen out of fashion, American high schools continue to sort students into relatively homogenous groups to receive instruction in different curricula (Lee and Ready, 2009; Lucas, 1999; Oakes, 2005; Tyson, 2011; Worthy, 2010).

The effects of tracking

In principle, tracking might serve the meritocratic ideal in one of two ways: it could improve all students' achievement by dividing them into homogenous groups in which instruction is more effective, thereby giving all students an equal opportunity to compete for jobs and educational credentials in the adult world; or it could structure the school as a small-scale meritocracy in its own right, isolating the most promising students to receive most of the school's material and symbolic resources. Large-scale survey research suggests that tracking tends to perform the latter function. Most comparisons of differentiated and undifferentiated schools indicate that tracking *per se* has a limited effect on overall achievement. In a 'best-evidence synthesis' of research on the overall effects of tracking, Slavin (1990) reviews fifteen studies involving experimental assignment of students to tracked or untracked classes, either randomly or in matched pairs, and finds no significant evidence that students in tracked programs perform differently, on

[13] This shift is similar in both timing and substance to the move in the UK from streaming to banding and setting (Ireson et al., 1999).

average, than their peers in untracked classes.[14] More recent analyses reach the same conclusion for large samples in the US (Betts and Shkolnik, 2000) and internationally (Terwel, 2005).

Studies on the differential achievement of students in high and low tracks are more common, but also less robust, since obvious ethical concerns preclude researchers from randomly assigning students to tracks. Non-experimental studies cannot completely isolate the causal role of track placement from covariant background factors that might influence both track assignment and academic outcomes, such as cognitive ability, motivation, or family support. However, the bulk of studies that control for observable correlates of academic outcomes do indicate that tracking magnifies differences in achievement between high- and low-track students (Gamoran and Mare, 1989; Gamoran and Nystrand, 1994; Hallinan and Kubitschek, 1999; Lucas, 1999; Oakes, 1981, 2005; Schofield, 2010; but see Betts and Shkolnik, 2000; and Figlio and Page, 2002, for methodological critiques). Researchers have found evidence for similar stratification effects in British secondary schools that practice streaming, banding, or setting (Boaler, Wiliam, and Brown, 2000; Ireson et al., 2002; Kerckhoff, 1986). Further evidence indicates that students who take advanced courses in high school have higher rates of college attendance and persistence (Adelman, 1999; Attewell and Domina, 2008; Farkas, 2011; Horn and Kojaku, 2001; Long, Conger, and Iatarola, 2012; Vanfossen, Jones, and Spade, 1987) and are more likely to have professional rather than service-sector jobs (Joseph, 1997). Low-track enrollment, by contrast, is associated with a higher likelihood of dropping out of high school (Werblow, Urick, and Duesbery, 2013). In short, taking a more demanding academic curriculum confers significant advantages on students, but at the cost of increasing the achievement gap within stratified schools.

Research on the effects of the International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme, the particular focus of this study, suggests that IB students enjoy similar advantages in academic achievement. Saavedra (2011) has conducted the most rigorous analysis to date, comparing a large sample of IB and non-IB students in 13 Chicago public schools. This

[14] The median effect size was -.06, indicating a negligible advantage for heterogeneous grouping. Slavin does offer the important caveat that the studies involved in his review generally investigated the effects of assigning students to different levels of courses on the same topic (for example, by comparing the math test scores of students enrolled in regular and advanced algebra) while omitting the effects of *acceleration* (in which, for instance, some ninth-graders would take geometry while most would take algebra). This form of differentiation could potentially have greater effects, particularly at the high school level.

analysis indicates that, even when controlling for student, school, and cohort characteristics, IB enrollment has a significant positive effect on academic achievement, high school graduation, and college enrollment, with all of these effects more pronounced for boys. Using a slightly different approach to correcting selection bias, Coca et al. (2012) find similar positive effects of sustained IB participation in another study of Chicago students. Other observational studies have found that IB participation is positively associated with grades (Roderick et al., 2009), standardized test scores (Mayer, 2006; Oudghiri, 2008), behavior in school (Shaunessy et al., 2006), and college attendance and persistence rates (Caspary, 2011; Duevel, 1999; Halic, 2013; Hughes et al., 2005; Shah, Dean, and Chen, 2010). Panich (2001), comparing pairs of students with the same SAT scores at one American university, finds that IB diploma holders earned better grades in the first year of college than those with no IB credit, but that certificate students earned lower grades than the control group. This research offers some preliminary indications that, when the IB functions as the top track in a school, it is likely to stratify students in ways similar to the tracking systems described previously.

Indications that tracking exacerbates achievement inequality are particularly worrying in light of the near-unanimous finding of survey research that track placement tends to reflect race and class inequalities in American society. Quantitative evidence has consistently demonstrated that black, Latino, and low-income students are overrepresented in basic and vocational programs, while white students from affluent families are overrepresented in honors and college preparatory tracks (Braddock and Dawkins, 1993; Gamoran et al., 1995; Joseph, 1997; Lucas, 1999; Oakes, 2005). The shift from tracking to setting has not resolved these concerns. A nationwide study of 2009 high school graduates' transcripts indicates that, although students' high school experiences overall have become more challenging in recent decades, disadvantaged groups of students do not share equally in these gains: black and Hispanic students, as well as students whose parents have no college education, students with disabilities, and English language learners, all complete challenging curricula at lower rates than white students (NCES, 2011a).

Mechanisms for tracking effects: instructional, social, and institutional

These findings raise the question of how tracking works to magnify academic inequalities, and particularly whether stratification results merely from sorting itself or from the school's unequal treatment of students in different places on the academic hierarchy. In a study of ability grouping in elementary reading instruction, Pallas et al.

(1994) offer a helpful framework for addressing this question, proposing that grouping might affect academic achievement by instructional, social, and institutional mechanisms. *Instructional* mechanisms refer to the likelihood that teaching practices and curricular content vary with track level. *Social* mechanisms reflect the fact that tracking sorts students into different social settings in which they evaluate and form expectations for their own performance through interactions with other students; differential socialization created by tracking might lead to different academic outcomes. Finally, *institutional* mechanisms refer to the influence of course placements on the expectations of parents, teachers, and other members of society, reflecting the general consensus that tracking decisions incorporate some legitimate evaluation of a student's achievement and potential. Thus, tracking might stratify academic outcomes by exposing students to different classroom practices, by socializing them into different normative views about learning and school, or by sending signals to others about students' academic capacity. Empirical investigations offer some evidence for all three of these hypotheses.

Instructional effects. Many observers point out that students in high-track classes appear to benefit from higher-quality instruction than their low-track classmates receive. Compared to low-track classes, high-track classes cover a greater volume of content (Oakes, 2005; Schiller et al., 2010; Schmidt, Cogan, and Houang, 2009) at a higher level of complexity (Applebee et al., 2003; Schiller et al., 2010). The social status associated with knowledge presented also varies by track level: a high-track English class might teach students how to interpret Shakespeare and write literary analysis, while a low-track class might offer 'young adult' fiction and focus on writing job applications (Finley, 1984; Gamoran and Berends, 1987; Oakes, 2005). High-track students explore more concepts, receive more challenging assignments, engage in more complex cognitive tasks, discuss material more frequently, and apply new skills and ideas in a wider variety of new situations (Applebee et al., 2003; Gamoran et al., 1995; Oakes, 2005; Watanabe, 2008). Low-track instruction is slower, less conceptually complex, more rigidly structured, and more focused on rote memory and test preparation (Applebee et al., 2003; Finley, 1984; Gamoran and Berends, 1987; Hand, 2010; Page, 1991; Watanabe, 2008). There is some evidence that instructional differences, particularly in class discussion and student participation, mediate between-track differences in achievement (Applebee et al., 2003; Carbonaro and Gamoran, 2002; Gamoran and Nystrand, 1994; Gamoran et al., 1995). In many schools, the best teachers appear to be tracked along with students: teachers of high-track classes tend to have more experience (Finley, 1984; Gamoran and Berends,

1987; Rosenbaum, 1976) and to be more enthusiastic about their classes, which are sometimes viewed as rewards for competence or experience (Finley, 1984; Oakes, 2005). It is important to note, however, that the magnitude of these differences in practice is relatively small: several comparative studies offer the qualification that American high school classrooms are generally dull environments characterized by teacher-directed activities and passive students, and differences between tracks represent minor variations on this pattern (Gamoran et al., 1995; Oakes, 2005; Page, 1991).

Social effects. Tracking can also affect students' academic performance by sorting them into peer groups with different norms and expectations surrounding academic effort and achievement. In turn, these socialization effects influence academic performance both individually, by shaping students' attitudes toward school and behavior in class, and collectively, by affecting the classroom environment. On the individual level, Berends (1995) finds that, even after controlling for background, attitudes, and prior performance, low-track placement is still associated with various indicators of less positive attitudes toward school, including higher dropout rates, lower college expectations, higher rates of absenteeism, more disciplinary problems, and lower engagement. Other studies indicate that high-track students exert more effort in class (Carbonaro, 2005), have higher self-esteem (Vanfossen, Jones, and Spade, 1987), have higher educational aspirations (Braddock and Dawkins, 1993), and are less likely to follow friends into delinquent behavior (Crosnoe, 2002) compared to their low-track peers. The social effects of track placement also manifest themselves in ways that make the atmosphere less conducive to learning in low-track classrooms. Far more students go off-task in low-track classes than in middle- and high-track classes (Gamoran and Nystrand, 1994), and the quality of student resistance is more public and disruptive in low-track classes (Schwartz, 1981). Gamoran et al. (1995) extend this finding by pointing out that off-task behavior appears to be detrimental to achievement growth in low- and middle-track classes but not in high-track classes. Teachers, in turn, respond to off-task behavior more regularly and punitively in low-track classes (Metz, 1978; Oakes, 2005), and low-track students more frequently describe teachers' attitudes as negative or demeaning (Rosenbaum, 1976). These findings should be viewed with some caution, since it is difficult to disentangle social outcomes from prior differences in academic skills and student attitudes or from the instructional differences outlined above. However, they do suggest that tracking practices are likely to affect behavioral and

attitudinal outcomes for students, which are important in their own right and as an influence on learning outcomes.

While American research, especially studies based on large-scale surveys, has tended to emphasize instructional over social factors, a series of British school ethnographies offers a more detailed account of how tracking shapes students' norms and values. Three single-school studies explore the interactions between school structures and social relations among students: David Hargreaves' (1967) study of Lumley Secondary Modern School, Colin Lacey's (1970) investigation of Hightown Grammar School, and Stephen Ball's (1981) description of Beachside Comprehensive School. Each case study advances evidence for a similar explanation of the effects of student sorting, which Hammersley (1985) synthesizes under the title *differentiation-polarization theory*. This theory holds that when schools rank or sort students according to standards of academic and behavioral performance, students' attitudes to those standards become polarized, resulting in the formation of an anti-school subculture. In all three schools, students in higher academic positions expressed stronger agreement with 'pro-school' values, experienced fewer disciplinary problems, and embraced higher academic aspirations than those in lower streams or bands. Moreover, students formed friendship networks largely within their own stream or band, and this social segregation reinforced polarization. For example, the most popular students in Lumley's top form participated in lessons, did well in examinations, and attended school regularly, whereas eagerness to answer questions and unwillingness to 'mess about' in lessons characterized the least popular students in the lower-ranked forms. These reinforcing processes of school differentiation and student polarization resulted in the formation of distinct pro- and anti-school subcultures at all three schools, which corresponded closely with the school's official academic hierarchy. Importantly, the degree of polarization increased over the course of students' time in the schools, indicating that streaming and setting promote subculture formation beyond the effect of prior differences in students' attitudes to school. Subsequent research in the UK (Abraham, 1989), the US (Berends, 1995; Crosnoe, 2002; Rosenbaum, 1976), and Belgium (Van Houtte, 2006) has substantiated the relationship between track placement and various attitudinal and behavioral indicators of attachment to school.

This divergence in adolescents' values is an interesting finding in its own right, particularly given the evidence offered by Hargreaves (1967) that anti-school subcultures may coalesce into 'delinquescent' subcultures that engage in petty criminal activity in and

outside of school. However, value polarization is especially relevant to the present study because it tends to reinforce differential academic outcomes. In part, this is because students who embrace academic, pro-school values tend to behave in ways that promote academic success; they pay attention in class, complete their homework, study for exams, and otherwise prepare themselves to earn better test scores, grades, and other indicators of learning that commonly serve as criteria for future placement in tracks or courses. Less obviously, in virtually all tracking systems involving some element of human judgment, a student's perceived values and behaviors are themselves bases for differentiation, independent of the effects of these values on achievement. Formal or informal staff evaluations of students' attitudes and comportment played some role in stream or band placement at all three case study schools. When students have some say in differentiating themselves, the divergent aspirations incorporated in their value systems also play a role in differentiation. Ball's examination of students' subject option choices in the third year shows both how anti-school pupils' lower hopes for their academic futures led them to choose lower-status courses, and how staff used reputations for poor behavior as reasons to reject many of those lower-band students who did attempt to take more prestigious or demanding subjects. Thus, polarization likely helps explain how curriculum tracking exacerbates the achievement gaps between high- and low-track students. However, it remains to be seen whether the 'softer' tracking systems that have emerged since Ball, Hargreaves, and Lacey conducted their studies produce the same degree of polarization among students.

Institutional effects. Finally, tracking can affect academic achievement through *institutional* effects: labels like 'honors student' or 'remedial student' are freighted with symbolic meaning, and teachers, parents, and other members of society are likely to react to those labels by treating students in a way that affirms the appropriateness of their track placement (Pallas et al., 1994; Rist, 1970, 1977). The quantitative evidence for these effects primarily relies on measures of teachers' expectations for students in different tracks.[15] Several studies indicate that teachers hold lower expectations for their low-track students' capacity to perform (Gamoran and Berends, 1987; Oakes, 2005; Page, 1991; Rosenbaum, 1976; Schwartz, 1981). This is a particularly worrying trend given the

[15] Pallas et al. (1994) also survey parents' expectations for their children's academic performance as another measure of institutional effects. However, researchers investigating tracking at the secondary school level have largely ignored parent expectations, which we might reasonably expect to be less important for adolescents than they are for young children.

evidence that teachers' expectations for their students tend to become self-fulfilling prophecies (Rist, 1970; Rosenthal and Jacobson, 1968). There is little evidence that teacher expectations in their own right explain much of the variation in academic outcomes between tracks (Gamoran and Nystrand, 1994), but this should not lead us to discount the institutional-effects explanation, for three reasons. First, it is difficult to discern the extent to which track placement *per se* informs teachers' academic expectations of students, given that both expectations and track placements do correspond, if imperfectly, to students' measured performance or potential (Schwartz, 1981). Moreover, given the increasing controversy associated with tracking, we should expect any survey of expectations to suffer from some response bias, perhaps leading teachers to understate the magnitude of the differences between their expectations for high- and low-track students. Finally, much of the influence of teacher expectations on student performance is likely mediated through instructional practices, which are easier to measure in large-scale observational studies.

Interpretive studies offer more promising insights into how the meanings associated with track placements manifest themselves in classroom actions (Page, 1991; Page and Valli, 1990). A detailed investigation of one high school teacher's high- and low-track English classes offers a particularly good illustration: Caughlan and Kelly (2004) use interview and observational evidence from a single high school teacher's high- and low-track English classes to demonstrate the links between the institutional and instructional effects of tracking on student achievement. Interviews with the teacher suggested that she held clear and different 'cultural models' of students in each track: she saw her high-track students as intelligent, successful, academically motivated children of middle-class families who would go on to university education and professional success, much like herself; conversely, the teacher thought of her low-track students as uninterested in the academic study of English and unlikely to continue their education beyond the junior college level, largely thanks to their working-class upbringings. This distinction notably lacks any reference to students' cognitive abilities, but it nonetheless assumes that the teacher cannot reasonably be expected to change these differences in a year-long course. Instructional practices in the two classes fit with the teacher's beliefs: the teacher used authentic questions, uptake, and other indicators of 'dialogic instruction' in both classes, but discussions were more coherent and oriented toward literature in the high-track class, whereas in the low-track class, discussions largely concerned elements of students' personal lives that were vaguely related to the literature and served as a

temporary distraction from the subject matter of the course. Thus, the teacher's beliefs about the 'nature' of certain groups of students (an institutional effect) manifest themselves in different uses of discussion and approaches to literature (instructional effects) in ways that give high-track students an advantage in improving their understanding of the material.

The evidence, then, suggests that tracked schools do not function as 'great equalizers'; instead, they are better viewed as stratified societies on a smaller scale. Most schools sort their students into homogenous groups, and each group receives different instruction and socialization, consistent with the larger cultural meanings associated with its location in the school hierarchy. Thus, a student who finds herself in low-track classes is disadvantaged both by the fact of sorting itself, which places her in courses with peers who put less effort into their schoolwork and are more likely to disrupt each other's learning, and by the practices commonly associated with sorting, which ensure that she receives a smaller share of her school's institutional resources and its symbolic approval. All of these mechanisms magnify the pre-existing differences between high- and low-track students, conferring significant advantages on the former group in future competitions for jobs, higher education, and social standing. In short, in contrast to the 'contest norm' (Turner, 1960), which calls for schools to prepare all students for a meritocratic competition that begins in college, curriculum differentiation functions as a *de facto* system of stratification within most American high schools.

Is tracking meritocratic?

Having established that tracking effectively establishes stratification within individual high schools, we can now turn to an examination of whether those stratification systems operate on meritocratic principles. The literature offers evidence on two aspects of this question. First, I consider the relationship between track placement and measurable indicators of 'merit', which should be both consistent and transparent if tracking is meritocratic. Second, I investigate the extent to which students can move between tracks from year to year; a lack of mobility would indicate that initial track placement constrains future prospects, which would defy the 'contest norm' of open competition (Turner, 1960).

Establishing the correlates of track placement is a complicated endeavor, given the variation between different schools' tracking practices and the limited validity of students' self-reported track placements (Gamoran and Berends, 1987; Oakes, 2005). However, many school-level studies indicate that IQ, standardized test scores, grades,

teacher evaluations of behavior, and other data available in school records fail to completely explain students' track placements, often in contradiction of the school's stated policy (Cicourel and Kitsuse, 1963; Goycochea, 2000; Lucas, 1999; Rosenbaum, 1976). Students' chances of being placed in advanced classes also differ from school to school (Hallinan, 1994; Useem, 1992). Large-scale surveys support the especially troubling conclusion that low-income students appear to be disadvantaged in track placement even after accounting for the effects of prior achievement and measured cognitive ability (Attewell and Domina, 2008; Crosnoe and Schneider, 2010; Lucas, 1999; Vanfossen, Jones, and Spade, 1987). The evidence is more mixed on whether black and Latino students are overrepresented or underrepresented in high-tracks relative to standardized measures of their cognitive ability (Corra, Carter, and Carter, 2011; Gamoran and Mare, 1989; Kelly, 2009; Lucas and Berends, 2007; Mickelson, 2005; Oakes, 1995; Riegle-Crumb, 2006). Regardless, whether 'merit' is defined as cognitive ability, effort, or a combination of both, track assignments do not appear to be distributed on a purely meritocratic basis.

Another line of research investigates the extent to which students move between tracks from year to year. Turner (1960) sets forth two 'ideal types' of social mobility that can be applied to within-school mobility. In a *sponsored mobility* system, which Turner attributes to the United Kingdom, upward mobility is available only to those individuals who are sponsored by the elite; the system's function is to reproduce stratification by 'sorting persons into their proper niches' (Turner, 1960: 863). In a school with a sponsored mobility system, we should expect track placements to remain stable over time. By contrast, in a system of *contest mobility*, which Turner attributes to the United States, elite status is awarded to the winners of a free and open competition based on merit and effort. The contest mobility norm should discourage schools from sorting students and encourage them to provide extra support to the weakest students until the 'true contest' (Turner, 1960: 863) begins at the university level. Thus, the contest mobility norm predicts a high degree of mobility between tracks. Based on a study of a single high school's tracking system, Rosenbaum proposes a third model of *tournament mobility*: 'when you win, you win only the right to go on to the next round; when you lose, you lose forever' (1976: 40). This model predicts a good deal of downward mobility but very little upward mobility, so that the students who graduate in the top track represent the most persistent share of those who started out in that track. Mobility is important to any study of the school as a stratified social system, but it is also relevant to broader questions

about occupational stratification, given the evidence that top-track placement confers a significant advantage on students competing for jobs and university places.

The quantitative research since the 'unremarked revolution' (Lucas, 1999), which we might expect to have opened up far more possibilities for students to change tracks, paints a mixed picture of how within-school mobility works. Lucas' own study, based on a nationally representative sample of English and mathematics coursetaking in grades 10 through 12, concludes that the tournament metaphor is overstated; in both English and mathematics, about 80% of students who move downward after the sophomore year do not move upward in the next year, but there is a nontrivial possibility that students will recover from downward mobility. Hallinan (1996) offers an even more optimistic portrait of mobility in a longitudinal study of seven high schools in two cities, finding that about 30% of students change tracks in English and 11% change tracks in math over their high school careers, and that a considerable share of these students move to higher tracks. However, other large-scale surveys (Atanda, 1999; Braddock and Dawkins, 1993; Finkelstein and Fong, 2008; Spielhagen, 2006) find that early placement in college-preparatory tracks or 'gatekeeper courses' such as algebra confers a significant advantage on students' future track placement and educational attainment, meaning that students initially placed in a low track may be unable to catch up with their high-track peers, regardless of future gains in achievement. Studies of individual schools have uncovered particularly strong evidence that students tend to follow one of several hierarchically arranged coursetaking patterns even in the absence of formal curriculum tracks (Garet and DeLany, 1988; Heck, Price, and Thomas, 2004; McFarland, 2006; Rosenbaum, 1976), suggesting that schools' course offerings and placement practices may constrain student mobility in a way that larger-scale quantitative research has failed to detect. In any event, although upward mobility is certainly possible, it remains an exception to the rule, indicating that early track placements are likely to predict coursetaking paths for most students.

The evidence, then, suggests that tracking undermines the equalizing function of public schooling, whether that function requires schools to provide equality of opportunity or equality of result. Certainly, tracking does not fulfill Turner's (1960) vision that all students in a contest mobility system should be equally prepared to compete for jobs or further education upon graduating from high school, a finding that should be unsurprising given that tracking originated in an attempt to sort and train students based on predictions about their future vocations. However, the finding that

track placement decisions do not strictly correspond to observable measures of 'merit' raises serious questions about whether tracked schools truly provide an equal opportunity for social mobility. In sum, the persistence of tracking suggests the need for careful investigation of how American schools reconcile their curriculum differentiation practices with their claim to serve an equalizing function in society.

Detracking: a step towards equal opportunity?

As Lucas (1999) notes, many schools have responded to the growing evidence that tracking is insufficiently meritocratic by eliminating overarching programs of study and allowing students to satisfy graduation requirements by choosing from a variety of subjects and levels of study. Such 'detracking' programs can range from simply introducing student choice into the scheduling process to the more radical reform of offering each subject to all students at the same difficulty level (Rubin, 2006). A few carefully constructed detracking programs have succeeded in integrating underrepresented groups of students into advanced classes. One high-profile example is the Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) program, which selects underachieving but motivated minority students, places them in advanced academic classes within tracked schools, and provides additional academic and social supports to facilitate their transition (Mehan, Hubbard, and Villanueva, 1994; Mehan et al., 1996). Another is the detracking effort in Rockville Centre, New York, in which middle and high schools across the district gradually introduced heterogeneous grouping and student-centered learning in order to prepare all students to take International Baccalaureate courses in the eleventh and twelfth grades (Burris et al., 2007, 2008; Garrity and Burris, 2007). However, the much more common practice of choice-based detracking – in essence, lowering the formal barriers to entry into advanced courses and relying on students to choose the courses that best suit their interests – have met with limited success. Evaluations of detracking schools indicate that many 'detracking' reforms do little more than change the mechanisms of selection, leaving the underlying fact of curriculum differentiation intact. More ambitious reforms to tracking often meet with political resistance, revealing that tracking has deep roots in the rarely-stated belief that high schools should be arenas of meritocratic selection rather than agents of social equality.

The narrowest form of detracking simply alters the mechanism of selection into advanced classes, making students responsible for pursuing upward mobility. Unsurprisingly, such reforms rarely achieve their stated goals of increasing advanced

coursetaking and improving the participation of underrepresented minorities. Yonezawa, Wells, and Serna (2002) describe three persisting barriers to upward mobility at six detracking, racially mixed high schools. First, institutional barriers deterred many students from moving upward: students had uneven access to information about their schools' open access policies; some guidance counselors and teachers exercised 'selective flexibility' (47) in granting students' requests to change tracks, often reflecting assumptions about ability based on race, class, and ethnicity; and some schools maintained hidden prerequisites for high-track classes, despite their stated policies of open enrollment. Second, students' different aspirations and identities lead them to choose different tracks. Many low-track students, especially students of color, doubted their ability to fit in and succeed in honors classes, while many high-track students felt entitled not only to a demanding curriculum but also to policies that protected their preferred position in the school. The encouragements of parents and educators often reinforced these differentiated aspirations and identities. Finally, some low-income black and Latino students, in particular, rejected high-track classes in order to stay with their friends, avoid accusations of 'acting white' or 'selling out', or protect themselves against what they perceived as the hostile environment in high-track classes. In particular, many students felt that they would be forced to sacrifice their dignity in majority-white high-track classes; some chose instead to seek out 'safe spaces', such as courses in African American studies or Mexican American history, where their backgrounds would be more respected. These themes help explain the persistent underrepresentation of minorities and low-income students in advanced classes. Students' and teachers' beliefs will continue to reflect the well-established culture of tracking, and stratification by race, class, and prior track location will persist, unless detracking involves a more serious challenge to the practice of sorting students by any means.

Ready and Lee (2008) investigate a different but comparable form of detracking: the 'schools-within-schools' model, which attempts to deliver a more personalized education, foster a closer school community, and cater to divergent student interests by dividing the school into 'subunits', each of which has a different academic or vocational theme. Each of the five case study schools' subunits reflected an attempt to accommodate students' different interests and abilities and to retain high-achieving students, especially those from affluent families who could afford to go to other schools. In contrast to the rational-choice theorem undergirding the schools-within-schools model, most students explained their subunit choices in terms of reputations for

academic rigor, workload, and classroom culture, with little reference to academic or occupational aspirations. Although the subunits were ostensibly organized around equally valuable vocational or academic themes, in each school there was a fairly clear hierarchy of subunits, and enrollment disparities in race, class, and academic performance tended to reflect this hierarchy.

Rubin (2006) takes a closer look at how detracking played out in a single school where high- and low-achieving students were grouped together for ninth-grade history and English classes in an attempt to bridge social and academic gaps between black and white students. The two teachers in the study fully supported the reforms as a way to promote social justice, and they both used progressive pedagogical strategies, including a good deal of small-group work, to encourage students to make friends with others from different backgrounds and help each other learn. However, the students, who were keenly aware of the school's achievement gap and racial divide, tended to interact in ways that subverted the purposes of this strategy: high-achieving students essentially took over their groups, denying weaker students the opportunity to develop their skills. This strategy fostered resentment on both sides, with stronger students upset that they were 'weighed down' by their group and weaker students feeling disrespected and disliked. Here, even though a more aggressive form of detracking succeeded in creating some racially and academically diverse classrooms, the failure to address low-achieving students' shortcomings in skills and content knowledge meant that students responded to their teachers' well-intentioned, progressive strategies in ways that simply reinforced the school's deep-seated racial and social divisions. These findings provide further reason to doubt that simply changing the process of course selection is not necessarily sufficient to remedy the problems of tracking.

When schools do launch more ambitious challenges to curriculum differentiation, such reforms often meet with political resistance, usually led by elite parents with a vested interest in maintaining their children's advantages. In a three-year study of ten racially diverse schools undergoing detracking reforms, Oakes, Wells, and their colleagues have uncovered patterns of concerted resistance by politically powerful parents (Oakes et al., 1997; Wells and Oakes, 1996; Wells and Serna, 1996). Although the composition of the local elite varies slightly with local context, the most powerful parents in each location tend to be more white, affluent, and educated than the rest of the community, and they tend to use similar strategies to thwart reform proposals: threatening to leave the school; co-opting powerful teachers and administrators within

the school; securing the cooperation of the 'not-quite elite' parents involved in school-level governance; and offering symbolic bribes to schools and districts, in which elites accept limited detracking reforms in exchange for the school's 'gifts' of special instructional or symbolic resources to their children (Wells and Serna, 1996). Importantly, these parents demonstrate more concern with the fact of sorting than with the quality or content of the curriculum; their goal is to maintain advanced courses as the *exclusive* privilege of their children, despite their awareness that tracking often separates students by race and class (Wells and Oakes, 1996; Wells and Serna, 1996). Such political resistance can force administrators to abandon or significantly reduce their plans to reduce vertical differentiation.

If resistance to detracking is not founded in clear educational concerns or overt support for segregation, then what ideology justifies pervasive opposition to reform? Oakes et al. (1997) offer a promising explanation: detracking challenges not just conventional schooling practices but, more fundamentally, the longstanding ideology that intelligence is fixed, objective, and measurable, and therefore that the function of schooling is to sort students by their intelligence rather than to support every student in achieving the same standard. Notably, the definition of intelligence in this conventional view tends to align very closely with cultural styles typical of affluent white families. Although some teachers in each of the case study schools articulated more progressive visions of intelligence as multifaceted and developmental, more traditional educators aligned with the elite parents of high-track students to block or water down detracking proposals. In other words, detracking reforms challenged the longstanding practice of structuring schools as arenas for ostensibly meritocratic selection, and those parents whose children were judged to be the most meritorious under the old system took strategic action to preserve their children's high status in the school. This finding underscores the fact that tracking is not just a rational way of organizing school resources to efficiently achieve educational ends; it also reflects a powerful and often unspoken ideology that legitimates educational, racial, and class inequality on the basis of presumed differences in a highly problematic conception of innate intelligence.

The importance of between-school variation

Much of the literature included in this review treats tracking as a stable phenomenon across school and community contexts. However, both quantitative and qualitative evidence about variation between individual schools in the structures, meanings, and effects of tracking underscores the importance of examining tracking

structures in their school contexts. Sørensen (1970) offers a helpful set of terms for describing the organization of tracking systems. *Vertical differentiation* attempts to 'reduce the amount of variation in whatever characteristics the school assumes relevant for a student's learning capacity' (Sørensen, 1970: 360). Grouping students into grade levels by age is the most universal example of vertical differentiation; dividing them between 'honors' (more demanding), regular, and remedial classes is another possibility. *Horizontal differentiation* attempts to reduce variation in the knowledge or skills taught to groups of students. A horizontally differentiated program might seek to prepare some students for university and others for skilled manual trades. *Electivity* indicates the degree of student choice involved in group placement: students choose their own classes in a highly elective system, while teachers or guidance counselors determine placements in a system with low electivity. *Assignment criteria* are the characteristics by which, in a less elective system, placement decisions are made; they generally include assessments of past performance, current achievement level, and/or current cognitive skills. *Selectivity* refers to the degree of homogeneity that a system aims to produce within learning groups. Finally, *scope* measures 'to what extent a given group of students will be members of the same classroom over time' (Sørensen, 1970: 362). A system with high scope assigns students to overarching tracks governing their coursetaking in all subjects and offers them few opportunities to move between tracks.

Quantitative studies reveal important between-school differences in the structure and effects of tracking. Using Sørensen's framework, Gamoran (1992) offers the most detailed study of the relationship between school context and tracking effects, finding that limited mobility between tracks is associated with increased inequality in math and verbal achievement and lower overall math achievement, very high or very low inclusiveness of students in college-bound tracks is associated with greater inequality in math achievement, and high inclusiveness is associated with higher overall math and verbal achievement. Hallinan's (1994) longitudinal study of tracking in two American cities finds substantial between-school variation in both the results of track assignments, such that the same student might be placed in an academic track in one school and a vocational track in another, and in the effects of track placement on achievement. The implications of track location for a student's curricular experiences also vary with school context: the correlation between students' math and English placements, an indicator of *de facto* tracking, is higher in socioeconomically diverse schools (Lucas, 1999), and the specific coursetaking paths associated with various tracks in mathematics differ from

school to school (McFarland, 2006). While different studies draw different conclusions about whether race plays an unfair role in the tracking placement process, the demographic makeup of schools appears to be important to this question: black students' disadvantage in track placement is greatest in low-income and predominantly white schools (Kelly, 2009; Lucas and Berends, 2007).

A wide variety of ethnographic research suggests one possible source of this variation: different school cultures assign different meanings to tracked classes and students, which translate into observable differences in high- and low-track classroom practices. Page (1991) illustrates this point in her interpretive study of how low-track classes work in two American high schools, Marshall and Southmoor. In both schools, low-track instruction reflects a particular interpretation of the school's broader culture. At Southmoor, which touts itself as an elite academic institution, low-track classes are widely regarded as marginal to the school's academic mission, and they tend to embody a chaotic 'caricature' of the regular curriculum, in which both teachers and students frequently divert lessons from their nominal learning goals. By contrast, Marshall defines itself as an unexceptional working-class school whose regular-track curriculum emphasizes skill development and discipline rather than intellectual growth, and its lower-track classes offer a hyperbolically regimented, routinized, and impersonal version of this curriculum. Page shows how these two translations of accepted pedagogical practices follow from teachers' (often inaccurate) stereotypes about low-track students, which hold that such students lack academic competence, come from socioeconomically and educationally disadvantaged families, and present discipline problems because they are simultaneously too passive in academic activities and too active in disrupting class. This study's in-depth exploration of culture and practice in two schools demonstrates how teachers' beliefs, mediated by school and community cultures, translate into two distinct sets of low-track practices, both of which perpetuate the educational advantage of high-track students.

Other ethnographic studies offer further evidence that tracking varies according to community context, school sector, local tradition, and a variety of idiosyncratic factors. In a comparative study of four Catholic and three public schools, Camarena (1990) argues that Catholic schools' tracking systems produce less stark social and academic stratification because of their distinctive ideologies: in keeping with their commitment to develop each individual's talents, Catholic schools use tracking as a means to help all students achieve the same standards, and they accordingly devote far

more resources to making initial track placements, monitoring students' progress, and reassigning students to a higher or lower track when appropriate. These differences help explain the common observation that tracking has fewer deleterious effects in Catholic schools than in public schools (Gamoran, 1992; Lee et al., 1998a, 1998b; Valli, 1990). Hanson (1990) describes differences between high-track geometry and English classes in a suburban and an urban school in the same district: in response to highly involved parents' demands for a rigid college preparatory education, the suburban school tended to provide instruction in specific skills and content in highly structured classrooms, while the urban school teachers, with less pressure from parents and more ambiguous views of their students' futures, covered less material in geometry and emphasized the development of broader critical thinking and literary appreciation skills in English. Conner (2007) notes that even the standardized curriculum of the International Baccalaureate has different meanings for staff and students in different schools: levels of student engagement in the extended essay, a requirement for IB diploma candidates, varied widely between the eight schools in her study. This short list is far from an exhaustive summary of the qualitative evidence that schools' distinctive cultures inform unique approaches to curriculum differentiation, but it does establish that a deep investigation of the institutional meanings ascribed to tracking in a particular school context is necessary to explain how tracking affects academic and social outcomes for students.

Conclusion

This chapter has explored the practice of curriculum differentiation in the context of the ideology of meritocracy. The belief that merit rather than inheritance should determine social status enjoys a great deal of popularity in the United States, where the mythology of the American dream holds that anyone who works hard should have an equal chance at prosperity. This ideology also sanctions a high degree of inequality: if everyone has an equal opportunity to move up in the world, people at the bottom of the social order are responsible for their own predicament. The public school, more than any other institution, symbolizes the promise of equal opportunity. Thus, most Americans express agreement with the mainstream achievement ideology, which holds that hard work and education are the keys to individual economic and social success. This ideology remains powerful in educational and political thought despite the potential criticism that the arbitrarily distributed quality of cognitive ability could significantly limit an individual's life chances through no fault of his own. The belief that

public education gives everyone a fair chance at upward mobility implies that the schools' mission should be to put all students on an equal footing to compete for jobs and further education, but research on tracking shows that this is far from the case. The meanings, structures, and effects of tracking differ from school to school. On the whole, however, schools continue to sort their students into ability-grouped classes that provide very different levels of preparation for future success. Moreover, the sorting process is far from a perfect reflection of students' 'merit', whether measured by prior achievement or by effort.

Tracking is hardly a new or unknown phenomenon, and the criticism that it reproduces social inequality has been widely aired in academia and among professional educators. Yet schools continue to group their students for instruction, often in ways that benefit already privileged students at the expense of those who need public education the most, despite the apparent popularity of detracking efforts. Given the declining popularity of IQ testing and other measures that claim to predict students' potential, on what basis do schools assign their students to courses of study? Why do schools remain so reliant on sorting their students into homogeneous classrooms? And why do teachers, parents, and students continue to accept the resulting stratification? The rest of this thesis explores these questions with a detailed study of Lincoln High School, a single urban public school in the United States. Its primary contribution is to our understanding of the interplay between how merit is defined and how students experience curricular stratification, which has important implications for both academic and social outcomes. This substantive investigation, in turn, bears on the more abstract question of why social and economic stratification persists in societies that express a strong ideological commitment to equality of opportunity.

Chapter 3. Methodology

The theoretical and empirical frameworks set out in Chapter 2 frame the purpose of the present study: to investigate how a single school, which I refer to with the pseudonym Lincoln High School, balances the normative view that American schools should serve as 'great equalizers' with the empirical reality that most schools employ an imperfectly meritocratic system of sorting students according to perceived differences in their abilities and interests. To that end, I direct my focus to the relationship between what participants believe about Lincoln's tracking system and how they enact it in day-to-day classroom life. Given the paucity of research on this relationship, my aim in this project is to generate hypotheses, not to test established theories. Moreover, I am more concerned with developing propositions that are grounded in a thorough investigation of a single setting than I am with advancing a broad explanation of how tracking works in all contexts; the hypothesis presented here is best expanded and refined in other studies. This hypothesis deals primarily with my interpretation of students' and teachers' perspectives, and thus it makes no grand claims to objectivity or omniscience; I simply aim to describe how participants understand the International Baccalaureate (IB), Lincoln's prestigious top-track curriculum, and to explain how they construct Lincoln's tracking system by acting on these understandings.

The research methods set out in this chapter are designed to achieve the aims of understanding a single case, generating hypotheses, and illuminating the relationships between the structure of tracking at Lincoln and participants' beliefs surrounding meritocracy and social mobility. The first section describes how this project draws on the traditions of case study research and grounded theory, tailoring elements of both of those approaches to suit the specific research questions addressed here. The second section sets out those research questions and recounts how they have evolved over the course of the research process. The next two sections offer detailed information on the methods I used to collect and analyze data. The last two sections address concerns about ethics, reflexivity, and validity arising from these research methods.

Methodological traditions

Case study research

In its choice of object and its approach to data collection and analysis, this project fits squarely in the tradition of case study research: the investigation of one or more instances, or 'cases', of a larger phenomenon, taking account of the real-world context in which each case is embedded (Yin, 2003). The case might be selected because it is intrinsically interesting, or because it is instrumentally useful in providing insight into some more abstract issue (Stake, 1995). As a high-performing school frequently cited as a 'success story' for its district, Lincoln certainly merits study in its own right. Moreover, Lincoln functions as a case of a school with a hierarchical system of curriculum differentiation driven primarily by student choice. The findings are thus particularly relevant for the study of curriculum differentiation and detracking schools, and more generally of beliefs about social mobility in a stratified society; they may also be of interest for researchers studying urban schools and the International Baccalaureate, although contributing to research in these fields is not a primary aim. The case study approach is particularly useful where the boundaries between the case and its context are not perfectly clear (Yin, 2003); here, it allows for an examination of the ways in which beliefs about how to move up on Lincoln's academic and social hierarchy reflect and reshape larger ideologies about social mobility in America.

Case study research also tends to lend itself to a particular method of inquiry. This method emphasizes the collection of multiple sources of rich data, encompassing a variety of perspectives. Thus, case studies rarely rely exclusively on quantitative or survey data (Yin, 2003). I have selected the case study approach because these methods allow for an in-depth exploration of how tracking operates at the school level, and particularly the discovery of a wide range of perspectives on the same events and structures. Schools are complex systems, and perspectives on tracking are likely to differ between and within groups defined by different backgrounds and roles. This study does not aim to generate a single 'true' account of how tracking works at Lincoln, but it does attempt to produce as fully informed an understanding as possible, and the immersion permitted by the case study approach is crucial to achieving that goal.

Grounded theory

Grounded theory is the second methodological tradition informing this project. Grounded theory emerged in the 1960s as a reaction to what its creators, the sociologists

Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss, perceived as an excessive preoccupation in their field with testing and confirming established 'grand theories' (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). In stark contrast to this deductive approach, grounded theory advocates the 'initial, systematic discovery of the theory from the data of social research' (Glaser and Strauss, 1967: 3); the researcher's job is to inductively construct theory through constant comparative analysis of empirical data. Some of the more strident advocates of grounded theory have been criticized for excessively ideological devotion to the methodological prescriptions outlined in the canonical texts on grounded theory (Corbin and Strauss, 2008; Glaser and Strauss, 1967), at the expense of genuine sensitivity to the research topic (Thomas and James, 2006). This project attempts to avoid such pitfalls, instead following Charmaz' guidance that grounded theory should emphasize 'the studied phenomenon rather than the methods of studying it' (2005: 509). Thus, this project would likely not qualify as an orthodox grounded theory study using criteria such as the 'troublesome trinity' of theoretical sampling, constant comparison to theoretical (rather than demographic) categories, and generating a middle-range theory that can be generalized to other settings (Hood, 2007). In particular, this study is more concerned with generating a limited, substantive theory of how the IB works at Lincoln than with producing a formal theory of program implementation or status attainment. I have therefore given much less emphasis to the exhaustive delineation of categories and properties than might be found in a grounded theory project dedicated to more abstract questions.

Nonetheless, grounded theorists have developed and advocated a number of perspectives and tools that can contribute significantly to this study. One such contribution is perhaps the most fundamental premise of grounded theory: that the researcher should attempt to derive theory from the data, rather than forcing the data to fit an existing theory (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). In this situation, while a wide range of theories might explain how curriculum differentiation works at some level, there is no clear, unified framework through which to analyze what goes on at the school, classroom, teacher, and student levels simultaneously. Generating theory is thus a more feasible goal than testing theory for this research topic. In addition, a number of tools for data collection and analysis in this study are borrowed from grounded theory. A particularly important influence is the concept of 'theoretical sampling', in which choices about where and how to collect data are guided by the attempt to more fully develop emerging theoretical concepts and properties, rather than by *a priori* decisions that aim to

achieve a 'representative' sample (Corbin and Strauss, 2008). Similarly, to the extent that practical considerations allow, data collection and analysis occur simultaneously. Thus, while this study will not produce a midrange 'grounded theory' in the sense that Glaser and Strauss (1967) first described it, it is important to acknowledge the influence of this methodological tradition on the present project.

Epistemology

These aims and choices reflect a particular set of epistemological orientations. Grounded theory has often been characterized as a positivist tradition, aimed at discovering singular truths about the social world (Bryant and Charmaz, 2007). However, positivist approaches, with their insistence on objectivity, assume that the researcher is more detached from the research setting than is possible in this situation. Arguably, it is impossible for any researcher to enter a social setting completely free of preconceptions, to engage in data collection without influencing how the subjects of the research behave, or to completely separate her own knowledge, experiences, and personality from the process of data analysis. Such an ideal of objectivity is especially unrealistic in this study, since I have chosen to study the high school I attended. (Issues arising from my prior involvement with Lincoln are more fully explored in the last section of this chapter.) Instead, I prefer to employ a constructivist perspective, which assumes that social actors construct their own interpretations of reality from the interaction between experience and reaction. Following Charmaz, who has written extensively about conducting grounded theory studies from a constructivist perspective, I believe that 'any theoretical rendering offers an *interpretive* portrayal of the studied world, not an exact picture of it' (2006: 10). This study will not produce a universally agreeable account, but it can contribute to both substantive and theoretical understanding of the topic.

Research questions: from descriptive to analytical

In keeping with the grounded theory principle that the researcher should allow analysis to emerge from data, rather than forcing the data into a preconceived analytical framework, I developed my research questions through an iterative process. I began with the very broadly defined question, 'What's going on at Lincoln High School?' My intent in the pilot phase of the study was to find out which questions were most interesting to the teachers and students I interviewed, in order to generate analysis that was useful to me as a researcher and to teachers and students as stakeholders in the school. In this stage, I followed Corbin and Strauss' principle that the purpose of the initial research

question is to 'lead the researcher into the data where the issues and problems important to the persons, organizations, groups, and communities under investigation can be explored' (2008: 25). In the first few interviews, I did ask a few questions that I had formulated on the basis of existing research and personal experience. For instance, given the debate over whether 'oppositional cultures' help explain race-based gaps in academic achievement, I asked students whether they felt that their course choices impacted their social standing among peers at Lincoln. However, I found that the most open-ended questions, such as 'What would you change about Lincoln if you could?', yielded the most interesting and unexpected insights. In particular, the theme of underrepresentation of black male students in the IB program, explored more fully in Chapter 7, emerged unexpectedly through such broad questions: one teacher brought it up when I followed up on a comparison between Lincoln and her previous school, and another when I asked about her general feelings on Lincoln's IB program. The serendipitous emergence of this topic illustrates the value of being sensitive to unexpected themes in the data, especially at the beginning stages of a research project.

As I continued interviewing students and teachers in the pilot phase, I made a conscious attempt to explore the issue of underrepresentation with each participant. These discussions raised two more general questions about tracking at Lincoln. First, I asked students and recent graduates to recount their own coursetaking decisions, wondering whether these explanations might offer clues as to the nature of underrepresentation. To my surprise, students characterized their decisions primarily in terms of *effort*; prior academic achievement and intellectual growth figured much less prominently in these explanations than in the literature on tracking summarized in Chapter 2. Second, following Becker's (1998) advice to interrogate assumptions so widely held that participants rarely bother to state them directly, I used interviews and observations to address the question: why does the IB matter? This question encompasses both beliefs and practices: I used interviews to investigate the symbolic meanings attributed to different locations in Lincoln's curricular structure, and I conducted classroom observations to find out how high- and low-track classes differ from each other in practice. I also used empirical data on student coursetaking to add a longitudinal dimension to this question, addressing how students' initial coursetaking decisions constrain their future options. These two questions, and their relationship to the underrepresentation of black male students, became the focus of data collection during the remaining fieldwork periods. As I reflected on the data, a third question

emerged: if students and teachers genuinely believe that effort is the most important requirement for success in the IB, then why does the school maintain a vertically differentiated curriculum? This question is especially relevant for the questions about the school's role in a meritocracy explored in Chapter 2. Fortuitously, participants' comments on two policy issues – the principal's proposal to eliminate most low-track classes, and the effort to tighten admissions standards – gave me a substantial body of data with which to explore this question. Thus, my final research questions ask:

(1) To what extent is Lincoln's curriculum stratified, both academically and socially?
(2) What do students and faculty believe about how to succeed in their school's tracking system – in other words, what is the local achievement ideology?
(3) Why does Lincoln persist in tracking its students, even though its achievement ideology insists that every student is capable of succeeding in IB classes?

These questions structure the three findings chapters of my thesis.

Data collection

Research schedule

Data collection for this project was divided into three phases: a pilot study, two trips focused on developing and exploring research questions, and a third phase devoted to confirming and refining the analysis. This schedule reflects analytical as well as practical considerations: alternating between phases of data collection and analysis allowed me to refine my research questions, sampling strategy, and instruments to build on the results of preliminary analysis (Corbin and Strauss, 2008). The first phase, which took place over two weeks in April 2011, served the function of a pilot study. In this phase, I interviewed two teachers, four current students, and four recent graduates, recruited through prior connections and referrals by other participants. The pilot interviews followed a very open-ended protocol, with the aims of gathering background information on the research site, defining specific research questions, and refining the interview instruments.

The second phase of research focused on the more descriptive research questions described in the previous section. This phase included two separate trips to Lincoln, comprising four weeks in September 2011 and another four weeks in December 2011 and January 2012. In this phase, I recorded interviews with 19 students and 10 faculty members. I also observed 81 class meetings and other school events, and I informally participated in a variety of school and extracurricular activities. I continued to make minor revisions to my sampling practices and interview schedules during this period, but

the major aim was to collect data relating to the three descriptive research questions: how students choose courses, what explains the underrepresentation of black males in the IB program, and how much classes differ by track location.

In the third phase, which spanned four weeks in March and April 2012, I aimed to collect data that would allow me to refine and verify my preliminary analysis of the data from the first two phases. I sought out interview participants and observation sites that could shed light on salient theoretical issues, and I also looked for participants who might be especially likely to contradict my emerging hypotheses. In this phase, I interviewed 12 teachers and 15 students, and I observed 60 classes and other events; I also conducted second interviews with four faculty members. I revised my interview questions and observation protocols in this phase to focus more specifically on the emerging concept of the achievement ideology and its links with student course choices and classroom practice.

Interviews

I used a combination of purposive and opportunistic sampling strategies to recruit students for interviews. Especially at the beginning of field research, I relied on a few prior connections to arrange interviews with students. One of my first student participants was a senior who had contacted me months before to ask for help with a college tour he was arranging; two others were members of the debate team whom I had previously met at the request of their coach. In this stage, I also interviewed a group of four recent graduates introduced to me by a teacher, who had cited them as exceptions to the rule of low participation by black males in the IB program. This group of students offered particularly interesting insights into the race, class, and gender dynamics influencing course-taking decisions. I leaned on similar connections – especially with the debate team, which I occasionally helped coach – for many early interviews.

As I began to immerse myself more deeply in the life of the school, students became accustomed to seeing me around, and I began to parlay these informal acquaintances into requests for interviews. I spent my free time during the school day in the classroom of an art teacher who agreed to host me, which proved helpful in this regard: the informal environment of the classroom, its status as a refuge for students skipping class or avoiding the cafeteria during lunch, and my friendship with the art teacher all allowed me to become friendly with a wide range of students, many of whom I subsequently interviewed. I recruited a smaller number of students while observing other classes. In some cases, with the teacher's approval, I mentioned that I was looking

for students to interview while introducing myself in observations; in others, I used free time to ask students sitting near me whether they might be interested in an interview. Occasionally, students would ask me about my research and volunteer to be interviewed.

These chance encounters accounted for the bulk of my interviews through January. Towards the end of fieldwork, based on a review of the data I had collected thus far, I made a particular effort to contact students belonging to groups that were previously missing from my sample. Some of these were demographic categories, particularly Asian and Hispanic students and white males. I also attempted to recruit students who I thought could shed light on a substantive question that arose in the course of research. For instance, I sought out black male students when teachers first raised the question of whether they were fairly represented in the IB program, and I scheduled interviews with several athletes after a few participants speculated that playing a sport might hinder academic success. This phase of more purposeful sampling also had the effect of broadening my sample beyond the small group of students who were sufficiently interested in me or my research to initiate a conversation and to agree to be interviewed. In all, I interviewed 42 Lincoln students and recent graduates. Only one student directly declined my request for an interview, because she was uncomfortable with being tape-recorded; three others agreed in principle to be interviewed but never responded to my requests to schedule a meeting or failed to return the signed consent form. A fourth agreed to an interview and returned a consent form but unexpectedly dropped out of school before our scheduled meeting time.

I recruited teachers for interviews using a similar mix of prior connections and targeted requests. In the pilot phase, I interviewed two teachers who were friendly with me and interested in my research. Prior connections also accounted for many of my teacher interviews early in the school year. As I became a more familiar presence at the school, I began to recruit other teachers into the study. I particularly focused my efforts on teachers who taught both high- and low-track classes, and I often inquired about interviewing those teachers after spending a few days observing their classes. I was able to interview all but one of the teachers whose classes I observed. In general, teachers were extremely generous with their time and forthcoming in conversation. I have no doubt that my status as an alumna greatly helped me gain access and trust in these interviews. In all, I recorded interviews with 23 teachers and administrators. I also conducted second interviews with four participants (the principal, the IB coordinator, the CAS coordinator, and an English teacher) during the last round of data collection. All

departments at the school were included, with English teachers somewhat overrepresented and math teachers somewhat underrepresented. Only one teacher declined to be interviewed. A full listing of interviews conducted is presented in Appendix E.

In conducting interviews, I followed a semi-structured protocol, which I periodically revised to reflect prior analysis and existing literature. When interviewing students, I generally began by soliciting narratives about how they came to Lincoln, and then proceeded to a more detailed discussion of their course choices. I next asked for more general opinions about the IB and the school. I closed with a few more factual questions about students' other activities and their plans for the future. In interviews with teachers, I began by asking about prior teaching experience at Lincoln and at other schools, making sure to establish a list of courses they had taught at Lincoln. I then solicited some general opinions on the IB and the school (including the teacher's beliefs about what traits a student needs to succeed in the IB), followed by more specific questions about teaching practices, classroom culture, coursetaking patterns, tracking and detracking, and recruitment of students to the IB. Where applicable, I also directly asked teachers to compare their high- and low-track classes with each other. I closed each interview by asking if the respondent wanted to tell me anything else; this question often prompted participants to offer helpful summaries or insights. Copies of the interview protocols are included in Appendix B.

Using a loosely structured protocol afforded several advantages to this project, at the expense of perfect consistency between interviews. First, it allowed me to conduct interviews without relying on extensive notes, which promoted an informal atmosphere in interviews and, I believe, encouraged respondents to be more forthcoming. It also allowed me to probe for further details on theoretically important topics, such as a student's rationale for choosing a particular course, while spending little time on less relevant information, such as a student's list of extracurricular activities. This was particularly helpful because the time available for individual interviews was often limited. Finally, it allowed me to modify the interview schedule substantially where necessary, for instance, to add questions about a department chair's role in assigning teachers to courses. The semi-structured protocol thus allowed me to gather the same set of basic information about each participant while also presenting many opportunities for a richer elucidation of the participant's perspectives to emerge (Charmaz, 2006; Corbin and Strauss, 2008).

Observations

I selected classes for initial observation largely on the basis of opportunity, with the aim of refining the observation protocol and making my presence familiar to students as quickly as possible. As my fieldwork progressed, I made a point of seeking out 'matched pairs' of high- and low-track courses taught by the same teacher in the hopes of observing how track status affects classroom culture even when the teacher remains the same. Some of these sets of classes were 'perfect matches' which offered very similar content, with the IB or pre-diploma label serving as the most important distinction between the two. Most of these perfect matches, such as Algebra and Algebra Pre-Diploma, were in the math department. Others offered different content to students of the same age in the same department. For instance, the same teacher taught IB Environmentals and Biology 2, both science electives for juniors and seniors. Such classes cover different subjects, but since they fulfill the same graduation requirement, they function as alternatives for students as they choose courses. With the permission of school administrators, I also observed several non-class events, such as school-wide assemblies and faculty meetings. I made a point of seeking out events with particular relevance to my research questions.

My aim in conducting classroom observations was to create a thorough record of the class period while being as unobtrusive as possible. I sat in a desk suggested by the teacher, usually in the back of the classroom, and recorded hand-written field notes. Some teachers offered me a moment to introduce myself and describe my research at the beginning of my first observation, but otherwise I did not participate in class activities unless asked by the teacher or a student. My field notes followed a loosely structured protocol focusing on three major categories. First, I aimed to identify the basic structure of the lesson, with a particular focus on demands made of students; to this end, I took notes on lectures, wrote down assignments, and collected copies of handouts whenever possible. Second, I attempted to capture the verbal interactions in class as much as possible; this generally meant writing down everything that the teacher and students said in whole-class dialogues and in small-group conversations. I recorded participants' exact language as much as possible, marking direct quotes in my field notes with double quotation marks; where I was not able to capture entire exchanges verbatim, I mirrored participants' language as closely as I could. Third, I took note of students' behavior and compared it to what the teacher had asked them to do. This generally entailed looking around the classroom a few times per hour and noting what students were doing,

especially when the teacher had assigned them some independent task. Whenever possible, I added the time of day to specific events in my field notes, in order to record some information about the allocation of time in lessons. At some point during each observation, I also made a seating chart noting the race and gender of each student in the class, which gave me a way to corroborate teachers' and students' claims that black males are underrepresented in Lincoln's IB program. I used similar note-taking procedures in other observations, paying particular attention to any mention of the IB. As with the interview schedules, I adjusted my observation practices as needed to refocus my attention on emerging theoretical concepts (Corbin and Strauss, 2008), such as 'quality of misbehavior' (discussed in Chapter 5).

Documents

I collected a variety of documents in the course of my fieldwork. During classroom observations, teachers often gave me an extra copy of materials handed out during class; I was also occasionally able to procure textbooks and copy down assignments. I used these documents to supplement observational data with, for instance, the precise content of homework assignments. I also obtained a number of official documents, such as the master schedule of teachers and classes, the student handbook, and the contract signed by all full IB students, which I used as indications of the school's official policies and positions. A teacher provided me with every issue of the school newspaper published in the 2009-10 and 2010-11 school years, which included articles on relevant topics like the low participation of student-athletes in the IB program and concerns about disciplinary problems. These documents were not the primary objects of my analysis, but they provided helpful background information and often served to corroborate or clarify my field notes. Finally, the IB coordinator provided a number of statistical reports on participation and performance in the diploma program.

I also received two more comprehensive sources of information about students' coursetaking decisions. In January 2012, the Lincoln guidance department generously provided me with anonymous school transcripts for the classes of 2011, 2012, 2013, and 2014. These students were first-year graduates, seniors, juniors, and sophomores respectively at the time of fieldwork. For each year of a student's high school career, his or her transcript lists the code and title of each course taken, the grade received, the number of credits earned, the number of absences recorded in that course, and the school at which the course was taken. These transcripts offer an empirical record of students' progress from course to course. I also received copies of forms submitted to

the IB coordinator by 93 students in the classes of 2011, 2012, and 2013 who wanted to drop full IB status. These drop forms include the student's rationale for dropping the IB and their requests for course changes in the coming semester. Since I received these forms in the fall of 2011, they are not a complete survey of all of the students who dropped in the classes of 2012 and 2013, but they do offer a more comprehensive and likely more candid account of students' decisions to drop the IB than I could obtain in interviews alone.

Informal participation

In addition to these structured forms of data collection, I attempted to immerse myself in the life of the school as much as possible, leading me to observe and participate in many aspects of student life. I spent my free time in the classroom of an art teacher who maintained a fairly informal environment, and I often chatted casually with students there. I occasionally helped coach and judge for the speech and debate team after school, and I attended a few basketball games, including the boys' and girls' state tournaments. During classroom observations, teachers occasionally asked me to participate by leading a discussion or providing feedback to students, which I did to the best of my ability. At the request of the guidance department, I met with several high-performing seniors early in the fall semester to talk about their college applications, and I commented on drafts of personal statements for a few students applying to selective universities. I also spoke to students and parents about my experiences at Lincoln on three occasions: a recruitment night for admitted eighth graders, a meeting of juniors to discuss college applications, and a meeting for sophomores considering the IB diploma and their parents. All of these activities allowed me to experience day-to-day student life outside of the classroom, and they also served as additional ways to meet and recruit interview participants.

Data analysis

Guiding principles

My approach to data analysis follows two guiding principles at the heart of the grounded theory tradition. First, data analysis is *inductive*, meaning that the researcher should allow theoretical concepts to emerge from the data, rather than imposing a preconceived theoretical framework on the data. Second, analysis is *iterative*, requiring the researcher to repeatedly engage with the same data from different perspectives and to consciously interrogate the relationship between the data and the research questions. These principles capture the strengths of the grounded theory tradition – its flexibility

and sensitivity to data – without dictating reliance on an excessively rigid set of prescriptions for how analysis should be carried out.

The view that qualitative data analysis should be inductive is enshrined in the grounded theory tradition, which emerged as a response to what Glaser and Strauss (1967) perceived as sociologists' tendency to seek verification for existing 'grand theories' with little foundation in empirical data. Instead of testing an established theory in new settings, a grounded theory study ideally begins with open-ended data collection and constructs theoretical explanations from repeated engagement with those data. Thus, the initial research questions and interview schedules, conceived without the guidance of an overarching theoretical framework, tend to be quite open-ended and descriptive (Charmaz, 2006; Corbin and Holt, 2005; Corbin and Strauss, 2008). The most rigid interpretation of grounded theory holds that the researcher should not even begin to review the literature until after the analysis is complete, so as to eliminate the possibility that existing theories might color data collection and analysis (Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Glaser, 1978). In practice, it is unreasonable to assume that most researchers can fully separate their prior academic or personal experience from the act of data analysis, particularly given the time constraints surrounding a doctoral thesis. Nonetheless, I have attempted to let participants' concerns and my own insights shape my analysis more than any predetermined theoretical framework.

While the initial data analysis in grounded theory is descriptive and sometimes frustratingly broad, it gradually becomes more specific and explanatory through an iterative process of data collection and analysis. Analysis should ideally begin when the first interview is completed, not when data collection is complete (Charmaz, 2006; Corbin and Strauss, 2007). One useful framework for iterative data analysis revolves around three questions:

(1) What are the data telling me?
(2) What is it I want to know?
(3) What is the dialectical relationship between what the data are telling me and what I want to know? (Srivastava and Hopwood, 2009: 78)

Periodically asking these questions helped me determine a more specific focus for my analysis and adjust my data collection methods to address the research questions better. Thus, my research design includes alternating phases of data collection and analysis, with intentional shifts in research questions, interview instruments, sampling, and analytical focus between each phase.

Analytical procedures: coding and memo-writing

My analysis proceeded in three loosely defined stages – organizing the data, initial coding, and focused coding – accompanied by memo-writing at all stages. I began by thoroughly familiarizing myself with the data. I transcribed all student and faculty interviews verbatim, occasionally omitting verbal tics or irrelevant tangents. I typed all of my field notes and attached them to any documents collected during the course of the observation. (A sample interview transcript is provided in Appendix C; field notes from one observation are attached in Appendix D.) I also created an inventory of all the interviews, field notes, and documents I collected during the course of my research. (This inventory is attached as Appendix E.) I organized all of these documents with the NVivo qualitative data analysis software, which I used to attach codes to data for the remainder of the project. Transcribing, re-reading, and organizing my data helped me start identifying important areas for analysis.

The bulk of my analysis took the form of coding – attaching succinct indicators of meaning to pieces of data – and memo-writing. Different schools of qualitative research embrace different approaches to coding (see, e.g., Bryman, 2012; Charmaz, 2006; Corbin and Strauss, 2008; Glaser, 1978; Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Miles and Huberman, 1994; Saldaña, 2013; Strauss, 1987), but most agree that it is an invaluable tool for interpreting data. Codes might straightforwardly describe the category to which the coded segment of data belongs; they might encode the researcher's interpretation of some meaning implicit in the data; or they might connect a particular segment of data to a larger pattern occurring across the study (Miles and Huberman, 1994). Codes can be *in vivo*, meaning that they mirror the participant's understanding and sometimes use the participant's words, or they can connect the data to larger themes in the scholarly literature (Strauss, 1987). Codes represent the first step in the process of building an integrated theory from a large body of data, and they facilitate later analysis by making it easier to retrieve data related to a particular topic.

I approached coding in two stages: 'initial' and 'focused' coding (Charmaz, 2006). In the first stage, I simply attached as many different codes as possible to small segments of interview and observation transcripts, often working line by line to encourage the generation of a variety of concepts. The codes in this stage were largely descriptive, and many were eventually discarded from the coding scheme because they were unique to an individual respondent or irrelevant to my research questions. As I continued the process of open coding, a number of codes began to repeat themselves, suggesting their

importance to many participants in the study. I periodically reviewed the long list of codes generated by this process to help answer the questions suggested by Srivastava and Hopwood (2009): what are the data telling me, what do I want to know, and what is the dialectical relationship between these two findings? These reviews helped me develop the research questions described earlier in this chapter and revise my interview and observation techniques to improve the fit between my data and my research questions.

Once I had developed more analytical research questions, I began the second stage of coding, which involved revisiting the data over and over again to code for comments and observations related to each research question. During this stage, I used a more parsimonious list of codes, combining similar codes and eliminating irrelevant codes from the first stage. I also added a number of 'sociological' codes (Strauss, 1987) where a concept from the academic literature fit particularly well with participants' own descriptions. For example, when coding explanations of underrepresentation, I attached the code 'oppositional culture' to comments, which mirrored the widely cited theory of the same name (Fordham and Ogbu, 1986; Ogbu, 1978, 2008; Ogbu and Simons, 1998). I was mostly able to construct coding frameworks to answer each research question from the emergent and *in vivo* codes generated during the first stage of coding, but in a few cases I came up with codes deductively and searched for data to which they could be attached. I organized codes into hierarchies for greater clarity: for instance, the category 'underrepresentation' contained the subcategory 'where', which in turn contained several codes indicating whether participants felt that black male students were underrepresented among IB course-takers, diploma candidates, diploma earners, or some other category. The aim in this stage was to ask a series of analytical questions of the data, using focused coding to identify and categorize the data relevant to each question.

Throughout the process, I wrote memos to capture my developing thoughts and insights about the project. Early in the analysis, these memos usually captured hunches or elaborated on codes that seemed particularly interesting; for instance, one memo written during the pilot study simply enumerated participants' explanations for underrepresentation, using categories quite different from the terms I eventually used to describe the phenomenon. As the analysis progressed, I began to write memos more explicitly directed towards using the data to answer my research questions. For instance, during a round of coding focused on how participants explain the underrepresentation of black males in IB classes, I wrote a memo for each code corresponding to a common explanation: unwillingness to work, focus on sports, material disadvantage, and so forth.

In writing these more analytical memos, I made a point of incorporating both raw data and references to other theoretical codes and categories. Memo-writing at all stages allowed me to integrate disparate codes into a coherent argument while remaining firmly grounded in the data (Charmaz, 2006; Corbin and Strauss, 2008; Lempert, 2007). I eventually organized and revised these memos to form the first drafts of my three findings chapters.

Quantitative analysis: class enrollment and course-taking patterns

I used the student transcripts provided by the guidance department to establish some details about the composition of each course at Lincoln and the patterns of student mobility from course to course, both reported in Chapter 5. First, I used transcript data to assess the validity of popular stereotypes about the type of student attracted by various courses at Lincoln. I inferred the values of three binary variables from each student's transcript: special education, full IB, and drop. Since certain courses and course codes are reserved for students with an individualized education program (IEP), I coded students enrolled in one or more of these courses as special education students ('SPED'). I used a publicly available listing of all courses offered in the school district, which designated certain courses as special education courses, and interviews with special education teachers to determine which courses were exclusive to special education students. I coded students in the classes of 2011 and 2012 as IB diploma candidates ('IB') if their transcripts indicated two semesters of enrollment in Theory of Knowledge (TOK), a course reserved exclusively for IB diploma candidates, and as having dropped the full IB if they took TOK in the second semester of the junior year but not in the second semester of senior year.[16] The transcripts for the class of 2013 only include courses taken in the first semester of the junior year, so I could not infer IB diploma status for this group. The tables in Chapter 5 show the share of students in each course belonging to each of these three categories.

I also calculated two indicators of academic performance for each student, following the common practice in American schools of measuring student achievement with a grade point average (GPA). Following school practice, I assigned four points for

[16] This methodology necessarily misclassifies some drop students as certificate students, since a number of students drop the full IB in the first semester of their junior year, before enrolling in TOK.

an A, three for a B, two for a C, one for a D, and zero for a U.[17] Three other grades were assigned no point value and thus did not affect GPA calculations. 'Pass' indicates that a student has received credit for a course that he or she opted to take on a pass-fail basis. 'Incomplete' indicates that a student has not completed the requirements of the course but should not receive a failing grade. Teachers sometimes use it to allow individual students extra time to make up work after the deadline for finalizing semester grades has passed, and they generally calculate the grade and change it for future transcripts once the work has been completed. Finally, 'withdraw' indicates that a student has removed herself from the course after the deadline to drop a class. Withdrawals are very rare and can reflect a variety of unusual circumstances, so I omitted them from GPA calculations as well. The GPA for a given set of courses is the sum of these point values divided by the number of courses. A 4.0 reflects a perfect transcript with A's in all subjects. I calculated a cumulative GPA for each student, reflecting the average of all grades in all courses taken at Lincoln. In order to account for the likelihood that weaker students may inflate their GPAs by taking more electives in subjects like art and business, which are widely regarded as easier, I also calculated an academic GPA, reflecting the average of grades in all courses in the five major academic departments: English, world languages, social studies, science, and mathematics. Finally, as a loose proxy for behavior, I calculated the average number of absences per course for each student over the entire high school career. The tables in Chapter 5 display the means of each of these three variables for students enrolled in each class.

I also used student transcripts to establish the overall patterns of movement through Lincoln's curriculum within each subject, following McFarland's (2006) approach to studying 'curricular flows' (see also Wasserman and Faust, 1994). I restricted this analysis to students in the graduating class of 2011, the only class for which I had complete coursetaking records. I began by constructing four affiliation matrices ($\mathbf{A}_{07}$, $\mathbf{A}_{08}$, $\mathbf{A}_{09}$, and $\mathbf{A}_{10}$) for the 2007-08, 2008-09, 2009-10, and 2010-11 school years respectively, with each column representing a course and each row representing a student. Each cell had a value of 1 if a student took a course in a given year, and 0 otherwise. To calculate transition probabilities from year to year, I multiplied the transposed affiliation matrix for the origin year by the affiliation matrix for the destination year (e.g., the transition matrix

[17] Many American high schools calculate 'weighted' grade point averages for their students by assigning bonus points for taking honors, Advanced Placement, or IB classes, so that a GPA above 4.0 is possible. Lincoln does not use weighted GPAs, so I followed this practice in my analysis.

$\mathbf{M}_{0708}$ describing students' transitions from 2007-08 to 2008-09 would be defined as $\mathbf{M}_{0708} = \mathbf{A}^{T}_{07} \times \mathbf{A}_{08}$). This matrix indicates the transition frequencies from each origin course to each destination course, such that m_{ij} represents the number of students who took course *i* in 2007-08 and course *j* in 2008-09 for every course offered at Lincoln. To determine transition probabilities, I divided each transition frequency by the total number of students enrolled in the course in the origin year. The transition probabilities presented in Appendix H thus describe the share of students from each origin course who proceeded to a given destination course in the following year. I have omitted non-academic electives from this appendix, since few of these courses are hierarchically or sequentially organized.

The mobility diagrams in Chapter 5 display transition probabilities between courses in English, world languages, science, and mathematics for the graduating class of 2011. Since students must take an English course in each year of high school, the three matrices describing transitions between grades 9 and 10 ($\mathbf{M}_{0708}$), grades 10 and 11 ($\mathbf{M}_{0809}$), and grades 11 and 12 ($\mathbf{M}_{0910}$) are sufficient to describe English coursetaking. In world languages and mathematics, where coursetaking is sequential but freshmen may enter the curriculum at several different points, I have instead calculated transition probabilities based on transitions between all pairs of adjacent years (i.e., $\mathbf{M}_{0708}$, $\mathbf{M}_{0809}$, and $\mathbf{M}_{0910}$). In science, I have displayed year-to-year transition probabilities within subject areas (biology, chemistry, environmental science, and physics). I have omitted diagrams for social studies classes, since most classes in this department are neither vertically differentiated nor sequentially organized, as Chapter 4 explains. This methodology does omit some information about the coursetaking process: it does not describe coursetaking in years before 2007-08 for the very small number of students who spent more than four years at Lincoln, and it does not account for transitions into and out of special education courses in each department (although it does include special education students enrolled in regular education courses). It also does not account for curricular moves in non-adjacent years – for instance, a student who took Chemistry 1 in the sophomore year, no science in the junior year, and Biology 2 in the senior year would be omitted from these calculations. However, this is a rare occurrence for regular education students at Lincoln, so this omission does not substantially affect the findings. Despite these shortcomings, this approach provides a comprehensive overview of how students move from course to course within each academic subject at Lincoln, allowing me to assess the degree to which students move up and down between tracks.

Ethical considerations

Informed consent

While this study does not involve particularly sensitive issues or especially vulnerable populations, it does require consideration of ethical concerns about informed consent, participant confidentiality, and the impact of my presence on the operation of the school. Informed consent refers to the degree to which participants are given the opportunity to freely decide whether to participate in the research, based on a detailed knowledge of the potential rewards and consequences of participation. Informed consent can be violated when the researcher actively misleads participants about the costs and benefits of their participation, perhaps in an attempt to gain greater access, or when the researcher fails to anticipate and correct misperceptions that could influence the decision to participate. The most systematic way of addressing these concerns was an informed consent form (attached in Appendix A), which clearly set out the purposes of the research, the protections in place for participants' anonymity, the procedures surrounding data storage and sharing, and the fact that I offered no material rewards for participation. I required all teachers and students participating in the research to sign a consent form, and I required students under 18 to obtain a signature from a parent or legal guardian before our interview. I orally reiterated the major provisions of the informed consent letter before starting each interview, adding that participants could decline to answer any question or end the interview at any time without giving a reason or suffering adverse consequences; I also gave each participant a chance to ask me questions about what I would do with their data before I began the interview. Few participants asked questions or expressed reservations, leading me to believe that they generally did not view my research as unduly risky or invasive.

My methods raised the particular possibility that participants might view me as an authority figure. Because I conducted my research with the approval of the principal, and because I was visibly friendly with many teachers at Lincoln, some participants might have mistakenly believed that I was working on behalf of the school or the district. This would raise concerns for the validity of interview data as well as for informed consent. For instance, a student might have believed that participating in an interview would improve her standing with a teacher, and consent to participate based on that misunderstanding; a teacher might have given an overly positive account of his experience at the school in the hopes of avoiding conflict with administrators. I attempted to counter this possibility in a number of ways. The informed consent letter

specified that I would not disclose any information about participants' identity or opinions, and that there were no right or wrong answers to interview questions. My casual dress, my age, and my informal demeanor all helped reinforce the impression that I was not a part of the faculty or administration. In this regard, it helped that my relationships with most teachers (and a few students) predated the arrival of the principal, who was new to the school at the time of my fieldwork. The frequency with which students and teachers shared highly critical opinions about the administration, and the lack of concern students showed about skipping class or otherwise breaking the rules in front of me, suggest that these efforts were largely successful.

The setting of my research also necessitated some consideration about how to obtain fully informed consent from adolescents, who in some cases were below the legal age of majority. The risk of exploitation or manipulation was relatively low in this case, since the questions covered non-sensitive topics and student participants were generally normally developing adolescents whose presence at a selective school suggested above-average academic competence. Nonetheless, as a safeguard, I required students under 18 to provide a consent form signed by a parent or guardian before beginning an interview, and I provided my contact information to students and parents so that I could address any questions or concerns. This requirement represents an especially cautious approach to informed consent in light of research indicating that children as young as 12 can demonstrate the same capacity as adults to make informed decisions about participating in research (Abramovitch et al., 1991; Hurley and Underwood, 2002; Weithorn and Campbell, 1982; Wendler and Shah, 2003).

Confidentiality and anonymity

Another ethical issue is the impossibility of making the study completely anonymous. I have used standard practices to protect the anonymity of participants, such as removing identifying details from interview transcripts and field notes and using pseudonyms for individuals, the school, and the district. During fieldwork, I also refrained from discussing individual participants' identities or comments with other teachers and students. However, the school involved will likely be identifiable to participants in the study and to other people familiar with the district. The school might also be identifiable since it is necessary for me to disclose that I attended Lincoln. This could have negative consequences if particular comments or actions described in the report can be attributed to individual participants. For instance, teachers who criticize a particular administrator might face consequences as a result of their participation in the

study if the report includes details that might reveal teachers' identities. I have attempted to minimize this risk by omitting details that could be used to identify individuals, such as the particular classes they teach or a distinctive athletic achievement, and by attributing as few critical comments as possible to individually identifiable participants. During interviews, I also tried to secure participants' truly informed consent by discussing the limitations of anonymization and pseudonyms before beginning the interview. It is impossible for me to completely eliminate the possibility that a reader might identify Lincoln, but I have attempted to present my results in a way that minimizes the risk of an individual participant being identified from this report.

Researcher impact

Finally, I attempted to minimize the possibility that my presence at Lincoln would impede the school's day-to-day business. To this end, I designed data collection methods to be as non-intrusive as possible. In arranging interviews, I accommodated participants' schedules as much as possible, generally meeting with students during lunch hours and with teachers after school or during free periods. When observing classes, I generally followed the teacher's advice about when to come to class and where to sit. My presence seemed to generate curiosity from a handful of students on my first day in some classes, but I otherwise noticed no evidence that I caused much disruption in the school, and teachers never openly objected to having me in their classrooms. My prior familiarity with Lincoln also helped minimize my reliance on teachers and administrators for making introductions and showing me around the building. I also attempted to make myself useful to the school through the informal forms of participation discussed earlier in this chapter: offering college application advice to seniors, working with the debate team, and speaking with parents and students at assemblies. I cannot be certain that my presence at Lincoln during fieldwork was completely undisruptive, but I made every attempt to make as few impositions as possible on teachers and students' time.

Trustworthiness

This chapter closes with a discussion of how the research methods outlined here affect the value of my findings. The literature on evaluating qualitative research encompasses variously phrased goals: 'trustworthiness' (Lincoln and Guba, 1985), 'credibility' (Glaser and Strauss, 1967), 'quality' (Corbin and Strauss, 2008), and 'validity and reliability' (Hammersley, 1987). Some canonical works in methodology set out comprehensive lists of criteria for 'quality' research, while others take the more subjective

(and perhaps more honest) position that 'we know it when we see it' (Seale, 2002: 102). One common rubric for evaluating positivist, quantitative research assesses studies for internal validity, external validity, reliability, and objectivity. Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggest four parallel criteria in their alternative 'naturalist' paradigm: credibility, applicability, consistency, and neutrality. Charmaz (2006) offers the criteria of credibility, originality, resonance, and usefulness. For the purposes of my own project, I have largely disregarded criteria like objectivity and reliability, which implicitly deny that the analyst does or should play a role in constructing the interpretation of data. Instead, I focus on three issues in the evaluation of my findings: whether my data support my conclusions, whether my prior experience at Lincoln has unduly influenced my analysis, and whether my findings are useful beyond the case study site.

Credibility

The first question for evaluation concerns whether my interpretation constitutes an accurate account of 'what's going on' at Lincoln. This criterion is similar to 'internal validity' in the positivist paradigm or 'truth value' in naturalistic inquiry (Lincoln and Guba, 1985: 290), and it bears on both the collection and the analysis of data. Potential threats to credibility include inadequate or unrepresentative data, a failure to ground conclusions in the data, and biased interpretation of the data. The design of this study incorporates a number of features to enhance credibility, including triangulation, member checks, and inductive analysis.

Triangulation refers to the use of multiple sources of data to support the same conclusion. It is a common feature of case study research, where immersion in the research site allows the researcher to collect multiple forms of data on the same topic (Yin, 2003). My study incorporates several forms of data, including interviews, observations, and document analysis. Not all of the data I collected speak to all of my research questions, but wherever possible, I have supported conclusions with multiple forms of data – for instance, by comparing my observations of a class with a teacher's description of his teaching practices, or by checking a student's impression of a particular policy against the school's written materials describing that rule. This enhances credibility by reducing the likelihood that bias or error in a single data source will make its way into the study's conclusions. It also allows me to explore disjunctures between participants' perspectives and the 'official' versions of events, which are often interesting in their own right.

During the later stages of field research, I adopted an informal approach to 'member checks', or soliciting participants' reactions to some of my provisional conclusions. Member checks can be used for a variety of purposes, including verifying interview transcripts, stimulating further discussion, generating summaries of data, and protecting the researcher against claims of distortion or inaccuracy (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). They can also be misleading or counterproductive, particularly when the researcher simply offers individual participants the opportunity to accept or reject conclusions based on a much wider range of experiences (Morse et al., 2002). Bearing this danger in mind, I used member checks primarily to confirm my emerging impressions of consensus opinions, using phrases like, 'A lot of other students and teachers here have said that the IB is really about how hard you work, not how smart you are. Do you think that's true?' By incorporating these questions into later interviews, I used member checks to verify conclusions about prevailing perceptions of events without subjecting my entire analysis to participants' approval.

Finally, the inductive approach to data analysis prescribed by grounded theory serves as a safeguard against the possibility that the analyst will attempt to force the data to fit a preconceived hypothesis or agenda. Although I attempted to approach fieldwork without any *a priori* commitment to a particular theory, I did conduct much of the literature review before and during the fieldwork period. Consequently, two theoretical constructs held my attention at the beginning of the project: the assumption, common among American scholars, that academic or cognitive capacity is the primary variable at play in curriculum differentiation; and the popularized form of the oppositional culture hypothesis, which holds that some black students shy away from exerting effort in school for fear of being accused of 'acting white'. The formal procedure of initial coding, which requires the analyst to generate a wide variety of codes directly from the data, helped me set aside these theories and engage with participants' perspectives in their own terms. This inductive approach helped me arrive at the conclusions that both of these prevailing hypotheses are inadequate to explain tracking at Lincoln: as Chapter 6 explains, nearly all participants explicitly reject the idea that cognitive ability is the primary determinant of track placement, and there is little evidence that the specter of 'acting white' has much bearing on students' decisions at Lincoln.

Reflexivity

A particular threat to credibility arises from the fact that I attended Lincoln as a student, graduating with an IB diploma in 2006, and therefore my conclusions might give

undue weight to my own experiences there. In particular, my experience as a full IB student, which was generally positive, might lead me to uncritically accept statements about the benefits of the IB and dismiss criticisms of its value. I entered Lincoln with longstanding preconceptions about how the school worked, which classes were the most academically rigorous, and which teachers were the most demanding. My history with the school also undoubtedly affected how participants behaved towards me: students and teachers generally knew that I had been an academically successful student, and this may have made them less willing to question the fairness or utility of the school's academic hierarchy in interviews. Of course, concerns that the researcher's background might influence a study are hardly unique to this project; every researcher's prior experience will inevitably influence her interactions with participants and analysis of data. It would be overly simplistic to argue that there is one correct account of 'what is going on' that could be reliably derived by an objective, impartial researcher. Nonetheless, the possibility of bias is serious enough to demand a justification for the choice of research setting and a concerted effort to prevent my preconceptions from exerting an outsize influence on the project.

I decided to conduct the study at Lincoln because the possibility of bias is a fair price to pay for the greater degree of access available to me as a 'quasi-insider'; following Stake, I have chosen to study 'that case from which [I] feel [I] can learn the most' (2008: 130). My status as an alumna helped me get the principal's consent to conduct the study at Lincoln and to quickly arrange interviews and observations. My prior knowledge of the school and the district – from its bureaucratic terminology to the physical layout of the building – helped me navigate the field more quickly than I otherwise could have. Being familiar with Lincoln also allowed me to enter the field without relying on a small group of key informants and to blend in at the school more quickly, thus minimizing the potentially disruptive impact of data collection. Prior experience with the research site, then, facilitated more thorough data collection and the elucidation of a wider variety of perspectives, enabling me to create a better-informed account of how the IB works at Lincoln.

This analysis is strengthened by a number of conscious attempts to promote reflexivity and minimize bias in both data collection and analysis. Triangulation and member checks make it more difficult for my analysis to rest solely on my own preconceptions (Robson, 2002). I investigated research questions that I had not seriously considered while in school and sought to interview participants and observe situations

that I would not have encountered as a student, meaning that I had consciously developed few opinions about the subject of my analysis before beginning fieldwork. Where it seemed likely that my history at Lincoln might bias participants' interview responses, I interrogated these topics more deeply. For instance, the interview protocols include both a general question about what is necessary to succeed in the IB and specific probes about the roles of hard work and prior achievement. I included these probes in an attempt to clarify whether students really take the extreme position that hard work alone determines school success, offering them an opportunity to express more nuanced views of the achievement ideology. When I asked about the role of factors other than hard work, students sometimes acknowledged a few extreme cases – someone with special educational needs or unusually weak academic preparation might be unable to do the IB regardless of effort – but they generally doubled down on the position that effort is the most important prerequisite for success, suggesting that these beliefs are genuine and do not just reflect an attempt to mimic the interviewer's perceived preconceptions. The alignment between participants' general characterization of what makes a student successful and their explanations for underrepresentation, described in Chapter 7, also suggest that most genuinely believe that school success is a fair reflection of effort. Of course, none of these strategies can guarantee perfect 'objectivity', but they do help ensure that my analysis reflects participants' views and not just my own prejudices.

Generalizability

The final criterion for evaluation assesses whether this study's findings are applicable outside the context on which they are based: in short, whether my argument is useful beyond Lincoln High School. The problems of generalizability (or external validity, in more conventional terms) and usefulness are particularly salient because I have chosen to carry out research at a single school. This choice raises the reasonable concern that my findings might give undue weight to the idiosyncrasies of the particular case selected for analysis, compromising the generalizability of the study. The most radical counterargument to this point simply suggests that generalization is not the main point of social science research. Building on the assumption that 'all experts… operate on the basis of intimate knowledge of several thousand concrete cases in their areas of experience', Flyvbjerg (2006: 222) argues that the sort of abstract theory which generalization is supposed to produce is, in fact, *less* valuable than the practical and contextualized knowledge that case studies offer. Case studies can also be of great interest and use to people concerned with the cases themselves; this project might

inform future practice at Lincoln even in the absence of any attempt to generalize its findings.

Additionally, there is a longstanding tradition in social science research of drawing generalizable conclusions from case studies. Instead of generalizing from a sample to a population, the researcher derives a hypothesis or a theory from the analysis of a single case; the theory can then be tested and refined in similar situations. Yin (2003) describes this process as 'analytic generalization'; Stake (1995) calls it 'naturalistic generalization'. Bryman (2012) provides a long list of studies of single families, schools, organizations, and communities that have proved enormously influential in the development of sociological theory. The differentiation-polarization hypothesis described in Chapter 2 offers one example: studies of a boys' secondary modern school (Hargreaves, 1967), a boys' grammar school (Lacey, 1970), and a mixed comprehensive school (Ball, 1981) all build on the same hypothesis about the effects of streaming and banding on social relations among students. The present study investigates a single case of a broader phenomenon: curriculum differentiation systems primarily driven by student choice. My hypothesis that an attitude-centered achievement ideology legitimates the persistence of tracking is supported exclusively by evidence drawn from Lincoln, but it can easily be tested using similar methods at other schools in different contexts.

Conclusion

This chapter has set out the principles that guided the design of my research and the procedures I used to collect and analyze data. Using key concepts borrowed from grounded theory and case study research, I selected a single site for my study based on access and collected interview, observational, and documentary data. Fieldwork was divided into exploratory, descriptive, and analytical phases; each phase built on analysis of the data collected during previous phases. My sampling strategies and data collection protocols were oriented towards investigating concepts rather than achieving statistical representation, allowing me to continually modify the study as my research questions and working hypotheses evolved. I carried out data analysis during and after fieldwork, using an inductive and iterative process that aimed to facilitate flexibility and sensitivity rather than forcing the data into a preconceived theoretical framework. A number of safeguards were built into the study to address ethical concerns and to bolster its credibility and trustworthiness. The findings resulting from this process are not the only reasonable interpretation of how curriculum differentiation works at Lincoln, nor will they necessarily apply to tracking in all other settings; further empirical investigation in other

settings will be necessary to expand and refine this hypothesis. Nonetheless, the detailed case study presented in the following chapters opens up new lines of inquiry in the study of within-school stratification and beliefs about social mobility, thanks to the focus on hypothesis generation embedded in its design.

Chapter 4. Context

In light of the important local variations in the practice and effects of tracking described in Chapter 2, the setting of the case study presented here deserves extended attention. This chapter establishes the context of the study by describing Lincoln High School and the International Baccalaureate (IB) program, incorporating accounts of each institution's historical development and its present status. The first section introduces the city of Springfield and Lincoln High School; the second section describes the evolution and current structure of the IB Diploma Programme; and the third section explains the structure of curriculum differentiation at Lincoln. My primary aim is to present enough contextual information to facilitate the understanding of my argument in the following three chapters; to that end, this chapter is primarily descriptive. However, I also introduce a few key themes that figure prominently in the analysis, including Lincoln's identity as a 'success story' for urban education, the tenuous balance between elitism and inclusiveness in the International Baccalaureate, and the high but decreasing degree of differentiation in Lincoln's curriculum.

Lincoln High School

This study focuses on a single American school offering the IB Diploma Programme, which I call Lincoln High School. In this section, I present a brief history of the school and its IB program. This history is drawn from a variety of sources, including newspaper accounts, the school's website, official documents, data given to me by the school's current IB coordinator, interviews with faculty, information obtained from the International Baccalaureate, scholarly publications, government reports, and court documents from a federal lawsuit seeking to desegregate the Springfield schools. The section concludes with a sketch of the school in the 2011-12 school year, when I conducted my fieldwork. To avoid identifying the school, I have not included conventional bibliographic citations for the material in this section.

A brief history of Lincoln

Lincoln High School was designed and built on the north side of Springfield, a large industrial city in the American Midwest, during the Great Depression as part of a federal employment project. The school opened in September 1934, and its first class of 375 students graduated in 1938. For the first few decades of its existence, area

newspapers rarely mentioned Lincoln outside of the sports pages. The few educational items appearing in this period include brief reports on a remedial physical education program for disabled students and a novel baby-sitting course. A 1946 profile of the school praises its wide range of extracurricular activities and its students' impressive contributions to the war effort in the form of selling bonds, salvaging recyclable materials, and volunteering at the Red Cross. Six student essays on the topic 'What We Like Most About Lincoln High' mention leadership opportunities, vocational guidance, and extracurricular activities, but nothing related to academic courses.

As Springfield's African American population grew and spread into the Lincoln neighborhood, the school saw its enrollment of black students increase steadily. According to statistics cited in a desegregation lawsuit against the city, the share of black students at Lincoln climbed from 33% in 1961-62, to 76% in 1967-68, to 99% in 1971-72. Two explanations might be offered for this demographic change: the Lincoln neighborhood's African American population grew steadily in the 1960s, and the number of white students requesting to transfer to Lincoln declined, while the number seeking to leave Lincoln stayed constant. During this period, Lincoln hosted several members of Teacher Corps, a federal program targeted at schools in high-poverty areas, suggesting that many of its students were from low-income families as well.

In keeping with the national and local climate, racial tension was the focus of many news stories mentioning Lincoln in the 1960s. In October 1967, newspapers recounted a 'melee' at the school in which hundreds of students 'rampaged' through the building, disrupting afternoon classes and leaving four white students with minor injuries. Although the principal denied that the event was a race riot, he later announced to students his fear that the fight would accelerate the flight of white students from the school. Indeed, six white students turned in requests to transfer out of Lincoln the next day. In the next two years, newspapers reported several student protests over the lack of black history courses and materials, the suspension of protesting black students at a university elsewhere in the state, and the decision to hire additional adults to patrol the hallways in response to growing student unrest. Teachers staged their own two-day boycott in May 1969, demanding a 'safer instructional climate' and the reinstatement of a colleague who had been accused of hitting two students.

By the mid-1970s, political unrest at the school had abated, but Lincoln was hardly a success story with respect to either academic standards or student behavior. In 1970, two students were convicted of battery, and a third was referred to the juvenile

justice system, after attacking the principal and a teacher during a school assembly. In the 1974-75 school year, 13.5% of Lincoln students failed all of their courses for at least one grading period, the second-highest total of all high schools in the district. The principal complained that 'our students' attitude toward school is negative in nature'. Gambling among students was a persistent problem. In May 1974, Lincoln received 334 requests for outward transfers on a single day, most from eighth graders who lived in the neighborhood and would have been automatically assigned to Lincoln the next year. A student who had transferred to Lincoln compared its academic program unfavorably to her previous religious school, saying, 'At Lincoln all you have to do is come to class'. A small group of concerned parents and community members called for reforms, but support from the school board was slow to materialize.

The tide began to turn for Lincoln in 1976, when, after a ten-year legal battle, a federal judge ruled that Springfield had intentionally created and maintained a racially segregated school system. The district's appeal against this judgment delayed the implementation of desegregation for another three years, during which time parents, community members, the school board, the superintendent, and a special master, appointed by the federal district court to implement desegregation, all debated a variety of voluntary integration plans based on the creation of several citywide magnet schools. Lincoln's fate, like that of many other schools in the district, was uncertain during this confused period. Various parties circulated proposals to establish a medical careers training center at the school, to merge it with nearby suburban districts, or to close it altogether. By the time the desegregation lawsuit was finally settled in 1979, the district had already decided to reconfigure Lincoln as a college preparatory school and to relocate an existing middle school program for the gifted and talented to Lincoln's building.

Lincoln School for the College Bound opened its doors in September 1978, the same year that the school received International Baccalaureate certification. I could find no official record of why the school chose the IB, which was then virtually unknown in the United States, to structure its new curriculum. However, the IB's reputation for academic rigor – and its potential appeal to the affluent, educated families that were leaving the Springfield schools in droves – certainly fit with the goals of voluntary desegregation. In 1983, ten years after Lincoln had received more outward transfer requests than any other school in the district, there were 85 students on a waiting list to attend Lincoln. By 1987, the waiting list held 100 students, and Lincoln graduates had

matriculated at Harvard, Stanford, Georgetown, and Brown. In 1997, a change in district policy allowed Lincoln and two other specialty schools to implement admissions requirements; the number of applications far exceeded the number of seats available, and the school continued to maintain a waiting list for hundreds of students. The racial balance shifted in this period as well: by 1987, black and white students each accounted for about half of the student body.

Press accounts following the restructuring suggest that Lincoln's magnet program succeeded in transforming its curriculum as well as its reputation. Newspapers that had once printed Lincoln's name only in stories about student protests or football games began to report on its academic achievements. In 1983, the head of the state's education department ranked Lincoln's graduation requirements – four years of English, three years of mathematics, two years of social studies, three years of science, and two years of a foreign language – as the most stringent in the state. Lincoln students were repeatedly cited for having the district's best average test scores, grades, attendance, and graduation rates, and its lowest dropout and suspension rates. Reported college attendance rates for Lincoln students surpassed 90% by the early 1990s. A popular national magazine's rankings of public high schools based on the number of Advanced Placement or IB tests taken per graduate placed Lincoln at the top of its state every year between 2006 and 2010. One successful campaign to create a new IB high school in Springfield branded itself as an attempt to create a 'Lincoln of the south side'. While public opinion once held that Lincoln was a mediocre school at best, since the adoption of the IB, Lincoln has been widely accepted as among the very best high schools in the district. Lincoln's reputation for academic excellence in general, and the IB program in particular, figures prominently in day-to-day life at the school and in the findings of this study.

Springfield and Lincoln today

Today, Springfield is a city of some 600,000 inhabitants, with a diverse population that reflects its history as a destination for successive waves of migrants. The city was originally inhabited by several Native American tribes and first permanently settled by French fur traders in the late 18th century. Its population grew rapidly thanks to immigration from Germany and then Poland in the mid-19th century. African American migrants began arriving from the South in the early 20th century, and the city's black population continued to grow through the 1950s. The city's Hispanic population also began to grow in the 1950s, driven primarily by the arrival of immigrants from Mexico. More recently, Springfield's Asian population has exploded, thanks in large part to the

rapid resettlement of Hmong refugees beginning in the mid-1970s. Today, Springfield's population is roughly 40% black, 37% non-Hispanic white, 17% Latino or Hispanic, and 3% Asian, making it much more diverse than its county and the state as a whole. The city's economy, long based on shipping, manufacturing, and brewing, suffered with the decline of American manufacturing from the late 1960s onwards, and its population has declined with the loss of manufacturing jobs and the exodus of residents to nearby suburbs. Manufacturing still constitutes a significant share of Springfield's economy, along with the service, finance, and health care sectors. However, many jobs in the area are located in the suburbs and require high levels of skill and education, making them inaccessible to the city's most disadvantaged residents.

Residents sometimes describe Springfield as a 'big city of small towns', reflecting the diversity and uniqueness of many of the city's neighborhoods. This characterization also hints at one of the city's most persistent problems: Springfield ranks among the most racially segregated metropolitan areas in the United States. The city's African American population, initially concentrated in a small area just north of the city center, now occupies much of the northwest side of the city, including the neighborhood surrounding Lincoln. The rapidly growing Hispanic population is concentrated in a smaller area on the near south side of the city. Working-class whites dominate in neighborhoods to the south, while more affluent whites populate the valuable waterfront property on the city's east side. Many Springfield residents – including most of the Lincoln students and teachers I interviewed – treat their city's residential segregation as a matter of common knowledge, sometimes even using 'the north side' as shorthand for the city's black population or 'the east side' to refer to wealthy white professionals. The distribution of income, wealth, and educational attainment in the city, as in the United States as a whole, is also characterized by persistent disadvantages for black and Latino households.

The Springfield Public Schools (SPS) cover the entire city, serving 80,000 students in 175 schools. The district's enrollment has declined steadily over the last decade, thanks to the city's declining population and to the growing popularity and accessibility of schools outside the district: state law allows students to enroll in public schools in other districts if space allows, with preference given to transfers that promote racial balance. A large and growing state voucher program also subsidizes tuition costs at private schools for low-income Springfield residents. More than half of the district's students are African American, roughly a quarter are Latino, four in five live in low-

income households,[18] and 20% qualify for special education services. SPS ranks well below the state's other large school districts on most metrics of achievement, including state and national test scores, attendance, and high school graduation. In 2011-12, for instance, SPS' four-year high school graduation rate was just over 60%, compared to 87% for the state. On state standardized tests in the same year, 45% of SPS tenth-graders scored below proficiency in reading, and over 60% scored below proficient in math, compared to statewide totals of 20% and 27% respectively. Regular debates in the media and in local government over how to 'fix SPS' testify to the general public's low regard for the district's performance.

Lincoln High School is among the few exceptions to the rule of underwhelming performance among SPS high schools. Lincoln is situated in a middle-class, predominantly African American neighborhood on the city's north side. The residential neighborhood surrounding Lincoln is made up of neat, modest, single-family homes, but the nearest major thoroughfare is dominated by fast-food restaurants, discount retailers, prepaid mobile phone stores, and more than a few empty storefronts. Its student body of 1,500 is 60% black, 20% white, 10% Asian, 7% Hispanic, and 55% low-income. Fifteen per cent of Lincoln students have special educational needs. Lincoln has fewer low-income and Hispanic students than SPS as a whole, but its demographic profile is otherwise similar to that of its troubled school system.[19] Nonetheless, it outperforms the state and district on nearly every measure of academic performance. In 2011-12, 84% of Lincoln's tenth-graders scored proficient or better on state reading tests, 75% achieved proficiency in math, and 92% graduated within four years.

However, Lincoln is by no means immune to the financial and administrative instability endemic to SPS. Budget constraints are a constant topic of conversation at the school. Most dramatically, in 2010, a budget cut of $1.1 million forced Lincoln to eliminate its French and business programs, eliminate seven teaching positions, and

[18] Following district guidelines, I use eligibility for free or reduced-price school meals through the National School Lunch Program to indicate whether students come from low-income families. In the 2011-12 school year, children with family incomes below 130% of the federal poverty level, or $29,055 (roughly £18,700) for a family of four, were eligible to receive free school meals; children with family incomes below 185% of the federal poverty level, or $41,348 (roughly £26,600) for a family of four, are eligible to receive school meals at a reduced price (Department of Agriculture, 2011). SPS reports that many eligible high school students do not claim this benefit, meaning that these figures likely understate the number of low-income students at each school.

[19] The share of white students in SPS has steadily declined since 1977, when 60% of the district's students were white; this likely explains the similar shift in the composition of Lincoln's student body.

abandon its maximum class size of 35 students. In fall 2010, Lincoln also opened a middle years program in a nearby elementary school building. The decision to operate the middle years program as part of Lincoln, rather than as a separate school, added to the financial strain. According to staff and students, in the five years before I began my fieldwork, Lincoln had also received growing numbers of students with special educational needs and students who had been removed from other schools because of disciplinary issues. Administrative turnover added to this sense of change: a new principal arrived at Lincoln in the fall of 2011, and an assistant principal left in the middle of the 2011-12 school year. The new principal, known by the nickname Dr. Z, was unusual among SPS principals in that he came from outside the district; he had previously worked at a long list of international schools around the world, including several with IB programs. Dr. Z quickly proposed significant changes to the school's track structure and admissions policy, discussed in Chapter 7. When I arrived at Lincoln in August 2011, then, there was a palpable sense that the school's longstanding reputation for excellence was threatened by internal and external changes.

The International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme

The IB Diploma Programme played the central role in Lincoln's transformation from deteriorating neighborhood school to district success story.[20] The IB's apparent success at Lincoln is particularly interesting because the program was designed with a very different population in mind: the IB first took root among a group of elite international schools serving relatively privileged, internationally mobile students. Urban public schools like Lincoln, with large classes, limited resources, and primarily American student bodies, turned to the IB in search of academic rigor, not international education. Nonetheless, the IB's explicit concern with promoting intercultural understanding is particularly salient in racially and socioeconomically diverse schools. This section recounts the evolution of the IB from an experimental program serving the children of the cosmopolitan elite to a highly regarded and internationally accepted academic curriculum, with a particular focus on how the IB has attempted to strike a balance

[20] The IB now offers four courses of study: the original Diploma Programme, for students aged 16-19; the Middle Years Programme (MYP), created in 1994, for students aged 11-16; the Primary Years Programme (PYP), created in 1997, for students aged 6-11; and the Career-related Certificate (IBCC), a combined academic and vocational qualification, first offered in 2012. Participation in the PYP or MYP is not a prerequisite for participation in the Diploma Programme, and schools may offer one, two, or all three of the curricula. This study is concerned exclusively with the Diploma Programme, and the terms 'IB' and 'IB school' refer to the Diploma Programme, unless otherwise noted.

between elitism and inclusiveness. It also describes the contemporary structure of the IB's curriculum and exams, both of which feature prominently in coursetaking and instruction at Lincoln.

International schools and the creation of the IB

After the First World War, growing international mobility among professional families created a corresponding demand for schools to serve children living in adopted countries. Some 'binational' schools, particularly in developing countries, adopted national curricula in order to serve particular expatriate communities; others took a more cosmopolitan approach. One early example of the latter type is the International School of Geneva, founded in 1924 and commonly referred to as Ecolint, which initially served the international community affiliated with the League of Nations and sought to promote international-mindedness in its pupils. The United Nations International School (UNIS) opened its doors in New York in 1947 with similar aims: promoting the development of children in a manner harmonious with American culture, their own traditions, and the international spirit of the United Nations. Atlantic College, founded in Wales in 1962, was the first member of a group of United World Colleges (UWCs) enrolling local and international students in a program dedicated to the belief that international education can foster international understanding and world peace. As these and other international schools expanded, they faced a particular challenge in designing courses of study for the upper grades: students from a variety of national and linguistic backgrounds needed to be prepared for higher education in many different countries, each with its own set of requirements for university admission (Fox, 1985; Peterson, 1987).

By the early 1960s, all of these schools had settled on secondary curricula oriented towards preparation for a fixed number of national examination systems: UNIS targeted American and British examinations; Ecolint allowed students to choose between the Swiss, French, British, and American examinations; and Atlantic College prepared all students for the English GCEs and negotiated acceptance of those results with universities in other countries on a case-by-case basis (Fox, 1985; Peterson, 1987). Peterson (1972, 1987) describes the practical and educational disadvantages of these approaches. In addition to the obvious expense and difficulty of teaching up to four different national curricula, or the time required to persuade a university to accept foreign qualifications for each student wishing to continue her education outside of the UK, many educators felt that these approaches undermined a fundamental purpose of

international schools by dividing students into national groups or teaching them a curriculum written from a single national perspective. Concerns with the quality of individual national examinations, particularly the perceived overspecialization of the English GCEs, also motivated some dissatisfaction with these solutions (Peterson, 1987). In any event, by the early 1960s, the interest in international examinations was sufficient to spur a group of international educators to action.

The International Schools Association (ISA), founded in 1951, served as an early incubator of efforts to devise a common curriculum for international schools. Tentative experimentation began in 1962, when UNESCO offered the ISA a small grant to explore the possibility of an international social studies examination. The next year, a grant of $75,000 from the Twentieth Century Fund allowed the ISA to establish an ad hoc body to investigate the possibility of an international system of school-leaving examinations. This body, named the International Schools Examination Syndicate (ISES), formally separated from the ISA in 1965. Over the next two years, ISES convened panels of teachers, government representatives, and academics to develop syllabi for a wide variety of subjects; it also continued to carry out pilot experiments in social studies and language teaching at the International School of Geneva. During this period, Atlantic College joined the ISES project, and French educational authorities offered strong support, with French inspectors contributing to the development of syllabi in many subjects (Peterson, 1972).

At a conference in Sèvres in February 1967, the group, by then known as the International Baccalaureate Office (IBO), unveiled its proposal for an international system of secondary school examinations. In order to earn an International Baccalaureate diploma, students would be required to pass examinations in six subjects, including two languages, mathematics, a social science, and an experimental science. The sixth subject might be another language or science, an arts subject, or a special course designed by the school and approved by the IBO. Three of the subjects would be taken at a 'higher level', to allow some room for specialization, and the other three would be taken at 'subsidiary level'. In addition, all diploma candidates would be required to take a course in Theory of Knowledge, intended to encourage reflection on different ways of thinking in different academic disciplines, and to participate in creative, aesthetic, physical, and social service activities for the equivalent of one afternoon per week. Examinations, except for those in second languages, would be offered in English or French. Students not wishing to pursue

the full diploma would be able to earn certificates by taking examinations in one or more individual subjects (ISES, 1967).

Delegates to the first Sèvres conference agreed to lobby universities in their countries to cooperate in an experiment: for a six-year trial period, universities and educational authorities would recognize an IB diploma as an entry qualification for up to 500 graduates of IBO-certified schools every year. Trial examinations in a few subjects were held at seven schools in April and May 1968. Six hundred and fifty candidates at 13 international schools sat for 1,123 exams in the first full trial examinations in 1969. The first official examinations took place in May and June 1970. Thirty-nine candidates from four schools attempted the full diploma. Twenty of them passed and used the new diploma to win acceptance to universities including Oxford, Yale, and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Between 1970 and 1974, the number of IB schools grew from 11 to 27, and the number of official examination candidates grew from 312 to 1,080, well beyond the limit imposed at the beginning of the trial. The IBO awarded 20 diplomas in 1970, and 236 in 1974; exam pass rates steadily climbed over the same period from 69.4% to 75.9%. During this period, the institutional structure of the IBO continued to develop. An IBO Research Centre was established at Oxford to evaluate the IB's assessments, syllabi, and comparability with other secondary school-leaving examinations. In 1968, the IBO established permanent offices in Geneva and appointed A.D.C. Peterson, Director of the Oxford University Department of Education, its first director-general (Peterson, 1972, 1987; Renaud, 1974).

An evaluation written at the close of this trial period by Gérard Renaud, then the deputy director-general of the IBO, declares the experiment an unqualified success. Comments from schools and students praise the IB's success in facilitating educational mobility, providing for the unique needs of the heterogeneous student populations in international schools, promoting international understanding, addressing the requirements of various national education systems, and encouraging innovation in pedagogy. The evaluation notes positive feedback from university professors and widespread acceptance from higher education institutions. Renaud's report also notes growing interest from governments: during the trial period, representatives from Mauritius, Malta, Puerto Rico, and Mexico made inquiries about adopting the IB for use in their national systems. One London school's comments even speculate that the IB helped build support for reducing premature specialization in the examination system of England. The only significant drawback noted is delay in recognition of the diploma,

attributed to the recalcitrance of certain universities and education ministries (Renaud, 1974).

Participants in a second conference at Sèvres in 1974, financed by the French government, roundly agreed that the results of the experiment merited the continued expansion of the IB. Discussion at this conference focused on potential ways of promoting this expansion; suggestions included seeking further university recognition of the IB, adding a vocational component to cater to students not bound for higher education, and expanding the IB's age range to include adults and younger secondary students. These proposals reflect the emergence of a concern with making the IB available to a more diverse group of students, not just to a larger number of elite international schools. The conference also recommended administrative reforms. Many participants expressed the hope that the IBO might become a branch of UNESCO with intergovernmental status. This hope was never fulfilled, but the more modest proposal of establishing several regional offices to support further expansion did eventually come to fruition. The conference recommended one fundamental change to the educational structure of the Diploma Programme: noting the success of original research requirements in certain higher level subjects, participants endorsed the new requirement of an extended essay in any subject from every diploma candidate (Fox, 1985; Renaud, 1974).

The growth of the IB

The geographical, numerical, and curricular scope of the IB continued to expand in the following years. By 1977, the IBO had established regional offices in London and New York, with plans to open another in Manila (Peterson, 1977). In 1978, 60 schools on four continents offered the IB, with the first Australian IB program set to start the next year and 20 more schools certified to offer the IB in the future. Between 1970 and 1978, an estimated 9,000 students took IB examinations, with about 2,400 candidates registered for the 1978 session (Peterson, 1978). The organizational and financial foundations of the IBO also solidified in the late 1970s. In 1976, nine countries made two-year commitments to fund the IBO at an intergovernmental conference at The Hague (Fox, 1985). Attendance doubled at another conference in London two years later, and many governments initiated or renewed pledges of support. Delegates to the London conference abandoned the earlier proposal to establish the IB as an intergovernmental organization, agreeing instead to establish a standing conference of

supporting governments that would meet periodically to review the IB's progress (Peterson, 1978).

The IB also began to expand beyond its initial constituency of elite students at fee-paying international schools. Renaud's 1974 report notes, with apparent approbation, that almost half of IB candidates in the trial period declared no intention of attending university. Of the 59 schools listed in a directory of institutions offering the IB in 1978-79, nine received public funds (IBO, 1978). English colleges of further education played a major role in the IBO's efforts to expand into national educational systems, and A.D.C. Peterson personally taught Theory of Knowledge for several years at Hammersmith and West London College of Further Education, which served students from many national and ethnic backgrounds ranging in age from 16 to 60 (Peterson, 1987). Many schools developed their own syllabi, in subjects ranging from 'international business studies and office practice' to 'mathematics for the non-mathematical', to suit the needs of students planning to pursue work or career training after finishing the IB (Peterson, 1978). The extent of this democratization should not be overstated: in the 1976 session, 91.6% of test-takers attended privately supported schools, and five well-established, fee-paying international schools accounted for 56.9% of candidates (Remillard, 1978). However, the developments of the late 1970s did offer the first evidence that the IB might be successful for national as well as international systems.

During the 1980s, the IB expanded most rapidly – and, from its founders' point of view, unexpectedly – in North America. The number of IB programs in the United States grew from 28 in 1980 to 90 in 1984. Notably, the vast majority of these new IB schools did not serve the program's initial constituency of internationally mobile students. In 1977, Francis Lewis High School in New York City became the first public school to offer IB exams (Peterson, 1987). A 1978-79 directory lists two state schools, both in New York, among the eight IB schools in the United States; in the next year, there were 15 public and nine private IB schools in the US (IBO, 1978, 1979). By 1984, North America accounted for more than half of the world's IB programs, with 36 in Canada and 90 in the US, compared to 103 in the rest of the world. Between 1980 and 1985, the number of American and Canadian IB programs grew by 300%, while the number in the rest of the world grew by one-third. The IBO was somewhat surprised by this pattern: it had initially focused its American expansion efforts on community colleges and elite preparatory schools, with limited success. Regardless, the explosion of interest in the US and Canada was a boon for the IBO, which would have been forced to

continue relying on the uncertain stream of funding from charitable foundations had its revenues from North American school subscription fees not increased substantially (Peterson, 1987).

This group of schools adopted the IB for reasons markedly different from those of the original small group of international schools (Tarc, 2007; Walker, 1996). There are no comprehensive data available about why schools seek authorization to offer the IB, but most available evidence suggests that American schools are primarily interested in the IB as a way to raise academic standards. In one survey of IB coordinators at 155 US schools, including 143 state schools, 70% of respondents said that their schools had implemented the IB because they hoped to raise academic standards. In comparison, only 17% of schools were primarily motivated by the IB's internationalist philosophy (Spahn, 2000). This evidence is consistent with many anecdotal accounts of American public schools adopting IB programs in the hopes of raising achievement (Cavanagh, 2006a, 2006b; Cech, 2007; Gazda-Grace, 2002; Gehring, 2001; Lewin, 2010; Mathews and Hill, 2005; Mulhern and Ward, 1985; Porter and Banchero, 2013; Schachter, 2008; Spahn, 2000), particularly for academically gifted students (Nugent and Karnes, 2002; Peterson, 1987; Poelzer and Feldhusen, 1997), and with descriptions of the program by IB advocates that focus on its academic rigor rather than its internationalist principles (Daniel and Cox, 1992; Jacoby, 1992; Passow, 1986; Savage, 1982; Tookey, 2000; Tyson, 1984). Much of the public discussion about American education in the 1980s was framed by the 1983 report *A Nation at Risk*, which decried the 'mediocre educational performance' of the country's schools and called for higher standards in schooling in order to maintain a competitive advantage over other nations (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983). In this climate, the IB appealed to many educators less because it was international and more because it was 'world-class' (Conner, 2008).

The IB in US urban public schools

While most of these early adopters were well-funded suburban or independent schools, one trend in education reform propelled the Diploma Programme's expansion in an unlikely environment: predominantly minority, low-performing urban public schools. In the wake of the Supreme Court's 1954 decision in *Brown v. Board of Education* to ban racial segregation in schools, school districts devised a number of strategies to implement desegregation. One such strategy was to create magnet schools, which offer distinctive programs designed to attract a racially diverse group of students to schools that might otherwise be affected by residential segregation and 'white flight' to suburban

districts. Magnet schools spread rapidly through the 1980s. School districts were attracted by the possibility that magnet schools would be a less controversial approach to desegregation than mandatory transportation of students across neighborhood or district lines, and encouraged by the availability of federal funds (Peterson, 2001). A number of districts, including Springfield, selected the IB as the academic program that would make their magnet schools attractive to parents and students (Conner, 2008; Ferrara, 1996; Fox, 1985; Gilliam, 1997; Mathews and Hill, 2005). Ten per cent of IB coordinators in Spahn's (2000) survey cited racial integration as their school's primary motive for pursuing IB certification. More recently, even as the momentum behind school desegregation has waned, some advocates still praise the IB as a tool for fulfilling the 'equalizing' promise of American schools by improving education for historically disadvantaged students (Access, 2003; Burris and Garrity, 2008; Conner, 2008). Federal initiatives like the Advanced Placement Incentive Program and the Magnet Schools Assistance Program offer funding for advanced courses, including the IB, at schools serving large populations of low-income students (Cavanagh, 2006b). Many states also offer funding to defray the costs associated with the IB. As of 2010, 670 state schools in the US offered the Diploma Programme, over 90% of American schools offering one or more IB program received state funds, and 40%, or 633, of those state schools served a large share of students from low-income households[21] (IB, 2012b; IBO, 2010). As of 2009, 12% of American students participating in the Diploma Programme were Hispanic, 10% were African American, and 17% were from low-income families, meaning that all three groups remain underrepresented in the IB proportional to their share of the population (Perna et al., forthcoming).

The rapid growth of the IB in this unexpected environment raises the question of how well the Diploma Programme is suited to the needs of national schools with limited resources and culturally diverse, less privileged populations. Two longstanding concerns of the IB are relevant to this question: the goal of promoting international and intercultural understanding, and the tension between access and elitism. The IB's stated mission of developing 'intercultural understanding and respect' (IB, 2013b) might well be relevant in diverse urban schools, but little research has investigated whether the

[21] The final figure refers to the share of public IB schools in the US designated as Title I schools, meaning that they received funds from a federal program targeted at schools where at least 40% of students are from low-income families. A further 16% of American public IB schools in 2009-10 were 'Title I eligible', meaning that a substantial share of their students, but less than 40%, were from low-income families (IB, 2012b).

program has actually achieved this goal in national schools. One doctoral dissertation based on interviews with educators at American IB schools finds that, although IB teachers are committed to the principle of 'international-mindedness' in the abstract, they lack a clear understanding of how to put it into practice, thanks in part to the vague definition of internationalism in the IB's own materials (Gigliotti-Labay, 2010). Studies carried out in international schools offer more hopeful indications that students become more internationally minded over the course of their participation in the IB, but they generally attribute much of this effect to interactions with students from other national and cultural backgrounds, not to the IB curriculum alone (Ben Giaber, 2006; Brown, 2006; Hayden and Wong, 1997; Wilkinson and Hayden, 2010). In the urban school context, interactions among students from diverse cultural backgrounds might serve a similar function, but as Conner (2008) points out, this effect depends on the degree to which enrollment in a school's IB program reflects the overall diversity of its students.

The IB's expansion in schools serving relatively low-income students also holds the potential to shift the way the program strikes a balance between elitism and inclusiveness. In an analysis of the IB's founding period, Tarc highlights the longstanding tension between 'the *dream* of a transformative and internationalist IB' and 'the parochial and elitist *actuality* of IB in the world' (2009: 251), pointing out that the IB's origins in a small group of elite international schools imposed some practical constraints on its ideal of serving students from all national and social backgrounds (see also Conner, 2008; Tarc, 2007). The IB's mission statement does not include a direct statement about access or inclusiveness, but several features of its organizational history suggest a longstanding concern with making the program more accessible to students. A.D.C. Peterson's accounts, in particular, display some concern with making the IB available to students in developing countries (1972: 104), perhaps by developing a hybrid of academic and vocational education for 'the Third World, and, indeed… the disadvantaged everywhere' (1972: 106). Renaud's (1974) evaluation of the IB's experimental period stresses the importance of expanding in developing countries and praises the program's apparent success in one London further education college. More recently, the IB has explicitly embraced the goal of serving students from 'increasingly diverse economic, social and cultural backgrounds' (IBO, 2004: 4) by shifting its focus from promoting growth to expanding access (IBO, 2006a). IB programs remain concentrated in wealthy countries and in schools serving relatively privileged populations (Bunnell, 2008; IBO, 2006a), but

the organization evidently views this as a shortcoming, and expanding to urban public schools is one way of addressing this problem.

At the same time, these affirmations of faith that the IB should be *socially* inclusive should not be understood as evidence that the IB is designed to work against *educational* stratification. Rather, the practical need to align the IB diploma with the entrance requirements of prestigious universities led it to rely on the same mechanisms of examination and selection that upheld the existing stratified system of education in the West (Tarc, 2009). Renaud acknowledges that the very fact of examination 'seems to be in opposition to the democratization of education' (1974: 40), but justifies the IB's use of examinations on the grounds that they are necessary to ensure access to higher education. Peterson goes further, arguing that the IB's 'intellectual elitism' in fact helps level social hierarchies by providing an objective criterion for meritocratic selection: '…within the context of contemporary society, the IB students will increasingly approach more nearly to an elite of talent and commitment than to one of "rich kids"' (quoted in Tarc, 2009: 253). The IB now allows individual schools to determine how students are admitted to the Diploma Programme (Conner, 2008; Mayer, 2008), and several case studies have documented substantial variation in schools' IB admissions procedures (Bland and Woodworth, 2009; Mayer, 2008; Perna et al., forthcoming), suggesting that the organization continues to accept the possibility that the IB could stratify students within as well as between schools. This position dovetails neatly with the meritocratic ideology, which accepts a high degree of stratification as long as it is based on achieved talent rather than ascribed social status (Remillard, 1978). The IB's expansion to urban public schools holds out the promise that more students from marginalized backgrounds may gain access to this new 'elite of talent', but whether this promise is fulfilled depends, in part, on whether all students in a given school have equal access to the IB program.

Very little research has investigated how the Diploma Programme works in the urban public schools, but the few available case studies suggest three themes relevant to questions about access and elitism. First, different schools take different approaches to deciding which students can take IB courses: some use 'open enrollment' policies, allowing all interested students to participate and perhaps actively recruiting some students; others require students to apply to the program by submitting grades, personal statements, and/or teacher recommendations; still others restrict IB courses to students identified as 'gifted and talented' on the basis of standardized tests (Conner, 2008; Mayer, 2006). These policies might be expected to have a substantial influence on who

participates in the program. Second, in schools where not all students participate in the IB, social divisions may emerge between IB participants and non-participants. For IB students, these divisions are a mixed blessing; many report favorably on the intellectual and social community of like-minded students in demanding academic classes, but taking IB classes also seems to mark out some students for criticism from their peers (Kyburg, 2006). Students who do not participate in the IB program, by contrast, may resent what they perceive as the biased distribution of resources in favor of IB students (Shaunessy et al., 2006). Finally, academic and social scaffolds help students make a successful transition into demanding IB courses, especially in schools that serve large groups of students from underperforming elementary and middle schools. Possible ways of supporting IB students in urban schools include seeking out struggling students for extra help, using culturally competent teaching practices, explicitly teaching study skills, facilitating support groups and extracurricular activities where IB students can build relationships with teachers and each other, and even adopting the IB Middle Years Programme in the earlier grades (Conner, 2008; Kyburg, Hertberg-Davis, and Callahan, 2007; Mayer, 2006, 2008). However, these findings offer only tentative indications of how the IB operates in urban school settings.

The structure of the IB Diploma Programme

While the profile of a 'typical' IB school has certainly changed, the requirements for students seeking a diploma at Lincoln today remain largely the same as those presented at Sèvres in 1967 (IBO, 2008b). In order to earn an IB diploma, a student must complete courses and examinations in six subjects; submit an extended essay based on original research; engage in 'Creativity, Action, Service' (CAS) activities outside of school; and take a course in the Theory of Knowledge (TOK). Exams are scored on a scale of 1 through 7, and up to three additional points may be awarded for performance in TOK and on the extended essay, for a maximum total score of 45 points. To pass, a candidate must earn at least 24 points and meet minimum score requirements for certain exams. In the May 2012 examination session, nearly 45,000 students earned IB diplomas, representing 78% of diploma candidates (IB, 2012a). Students who do not pursue the diploma may also earn one or more certificates in individual subjects by completing the course requirements and taking the exam. In May 2012, over 38,000 students worldwide were registered as certificate candidates (IB, 2012a).

IB diploma candidates are required to take one course in each of six different subject groups. Group 1 involves the study of literature, usually in the candidate's first

language. Group 2 is a second language. Group 3, 'Individuals and Societies', includes disciplines such as history, geography, philosophy, and economics. Group 4 is the experimental sciences: biology, chemistry, physics, design technology, and an interdisciplinary course called Environmental Systems and Societies. Group 5 is mathematics and computer science. Group 6 encompasses the arts, but students may also satisfy the sixth subject requirement by choosing another subject from one of the first five groups. Exams in most subjects may be taken at either higher level (HL), after two years of study (240 teaching hours), or standard level (SL), after one year of study (150 teaching hours); diploma candidates must take three or four HL exams (IBO, 2008b).

Within these categories, the IB aims to offer a high degree of choice to schools and students. Exams are offered in a wide variety of subjects in each group; in May 2012, the Group 1 exams were offered in 70 different languages (IB, 2012a). A school can choose which subjects to teach, as long as its offerings make it possible for students to fulfill the diploma requirements. If schools offer multiple subjects in the same group, students can generally choose which to take. Some subject exams also include options for specialization; for example, a Math HL class might cover an option on discrete mathematics, differential equations, statistics and probability, or sets and groups. The IB provides schools with a syllabus of the topics covered in each exam, but does not dictate how teachers conduct their courses. The IB also maintains no formal policy on how students should be admitted to IB courses, instead allowing individual schools to devise their own approaches to recruitment and selection (Conner, 2008; Mayer, 2008). Thus, while all IB schools are subject to the same rules and regulations, individual schools and teachers remain the primary determinants of how students experience the Diploma Programme.

In addition to the six subject examinations, IB diploma candidates complete three additional requirements. The extended essay is a 4,000-word research paper on a topic of the student's choice, carried out with guidance from a supervisor. Creativity, Action, Service attempts to balance the academic demands of the IB with artistic, physical, and voluntary activities. Students must complete approximately 150 hours of activities and compose written reflections to demonstrate the attainment of eight learning outcomes, such as undertaking new challenges, working collaboratively, and demonstrating perseverance. The requirement includes 'at least one project involving teamwork that integrates two or more of creativity, action and service, and is of

significant duration' (IBO, 2008a: 12). Theory of Knowledge is a 100-hour course that aims to encourage reflection on how knowledge is constructed and acquired in different disciplines and through different 'ways of knowing' (IBO, 2006b).

The IB uses complex assessment procedures that differentiate it from other challenging curricula based on a single, high-stakes exam. Marks in individual subjects, on a scale of 1 through 7, reflect a combination of internal and external assessments. Internal assessments are set by the IB and graded by teachers, with IB examiners checking samples of work at each school in order to ensure consistency of marks. Examples of internal assessments include tape-recorded oral examinations in Language B, laboratory projects in the experimental sciences, and an investigation workbook in visual art. Internal assessments are worth 20 to 30% of a student's score in most subjects. External assessments take the form of timed examinations, administered in May and November. The examinations are written and marked by IB examiners, generally current or former Diploma Programme teachers. External examiners also assign marks on a scale of A through E for extended essays and the Theory of Knowledge course, which is assessed through written essays. CAS is assessed internally, subject to monitoring by IB regional offices, with the school rendering a final decision on whether each student has satisfied the requirement.

Systematically comparing the IB with a 'normal' American high school curriculum is difficult, since graduation requirements and coursetaking patterns differ substantially between states and school districts. However, we can tentatively conclude that the IB holds diploma candidates to a higher standard than most American public schools. The examination requirements attached to the IB diploma distinguish it from a regular high school diploma in some states: as of the 2011-12 school year, half of the 50 states, accounting for 69% of American high school students, required students to pass exit examinations in order to earn a high school diploma. (Springfield's state does not administer a high school exit exam.) These exams also vary in coverage: all 25 states assessed English or language arts; 23 assessed mathematics; six assessed science, and four assessed social studies (McIntosh, 2012). The IB thus stands out for both the breadth and depth of knowledge required of diploma candidates.[22] Comparing the content of

[22] Direct comparisons between the IB and state requirements for coursetaking, as opposed to demonstrated competency, are not possible, since the IB Diploma Programme does not directly dictate students' coursetaking in the ninth and tenth grades, whereas state coursetaking requirements for high school graduation generally apply to all four years of high school. Nonetheless, if we assume that IB diploma candidates in most

individual IB courses with a 'typical' public school curriculum in the same subject is even more difficult, since many states' curriculum standards are quite vague. However, at least one review gives high marks for rigor to the IB's offerings in English, history, and science (Byrd et al., 2007), suggesting that IB courses may also be more demanding than 'regular' courses in most American schools. However, given the methodological difficulties of comparing an internationally standardized curriculum and program of assessment with the wildly divergent array of courses in a country with no national curriculum, these conclusions are tentative at best.

The structure of Lincoln's curriculum

Although Lincoln primarily earns attention for its IB curriculum, not all students participate in the IB to the same degree. Instead, in keeping with the national trend described in Chapter 2, the school practices a complex form of curriculum differentiation, with courses horizontally differentiated by department and subject and vertically differentiated by IB status and informal reputation. Within this structure, students can choose to 'go full IB', meaning that they fulfill all the requirements for the IB diploma, or they can opt for certificate status, choosing a mixture of IB and non-IB classes. Full IB students must take the IB exam in all six subjects, while certificate students can choose whether to take the exam corresponding to each of their IB classes. This section describes the actual structure of Lincoln's curriculum, with particular attention devoted to the degree of vertical differentiation between courses in the same subject area, the official rules governing how students move from course to course, and changes in the coursetaking structure over time.

The curriculum gives students a variety of ways to fulfill two sets of coursetaking requirements: the graduation requirements imposed by the state, school, and district, and the requirements of the IB diploma. The school requires regular education students to earn 23 credits, where passing a single year-long course is worth one credit, distributed among the various subjects as outlined in Table 4-1.

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schools take courses in all examined subjects in the ninth and tenth grades, then the IB's requirements are more stringent than high school graduation requirements in many states (Snyder and Dillow, 2012: 254).

Table 4-1. Lincoln High School graduation requirements

Subject	Credits	Further information
English	4.0	One credit of English each year
World Languages	2.0	Two consecutive years of the same language
Mathematics	3.0	Including algebra, geometry, and one course beyond geometry
Science	3.0	Including one year of biology
Social Sciences	3.0	Including world history (9th grade), US history (10th grade), and an IB social sciences course (11th grade)
Physical Education	1.5	IB diploma candidates may earn 0.5 credits through an independent study contract
Health	0.5	Mandatory for ninth graders
Speech	0.5	Taken in grade 11 or 12; waived for students who are full IB, take IB Theatre 1 and 2, or compete in speech/debate for three years
Fine Arts	1.0	Including visual art, music, theatre, textile arts, and aesthetics
Electives	4.5	
Total	23.0	

In addition, some students attempt to earn the IB diploma, which requires them to pass six IB courses and exams (including three or four at Higher Level) and complete the three additional requirements of CAS, TOK, and the extended essay. Lincoln offers students several options for fulfilling each requirement. Table 4-2 presents the IB exams available to students at Lincoln in each group, along with the last course that prepares students for each exam.

Table 4-2. International Baccalaureate diploma requirements

Subject	Exam	Terminal Course
Language A	English A HL[23] Literature HL Language and Literature HL Literature and Performance SL	IB English 2 IB Literature 2 IB Language and Literature 2 IB Literature and Performance 2
Language B	Spanish HL Spanish SL French SL (through 2011) German HL German SL Latin SL	IB Spanish 3 IB Spanish 1 or 2 IB French 2 German 6 or IB German 3 IB German 2 IB Latin 2
Individuals and Societies	History HL Economics HL Economics SL Geography SL Psychology SL	IB Americas IB Economics HL (independent study) IB Economics IB Geography IB Psychology
Experimental Sciences	Biology HL Biology SL Chemistry HL Chemistry SL Environmental Systems and Societies SL Physics HL Physics SL	IB Biology 2 IB Biology 1 IB Chemistry 2 IB Chemistry 1 IB Environmentals IB Physics 2 IB Physics 1
Mathematics and Computer Science	Mathematics HL Mathematics SL Mathematical Studies SL Computer Science HL Computer Science SL	IB Math Topics IB Calculus IB Pre-Calculus OR IB Math Studies 2 IB Computer Science HL IB Computer Science SL
Arts[24]	Visual Art HL Theatre HL	IB Art 2 IB Theatre 2
Core Requirements	Theory of Knowledge Extended Essay Creativity, Action, Service	IB Theory of Knowledge

[23] Beginning with the May 2013 examination session, the IB introduced two new Language A examination options: Language and Literature and Literature and Performance. The previous English A exam was retitled Literature, as was the corresponding sequence of courses, although many Lincoln participants still use 'IB English' to indicate the literature courses and exam. Following this shift, Lincoln offers three English options: Literature HL, Language and Literature HL, and Literature and Performance SL. This change applies to students graduating in 2013 and later.

[24] Students can also fulfill the final requirement by sitting another examination from one of the other five subject areas.

Within the framework created by these two sets of requirements, Lincoln students do have some degree of choice over the content and difficulty of the courses they take. Each department offers several different coursetaking paths by which a student can fulfill the requirements of graduation and the IB diploma. Some of these choices reflect horizontal differentiation between subjects (Sørensen, 1970). In science, for instance, students can choose between biology, chemistry, physics, and Environmental Systems and Societies (commonly known as 'Environmentals'); in social studies, a student can choose among eight subjects after finishing the required courses in world and US history. More important for our purposes, however, are the vertical distinctions between courses. Each course at Lincoln can be labeled with one of four levels of difficulty: IB, for courses that prepare primarily juniors and seniors for a particular International Baccalaureate exam; pre-diploma (usually abbreviated 'PD'), for courses designed to prepare freshmen and sophomores to enter the IB program; special education, reserved for students with an individualized education plan (IEP) designed to address special educational needs;[25] and 'regular', for all other courses. Vertical distinctions are thus possible within each department, not only by grade level but also by IB status. In some departments, courses are also sequentially arranged, with early courses functioning as prerequisites for later high-track courses.

The figures in Appendix F outline the coursetaking possibilities available in each department at Lincoln for the graduating classes of 2011 through 2014. These diagrams, drawn from a combination of transcript data and course selection guides printed by the guidance department, represent the *officially sanctioned* coursetaking paths. As we shall see in Chapter 5, the actual flow of students through Lincoln's curriculum sometimes deviates from these paths, due to a combination of changes in course offerings and flexibility in the implementation of coursetaking requirements. Nonetheless, these official prescriptions are a good indication of the course choices available to Lincoln students,

[25] In many ways, special education courses constitute a separate world at Lincoln. I do not extensively discuss special education classes in this thesis, for several reasons: they are highly complex, with a wide variety of offerings for students with different educational needs; they are legally restricted to students designated as 'special education', who account for about 15% of Lincoln's population; and, for students in the school's 'most restricted placement' units, they function as a separate school within the Lincoln building. Although many special education *students* participate in Lincoln's regular curriculum, including in IB classes, I have thus omitted special education *classes* from this discussion of Lincoln's curriculum structure. However, participants' comments in interviews and observations suggest that most view special education classes as the lowest level in Lincoln's curriculum hierarchy.

the differences between departments in the degree of differentiation and mobility, and the changes in the structure of the curriculum over time. In particular, three features merit brief discussion for each department: the extent of vertical differentiation, the degree to which students' initial choices constrain their future coursetaking possibilities, and changes over time in the structure of tracking.

The English curriculum has undergone a continuing process of detracking in recent years. Freshmen who earn high scores on the admissions test are recommended for American Authors PD, a ninth-grade course teaching eleventh-grade content; others are placed in a course stressing more fundamental skills, entitled English 9 Survey PD until 2009-10 and Literary Studies 1 PD beginning in fall 2010. Sophomores can enroll in British Authors PD with a teacher's approval, or in Thinking and Writing about Literature, a 'regular' course; this class was eliminated and replaced by a pre-diploma course called Literary Studies 2 in fall 2011. For students graduating in 2012 and earlier, junior year marked the beginning of stark differentiation: students chose between IB English 1, the first in a two-year sequence leading to the IB English exam, or American Authors, a requirement for all other juniors. 'Jumping up' from Thinking and Writing about Literature to IB English 1 was possible but uncommon, according to English teachers. Seniors would then earn their fourth English credit with IB English 2 or a regular-track elective. However, beginning with the class of 2013, the department took the radical step of requiring all juniors to enter a two-year IB sequence in Literature, Language and Literature, or Literature and Performance. As of the 2012-13 school year, only one elective remains on the schedule to allow seniors to make up for course failures.

In World Languages, students have several options for earning credits and preparing for IB exams. In Spanish, long the school's most popular second language, students can begin with Spanish 1, a standard introductory course, or Spanish 1 Accelerated, which covers two years of Spanish. After Spanish 3, students can choose between IB Spanish 1 and Spanish 4; the latter course was eliminated after the 2011-12 school year. After taking IB Spanish 1, students can progress to IB Spanish 2, which prepares them for the IB Spanish SL exam, or to IB Spanish 3, which prepares them for the HL exam. Students also occasionally take the IB Spanish SL exam after taking IB Spanish 1, or progress from IB Spanish 2 to IB Spanish 3. The school's German offerings follow a similar pattern. Lincoln also offered a five-year French sequence leading to the French SL exam, but substantial budget cuts in 2010 prompted the elimination of that program. Lincoln administered its last IB French exams in May 2011;

students taking French in the classes of 2012 and 2013 were encouraged to transfer to Spanish, although some dropped out entirely. A small Italian program was also cut in 2011. Finally, students can take a four-year sequence leading to the Latin SL exam. Although this system makes it possible for all students to reach the IB level after four years of study, a student must either gain advanced placement as a freshman by virtue of prior language experience or enroll in Spanish 1 Accelerated in order to qualify for a higher level exam.

The social studies department offers a uniform curriculum to ninth- and tenth-grade students, consisting of world history for freshmen and US history for sophomores. In 2007, the social studies department made the school's first significant move toward detracking by requiring all juniors to enroll in IB Global History, IB Economics, or IB Geography. IB Psychology was added in the 2009-10 school year. After one year of IB-level study, students can take standard level IB exams in Economics, Geography, and Psychology; a senior history course called IB Americas prepares students for the History HL exam, and students can take a second year of economics as an independent study class to prepare for Economics HL. Several other one-semester electives are also available to juniors and seniors; one of these, Minorities in American Society, was eliminated after its teacher retired in the summer of 2011. Finally, all full IB students take Theory of Knowledge, a core diploma requirement, in the junior spring and the senior fall. This set of offerings makes social studies the least vertically differentiated academic department in the school.

Lincoln's science offerings exhibit a high degree of both vertical and horizontal differentiation. Freshmen in the classes of 2013 and earlier chose between Biology 1 and Biology PD; a third, lower-level option, Integrated Science, was eliminated in 2007. Biology 1 was eliminated after the 2010-11 school year, so that all students starting in the class of 2014 now take Biology PD. Both biology classes qualify students for PD or regular courses in chemistry or physics. As juniors, the classes of 2011 and 2012 could continue to IB or regular classes in biology, chemistry, physics, or environmental sciences; the regular-track Physics 2 course was eliminated in 2011-12, and Chemistry 2 and Biology 2 were cut the next year. Students can take standard level IB exams after third-year IB courses or continue to prepare for higher level exams in biology, chemistry, and physics. Although this coursetaking structure is highly differentiated, it is, in principle, quite flexible; in theory, any sophomore course other than Physics 1 qualifies a student to continue on to IB science courses. Moreover, in keeping with the school-wide

trend of detracking, the science department is gradually reducing the extent of vertical differentiation within subjects and grade levels.

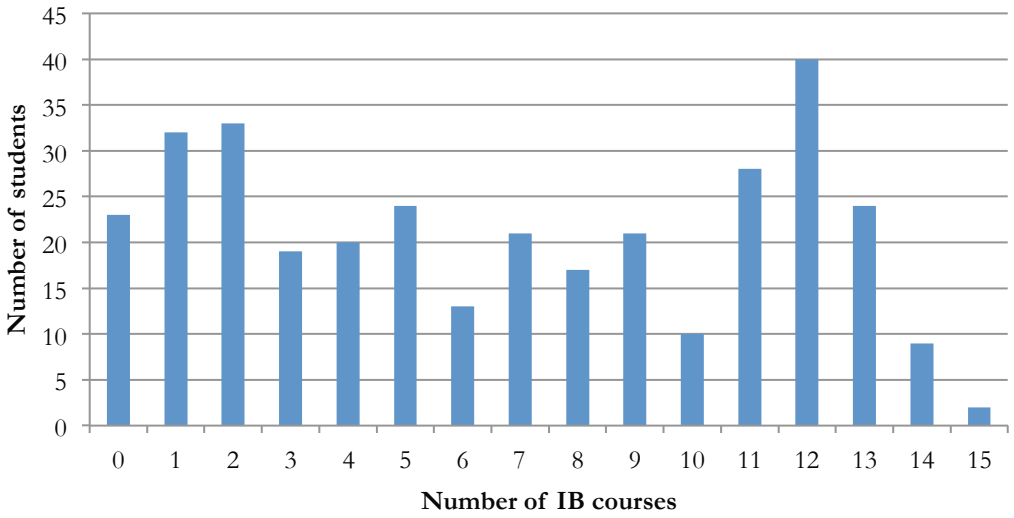
Mathematics is the most rigidly tracked subject at Lincoln, particularly because a student's initial course choices substantially constrain his future options. Eighth-graders who have been admitted to Lincoln are given the option to take an additional math placement exam, which can qualify them to start in Algebra PD, Geometry PD, or, in very unusual circumstances, Algebra 2/Trigonometry PD; students who do poorly on this exam, or opt out altogether, take Algebra as freshmen. Lincoln's course catalogue lists Algebra PD as a prerequisite for Geometry PD, although a flowchart elsewhere in the catalogue indicates that students who earn an A+ in Algebra can move up to Geometry PD. After geometry, the track system splits again: students in Geometry PD can move on to Algebra 2/Trigonometry PD or IB Math Studies 1, while students in Geometry can take the regular or IB version of Math Studies 1. Finishing Algebra 2/Trigonometry PD allows a student to take IB Pre-Calculus, IB Calculus (leading to the SL Mathematics exam), and, if time allows, IB Math Topics (leading to the Mathematics HL exam). Other students can continue to IB Math Studies 2, leading to the Math Studies SL exam, or regular Math Studies 2. A final course, Transition to College Math, is available to seniors who have not progressed beyond geometry. Students can also 'double up', taking two math classes in one year, by combining Geometry PD with Algebra 2/Trigonometry PD and IB Calculus with IB Math Topics. Thus, in principle, it is possible for a student to progress from Algebra PD to IB Math Topics, but this requires careful planning. Students who begin in Algebra are more severely constrained, with IB Math Studies 2 as their highest possible terminal course.

Finally, Lincoln offers electives in a variety of subjects, including several that satisfy the one-credit fine arts requirement and two that lead to higher level IB exams. In visual art, the introductory Art Foundations course qualifies students for two-semester series in drawing, painting, photography, and clay design, although the second courses in these series are not always available. An instructor's approval is required for a two-year IB Art sequence, which prepares students for the Visual Art HL exam. In theatre, semester-long courses in Acting and Play Production are the recommended but not necessary precursors to IB Theatre 1 and 2, which leads to the Theatre HL exam. Students can also earn elective credit by taking various one- and two-semester courses in music, business, and family and consumer economics, although these options are gradually diminishing: business classes were eliminated after the business teacher's

departure in 2010, and the family and consumer economics teacher's retirement in 2012 prompted the elimination of that department as well.

In sum, although all regular education students at Lincoln must fulfill the same graduation requirements, the differentiated curriculum makes it possible for students to graduate with a wide variety of coursetaking experiences. The histograms in Figure 4-1, which display the distribution of IB courses taken by Lincoln students in the graduating class of 2011, offer one indication of this diversity. By this measure, while most students at Lincoln participate in the IB, the degree of involvement varies considerably. Table 4-3, which shows the number of students graduating between 2007 and 2012 who attempted and received the IB diploma, further shows that only a minority of students participate in the fullest version of the IB program.

Figure 4-1. IB courses per student, class of 2011



Source: Student transcripts provided by the guidance department

Table 4-3. IB diploma candidates and recipients, classes of 2007-2012

Graduating class	Total enrollment, Grade 12	Diploma candidates	Diploma recipients
2007	320	76	26
2008	377	107	46
2009	352	99	48
2010	359	81	37
2011	Text 359	89	35
2012	356	80	43

Source: School-generated data supplied by the IB coordinator; district report cards for Lincoln

Conclusion

In most respects, Lincoln High School is an unlikely site for an International Baccalaureate program: its student population is almost entirely American, many of its students come from disadvantaged backgrounds, and its resources pale in comparison to those found at most fee-paying international schools. The establishment of the IB at Lincoln served contrasting purposes for the school and the program: Lincoln adopted an IB program in order to become an elite academic institution within the district, while the IB stood to lose its undesirable reputation for elitism by expanding to urban state schools like Lincoln. However, the extensive differentiation of Lincoln's curricular structure suggests the need for a closer look at precisely who participates in the IB. The unusual juxtaposition of program and context suggests the question that animates this thesis: does the IB expand all Lincoln students' opportunities for upward social mobility, or does it track students in a way that reproduces the stratified social order? I begin to address this question in Chapter 5.

Chapter 5. Lincoln's Curriculum as a Stratified System

As Chapter 2 noted, Americans often think of the public school as 'the great equalizer', an arena in which every child, regardless of her background, has an equal opportunity to develop skills and earn credentials that will prepare her for higher education, employment, and upward social mobility in the outside world. However, the pervasive practice of curriculum differentiation belies this egalitarian mythology: students are sorted, sometimes as early as elementary school, to receive different curricula and instruction in ways that increase the inequality between high- and low-achieving students, often exacerbating existing social divisions. In light of the growing body of evidence that curriculum tracking reproduces social inequality, schools are increasingly turning away from tracking by introducing a greater degree of student choice into the course selection process or even by dismantling the hierarchical arrangement of academic courses. This trend suggests the continued salience of the tension between egalitarianism and meritocracy in the arrangement of the high school curriculum.

This chapter uses interview, observation, and documentary data to explore whether Lincoln High School functions as a stratified system in its own right, a leveling agent designed to give students equal chances in some future meritocratic selection process, or a mix of both. I argue that, although Lincoln has taken steps to reduce the degree of vertical and horizontal differentiation in its curriculum, it remains a fundamentally stratified system. The distinction between International Baccalaureate, pre-diploma, and 'regular' classes, described in Chapter 4, is the most basic and obvious form of vertical differentiation in the curriculum. Moreover, an 'implicit hierarchy' of courses, embodied in the reputation attached to each course at Lincoln, dictates finer-grained distinctions of difficulty that are not immediately obvious from the school's formal description of its course offerings. This hierarchy of courses stratifies students both academically and socially: since the IB is central to the school's identity, top-track students receive a disproportionate share of both the school's symbolic approval and its instructional resources. Consequently, teachers and students describe high-track courses in the same language of academic rigor that they use to praise Lincoln as a whole, while they deride low-track courses as 'fluff classes' and 'dumping grounds'. This tracking system is less deterministic than many of the more rigidly tracked schools described in the literature, and tracking practices do vary between departments. Nonetheless, the

ubiquity and visibility of status distinctions between different courses at Lincoln suggests that the school is more a microcosmic meritocracy than it is a 'great equalizer'.

This chapter makes the case that Lincoln is a thoroughly stratified society in two sections. First, I examine participants' perceptions of different locations in the formal curriculum, in order to demonstrate that curriculum differentiation is also value-laden: in keeping with the widespread belief that the IB program is Lincoln's central purpose, participants generally praise IB classes for their academic rigor and dismiss 'regular' classes as peripheral to the school's mission. Course and teacher reputation, as well as IB status, inform students' perceptions of each course's value. Second, I offer empirical data on three aspects of coursetaking to corroborate participants' impressions of the differences between tracks at Lincoln. I use student transcript data to demonstrate that low-track courses generally enroll students with lower academic achievement, less challenging schedules, and worse attendance records than high-track courses. Data from classroom observations also demonstrate that institutional beliefs about the status of different courses correspond with instructional and social differences in classroom-level practice, which in turn explain how track location predicts students' opportunities to learn high-status content and skills. Finally, I present data on how students move through Lincoln's curricular structure in order to demonstrate that, over time, these reputations become self-fulfilling prophecies: in keeping with Rosenbaum's (1976) tournament metaphor for tracking, students' early enrollment in a low-track course imposes severe constraints on their future chances of taking prestigious IB courses.

'It's an IB school': the social status of track locations

The description of Lincoln's formal curriculum in Chapter 4 offers the first indication that Lincoln's curriculum is extensively differentiated, both vertically and horizontally. In theory, the distinctions between courses might be value-neutral, reflecting the school's rational desire to prepare students for a variety of equally valuable postsecondary opportunities. In fact, the structure of the track system informs not only neutral evaluations of difficulty but also a set of value judgments about a course's prestige and worth. These value judgments begin with the widely shared belief that Lincoln's central purpose is to promote academic excellence through its IB program. Thus, IB courses are considered not just objectively harder but also more appropriate to the purpose of the school, while low-track courses are frequently dismissed as 'fluff classes' and 'dumping grounds'.

The IB at the core of Lincoln's identity

As Powell, Farrar, and Cohen (1985) note, Americans expect their schools to perform a huge range of non-academic functions, from shaping good citizens to matching students with their future careers to providing psychological counseling. In many respects, Lincoln has defied this trend: students and teachers generally agree that academic achievement, defined by participation in IB courses and exams, is the central purpose of the school. The centrality of academic achievement is most obvious in the school's official presentations of its identity, particularly in the emphasis on preparing students for postsecondary education. For many years, the centrality of college-going to Lincoln's identity was embedded in the school's very name: 'For the College Bound' was appended to the school's name from 1978 until 2010. Posters advertising universities around the country line the hallways. Like many other official materials, the school profile available on Lincoln's website promotes the IB as a 'pre-university' program, celebrates the 95% of 2010 graduates bound for a two- or four-year college, and presents a long list of postsecondary institutions where graduates have matriculated. On arriving for orientation, incoming eighth-graders receive an enrollment form for the state's college covenant program, which promises admission to a state university and financial aid to students who maintain a B average, as well as a course catalogue that advertises most courses as 'college-level', 'college prep', and teaching 'skills which will be needed in college'. The guidance department regularly hosts visiting university admissions officers and recruiters, and the director of student counseling was eager to have me work with students applying to particularly selective universities.

The emphasis on college-going is the most prominent feature of Lincoln's more general institutional celebration of high academic achievement. The student handbook variously describes the school as a 'community of excellence' and a 'rigorous academic environment' that provides 'rigorous academic educational experiences', 'quality instruction', and 'inquiry, critical thinking, and student-centered learning'. The emphasis on emotional support, social development, and character-building noted by Powell, Farrar, and Cohen (1985) as common substitutes for academic rigor are notably absent from official Lincoln documents. Daily announcements celebrate 'mathletes', debaters, and winners of academic awards as often as they report on victories in football or baseball games. At a pep rally in March, attended by the superintendent of schools and the mayor of Springfield, the boys' and girls' basketball teams stood on stage alongside a student-built robot, which had just earned a bid to the national championships. Faculty

and students are quick to tout Lincoln's top rank among public schools in the state. In short, Lincoln's official identity rests on its claims to academic excellence, particularly with respect to students' college prospects.

My observations suggest that the school values academic achievement in deed as well as word: students and teachers commonly praise high achievers and diligent students. In casual conversations, quite a few students proudly announce that a classmate had earned a high college entrance exam score, been accepted to an Ivy League university, or demonstrated impressive knowledge in a class.[26] Nearly every student cites Lincoln's academic reputation as the first reason they or their parents chose the school. Many explain their decisions in ways that highlight Lincoln's unchallenged identity as the city's best academic high school; the phrase "it's the best" commonly stands alone as an explanation. Of course, this does not mean that the brightest students are always at the top of the social hierarchy, or that low achievement necessarily disqualifies students from popularity. Rather, the point is that exerting effort towards academic achievement is not, on its own, widely stigmatized, and that students generally accept that the school's primary mission is the development of academically capable students.

Lincoln's identity as an elite academic institution, in turn, depends on its IB program. The school's mission statement begins with the declaration that Lincoln 'uses the International Baccalaureate model to create rigorous academic educational experiences'. The IB logo features prominently on the sign at Lincoln's main entrance, on the school's website, and on many of its official documents. Students and teachers commonly express this sentiment with the succinct phrase, "It's an IB school." One junior asks, "What's the point of going to Lincoln if you're not going full IB?" Another says, "I came into Lincoln with the intention of being full IB, because there was no other point of even coming here." A senior takes an even more extreme position: "The mission of Lincoln isn't to be a high school; it's to be an IB school. And I find it sickening when students aren't in IB classes." One certificate student echoes these sentiments: "I think this is what Lincoln is for. It's a IB program. So I think people

[26] My own position in the school as a high-achieving student, discussed more fully in Chapter 3, undoubtedly played a role in starting these conversations. A visitor unknown to the students, or one with a reputation as a mediocre student and stellar basketball player, would likely encounter fewer announcements of academic excellence. These spontaneous conversations thus should not be interpreted to indicate that doing well in school entitles a student to popularity at Lincoln. However, considered alongside other sources of evidence, such as official presentations and student interview data, these conversations do help make the case that academic effort and success generally meet with Lincoln students' approval.

should be required to take at least two IB classes." Not all students go so far as to say that every Lincoln student should go full IB, but most of them – even certificate students – argue that students should be required to take at least one or two IB classes. The clear implication is that students who fail to meet this requirement do not belong at Lincoln.

The IB's normative status generates more controversy among teachers and administrators, but quite a few, including the principal, subscribe to the view that delivering an IB curriculum is Lincoln's central mission, and that course offerings extraneous to that mission should be the first candidates for the cuts required by sustained budget pressures. The principal repeatedly stresses that "we are an IB school" and "the mission of the school… is IB". An English teacher agrees that Lincoln "can't be all things to all people", indicating that even if other educational missions are worthwhile, they should not be Lincoln's first priority. Even teachers who express skepticism about forcing all students into IB classes nonetheless acknowledge that the IB is the expected standard of performance for students: in one chemistry teacher's words, "that's our mission statement". The IB, then, is not just a special program within an academically excellent school; it is the principal reason why Lincoln is academically excellent.

The high value placed on the IB manifests itself with particular visibility in the school's celebration of full IB students. A trophy case in the main foyer proudly displays a list of IB diploma candidates, along with photographs of recent diploma recipients and a map showing their college destinations. Lists of students who earned IB diplomas in recent graduating classes are prominently displayed in the IB coordinator's office and on the school's website. Full IB students are exempt from the speech class required of other students, and they can sometimes earn a waiver allowing them to complete one of the three required physical education classes as an independent study course. At graduation, full IB seniors wear a golden stole with the IB logo over their gowns, and their names are marked with the IB logo in the booklet handed to members of the audience. Several students also suggest that some teachers accord preferential treatment to full IB students. One senior diploma candidate testifies:

> When I'm [in the building] after school, if I'm walking around with some of my full IB friends, I won't be stopped and questioned for why I'm in the hall, even though we have that rule that you're not supposed to be in the hall. Then I'll look and a couple sophomores will walk by, and [a teacher will say], 'Why are you still here? The doors are closed!'

All of these official and unofficial forms of recognition reinforce students' sense that the IB is not just a 'specialty shop' (Powell, Farrar, and Cohen, 1985), but also the central element of Lincoln's claim to be an outstanding school.

IB classes and 'fluff classes'

The common belief that 'it's an IB school' underlies a set of value judgments about the worth of various courses in Lincoln's curriculum. Predictably, IB classes earn the bulk of official and unofficial approbation in this value system. The institution's endorsement of IB classes is clear from the structures governing enrollment in those courses. IB diploma candidates must take more credits, including more academic classes, than students pursuing a Lincoln diploma only; in practice, diploma candidates rarely have room for more than four non-academic elective credits over the course of their high school career. While there is no formal application to become a diploma candidate, sophomores interested in going full IB must attend an information meeting with their parents and return a signed contract indicating their commitment to the program. The course catalogue lists prerequisites – usually satisfactory completion of a related course or the approval of the instructor – for virtually all IB classes but for very few low-track classes. In mathematics, the most rigidly tracked subject, students must pass a placement test to take pre-diploma algebra or pre-diploma geometry as freshmen; others are effectively relegated to the regular and IB Math Studies courses unless they earn an A+ in first-year algebra. These relatively high barriers to entry collectively convey the impression that IB courses are suitable only for the most accomplished and motivated students, while any Lincoln student is presumed to be qualified for enrollment in lower-track classes.

The language surrounding IB classes, in both official representations and day-to-day conversation, reveals similar assumptions about the relative difficulty of IB and non-IB classes. References to 'rigor' and 'college preparatory' work appear again and again in printed descriptions of IB courses and the Diploma Programme. Students' and teachers' everyday talk also reflects the widespread acceptance of the IB's academic superiority. Teachers routinely remind their IB classes that they are doing 'college level' reading, writing, and calculations, and the phrase 'you'll need this when you get to college' often justifies spending class time on a particular skill or concept. Even in ninth- and tenth-grade classes, when IB exams are a distant possibility for students, teachers often hold up the IB as the standard for performance, aligning their curricula with the IB syllabus and borrowing from IB rubrics to grade assignments. One English teacher offers a widely

shared explanation for this phenomenon: "My assumption is that all my freshmen will take an IB class, and that's [the IB coordinator's] assumption too… So there's always the assumption that it doesn't matter what class you're in, you're gonna be in the [IB] program. And that's why we're in this building."

'Regular' classes, particularly those that function as alternatives to IB classes for upperclassmen, occupy a much more tenuous position in Lincoln's curriculum, because they do not serve the school's stated IB mission. In interviews, teachers and a few students repeatedly and spontaneously invoked the category of 'fluff classes', which encapsulates the most revealing critique of Lincoln's lower track. Fluff classes often serve as a conversational foil for IB classes; for instance, in elaborating on his plan to offer only IB-caliber courses at Lincoln, the principal specifies that there will be "no fluff courses" (while tactfully declining to identify any such courses currently in the catalogue). Other teachers contrast particular courses with the general standards of "college-level work", "the toughest, most rigorous academics", and "high expectations" that define "real classes". Participants repeatedly mention a few specific classes in the 'fluff' category. Following the 2010-11 school year, the English department eliminated a senior elective called Creative Writing/Communications Media, largely at the urging of its teacher, who felt that the course lacked rigor. When I asked another English teacher about her Advanced Composition class, she wryly commented, "Advanced Composition seems like a misnomer to me, because the kids… have, at best, basic composition skills". Several electives in social studies face similar criticism. In 2009-10 and 2010-11, one teacher designed and taught a semester-long class called Minorities in American Society. The course description emphasized scholarly themes that might be addressed in a university-level history or ethnic studies class, but in practice, according to participants, little serious learning occurred. As another teacher put it, "I don't think anything was ever taught in there. I think they watched movies that had black people in 'em… and everybody got an A, and it was a waste of time of a class."

Participants name non-academic electives as 'fluffy' with particular frequency. Students and teachers both refer to the common belief that most non-IB art classes are "easy A's". The courses in the Consumer Education department, which bear distinctively non-academic titles like 'Textile Arts' and 'Family, Food, and Society', are especially popular targets of criticism. Students who take several such courses face charges of being lazy and unserious, or at least failing to take full advantage of the opportunities afforded by a Lincoln education. During our interview, one social studies teacher actually

consulted the student database to find several examples of what he called the "classic senior schedule". His comments reveal the pejorative connotations attached to the fluff course: "Sociology, Aesthetics, Math Studies, study hall, German 1, Myth and Folklore, Parent and Child, Advanced Composition, and Bio 2… That's as fluffy as you can get… And we tell students we're gonna provide you with a meaningful pre-college experience. That is not it." While some teachers do defend the continued existence of such low-track classes (views which are explored more fully in Chapter 7), virtually nobody claims that such classes fit into the school's central mission of academic excellence.

Consistent with previous findings on teacher assignment to courses (Finley, 1984; Gamoran and Berends, 1987; Oakes, 2005; Rosenbaum, 1976), the assignment of teachers to courses reflects this hierarchy. Every spring, in most departments, teachers submit a list of classes they prefer to teach to their department chair, who drafts a schedule and submits it to an assistant principal for final approval. The final schedule takes account of scheduling and enrollment considerations as well as teacher preferences and department chair recommendations. Although individual teachers did not always state a preference for high-track classes in interviews, the available evidence does suggest that perceptions of teachers' competence figure prominently in the assignment process. Teachers new to Lincoln are generally assigned to teach low-track courses, since these are viewed as the least desirable. However, most seek to move up to high-track classes as soon as possible. A history teacher recalls believing, before he started teaching IB classes, that "if I could teach IB, I'd be one of the cool kids" in the department. Sometimes, teachers achieve upward mobility through experience alone: one history teacher expresses the view that IB classes are "our reward for being good little soldiers". However, a few relatively new teachers have managed to 'jump the queue' by intentionally or unintentionally developing a reputation for competence. One chemistry teacher, for instance, recalls, "There was this perception of us, even halfway through my first year, that I was doing a good job, and… they were so happy with my work that they wanted to put me in the IB program in my second year of teaching." Conversely, some veteran teachers may be relegated to low-track classes despite their experience if they are not considered strong enough to teach IB classes. A teacher of low-track senior English classes speaks frankly about this fact, claiming that she continues to teach low-track classes because, in her department chair's eyes, "clearly I am not worthy" to teach current or future IB students.

Lincoln's curriculum, then, is differentiated not just by content and difficulty, but also by prestige. Both the official ideology of the school and the most popular belief among teachers and students holds that Lincoln's central purpose is to provide a rigorous academic, college preparatory education, and that the IB is integral to this mission. Consequently, IB classes are widely considered to be not only more academically demanding and rewarding, but also more valuable to the school as an institution. In other words, Lincoln's curriculum constitutes a stratified social system, with different meanings and values attached to different locations in the hierarchy of courses.

Interestingly, these normative connotations seem to attach more strongly to courses than to the students who take them. In interviews, most students deny that there are particularly heavy social burdens attached to the choice to go full IB, and nobody admits that fear of being ostracized by classmates played a role in their coursetaking decisions. Nor do students believe that there is a particularly stark social division between high- and low-track students, thanks in part to the frequency with which diploma candidates and certificate students mix in classes and extracurricular activities. Although some students note that the sheer amount of time consumed by IB coursework curtails their ability to spend time with friends, I found no indication that being full IB *per se* is necessarily detrimental to a student's social standing, and many full IB students explicitly claim that they enjoy full social lives despite their heavy workload. If anything, contrary to the popular notion that black students disparage academic achievement as 'acting white' (Fordham and Ogbu, 1986), low-track students may have slightly lower social status. A full IB junior, for instance, speculates, "If you go full IB, you have the title success attached to you, whereas if you don't, you're [seen as] more of an underachiever". However, none of the low-track students I interviewed mentioned that they had experienced any criticism from peers based on their coursetaking choices; they seem much more keenly aware of their lower status according to the institutional values of the school. One student neatly summed up this sentiment when a classmate asked her whether certificate students were also entitled to wear the stole that IB diploma candidates wear over their robes at graduation, saying: "The certificates don't get nothing but a certificate."

The implicit hierarchy of courses

While most of these value judgments correspond to the distinction between IB, pre-diploma, and regular classes, interviews indicate that teachers, students, and

administrators recognize a more nuanced understanding of how Lincoln's curriculum is stratified, incorporating local knowledge about the reputations of individual courses and teachers. A few examples should suffice to illustrate the more subtle distinctions between courses of the same discipline and IB level. Since the 2009-10 school year, Lincoln freshmen have taken one of two English courses: American Authors PD and Literary Studies 1 PD. Although both courses are pre-diploma, American Authors is generally considered more challenging and prestigious. The information in the most recent course selection booklet offers one clue to this ranking. The entry for Literary Studies 1 stresses foundational content:

> This entry level course aims to strengthen students' skills in all language arts, giving them a foundation for literary study to prepare students for upper level IB courses. Students study ninth grade content through genres: nonfiction, short stories, the novel, drama, poetry, and various media.

The description of American Authors hints at the course's higher status without making an explicit comparison:

> This accelerated entry level course, designed for students with a strong reading and language skills [*sic*], aims to build on students' foundational skills by beginning basic literary study to prepare students for upper level IB courses. Students study eleventh grade content through American literature.

Both entries conclude with an identical description of major activities:

> All students participate in independent reading projects. They work on narration/description, illustration/argument (including basic literary analysis), compare-contrast, and business letter formats and engage in research projects. All units emphasize students developing independence in critical and creative thought to understand connections among and between subjects and real life.

Some elements of these descriptions, including the identical list of course activities and the shared descriptors 'pre-diploma' and 'entry level', support the official ideology that, as one English teacher puts it, "all roads lead to IB". However, the course booklet also makes the higher status of American Authors clear by describing it as an 'accelerated' course in 'eleventh grade content' for 'strong' readers and writers. Conventional wisdom at Lincoln also holds that American Authors is the more desirable course. At a recruitment night for incoming ninth-graders, one English teacher characterized American Authors as the ideal course "for the eighth-grader who has a book with her or him right now" and Literary Studies for students who "*like* reading, but they don't *love* reading". One senior recalls choosing American Authors because it "sounds more [like a course] for smart people". A sophomore refers to the common but

outdated belief that any student who takes Literary Studies 1 will have to take American Authors as a junior and "look like a sad junior with freshmen". These two first-year English options nominally occupy the same track level and provide equal preparation for IB courses, and a parent or other outsider might conclude from their titles alone that the choice between the two courses is simply a value-neutral decision between American and global content. However, nearly all Lincoln insiders are keenly aware that American Authors ranks above Literary Studies 1 in the school's implicit hierarchy of courses.

Differences in course reputation also manifest themselves at higher levels of study. In theory, all four of Lincoln's first-year IB science courses – IB Biology 1, IB Chemistry 1, IB Physics 1, and IB Environmentals – should occupy the same place in the hierarchy of courses. In practice, however, IB Environmentals is widely regarded as less prestigious than the other three classes. Several teachers allude to the ubiquity of this belief among students, speculating that the planned elimination of Biology 2 and Chemistry 2 (discussed at length in Chapter 7) will make IB Environmentals a 'dumping ground' for students who would have otherwise taken those low-track classes. Students also tend to characterize the class as fun but unserious. One senior underscored this point by suggesting that I interview her during her Environmentals class, when she felt that she was unlikely to be doing anything useful. The IB Environmentals teacher, Mr. Landers, acknowledges this perception himself, comparing Environmentals to his sections of Biology 2: "The reasons you take Bio 2… is because you get to go on field trips, because you want to do very little work – and I'm not gonna hand out hardly any work – because you want to have me for a teacher and see if something cool happens… And I think that those reasons will still be there for Environmentals next year."

Mr. Landers' comments point to another important feature of the implicit hierarchy of courses: an individual teacher's reputation is at least as important as the reputation of a particular course. In the 2011-12 school year, Lincoln offered 101 regular education courses; only 31 of those courses were divided between two or more teachers. This fact allows students to choose some courses with the aim of having or avoiding a particular teacher. It also means that a teacher's style and personality are often just as important to a course's reputation as the formal curriculum, especially when the same teacher has been associated with a course for several years. In some cases, teacher reputation can actually override the academic hierarchy. One student, for instance, enrolled in regular biology as a freshman because his older sister told him that the teacher was easy. After a semester, he decided that the class was "really slow" and "a

little bit too easy", so he "upgraded" to pre-diploma biology with Mr. Landers, seeking a greater challenge. However, he found that this was "pretty easy" as well, because his new teacher also had a reputation for being relaxed. The same student signed up for Advanced Composition as a senior after dropping full IB, but he quickly transferred back to IB English 2 after finding that Ms. Weaver, one of the most demanding teachers in the school, was teaching Advanced Composition: "Every week they had a essay, every week they had journals. And I'm like, well, if I'm doing the IB work, I might as well be in IB English 2!" This student's experiences highlight the importance of teachers in determining a course's reputation: in one case, 'upgrading' from a regular to a pre-diploma class made little difference because both were taught by 'easy' teachers, while in another, one 'hard' teacher's reputation actually outweighed the lower formal status of her course.

Empirical evidence on between-track differences

While the reputations attached to courses are certainly stereotypes, they are not without merit. Three sources of empirical evidence shed more light on the distinctions between high- and low-track courses at Lincoln. First, student coursetaking records for the 2010-11 school year indicate that, on average, students in low-track courses take a less demanding curriculum, earn lower grades, and attend school less frequently than students in comparable high-track courses. Second, observations of day-to-day classroom life suggest that track location corresponds to opportunities to learn: high-track courses move faster, cover more high-status content, and demand more cognitively complex tasks of students, thanks to both teacher practices and student behavior. Finally, coursetaking records for students in the graduating class of 2011 show that, over time, the differences between tracks work to constrain students' mobility through the curriculum. These three sources of evidence offer good reason to believe that the conventional wisdom presented in the first section of this chapter represents an exaggerated but not unfounded account of how stratification works at Lincoln: high-track courses offer a more enriching experience to higher-performing students, and these differences eventually preclude students from upward mobility within the school's hierarchically organized curriculum.

Stratified courses, stratified students

The first indication that Lincoln's courses systematically differ in prestige comes from data on the population of students enrolled in each course at Lincoln. Tables 5-1a

through 5-1f describe the courses offered in the 2010-11 school year[27] by presenting the characteristics of students enrolled in those courses. To measure curricular challenge, I display the share of students in each class who attempted the full diploma ('IB'), dropped the full diploma ('drop'), and were designated as special education students ('SPED'). The IB and drop variables are calculated as the numbers of IB and drop students, respectively, divided by the number of students in the classes of 2011 and 2012 enrolled in each class, since it was not possible to determine the IB status of students graduating in 2013 and 2014 from the available transcript data. (Where a class was composed primarily or completely of students in the classes of 2013 and 2014, the IB and drop fields are left blank.) I also present two measures of academic achievement and one proxy for behavior: the per-student mean of grade point average ('GPA'; $\mu = 2.775$, $\sigma = 0.778$), grade point average in academic classes only ('Academic GPA'; $\mu = 2.645$, $\sigma = 0.848$), and absences per class ($\mu = 5.258$, $\sigma = 6.583$). (The procedures used for calculating these variables are described in Chapter 3.) These statistics are admittedly limited, particularly because they cannot establish the direction of the causal relationship between course differences and student differences. Nonetheless, they provide the best available indication of the levels of curricular challenge, academic achievement, and student behavior typical to each class. We can reasonably expect that these differences, in turn, will influence student learning through their effects on teacher expectations, instructional practices, and student subcultures, among other mechanisms.

[27] I have presented data on the 2010-11 school year because it is the year for which I have the most complete course enrollment records. These records omit students who dropped out of school or transferred to a different school prior to graduating, but Lincoln's low mobility rates suggest that these omissions should not substantially affect the results.

Table 5-1a. English courses, 2010-11

		Share of class			Average per student		
Course	Students	IB	Drop	SPED	GPA	Academic GPA	Absences per class
American Authors PD	180	--	--	.000	3.093	2.957	3.021
Literary Studies 1 PD	89	--	--	.022	2.717	2.517	3.098
British Authors PD	233	--	--	.004	3.104	3.004	3.576
Thinking and Writing about Literature	90	--	--	.022	2.129	1.925	6.549
IB English 1	210	.368	.081	.000	3.009	2.904	3.853
American Authors	73	.000	.000	.096	2.373	2.200	4.959
IB English 2	146	.610	.096	.021	3.238	3.159	4.143
Creative Writing/ Communications Media	92	.000	.033	.076	2.408	2.261	7.842
American Ethnic Literature/ Mythology and Folklore	89	.000	.046	.067	2.465	2.344	7.477
Advanced Composition/ World Literature	67	.015	.030	.045	2.519	2.371	6.687

Table 5-1b. World Languages courses, 2010-11

Course	Students	Share of class			Average per student		
		IB	Drop	SPED	GPA	Academic GPA	Absences per class
Spanish 1	163	--	--	.160	2.453	2.279	5.272
Spanish 1 Accelerated	97	--	--	.010	3.135	3.015	2.519
Spanish 2	199	--	--	.040	2.524	2.369	5.191
Spanish 3 PD	159	.162	.068	.019	2.984	2.881	3.939
Spanish 4	21	0	0	0	2.704	2.615	4.587
IB Spanish 1	115	.519	.085	.017	3.196	3.103	3.848
IB Spanish 2	42	.524	.071	.024	3.344	3.276	4.095
IB Spanish 3	35	.543	.057	0	3.206	3.146	5.061
German 1	54	--	--	.093	2.724	2.600	6.798
German 2	19	--	--	0	3.014	2.907	3.466
German 3	18	0	.111	.056	2.478	2.312	4.252
German 4	4	0	0	0	2.096	1.947	7.249
IB German 1	6	0	.333	.167	2.898	2.802	6.535
IB German 2	21	.714	.048	.048	3.372	3.293	4.710
German 6	9	.556	.111	0	3.322	3.227	3.430
Latin 1	55	--	--	.055	2.988	2.853	3.073
Latin 2	24	--	--	0	2.988	2.843	2.668
IB Latin 1	26	.462	.115	0	3.196	3.119	4.155
IB Latin 2	11	.636	.182	0	3.196	3.078	4.167

Table 5-1c. Social Studies classes, 2010-11

Course	Students	Share of class			Average per student		
		IB	Drop	SPED	GPA	Academic GPA	Absences per class
World History PD	283	--	--	.042	2.897	2.741	3.564
US History PD	341	--	--	.053	2.789	2.659	4.654
IB Global History	276	.264	.063	.022	2.831	2.715	4.460
IB Psychology	66	.231	.062	.015	2.745	2.605	5.829
IB Geography	80	.375	.050	0	2.922	2.818	4.311
IB Economics 1	67	.448	.090	0	2.922	2.818	4.311
IB Theory of Knowledge (junior spring)	94	.819	.181	0	3.341	3.269	2.704
IB Americas	143	.483	.070	.021	2.981	2.894	5.445
IB Economics 2	22	.591	.091	0	3.106	3.035	5.079
IB Theory of Knowledge (senior fall)	89	1.000	0	.022	3.339	3.280	4.101
Minorities in American Society	67	0	0	.179	2.556	2.434	7.338
Philosophy	31	0	0	.161	2.569	2.445	6.749
Aesthetics	32	.032	.032	.031	2.368	2.222	8.291
Sociology	93	0	.033	.118	2.447	2.304	6.990
Anthropology	28	.074	.185	.143	2.384	2.219	6.801

Table 5-1d. Science classes, 2010-11

		Share of class			Average per student		
Course	Students	IB	Drop	SPED	GPA	Academic GPA	Absences per class
Biology PD	313	--	--	.086	2.790	2.631	3.938
Chemistry PD	198	--	--	.005	3.229	3.144	3.281
Chemistry 1	142	--	--	.148	2.178	2.002	7.554
Physics PD	85	.288	.038	0	3.220	3.147	3.561
Physics 1	72	0	.047	.028	2.537	2.403	6.156
IB Biology 1	117	.345	.086	0	3.069	2.967	3.793
Biology 2	132	0	.016	.159	2.419	2.269	6.625
IB Chemistry 1	94	.511	.085	0	3.148	3.067	3.363
Chemistry 2	49	0	0	.020	2.391	2.244	6.439
IB Physics 1	35	.514	.086	0	3.266	3.203	2.875
Physics 2	3	0	0	0	2.806	2.689	10.543
IB Environmentals	25	.240	.080	.040	2.874	2.754	5.605
IB Biology 2	76	.632	.079	.026	3.151	3.073	4.917
IB Chemistry 2	68	.574	.059	0	3.269	3.197	4.382
IB Physics 2	4	1	0	0	3.513	3.425	4.114

Table 5-1e. Mathematics classes – 2010-11

Course	Students	Share of class			Average per student		
		IB	Drop	SPED	GPA	Academic GPA	Absences per class
Algebra PD	121	--	--	0	3.186	3.053	3.122
Algebra	169	--	--	.148	2.374	2.175	5.786
Geometry PD	158	--	--	0	3.357	3.290	2.933
Geometry	204	--	--	.132	2.338	2.168	5.946
Algebra 2/Trigonometry PD	90	.433	.100	0	3.430	3.375	2.813
IB Math Studies 1	138	.232	.080	0	2.841	2.712	3.962
Math Studies 1	85	0	0	.129	2.346	2.178	5.051
Transition to College Math	39	0	0	.103	2.132	1.995	10.191
IB Pre-Calculus	69	.574	.074	0	3.435	3.385	4.193
IB Math Studies 2	136	.353	.088	.029	2.961	2.859	5.451
Math Studies 2	74	0	.054	.014	2.523	2.382	6.566
IB Calculus	41	.683	.049	0	3.483	3.433	3.735
IB Math Topics	15	.600	0	0	3.466	3.433	3.981
Introduction to Programming	47	--	--	0	2.742	2.564	4.038
Web Design	238	.010	.010	.118	2.543	2.378	6.460
Computer Programming	92	--	--	.043	2.678	2.544	4.664
IB Computers 1	25	.240	.040	.040	2.595	2.483	4.292
IB Computers 2	11	.364	.091	.091	3.137	3.048	4.523

Table 5-1f. Elective classes – 2010-11

Course	Students	Share of class			Average per student		
		IB	Drop	SPED	GPA	Academic GPA	Absences per class
Advanced Journalism[28]	11	--	--	0	2.956	2.840	3.796
Robotics[18]	17	--	--	.059	2.914	2.803	2.383
Art Foundations 1	230	--	--	.130	2.706	2.570	5.619
Art Foundations 2	110	.054	.027	.109	2.732	2.644	4.972
Clay Design 1	191	.066	.028	.084	2.718	2.589	5.586
Painting 1	53	.071	0	.038	2.640	2.489	4.407
Photography 1	39	.150	.100	.077	2.782	2.680	4.641
IB Art 1	23	.261	.043	0	3.018	2.947	3.822
IB Art 2	15	.800	.067	.067	3.246	3.159	5.076
Parents and Children	52	0	0	.115	2.335	2.172	6.558
Textile Arts	60	.029	.029	.017	2.416	2.278	6.400
Band	106	.604	.057	.009	3.129	2.944	2.570
Orchestra	54	.367	.133	.019	3.002	2.813	4.041
Percussion Ensemble	5	--	--	0	2.599	2.327	4.951
Beginning Chorus	39	--	--	.103	2.786	2.588	4.182
Intermediate Chorus	44	0	.029	.091	2.584	2.363	5.817
Vocal Production	8	0	0	.125	2.700	2.477	6.532

[28] These classes are offered in academic departments, but they do not count toward graduation requirements in English or science, respectively.

Table 5-1f. Elective classes – 2010-11 (continued)

		Share of class			Average per student		
Course	**Students**	**IB**	**Drop**	**SPED**	**GPA**	**Academic GPA**	**Absences per class**
Comprehensive Health Education	307	--	--	.081	2.820	2.668	4.093
Comprehensive Physical Education	284	--	--	.081	2.905	2.755	3.483
Fit for Life 1	370	--	--	.122	2.707	2.576	5.416
Life Sports 4	390	.214	.061	.118	2.745	2.622	5.684
Acting	150	--	--	.100	2.725	2.585	5.629
Play Production	65	--	--	0	2.635	2.478	5.680
IB Theatre 1	17	.294	.235	0	2.902	2.800	3.820
IB Theatre 2	14	.429	.071	.143	3.235	3.127	3.596
Contemporary Communications	224	.005	.086	.094	2.588	2.443	5.500

The results of this analysis are striking in their consistency: for every possible comparison between pairs or sets of vertically differentiated courses, the higher-track course enrolls students with, on average, more challenging schedules, higher cumulative and academic grade point averages, and fewer recorded absences per class. These differences are most obvious in mathematics, the school's most rigidly tracked department; at the extreme, students in top-track courses like Algebra 2/Trigonometry PD, IB Pre-Calculus, and IB Calculus earn average grades more than a standard deviation better than students in low-track courses like Transition to College Math and Math Studies 1 and 2. In English, American Authors PD and Literary Studies 1 PD appear to be only moderately stratified, but substantial differences emerge beginning in the sophomore year and persist through the senior year. Science courses follow the same pattern, with substantial differences in student achievement and behavior clearly evident as soon as vertical differentiation begins in the sophomore year. Even in the non-academic subjects, IB courses in art and theatre appear to be slightly more selective than regular-track electives, although these differences are much smaller in magnitude than those observed in the academic departments. The social studies department, which keeps all students on the same track through the junior year, appears to be the only exception to this rule. However, lower-achieving students evidently gravitate toward regular-track social studies courses once they become available in the senior year.

These data also suggest that the negative reputations attached to a few individual courses are rooted in fact. Creative Writing/Communications Media, which was eliminated after 2011 thanks to teachers' concerns about its lack of rigor, did attract students with slightly lower grades and worse attendance records than the other two senior English electives, although these differences pale in comparison to the contrast between IB Literature 2 and all senior elective courses. IB Environmentals, frequently singled out as the least demanding IB science course, does enroll students with somewhat lower grades and more absences than IB Biology 1, IB Chemistry 1, and IB Physics 1. Even among electives, the two family and consumer education courses apparently catered to a lower-achieving population of students than regular-track courses in music, art, and theatre. However, the opprobrium directed at the Minorities in American Society course appears to be somewhat unjustified, since this course actually enrolled a slightly higher-performing group of students than the other social studies electives. Aside from this exception, the implicit hierarchy of courses at Lincoln corresponds closely to student characteristics: the highest-status students at Lincoln, as

measured by IB participation, academic achievement, and attendance, are disproportionately represented in the school's highest-status courses.

Tracking in classroom life

My observations of day-to-day classroom life indicate that the hierarchy of courses also corresponds to inequalities in students' opportunities to learn: on the whole, high-track classes cover more content at a faster pace and a higher level of complexity, and the atmosphere in high-track classes more closely approximates 'mutual intensity' between teachers and students (Powell, Farrar, and Cohen, 1985). To be sure, classroom environments and teacher styles vary widely at Lincoln, and classes in the same track location and department can look quite different. Nonetheless, these differences in instruction and atmosphere were evident in every comparable pair of classes I observed, even when the same teacher taught 'matched pairs' of high- and low-track classes. In other words, similar to the findings of Caughlan and Kelly (2004), the institutional meanings attached to track locations at Lincoln correspond closely to instructional and social differences that directly affect students' opportunities to learn.

Most obviously, high-track classes simply demand more work from students, both during and outside of class. Within 'matched pairs' of classes taught by the same teachers, high-track classes generally spent more time on instructional activities, while the more relaxed atmosphere in many low-track classes allowed for more delays, diversions, and informal chatter, particularly at the beginning and end of each class period. High-track students also tended to receive more homework. In mathematics, Mr. Schmidt, a math teacher in his tenth year at Lincoln, typically gave the same assignment to his Algebra and Algebra PD students, but he designated a few problems as optional extra credit for the low-track class. Ms. Nolan, a popular English teacher, required her IB Literature 2 students to complete a portfolio for each work of literature they read, including elements like an analysis of a motif, a written dialogue with a classmate, and a commentary modeled after a section of the Literature A HL exam. Of the two Advanced Composition/World Literature teachers I observed, one required much shorter daily reading and writing assignments, while the other sporadically assigned short personal essays. In most IB classes, internal assessment requirements, such as the World Literature paper in English or the interdisciplinary group project in science courses, required students to do at least one substantial piece of work that was not required in low-track classes. I frequently overheard students complaining about late nights of

homework and looming deadlines, but virtually all of these complaints were directed at IB classes.

Even when classes demand an equal amount of work, high-track classes confer an advantage on their students by instructing them in more socially valued topics. The contrast between American Authors PD and Literary Studies 1 PD illustrates this difference well. For the first ten days of the spring semester, I observed Ms. Weaver's Literary Studies class, Ms. Nolan's American Authors class, and Ms. Nowak's American Authors class. All three teachers are veteran educators held in high esteem by their colleagues, and students in all three classes generally followed the teachers' directions and engaged with the lessons; I saw no overtly disruptive behavior during any of the classes. Nonetheless, the high-track courses systematically exposed students to more complex and high-status material than did Literary Studies 1. Ms. Nolan's class began with reflective activities on the first day back from winter break; students reviewed the syllabus for the new unit on poetry, then wrote down their goals for the semester and posted them around the room. However, the class quickly moved to poetry analysis: over the course of a week, students moved from 'exploding' a short Billy Collins poem by answering a series of structured questions to identifying literary devices and writing argumentative paragraphs about several excerpts from Walt Whitman's *Song of Myself*. Ms. Nowak's class began the semester with an introduction to the Gothic movement and a video and quiz about the life of Edgar Allen Poe; her students read Poe's short story 'The Masque of the Red Death' and engaged in an extensive discussion about the story as an allegory for the inevitability of death. Although Ms. Weaver's class actually spent more time on instructional activities and required more regular homework, it emphasized much more basic goals: comma usage, verb tense, and paragraph-length writing and editing. Although the students did complete a daily poetry journal exercise, its analytical component was limited. After reading Mary Oliver's poem 'Music Lesson', the class held one highly teacher-directed discussion about the phrase 'the death in the metronome' and wrote a paragraph on their own experiences with the concept, then reviewed it for comma placement, use of evidence, and appropriate topic sentences. The Literary Studies students' encounters with literature served the purpose of developing basic grammar and composition skills, whereas the American Authors engaged more deeply with close reading, situating literature in its context, and interpreting the meaning of literature – all skills explicitly emphasized in the IB Literature subject guide (IBO, 2011). Although the mechanics and grammar stressed in Ms. Weaver's class are certainly not without value,

they do constitute lower-status knowledge than the literary analysis emphasized in American Authors, especially from the perspective of university preparation (Finley, 1984; Oakes, 2005).

These differences are even more obvious in senior English classes, which reflect the culmination of a four-year tracking process. Ms. Nolan and Ms. Nowak both taught IB Literature 2, the only high-track senior literature class for the class of 2012; Ms. Weaver and Ms. Weiss, an English and theatre teacher, taught the low-track Advanced Composition and World Literature elective. The IB classes covered topics that would not be out of place in a college literature course: the function of various motifs and symbols in *The House of Bernarda Alba*; the performance of gender roles in *As I Lay Dying*; John Donne's poem 'The Bait' as a response to Christopher Marlowe's 'The Passionate Shepherd to his Love'. After observing one such discussion, a student teacher commented, 'You showed analytic and critical skills… that I didn't learn until my second or third year of college.' Students worked with a remarkable degree of independence, frequently offering comments and suggestions directly to each other rather than deferring to the teacher's opinion. Both teachers occasionally offered suggestions on students' style, grammar, and mechanics, but they dedicated little time to these technicalities and largely expected students to handle them independently.

By contrast, although the two Advanced Composition and World Literature teachers could hardly have been more different – Ms. Weaver was widely regarded as the strictest teacher at Lincoln, while Ms. Weiss' classes were freewheeling, noisy, and sometimes chaotic – both of them covered much simpler content, with a heavy emphasis on basic writing skills. Ms. Weiss stressed extremely basic material: she generally read out loud with her students, asked them factual reading comprehension questions, assigned essays that students rarely appeared to complete, and dictated apparently unrelated journal prompts – usually one- or two-line quotations from famous people – at the beginning of each class. In one session, students spent most of the period working in small groups to sort a list of school supplies into categories. The exercise was ostensibly designed to teach students about classification as a strategy for organizing essays, but I observed no follow-up assignment or discussion in which students actually had to apply categorization to their own writing. Ms. Weaver's class engaged with somewhat higher-order skills, progressing from reading comprehension strategies to a discussion of diction and metaphors in Tadeusz Borowski's poem 'Night Over Birkenau' during the first week of the spring semester. However, these explorations were quite basic compared to the IB

students' activities. Moreover, Ms. Weaver carefully directed students' discussions of texts, intervening with questions and comments after nearly every student contribution in order to keep the class on track. While high-track seniors developed and defended their own perspectives on a wide range of demanding novels, plays, and poems, low-track seniors were confined to a much more carefully directed set of exercises aimed primarily at reading comprehension and writing skills.

In science, I observed a similar contrast in the social status of knowledge between Mr. Landers' Biology 2 and IB Environmentals courses. The atmosphere in both classes was similarly relaxed, occasionally raucous; students chatted with each other, bantered with the teacher, worked on other homework, and wandered in and out of the greenhouse that Mr. Landers had constructed in the back of his classroom. However, when they did pay attention, IB Environmentals students engaged with higher-status knowledge. Over the course of the week in which I observed the two classes, the Environmentals students worked in groups to assess the environmental impact of a hypothetical major construction project, took a survey on their environmental values, and, on the last day of school before spring break, watched what Mr. Landers perfunctorily described as "a video about bears and wolves". These lessons did not appear particularly challenging to students; most groups' oral presentations of their environmental impact studies, for instance, formulaically presented a plan to build a shopping mall or basketball arena, acknowledged the impact of pollution and traffic, and vaguely cited the benefit of 'creating jobs'. Nonetheless, these lessons entailed at least cursory coverage of topics on the IB syllabus, including the environmental impact of economic development and the definitions of ecocentrism, anthropocentrism, and technocentrism. In the same week, the Biology 2 students took and discussed a survey on their opinions about parenting, then analyzed their own food intake for caloric content and nutritional value. These discussions covered some highly charged and complex topics, including human sexuality, the roles of nature and nurture in human development, and corporal punishment. However, the discussions consisted almost entirely of students sharing their opinions and anecdotes about parenting, with virtually no references to scientific research or other empirical evidence. Instead, they reflected what Mr. Landers later told me was an attempt to cater to students' interests and convey information relevant to their lives. As a result of these 'relevant' lessons, some Biology 2 students may well have reflected on their values and even changed their beliefs about childrearing or nutrition. However, they had even less exposure than the IB

Environmentals students to the academic and college-preparatory knowledge most prized at Lincoln.

Even in mathematics, subtle differences emerge between pairs of high- and low-track classes that ostensibly cover the same content. Mr. Schmidt used almost identical lesson plans for his Algebra and Algebra PD classes, but subtle differences in his teaching and students' questions pushed the high-track class to explore slightly more sophisticated material in every lesson. Mr. Schmidt explained this in an interview:

> Even though they both get taught kinda the same lesson, I can go more in depth with, um, with the honors [i.e., Pre-Diploma] class. An example would be, we were doing the distributive property [in Algebra PD], like, the FOIL ['first, outside, inside, last', a common mnemonic for teaching binomial multiplication in algebra] or whatever, basically writing in expanded form. And we started talking about how, what if it's a plus b raised to the seventh power, are you gonna sit there and distribute seven times and get that? Well, there's other ways of getting that. So you can use Pascal's triangle, and then we got into the binomial theorem, which got into probability. What's the probability of a 70% free-throw shooter making one out of two free throws? I wouldn't even bring that up with my regular class, because they're challenged with just FOIL, let alone binomial theorem or Pascal's triangle or anything.

Mr. Schmidt's teaching contributed to the difference between classes. For instance, while his regular students volunteered to write their solutions to each day's opening problem on the board, he called his PD class up row by row to provide answers, conveying the expectation that every student could handle the exercises. He made slight modifications to assignments: on one day, the regular class warmed up by factoring the expression $x^3 + 125$ while the PD class factored $16x^3 + 125$; on a unit test, several questions were mandatory for the PD class but counted as extra credit for the regular class. Interestingly, students' questions also drove the Algebra PD class to a slightly higher level of complexity. Students in the high-track class regularly asked Mr. Schmidt for additional examples, suggested alternative approaches to problems, and pressed him to clarify the definitions of terms. While students in Algebra participated at similar rates and answered Mr. Schmidt's questions willingly, they responded more passively to instruction, thereby tacitly accepting the teacher's offer of more basic content.

Students' agency made a more obvious contribution to between-track differences in another pair of math classes. Mr. Friar, a longtime Lincoln teacher planning to retire at the end of the year, taught one section of Math Studies 1 and two sections of IB Math Studies 1, both typically taken by juniors. Mr. Friar was skeptical when I told him I wanted to observe both classes; he told me that the curriculum was essentially the same and warned me that his regular class consisted mostly of "knuckleheads" (i.e., foolish and

ill-behaved students). In the week I observed, both classes did follow the same lesson plans, take the same unit test, and do the same assignments from the same textbook, and Mr. Friar behaved similarly in both, although he referred to IB exam requirements more frequently in the IB course. Nonetheless, each class had a distinctive learning climate, thanks to students' behavior. In the IB class, students frequently went off task, but their misbehavior was largely private; they slept, read, whispered with their neighbors, worked on other homework, and copied the answers from others' exams, but they generally did not interrupt the teacher or derail the lesson. By contrast, many students in the regular class, including a few persistent troublemakers, were overtly disruptive; they entered class late, held loud conversations across the room, shouted down other students' answers, and interrupted and argued with the teacher. Consequently, lessons in the regular class tended to move somewhat slower than those in the IB class, although the high levels of student disengagement in both classes may have minimized the impact of this difference.

While the Math Studies course presented the clearest case of how student behavior affects course rigor, the pattern of overt misbehavior in low-track classes and covert misbehavior in high-track classes was evident throughout the school. I frequently observed students in IB classes using class time to work on assignments for other courses, often quickly switching to the assigned task to conceal their behavior when the teacher was near. In small group tasks, high-track students skillfully divided their time between completing their work and chatting about unrelated topics, effectively carving out small spaces for socializing while finishing the required work. When they did openly defy teachers, high-track students usually demanded to have their work graded or even complained that the class was moving too slowly; in other words, their complaints still suggested a concern with learning, at least on an instrumental level. Many teachers also appeared to willfully ignore quiet misbehavior in high-track classes, opting instead to continue with the lesson. Low-track students did not always openly misbehave, especially in classes with strict teachers like Ms. Weaver, but when they did, they were much more likely to talk over teachers, move around the classroom, and draw other students into off-task behavior. In turn, teachers spent more time reprimanding students in low-track classes, which often drew other students' attention away from the lesson. It should be reiterated that the *frequency* of student misbehavior was quite similar in high- and low-track classes taught by the same teachers; the *quality* of misbehavior was the most notable difference. These findings echo Schwartz' observation that 'while top-track students

interact covertly with peers during teacher-centered lessons and lectures, low-track pupils relate to peers in an overt and disruptive manner' (1981: 103).

These social differences, in turn, translate into instructional differences in two ways. Most obviously, public disruptions in low-track classes often interfere with students' learning. In some situations, the teacher pauses the lesson to reprimand students; in others, students simply drown out the teacher, an effect that made it difficult for me to record substantial parts of a few low-track lessons. More subtly, in classes that incorporate significant amounts of group work and whole-class discussion, active student participation – not just passive compliance with the teacher's directions – is crucial to the success of the lesson. Some of the most intellectually demanding classes I observed were impressive largely because students contributed so much to the discussion. In one IB Literature 2 class, without any intervention from their teacher, Ms. Nolan's students sustained a fifteen-minute conversation about 'The Bait', touching on the themes of the contrast between Donne and Marlowe's characterizations of love, the shift in the poem's tone from seriousness to playfulness, and Donne's use of fishing as a metaphor for sexual attraction. In a senior Theory of Knowledge class, during a discussion of the difference between intrinsic and instrumental values, students readily contributed examples of each in their own lives. In such classes, the atmosphere of 'mutual intensity' (Powell, Farrar, and Cohen, 1985) between teachers and students relies not only on students' understanding of the content, but also on their willingness to contribute to the class, sometimes at the risk of being wrong in front of their peers.

However, not all students displayed such willingness. Mr. Gallo, a longtime social studies teacher, took the same Socratic approach to teaching TOK and several regular-track electives. His electives – anthropology, sociology, aesthetics, and philosophy – offered much more intellectually challenging material than most of the other low-track classes I observed, and he frequently encouraged student contributions to his freewheeling class discussions. Yet this approach worked much better in TOK, where most of the class participated enthusiastically, than in his other classes, where most students were reluctant to contribute more than a few words at a time. Mr. Gallo emphatically states his belief that "every human being has the capacity" to participate in the kind of conversation he sought to foster in his classroom, but he acknowledges that this does not actually happen to the same degree in each of his classes:

> What is it about these damn TOK kids, what is it about them, that they contribute? Like you did. Zero in on what Mr. Gallo's saying. Zero in on what she's saying, what he's saying. Zero in in such a focused manner,

> and really listen to what they're saying, and really process it. There's some kids, I didn't think – that can't do that. They cannot focus in like that. Their mind wanders. They would die in a TOK class. They would shoot themselves. They would go, 'I can't take this, I can't'. And they can't take it because they can't focus on the mental energy involved in you listening to what I'm saying, you listening to what that kid is saying, you processing and thinking about it as you're listening.

It is difficult, of course, to completely disentangle the effects of student agency from those exerted by instructional practices and institutional meanings. However, the differences between high- and low-track classes in the same subject, taught by the same teacher, suggest that the fact of sorting itself produces distinctive high- and low-track classroom environments, which in turn offer students differentiated opportunities to learn.

In sum, the conventional wisdom at Lincoln about which classes are 'rigorous' and which are 'fluffy' conveys more than a grain of truth. My observations reveal both instructional and social differences between high- and low-track classes: high-track classes cover more material, engage students in more complex cognitive tasks, and expose students to more socially valued knowledge, all in an atmosphere that more closely approximates Powell, Farrar, and Cohen's (1985) ideal of 'mutual intensity'. Two caveats to these findings are necessary. First, the differences between teachers, particularly in terms of student behavior, are far more noticeable than the differences between tracks. In light of the widespread view that high-track classes are rewards for the most competent teachers, the importance of individual teacher styles likely exacerbates between-track inequality, but a different teacher assignment system might well produce less stark instructional differentiation. Second, these observations cannot determine the relative importance of institutional, social, and instructional effects (Pallas et al., 1994) in producing the observed differences between tracks. Nonetheless, the findings presented here indicate that curricular differentiation at Lincoln systematically allocates a disproportionate share of the school's instructional resources and symbolic approval to high-track students, meaning that tracking has important consequences for students' opportunities to learn.

Student mobility

If Lincoln embodied the contest mobility ideal proposed by Turner (1960), these distinctions of social status and educational merit might not be particularly concerning, since students could move up to high-track classes at any point during high school. To investigate this possibility, I turn back to student transcript data, this time focusing on

the graduating class of 2011, the only class for which I have complete coursetaking data. Figures 5-1a through 5-1d graphically represent students' coursetaking paths through English, world languages, science, and mathematics. (I have not presented a diagram for social studies coursetaking patterns, since there is no significant vertical differentiation in this department until the senior year.) In English, the only subject in which students must take a course every year, I have diagrammed students' movements from year to year; in each other subject, the diagrams show transition probabilities for all pairs of adjacent years. Each transition probability experienced by at least two per cent of students is represented by an arrow, labeled with the share of students from each origin course who make the transition to the corresponding destination course. When at least two per cent of students repeat a course in the next year, the share of students repeating that course is listed in the box with the course's name.

Figure 5-1a. English coursetaking patterns, Class of 2011

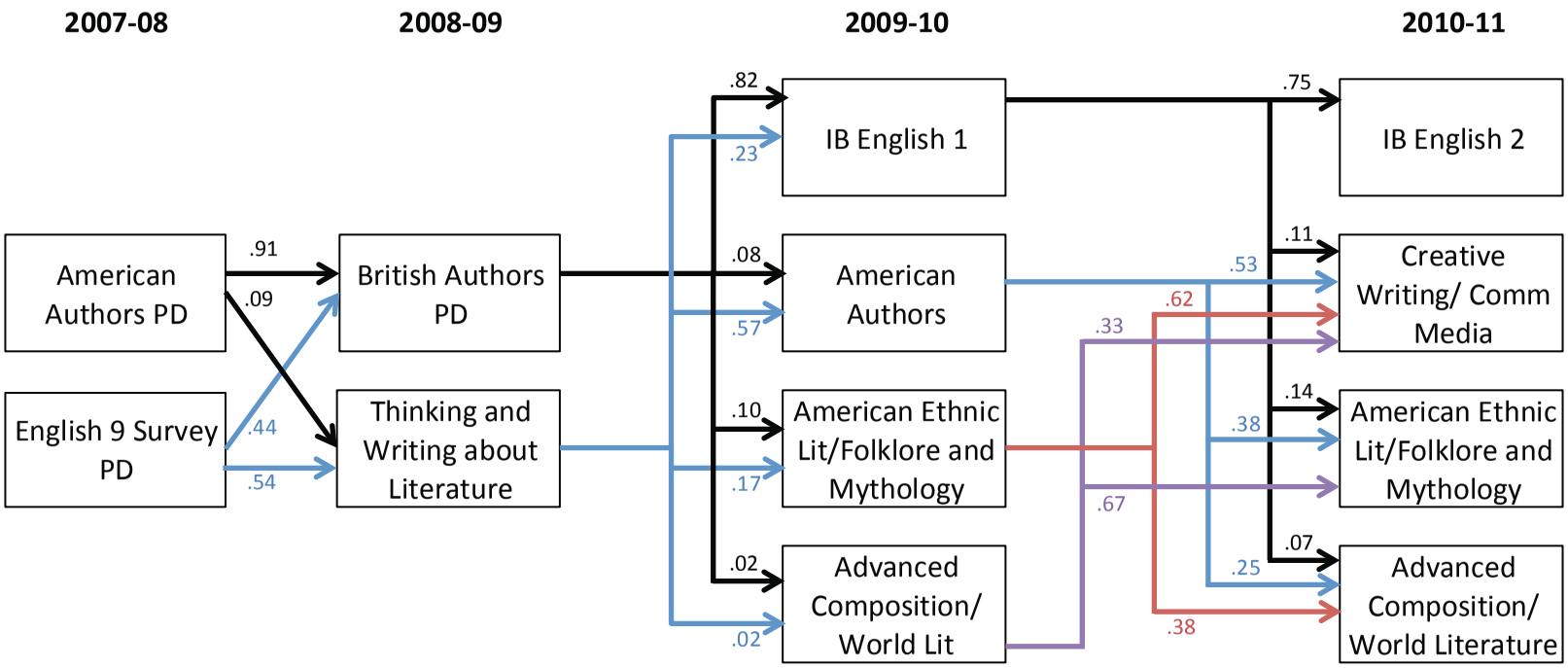


Figure 5-1b. World Language coursetaking patterns, Class of 2011

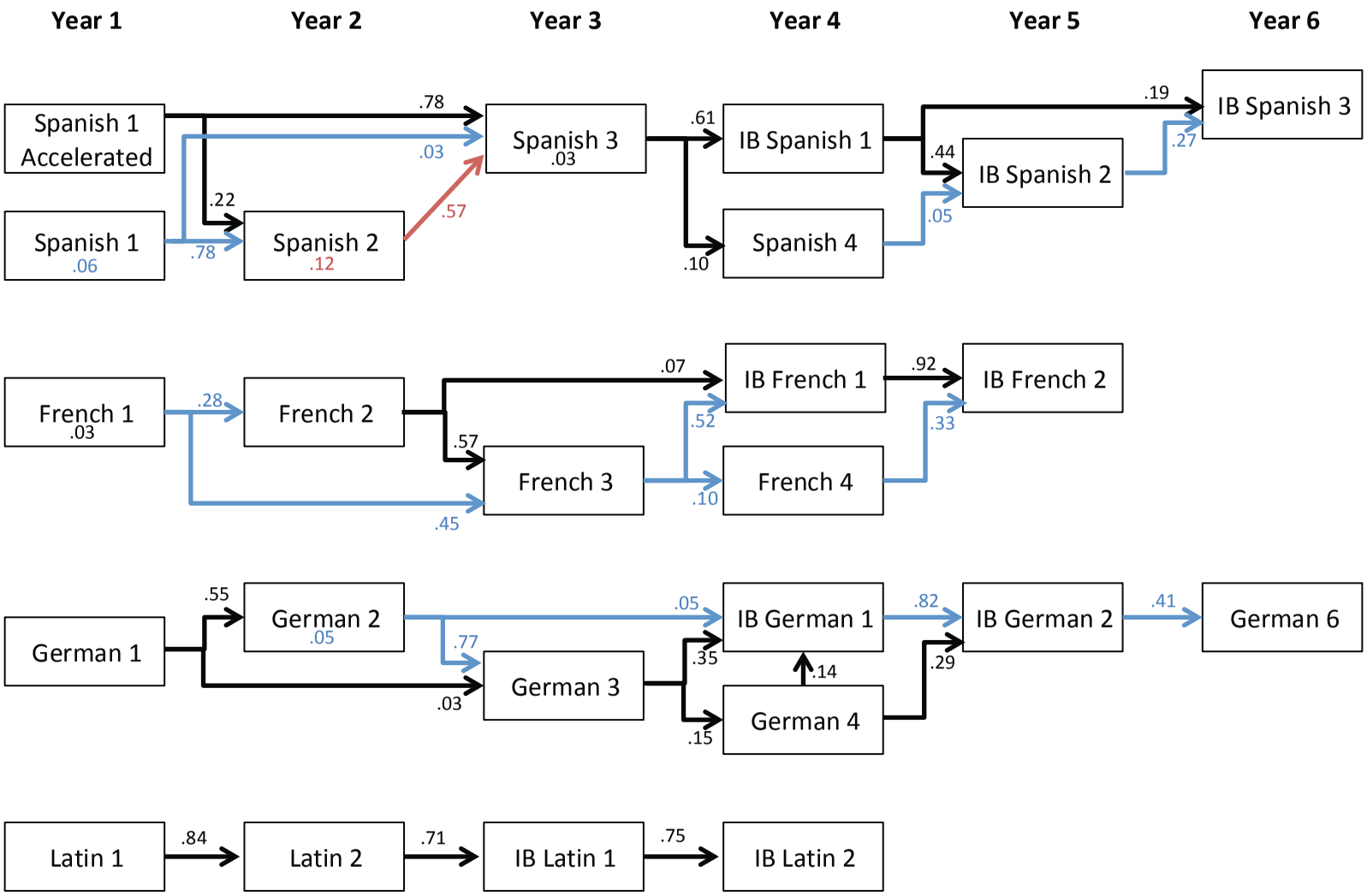
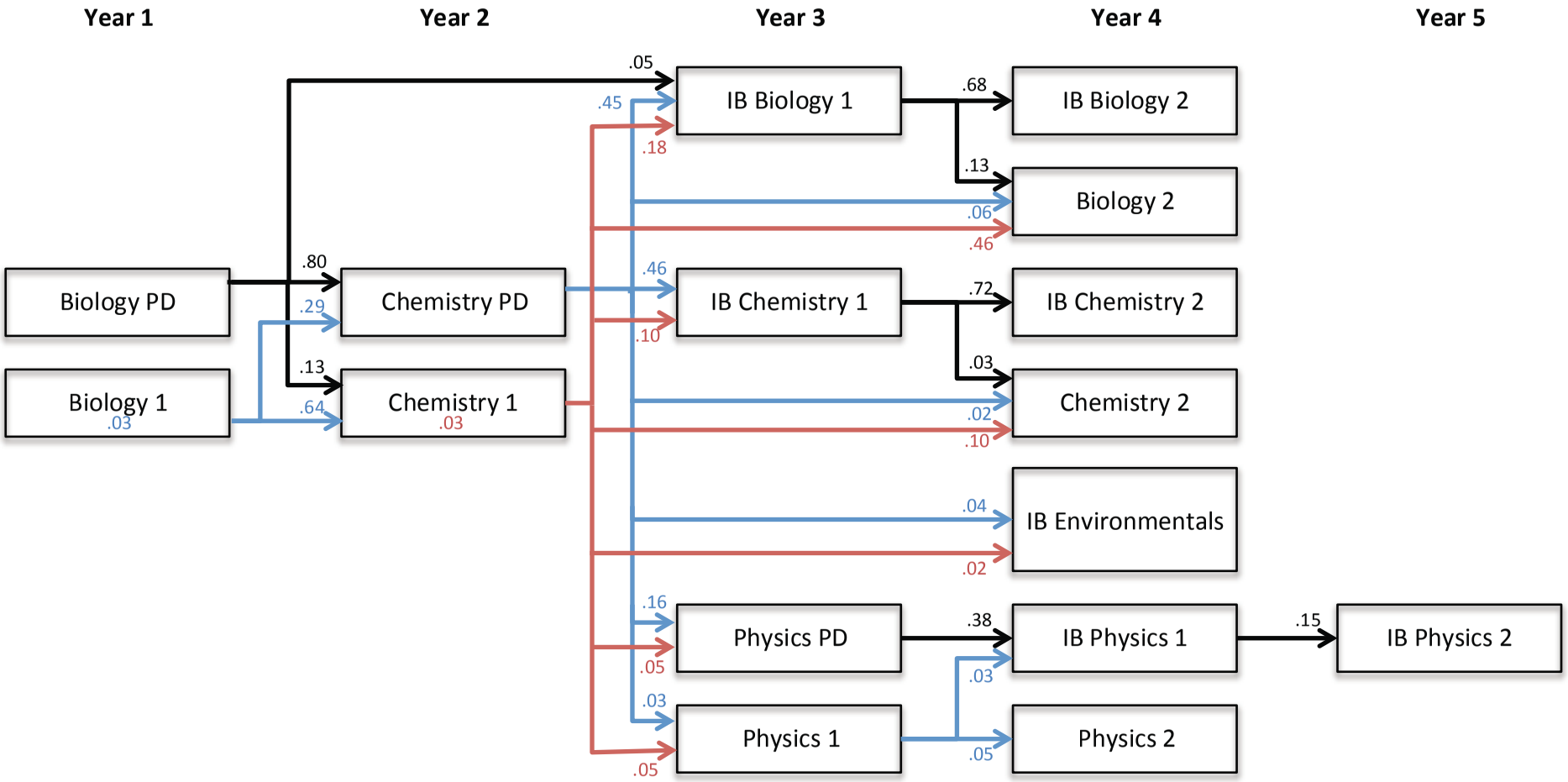
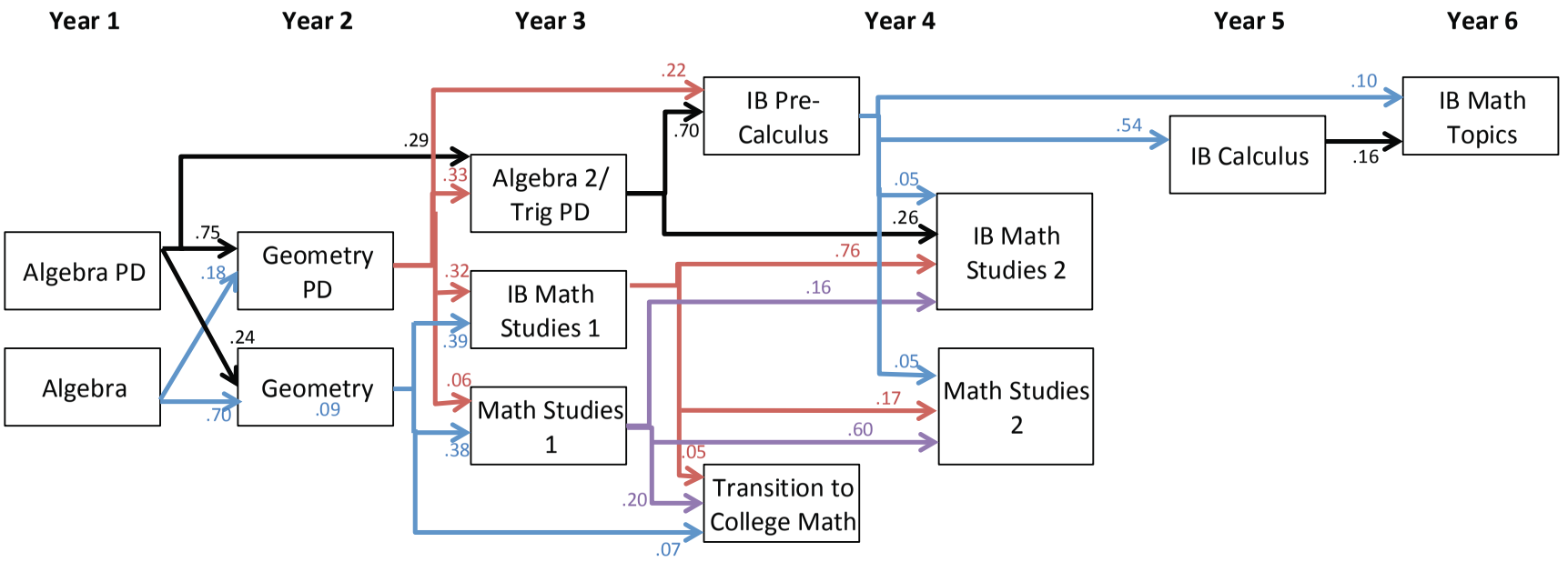


Figure 5-1c. Science coursetaking patterns, Class of 2011[29]



[29] For ease of understanding, this diagram does not display the probabilities associated with transitions between third- and fourth-year courses in different subjects – e.g., IB Biology 1 to Chemistry 2. These transition probabilities are displayed in Appendix H, Table H-4.

Figure 5-1d. Mathematics coursetaking patterns, Class of 2011[30]



[30] The math curriculum gives students two opportunities to 'double up' by taking two courses in one year: Geometry PD and Algebra 2/Trigonometry PD in the sophomore year, and/or IB Calculus and IB Math Topics in the senior year. Thus, the transition probabilities from a given course may add to more than 1, since, for instance, the 29% of Algebra PD students who continue to Algebra 2/Trigonometry PD in the next year are also among the 75% of students who continue to Geometry PD.

The mobility diagrams suggest that, in every department but social studies, initial coursetaking constrains a student's future options; in other words, the system offers limited opportunities for upward mobility. In English, more than 90% of freshmen who take American Authors PD continue on to British Authors PD, while 44% of freshmen who take English 9 Survey PD move up to the high-track class. Upward mobility is far rarer in the transition to junior year, however: 82% of British Authors PD students, compared to less than a quarter of those who take Thinking and Writing about Literature, enter IB English 1. Students who take low-track English classes as juniors, in turn, have no further opportunity to move into the IB curriculum as seniors, although a quarter of IB English 1 students drop down into regular-track senior classes. In world languages, the initial choice to take Spanish 1 Accelerated instead of Spanish 1 gives more than three-quarters of students the opportunity to move directly into Spanish 3, which in turn sends the majority of students to IB Spanish 1. In German and French, an unusually high percentage of students make the jump from regular-track fourth-year classes to second-year IB-level classes, although both of these programs are quite small. The science curriculum follows a similar pattern to English, although IB Biology 1 and IB Chemistry 1 are relatively accessible to students who take the low-track sophomore chemistry class. In the transition between third- and fourth-year classes, a minority of students move from IB to regular classes, while students who take regular-track classes typically move 'sideways' into another regular-track class or exit the science curriculum altogether.[31] In mathematics, enrollment in Algebra PD and Geometry PD significantly enhances a student's chances of staying in the top track or accelerating through the curriculum. By the third year of study, three distinct tracks are evident: most students in Algebra 2/Trigonometry PD continue to IB Pre-Calculus and then IB Calculus; students in IB Math Studies 1 typically complete IB Math Studies 2; and students in Math Studies 1 have very little chance of moving up to an IB course in the following year. Downward mobility remains an option at every turning point in the curriculum, but upward mobility is rare, even into the low-prestige IB Math Studies sequence. In short, after the sophomore year, coursetaking in most of Lincoln's academic departments strongly resembles Rosenbaum's (1976) tournament model:[32] students in each high-track class

[31] For the probabilities of lateral movements between regular-track science courses in different subjects, see Appendix H.

[32] It is worth noting that Lucas (1999) found similar levels of upward mobility – about 20% of the students in his sample who moved down a track in English and/or mathematics after the sophomore year went on to move up after the junior year – but

have a good chance to stay in the high track, but those who find themselves in low-track classes have little or no chance of upward mobility.

Conclusion

This chapter has established that Lincoln's curriculum is not just differentiated but also stratified. In addition to the formal distinctions between IB, pre-diploma, and regular courses described in Chapter 4, students and teachers draw further contrasts between courses based on their reputations. Such evaluations of a course's rigor are not merely objective educational assessments; they are deeply intertwined with judgments about each course's worth. The prevailing ideology at Lincoln holds that the school's central purpose is to provide a strong academic education, defined by the IB program; in this ideology, IB courses deserve their high status because they are academically demanding, while regular-track courses are 'fluff classes' whose lack of rigor threatens their claim to belong at Lincoln. Empirical evidence suggests that these stereotypes have some basis in fact: high-track classes enroll more 'desirable' students, as measured by attendance records, IB status, and academic achievement, and they tend to offer students more opportunity to learn high-status content in a more focused classroom environment. Over time, these differences crystallize into a clear tracking structure, suggesting that stereotypes about low-track courses are a self-fulfilling prophecy: in English, mathematics, and science, students enrolled in a low-track course are unlikely to move up to a high-track course, particularly after the sophomore year.

The evidence presented in this chapter, then, challenges the myth that Lincoln is a 'great equalizer', equipping all of its students with an equal chance to achieve upward mobility through higher education and professional success. In fact, Lincoln is a deeply stratified institution, with students' positions in the academic hierarchy determining both their worth, according to the school's value system, and their opportunities to learn. In keeping with previous research (Ball, 1980; Berends, 1995; Hargreaves, 1967; Lacey, 1970; MacLeod, 2009; Willis, 1977), we might expect low-achieving Lincoln students to

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concludes that his findings do not support the tournament metaphor. To be sure, these findings indicate greater mobility than Rosenbaum's (1976) results, which indicated that roughly 3% of students taking a non-college-track English class in the tenth grade moved to a college-track English class in the eleventh grade, whereas 21% of tenth-grade college-track students moved to the non-college track in the following year. Thus Lincoln's tracking structure does not follow the strict rules of a single-elimination tournament. Nonetheless, I have chosen to interpret these findings as evidence that upward mobility is constrained because they contradict Lincoln students' strong faith in equal opportunity at all stages in the tracking process.

reject their school's academically oriented value system, in light of their own limited prospects for upward educational and social mobility. Yet this is far from the case: in interviews, Lincoln students and teachers roundly express agreement with a local version of the meritocratic achievement ideology, repeatedly professing their faith that any student who works hard and persists at school can succeed in the IB. I explore this unlikely consensus in Chapter 6.

Chapter 6. The Lincoln Achievement Ideology

Despite the growing trend towards detracking in American public schools, Lincoln's curriculum is still a stratified system, in which distinctions of social status are attached to vertical curriculum differentiation. Given the popular belief that American schools ought to level the playing field for students from all backgrounds, this raises the question: why do students and teachers accept the obvious inequalities associated with Lincoln's academic and social hierarchy? The meritocratic ideology described in Chapter 2 offers one possible answer: inequality can be fair, even desirable, if each person's position in society follows from his or her individual merit. Thus, this chapter explores participants' beliefs about the basis for stratification and social mobility at Lincoln. I present the school's local version of the achievement ideology (Hochschild, 1995; MacLeod, 2009), which holds that any student, regardless of cognitive functioning or educational background, can and should achieve success in the IB program with sufficient hard work.[33] Students' explanations for their own coursetaking choices are largely consistent with this belief, suggesting that the achievement ideology leads students to accept and take responsibility for their own positions in the curricular hierarchy. This radical belief in equal opportunity *within* the school, in turn, allows participants to see Lincoln as a 'great equalizer' in the context of the larger society, since it provides a relatively disadvantaged group of students with ostensibly open access to a 'world-class' curriculum, which in turn facilitates upward social mobility. The achievement ideology, then, not only accepts that Lincoln's curriculum produces a stratified social system; it recasts this stratification as a force for social justice in the world beyond high school.

The Lincoln achievement ideology in theory: merit as effort

The definition of merit has long been central to debates about the existence and fairness of the meritocracy. Young defines merit as 'intelligence and effort together' (1958: 74), but his hypothetical meritocracy primarily sorts its citizens by IQ, a measure of innate intelligence. Bell (1973) stresses the role of education and technical skills but admits that intellect and motivation also play a part. Curriculum tracking also uses 'natural ability' as a major basis for sorting students; tracking became widespread as

[33] For the remainder of this thesis, I use the term 'achievement ideology' to refer to Lincoln participants' beliefs about mobility and opportunity, and 'mainstream achievement ideology' for the more general set of beliefs discussed in Chapter 2.

schools began to employ regular IQ testing (Kliebard, 1986), allowing them to sort out university-bound students from those better suited to vocational or technical education (Lucas, 1999; Oakes, 2005). The IB, too, owes much of its popularity in US national schools to early advocates who touted the Diploma Programme's benefits for a lucky minority of 'gifted and talented' students (see, e.g., Mulhern and Ward, 1985; Nugent and Karnes, 2002; Passow, 1986; Poelzer and Feldhusen, 1997; Tookey, 2000; Webb, 1981). Thus, we might reasonably expect some concept of cognitive capacity or prior academic achievement to figure prominently in Lincoln participants' view of their own sorting system.

In fact, this is far from the case: nearly every student and teacher I interviewed explicitly denies that intellect or any other ascribed trait plays a deciding role in students' prospects for curricular mobility. Most participants do acknowledge that a few students, especially those with special educational needs, simply lack the academic skills to do well at Lincoln. However, for the vast majority of Lincoln students, willingness to work hard is the fundamental quality that distinguishes whether a student will go full IB and therefore earn the title of 'good student'. Moreover, completing the work required for IB success is primarily a question of time and diligence. IB classes may teach more complex concepts, but the intellectual tasks they demand are not so difficult that the average Lincoln student cannot complete them by simply devoting most of her time to schoolwork, especially if persistence, not mastery, is the mark of success. Students and teachers cite other qualities necessary for IB success – basic study skills, a willingness to sacrifice other activities in favor of school – but these all follow from the central assertion that hard work is the key to academic success, where academic success means persisting as a full IB student.

Innate academic ability

Despite the centrality of individual effort in the achievement ideology, most students and teachers do acknowledge that a certain minimum level of academic competence is required for a student to succeed in the IB. A few define this in terms of 'native' intellectual ability, an immutable quality that schools can build on but not modify; teachers most frequently mention mathematical reasoning skills in this context. Others refer to prior academic preparation, placing responsibility on the student's previous teachers and schools. Most teachers are reluctant to reduce students' academic performance solely to a question of heredity but nonetheless view ability as beyond the school's control. A science teacher's statement illustrates this point nicely:

> They want to have all kids take [IB] chemistry, and with the low math level abilities, I just see that as a recipe for disaster… I'm not saying people's brains are smaller than anybody else's. I think there's a capacity – and a lot of it is due to environmental conditions leading up to high school – but there is a capacity that kids have for specific subjects and for school. And saying that they all can do it without a lot of scaffolding leading up to it… that just doesn't add up.

Students mention this prerequisite for success less frequently than their teachers do, but some interview data – particularly the occasional suggestion that special education students would probably be unable to manage a full IB courseload – suggest that students agree that some minimum level of academic capability is necessary. The important point is that when a student arrives at Lincoln, whether by nature or by nurture, the die is cast: there is little more the school can do to help him or her achieve this baseline competence.

While most teachers and students agree that there is some level of achievement below which a student's failure in IB is almost certain, they are less precise about what that level is. A few participants offer obvious examples of disqualifying conditions. The principal, for instance, answers his own rhetorical question: "Can you take a third grade student, somebody at a third grade level of education, and bring them here and make them full IB? For sure, no." Faculty also argue that most special education students simply lack the cognitive abilities to handle IB courses, although they make exceptions for specific disabilities like sight and hearing impairments. References to specific skills offer a more helpful description of baseline academic competence. English and social studies teachers commonly mention reading and writing skills as essential for their courses. A guidance counselor says her approach in scheduling students is to provide a firm foundation of skills in the freshman and sophomore years to equip students for success as upperclassmen: "I truly believe that if they get those strong basics – basic algebra, basic geometry – they can be successful on future courses." However, even these descriptions generally offer only the suggestion that the ideal IB student should be 'at grade level' or 'average', and teachers tend to err on the side of inclusiveness in employing them. This lack of specificity perhaps reflects the difficulty of precisely measuring academic achievement, but it also underscores the ubiquity of the belief that the IB is accessible to students with a wide range of academic capacities and backgrounds, at least to the extent that ability varies in Lincoln's current population.

The centrality of hard work

As I conducted interviews, I was surprised to hear students and teachers confidently tell me that hard work is the single most important behavior of an IB diploma candidate. When I pointed out the ubiquity of this belief to participants later in the research process, they generally contemplated this statement for a moment and then expressed their own agreement, suggesting that this belief is generally accepted but rarely stated. Interestingly, the centrality of hard work to the achievement ideology seems to have gained widespread acceptance at Lincoln even though there is no evident effort to transmit this belief. Students' and teachers' faith in the power of hard work holds that individual effort is the most important key to success in the IB, that the commitment of time is the principal characteristic of effort, that efficient study behaviors help minimize the IB's demands on a student's time, and that the underlying attitude that 'school comes first' guides successful full IB students in resolving conflicts between their schoolwork and other obligations.

Hard work is by far the most common theme in teachers' and students' descriptions of what the IB requires. A recent graduate describes his IB experience as "sleepless nights, those all-nighters, stressing during tests". A senior describes being full IB as "a lot of work. Like, long nights, headaches – oh, my God. It's a lot." A senior certificate student taking a full load of IB classes explains how the heavy workload made it difficult for him to make the transition to junior year:

> I would have to say the work is harder, and probably there's a lot more of it, just compared to freshman and sophomore year… It's higher level. They're trying to prep you for college… So not only are you reading things that are probably collegiate documents, but you have seven other classes, and this and that, and IB requirements… It was just a lot to handle.

Students frequently mention the amount of work as the most important disadvantage of doing the IB. One full IB junior describes a moment of doubt about whether to remain a diploma candidate: "I had so much homework, and there was one night where I was just like, oh my God, do I really want to do this for the rest of the semester, and then next semester, and the semester after that?" A sophomore, still undecided about whether to go full IB, seems hesitant about signing up for what she sees as a heavy workload: "It depends on the teacher, but it seems like it would be a lot [of work]." This perception of the IB as requiring a great deal of work is nearly universal among Lincoln students, and even those who find the IB manageable tend to acknowledge the ubiquity of this perception in the same breath.

In most participants' eyes, hard work is not just necessary but also sufficient for IB success: they explicitly state that hard work is much more important than other qualities and behaviors. In particular, hard work can even compensate for limited 'native intellect'.[34] A prospective full IB sophomore states this point straightforwardly:

> I feel that anyone who wants to do the IB program can do the IB program. I don't think that it has to do with, like, mental capacity. I think it has to do with that if they apply themselves, they can do anything that they want to.

Many claim that hard work is more important than talent for school in their own IB success. A full IB senior says that IB classes are "not hard. I mean, I'm not the smart – I'm not gonna be Einstein one day, or John Keynes, for that matter. Though I'd like to be. But you don't need to be a genius at all to survive IB." Others point to peers who have persisted in IB courses to prove this point. Another full IB senior cites an example: "Like, just the other day, this girl told me she was full IB, and I'm just like, 'What? You are not smart.'… So I think for some people, if they just try, they can do well." In keeping with this sentiment, most students believe that any Lincoln student can do the IB if they just work hard enough. The IB is thus not reserved for an elite group of talented students; instead, most students believe that almost any student at Lincoln can succeed in the diploma program, as long as he or she has the will to do the necessary work.

Teachers express a similar view of what the IB takes, making reference to two related concepts: *work ethic*, the quality of consistently putting in the basic effort needed to fulfill requirements, and *persistence*, the quality of persevering in the face of obstacles.

[34] The concept of innate ability or intellect is, of course, deeply problematic. Research in psychology has raised serious questions about whether there is such a thing as general intelligence, or 'ability to learn'; whether it can be reliably measured; whether it is determined by hereditary or environmental factors, or by a combination of both; and whether it exerts a determinative influence on school success or life chances. These questions, of course, extend well beyond the scope of this project. (For overviews, see Deary, 2012; Reeve and Bonaccio, 2011.) However, the frequency with which Lincoln participants draw a contrast between the influences of 'working hard' and 'being smart' suggests that popular notions of innate intelligence do play a central role in the school's achievement ideology, and so problematic terms like 'ability' and 'aptitude' inevitably recur in this thesis. By using these terms, I do not intend to uncritically endorse the concept of general intelligence, but rather to point out the most commonly dismissed explanation for why some students persist in the IB and others do not. This is particularly appropriate in light of the large body of literature which suggests or assumes that the IB is best suited to a small minority of 'gifted and talented' students (see, e.g., Callahan, 2003; Kyburg, 2006; Kyburg, Hertberg-Davis, and Callahan 2007; Mulhern and Ward, 1985; Nugent and Karnes, 2002; Passow, 1986; Poelzer and Feldhusen, 1997; Shaunessy and Suldo, 2010; Tookey, 2000; Webb, 1981).

Persistence can allow students with average academic abilities to succeed, while an insufficient work ethic can jeopardize the success of even the most capable students. Insufficient work ethic tends to figure prominently in teachers' explanations for why students fail their classes. One social studies teacher's definitive assertion of this view is notable, since his department's requirement that every Lincoln junior take an IB social studies class makes deficits in academic skills a more plausible explanation for course failures:

> Failures in [IB social studies] classes often have a lot to do with the unwillingness to do the requisite work, the requisite assignments, study for the tests, turn in the paper. It is primarily those kinds of things. Teachers in the social studies department are the kind of people who go out of their way if someone's going to meet them halfway. So that, probably more than anything, would be the reason why they're failing. They don't do the work. They don't do the assignments. They don't do the paper. They don't study. And they fail the tests, they don't turn the assignments in, the teacher goes, what am I going to do?

Implicit in this conception of effort is the message that, although getting into Lincoln may signal above-average academic achievement, students should not rest on their laurels. One art teacher describes a "sense of entitlement" in some IB students: "I got into Lincoln, I don't have to work now, give me my A." One of his colleagues offers a simple response to these students: "I tell them, people who don't read are not superior to those who can't read." Working hard is thus both a functional prerequisite to school success and a moral value that distinguishes the ideal IB student from his clever but lazy classmates – a view very similar to Turner's (1960) assertion that effort is a greater moral good than talent in a society governed by the contest norm. A social studies teacher puts this point bluntly: "If you don't pass Global [an IB junior history class], it's 'cause you're lazy."

If work ethic is the quality missing in students who have the potential to achieve at high levels but fail to do so, then persistence is the admirable trait of those who have to work especially hard to manage the demands of the IB. Teachers often praise students who stay engaged in IB classes despite having average or mediocre academic skill sets. For these students, IB work is more frustrating, and the temptation to give up and drop to lower-track classes is greater. A teacher describes this tendency in her IB Literature 2 class, echoing the view that IB participation is more important than good exam scores:

> There are the kids who are just gonna get straight A's, and they bring the conversation up to, I don't know, a level that probably wouldn't – you know, we wouldn't have this conversation if we didn't have these kids in the class. And then there are the kids who are saying – scratching their

> head, saying, 'What in the world is that kid saying?', you know. But they still have that drive that I talked about, and the motivation to be there and just try to do well, and that's what gets them through. They may not get a very good score on their IB English exam. They may not do very well on their [IB oral examinations]. But they're doing it.

In part, teachers value persistence because it leads to better academic results: several expressed the view that a mediocre grade in an IB class still reflects more learning and growth than an A in a 'fluff' elective. However, they also value persistence in its own right. Many teachers express pride in students who ultimately do not attain an IB diploma, on the grounds that they have admirably persevered and challenged themselves. One teacher describes a former advisee who ultimately did not earn his diploma: "I look at his extended essay compared to the other three that I had that year. It was very low; it was very weak. But the thing is, I'm so proud of him for going through it." This points to an important feature of the value system in place at Lincoln: hard work, especially in the face of obstacles, is both intrinsically valuable and an effective way of achieving academic goals.

The principal characteristic of the hard work required of a diploma candidate, in students' eyes, is that it takes a great deal of time. To be sure, hard work can sometimes refer to difficulty: as Chapter 5 demonstrated, work in IB classes tends to require more complex cognitive tasks, such as analysis and synthesis, compared to the more factually oriented tasks common in low-track classes. More often, though, 'hard work' simply means 'more work'. Success as an IB student, then, is largely a matter of putting in the required hours, both in and out of class. A sophomore summarizes this point: "It's not the fact that it's hard. It's the fact that it's just a lot of work, and it's really time-consuming." While this student is ready, even eager, to shoulder the burden of IB, not all Lincoln students are: heavy workload sometimes encourages students to avoid or consider dropping full IB. A junior who opted for certificate status because she feared the difficulty of IB classes nonetheless describes her homework as manageable:

> My IB classes. They're okay. They're not difficult. You have to pay attention, do your work. The IB classes, they give you more homework than the regular classes, but as a whole, they're pretty much the same. It's like, you have to pay attention, you have to get your work done. It's like – some people say it's hard, but it's not. I say if you pay attention and do the work that the teacher gives you, you'll pretty much be fine.

Even if IB-level work is more intellectually demanding, students believe, these cognitive tasks are manageable for the average Lincoln student. The 'hard work' required by IB classes is more a matter of quantity and consistency – following directions, studying for

exams, and handing in homework – than of difficulty or complexity. Several students believe that in order to go full IB, a student must simply be willing to "take the time", in one recent graduate's words. A full IB senior says that whether a student becomes a diploma candidate "depends on how much time you can devote to it". Many diploma candidates half-jokingly mention sleep deprivation as a cost of being full IB. In this view, time, not cognitive effort, is the most important resource required for a student to succeed in IB classes.

Managing the demands of the IB

Students and teachers also list a variety of other characteristics that they deem necessary for the successful full IB student. Given the centrality of 'putting in hours' to the achievement ideology, these characteristics are best understood as aspects of working hard. These secondary traits fall into two broad categories: *behaviors* that students use to minimize the demands of school on their time and *orientations* that guide students in making choices that support academic success.

Some traits help a student minimize the demands of school on his time by 'working smart': exercising concrete skills that help students achieve the best academic results in the least time possible. One full IB junior's hypothetical advice to younger students sums this point up neatly: "Organization, definitely. Manage your time wisely, and know which classes are important enough to do your homework at that time. And not procrastinating. And then you'll be good." Several students share time management strategies, ranging from doing homework in free time during the school day (or in classes perceived as less important) to carefully scheduling work on assignments and major projects. Many students warn against procrastination, while admitting that they themselves sometimes fail to follow this sensible recommendation. A few mention basic study skills, such as staying focused, paying attention, and taking notes. In classes and in interviews, teachers also frequently underscore the importance of organizational skills and time management. These capacities are undoubtedly important, but in keeping with the view that quantity, not difficulty, distinguishes IB work, they are in principle accessible to all students, regardless of prior academic achievement.

A few teachers point to even more basic skills, which collectively form the rules of what they call the 'game' of school: sitting quietly, following directions, making eye contact, and otherwise communicating respect in the conventional language of the traditional high school. For some teachers, the ability to play this game is more important

than academic skills, at least above the baseline required for success in the IB. One English teacher argues:

> It's not about academic ability. Right? It's about, can you go to school and play this game. Can you, six to seven times a day, play the game that's in front of you? Yes, I have my book. Yes, I will write on looseleaf paper. Yes, I will stay in my seat. Yes, I will get out of my seat and go work with her. Yes, I will do this homework so I can turn it in promptly.

These skills and behaviors are not particularly complex, nor are they necessarily connected to academic skill levels: a few teachers acknowledge examples of students with obvious talent for school whose inability or unwillingness to 'play the game' negatively affects their grades. Yet schools tend to reward students for having these traits, even though they are not explicitly taught in school. One teacher alludes to this point in describing a former student whose learning skills alone enabled him to go full IB:

> John admits, he's like, 'I am not the smartest guy in the world.' But he's like, 'But I'm organized, I know how to manage my time, and I know how to do the right things to learn. I learn those study skills.' So he knew about going to class every day and taking notes. I mean, these are things that seem like, duh, to educated women like us. But to some kids, they've not had that background. They've not had a teacher teach them how to take notes. And then how do we get that kid to go full IB?

These traits are similar to the idea of fluency in the language of the dominant culture in cultural competence theory, which also raises a troubling point: insofar as the rules of the 'game of school' overlap with the cultural practices of the white middle class, students from a different cultural background face a competitive disadvantage, and the school almost never explicitly assists them in learning the cultural capital that other students acquire effortlessly at home (Carter, 2003, 2005; Cornbleth, 2008; Delpit, 1988, 1998; Sleeter, 1995).

Whether defined as basic study skills or the 'game of school', these behaviors help students manage the IB by reducing the amount of their time that schoolwork consumes. However, even when these strategies are employed to maximum effect, a full IB student's schoolwork will sometimes conflict with other obligations: a sport, an extracurricular activity, or a paid job. In the event of such conflicts, students roundly agree, successful full IB students must attend to school first. Sometimes, concrete obligations must be minimized or sacrificed to make room for schoolwork. In particular, full IB students often mention the difficulty of finding time for a varsity sport – which generally requires at least ten hours of practice per week, in addition to competitions – or part-time employment. Students also face the challenge of balancing schoolwork with the social activities that many see as an integral part of being a normal teenager. Many

students are clearly willing to put school first, but some turn away from the IB because they believe it will require them to make too many sacrifices in other areas of life. One senior certificate student speaks for many of her classmates when she says, "I just didn't think I would have a life."

Teachers, too, emphasize the necessity of putting school before other activities. An art teacher notes that going full IB comes at the cost of some parts of the typical American adolescent experience:

> I think the difficulty is, if you want to be that successful, you're going to have to sacrifice certain things in your life as a teenager… I believe you have to sacrifice some of the hours spent on social networking experiences, some of the hours on hanging out with friends and shopping the malls. And perhaps sacrificing hours of sleep that other kids might be getting.

This teacher's comments hint that being full IB also comes at the psychological cost of being different from other teenagers. Thus, diploma candidates must prioritize school over the other concrete demands on their time – jobs, family responsibilities, membership in clubs and teams – and they must also prize academic success over the social status that comes with being 'normal'.

The necessity of putting school first also gives rise to the most widely recognized exception to the achievement ideology's promise of equal opportunity: students and teachers generally agree that students from very low-income families may justifiably choose low-track courses because they need to devote a significant amount of their time to paid employment. The IB coordinator cites this as a common rationale for students dropping diploma candidate status: "I've got a job, I'm earning money, and… I can't even use these college credits [from taking IB exams] if I don't have enough money for some tuition." A full IB senior speculates that "non-IB [students]… have a lot of jobs to look over, they're supporting their families, so you can't spend that many hours doing homework a day – it's unreasonable." A certificate student who classifies himself as low-income echoes this logic: "With such a high demand the full IB wants you to do, you know, with the extended [essay], the CAS, and whatnot, those who are, usually, not middle class or have financial problems end up finding themselves too stressed on a full IB track, so they either end up dropping, or they just don't go for it, because they know, oh, I can't afford this." A few participants also acknowledge that the fees associated with

IB exams, which amounted to roughly $375 for a diploma candidate in 2012,[35] might deter some students from going full IB. The school offers a deferred-payment plan for students eligible for subsidized school meals, but very little money is available to defray individual students' exam fees. In these limited circumstances, participants generally agree, a student's decision to take low-track classes might result from necessity rather than insufficient willpower. However, many of the full IB students I interviewed also held part-time jobs, suggesting that the need to work is not necessarily regarded as an insurmountable obstacle to academic success.

The achievement ideology in practice: students' coursetaking decisions

In keeping with the principles of the Lincoln achievement ideology, students generally explain their own coursetaking decisions in terms of their willingness to work hard. Despite the clear evidence presented in Chapter 5 that *de facto* tracks exist in most academic subjects, there are few *formal* barriers to movement between tracks, and students generally believe that they are primarily responsible for choosing their schedules. Intellectual challenge, interestingly, features in very few students' descriptions of how they chose their classes. Instead, most students conceptualize their decisions in terms of effort, either claiming that they seek out hard work for its own sake or describing a rational weighing of costs against benefits.

Free choice in the course selection process

At Lincoln, consumer choice remains as important as it was in the 'shopping mall high school' that entered public discourse nearly three decades ago (Powell, Farrar, and Cohen, 1985). Lincoln students select from a much smaller range of courses than the vast array of academic, vocational, and commercial offerings described by Powell, Farrar, and Cohen, but students are still the most important actors in determining their own course schedules, because they have the initial responsibility for proposing their schedule for each academic year. In theory, teachers must approve or deny a student entry into most advanced courses; in practice, many adopt such a liberal approach to this duty that they do not perform any gatekeeping function at all. Parents can sometimes secure higher course placements for their children by intervening with teachers or guidance counselors, but their formal role is limited to signing the course selection form. Finally,

[35] Funding from the state covers half of the total IB and Advanced Placement exam fees for SPS students; the typical diploma candidate is liable for a further $375 in fees after this subsidy is taken into account.

while the guidance department controls the course selection process, limitations on time and resources make it very difficult for counselors to offer personal advice to students with any degree of regularity.

The scheduling process begins midway through the spring, when current freshmen, sophomores, and juniors receive a printed course selection guide and a form listing their course options for the next year. The course booklet contains a paragraph-long description of every class to be offered in the next year, along with any prerequisites for enrolling in that course.[36] The most common prerequisites are satisfactory completion of one or more related lower-level courses and the consent of a current or potential instructor; a few courses are restricted to students in a particular year of schooling. Only the mathematics department maintains specific grade requirements for entry into advanced courses. Students fill out the course selection forms, obtain signatures from parents and from teachers whose agreement is a prerequisite for enrollment, and submit the forms to their guidance counselor. Sophomores planning to go full IB instead register for their junior year courses with the IB coordinator, who works with them to fill out a four-year plan for fulfilling all diploma requirements. The process is similar for current eighth-graders. Guidance counselors visit most of the district's middle schools to discuss scheduling with incoming freshmen. These students' choices dictate their schedules, with a notable exception: the default first-year math course is Algebra, and students must pass an additional placement test to enroll in Algebra PD or Geometry PD. The guidance department sometimes changes a student's course load for logistical reasons, but counselors do not systematically attempt to evaluate whether students have made appropriate course selections.

In principle, this system includes many points at which students might receive advice from teachers and counselors, especially if they opt for a large number of higher-level courses with prerequisites. In practice, however, most students choose courses with minimal input from adults. In interviews, very few students mention seeking or receiving advice from teachers or guidance counselors in the course selection process. From the faculty's perspective, severe limitations on time and resources explain much of this lack of interaction. The guidance department employs only four counselors for over 1,500 students, making it virtually impossible for counselors to dedicate significant attention to each individual student. Large class sizes and limited free time impose similar constraints on teachers' availability for advising students. In addition, most teachers are reluctant to

[36] See Appendix F for a map of prescribed coursetaking paths and prerequisites.

withhold approval to enroll in high-level courses from even their weakest students, for fear of prematurely closing off options to students who could well turn around their performance. As one science teacher puts it:

> No is such a hard word! … What'll end up happening is, I'll sign it, and I'll say, you know, I'm gonna sign this, but I want you to think about what – I mean, I'll never say no. Because I think that a student can – they change, and you don't know what's gonna happen. And the question then becomes, is it really a factor of them not understanding the material in my class, is it a factor of them being lazy – there's just all these different things. So I don't think I've ever said no.

With the exception of one senior, who implied that the IB coordinator urged him to drop IB Computers 1 after he failed the first-semester exam, no student I interviewed could recall a teacher rejecting his or her request to enroll in a high-track course.

Finally, even when students do not meet prerequisites or obtain the teacher's consent, students can sometimes enroll in a course by means of forgery or, more commonly, parental intervention. Guidance counselors told me that they usually acquiesced to parents' requests that their children be placed in high-track classes, and most teachers were well aware that their own recommendations were not final. Even in the math department, which is the only one in the school to set out performance-based guidelines governing which students can enroll in which courses, one teacher notes that students who earn low grades in his regular algebra class sometimes end up continuing to pre-diploma geometry, and sometimes Algebra 2 as well – a significant increase in difficulty from algebra – "because their parents probably think they're geniuses". A few teachers say that, over the course of their time at Lincoln, their growing awareness of this practice has led them to become more lenient in approving students for entry into high-track courses, knowing that the guidance department can override their recommendation. In short, the system of prerequisites does not in practice work to constrain course options, especially for savvy students with parents who are willing to lobby the school on their behalf.

Instead, Lincoln's course selection process confers an advantage on those students who exercise the virtues most prized in the achievement ideology – initiative, persistence, and individual effort. At all points in the course selection process, the onus is on the student to opt for a more difficult course, make sure he or she has fulfilled the prerequisites, and obtain teachers' signatures. These efforts may seem minor, but

especially from the perspective of an adolescent, they can be daunting. One senior explains his decision to take regular algebra as a freshman on the grounds that "I didn't feel like coming to the second day [for placement testing]… it was hard getting to Lincoln, you know." Initiative is doubly important for students seeking to jump up to the high track, who must break with the expected course of action for students in their current track location, seek approval from teachers who are more likely to be skeptical of their desire to move up, and perhaps go 'outside the system' by seeking parental intervention with the guidance department. Students who set long-range goals and make long-range coursetaking plans early in their high school careers also have an advantage, since taking accelerated courses in subjects like math and Spanish helps students gain access to advanced courses in the future. Informed and interested parents, of course, can help ambitious students achieve their desired schedules, and they sometimes push students into more demanding courses than they would choose for themselves. However, this level of parental involvement is by no means guaranteed to all students at Lincoln, making individual initiative especially important for students whose parents do not or cannot take an active interest in their children's course choices. It bears repeating that attributes like initiative, persistence, and foresight, while valuable, are essentially non-academic. In granting their approval for students to enroll in more advanced courses, teachers could potentially introduce a more systematic evaluation of students' academic potential into the process, but this is not the case in practice, thanks to the ease of circumventing teachers' gatekeeping role and the widespread belief that turning students away from high-level courses is unfair or futile. Thus, the course selection process partially fulfills the achievement ideology's prophecy that non-academic attitudes are the primary determinant of individual success. Students' rationales for their course choices offer further evidence of the primacy of effort in Lincoln's tracking system.

Learning

If the IB's high status at Lincoln is rooted in its presumed academic superiority, we might reasonably expect that the possibility of intellectual growth should draw a large number of Lincoln students to IB classes. In fact, only five of the students I interviewed indicated that a desire to learn more or explore content in greater depth had any bearing on their course choices. One senior who repeatedly affirms that "I love learning" actually chose certificate status because it would allow him to take more HL classes. Three others cite a general desire to "learn more" alongside other reasons in explaining why they

became diploma candidates. A freshman echoes this rationale, but she sounds less than completely convinced:

> EL: What do you think you're gonna get out of being full IB? What are the benefits?
>
> S: Um, like, I guess you learn more. I don't know why you [inaudible] learn more.
>
> EL: Anything in particular that you think you'd learn there?
>
> S: Um, I don't know. Like, [it] prepares you for college, so whatever you want to be when you, when you graduate. And it'll prepare you for that.

The IB's specific promise to teach global perspectives also has little impact on students. Three mention the possibility of developing international and intercultural perspectives as an incentive to take IB classes in its own right; several others make reference to the more instrumental benefit of facilitating international mobility after high school. (Interestingly, the one student with definite ambitions to attend university outside of the US, a sophomore at the time of our interview, had not previously considered that an IB diploma might help her achieve this goal.) Thus, although students commonly acknowledge academic rigor when describing the IB in the abstract, they do not appear to consider this characteristic when they make their own course-taking decisions.

Similarly, despite the language of rigor and difficulty that suffuses official presentations of IB courses, few students claim to have measured themselves against this standard when choosing courses. Of the handful of students who evaluate their own academic achievement at all, only one makes a direct link to her course choices. As a senior, this student is taking IB Biology 1, American Ethnic Literature, Transition to College Math, three non-academic electives, and a study hall,[37] giving her the easiest schedule of all the students I interviewed. She followed her three older sisters to Lincoln, and she attributes many of her course choices to their advice about which teachers are easier: "My sister's like, oh, this class is really hard, or this class is easy. I'm not gonna lie – I think my sisters are smarter than me, so they kind of know, like, mmm-kay, well, that's not gonna work out." When she did ignore their advice and take IB Biology, she says, "I didn't do so well". She repeatedly denigrates her own school performance: "I never do good on tests"; "I suck at math, I always have"; "Other people's ideas are so elaborate, and mine are just like, 'Oh, it's this, I think'." At the same time, she reflects that she could have done better even in difficult classes like IB Geography if she had

[37] A study hall is a free period during which students are usually expected to read or work silently. At Lincoln, students who are taking fewer than seven classes in a semester must attend study hall daily, but they do not receive credit for attending.

only studied more. Even for the student with the most frankly negative evaluation of her own cognitive abilities, then, effort still plays an important role in school success. Compared to this senior, most students give much more weight to the effort side of the equation. A sophomore's comments are more typical: "I just think you need to be organized [to go full IB]… I don't think I'm that smart, and I've had a [4.0] since fourth grade. I just do my work, and I know how to persuade teachers." At minimum, for Lincoln students, the willingness to work hard is the most important precondition for success in the IB; for some, the work demanded by IB classes is actually a sufficient reason to take them.

Work

Given the ubiquity of the belief that hard work is central to Lincoln's IB program, it is unsurprising that difficulty, defined primarily in terms of time commitment, features prominently in most students' explanations of how they have chosen their courses. Predictably, many certificate students shy away from going full IB because of the tremendous time commitment they believe it requires. More surprising, the difficulty of the IB – independent of its benefits in terms of learning or college credit – seems to attract quite a few students to the program. Many full IB students explain their decisions using some variation on the phrase, "I always try to challenge myself". Some students simply characterize the IB as 'the best': "my goal in life [is to] get the best education possible"; "I want to do the best I can"; "I just feel like I'm going above and beyond." A full IB senior took pre-diploma classes simply because they were more challenging, not necessarily because she wanted the IB diploma. One student who dropped full IB even suggests that the fact of having challenged herself made it worthwhile: "At least I tried doing the TOK, at least I tried doing the extended essay, at least I tried taking all IB classes, you know? So it was kind of worth it to do it." With striking consistency, these 'challenge-taking' students praise the IB's difficulty without making any reference to the possibility of learning more; they imply that working hard is a reward in its own right, regardless of the payoffs in terms of intellectual growth or educational credentials.

For these students, going full IB is less a conscious decision than the inevitable result of an immutable personality trait. Many say that they have always been perfectionists, or that seeking good grades and difficult academic work is an intrinsic part of their personality. Some students draw particularly telling contrasts between themselves and peers who opt for easier course schedules. A few express confusion about why

anyone would go to Lincoln and not become a diploma candidate. A recent graduate explains, "You have people who just wanted to skate by… I was never like that. I wanted to challenge myself. That's what the IB program offered for me." This explanation points to another salient feature of the challenge rationale: these self-identified perfectionists usually recognize that other students might have legitimate reasons for choosing certificate status, but they make it very clear that, for them, 'skating by' in low-track classes is unacceptable.

Certificate students, too, generally accept the underlying premise that anyone who works hard enough can go full IB. Indeed, a few students explicitly point to this in explaining why they chose some low-track classes. One senior enrolled in four IB classes says:

> [Full IB students], they're pretty determined. They know exactly what they want to do, they know that they can benefit from it and they can take on that task. And speaking for myself, I'm determined, but I just don't want to – I challenge myself, but I wouldn't challenge myself too hard to that degree.

Another senior certificate student explains his decision in terms of declining a challenge: "If I really pushed myself to do [full IB], I think I could have. But I never really told myself, like, that's something that you need to do. So it was something that I never really went for." Unlike 'anti-school' groups like MacLeod's Hallway Hangers (2009) or Willis' 'lads' (1977), these students do not necessarily believe that exerting effort in school is futile or that the deck is stacked against them. Instead, they accept the underlying logic of the achievement ideology and simply decline its offer of academic success in exchange for hard work.

While a few students cite work *per se* as a reason not to take IB classes, most describe specific sacrifices that they are unwilling to make in exchange for an IB diploma. These sacrifices fall into three broad categories: specific extracurricular activities, the general concept of a 'social life', and grades. Specific activities, most commonly sports and paid work, trade off with the IB because they consume large quantities of time. A teacher points out that sports, especially for students who play on both school and club teams, consume a tremendous amount of time: "They'll leave school, and then in the off-season… they practice or have games from 7 to 10:30 at night, and then they have to be back up at 6, 6:30 in the morning." Varsity athletes usually practice for two hours every day after school, in addition to competitions and off-season training. Paid employment can also take up much of a student's free time. In one extraordinary case, a student dropped full IB as a junior because she worked at two jobs from 4:30 PM to 2 AM every

day to support her family. This is an extreme circumstance, but quite a few Lincoln students work up to twenty hours per week to earn spending money, supplement their family's income, or save for college. These commitments deter many students from ever going full IB. Others attempt to combine the IB with other activities but eventually find that they cannot manage both: of the 93 written requests to drop full IB status provided to me by the IB coordinator, 12 mention a job, and four more cite other specific commitments, like family or church responsibilities. The conflict is by no means universal; most full IB students play sports or participate in school clubs, and indeed the CAS requirement forces diploma candidates to pursue interests other than schoolwork. Nonetheless, many students avoid the workload and extra requirements associated with the IB in order to dedicate time to work, sports, and other activities.

Other students who shy away from the time commitment required by the IB hint at a less well-defined alternative priority: their desire to have what they consider a 'normal' social life. As part of the discourse of 'IB talk', students frequently repeat the conventional wisdom that being full IB and 'having a life' are mutually exclusive. One senior says that certificate status allows him to balance academic rigor with a social life: "It gave me that leisure time, but still gave me that academic responsibility that I needed." A junior taking two IB classes recalls the impression that full IB students have "no free time at all" and "can't really mess around… there's no freedom allowed". Another senior simply says, "I just was scared. Like, full IB – I just didn't think I would have a life." One student writes on her drop form that she simply wants the "freedom to be a teenager". These students choose socializing with their friends – and the attendant sense of being a normal adolescent – over what they view as the deferred gratification offered by the IB. By contrast, full IB students must either work consciously to build time for socializing into their schedule or sacrifice some amount of purely social activity. Importantly, being full IB and having a social life need not be mutually exclusive, despite the popular cliché that IB students 'have no life'; several diploma candidates say they are quite satisfied with their social life, and many of them are obviously popular with other students, judging by their interactions in school. In contrast to the predictions of oppositional culture theory, IB classes demand social sacrifices not because being an IB student is an unpopular trait in its own right, but rather because schoolwork and CAS hours consume time that could otherwise be spent socializing with friends.

Finally, some students who start their junior years as diploma candidates find that they simply cannot handle the workload of the IB alone, particularly when CAS and the

extended essay are included. For these students, rigor trades off with success, as measured by grades. As the IB coordinator points out, students tend to see falling grades as a more immediate problem than an easy schedule: "We have students who drop because they have low GPAs, and their parents are saying, quite wisely, it's great to be full diploma and all of that, [but] no college is going to look at you with a 2.3." Understandably, very few students mentioned concern about their falling grades in face-to-face interviews, but their written requests to drop full diploma status are more candid: 27 of 93 mention declining grades as a reason for dropping. Four of these forms also indicate the student's hope to improve his or her odds of college admission by raising his or her grades. One student's explanation represents this logic well: "I wish to get my grades up and succeed in a standard class [rather] than fail in an IB class". Interestingly, these students rarely make radical changes to their course schedules after dropping the IB: 11 of the 27 students who cited grades on their drop forms removed only Theory of Knowledge from their schedules, likely leaving them with a schedule of six IB courses and a study hall or a speech and communications class.[38] Eleven other students dropped TOK and only one IB-level academic class. In total, aside from TOK, these 27 students removed 21 IB classes and one pre-diploma class from their schedules in favor of lower classes. (It is possible that students who dropped full IB as juniors might have removed further IB courses from their senior year schedules.) To these students, the demands of CAS and the extended essay, which also appear on many drop forms, seem to be a more important impediment to good grades than the rigor of their course schedule alone.

Instrumental rewards

Lincoln's general celebration of academic excellence tends to manifest itself most emphatically in the near-universal assumption that every student should and will continue to postsecondary education. In keeping with this norm, the vast majority of students, regardless of their IB status, cite college as a major benefit of taking IB courses and exams. Some students speculate that a transcript full of IB courses will impress admissions officers, thereby improving their chances of winning admission to a prestigious school. Others seize on the possibility that they might earn college credit or advanced standing, and perhaps graduate early, if they earn high marks on IB exams. A

[38] Lincoln enforces the unusual requirement that students take a one-semester course in speech and communications in order to graduate. Students are exempt from this requirement if they go full IB, take IB Theatre 1 and 2, or participate in the speech or debate teams for three years.

third group argues that taking demanding IB courses will help prepare them for the rigors of university education, a prediction which recent graduates affirm. Many respondents cite more than one of these aspects when explaining the benefits of IB participation. In all cases, the underlying message is that investing time and energy now will have concrete payoffs, sometimes expressed in monetary terms, in the future; in this view, a rational weighing of costs and benefits justifies students' decisions to take IB classes.

Many students mention improving their chances of admission to college in explaining the benefits of the IB. Several students name highly selective schools they hoped to attend. One student recalls his early expectation that he could follow in the footsteps of a friend who excelled in athletics, went full IB, earned good grades, and went to Princeton. Another believes that going full IB would give him a "competitive edge" in the admissions process at Harvard and Columbia, his two top college choices. A third student hopes that his heavy load of IB courses will demonstrate his "love of learning" and compensate for his weak grades in the eyes of Harvard admissions officers. A fourth thinks that the prestige associated with Lincoln and the IB will help him get into the public policy program at New York University. Other students with less clearly defined ambitions nonetheless express the belief that the IB will help them get into a 'good college'. While there may be a trade-off between rigor and grades for some students, as described in the previous section, students generally agree that, all other things being equal, taking IB classes is an asset for a student's college application.

The second major college-related reason to pursue the IB is the promise that students who earn sufficient scores on exams can be rewarded with college credit. This possibility features prominently in the school's official presentation of the IB to students and parents. At a recruitment night for accepted eighth-graders, the principal called the IB the "best college credit program" available to high school students and mentioned the possibility that students could enter with sophomore standing. When the IB coordinator distributed exam registration forms to an IB Literature 2 class, she told the class that college credit should be viewed as secondary in importance to the superior educational experience provided by IB classes, but she proceeded to reel off a list of recent graduates' current universities, along with the number of credits each of them had received for their IB exam performance. Financial considerations are an important subtext to this argument, with many teachers reminding students that, although IB exams may be costly, they are much less expensive than college tuition fees for the equivalent

number of credit hours. In response to a parent's question about costs associated with IB at the eighth-grade recruitment night, a teacher and Lincoln graduate speculated that he saved about $7,000 by applying IB credits to his college degree. In her pitch to the English class, the IB coordinator estimated that an IB diploma could save a student up to $42,000 in college tuition. One alumnus aptly summarizes the official message he got about the IB this way: "Good grades translate to dollar signs."

Many students take this message to heart: about half of the students I interviewed include college credit among the reasons they chose IB courses. Several students seem to view the IB primarily as a credit-granting program, and even students with fairly limited understandings of what the program entails tend to quickly latch onto the especially appealing promise that the IB might let them skip a year of college. A sophomore treats the equation between 'good grades' and 'dollar signs' as self-evident: "You also get to skip a couple classes when you do get to college. So I don't mind free classes." A full IB senior recalls that her parents first told her about the possibility of earning college credit before she even started at Lincoln: "In eighth grade, I didn't know what that meant, but I liked it." A full IB junior admits that, when she was a sophomore, "honestly, I just knew that [the IB] would help with college and receiving college credit". For many students, college credit is the most immediately enticing instrumental reward of the IB; for a few, college credit in itself provides sufficient reason to take a full schedule of IB classes.

Most students treat the value of earning college credits as self-evident, but a few elaborate, saying that earning credits would allow them to save time or money. A few students frankly admit that they take IB courses and exams because of, not despite, their distaste for school. These students take it for granted that they will continue on to university, but they hope that earning credits through the IB will help them finish college sooner and move on to something more enjoyable. One junior taking six IB classes puts it this way:

> EL: What do you think you're getting out of taking IB classes? What are the benefits for you?
>
> S: Well, like – I don't know, people have told me a lot of stuff about getting ahead in college, and you could skip pretty much your whole first year of college. So I'm really interested in that.
>
> EL: Anything else, or is it mostly the college credit?
>
> S: Yeah, pretty much. Because I'm a person that – I pretty much don't like school that much, so just, like, hearing that if I work pretty hard my last two years, my junior year and my senior year, then I could get ahead, and – you know – make it out early.

The possibility of saving money also looms large in students' explanations – perhaps a predictable trend in a school where more than half of the student body qualifies for federally subsidized school meals and the guidance department devotes significant resources to helping students apply for financial aid and other scholarships.

While most students mention the possibility of college credit as an enticement to take more IB classes, a few express skepticism about whether the IB's returns in this regard are truly worth the investment. The most incisive form of this critique recognizes that nearly all American universities award credit for individual exam scores, not for the IB diploma itself. Students can maximize the potential payoff of the IB in terms of university credit by taking as many HL exams as possible. Pursuing the diploma requires a student to take at least two SL classes and adds the burdens of TOK, CAS, and the extended essay, which do not translate into college credit at most universities. Thus, being a diploma candidate is actually a disadvantage for the student whose sole aim is to accumulate college credit. I met only one student who actively chose this strategy from the beginning, taking seven IB classes as a junior and eight (including one independent study course) as a senior in pursuit of college credit as well as the chance to study more subjects he enjoyed. More commonly, students express skepticism about the instrumental rewards of a diploma only after they have started to contemplate dropping full IB for other reasons. One senior, for instance, dropped the full IB because she could not balance her schoolwork with daily shifts at two different jobs. She had initially gone full IB in pursuit of college credit, but realized after dropping diploma status that "you don't need to be full IB to get the college credits". In this sense, the college credit argument for certificate status functions as a retrospective justification rather than a decision-making factor.

Finally, many students take IB classes to prepare themselves for college. This rationale also echoes the school's official sales pitch for the IB: administrators and teachers frequently promise that IB students get better grades and adjust more easily as college freshmen. When I visited classes, several students asked, apparently spontaneously, whether I thought the IB had prepared me for Harvard. Academic rigor is certainly the IB's most obvious advantage in college preparation, and students uniformly agree that IB classes cover more complex, 'college-level' material than 'regular' classes. One student makes the contrast in emphatic terms, saying that students who do not take IB classes will be "clueless" when they leave Lincoln. (This student's strong stance on this question is particularly notable given that she has special educational

needs, making her a member of the group least likely to participate in the IB.) However, students also point to school-related behaviors when explaining how IB classes will prepare them for college. The reliance on a few major assignments rather than daily worksheets, the need to develop time management skills, and the sheer volume of work all make IB classes similar to college classes, in students' eyes. One student notes, without obvious irony, that the monotonous lectures in her IB Global class will help prepare her for similarly dull university professors. Recent graduates generally agree that the IB has made college easier for them, referring to a mix of academic skills, especially writing, and study skills, such as being proactive, learning when to ask for help, and balancing school with extracurricular activities. The college preparation argument reveals that, for many Lincoln students, success in college depends on hard work and study skills as much as it does on cognitive ability and content knowledge – an extension of the achievement ideology's recipe for high school success.

The prevailing considerations when students choose their courses, then, reflect the achievement ideology's promise that upward mobility is possible for everyone: students believe that they, not their teachers or guidance counselors, control their coursetaking decisions. Consequently, they tend to express satisfaction with their course choices, if not always with their teachers or workload. Full IB students enjoy a number of clear benefits, including the intrinsic satisfaction of having challenged themselves, the instrumental benefits associated with IB classes and exams, and the symbolic approval attached to participation in the IB. Despite the diminished social status associated with their curricular track, certificate students also readily give coherent justifications for their course choices, generally explaining their schedules as accommodations for other, non-school priorities rather than criticizing themselves for a lack of ambition or capability. Notably, virtually nobody claims to have been frustrated in his or her ambition to take high-track classes or go full IB. The tracking regime at Lincoln, then, enjoys widespread acceptance among its subjects, who believe that they have been fairly sorted according to the local definition of merit as hard work.

Lincoln's egalitarian ethos

The achievement ideology, with its radical promise that the IB is accessible to all comers regardless of background, dovetails neatly with Lincoln's ideal image as an agent of social mobility. In principle, as a public school, Lincoln is committed to educating all students, regardless of their background. Teachers and students take particular pride in Lincoln's status as a diverse urban school, and they are keenly aware that their school

defies conventional wisdom about both IB schools and urban public schools. In light of this unusual juxtaposition of program and context, most participants at Lincoln are particularly appreciative of the IB program, since it offers them the opportunity to defy stereotypes through academic achievement and upward social mobility. In other words, the promise of equal opportunity *within* the school allows Lincoln to cast itself as a 'great equalizer' of students' chances for upward mobility *beyond* the world of high school.

With its limited resources, primarily American-born population, and large share of low-income students, Lincoln certainly does not fit the mold of the elite, fee-paying, international school that first defined the IB (Peterson, 1987). One teacher laughingly recounts an IB training at which one participant, who worked at an international boarding school, suggested that schools could enforce their extended essay deadlines by threatening to withhold students' weekend passes. Several other participants mention that the IB seems to be designed for schools with greater resources than Lincoln, citing the obstacles posed by large class sizes, limited lab resources, inconsistent parent involvement, and the large share of students with part-time jobs. Class sizes are an especially common target of criticism: one teacher highlights the difficulty of adequately teaching Theory of Knowledge to a class of 36 students; another points out that his chemistry classes are so large that, under state law, they are technically barred from conducting experiments with only one teacher in the room. Lincoln's diverse student population also makes it an unusual setting for an IB program. The IB coordinator, echoing a common sentiment, notes that, thanks to demographic changes and increasing school choice, "our population is coming to us more impoverished – more financially impoverished, more intellectually impoverished". The principal remarks that, in his long career in international education, he has never worked at a school with such a broad range of student backgrounds and abilities. In both of these respects, students and teachers are well aware that implementing the IB at Lincoln is likely to be harder than it would be at a fee-paying international school.

However, teachers and students see these discrepancies between Lincoln and the 'typical' public school as welcome challenges, not insurmountable obstacles. One full IB junior summarizes the point well:

> S: If they're offering a full IB program in a public school, people should take it, definitely.
> EL: Do you think it's different at all because it's in a public school?
> S: Yeah. Actually, I would imagine it would be better, because we have something to prove.

Participants frequently mention that Lincoln's IB program offers an unusual opportunity to its students. At a recruitment event for admitted eighth-graders, a social studies teacher structured his remarks around the theme of opportunity, listing a variety of academic, athletic, and extracurricular activities on offer and following each with the refrain, 'Lincoln does!' An art teacher notes, "The opportunities that you have here, you would be hard-pressed to find at other schools". Teachers and students thus acknowledge that Lincoln is an unusual setting for the IB, but they are proud to offer such a 'world-class' program at their decidedly local school.

The theme of opportunity does not just refer to students' chances to participate in a highly regarded curriculum while they are in high school; it also encompasses the school's function of preparing students for upward mobility after high school. As this chapter has noted, the norm of college-going is deeply embedded in daily life for students at Lincoln. In keeping with this norm, all but two of the students I interviewed expressed an ambition to go to college. Many responded to my intentionally open-ended question, 'What do you want to do after high school?', by naming a few of their top-choice colleges, implying that tertiary education is so obvious a next step that it need not be explicitly indicated. Students' explanations for their coursetaking choices reveal a clear preoccupation with college-going; IB students accept their heavy workload on the grounds that it will prepare them for college, and a few certificate students even rationalize their status by claiming that it gives them a better chance of maintaining the grades needed for college admission while still allowing them to take IB exams for college credit. In turn, although they do not usually state this directly, students apparently assume that going to college will prepare them for middle-class, professional careers. In interviews, most students name lofty career ambitions, ranging from graphic designer to neurosurgeon to business owner, which would situate them solidly in the middle class. For the school's many students from low-income families, fulfilling these goals would certainly constitute upward social mobility.

The school takes particular pride in its academic success and its college-oriented culture because these attributes defy many of the negative stereotypes attached to SPS. Springfield's public schools have long been a perennial target of criticism and reform proposals, including a recent unsuccessful attempt to transfer control of the system from the elected school board to the mayor. The pervasiveness of prejudice against SPS became particularly clear in March 2012, when Lincoln's boys' and girls' basketball teams, both composed primarily of black players, each narrowly lost its state

championship game to predominantly white teams from the Springfield suburbs. The Lincoln players experienced racially tinged harassment from some opposing fans, ranging from online comments that Springfield teams were composed of 'thugs and criminals' to chants of 'Who's your daddy?' directed at a Lincoln player who had fathered a child. These perceived slights sparked a remarkably candid dialogue in which Lincoln students explicitly celebrated their school's combination of diversity and academic excellence as a direct counter to negative stereotypes about SPS. In response to the 'thugs and criminals' comment, a senior posted to Facebook a photograph of his Harvard acceptance letter with the sarcastic caption, 'I go to an SPS school. I'm obviously a thug with no future.' Other students and alumni followed suit, touting their scholarship offers, professional careers, and community service activities. In the weeks following the basketball games, I heard students proudly pointing out that Lincoln achieved national recognition and sent students to Ivy League schools despite being at a disadvantage in everything from parental education levels to athletic facilities. Thus, Lincoln's egalitarian ethos manifests itself in the keen sense of pride that individual students and the school itself have both overcome the odds, achieving academic successes despite limited material resources.

The juxtaposition of an urban setting with an elite curriculum thus allows Lincoln to cast itself as a vehicle for upward social mobility. One English teacher echoes Horace Mann's words in making this point: "IB can flourish in public education. That's a beautiful partnership… Because – and I do believe this – for all our failings, and how we're heading toward plutocracy, there's still enough of that really gorgeous idea that education can be an equalizer… It can be your path up and out." A 2011 graduate testifies to his own experience of upward mobility, acknowledging that he grew up in a low-income neighborhood and is "still dealing with issues in the household" but claiming that the IB has helped him overcome these initial disadvantages:

> It's all in your mentality. In the situation that you're in now, or in high school, or whatever the case is, you gotta ask yourself, do you want to be in this type of situation forever? Or, you know, if you want to get out of your situation, you've got to push yourself a little harder than, let's say, your peers who doesn't have this kind of background. So I kind of just stuck with that the whole time [I was in high school]. It's a better place for me out here than the state that I'm currently in. So I decided to push myself to the maximum.

The achievement ideology's promise that anyone who works hard enough can do the IB is essential in allowing participants to see Lincoln as a 'great equalizer' despite its extensive internal stratification. The English teacher makes this connection explicit: "At its worst, [the IB] can be really gross and elitist. But I've noticed that public schools are

not as damaged by that mentality… as long as we hang on to student self-selection." This defense of Lincoln's equalizing function suggests a middle ground between equality of opportunity and equality of result: by eliminating most of the barriers to entry into IB courses, participants suggest, their school can make an elite educational credential available to students from disadvantaged backgrounds, thus mitigating racial and socioeconomic inequality in the world beyond high school.

Conclusion

Despite Lincoln's extensive academic and social stratification, the school's culture essentially accepts the mainstream achievement ideology (Hochschild, 1995; MacLeod, 2009) and its implicit endorsement of meritocracy: students and teachers alike believe that individuals control their own curricular positions and that anyone who works hard enough, regardless of innate talent, can succeed in the IB. This radical promise of equal opportunity, by defining 'merit' exclusively in terms of effort, condones academic inequality while simultaneously implying that it need not exist, since every student could become a Lincoln success story if he or she only exercised sufficient willpower to succeed. By stressing that Lincoln provides equal opportunities for everyone to participate in the IB, the Lincoln achievement ideology powerfully refutes claims that within-school stratification reproduces social inequality. Instead, precisely because Lincoln falls so far outside the norm of 'schools for rich kids' (Peterson, 1987: 107), its supporters can claim that it provides disadvantaged students with unusual opportunities for upward mobility, making it a force for social equality in the world outside high school. This effort-based achievement ideology is hardly an anomaly among American high schools; it fits neatly into the rhetoric of the American dream, which promises that anyone with sufficient work ethic and drive can achieve upward social and economic mobility. However, it also raises a perplexing question: if students and faculty genuinely believe that everyone is capable of succeeding in the IB, then why do they continue to support a system that sorts students to receive unequal academic treatment and social status? I suggest some answers to this question in Chapter 7.

Chapter 7. The Limits of Equal Opportunity

In light of Lincoln's deep academic and social stratification, the widespread faith in equal opportunity described in Chapter 6 is surprising. Previous research about students' perspectives on their tracked schools has demonstrated that students at the bottom of the academic totem pole often reject the school's value system and turn to alternative sources of validation (Ball, 1981; Berends, 1995; Hargreaves, 1967; Lacey, 1970), especially when they are doubly or triply disadvantaged by race and/or class status in addition to track position (Fordham and Ogbu, 1986; MacLeod, 2009; Ogbu, 1978; Willis, 1977). Why do Lincoln students and teachers persist in believing that their school offers equal opportunity, and, more radically, that it can remedy existing social inequalities? How can we reconcile the coexistence of Lincoln's inclusive achievement ideology with its continued reliance on sorting students into homogenous groups for instruction? This chapter argues that the answer to these questions lies in the Lincoln achievement ideology's distinctive formulation of merit as individual effort. I begin by arguing that the equation between hard work and success legitimates Lincoln's academic and social hierarchy and persuades students to accept their places within it. I then turn to a discussion of the underrepresentation of black and Latino males in IB classes, one of the most obvious and persistent flaws of Lincoln's tracking system, to demonstrate that the achievement ideology's focus on personal choice puts the burden of improvement on individual students and families while absolving the school of its responsibility to ensure that students reach their full potential. Finally, I examine teachers and students' reactions to policy changes at Lincoln, particularly the new principal's proposals relating to detracking and changing the admissions standard, to demonstrate that courses at Lincoln are *ends* for student sorting at least as much as they are *means* for improving student achievement. This finding, in turn, suggests that the Lincoln achievement ideology views merit, however defined, as essentially fixed by the time students enter high school, explaining why many participants continue to support tracking despite their stated faith that every student can learn with sufficient hard work.

The legitimation function of the achievement ideology

Lincoln teachers and students use the rhetoric of equal opportunity to allay their concerns about the potentially unjust effects of curriculum differentiation. As Chapter 6 established, the school's local achievement ideology holds that any student who wants to

do the IB has the opportunity to do it. The IB coordinator's statement on this point is typical: "Our program is considered an open program, whereby you choose to be in and you choose to be out." When asked them about their approach to counseling students, teachers and administrators often proudly echo this philosophy, noting that they rarely or never discourage students from attempting an IB class. Many express variations on one guidance counselor's statement that "it's easier to move down [a track], if you can't handle it, than it is to regret what you didn't do". Students, too, frequently say that they advise younger friends considering IB classes to 'go for it', reflecting the norm that students should take advantage of open access to IB courses. The formal presence of equal opportunity even supports the bold claim that Lincoln is a 'great equalizer', since it offers open access to a prestigious curriculum to large numbers of disadvantaged students. This emphasis on equal opportunity also implies what Hochschild (1995) identifies as the less optimistic side of the American dream: if society gives everyone a fair opportunity to move up in the world, then those who fail to achieve upward mobility have only themselves to blame.

Even more impressive, defining merit exclusively in terms of effort allows the Lincoln achievement ideology to largely escape Rawls' critique that, since 'we do not deserve our place in the distribution of native endowments, any more than we deserve our initial starting place in society' (1999: 89), a meritocracy of talent is just as unjust as an aristocracy of birth. Since the stated criteria for upward mobility at Lincoln are achieved, not ascribed, the distribution of social status bears no necessary relation to the 'distribution of native endowments', and students' social position can be attributed exclusively to their individual choices. Thus, the ideal representation of Lincoln's status mobility system might be described as a radically accessible form of the meritocratic ideology, the American dream, or Turner's (1960) contest norm. All of these belief systems promise a more just and efficient society in which the morally arbitrary quality of social position at birth does not confer an entitlement to affluence on undeserving children of privilege, nor consign clever but poor children to inherit their parents' low social status. The Lincoln achievement ideology goes even further, promising that even students with unremarkable 'native endowments' can attain high social status given sufficient effort. It would be difficult for the staunchest advocate of egalitarianism to find fault with such a radically inclusive ideal.

Moreover, the achievement ideology encourages students in all tracks to subjectively accept their positions in Lincoln's academic hierarchy. Chapter 6 has already

presented much of the evidence on this point: students tend to attribute their track positions to their own free and rational choices, denying or ignoring the possibility that factors beyond their control have constrained their coursetaking options. In interviews, the vast majority of students claimed sole or primary responsibility for their coursetaking decisions; one junior mentioned that two of his teachers had discouraged their classes from going full IB because of the heavy workload, but nobody reported being thwarted in his or her desire to take a high-track class. (Indeed, the only exception to this rule was that a few students claimed that their parents had pressured them to go full IB – an instance in which other actors imposed constraints against *downward* mobility.) This finding is consistent with teachers' and counselors' reports that they rarely deny a student's request to move into a high-track class, even if the student has not fulfilled stated grade or coursetaking prerequisites. The centrality of free choice in these explanations suggests that students generally view themselves as the masters of their own fate, diminishing the likelihood that low-track students could blame school rules or individual faculty members for frustrating their academic ambitions.

Students also account for these decisions in terms largely consistent with the achievement ideology. High-track students cite either the intrinsic value of challenge-seeking or the instrumental payoffs of taking IB classes in explaining their decisions. At first glance, many of these students' accounts appear self-effacing, since they often explicitly discount their own cognitive abilities; witness one full IB senior's frank admission that "I'm not gonna be Einstein one day", or a sophomore's declaration that, despite earning straight A's, "I'm not that smart". Yet the prevailing equation of effort with high-track status also encourages full IB students to take pride in their own hard work. Indeed, many high-track students, especially full IB seniors, seem to find enjoyment in swapping somewhat exaggerated stories about how much homework they have. I overheard quite a few students reeling off lists of impending deadlines, upcoming tests, and extracurricular commitments as a form of competitive conversation; dire predictions about how late each student would have to stay awake that night were a favorite tactic. One senior even wrote her college application essay about the health risks of being a diploma candidate, which she later described to me: "No social life. Possible heartburn. Depression." In private, many of these students acknowledge that their complaints are somewhat exaggerated, but this does not seem to deter them from publicly discussing their workload – and, implicitly, boasting about their capacity to complete it. The achievement ideology, then, encourages high-track students to believe

that they have earned their membership in the school's elite, thanks to their own hard work.

Although Lincoln's value system denies this psychological reward to its low-track students, it does offer them several ways to preserve their self-esteem. Structurally, since Lincoln's system allows students to take courses at different levels in different subjects, there is no clear identity category that epitomizes the low track in the way that the IB diploma candidate epitomizes the high track. Students might also compare themselves to similarly positioned peers at non-selective schools, or to special education students at Lincoln, in order to maintain a sense of 'specialness' (Powell, Farrar, and Cohen, 1985). The admissions process and IB course requirements in social studies and English bolster the sense that every regular education student at Lincoln is in some sense part of Springfield's academic elite. Most importantly, since prior academic achievement is not considered the primary determinant of track position, low-track students need not condemn themselves as dull, nor need they blame the system for assigning them a low-status position. Instead, low-track students explain their positions as a product of their own free choices, often with even greater certainty than full IB students. The popular belief that IB classes simply require a great deal of time allows students to reasonably explain their choices of low-track classes with reference to a variety of other time commitments, such as a job, a varsity sport, or family obligations, instead of having to admit to laziness or lack of foresight. Students who reduce their academic workload in favor of paid employment, in particular, rarely face challenges from their classmates or teachers, who generally recognize that family financial circumstances may compel students from low-income families to find jobs as soon as possible. Low-track students also appear not to recognize that their early coursetaking choices constrain their later options, especially in sequential disciplines like world languages and mathematics; their faith in equal opportunity thus persists throughout their time in high school. Because the achievement ideology emphasizes individual effort, free choice, and equal opportunity, low-track students at Lincoln display little evidence of the disaffection documented in schools where prior achievement is the primary criterion for differentiation.

Underrepresentation and personal responsibility

The conversation surrounding the low participation rates of black male students in IB classes – which I refer to as 'underrepresentation' – provides the clearest demonstration that Lincoln prioritizes equality of opportunity over equality of result. This phenomenon raises a strong challenge to Lincoln's egalitarian ethos: if the school

somehow discourages black males from taking advantage of its most demanding curricular offerings, then it might be accused of reproducing social injustice rather than ameliorating it. Yet Lincoln teachers and students generally deny that their school's tracking structures deserve much of the blame for underrepresentation. Instead, they claim that differences in culture, loosely defined, have led black male students to turn away from school in favor of non-academic paths to success, thus implying that black students, families, and communities, not the school, are responsible for remedying underrepresentation. This response highlights an important implication of the achievement ideology: as long as the school provides equal opportunities for academic success, the individual is solely responsible for his or her own upward mobility.

The evidence for underrepresentation

Even in the pilot stage of research, I was surprised by the consistency with which participants independently voiced their concerns about underrepresentation. Precise definitions of the phenomenon vary slightly between participants with respect to which groups are underrepresented and how underrepresentation is measured. A few take all black students, or all non-white males, as the object of their concern; others mention that low-income students also participate in the IB at lower rates. However, there is near-unanimous agreement that young African American men are the most significant underrepresented group. In this discussion, I focus on black male students, not only because they are the focus of most participants' concerns but also because the small numbers of Asian and Hispanic students at Lincoln make it difficult to establish patterns of representation for those groups.[39] The question of where students are underrepresented is also complicated: teachers and students point to disparities in IB course enrollment, diploma candidate status, and academic achievement, particularly as measured by IB diploma attainment. The bulk of available evidence relates to black male students' representation among IB diploma candidates, but school data offer evidence for underrepresentation on all three of these measures.

Multiple official sources of data indicate that white students are overrepresented in Lincoln's IB program and African American students, especially boys, are underrepresented. Table 7-1, based on data compiled by the school and provided to me by the IB coordinator, shows the composition of three groups by ethnicity for each graduating class between 2006 and 2011: diploma candidates, diploma recipients, and the

[39] In the 2010-11 school year, Lincoln's student body was 65% black, 20% white, 10% Asian, and 6% Hispanic.

entire student body. In every year, the population of full IB students has a greater share of white students and a smaller share of black students than the school as a whole; this disparity is even more marked among successful diploma candidates. Federal data from the 2009-10 school year, displayed in Table 7-2, raise concerns about the participation of black males in IB courses overall, regardless of diploma status: when data are disaggregated by race and gender, young black men are the most significantly underrepresented group. Systematic breakdowns of IB participation by race and gender are unfortunately not available for other years, but my observations of classes at Lincoln confirm the impression that black males are notably underrepresented in IB classes, especially Theory of Knowledge, which is reserved for diploma candidates only. In interviews, the vast majority of students and teachers either independently raised the issue of underrepresentation or agreed when I mentioned others' concerns about the performance of black males. In short, available data clearly confirm the pattern of underrepresentation, and students, teachers, and administrators all privately acknowledge it.

Table 7-1. IB participation rates by race/ethnicity, Classes of 2006-2011

		African American	Asian	Caucasian	Hispanic	Native American	Other	Total
2006	Diploma recipients	6 (.19)	5 (.16)	19 (.59)	1 (.03)	0 (.00)	1 (.03)	32
	Diploma candidates	24 (.36)	7 (.11)	31 (.47)	1 (.02)	0 (.00)	3 (.05)	66
	All students	(.59)	(.06)	(.24)	(.06)	(.01)	(.04)	--
2007	Diploma recipients	2 (.08)	3 (.12)	15 (.58)	3 (.12)	0 (.00)	3 (.12)	26
	Diploma candidates	23 (.30)	9 (.12)	33 (.43)	6 (.08)	0 (.00)	5 (.07)	76
	All students	(.61)	(.07)	(.21)	(.07)	(.01)	(.02)	--
2008	Diploma recipients	10 (.22)	3 (.07)	25 (.54)	5 (.11)	0 (.00)	3 (.07)	46
	Diploma candidates	41 (.38)	13 (.12)	36 (.34)	12 (.11)	0 (.00)	6 (.06)	107
	All students	919 (.60)	109 (.07)	327 (.21)	109 (.07)	12 (.01)	54 (.04)	1530
2009	Diploma recipients	10 (.21)	3 (.06)	25 (.52)	6 (.13)	2 (.04)	2 (.04)	48
	Diploma candidates	30 (.30)	7 (.07)	42 (.42)	12 (.12)	2 (.02)	6 (.06)	99
	All students	(.62)	(.07)	(.20)	(.07)	(.01)	(.03)	--
2010	Diploma recipients	6 (.16)	6 (.16)	14 (.36)	7 (.19)	0 (.00)	4 (.11)	37
	Diploma candidates	28 (.35)	10 (.12)	22 (.27)	14 (.17)	0 (.00)	7 (.09)	81
	All students	954 (.62)	134 (.09)	273 (.18)	106 (.07)	7 (.01)	59 (.04)	1533
2011	Diploma recipients	5 (.14)	2 (.06)	19 (.59)	10 (.29)	0 (.00)	0 (.00)	35
	Diploma candidates	24 (.27)	5 (.06)	39 (.44)	21 (.24)	0 (.00)	0 (.00)	89
	All students	1025 (.64)	145 (.09)	324 (.20)	99 (.06)	5 (.00)	0 (.00)	1598

Source: School-generated analysis supplied by the IB coordinator, April 2012. The number of students in a given category of race/ethnicity and IB status is followed by the percentage of students in each IB category identified as the given racial/ethnic group. The composition of the student body for 2005-06, 2006-07, and 2008-09 is only available by percentages.

Table 7-2. School and IB enrollment by race and ethnicity, 2009-10

		African American	Asian	Caucasian	Hispanic	Native American	Total
IB students	Male	70 (.15)	20 (.04)	60 (.13)	20 (.04)	0 (.00)	165 (.34)
	Female	165 (.34)	30 (.06)	80 (.17)	30 (.06)	0 (.00)	315 (.66)
All students	Male	370 (.24)	45 (.03)	145 (.09)	40 (.03)	5 (.00)	600 (.39)
	Female	590 (.38)	90 (.06)	190 (.12)	65 (.04)	5 (.00)	940 (.61)

Source: Office for Civil Rights, 2010.

Explaining underrepresentation

Students and teachers alike offer several major explanations for the persistence of underrepresentation. The first and most obvious suggests that black males are more likely than other students to live in homes where family and work obligations simply take up too much time for the IB to be a feasible course of study. Students and teachers point

out that low-income students tend to lack access to resources like a computer, Internet access, and a quiet study space at home. Poverty also makes demands on a student's time: many acknowledge that students who have to find paid employment in order to support the household, or babysit younger siblings while their parents work, simply cannot commit the time to school that the IB requires. A black male graduate expresses this line of thought:

> And those who actually pursue the IB program, I would say, come from a more stable household, more stable background. As opposed to those who – let's say, an inner-city person who grew up with, I would say, a lot of issues growing up in their household… I would put a lot of African Americans in that category, because that's the majority of African Americans that go [to Lincoln] have those kind of backgrounds. And you just don't see too many of them pursuing the IB program.

This argument corresponds to one of the few exceptions to the Lincoln achievement ideology, outlined in Chapter 6, and it is consistent with the common knowledge that African Americans in Springfield, on average, earn less than whites. However, it is not the most frequently mentioned explanation for underrepresentation, in part because it fails to explain gender differences in IB participation.

More commonly, participants argue that black males take fewer IB classes because they have lower aspirations for the future. A few allude to what an alumnus calls "hoop dreams", the popular stereotype that many black men dream of making it as professional athletes or rappers. A full IB student refers specifically to students' future orientations:

> I think it has a lot to do with the goals you have set for yourself after. When I'm looking in comparison to – like, most of my friends are black males, so when I'm comparing the four people I've mentioned [all black male full IB students], they had a plan for college after, and they're like, I want to do this when I grow up, and this is what I'm going to do now, I'm not going to worry about high school now… And then, like – I have a lot of friends on the basketball team – they treated high school as, oh, this is awesome, we're living it up now. So I think it might have to do with future-oriented goals? I'm not sure.

A January 2011 article in the school newspaper sparked controversy when it raised similar questions about the aspirations of young black men, in part on the basis of an unscientific lunchtime survey which found that black male students' career aspirations include 'bus driver, McDonalds' manager and drug dealer'. Even if black males embrace the same middle-class career and educational goals as their classmates, other participants suggest, they may underestimate the utility of schooling in helping them achieve those goals. One recent graduate criticizes the shortsightedness of many of his friends: "They

see where they're at and where they want to go. But they don't know the steps to get there… And a lot of them don't understand that school is honestly the best way." More generally, many participants believe that black students are simply more likely to be oriented towards more immediate rewards, particularly having time to socialize with friends. One senior certificate student speculates, "Black people, they just don't seem to take [school] as serious. It's more, like, the social – not to be racist, but it's more social." This line of reasoning suggests that black male students take fewer IB classes because they are simply less likely to agree with the achievement ideology.

The most telling explanation for underrepresentation goes further, attributing this presumed difference in values to some pathological element of 'black culture'. Some participants – almost all of whom are African American students adopting a critical tone toward their own community – argue that black students rarely display the challenge-seeking, perfectionist personalities that characterize many of the full IB students described in Chapter 6. One recent full IB graduate characterizes the "complacency" that stops many other students from following his example and taking difficult courses:

> We have a lot of complacency. I'll say that from my experience in the black community as a whole, not just the black community in the IB program – complacency, doing enough to get by. That's always been something we've settled for. Just making it through, just making it through and being okay, but not really wanting to excel or challenge yourself.

Another alumnus similarly explains underrepresentation as a function of a larger lack of initiative:

> I guess I can say, with the black males, they're kind of taking the easy way out, in a sense… not going full diploma, taking the easiest classes, the bare minimum requirements to graduate… I think that's kind of something you can kind of say – you can see throughout life in general. Even when it comes to, you know, making money, in a sense. You know, a lot of these stereotypical black, African-American males, who either never finish high school or… try to find the easiest way possible for them to get rich.

Instead, according to this view, black male students are drawn to low-track classes because they hope to avoid the hard work associated with the IB in the school's achievement ideology. In this view, black families and communities are to blame for underrepresentation, since they fail to instill in their children the motivation and work ethic that the achievement ideology requires. An administrator puts this point bluntly: "Their culture has given them certain routes to success, and academia is not one of them."

A related explanation echoes the popular 'acting white' version of oppositional culture theory, described more fully in Chapter 2.[40] Participants who take this view, almost all of whom are white teachers, generally suggest that although it is easier to be both popular and a good student at Lincoln than at most other schools, this is not necessarily the case for black males. As one Spanish teacher puts it, "Lincoln has less of a stigma for being a nerd, but there's still a huge stigma for being a nerd, or being an IB nerd, I think, among the black males". Some argue that the social consequences of academic success are higher for boys, who are expected to be "tougher rather than smarter", in one English teacher's words. Consequently, even highly capable students face pressure to avoid looking as if they are trying hard or doing well in school. A history teacher describes one example:

> [A student] comes in the class, baggy pants, baggy hoodie, head down, earphones in – all the cultural stereotypes of, I'm African American, don't mess with me. In class, he doesn't say a word. He's got a scowl on his face. We're slouched. We're not involved in class. When it comes to test time, he's – he is on par with the valedictorians I have in class, in terms of his writing. But when you ask him a question in class, his immediate response is, I don't know. So either somehow he's cheating fantastically and I can't figure it out, or he's bought into this cultural stereotype of, I can't get too far out from what it means to be African American, and I can't be a valedictorian because I have to have friends.

According to this explanation, the anti-school values attributed to black families influence not only students' individual beliefs but also the social stakes of their schooling decisions.

Personal responsibility and the burden of improvement

The black males who do buck the trend and go full IB offer more nuanced accounts of their individual success, but they nonetheless emphasize effort as the primary determinant of their own upward mobility.[41] One 2011 graduate acknowledges the role of family support in his own academic career, but nonetheless refuses to accept a lack of such support as an excuse for other students to take less challenging courses:

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[40] It should be reiterated that the 'acting white' theory espoused by some Lincoln participants is a fairly inaccurate caricature of Fordham and Ogbu's (1986) original argument, which places much more emphasis on the school's responsibility for forcing black students to choose between school success and their racial identity.

[41] It is worth noting that not all of these students tell their stories in terms of overcoming the odds; of the seven black male diploma candidates I interviewed, one flatly denied that underrepresentation was a problem, while two others seemed not to have considered the possibility before I brought it up.

> My parents were very academically motivated, motivating. I'd be at the movies, and my dad is asking me math problems during the previews. Little stuff like that. And I understand not everyone has that. But at what point can you hold yourself accountable for caring about your academics?

The other black male diploma candidates I interviewed concur with this graduate's emphasis on personal responsibility and individual choice. Most told me that they went full IB in search of a challenge, echoing one junior's simple explanation: "I always look for perfection. Or the closest thing to it." If anything, these students are especially unwilling to accept excuses for poor school performance. As one junior puts it, "Everybody is capable [of being full IB]… If they're offering a full IB program in a public school, people should take it, definitely." A few recent graduates, who had been part of a group of black male student-athletes who supported each other as IB diploma candidates, even say that going full IB gave them the additional reward of being seen as role models. These narratives reaffirm the theme of equal opportunity by identifying personal responsibility as the critical element in students' paths to academic success and upward mobility.

It hardly needs to be stated that, insofar as they rely on sweeping generalizations about black students and their families, these explanations are deeply problematic. Less obviously, they highlight a critical feature of the Lincoln achievement ideology: success may be available to everyone, but the responsibility for pursuing success rests squarely on the shoulders of the individual. Even when confronted with the unpleasant fact of underrepresentation, which presents a direct threat to Lincoln's idealized image as an agent of social mobility for underprivileged students, teachers and administrators defer to student choice. When I asked students and teachers what the school was doing to address underrepresentation, the only organized response mentioned was a group called Man2Man, whose advisor – a white female Spanish teacher – told me that she tried to invite recent graduates who could persuasively sell the IB to the group's primarily black and Hispanic members. Another teacher told me that some staff members had discussed the gap in IB exam scores between white and black students a few years prior to our interview, but that "that conversation… started to dry up" as the school replaced several administrators. Indeed, many teachers seem to believe that they are alone in recognizing the problem of underrepresentation; few have discussed the issue with other teachers or students, and most feel that the school is not doing enough to recruit black male students into the IB.

Certainly, the lack of an aggressive response to underrepresentation should not necessarily be construed as malicious neglect. As several teachers point out, the arrival of the new principal, the perceived crisis at the middle years campus, and the growing special education population, along with the daily challenges of running a school, may simply seem more urgent to administrators than the longstanding and widespread problem of underrepresentation. Nonetheless, the school's continued tolerance of underrepresentation, despite general awareness of the problem, raises a serious challenge to the school's self-proclaimed equalizing mission. The inclusive terms of Lincoln's achievement ideology suggests that 'merit' is available to all students, and thus that the school could aggressively pursue its equalizing mission by making a conscious effort to instill the meritorious qualities of drive and persistence in all students, especially those most obviously disadvantaged by race, class, and gender. However, the persistence of underrepresentation suggests that the apparent openness of Lincoln's opportunity structure actually deflects responsibility for fulfilling the equalizing function from the school onto its students and their families. Indeed, affirmative action to remedy underrepresentation might well violate the achievement ideology's emphasis on personal responsibility. A black male graduate puts this point well:

> There was no, uh – there was no unique curriculum or method of making it more attractive to African Americans. But I almost want to say that's fair. I wouldn't – I think that's our problem now, in the black community. We always need that extra kick in the pants to get us motivated or started on something, when it should come from within. It really should come from within. And I understand not everybody is as motivated, but this is the program, these are the benefits, if you want it, go after it, if you don't, so what? I think that's how the world is gonna be. Not everything is gonna be given to you or made unique to you. If you want it, you have to go out and be proactive about it. So I don't see it as a bad thing that they didn't target African American males. It really is on us.

The sorting function and the nature of merit

Lincoln's passive approach to underrepresentation offers the first hint that the achievement ideology is not as radically inclusive as it seems: if the school has largely disavowed its responsibility to make sure that capable students from disadvantaged backgrounds take full advantage of the curriculum, perhaps its claim to be a 'great equalizer' is less than completely justified. Two other controversial issues at Lincoln shed light on the limits of equal opportunity: detracking and the admissions standard. In the year when I carried out fieldwork, the newly arrived principal, known by the nickname Dr. Z, proposed to eliminate most regular-track classes and raise the bar for admission to

the high school campus. Both of these proposals sparked unusually candid conversations about student sorting, the nature of ability, and the sources of Lincoln's success. This section begins by summarizing both proposed changes and the available evidence about their implementation. I then analyze the reactions to these proposals among faculty members (and a few students). The reactions to these bold proposals suggest two veiled features of Lincoln's achievement ideology: students' merit is defined as beyond the school's power to change, and thus the school's job is to accommodate differences in students' abilities and interests, rather than to shape them in accordance with its stated academic values.

Policy changes: detracking and admissions

In keeping with national trends, Lincoln was in the midst of a long process of significantly altering its curriculum structure when I arrived at the school in August 2011. The social studies department began detracking in 2007, assigning all freshmen and sophomores to the same two-year pre-diploma history sequence and requiring all juniors to enroll in an IB-level social studies course. The English department followed suit. Starting in 2011-12, the department eliminated 'regular' course offerings for freshmen, sophomores, and juniors. Literary Studies 2 PD replaced the old Thinking and Writing about Literature course for sophomores, and juniors graduating in 2013 and later were required to choose a two-year sequence in IB Literature HL, IB Language and Literature HL, or IB Literature and Performance SL. In the fall of 2011, Dr. Z, the new principal, announced an even more radical change: all regular-track courses would be phased out, so that freshmen entering Lincoln in fall 2012 and after would only take pre-diploma and IB courses. These bold policy changes suggest that Lincoln has fully embraced the detracking movement, not only by expanding the scope of student choice but also by eliminating most of the distinctions of difficulty between courses.

Yet a closer examination reveals that Lincoln's long tradition of curriculum differentiation will not be easily dismantled, thanks to resistance from teachers and acquiescence from the administration. The 2012-13 course schedule reveals that several regular-track classes have been retained from prior years. In English, IB Literature and Performance 2 and IB Language and Literature 2 replaced American Ethnic Literature, but a section of Advanced Composition and World Literature was retained for seniors who need to make up English credits. The social studies department continues to offer Sociology, Anthropology, Aesthetics, and Philosophy as semester-long electives. The science department did eliminate Biology 2, Chemistry 2, and Physics 1, but it retained

Chemistry 1 for sophomores and added team-taught sections of Biology PD and Chemistry 1 for special education students. The math department eliminated its two lowest-track senior courses, Math Studies 2 and Transition to College Math, but it continues to offer high- and low-track versions of Algebra, Geometry, and Math Studies 1. A few electives were also eliminated, including Web Design, Introduction to Programming, and all of the family and consumer economics courses. The world languages department was the only one to eliminate all of its low-track courses, cutting Spanish 4 and German 4 and retitling German 6 as IB German 3, although students can still gain an advantage by taking Spanish 1 Accelerated as freshmen. Thus, while Dr. Z's proposal has certainly led to substantial changes in the first year of its implementation, some degree of curriculum differentiation persists in most departments.

Dr. Z's attempt to make the school more selective by reducing the size of the incoming freshman class met with more success. This initiative addressed longstanding concerns about the declining quality of students entering Lincoln. When my fieldwork began in late August 2011, just after the start of the school year, many faculty members were quick to point out to me that the bar had been lowered for that year's freshman class. The principal, the IB coordinator, and the guidance director all told me that the school had admitted an unusually large number of students from the wait list, meaning that many students who had not passed the admissions test in eighth grade had nonetheless been offered places at the school. Most participants attribute this unusual situation to increased competition for the brightest high school students. Carter, an IB high school established in 2002 with the goal of becoming 'the Lincoln of the south side', was starting to draw high-achieving students away from Lincoln, a phenomenon probably encouraged by the district's recent decision to cut transportation funding for south side residents attending Lincoln. Edison, a gifted and talented middle school that had long funneled large numbers of students to Lincoln, had merged with a nearby high school, creating further competition. Demographic changes in the suburbs had also led many suburban schools to make more places available to Springfield residents under the state's open enrollment program, drawing some ninth-graders out of the district entirely. A growing voucher program for low-income students had a similar effect. This combination of factors forced Lincoln to relax its admissions requirements, prompting some concern among faculty about the declining 'quality' of the student body.

Two ongoing shifts in the student body also fuel concerns about Lincoln's selectiveness. One trend is the growing number of special education students. In 2009,

following claims of unfairness from the principal of a Springfield high school with a large special education population, SPS implemented a policy of distributing special-needs students more evenly between high schools. Although the actual growth in Lincoln's special education population has not been dramatic to this point – according to district statistics, the share of special education students in Lincoln's student body grew from 11% in 2003-04 to 14% in 2010-11 – many of the faculty, and a significant number of students, share the belief that district policies have forced a greater number of special education students into attending Lincoln, without regard for the school's capacities or wishes. A smaller but equally high-profile issue concerns disciplinary transfers into the school. While statistics on this practice are not publicly available, most teachers and students are aware that Lincoln has recently received an increasing number of students transferred from other schools by the district because of disciplinary or legal problems, and many blame these students for a disproportionate share of disruptions and fights at Lincoln. The point here is not that demographic changes are happening at Lincoln, but rather that they are widely *perceived* to be causes of the more general decline in the school's academic and behavioral performance.

Declining selectiveness, disciplinary transfers, and growing special education enrollment, however, all pale in the face of what many teachers see as an imminent crisis: the influx of students from Lincoln's middle years campus. At the time of my fieldwork, Lincoln had recently opened a middle school in a separate building nearby; the first class of sixth-graders entered in the fall of 2010 and was expected to complete the eighth grade in the spring of 2013. Initially, administrators were adamant that the middle school was simply an extension of Lincoln located at a different campus; they intended that the new grades would share Lincoln's reputation for academic excellence and serve as a 'feeder' school, funneling talented middle-school graduates into the high school's IB program. Consequently, the school sought authorization to offer the IB Middle Years Programme in grades 6 through 10. However, by the time I arrived at the high school campus, the consensus there seemed to be that things at the middle school were going poorly. I heard reports of drugs and a gun being found in the middle school building. The assistant principal in charge of the middle years campus abruptly departed in the middle of the year, forcing the school to appoint various teachers as temporary administrators. Teachers at the high school strongly resented the prospect that they might be assigned to teach at the middle school, sometimes to the point of threatening to resign. At the time I carried out fieldwork, just over a year before the potential arrival of

the middle school graduates, the administration had still not determined whether the middle school students would have to take the admissions test or automatically matriculate to the high school. The faculty agreed that the latter possibility was unacceptable, and the teachers' union was actively seeking clarification from the school board as to whether Lincoln would be required to automatically admit its own middle school students. One teacher sums up many of his colleagues' fears:

> I think that could be the downfall of this school, is that middle years program. Because if those kids do not have to test to get in here, this school's gonna fall down very quickly, I think. Then our whole admissions standard is gone. And if our admissions standard is gone, we're gonna be very similar to a lot of other schools.

Consequently, the administration sought to raise the barriers to entry into the school by reducing enrollment. At a January 2012 faculty meeting, Dr. Z announced that he had received the superintendent's approval to admit 100 fewer students in the coming year. This decision represented a drastic step, not least because Lincoln receives much of its funding on a per-student basis, meaning that a reduction in enrollment would put faculty positions at risk. Although Dr. Z expected that the coming addition of the eighth grade to the middle years campus would offset the budgetary impact of reducing enrollment, some high school teachers might be forced to transfer to the middle school, a prospect that most deeply resented. Nonetheless, the administration opted to take this risk – with the support of many teachers – because of the growing consensus that, in Dr. Z's words, relaxing the admissions standard would be tantamount to "diluting our program". According to state data, Lincoln enrolled 366 ninth-graders in 2012-13, compared to 424 in 2011-12, demonstrating that this initiative did substantially shrink the class of 2016.[42]

The nature of merit

The debate over detracking and admissions offers a useful vantage point from which to reconsider the precise nature of merit in the Lincoln achievement ideology. If Lincoln teachers fully believe the achievement ideology in its simplest form – that anyone who works hard, regardless of prior achievement, can and should handle the IB – then they should be expected to unequivocally support detracking as a way of better serving the school's academic mission. Moreover, the faculty might also be expected to

[42] The enrollment reduction could have been smaller than planned because of incoming disciplinary transfers, special education placements (which are controlled by the district rather than the school), budgetary pressures, or unusually high matriculation rates among admitted students, among other possibilities.

show little concern with the admissions standard; at the extreme, the egalitarian impulses in Lincoln's value system might give rise to a call for expanding the school's enrollment, so that more Springfield students could take advantage of the opportunity for upward mobility provided by the IB. To be sure, practical constraints, such as concerns about overcrowding the high school building and the desire to avoid making low-track teachers redundant, would understandably impose some limitations on these policies in the best of circumstances. Yet teachers' resistance to detracking also reflects some deeper-seated concerns. The conversations surrounding detracking and admissions suggest that, when confronted with concrete policy changes, Lincoln teachers qualify their inclusive definition of merit in two ways: a few revert to the position that some students lack the cognitive skills necessary to manage the demands of the IB, and nearly all indicate that merit, even when defined as effort, is essentially fixed in the student.

Some teachers' responses to the specter of detracking suggest, contrary to the achievement ideology, that cognitive skills may constrain some students' coursetaking options. The possibility of integrating special education students into IB classes provides the clearest example of this. Many English teachers recall that the primary concern about detracking in their department related to whether special education students would be able to handle the material; some special education teachers echoed this fear. A social studies teacher shared a variety of his strategies for differentiating instruction in detracked IB classes, but also told me that, when he consulted them early in the school year, special education teachers occasionally removed students from his class after deciding that "their skills just weren't up to snuff". The concept of ability also resurfaces in a few teachers' speculations about how detracking might affect their own teaching of regular education students. One science teacher, who successfully lobbied the principal to retain Chemistry 1 as a low-track option for students who had earned a D or a U in algebra as freshmen, describes her rationale: "There are some kids that are just never gonna be able to do IB Chemistry… They don't have the math skills necessary. They don't necessarily have the manipulative skills, because we have some teachers that aren't really hands-on… And some of them just don't have the capability to do chemistry at that level." A math teacher offers a similar rationale for his department's defense of tracking, positing that a straightforward distinction emerges between "really smart kids" and "low-end kids" well before the beginning of high school. Importantly, these views do not necessarily reflect total agreement with the deterministic view that intelligence is unitary, fixed, and heritable; in this sense, Lincoln teachers' views are more nuanced than

those documented by Oakes et al. (1997) in their study of teachers' resistance to detracking. Instead, teachers who invoke the concept of 'ability' generally take the more limited view that, even if ability is malleable, it depends on upbringing and early education to such an extent that, by the time they enter Lincoln, some students are simply incapable of attaining the high standard set by the IB.

While the assertion that cognitive ability may preclude some students from qualifying for the high track remains a minority position, most teachers redefine merit in a more subtle way in their objections to detracking. The crux of this position is that the attitudes required for IB success – persistence, motivation, a strong work ethic – are essentially fixed and unchangeable. A science teacher firmly insists that "all kids can learn", but he predicts that detracking will nonetheless fail because not all students are sufficiently interested in learning:

> The key to it is, how can we entice the kid to apply themselves to the material? … There's certain parts of mathematics that just requires your brain to think, and if you're – if coming to school is not about learning, if you believe that you're coming to school as a destination and not about a place of, this is where I learn about the world, this is where I – this intrinsic thing in your mind that says, I want to learn – if that's not taught to you somehow, whether it's at home or wherever, I don't know how you can get kids up in their math skills. Because to truly understand math, you have to buy into the fact that you're here to learn. And if you only think you're here to get some piece of paper, which will allow you to get this job, which will allow you to buy this house, and you get this car – if it's all just a step by step hoop to jump through … if you're not willing to buy in, it's not going to make sense.

Other teachers predict that detracking will fail because not all students at Lincoln are equally motivated to do the IB. As one math teacher puts it, "[The principal] doesn't realize that… some people come here because there isn't a fight every day in this school. Whether they can handle the rigor is another story." Some participants qualify this view by acknowledging that students' attitudes and motivation depend on other factors, such as family background. However, this acknowledgement does not change the fundamental position that students have different levels of merit, even when merit is defined exclusively in terms of attitudes, and that these differences will ultimately hinder students' learning in detracked classes.

Even the principal's detracking proposal embraces the idea that merit is fixed, because it relies on creating a more uniformly motivated group of students through changes in the admissions process. Dr. Z sets out the rationale for simultaneously reducing within-school stratification and increasing between-school stratification:

> This year we didn't have 400 students who wanted to come here, and therefore the admission criteria became a mockery, because nobody was denied – anybody could come here, there was no waiting list, anybody could come here. And that was not the idea. And that just means that our market is not there. We don't have people out there who really would benefit by this program… The idea is still not to have it so open that there is no standard whatsoever. The idea is that this is an IB school, you are here for an IB program, and therefore you must come with that mindset and not just by accident, you are passing by, and then somebody sent you into this building. So I think you must really come here because you want to be here, you really want a good academic program, and all the things that Lincoln has to offer. That has to be the reason why you come here.

By recruiting only those students who are motivated to do the IB, raising the admissions standard would also make detracking sensible, according to the logic of the achievement ideology. If low-track classes currently serve as 'dumping grounds' for unmotivated, badly behaved students, then eliminating such students from the school would also eliminate the need for such 'fluff classes'. This policy shift amounts to an emphatic statement that Lincoln is a specialty school, not a comprehensive high school. As an English teacher puts it, "we can't be all things to all people". Dr. Z uses similar terms: "We are an IB school. You cannot be serving two masters. So we're going to focus on IB. And because we are based on admission, I'm assuming that students have made these choices, that those who come here, come for the IB… Doing IB courses, I think, that's why they are here."

Viewed in this context, the plan to eliminate tracking at Lincoln hardly qualifies as egalitarian, except in a very limited sense. While cutting low-track classes would indeed decrease the degree of differentiation *within* the school, it depends on the success of efforts to increase the degree of differentiation *between* schools by making Lincoln more selective. Moreover, the basis for that differentiation – students' motivation to take IB courses – may appear to be a fairer criterion for sorting than a unitary measure of intelligence would be, but the reliance on admissions standards as the primary means for recruiting a uniformly motivated body of students suggests that the attitudes required for school success are essentially fixed by the time a student enters high school. Even though Lincoln's achievement ideology officially defines merit in a way that makes upward mobility appear accessible to everyone, the administration's approach to detracking suggests that, in practice, the promise of equal opportunity is limited to an elite group of students, whether defined by admission to Lincoln or enrollment in its top track. The students whose attitude or prior achievement disqualifies them from admission to this

elite are relegated to 'fluff classes' within Lincoln or left to fend for themselves elsewhere in SPS.

The school as sorting machine

If individual merit, however defined, is beyond the school's power to change, then it follows that Lincoln's curriculum should accommodate students' differences rather than change them. The common description of low-track classes as 'dumping grounds' suggests this emphasis on sorting over improvement, implying that the school uses such classes as a place to put students who would likely disrupt or resist teachers in more demanding courses. Describing the Minorities in American Society course, a social studies teacher elucidates this reasoning:

> T: …It was a waste of time of a class, but nobody really complained, because nobody wanted to teach those kids. So [Minorities] was the sponge for the 60 to 70 kids that are a little difficult.
> EL: Difficult in what sense?
> T: Difficult in the sense that in IB Americas, they're going to get D's and U's, they're going to struggle to read, they're going to struggle to write, they're not going to do their homework because they struggle with, one, the level of the content; two, they just struggle with basic academic skills, in terms of, you will go home and you will take an hour to read this – just that academic discipline. Kids that aren't college ready… So [the Minorities class] served a purpose, but I don't know if it was a good purpose.

In short, although low-track classes, by definition, fail to provide an IB-quality education for the students who take them, they serve a vital function by isolating students who are widely considered disruptive and difficult to teach, thereby allowing the school's most prestigious classes to cater to a more elite clientele of students who subscribe to and behave in accordance with the achievement ideology.

This discussion of fluff classes reveals the deeper assumption that courses at Lincoln are ends, not means, and thus that the school's educational function is predicated on sorting students into the right classes. Teachers talk at great length about the 'type' of student who is best suited to IB courses, but they say little about how their courses can turn average students, especially those who lack motivation, into IB exam-takers. On a larger scale, the principal and his supporters argue that eliminating non-IB courses will improve academic rigor by attracting a smaller and brighter body of students who, in the principal's words, "come for the IB". Dr. Z's justification for detracking and shrinking the school echoes Powell, Farrar, and Cohen's (1985) metaphor of the shopping mall high school: "Every course… serves a purpose, it serves a clientele. And… in the end, we have to serve the mission of the school, which is IB, and therefore

our clientele must be that." Improving the standard of classroom instruction is almost treated as an unexpected side benefit. The IB coordinator's justification for this policy shift neatly sums up this ranking of priorities: "Dr. Z would like to improve the rigor of students who we attract, or at least challenge us further to bring the students up higher." This position, too, is consistent with Lincoln's hands-off approach to underrepresentation: students are fundamentally responsible for setting and pursuing their own academic goals; the school's job is simply to provide them with options.

Consistent with a trend first noted by Powell, Farrar, and Cohen (1985), one reason for the school's continued commitment to accommodating a variety of student interests is that Americans tend to view choice as good in its own right. Another is that many teachers have genuine concerns about their ability to effectively teach heterogeneous groups of students, thanks to both academic and behavioral concerns. Some teachers worry that, even if prior achievement were totally irrelevant to an *individual* student's potential to succeed in IB courses, it would be difficult to achieve IB standards in teaching *groups* of students with widely varying levels of prior achievement. A math teacher offers the strongest defense of this argument:

> T: I believe in tracking these kids. I mean, I know you might have learned in college not to do it, but you can just see the difference. I can see it. It's just – and I teach both sides of it.
> EL: Right. Do you think that tracking is – what's the benefit of tracking 'em?
> T: Because you can push those kids further, the honors kids. Whereas, like I said, if you put 'em all together and you're teaching to that middle kid – so if here's my honors class, and the middle kid's here, now if I integrate everybody, now my middle kid is over here somewhere [indicating a lower point on a scale of ability]. So I am watering it down. So you can't tell me that these honors kids are benefiting by being placed with everybody else. And the flip side – you got your low-end kids, now if you're putting the really smart kids in there, now the middle goes from here to here [indicating a higher point on the scale]. So now they're expected to do even beyond – I mean, this was hard for 'em, now this is even harder. So I just don't think it's benefiting anybody. I think you want to find where they're at and push 'em from there, not make up – have a hodgepodge of kids. I mean, if tracking's so bad, why do we have admissions standards here? Why don't we just throw the biggest thugs in the class with you, and see how well you learn in your class, in all your classes? I am 100% for tracking. I think it helps both groups. And if you put 'em all together, I honestly don't know how I would teach it. I would try to find that middle, which I don't think is good for either end. I mean, it's good for that middle kid. There's a – more outliers, basically, when you start throwin' everybody in there.

A science teacher declines to make such a stark distinction between 'low-end kids' and high-achieving students, but he is nonetheless skeptical of the principal's proposal that students should be prepared for IB-level study after finishing Chemistry 1:

> [Dr. Z] wants [Chemistry 1 students] to be totally caught up on their math skills and ready for IB. It's like saying, okay, so these kids are deficient, so you want me to teach them everything that the [pre-diploma] kids are gonna learn in half the amount of time, and all the stuff they're deficient on. This rhetoric in education is maddening. You're talking out of the side of your mouth all the time.

The lack of opportunities for professional development courses on how to teach in heterogeneous classrooms, a fact bemoaned by several teachers, no doubt contributed to these anxieties.

Other teachers wonder whether mixing more and less motivated students might make classroom environments less conducive to academic achievement. The math teacher's comment about mixing the brightest students with "the biggest thugs in the class" hints at the common fear that the loud, disruptive, public misbehavior described in Chapter 5, currently restricted to low-track classes, could derail even more students' learning if the school's worst-behaved students are moved to high-track classes. One faculty member speculates that behavior problems will become particularly acute if more special education students are pushed into IB courses:

> T: Maybe the English teachers will be tearing their hair out [once detracking is implemented in English], like our social studies teachers are. Because many of our kids, our exceptional ed kids, are mainstreamed into these courses. And – wow!
>
> EL: What happens when that's the situation?
>
> T: The teachers die! We had a Spanish teacher who took a family leave last year for four months! She had classes that, half of the class was [special education students]. It was crazy. The kids who wanted to learn in the class couldn't, because the other kids act out constantly, on top of the behaviors. And then they don't do the work, you feel responsible for them, and it drags the progress of the whole class down.

Other teachers suggest that, even if detracking does not lead to outright chaos in high-track classrooms, it might still diminish the quality of learning in classes that depend on active student participation and cooperation. One social studies teacher, for instance, notes that he finds it much easier to lead discussions in his TOK class, where most students had the "mental energy, and mental focus, and mental discipline" required for complex discussions, than in his senior elective courses. This argument is wholly consistent with the view, outlined earlier in this chapter, that changing students' interests largely falls outside of the school's mission.

Despite their reservations about Dr. Z's detracking proposal, most teachers accept that at least some regular-track classes are likely to be eliminated. In a testament to the continued importance of sorting students, many predict that the implicit hierarchy of courses, described in Chapter 5, will continue to structure *de facto* vertical differentiation. In math, teachers' anxieties primarily concern the (ultimately averted) prospect of detracking in algebra and geometry, since detracking does not threaten the rarefied status of high-level, accelerated courses like IB Calculus and IB Math Topics. Even among IB classes, some teachers predict that courses like IB Environmentals and IB Literature and Performance will simply replace regular-track courses like Biology 2 and Creative Writing as 'dumping grounds' for the weakest and least motivated students. This is particularly likely when course reputation overlaps with teacher reputation. Mr. Landers, a popular teacher and coach who was responsible for Biology 2 and IB Environmentals in 2011-12, straightforwardly acknowledges this possibility:

> The reasons you take Bio 2, and I'm not gonna sugarcoat it, is because you get to go on field trips, because you want to do very little work – and I'm not gonna hand out hardly any work – because you want to have me for a teacher and see if something cool happens. And that's honest. I don't want to make it sound self-serving, but that's one of the reasons why they do it, and I think that those reasons will still be there for Environmentals next year.

Thus, even in the unlikely circumstance that all 'regular' courses are eliminated, the implicit hierarchy of courses may yet allow student sorting to remain Lincoln's most important function.

Conclusion

The Lincoln achievement ideology represents a clever balancing feat. By defining merit in terms of individual effort, it implies that every student has an equal chance at upward social mobility within Lincoln's differentiated curriculum and in the larger meritocratic society, thus satisfying Rawls' (1999) critique that status distinctions based on ascribed characteristics are unfair. At the same time, Lincoln's continued insistence on maintaining the exclusivity of the school and its IB classes suggests that 'merit' is not strictly a matter of free student choice; rather, it incorporates fundamental cognitive abilities, attitudes, or both, and these qualities are essentially fixed by the time a student enters high school. The achievement ideology thus legitimates curriculum stratification in two ways: by offering an apparently objective and justified criterion for assigning students to tracks, it allows the school to claim that it provides equal opportunity, or even that it helps to remedy social inequalities, as an institution; and by establishing a

narrative in which individual effort guarantees individual success, it subjectively justifies the tracking regime in the eyes of its subjects.

Yet the balance between egalitarian ideal and differentiated practice is tenuous, as the analysis in this chapter shows. As many participants acknowledge, equality of opportunity has patently failed to produce equality of result, particularly for black male students; in this respect, tracking at Lincoln follows the pattern established by the large body of research on curriculum differentiation summarized in Chapter 2. The fact that the school continues to deflect responsibility for remedying this situation onto students and their families, rather than taking proactive steps to encourage underachieving students to seek out greater challenges, testifies to the centrality of individual effort and personal responsibility in Lincoln's local definition of merit. When the newly arrived principal's detracking proposal presented an unusually direct challenge to this individualistic rhetoric, teachers reacted in a way that betrays the limits on the achievement ideology's promise of equal opportunity. Most teachers, including many advocates of detracking, object to this proposal on the grounds that students' merit is largely fixed by the time they start high school, and that it would be extremely difficult to achieve high academic standards if IB courses enrolled a more heterogeneous group of students. If merit is defined as fixed, it follows that the school's job is to accommodate differences, not to remediate them; thus, teachers support, and sometimes actively lobby for, the retention of low-track classes as 'dumping grounds' for students who might disrupt or 'water down' Lincoln's most prestigious courses. These findings give reason for a critical view of Lincoln's achievement ideology: the rhetoric of equal opportunity has clearly convinced many teachers and students that Lincoln is an agent of upward social mobility, but it also veils deeper-seated beliefs about the nature of merit and the responsibility of the school in ways that support the continued practice of hierarchical curriculum differentiation.

Chapter 8. Conclusion

This project began with a single animating question: how do schools negotiate the tension between excellence and equity? Americans have traditionally expected their schools to function as forces for equality, setting all children – regardless of race, class, gender, or other accident of birth – on a level playing field, where they can compete on equal terms for jobs, further education, and social status. At the same time, schools have an obvious imperative to promote high academic standards, particularly given the established link between educational achievement and economic growth. Traditionally, American high schools have viewed these two goals as competing objectives, on the grounds that student diversity – particularly with respect to 'innate intelligence' – makes it impossible to educate all students to the high standard required for university admission and success in a professional, white-collar career. For most of the history of mass secondary education in the United States, schools opted for excellence over equity, using IQ tests and other proxies for 'ability' to sort students into academic, vocational, and general 'tracks' intended to prepare them for their future occupations. In recent decades, concerns about the fairness of this practice, as well as challenges to the underlying notion that a single measure of cognitive ability can fairly predict a child's future potential, have led a growing number of schools to reduce the degree of differentiation in their curricular offerings and to offer students more control over their own coursetaking, thus shifting the balance in favor of a more equitable distribution of instructional resources. However, preliminary investigations of such reforms suggest that the tension between excellence and equity remains relevant in detracking schools, manifesting itself in political resistance to proposed reforms or in the persistence of more subtle forms of *de facto* tracking.

On the surface, it appears that Lincoln High School has performed an impressive balancing act: the school maintains a clear tracking system, with low-track students disadvantaged in terms of academic standing, social status, and future coursetaking options, and yet virtually everyone at the school accepts that such stratification is fair, largely because students are free to choose their own courses. The key to this balancing act lies in the school's effort-based achievement ideology: whereas schools have historically justified restricting their most demanding curricula to a small group of students on the grounds that natural variations in the distribution of intelligence mean

that not all students are capable of attaining the same level of academic knowledge, Lincoln insists that attitude outweighs aptitude in determining who can succeed in the International Baccalaureate, making the school's top track, in theory, accessible to all. This formula for success echoes the meritocratic ideal and the rhetoric of the American dream, both of which hold that an individual's place in a stratified society justly reflects her qualifications, but with a crucial difference: Lincoln's achievement ideology denies that prior academic achievement plays a defining role in the coursetaking possibilities available to students. This radical definition of merit as effort, and its corresponding promise that every student has an equal opportunity to enjoy the benefits of the IB if he simply chooses to work hard, accomplishes the remarkable feat of legitimating Lincoln's tracking system in the eyes of its subjects, whose near-unanimous belief that they have chosen their own educational path defies the empirical evidence that students' initial coursetaking imposes a substantial constraint on their future opportunities. This faith in equal opportunity, moreover, allows Lincoln students and teachers to characterize their school as a vehicle for social equality: since it gives large numbers of students from historically marginalized groups a chance to earn a world-class credential and thus an opportunity for upward social mobility, they argue, Lincoln fulfills Horace Mann's vision of public schooling as 'the great equalizer of the conditions of men'.

To be sure, for many individual students, Lincoln has delivered on this promise. Its students' impressive academic achievements suggest that the school richly deserves its reputation for academic excellence. Yet Lincoln's powerful claim to be a force for social equality demands some qualification in light of the evidence that the school remains deeply dependent on sorting its students – first by selecting its students through the admissions process, and then by providing a number of regular-track 'fluff classes' as 'dumping grounds' for students who fail to meet the standard for IB success set out in the local achievement ideology. Although that standard is defined in terms of effort, the fact of sorting remains largely unchanged, because teachers and administrators have largely disavowed any responsibility to influence how much effort students devote to their schoolwork. Thus, although Lincoln's redefinition of merit as effort might seem to represent a radical move towards a more inclusive school, in practice it sustains a system of curriculum differentiation not much different from the old, intelligence-based regime. The underrepresentation of Latino and African American male students in Lincoln's highest-status classes, a widely acknowledged and seemingly intractable problem, highlights the shortcomings of this new regime with painful clarity.

The persistence of sorting, in turn, reveals some uncomfortable truths about the version of meritocracy embodied in Lincoln's achievement ideology. As Chapter 2 demonstrated, the role of education in a meritocratic society depends on the precise understanding of merit. If merit is fixed, unchangeable, and unequally distributed – qualities traditionally associated with the idea of 'general intelligence' – then the task of schools is to *sort* students according to their merit into a highly differentiated system so that they can be prepared for their future roles in society. Accordingly, in Young's (1958) dystopian vision of the meritocracy, a strict regimen of regular IQ testing informed students' placement in schools designed to prepare them for the intellectual elite or the working class; the traditional system of tracking before the 'unremarked revolution' (Lucas, 1999) operated in a similar way. In such a system, *formal* equality of opportunity (Daniels, 1978) is all that is needed to ensure that the meritocracy fairly distributes social positions. By contrast, when merit is defined as changeable, then Turner's (1960) 'contest norm' gives a better description of the ideal education system: schools are free, open to all, and relatively undifferentiated, so as to set students on an equal footing for an open competition beginning in adulthood. Schools' role in such a system is to *develop* merit, a function suggested by Bell's tentative definition of merit as incorporating 'technical skills and higher education' (1973: 409). This interpretation also suggests that schools should guarantee *fair* equality of opportunity by taking special measures to enhance the competitive capacity of students from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Lincoln's formulation of merit as effort suggests that it should fall into the latter category and embrace the goal of cultivating the persistence, work ethic, and other qualities necessary for academic success. Yet in practice, its tracking structures and its preoccupation with maintaining its admissions standard suggest that Lincoln is more concerned with sorting students than with developing their merit equally. In turn, the persistence of tracking suggests a view of merit as fixed, even though it is defined in attitudinal rather than cognitive terms. This position is consistent with the absence of any systematic attempt at Lincoln to push students to raise their aspirations, develop the kind of merit demanded by their school's achievement ideology, and reach their full academic potential. The function of the Lincoln achievement ideology's apparently radical definition of merit, then, is to stress equality of opportunity at the expense of equality of outcome; it legitimates, and even exacerbates, inequalities in the distribution of academic achievement and social status.

Although this argument has been largely critical of Lincoln, it should be stressed that the school's problems are by no means exclusively of its own making. The contradictory themes that characterize Lincoln's track system – the persistence of curriculum differentiation and the ideology of equal opportunity for social mobility through schooling – also characterize many other American schools, and the race, class, and gender inequities at Lincoln reflect longstanding patterns of disadvantage in American social, economic, and political life. The school also deserves credit for its many academic accomplishments, which are even more impressive in light of the severe constraints on Lincoln's resources. The point, then, is not to blame Lincoln for creating its own problems, nor to condemn it for reproducing inequality without regard to its genuine educational accomplishments, but rather to question how the school reconciles its commitment to equality with its endorsement of tracking. Such an investigation, in turn, can offer some lessons to both researchers and educators about the possibilities of reforming schools to promote both excellence and equity simultaneously. The remainder of this chapter explores these lessons.

Implications for research

The study of curriculum differentiation

As Lucas (1999) notes, the structure of American high school curricula has undergone an 'unremarked revolution' in recent decades, with choice-driven, course-by-course scheduling replacing the previous system of overarching curricular 'tracks' that dictated a student's entire program of study. Lincoln High School, with a course scheduling process dominated by student choice and a loosely enforced set of prerequisites, exemplifies these increasingly popular 'detracking' reforms. However, my findings demonstrate the persistence of hierarchical curriculum differentiation even after the demise of formal tracking. In nearly every academic subject, students eventually choose between courses with different official titles, which position each course on a hierarchy structured by the requirements of the IB, and different unofficial reputations, which inform further distinctions of difficulty between nominally interchangeable courses. Each course's position on this academic hierarchy also informs its social status in terms of the school's official value system: while demanding IB courses are widely regarded as 'rigorous' and 'college-level', low-track courses are dismissed as 'fluff classes' and 'dumping grounds'. Moreover, although the scheduling process gives students a high degree of control over their own education, students' choices largely replicate the

'tournament structure' described by Rosenbaum (1976) a generation earlier: students can and do move down from IB to 'regular' classes at any point in their schooling career, but few students who start out in low-track courses make the jump to high-track courses. The persistent underrepresentation of male students of color in high-track classes, too, bears a striking similarity to the pattern of sorting under formal tracking. These findings support other studies (Ready and Lee, 2008; Rubin, 2003; Yonezawa, Wells, and Serna, 2002) that question whether simply lowering the barriers to entry into high-track courses can effectively remedy the inequities associated with tracking.

The case of Lincoln also suggests that tracking will not be easily reformed, even in schools with an apparently egalitarian ethos. Oakes et al. (1997) have suggested, based on a study of ten schools, that parents' and teachers' resistance to detracking follows from the deeply ingrained belief that intelligence is fixed, measurable, and unequally distributed – a view very similar to the conventional logic underlying tracking. The Lincoln achievement ideology might seem more favorable to detracking, since it explicitly discounts the role of prior achievement in predicting school success. Yet teachers at Lincoln have vehemently resisted the principal's proposal to eliminate most regular-track classes. In objecting to detracking, some revert to the argument that some students simply lack the cognitive ability to succeed in IB classes, but more justify their resistance on the grounds that students' *attitudes* are unevenly distributed – that some students are disinclined to put in the hard work required to do well at Lincoln, and that the school is not responsible for changing such students' minds. Resistance to detracking, then, does not follow exclusively from a belief in the unitary conception of intelligence that brought about the earliest regimes of tracking based on IQ testing; teachers may well support curriculum differentiation even when 'merit' is defined in what appears to be a much more inclusive fashion.

These findings, in turn, reflect the influence of a somewhat unusual approach to the study of within-school stratification: a focus on the intersection between school structures and institutional beliefs. Much of the literature on tracking deals primarily with quantitative evaluations of the predictors and effects of track placement, or with observational evidence on the mechanisms by which tracking produces different outcomes for different students. While these findings are certainly valuable, my focus on the more subjective ideological aspects of Lincoln's track system has allowed me to explain several little-explored features of tracking. First, understanding the achievement ideology helps explain how students and teachers enact tracking regimes by assigning

meaning to different track locations, implementing the scheduling process in a way that reproduces many of the effects of more traditional track systems, and producing high- and low-track classroom environments that fulfill popular stereotypes about between-track differences in academic demands and student behavior. A focus on beliefs also reveals how patterns of inequality are reproduced even in a school where students largely control their schedules and many members of the faculty are deeply committed to social justice. Finally, the exploration of Lincoln's achievement ideology presented here sets Lincoln in the larger context of the meritocratic ideology and the American dream, shedding light on the similarities and differences between all three status mobility systems.

The study of stratification

At a more abstract level, these findings give further reason to question the idealistic view of schools as agents of social mobility for all. Such skepticism, of course, is hardly a recent innovation; Bowles and Gintis (1967) in the United States and Willis (1977) in the United Kingdom, among many others, famously argued decades ago that schools reproduce the class structure. The unique contribution of the present study is to call attention to the much more subtle ways in which the organization of schools continues to foster inequality even in an era when tracking in its traditional form has largely fallen out of fashion. Even though the new regime of student-driven, course-by-course ability grouping claims to uphold the meritocratic ideal on the grounds that it offers formal equality of opportunity, the persistence of curriculum differentiation allows, even demands, the continued sorting of students based on some criterion of merit. Lincoln's particular innovation has been to define that criterion solely in terms of effort, but, as we have seen, this redefinition serves primarily to legitimate the existence of stratification, not to facilitate greater mobility.

In addition to its well-documented implications for disparities in academic achievement, the persistence of within-school stratification threatens the validity of the 'contest norm' (Turner, 1960), or the typically American view that an individual's position in society reflects the outcome of a fair and open competition that begins relatively late in life. If, as the conventional wisdom at Lincoln holds, participating in the IB is a ticket to success in higher education and a passport into the middle class, then academic stratification *within* school has important ramifications for social stratification *beyond* school. The findings of this thesis call the contest norm into question in two ways. First, they indisputably demonstrate that, at Lincoln, selection starts much earlier than

Turner (1960) predicted: a student's coursetaking as early as ninth grade imposes considerable constraints on his future coursetaking options, and academic experiences prior to high school (particularly in mathematics, where ninth-grade coursetaking reflects the results of a placement test) likely figure into a student's starting position in Lincoln's curriculum. Second, although the lack of reliable measures of 'ability' precludes a conclusive finding on this point, there is also some reason to doubt that tracking at Lincoln is strictly meritocratic. Flexibility in the enforcement of prerequisites for enrolling in advanced courses, for instance, tends to work to the advantage of students with savvy and interested parents who can effectively lobby for their interests (see also Yonezawa, Wells, and Serna, 2002). The inclusion of various forms of dominant cultural capital (Carter, 2005; Delpit, 1998) in teachers' definitions of the ideal IB student also favors students from white, middle-class families. Insofar as these features of a school's sorting system reproduce existing patterns of privilege within the school's academic hierarchy, they are also likely to contribute to the maintenance of those patterns in the outside world's social and economic hierarchy.

Possibilities for future research

These findings, then, suggest a new explanation for how within-school stratification has survived the 'unremarked revolution' and the demise of formal tracking: by replacing aptitude with attitude in the definition of what it takes to become academically successful, schools can promise every student the opportunity to rise to the top of the track structure, thereby legitimating the continued existence of curriculum differentiation without actually requiring that more students take high-track classes. This hypothesis could do much to explain why tracking persists and, perhaps, how it can be more fundamentally reformed, but much more research is needed to expand and refine the argument. Most obviously, case studies of the relationship between tracking structures and beliefs about achievement should be carried out at a wider variety of school sites, in order to confirm that this new legitimation mechanism is not unique to Lincoln. Studying schools in different contexts could be particularly helpful in testing the limits of this hypothesis. Elite private schools, which traditionally do not embrace the mission of promoting social equality, might still cling to the more traditional intelligence-based justification for tracking, or they might be more willing to abandon curriculum differentiation because they have greater power to select a homogeneous student body. Schools with a higher degree of curriculum differentiation, or with more rigid controls on student mobility between tracks, might offer evidence about the level of inequality

that an effort-based achievement ideology can effectively legitimate. We might also expect institutional ideologies to differ in more truly comprehensive schools, with no admissions standard or distinctive academic program, where the academic and social hierarchies are likely to be more independent – in other words, where academic achievement might come at the cost of popularity among peers. Finally, given the close similarities between Lincoln's achievement ideology and the mythology of the American dream documented here, comparative research in different national and cultural contexts could shed more light on the ways in which school-level achievement ideologies reflect and reshape beliefs about a society's status mobility system writ large.

Further study is also necessary to more precisely identify the mechanisms by which students' course choices reproduce existing patterns of disadvantage. This thesis has documented the tendency for students and teachers to accept that the underrepresentation of black males in Lincoln's IB program results from an essentially fair and voluntary scheduling process, but it has offered only hints as to why some groups of students choose fewer high-track classes than others. As discussed in Chapter 7, generalizations about 'hoop dreams' or 'fear of acting white' among black students and communities are a favorite explanation of Lincoln participants, but the limited supporting evidence, both in my interviews and in other tests of the oppositional culture thesis, suggests that this is unlikely to be the only explanation. Irregularities in the course scheduling process, such as the guidance department's willingness to override teachers' placement recommendations at the request of a persistent parent, which operate to the advantage of middle-class families, may also play a role (see Yonezawa, Wells, and Serna, 2002, for a similar explanation). The lower wealth and income of black and Latino households in Springfield and in the United States almost certainly plays a role, too. A final possibility is that differences in academic preparation (although not necessarily 'aptitude' in the sense of a single measure of general intelligence) do figure into course choices. Although attitudinal factors dominate students' explanations of their course choices, it would be difficult to deny that a strong foundation of reading, writing, and computational skills facilitates success in IB classes; students may well consider this type of academic preparation in choosing their courses and intentionally or unintentionally omit this part of the decision-making process from their interview comments. Race and class disparities in access to high-quality elementary and middle school education – a longstanding concern in Springfield and many other urban school districts – thus could

help explain underrepresentation at Lincoln.[43] This point emphatically does not concur with the troubling and thoroughly debunked position that there is any inherent difference in intelligence between racial or ethnic groups (Herrnstein and Murray, 1994; Jensen, 1969; for refutations of this argument, see, e.g., Daley and Onwuegbuzie, 2011; Fagan and Holland, 2002, 2007; Gardner, 1983, 2006; Neisser, 1998; Nisbett, 1995, 1998; Ogbu, 1978; Sternberg, Grigorenko, and Kidd, 2005). Rather, it acknowledges that race, class, and gender achievement gaps emerge well before the high school level, and a solution to the problem will have to take this fact into account. All of these suggestions, however, are speculative, and more thorough investigations of the influences on students' coursetaking decisions are necessary to understand why inequality persists in detracked schools.

Implications for practice

The International Baccalaureate

As one of the first urban public schools authorized to offer the Diploma Programme, the case of Lincoln can offer valuable lessons to the International Baccalaureate as it seeks to reach a more diverse group of students and schools. The rhetoric of social justice and equal opportunity that surrounds Lincoln's IB program has much in common with the IB's recent drive to expand access beyond the stereotypical group of 'schools for rich kids' (Tarc, 2009: 253). Yet, as Chapter 4 demonstrated, the IB has never completely resolved the tension between social inclusiveness and intellectual elitism in its own history. The organization's reluctance to dictate the terms on which students are admitted to the Diploma Programme has enabled schools like Lincoln to use the IB to structure their tracking systems. This study should serve as a reminder that, even when the IB succeeds in expanding to relatively less privileged *schools*, this is no guarantee that it has expanded to serve relatively less privileged *students*. This fact should inform the IB's approach to implementing its strategic agenda of moving 'from access to growth' (IBO, 2006a) as it continues to expand. In particular, collecting and publishing information about the demographic characteristics of IB diploma candidates and other exam-takers, as well as the overall composition of their schools, would facilitate a more accurate evaluation of whether the expansion of access is sufficient to expand participation in the Diploma Programme.

[43] Harris and Robinson (2007) have argued that black-white gaps in prior skills explain much of the variation in schooling behaviors and performance usually attributed to oppositional culture.

As this expansion of access proceeds, IB schools would also benefit from paying special attention to the program's early goal of fostering world peace through intercultural understanding. As many of the organization's historians have noted (Fox, 1985; Peterson, 1987; Tarc, 2009), one of the IB's loftiest goals was to help avert global conflict by promoting greater understanding between students from different national and cultural backgrounds. This ideal might help inform practice in the quite different situation of IB programs in urban public schools. To the extent that the IB's curriculum promotes international understanding in international schools, we might hope that it also promotes intercultural understanding in schools like Lincoln. Elements of the curriculum such as TOK, with its emphasis on appreciating a variety of perspectives on difficult issues, or the attempt to avoid ethnocentrism in the teaching of history and literature, thus might help students in diverse national schools understand each other's cultural backgrounds. However, the available research suggests that, to the extent that IB students in international schools develop more intercultural awareness, informal interactions with a diverse group of peers are at least as important as more formal elements of the curriculum (Ben Giaber, 2006; Brown, 2006; Hayden and Wong, 1997; Wilkinson and Hayden, 2010). Within-school stratification, then, could well undermine the IB's potential to promote intercultural understanding if the track structure tends to reproduce patterns of race and class inequality.

Lincoln High School

Finally, these findings bear directly on two immediate challenges for Lincoln: the need to address underrepresentation and the advent of detracking. The race, class, and gender disparities in IB participation are the most obvious challenge to the legitimacy of the achievement ideology. If Lincoln wants to sustain a credible claim to be an egalitarian institution, it must take a more proactive approach to recruiting black males and other underrepresented groups into the IB program. As Chapter 7 shows, most participants tacitly justify their school's passive approach by pointing out that the problem of minority male underachievement stems from family situations, cultural differences, income inequality, and other factors beyond the school's control. They may well be correct; concerns about the academic performance of black and Latino males are by no means unique to Lincoln (see, e.g., Corra, Carter, and Carter, 2011; Garibaldi, 1992; Jordan and Cooper, 2003; Noguera, 2003, 2009), and it would certainly be unfair to blame Lincoln alone for a problem with such deep roots in American history. Yet Lincoln's educational mission and its claim to be an agent of social justice oblige it to do

more than simply pass on the blame for underrepresentation. If teachers and students truly believe that hard work enables anybody to do the IB, they must make a concerted effort to convince more students – especially those from underrepresented groups – to invest their time and energy in a demanding curriculum.

This will no doubt be a demanding task, but students and teachers have suggested some manageable steps to improve IB recruitment. One solution addresses the common concern that Ms. Hoover, the IB coordinator, inadvertently deters some students from going full IB because she overemphasizes the difficulty of the program. The school might do well to ask current students or recent graduates to 'sell' the IB to their peers. This would give students a wider range of perspectives on the IB and perhaps help them form a more realistic idea of the amount of work involved. Recent graduates, in particular, might be able to convince younger students of the college-related benefits of the IB with greater credibility than school administrators. To the extent that underrepresentation is a self-perpetuating phenomenon, with some students deterred from going full IB by the fear that they would be the 'token' minority representation in some IB classes, asking students from underrepresented groups to be the public face of the IB might also help dispel the stereotype that IB classes are meant for white, middle-class students. Another approach involves lowering the financial barriers to IB participation, perhaps by raising funds to further subsidize the cost of IB exams for low-income students. At present, the school allows students who are eligible for free or reduced-price school meals to pay for IB exams on an installment plan, but more active fundraising could allow the school to further reduce the burden on low-income families. Such concrete steps would require teachers, administrators, and perhaps even students to have an open conversation about the causes and consequences of race, class, and gender disparities in IB participation at Lincoln. Interestingly, although the majority of teachers I interviewed are aware of and concerned about underrepresentation, most seem to feel that they are alone in this concern. Encouraging teachers to explicitly discuss underrepresentation might well generate a greater variety of ideas about how Lincoln can correct this obvious challenge to its egalitarian ideals.

The proposal to eliminate most 'regular' courses at Lincoln represents a much bolder approach to equalizing IB participation and, more broadly, fulfilling the promise of the achievement ideology that all students can do the IB. Yet this thesis offers a number of reasons to question whether detracking will achieve these lofty goals. As Chapter 7 has documented, resistance among teachers raises the possibility that

detracking simply will not happen. Teacher opposition has already forced the administration to retain some low-track science and math classes, and continued opposition in the coming years could thwart further progress. Even if the principal does succeed in eliminating all non-IB courses, the implicit hierarchy of courses described in Chapter 5 will likely allow stratification to continue. Pushing forward with detracking against the will of teachers may also cause some teachers to 'water down' their curricula, as one math teacher pessimistically predicts. Indeed, if a teacher doubts for any reason that all Lincoln students are qualified to manage high-track content, then lowering standards is a perfectly rational, if ultimately counterproductive, way to avoid the backlash that usually attends a high rate of student failure. In short, as long as teachers remain less than thoroughly convinced of the merits of detracking, some form of curricular stratification is likely to continue.

Research from other schools suggests that, if detracking is to succeed at Lincoln, the school will have to do much more than simply eliminate 'fluff classes'. One suburban district's detracking program, for instance, improved standardized test scores and IB participation rates by gradually eliminating tracking as early as middle school, redesigning curricula to incorporate more student-centered learning activities specifically designed for heterogeneous classes, and adding support classes for struggling students (Burris et al., 2008; Garrity and Burris, 2007). The AVID program, which has produced impressive gains in academic achievement and advanced coursetaking among black and Latino students in California and elsewhere, enrolls underrepresented students in high-track classes but also provides them with a support class, where they learn a variety of important academic skills (Mehan et al., 1996). In Lincoln's own English and history departments, which have pioneered detracking at the school, teachers with favorable views of detracking tend to use group discussions, differentiated assessment methods, and other teaching methods that cater to heterogeneous classes. Although the research on detracking is still somewhat preliminary, it does provide good reason to believe that detracking cannot succeed without a fundamental change in classroom instruction, especially in math and science. This change, in turn, is unlikely to happen if teachers do not actively support the detracking agenda.

All of these recommendations, however, demand a critical qualification: they will be extremely difficult to implement in the environment of budget restrictions and administrative instability that currently prevails at Lincoln and throughout the Springfield schools. The theme of limited resources occurred again and again in my interviews, as

teachers and students acknowledged the barriers presented by limited staffing, large classes, and outdated equipment. The effects of class sizes, in particular, are a constant complaint. One TOK teacher notes the impossibility of having meaningful, whole-class discussions about ethical and philosophical issues in a class of 36 students. A chemistry teacher wryly points out that, according to state law, most of his classes are too large to legally conduct experiments under the supervision of just one adult. Teachers also worry that it will be virtually impossible to differentiate instruction in the large IB classes that the principal's detracking proposal aims to create, especially because the school's special education staff is too small to provide inclusion support in more than a handful of classes. Although encouraging more students to take IB classes might seem to be the natural responsibility of the guidance department, which handles student scheduling, most participants recognize this as an unreasonable expectation, given that Lincoln employs just four guidance counselors for over 1,500 students. In many teachers' eyes, the 2013-14 school year promises to be particularly challenging, thanks to an unprecedented wave of retirements and resignations[44] that will leave Lincoln with an unusual number of relatively inexperienced teachers just as the principal's detracking proposals threaten to make classes much more heterogeneous. These persistent constraints, which are largely beyond the Lincoln administration's control, give reason to be pessimistic about the prospects for radical reform, particularly with respect to encouraging different approaches to instruction in heterogeneous classrooms, without substantial changes at the district and state levels.

At the most fundamental level, addressing both underrepresentation and detracking will require Lincoln to reconsider its stated faith in success by hard work alone. Lincoln's effort-based achievement ideology raises the tantalizing prospect that schools need not compromise between excellence and equity, but, as this thesis has demonstrated, the school's continued reliance on sorting its students betrays some amount of skepticism that every student can truly benefit from an IB education. I have drawn no conclusions in this thesis about whether the achievement ideology is truly correct, and, given the difficulty of reliably measuring 'hard work' and disentangling its effects from cognitive ability or prior achievement, it might be unreasonable to suggest a

[44] In 2011, a change in state law eviscerated the power of teachers' unions to collectively bargain over their wages, benefits, and conditions of employment. The existing contract governing SPS teachers expired in 2013, prompting an extraordinary number of teachers throughout the district to retire rather than face higher mandatory pension contributions and potentially lower salaries.

quantitative assessment of the achievement ideology as the next step for researchers. Nonetheless, resolving the tensions and inconsistencies described here will require Lincoln's staff, and perhaps its students, to come to some consensus about whether hard work is truly sufficient for regular education students to succeed in IB classes. Building consensus is particularly important because, as we have seen, detracking and other equity-oriented reforms depend on the active cooperation of teachers, who may have to change their approaches to instruction in order to accommodate more heterogeneous classes. Such a conversation will be difficult, but it is essential if Lincoln hopes to raise all of its students to a higher level of academic performance.

Conclusion

Lincoln High School represents both the potential and the limits of education in an ostensibly meritocratic society. It was one of the first state schools to offer the prestigious International Baccalaureate program to all comers, regardless of their background or ability to pay school fees, and its remarkably diverse student population continues to defy stereotypes about underperforming urban public schools to this day. To individual students, Lincoln holds out the promise of upward mobility through education; to its community, Lincoln offers the even more appealing prospect that public schooling can remedy longstanding inequities associated with race and class. However, the hierarchical structure of Lincoln's curriculum, and the predictable overrepresentation of privileged students in its upper echelons, suggest that the school has not fully embraced the mission of attacking inequality through education. Instead of preparing students equally for a meritocratic competition in the outside world, Lincoln constitutes a microcosmic meritocracy in its own right, one in which the gospel of hard work serves more as a justification for inequality than a strategy for reducing it.

Lincoln is hardly alone in forging an uneasy balance between excellence and equity; the dilemma is a familiar one for schools and other institutions in any stratified society. As such, Lincoln's story can be instructive for the many other schools seeking to close achievement gaps without compromising academic standards, both for researchers seeking to understand within-school stratification and for educators attempting to improve school practice and policy. Thus the possibility that Lincoln can achieve high standards without reproducing inequality is particular cause to be hopeful. If the school can be reorganized to develop merit rather than sort students, and if teachers are supported in carrying out this mission in increasingly diverse classes, Lincoln may yet become the vehicle of social mobility that it claims to be. Yet precisely because American

schools are embedded in a deeply stratified society, we should not be too optimistic that schools alone can resolve the conflict between excellence and equity, as long as the occupational structure demands that different jobs be rewarded with different material compensation and social status. The way in which the school distributes educational credentials certainly merits close examination, but changing this distribution is unlikely to singlehandedly fulfill the promises of the meritocratic ideal.

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Appendix A. Informed Consent Documents

Figure A-1. Consent documents for head of school

University of Oxford
Department of Educational Studies
15 Norham Gardens, Oxford, UK OX2 6PY

Director: Professor Anne Edwards
Tel: +44 (0)1865 274024 Fax: +44 (0)1865 274027

Principal name
School name and address
Date

Dear *(principal name)*,

I am writing to inquire about conducting some research in your school this or next academic year. I am a doctoral student at Oxford University, supervised by Professor David Phillips. My research project explores academic achievement in urban public high schools offering the International Baccalaureate Diploma Program. I am interested in how your school implements the IB program, and in how administrators, teachers, and students feel about the program's effect on academic achievement. By participating in the research, your school will contribute to a project that will advance our understanding of how IB programs work in the context of urban public schools, and how other schools and districts can successfully adopt the IB.

If you agree to let me conduct research at your school, I will visit the school several times in the 2010-11 and/or 2011-12 school years, for about two weeks at a time. I will arrange these visits in advance with you. My primary activities will be to observe classes and to interview teachers, administrators, and students about their perceptions of the IB program. With your consent, I will also observe faculty meetings and other school events.

Oxford University has strict ethical procedures governing research with teachers and students, consistent with the guidelines of the British Educational Research Association. This project has received clearance from Oxford's Central University Research Ethics Committee. Before beginning research at your school, I will inform parents and guardians about the research and offer them the opportunity to opt out of including their students in the research. Teachers, administrators, and students will only be interviewed after receiving information about the study and signing a consent form; students under 18 will not be interviewed unless their parent or guardian has signed a consent form as well. Classrooms will only be observed after the teacher has signed a consent form for the observation. Participants will be able to ask questions about the research at any time. Participants will be able to withdraw from the research at any time.

Figure A-1. Consent documents for head of school (continued)

All participants will be made anonymous in all reports and publications resulting from this research, and the school will not be named. My supervisor and I will be the only people who have full access to documents, interview transcripts, observation notes, and all other data resulting from this study. Names and other identifying details will be removed from notes and transcripts and replaced with pseudonyms before being used in any publication. Recordings of interviews and any documents obtained in the course of the study will be stored in a locked cabinet and will be destroyed at the end of the study.

If you agree to participate in this project, the research will be written up as a doctoral thesis. In accordance with Oxford University regulations, on successful submission of the thesis, it will be deposited both in print and online in the Oxford University archives, to facilitate its use in future research. The thesis will be available online to the general public through the Oxford University Research Archives.

If you would like to take part in the study, or need more information about what is involved, please contact me. I am most easily accessible by email at eva.lam@education.ox.ac.uk. Whether or not you feel it would be appropriate for your school to participate, I would be grateful if you would complete the enclosed form and return it to me in the enclosed stamped addressed envelope.

Thank you for your time and attention. I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours,

Eva Lam

Figure A-1. Consent documents for head of school (continued)

University of Oxford
Department of Educational Studies
15 Norham Gardens, Oxford, UK OX2 6PY

Director: Professor Anne Edwards
Tel: +44 (0)1865 274024 Fax: +44 (0)1865 274027

Academic Achievement and the International Baccalaureate in American Urban Public Schools

Eva Lam
Oxford University Department of Education

School name
School address
Principal name

Please select one of the following:

___ We would like to take part in this project.

___ We would like to find out more about this project.

___ We do not wish to participate in this project.

If you would like further information, or are interested in taking part, please give the name of a contact person for your school, and details of the best way to contact that person.

Contact name: _____

Contact email: _____

Contact telephone number: _____

Please return this form in the stamped, addressed envelope enclosed with this letter.

Thank you for your help.

Figure A-2. Consent documents for teachers

University of Oxford
Department of Educational Studies
15 Norham Gardens, Oxford, UK OX2 6PY

Director: Professor Anne Edwards
Tel: +44 (0)1865 274024 Fax: +44 (0)1865 274027

Date

Dear teacher,

I am writing to invite you to be interviewed for a study on academic achievement and the International Baccalaureate in American urban public schools. Your school has consented to participate in this study, and I may have already observed some of your classes; I would like to interview you to find out more about your experiences as a teacher at an IB school and your thoughts on the IB program. The purpose of this letter is to inform you about the interview process, and to get your consent for an interview.

If you agree to an interview with me, I will meet with you at your convenience, in your classroom or another convenient location. The interview will likely take approximately an hour; if necessary, we can conduct the interview in shorter segments or arrange a follow-up conversation later. I will ask you open-ended questions about your teaching experience and your feelings about the IB. There are no right or wrong answers to these questions, and you can decline to answer any question. You can also stop the interview at any time without consequence. Unless you object, I will tape-record our conversation; I may also take notes. I will use these interviews, along with other data sources, to write a doctoral thesis, which will be available in print and online through the Oxford University Research Archive.

I will take a number of steps to protect your anonymity during and after the interview, following procedures approved by the University of Oxford Central University Research Ethics Committee, which has approved this project. I will store the recording of our interview in a locked cabinet, which only my supervisor and I can access. I will destroy these recordings at the end of the study. Your name and any other identifying details will be removed when I transcribe our interview. Your name, the name of your school, and other identifying details about you or anyone else we discuss will not appear in my thesis or any other publications resulting from this research. I will not discuss your participation in the interview with anyone else at the school.

If you have a concern about any aspect of this project, please contact me in person, by email (eva.lam@education.ox.ac.uk), or by telephone (414-477-2566), and I will do my best to answer your questions. If you remain unhappy and wish to make a formal complaint, please contact Lisa Currie, Higher Degrees Secretary at the Oxford University Department of Education (lisa.currie@education.ox.ac.uk), who will direct your complaint to the appropriate body.

Figure A-2. Consent documents for teachers (continued)

If you are interested in participating in an interview, please fill out and sign the attached consent form and return it to me.

Thank you for your help!

Eva Lam
Doctoral research student

Figure A-2. Consent documents for teachers (continued)

University of Oxford

Department of Educational Studies
15 Norham Gardens, Oxford, UK OX2 6PY

Director: Professor Anne Edwards
Tel: +44 (0)1865 274024 Fax: +44 (0)1865 274027

Project: Academic Achievement and the International Baccalaureate in American Urban Public Schools
Researcher: Eva Lam

Teacher Interview Consent Form

I confirm that:

- I have read the participant information letter.
- I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the study, and I have received satisfactory answers to my questions.
- I understand that I can withdraw from the study at any time, for any reason, by telling the researcher that I wish to stop participating.
- I understand that this project has been reviewed by, and received ethics clearance through, the University of Oxford Central University Research Ethics Committee.
- I understand who will have access to the personal data I provide in this study, how the data will be stored, and what will happen to the data at the end of the project.
- I understand that the thesis based on this research will be available to the public through the Oxford University Research Archive.
- I agree to participate in this study.
- I understand how to raise a concern with the researcher and make a formal complaint.

Teacher name: _____

Teacher signature: _____ Date: _____

Researcher name: Eva Lam

Researcher signature: _____ Date: _____

Figure A-3. Consent documents for students and parents/guardians

University of Oxford

Department of Educational Studies
15 Norham Gardens, Oxford, UK OX2 6PY

Director: Professor Anne Edwards
Tel: +44 (0)1865 274024 Fax: +44 (0)1865 274027

(Date)

Dear student,

I am writing to invite you to participate in a study on academic achievement and the International Baccalaureate in American urban public schools. Your school has consented to participate in this study, and you may have noticed me observing some of your classes. I would like to interview you to find out more about your experiences at school and your thoughts on the IB program. The purpose of this letter is to inform you about the study, and to get your consent for an interview.

If you agree to an interview with me, I will meet with you at your convenience, during or after school, in a free classroom. I may ask to interview you individually or in a small group. The interview will likely take between 15 and 45 minutes. I will ask you open-ended questions about your experiences at school and your feelings about the IB. There are no right or wrong answers to these questions, and you can decline to answer any question. You can also stop the interview at any time without consequence. Unless you object, I will tape-record our conversation; I may also take notes. I will use these interviews, along with other data sources, to write a doctoral thesis, which will be available in print and online through the Oxford University Research Archive.

I will take a number of steps to protect your anonymity during and after the interview, following procedures approved by the University of Oxford Central University Research Ethics Committee, which has approved this project. I will store the recording of our interview in a locked cabinet, which only my supervisor and I can access. I will destroy these recordings at the end of the study. Your name and any other identifying details will be removed when I transcribe our interview. Your name, the names of your teachers, and the name of your school will not appear in my doctoral thesis or any other publications resulting from this research. I will not discuss your participation in the interview with anyone else at the school, unless failing to do so will pose a direct threat to your well-being. Your participation will not affect your grades.

If you have a concern about any aspect of this project, please contact me in person, by email (eva.lam@education.ox.ac.uk), or by telephone (414-477-2566), and I will do my best to answer your questions. If you remain unhappy and wish to make a formal complaint, please contact Lisa Currie, Higher Degrees Secretary at the Oxford University Department of Education (lisa.currie@education.ox.ac.uk), who will direct your complaint to the appropriate body.

Figure A-3. Consent documents for students and parents/guardians (continued)

If you are interested in participating in the research, please fill out and sign the attached consent form and return it to me; **if you are under 18, please have your parent or guardian fill it out as well**. If you are not interested in participating in the research, no paperwork is necessary.

Thank you for your help!

Eva Lam
Doctoral research student
Oxford University Department of Education

Figure A-3. Consent documents for students and parents/guardians (continued)

University of Oxford

Department of Educational Studies
15 Norham Gardens, Oxford, UK OX2 6PY

Director: Professor Anne Edwards
Tel: +44 (0)1865 274024 Fax: +44 (0)1865 274027

Project: Academic Achievement and the International Baccalaureate in American Urban Public Schools
Researcher: Eva Lam

Student Interview Consent Form

I confirm that:

- I have read the participant information letter.
- I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the study, and I have received satisfactory answers to my questions.
- I understand that I can withdraw from the study at any time, for any reason, by telling the researcher that I wish to stop participating.
- I understand that this project has been reviewed by, and received ethics clearance through, the University of Oxford Central University Research Ethics Committee.
- I understand who will have access to the personal data I provide in this study, how the data will be stored, and what will happen to the data at the end of the project.
- I understand that the thesis based on this research will be available to the public through the Oxford University Research Archive.
- I agree to participate in this study.
- I understand how to raise a concern with the researcher and make a formal complaint.

Student name: _____

Student signature: _____ Date: _____

If the student is under 18:

I confirm that I have read the attached information letter and that I consent to my child's participation in this study.

Parent/guardian name: _____

Parent/guardian signature: _____ Date: _____

Researcher name: Eva Lam

Researcher signature: _____ Date: _____

Appendix B. Interview Guides

Interview guide for students

Background
Tell me about yourself. What grade are you in? What school did you go to before Lincoln?
How did you come to Lincoln? Who decided? Why? Did the IB figure into that decision?

Coursetaking history and decision-making process
If you remember, what classes did you take freshman year? (Probe for all required subjects) Do you remember how you chose those classes? (Repeat for all years enrolled at Lincoln)
How do you learn about different classes when you're choosing classes?
Did you ask anyone else for advice about what classes to take? Teachers, friends, family?
How would you compare your IB and your non-IB classes?
What's your easiest class? Your hardest? Why?
What's your favorite class? Your least favorite? Why?
Are you planning to take any IB exams? Why?
What's your workload like? How do you manage the work?

IB decision
Are you full IB, or planning to go full IB? How did you make that decision?
What do you think are the advantages of being full IB/taking IB classes? The disadvantages?
How would you compare IB and non-IB students with each other?
Do you remember how you first heard about the IB? What was your first impression?
How else have you learned about the IB – friends, family, teachers, official sources of information? What do you think was the most important source of information?
Did you ask anyone for advice about whether to go full IB – your family, your friends, your teachers, a guidance counselor?
(If full IB) Have you ever considered dropping full IB? How come?
(If dropped full IB) How did you end up dropping full IB?
If a younger student asked you for advice about whether to go full IB, what would you say?
What do you think it takes for a student to be full IB here? (Probe for roles of effort, cognitive ability, academic preparation, external supports)
Do you think everyone here should be full IB?

Student culture and underrepresentation
Do you think there's a divide between IB and non-IB students here?
Do you think anyone looks at you differently, or treats you differently, because you're an IB/certificate student? (Probe for perceived bias among students, teachers, administrators)
Do you think every group here is equally represented in the IB? Why or why not? Do you think the school is doing anything about that? Should they?

Closing

What do you want to do after high school? (Probe for university aspirations, career aspirations, links with high school coursetaking)

What do you do outside of classes – extracurricular activities, sports, work, hobbies?

If you don't mind telling me, how do you identify your race/ethnicity?

Is there anything else you want to tell me?

Interview guide for teachers

Background
Tell me about yourself. How did you get into teaching? How long have you been teaching?
How long have you been teaching at Lincoln? Where else have you taught?
What classes are you teaching this year? (Probe for track level, if necessary)
What other classes have you taught at Lincoln? (Probe for complete list and years)
How long have you been teaching those classes? (Probe for order of teaching and timing of move to high-track classes)
How did you end up teaching the classes that you teach? (Probe for department placement process, factors in teacher scheduling)

General opinions – IB and the achievement ideology
Can you tell me about how the IB works at Lincoln, from your perspective?
What do you think about the IB program here?
Do you think being in an urban public school changes the IB program? How?
What do you think a student needs to be able to do the IB here? (Probe for roles of effort, cognitive ability, academic preparation, external supports)
Do you think every student here can handle the IB? Should everyone here be full IB?

Teaching
How would you compare your IB and your non-IB classes, or IB and non-IB classes in general? (Probe for academic and behavioral differences)
Do you think the IB training has influenced the way you teach? How?
How much do you follow the IB syllabus in your class? How much time do you spend trying to prepare students for the IB exam?
(For freshman and sophomore classes) Do you think about preparing students for IB classes at all in teaching your class?

Detracking
(English and social studies teachers) Your department requires juniors/seniors to take an IB course, right? How was that decision made? Was there any resistance to that? (Probe for arguments for and against detracking in departmental conversations) How is that working out so far?
I've heard that Dr. Z wants to eliminate a lot of regular classes. Is that correct? (Probe for understanding of plan)
What do you think about that? What do you think will happen in your classroom? In the school?

Course placement
How do students get assigned to classes in your subject?
How do students end up in your class? What courses do they usually come from?
If a student starts in a low-track course in your department, what do you think they need to jump up to an IB class?
What do you think a student needs to be ready for your class? Skills? Attitudes?
Do you have to approve students to take any classes? What do you look for when they ask you to sign their enrollment forms? Does anyone else have influence over whether students end up in the class you recommend?
Do students ever ask you advice on what classes to take? Whether to go full IB? Do you ever give any general advice to students about those questions?

Peer culture and underrepresentation
How would you compare IB and non-IB students here?
Do you think there's a division between IB and non-IB students at this school?
Do you think there's a stigma attached to being full IB, or not being full IB, at this school?
Is there any group of students that you think is overrepresented or underrepresented in IB classes here? (Introduce black male underrepresentation, if necessary) Why do you think that is? Is the school doing anything about it? Do you think the school should be doing anything about it?

Closing questions
If you could change anything about Lincoln, what would it be?
Is there anything else you'd like to tell me?

Appendix C. Sample Interview Transcript

I first met Andrew, a senior, through his debate coach. He was an enthusiastic but inconsistent student; he took an extremely demanding load of IB courses and displayed an obvious interest in a wide variety of academic and political topics, but, as he freely admitted, he earned mediocre grades and often neglected his homework. We met for an interview in late August, about two weeks after the start of the school year; our conversation took place in an unoccupied corner of an art classroom and lasted roughly twenty minutes. During the course of the subsequent school year, I frequently chatted with Andrew about school, debate, and politics. At his request, we also met to discuss his college applications; he was particularly interested in going to Harvard. Ultimately, Andrew graduated from Lincoln in May 2012 and enrolled in a public university in Springfield. This transcript has been edited to remove a few digressions, but it is otherwise a verbatim record of our interview.

EL: Do you have any questions, procedure-wise?
A: Um, not really? You know I'm not full IB, right? I just take IB-
EL: Yeah, actually, that helps me a lot.
A: Okay.
EL: Because I'm talking to too many full IB kids.
A: Okay. Yeah. I just take IB classes.
EL: Okay. So how many IB classes are you taking?
A: Every class is IB. I take – I took seven last year, so that was a full course, and then I take, um, eight this year.
EL: Eight classes?
A: Eight classes. I take two HL classes after school.
EL: Wow. What classes are they?
A: Physics HL and Econ HL.
EL: I didn't even know they had physics HL.
A: They do.
EL: Is that just on your own time?
A: Yeah. Yeah.
EL: So you're getting course credit for that. Do you actually meet with the teacher, or just study?
A: Yeah. It's about 45 minutes after school with the teacher. However, it's mostly independent work. You have to do at least two hours of studying on your own during the week. And when we're actually in the classroom, we're just with everybody else that's in the class, and we talk over the homework problem.
EL: Yeah. Yeah. That – [the homework] that class was doing, the SL class was doing? Or –
A: What the HL class was doing. We have a homework packet. So we do the homework, and then when we're in the classroom, we talk it over with each other.
EL: Oh, okay. Okay. So you just kind of ignore what's going on in the rest of the class, then? There's just, like, a few of you?
A: Yeah.
EL: Sweet. So is Mr. Chalmers [a veteran economics teacher] doing econ?
A: Yeah, Chalmers is doing econ.
EL: Of course. And who does physics?
A: Mr. Skinner.
EL: Sweet.
A: I think he was new, before –
EL: Yeah. I don't think he was here when I was here. So how come you're not full IB?
A: I'm not full IB because – man. I always preach going full IB, but then I was like, I like

learning a lot. I like learning about different things – economics, geography, psychology – they all appeal to me. And I realized that going full IB would not only exclude me from taking these classes, but I would also have to take gym. Which I'm doing anyways, but I would have to take gym, since I had TOK, and then that .5 credit would have to be gym.[45]
EL: Really.
A: Yeah.
EL: Huh! So – sorry. I'm not quite wrapping my head around this. So you have to take, um, gym regardless? Is that true, or do you –
A: Yeah. SPS requires three semesters of gym, and because I waited for so long, I'm now taking a full year of gym.
EL: Okay. So you ditched TOK and did gym instead?
A: Basically. Since I wasn't full IB.
EL: Was that it? Was it just the scheduling stuff? Or was there anything else?
A: No, basically scheduling.
EL: That sucks.
A: Yeah.
EL: And would you have wanted to stay full IB, if you could…?
A: I would have loved to be full IB just for the TOK class. Just because it's that sort of abstract thinking, and how do we know this, blah blah blah. I love talking about that stuff.
EL: Did you take TOK last year?
A: No. I wasn't full IB last year, either.
EL: At what point did you drop, or were you never –
A: I was never.
EL: Oh, okay. Huh. Interesting. You're definitely the first person I've talked to who's taken that many IB classes who's not full IB.
A: Oh, yeah.
EL: So back up a little bit. How did you end up at Lincoln? Where were you before this?
A: I was at [a south side middle school].
EL: Yeah. And how'd you decide to come to Lincoln?
A: I decided to come to Lincoln – wow, this will sound really selfish – I like to associate myself with the best, and you know, Lincoln was the best, I heard around the block, so I just had to go to Lincoln. So I applied.
EL: Yeah. I can relate to that a little bit. Did the IB factor into that decision at all?
A: I actually was unaware of what IB was when entering Lincoln. My real first exposure was probably so – towards the end of sophomore year, when they were like, 'Oh, you're going to be a part of this'.
EL: Had you been in pre-diploma-type classes before that? Or was it a big jump up?
A: Yeah.
EL: So you sort of set yourself on a track to be full IB, but without necessarily thinking that much about it.
A: Yeah, knowing what was going to be entailed.
EL: So what was your – so you didn't really have a conception of what the IB was before the end of sophomore year?
A: I kind of knew, oh, you have to write this paper [i.e., the extended essay], and you did

[45] This is a somewhat inaccurate interpretation. All Lincoln students are required to earn 1.5 credits of physical education to graduate; full IB students can obtain a waiver that allows them to earn one-half credit towards this requirement by completing an independent study contract.

a lot of other work.
EL: What was your impression of how much work it was going to take?
A: Before or during?
EL: Before.
A: Not what I expected. I just assumed, like, a twelve-page paper. And my freshman year, I had Mr. Churchill [a history teacher with a reputation for high standards] for world history, so I already had written a twelve-page paper before. So I was like, oh, this is going to be easy! You know? But man. Has it just been not what I expected, you know?
EL: How much harder has it been?
A: Uh… a lot. Sophomore year to junior year was such a jump. And man, did that throw me off track, for a little bit, but –
EL: In what sense is it harder? Is it like, more work, harder work, all of the above?
A: Um… hmm. I would have to say the work is harder, and probably there's a lot more of it, just compared to freshman and sophomore year. Just because, I think… I don't know. It's higher level. They're trying to prep you for college. These – some of these classes, like geography and psych, are teaching two-year courses in one year to high school students. So not only are you reading things that are probably collegiate documents, but you have seven other classes, and this and that, and IB requirements [inaudible]. It was just a lot to handle.
EL: So how do you deal with that level of work?
A: How do I deal?
EL: Yeah. What do you do to, to cope?
A: I just… I try to suck it up and do it. And if it doesn't get done, then, you know, I procrastinate, and I just, I figure something out.
EL: How come you decided to take so many IB courses?
A: I decided to take so many IB courses… In the beginning it was like, well, I should just take a bunch of these classes so I know a lot of things, and I can impress people because I have a vast knowledge of a variety of things. And then, you know, later on in high school, I realized that the more classes I took HL, the more likely I would be to get that college credit, so now it's been more of a financial decision to take more.
EL: Do you think it's been worth it so far?
A: Oh, definitely. Definitely.
EL: Do you get the sense there's a division in this school at all between, like, IB and non-IB students?
A: I probably wouldn't say that, just because I myself felt, in the beginning of junior year, there was this division. Maybe within the classes themselves, because they're IB, you're going to be with only, assumingly, IB students. But I would feel outside of the classrooms, certificate, full IB, those that even take – I don't know how I would put – those that don't take even a single IB class, they all sort of intermingle. And I know a lot of people that are certificate that are taking two IB classes, who talk with full IB students, and it's just – I don't know. I think IB and this whole title doesn't really hold up when it comes to wanting to know everybody and being a community.
EL: Do you think there's any stigma attached to being full IB, or not being full IB, or…
A: Oh, yeah. I would have to say… Yeah, there definitely is one. Being full IB, you're seen as this, you're super intelligent, you're going to make it somewhere, you're gonna do this, you're on the right track, you're probably middle class. And being non-full IB, you're probably just like, oh, I got a job, I probably live in poverty, I don't know as much, I can't do as much.
EL: It's interesting you say, you know, if you're full IB, you're probably middle class. Because you're one of the first – sometimes people will talk about race, but almost nobody talks about class when I ask that question. So do you think, is that true, is it true

that most people who are full IB or participating at a high level are middle class?
A: I will have to agree. I'm just going to agree on that. Because I feel that with such a high demand that full IB wants you to do, you know, with the extended [essay], the CAS, and whatnot, those who are usually not middle class or have financial problems end up finding themselves too stressed on a full IB track, so they end up either dropping, or they just don't go for it, because they know, oh, I can't afford this, for one –
EL: Exam-wise, or time-wise?
A: Exam-wise and time-wise.
EL: Can I ask where you would situate yourself on that spectrum?
A: [Laughs] We were just talking about this in math class.
EL: If you don't want to tell me, that is totally fine.
A: No. Um… I would probably situate myself – I don't know the real federal standard for what's poverty, but I would assume I'm, like, upper lower class.
EL: Upper lower class?
A: Upper lower class.
EL: Upper lower class, okay.
A: Maybe lower middle class. A lot of the scholarships say, if you make under sixty thousand [dollars per year], you're good [i.e., eligible to apply for scholarships targeted at students from low-income families]. So I fit that requirement. So, pretty much.
EL: Okay. Gotcha. Gotcha. And while we're asking uncomfortable demographic questions, can I ask what ethnicity you would categorize yourself as?
A: I categorize myself as African American.
EL: Okay. Do you think that there's equal or unequal ethnic representation in the IB program?
A: I don't know. Um… being that this school is mostly African American, I would say, yeah, there's unequal representation. Um… For full IB, or certificate? What do you mean, IB program?
EL: Start with full IB.
A: Full IB, maybe not so much. I would have to say it's mostly Caucasian or your, uh, Filipino, Pacific Islander sort of ethnicity that go full IB.
EL: Are there a lot of Filipino and Pacific Islander kids at this school? I don't think there were when I was here, but –
A: Actually, no. I know one Filipino woman who was full IB. I would assume. Maybe she dropped. I don't know.
EL: And what about people who are represented as, like, just certificate students?
A: Certificate, I would believe there's an equal representation.
EL: Why do you think that is?
A: Um…
EL: Specifically, why do you think that it's – like, the full IB students are whiter than the rest of the school?
A: I think, I mean, not only – I think that I would have to fall back on the class. I just don't think – it's more – The majority of African Americans at this school are probably lower middle class, upper middle class, and so they don't have the time or money to be a part of the full IB track, so they can't. So they just go certificate.
EL: Do you – where do you want to, what do you want to do after this?
A: After high school?
EL: Yeah.
A: Oh, man. For undergrad, I'll probably major in chemistry. Or biology. Probably chemistry, though, because I bet I could get better jobs with a major in chemistry than biology. And then off to med school after that, to be a neurosurgeon.
EL: That's funny. You are the second student I've interviewed today, and you're the

second one who wants to be a neurosurgeon. Do you have any idea where you want to go for college?
A: For college? Well, my dream has been Harvard.
EL: Yes. I mean, hey – that's awesome.
A: I know I'm not going to get in, though. So I'll probably –
EL: Why do you think that? Just out of curiosity.
A: Oh. Because I definitely don't have the grades for that, for one. And probably wouldn't get as much financial aid as I would expect, so probably wouldn't be able to afford it.
EL: [A short digression on Harvard's financial aid policy.] What do you do – I know part of the answer to this question, but what do you do outside of school?
A: Outside of school? Like, extracurricular, or, like, hobbies outside of school?
EL: Uh, all the above.
A: I do, obviously, Congress, forensics, debate. I'm in Model UN, Science Olympiad. What else do I do? Link Crew, that is considered outside of school.
EL: What is Link Crew? This is new for me.
A: It's very new. It started when I was a freshman. It's upperclassmen sort of helping pave the way or create the foundation for freshmen to have a smoother transition from middle school to high school.
EL: That's cool. So what do – are you, like, a mentor in that program?
A: I guess we could be seen as mentors.
EL: Sorry, I don't know what your terminology is.
A: We – yeah, I mean, freshmen can come to us and ask for help. We help them study for their first exams. We hold specific events that help freshmen become more of a community, so they know each other and they feel that they're also part of a high school experience, because they know the top of the top, seniors and juniors.
EL: Do you help – do you ever give freshmen advice about whether they should – like, what classes they should take, whether they should be pointing towards the IB or not?
A: All the time. I don't specifically say, 'Oh, you should not do full IB, because of all the crap'. I just say, you know, look at your options. Because full IB is amazing. I don't have any problems with going full IB, or people who went full IB. It's an amazing track, people should go for it. I usually just say, you know, what do you want to do? Do you want to learn more, or do you want to look good?
EL: Is there a 'but' on the other end of that, I think full IB is great?
A: Uh… I guess.
EL: Do you think there are downsides?
A: You know, full IB, I hear from multiple people, it's just like – oh, you have your diploma, you look good, but colleges don't care.
EL: Really? In terms of admission, or credit, or both?
A: Admission. That doesn't really set you – maybe. Makes you a little unique, but not incredibly unique.
EL: Just out of curiosity, where do you get that impression? Because I don't, I honestly was not that informed when I did my college applications. I don't know that much. And so the only thing I knew about IB in college was that Ms. Hoover [the IB coordinator] was always going around saying, 'It'll get you into college! They're looking at your transcript!'
A: She basically does. Oh, wow. I didn't notice that. But, uh, I think most of my friends that already graduated and that are in college now, they say, they didn't really seem to notice that I was full IB. I know [a mutual friend], you know her – she didn't even receive her diploma until after she got accepted into college, so she really couldn't put it on her application for college, to say, 'Oh, I was full IB', because [inaudible]. So it's kind

of just like, I accomplished this, but it didn't really tip the weight, you know?
EL: I mean, I don't even know if you've taken any, but how would you compare IB to non-IB classes?
A: IB to non-IB classes? IB classes are so much harder. They are – yeah, they're just ten times harder than non-IB classes. I think non-IB classes are installed for children who are assumed to not be able to graduate, so we make these classes so that – so easy that it's just like, hey, scoot along now so you can graduate and get out.
EL: Do you get the sense that there's a bunch of those kids at Lincoln?
A: Yes. An amount that I didn't really think that was going to be here coming into Lincoln.
EL: Despite the admissions test and stuff?
A: Yeah.
EL: Why? Any i–
A: Coming into Lincoln, I was associating myself with the best of the best. I'm assuming everyone is going to be a genius. And I come here, and there's kids who should belong at [a neighborhood school with a weaker academic reputation]. They should not be here. I don't know.
EL: Huh. That's interesting. Anything else that sticks out in your head as, like, really important, why haven't you asked me about this? Anything else you want to tell me?
A: I don't know. I feel like everything you're asking is relative to what you want to hear, so hopefully…
EL: That's true. No, this has been super useful, so… Yeah, that's all I got in terms of questions. So thank you very much!
A: Great!

Appendix D. Sample Observation Notes

These notes were taken on a Tuesday in January, not long after the end of the winter vacation, during Ms. Weiss' Hour 10 section of World Literature, a twelfth-grade English class. Hour 10, the last period in the school day at Lincoln, lasts from 1:47 PM to 2:40 PM; at several points in the text, I have made a note of the time in parentheses. There were 32 students in class on this day. Direct quotations are enclosed in double inverted commas; single inverted commas mark paraphrased dialogue, although I have mimicked participants' styles of speech as much as possible. In rendering dialogue, I have used 'T' to indicate the teacher, 'B' for a male student, 'G' for a female student, and 'S' for a student whose gender I did not record.

(1:47.) The bell rings. Students are entering. Ms. Weiss shuts the door and yells, "When you're late, you wait!" at the students who haven't made it. "Stop talking!" she calls, over and over. "You have a quote and a journal prompt." One girl up front is asking the teacher about makeup work. 'Not now', the teacher says.

The quote: "We should all be concerned about the future, because we will have to spend the rest of our lives there." She repeats this, in parts, several times, then gives the author's name: Charles F. Kettering, a philosopher. It's mostly quiet, especially compared to yesterday. Students are writing. The noise level rises. "Hey, you're writing, not chatting." Then: "Writing is a silent activity", a couple dozen times.

(1:52.) There's laughing in some corners of the classroom and talking in others. The teacher takes attendance, calling names. There are lots of jokes and chatter during this process.

(1:54.) T: "On the same page, write down a journal prompt." A boy walks in late, wearing a sweatshirt that reads 'I ♥ HOT MOMS'. Another boy reads it aloud and calls out, "He always trying to bone people's moms!"

Ms. Weiss gives the journal prompt: "Have you ever felt like you didn't belong? Describe that feeling." This is connected to the reading – are you like Mira or B?[46] "Writing is a silent activity!" – she repeats this several times during the exercise. "You don't know when I'm gonna collect this."

B: 'Who's Mira and B?' (He wasn't here yesterday.)
B: "Damn, Rihanna sexy!" (Referring to a popular singer.)
(1:58.) T: "One minute to finish!"

(There's a little mumbling among boys in a corner about who Mira is. Then some rap lyrics are exchanged across aisles: "I am not a boxer, but I do some rounds.")

[46] On the previous day, the class had read a selection from their textbook: an essay, originally published in the *New York Times* (Mukherjee, 1996), about two Indian sisters' approaches to assimilating in America. The author, whose first name was Bharati (the class, finding this difficult to pronounce, referred to her as 'B'), compared her own attempt to assimilate into American culture with her sister Mira's decision to retain Indian citizenship and live as an expatriate.

(1:59.) T: 'OK, are you ready? Open *Models for Writers* to page 130. Did we finish the questions yesterday?'
G: 'Yes.'
T: 'You're probably lying, but that's OK.'

Students are now looking at a prompt in their textbook that lists the contents of a hypothetical student's desk drawer and asks students to create categories by which to sort the drawer.

T: 'You're going row by row. You need a recorder – one person writes it down. Organize this drawer. Someone read out loud. Divide them into categories, label the categories, put like with like.'
A girl reads an entry entitled 'Division and Classification' from the textbook's glossary: "Division and classification are rhetorical patterns used by the writer first to establish categories and then to arrange or sort people, places, or things into these categories according to their different characteristics, thus making them more manageable for the writer and more understandable and meaningful for the reader."
A student passes wind; someone snickers.

T: 'Rhetoric is a five-dollar word for what? Writers use it. For writing, thinking – something you're not doing much of. For the literal-minded, you can see, but not touch, this exercise.' She opens up a red canvas bag and dumps out a pile of school supplies on a desk at the front of the room. Lots of students call out 'Ooh!', in a mocking tone. 'One person writes. Pick a recorder and start.'

(2:04.) There's lots of noise in the room. Three boys in the back are laughing loudly. Ms. Weiss is showing a few students some kind of cleaning device in her pile of stuff. She calls out: "Who's got an illegal cellular device?[47] Take it out and tell me what time it is."
'It's 2:06. In ten minutes I'll stop you.'

(2:07.) T: (Holding up a pen and pencil.) 'What's in my hand?'
S: 'A pen.'
S: 'A pencil.'
T: 'What's the broad category? Writing utensils. Group like things with like things.'

A boy in the back is imitating one of the teacher's favorite phrases: "Dammit, Janet!"
T: 'You're all getting a grade for this!'

A boy sitting next to me breaks wind, gets up, and walks towards the front of the room, pausing halfway to dance around in front of a pair of girls. He's laughing wildly. A couple of boys nearby walk away to escape the smell.

The teacher calls out time warnings: 'Eight minutes!' 'Six minutes!' 'Two minutes!'
There's sudden quiet at 2:13. 'One minute!'

(2:14.) T: 'We're done. Here's an example of classification.' She writes two headings on the board: 'Good Kids' and 'Bad Kids'. 'What am I grouping? Kids. Actually, you do it.

[47] Officially, Lincoln students are not allowed to carry mobile phones or other electronic devices during the school day. In practice, this rule is widely disregarded, and teachers occasionally ask students to use their 'illegal cellular devices' as clocks or timers.

Who will be my recorder?' (A girl volunteers.) 'Think how I would categorize them as I read each name. I'll tell you if you're right.'

There's surprising quiet at the start of this exercise. The teacher reads through the attendance list, and the girl at the board puts a check under 'good' or 'bad' for each name. This elicits many loud reactions. The girl writing on the board pauses when the teacher reads one boy's name. She goes to him: "Why do you think they're having trouble categorizing you?"
B: "They don't know me."
T: "You miss too much class!"
At the end of the exercise, about eight students have been labeled as 'bad'.

T: 'So if you're classifying, you need categories first.' The boys in my corner are talking; the rest of the class is quiet. 'So in the drawer, what's a broad category?'
G: 'Writing utensils.'
B: 'Things you find when cleaning out a desk.'
G: 'Personal grooming items.'
T: 'Would a broad category be school supplies? So find "fastener". Or "clasp". A clasp holds other things together. Is there an absolute right or wrong way to do this? No. Choose wisely. I have a pen, a pencil, a marker, lead… where would those go?'
S: 'Writing.'
T: 'What about this?' She holds up an eraser. 'Where would it go?'

A boy throws a paperclip across the computer desks. It lands near a girl, who says, "Who threw that?" and throws it back in his direction. Meanwhile, Ms. Weiss is going through more examples, holding up office supplies.

Ms. Weiss calls on the recorder from the far left row. An Asian girl stands up; the teacher calls her by the wrong name and apologizes. She reads her list quietly. The boys in my corner and some boys on the other side of the room are talking.
T: "Are you listening?" One conversation stops; the other carries on with quiet snickering.
T: "Anyone do it differently? You might want to revise your groupings."
A girl shares her group's list, starting with "things to write with". T interrupts: 'Do you write with an eraser?' I notice a girl two seats down from me swiping away at an iPod.

The teacher calls on a third group, and a boy reads their categories. My corner is continuing to talk, and a boy nearby is playing with a pair of gloves – the only thing on his desk. The boy next to me, finally quiet, is texting instead.
(2:24.) T: 'So you could further classify writing utensils by color or type." 'Classification lets you be as specific as you want.' "And good writing is what?"
B: 'Nonexistent.'
G: 'Organized.'
B: 'Spontaneous.'
T: 'Specific!' She gives an example by vaguely indicating people in the room. 'You have to use nouns.' It's quite noisy now.

A girl reads her group's list. It's quieter now, except for the three boys in the back. 'We didn't know what to do with scissors, but we figured it didn't matter because they'd get

confiscated in the latest weapons check anyway.'[48] A boy in back makes a sarcastic comment: 'That's a knee-slapper.' A boy reads the list for the last group, with two or three side conversations.

(2:33.) T: 'What did you learn?'
G: 'How to organize.'
B, raising hand: 'Before you start organizing, you need categories.'
T: 'Hands only, what did you learn?'
G: 'How to organize.'
T: 'Specifically?'
G: 'How to categorize.'
T: 'What else? I am really going to have to talk to your parents, because they're paying taxes that fund my salary, but you're not learning.'
G: 'There are lots of ways to categorize things.'
G: 'It can be specific or general.'
T: 'What's the best choice?'
(A chorus of responses, mixed between 'specific' and 'pacific'.)
T: 'I am not feeling pacific. Don't confuse specific and pacific, or I'll punch you in the jaw. Pacific is peaceful, and also the name of an ocean.'
B: 'I learned a lot about myself.'
T: 'What did you learn, dear heart?'
B: 'I learned how to work within a group.'
T: 'That's a valuable life skill. We don't just give you group work for our health. Look around. There are messes everywhere. Clean them up. "Get your crap in the right container." Bring *Models for Writers* tomorrow.' There's loud talking in my corner at this point. 'I have bad news. You might have heard a rumor that I'm not here on Thursday. But I'm actually only missing the first two classes. So I'll be here for this class.'

(2:37.) Students are packing their things, putting on their book bags, and standing up. One of the boys in my corner is talking about how much he weighs.

(2:39.) Ms. Weiss announces, 'I'm putting away extra books tomorrow, so be sure to take your things tonight.' One girl stays after the bell, asking about extra work. She chats with Ms. Weiss and me for several minutes, exchanging some anecdotes about another teacher, and then leaves.

[48] Lincoln, like most SPS schools, periodically conducts unannounced checks for weapons and other contraband at the beginning of the school day; during these checks, all students must have their bags searched and walk through a metal detector as they enter the building.

Appendix E. Data Inventory

Table E-1. Student interviews

Pseudonym	Race/ ethnicity	Gender	Graduating class	IB status	Introduced through[49]
Jamari	African American	Male	2009	Full IB	Ms. McLean
Josh	White/ Latino	Male	2011	Full IB	Student contact
Ahman	African American	Male	2009	Full IB	Ms. McLean
Terrence	African American	Male	2009	Full IB	Ms. McLean
Ephasia	African American	Female	2009	Full IB	Jamari
Bart	White	Male	2012	Full IB	Debate
Aaron	White	Male	2012	Full IB	Debate
Kiana	African American	Female	2011	Certificate	Art room
Tramon	African American	Male	2013	Full IB	Debate
Stella	African American	Female	2014	Prospective IB	Student contact
Jarrell	African American	Male	2013	Full IB	Debate
Andrew	African American	Male	2012	Certificate	Debate
AJ	White	Male	2013	Full IB	Observation
Kia	African American	Female	2013	Full IB	Stella
Javon	African American	Male	2013	Certificate	Ms. McLean
Glenna	African American	Female	2012	Certificate	Observation
Sam	Multiracial	Female	2014	Undecided	Art room

[49] This column lists the name of the student or teacher who introduced me to each student or the context in which we met. 'Student contact' indicates that the student initially reached out to me, usually because he or she was specifically interested in participating in my research. 'Debate' indicates that I met the student while I was volunteering with the speech and debate team. 'Art room' indicates that I became acquainted with the student because he or she took one of Mr. Waits' art classes or frequently visited his classroom, where I spent my free time.

Table E-1. Student interviews (continued)

Pseudonym	Race/ ethnicity	Gender	Graduating class	IB status	Introduced through
Jenny	White	Female	2012	Full IB	Mr. Waits
Monique	African American	Female	2012	Full IB	Observation
Jona	African American	Female	2013	Certificate	Art room
Diana	Hispanic	Female	2013	Certificate	Art room
Sherelle	African American	Female	2012	Full IB	Monique
Aaron	African American	Male	2012	Certificate	Art room
Amina	African American	Female	2015	Prospective IB	Art room
Halima	African American	Female	2014	Prospective IB	Art room
Wilma	African American	Female	2014	Prospective IB	Art room
Ali	Asian	Male	2012	Full IB	Mr. Waits
Angeline	White	Female	2013	Full IB	Mr. Waits
Lynencia	African American	Female	2014	Certificate	Mr. Waits
Maya	African American	Female	2012	Certificate	Mr. Waits
Claire	Multiracial	Female	2012	Certificate	Art room
Wendell	White	Male	2013	Full IB	Debate
Sylvia	Asian	Female	2015	Prospective IB	Art room
Lisa	Asian	Female	2012	Dropped IB	Art room
Chavon	African American	Female	2014	Certificate	Art room
Kenneth	African American	Male	2013	Full IB	Debate
Taylor	White	Female	2012	Dropped IB	Debate
Ana	White	Female	2012	Full IB	Debate
Maggie	White	Female	2012	Certificate	Art room
Quinton	African American	Male	2013	Full IB	Nelson
Omari	Black	Male	2012	Dropped IB	Art room
Nelson	Multiracial	Male	2012	Full IB	Art room

Table E-2. Teacher interviews

Pseudonym	Department/ position	Race/ ethnicity	Gender	Courses taught, 2011-12
Ms. Nolan	English	White	Female	American Authors PD IB Language and Literature 1 IB Literature 2
Ms. McLean	Spanish	White	Female	Spanish 1 Spanish 1 Accelerated Spanish 2
Dr. Z	Principal	Asian	Male	
Mr. Waits	Art	White	Male	Art Foundations 1 Art Foundations 2 Painting Clay Design
Ms. Hoover	IB coordinator	White	Female	
Mr. Wright	Art	White	Male	Art Foundations 2 Photography IB Art 1 IB Art 2
Mr. Payton	Art	African American	Male	Art Foundations 1
Ms. Nowak	English	White	Female	American Authors IB Literature 2
Mr. Patrick	Social studies	White	Male	IB Global History IB Theory of Knowledge
Mr. Gallo	Social studies	White	Male	IB Theory of Knowledge Aesthetics Anthropology Sociology Philosophy
Mr. Chalmers	Social studies	White	Male	IB Economics IB Global History
Ms. Johnson	Guidance counselor	White	Female	
Ms. Domrose	Guidance counselor	White	Female	
Ms. Weiss	English/theatre	White	Female	Acting IB Theatre 1 Advanced Composition/ World Literature
Mr. Churchill	Social studies	White	Male	IB History of the Americas
Ms. Muntz	Science	White	Female	IB Chemistry 1

Table E-2. Teacher interviews (continued)

Pseudonym	Department/ position	Race/ ethnicity	Gender	Courses taught, 2011-12
Mr. Logan	Science	White	Male	Chemistry PD IB Chemistry 2
Mr. Schmidt	Math	White	Male	Algebra Algebra PD
Mr. Landers	Science	White	Male	Biology 2 IB Environmentals
Ms. Atkins	Science/CAS coordinator	White	Female	IB Biology 1
Mr. Pryor	English	White	Male	British Authors PD IB Literature 1
Mr. Barlow	Special education	White	Male	Functional Math Resource Room
Ms. Bouvier	English	White	Female	American Authors PD IB Language and Literature 1

Table E-3. Observations

Code	Date	Period	Course/event	Teacher
O1	29 Aug 2011	1	Painting	Mr. Waits
O2	29 Aug 2011	2	American Authors	Ms. Nolan
O3	29 Aug 2011	4/5	IB Theory of Knowledge	Mr. Gallo
O4	29 Aug 2011	9	IB Literature 2	Ms. Nolan
O5	29 Aug 2011	After school	Faculty meeting	
O6	30 Aug 2011	1	Painting	Mr. Waits
O7	31 Aug 2011	1	IB Language and Literature 1	Ms. Nolan
O8	6 Sept 2011	1	IB Literature 2	Ms. Nowak
O9	6 Sept 2011	2	IB Literature 2	Ms. Nowak
O10	6 Sept 2011	10	IB Literature 2	Ms. Nolan
O11	7 Sept 2011	1	IB Literature and Performance 1	Ms. Weaver
O12	7 Sept 2011	2	Advanced Composition	Ms. Weaver
O13	7 Sept 2011	9	Literary Studies 1	Ms. Weaver
O14	8 Sept 2011	1	IB Language and Literature 1	Ms. Nolan
O15	8 Sept 2011	After school	Man2Man introductory meeting	Ms. McLean
O16	12 Sept 2011	4/5	IB Global	Mr. Patrick
O17	12 Sept 2011	9	IB Global	Mr. Patrick
O18	12 Sept 2011	10	IB Global	Mr. Patrick
O19	13 Sept 2011	2	All-school assembly	Dr. Z
O20	13 Sept 2011	3	IB Economics	Mr. Chalmers
O21	13 Sept 2011	9	IB Literature 2	Ms. Nolan
O22	16 Sept 2011	1	IB Literature 2	Ms. Nowak
O23	16 Sept 2011	2	IB Literature 2	Ms. Nowak
O24	20 Sept 2011	3	Sociology	Mr. Gallo
O26	20 Sept 2011	6/7	Aesthetics	Mr. Gallo
O27	20 Sept 2011	9	IB Theory of Knowledge	Mr. Gallo
O28	21 Sept 2011	1	IB Language and Literature 1	Ms. Nolan
O29	21 Sept 2011	2	American Authors PD	Ms. Nolan
O30	21 Sept 2011	9	American Authors PD	Ms. Nowak
O31	22 Sept 2011	2	IB Theory of Knowledge	Mr. Patrick
O32	22 Sept 2011	4/5	IB Literature 2	Ms. Nowak
O33	15 Sept 2011	9 and 10	College advising in the guidance department	
O34	23 Sept 2011	4/5	IB Literature 2	Ms. Nowak
O35	14 Dec 2011	2	Informal conversations with IB coordinator and Spanish teacher	Ms. Hoover Ms. McLean

Table E-3. Observations (continued)

Code	Date	Period	Course/event	Teacher
O36	14 Dec 2011	7/8	Informal conversation with Ali about Extended Essay	
O37	14 Dec 2011	After school	Recruitment meeting for admitted 8th graders and parents	
O38	15 Dec 2011	10	IB Literature 2	Ms. Nolan
O39	16 Dec 2011	10	IB Literature 2	Ms. Nolan
O40	19 Dec 2011	1	Painting – final exam	Mr. Waits
O41	3 Jan 2012	After school	Faculty meeting	
O42	4 Jan 2012	1	IB Literature and Performance 1	Ms. Weaver
O43	4 Jan 2012	2	World Literature	Ms. Weaver
O44	4 Jan 2012	5/6	American Authors PD	Ms. Nolan
O45	4 Jan 2012	7/8	Literary Studies 1 PD	Ms. Weaver
O46	4 Jan 2012	9	American Authors PD	Ms. Nowak
O47	5 Jan 2012	1	IB Literature and Performance 1	Ms. Weaver
O48	5 Jan 2012	2	World Literature	Ms. Weaver
O49	5 Jan 2012	5/6	American Authors PD	Ms. Nolan
O50	5 Jan 2012	7/8	Literary Studies 1 PD	Ms. Weaver
O51	6 Jan 2012	7/8	Literary Studies 1 PD	Ms. Weaver
O52	6 Jan 2012	9	American Authors PD	Ms. Nowak
O53	6 Jan 2012	10	IB Literature 2	Ms. Nolan
O54	9 Jan 2012	2	World Literature	Ms. Weaver
O55	9 Jan 2012	5/6	American Authors PD	Ms. Nolan
O56	9 Jan 2012	7/8	Literary Studies 1 PD	Ms. Weaver
O57	9 Jan 2012	9	American Authors	Ms. Nowak
O58	9 Jan 2012	10	World Literature	Ms. Weiss
O59	10 Jan 2012	1	IB Literature and Performance 1	Ms. Weaver
O60	10 Jan 2012	2	World Literature	Ms. Weaver
O61	10 Jan 2012	7/8	Literary Studies 1 PD	Ms. Weaver
O62	10 Jan 2012	9	American Authors PD	Ms. Nowak
O63	10 Jan 2012	10	World Literature	Ms. Weiss
O64	11 Jan 2012	1	IB Literature and Performance 1	Ms. Weaver
O65	11 Jan 2012	2	World Literature	Ms. Weaver
O66	11 Jan 2012	5/6	American Authors PD	Ms. Nolan
O67	11 Jan 2012	7/8	Literary Studies 1 PD	Ms. Weaver
O68	11 Jan 2012	9	American Authors PD	Ms. Nowak
O69	11 Jan 2012	10	World Literature	Ms. Weiss
O70	12 Jan 2012	1	IB Literature and Performance 1	Ms. Weaver
O71	12 Jan 2012	2	World Literature	Ms. Weaver

Table E-3. Observations (continued)

Code	Date	Period	Course/event	Teacher
O72	12 Jan 2012	5/6	American Authors PD	Ms. Nolan
O73	12 Jan 2012	7/8	Literary Studies 1 PD	Ms. Weaver
O74	12 Jan 2012	9	American Authors PD	Ms. Nowak
O75	12 Jan 2012	10	IB Literature 2	Ms. Nolan
O76	13 Jan 2012	1	IB Literature and Performance 1	Ms. Weaver
O77	13 Jan 2012	2	World Literature	Ms. Weaver
O78	13 Jan 2012	5/6	American Authors PD	Ms. Nolan
O79	13 Jan 2012	7/8	Literary Studies 1 PD	Ms. Weaver
O80	13 Jan 2012	9	American Authors PD	Ms. Nowak
O81	13 Jan 2012	10	World Literature	Ms. Weiss
O82	12 Mar 2012	1	IB Language and Literature 1	Ms. Nolan
O83	13 Mar 2012	1	IB Language and Literature 1	Ms. Nolan
O84	14 Mar 2012	1	IB Language and Literature 1	Ms. Nolan
O85	14 Mar 2012	9	IB Literature 2	Ms. Nolan
O86	15 Mar 2012	1	IB Language and Literature 1	Ms. Nolan
O87	15 Mar 2012	9	IB Literature 2	Ms. Nolan
O88	16 Mar 2012	1	IB Language and Literature 1	Ms. Nolan
O89	19 Mar 2012	1	IB Language and Literature 1	Ms. Nolan
O90	19 Mar 2012	3	Anthropology	Mr. Gallo
O91	19 Mar 2012	4/5	IB Theory of Knowledge	Mr. Gallo
O92	19 Mar 2012	6/7	Philosophy	Mr. Gallo
O93	19 Mar 2012	9	IB Literature 2	Ms. Nolan
O94	20 Mar 2012	3	Anthropology	Mr. Gallo
O95	20 Mar 2012	4/5	IB Theory of Knowledge	Mr. Gallo
O96	20 Mar 2012	6/7	Philosophy	Mr. Gallo
O97	20 Mar 2012	9	IB Literature 2	Ms. Nolan
O98	20 Mar 2012	After school	Prospective IB sophomore parent meeting	Ms. Hoover
O99	21 Mar 2012	3	Anthropology	Mr. Gallo
O100	21 Mar 2012	4/5	IB Theory of Knowledge	Mr. Gallo
O101	21 Mar 2012	6/7	Philosophy	Mr. Gallo
O102	21 Mar 2012	9	IB Literature 2	Ms. Nolan
O103	21 Mar 2012	10	IB Literature 2	Ms. Nolan
O104	22 Mar 2012	3	Anthropology	Mr. Gallo
O105	22 Mar 2012	4/5	IB Theory of Knowledge	Mr. Gallo
O106	22 Mar 2012	6/7	Philosophy	Mr. Gallo
O107	22 Mar 2012	9	IB Literature 2	Ms. Nolan
O108	26 Mar 2012	1	Math Studies 1	Mr. Friar
O109	26 Mar 2012	2	IB Math Studies 1	Mr. Friar

Table E-3. Observations (continued)

Code	Date	Period	Course/event	Teacher
O110	26 Mar 2012	3	Algebra	Mr. Schmidt
O111	26 Mar 2012	7/8	Algebra PD	Mr. Schmidt
O112	26 Mar 2012	After school	Student meeting to discuss racist behavior at basketball games	Ms. Nolan
O113	27 Mar 2012	1	Math Studies 1	Mr. Friar
O114	27 Mar 2012	2	IB Math Studies 1	Mr. Friar
O115	27 Mar 2012	3	Algebra	Mr. Schmidt
O116	27 Mar 2012	7/8	Algebra PD	Mr. Schmidt
O117	27 Mar 2012	9	IB Americas	Mr. Churchill
O118	28 Mar 2012	1	Math Studies 1	Mr. Friar
O119	28 Mar 2012	2	IB Math Studies 1	Mr. Friar
O120	28 Mar 2012	3	Algebra	Mr. Schmidt
O121	28 Mar 2012	7/8	Algebra PD	Mr. Schmidt
O122	28 Mar 2012	9	IB Americas	Mr. Churchill
O123	29 Mar 2012	1	Math Studies 1	Mr. Friar
O124	29 Mar 2012	2	IB Math Studies 1	Mr. Friar
O125	29 Mar 2012	3	Algebra	Mr. Schmidt
O126	29 Mar 2012	7/8	Algebra PD	Mr. Schmidt
O127	29 Mar 2012	9	IB Americas	Mr. Churchill
O128	30 Mar 2012	1	Math Studies 1	Mr. Friar
O129	30 Mar 2012	2	IB Math Studies 1	Mr. Friar
O130	30 Mar 2012	9	IB Americas	Mr. Churchill
O131	2 Apr 2012	3	Biology 2	Mr. Landers
O132	2 Apr 2012	7/8	IB Environmentals	Mr. Landers
O133	2 Apr 2012	9	IB Americas	Mr. Churchill
O134	2 Apr 2012	After school	Faculty meeting	
O135	3 Apr 2012	3	Biology 2	Mr. Landers
O136	3 Apr 2012	7/8	IB Environmentals	Mr. Landers
O137	3 Apr 2012	9	IB Americas	Mr. Churchill
O138	4 Apr 2012	3	Biology 2	Mr. Landers
O139	4 Apr 2012	7/8	IB Environmentals	Mr. Landers
O140	5 Apr 2012	3	Biology 2	Mr. Landers
O141	5 Apr 2012	7/8	IB Environmentals	Mr. Landers

Appendix F. Coursetaking Maps

The diagrams presented in this appendix represent the course offerings at Lincoln available to students in the graduating classes of 2011 through 2014, as well as the official policies governing enrollment in and progression through those courses. The following key can be used to interpret all diagrams in this appendix:


Year-long, full-credit course


One-semester, half-credit course

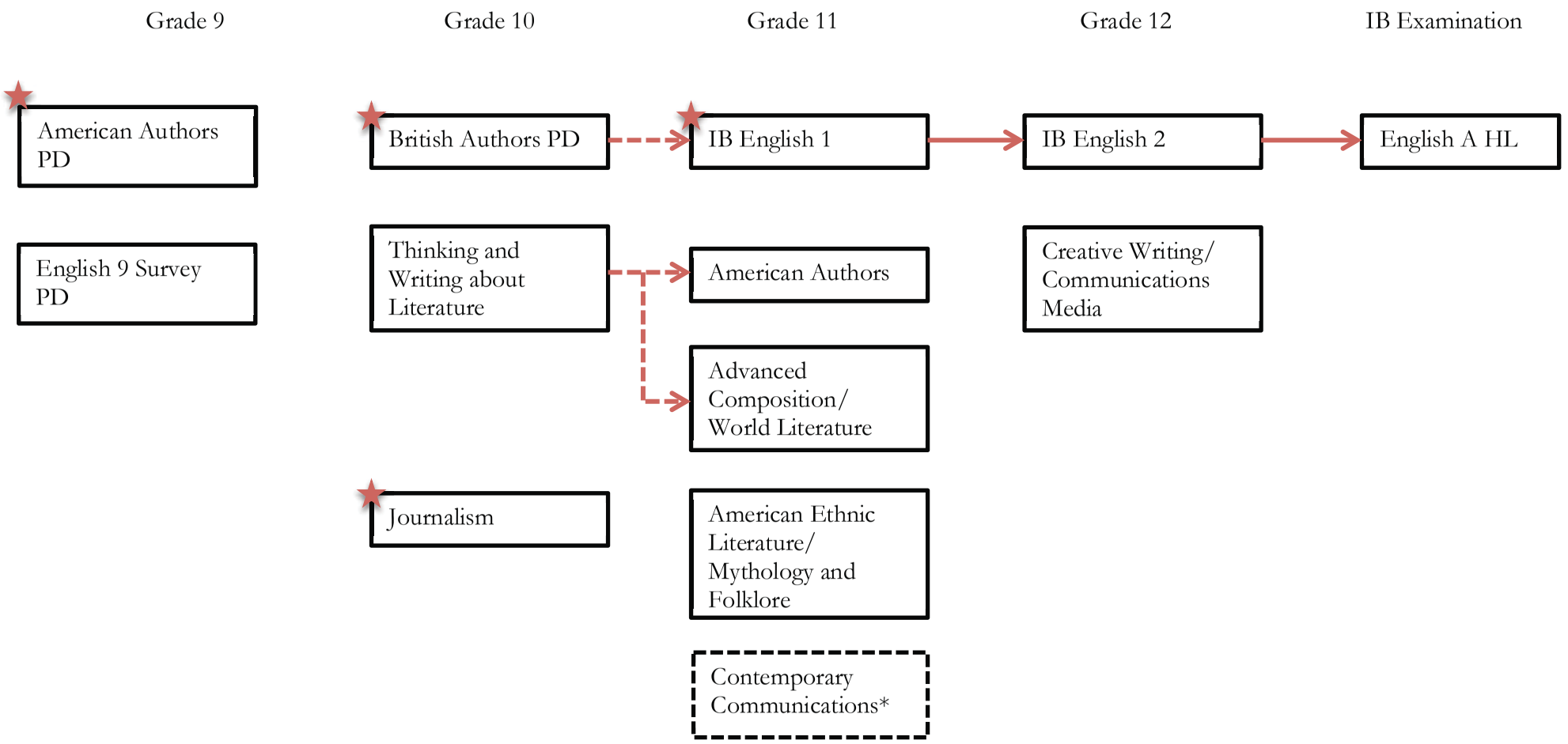

Passing the first course in this sequence is a prerequisite for taking the subsequent course or IB exam


Passing the first course in this sequence is a prerequisite for taking the subsequent course, except with the instructor's consent


An instructor or guidance counselor's consent is required to enroll in this course

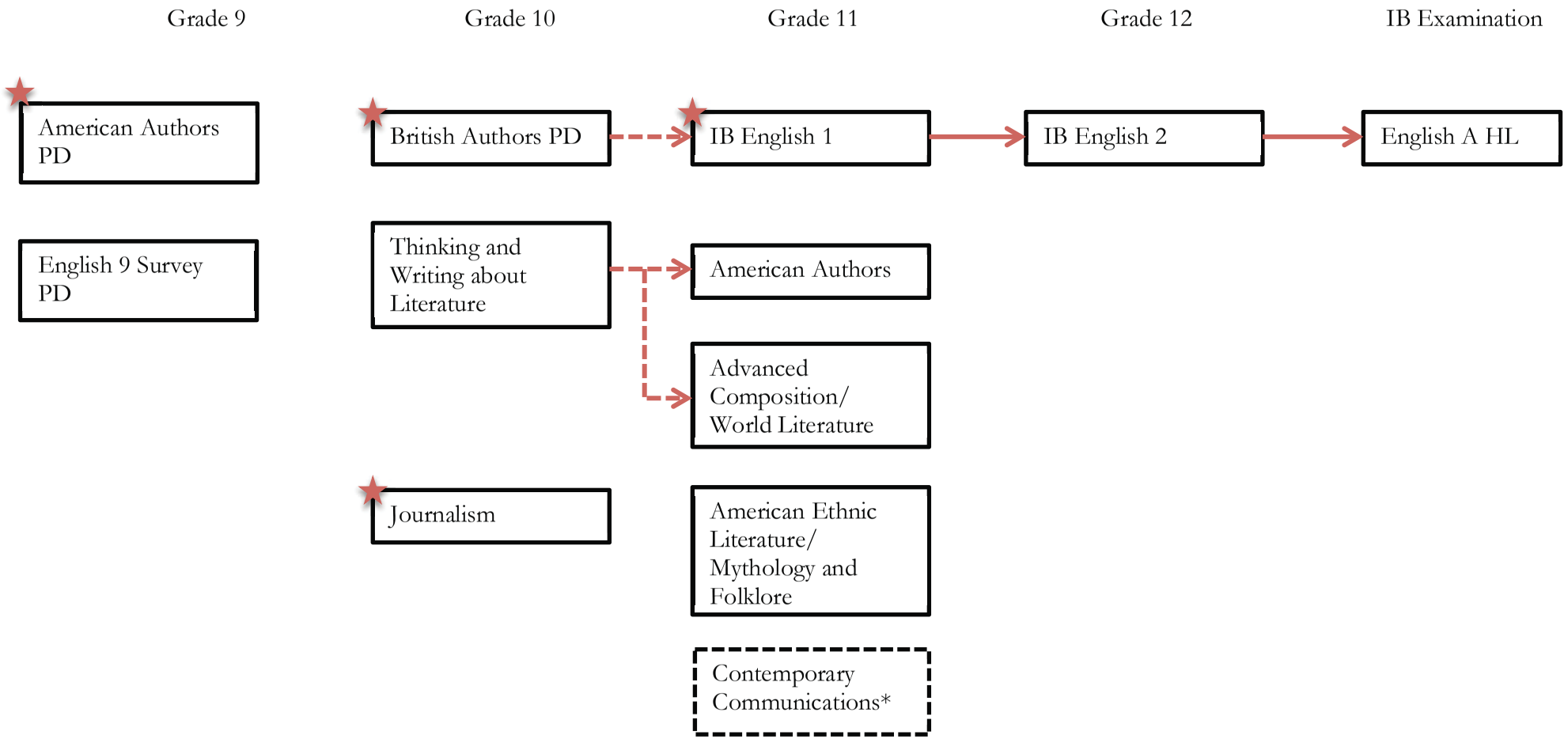
Each course is listed in the earliest grade in which a student is permitted to take it.

Figure F-1a. English – Class of 2011



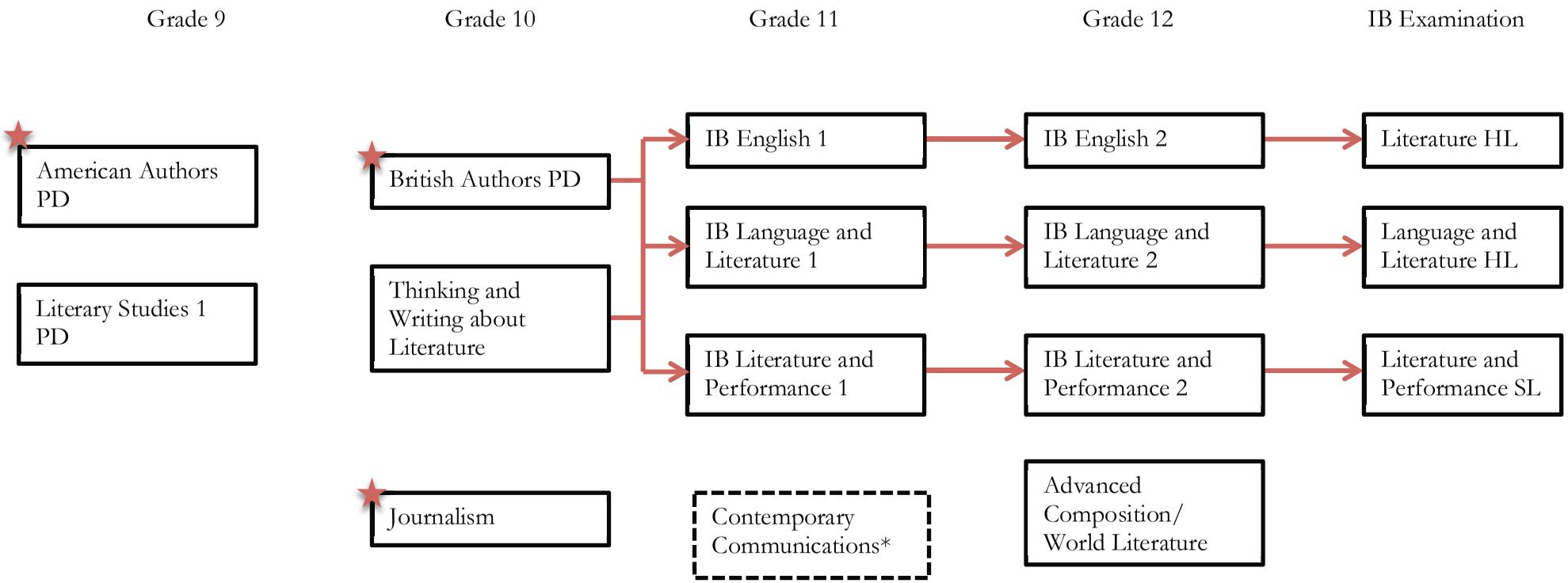
*Contemporary Communications is mandatory for all Lincoln students, except IB diploma candidates, students who complete IB Theatre 1 and 2, and students who participate in speech or debate for three years.

Figure F-1b. English – Class of 2012



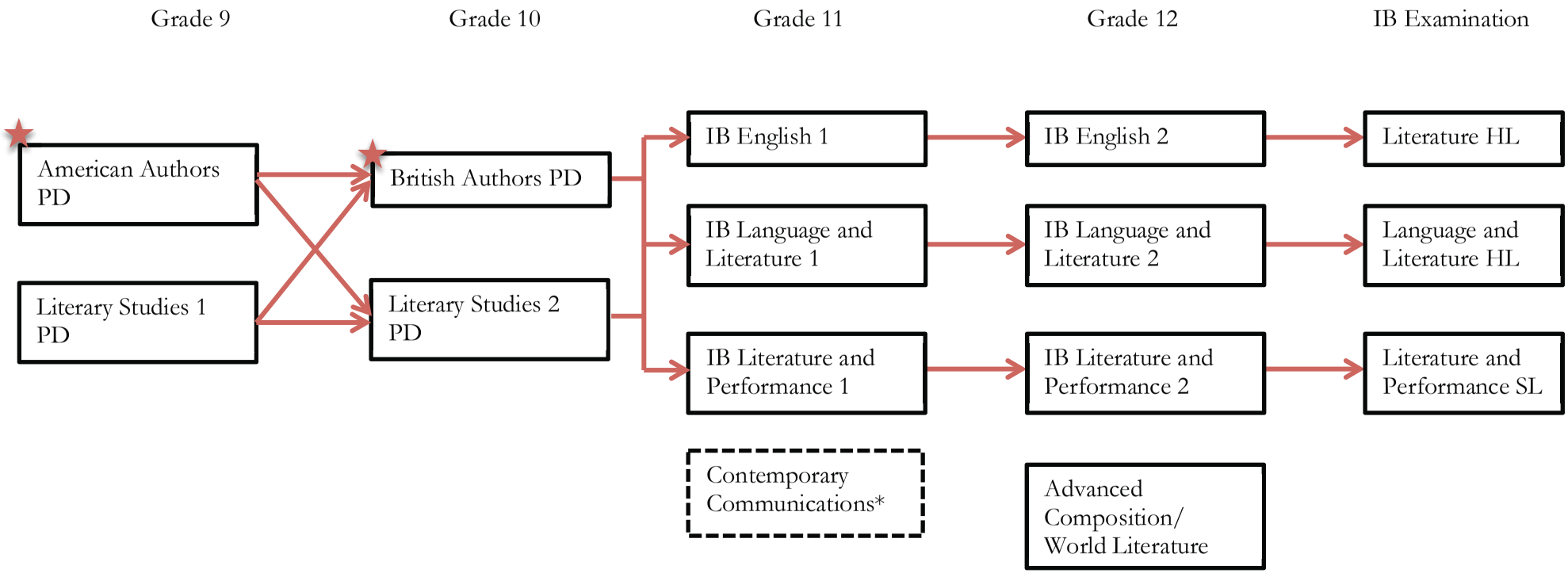
*Contemporary Communications is mandatory for all Lincoln students, except IB diploma candidates, students who complete IB Theatre 1 and 2, and students who participate in speech or debate for three years.

Figure F-1c. English – Class of 2013



*Contemporary Communications is mandatory for all Lincoln students, except IB diploma candidates, students who complete IB Theatre 1 and 2, and students who participate in speech or debate for three years.

Figure F-1d. English – Class of 2014



*Contemporary Communications is mandatory for all Lincoln students, except IB diploma candidates, students who complete IB Theatre 1 and 2, and students who participate in speech or debate for three years.

Figure F-2a. World Languages – Class of 2011

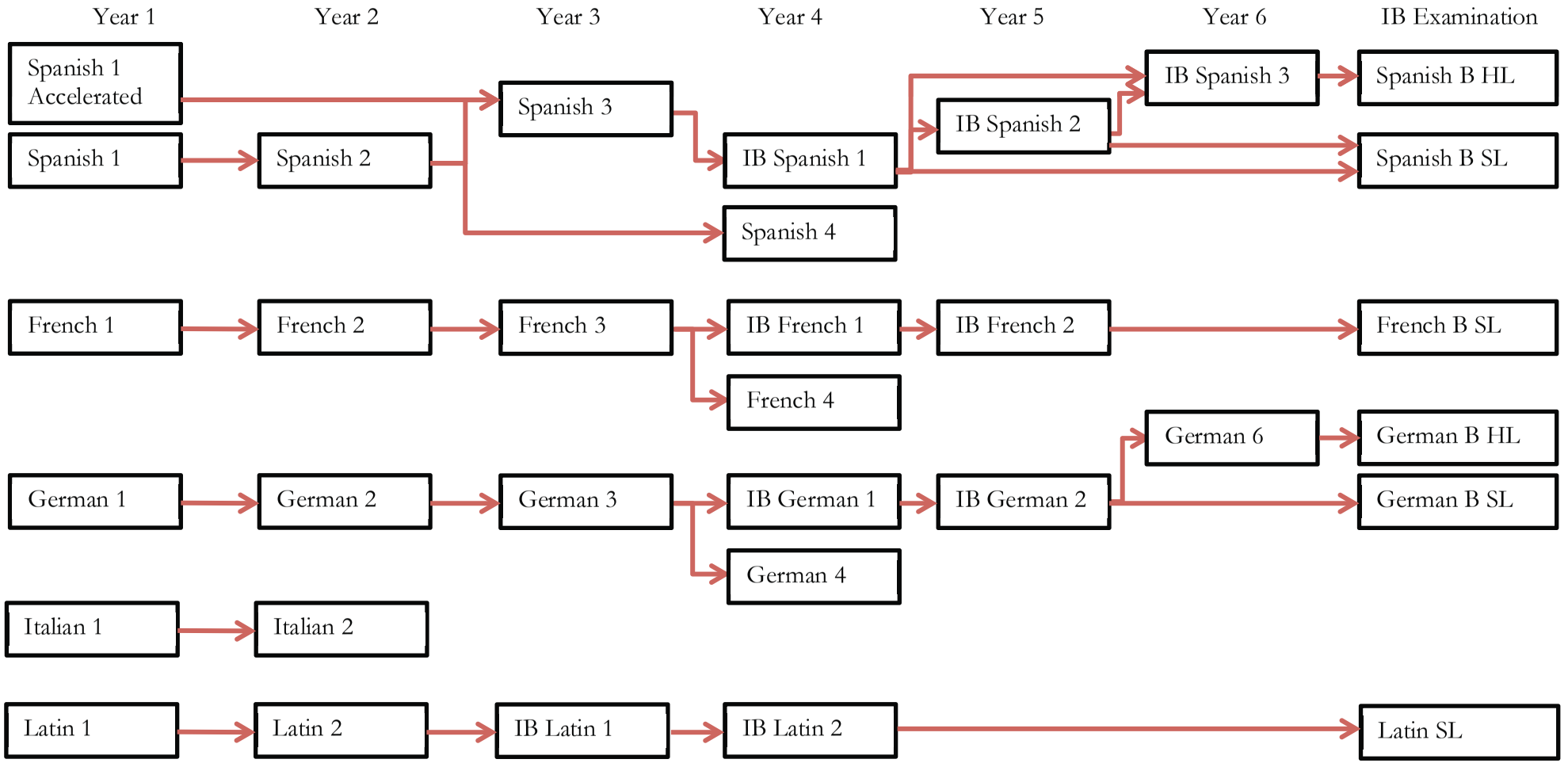


Figure F-2b. World Languages – Class of 2012

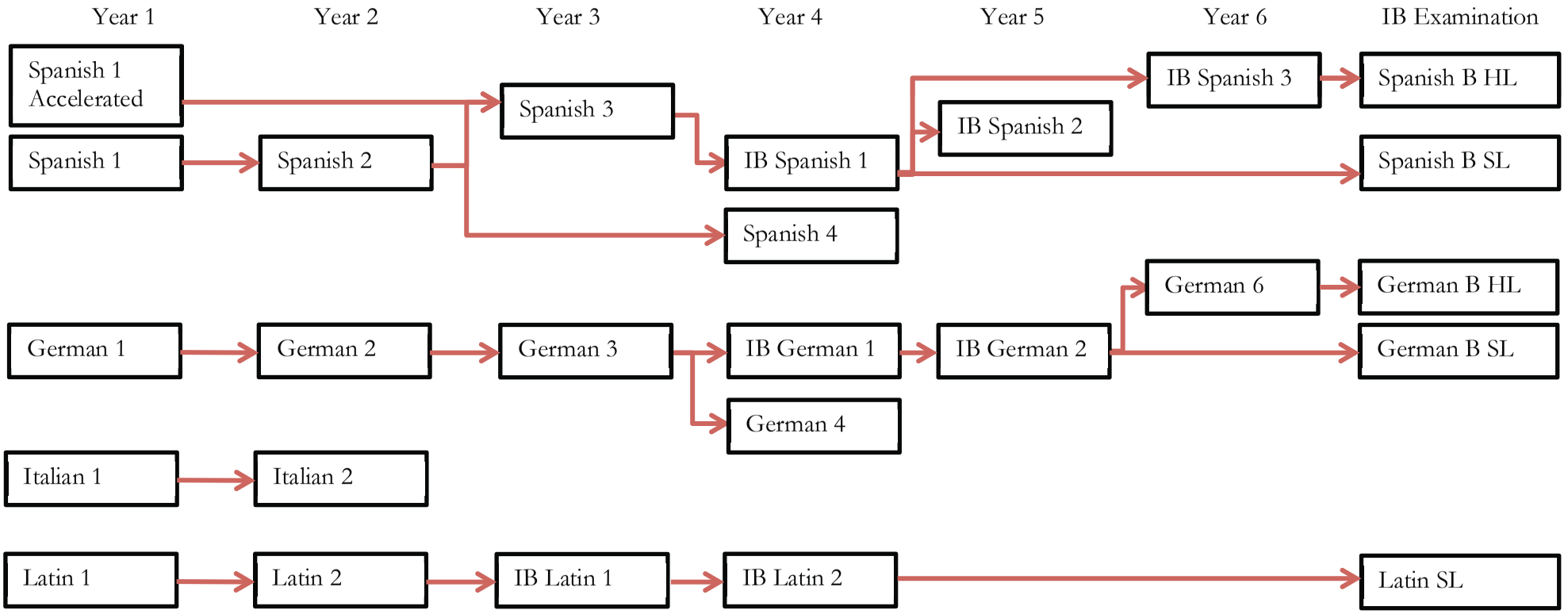


Figure F-2c. World Languages – Classes of 2013 and 2014

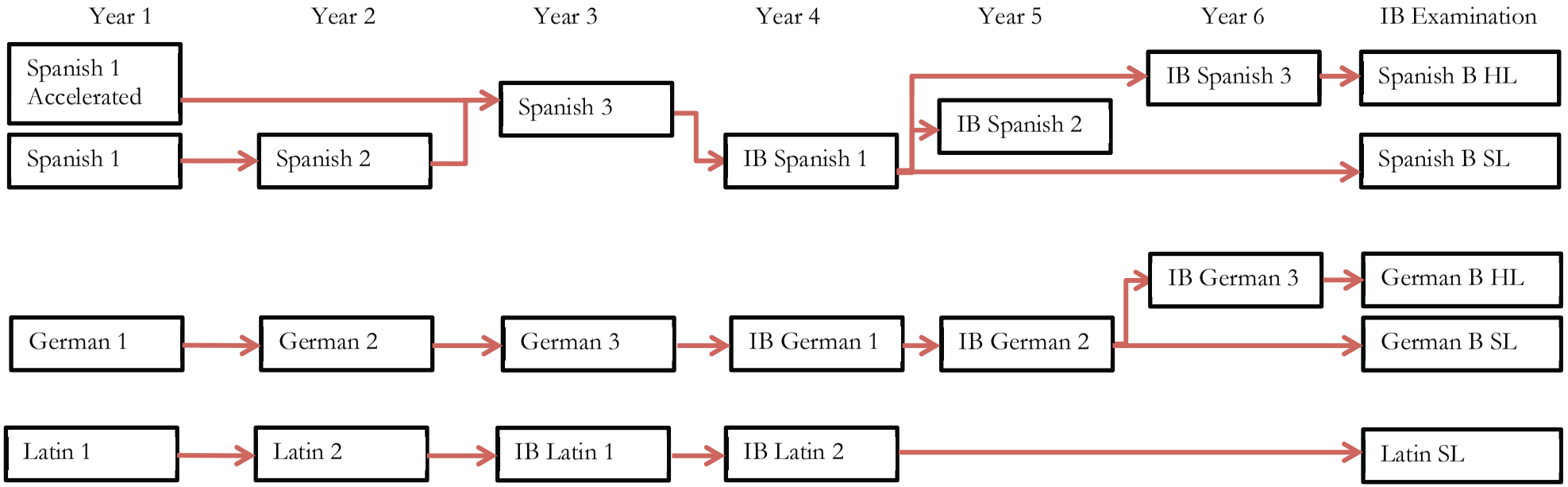
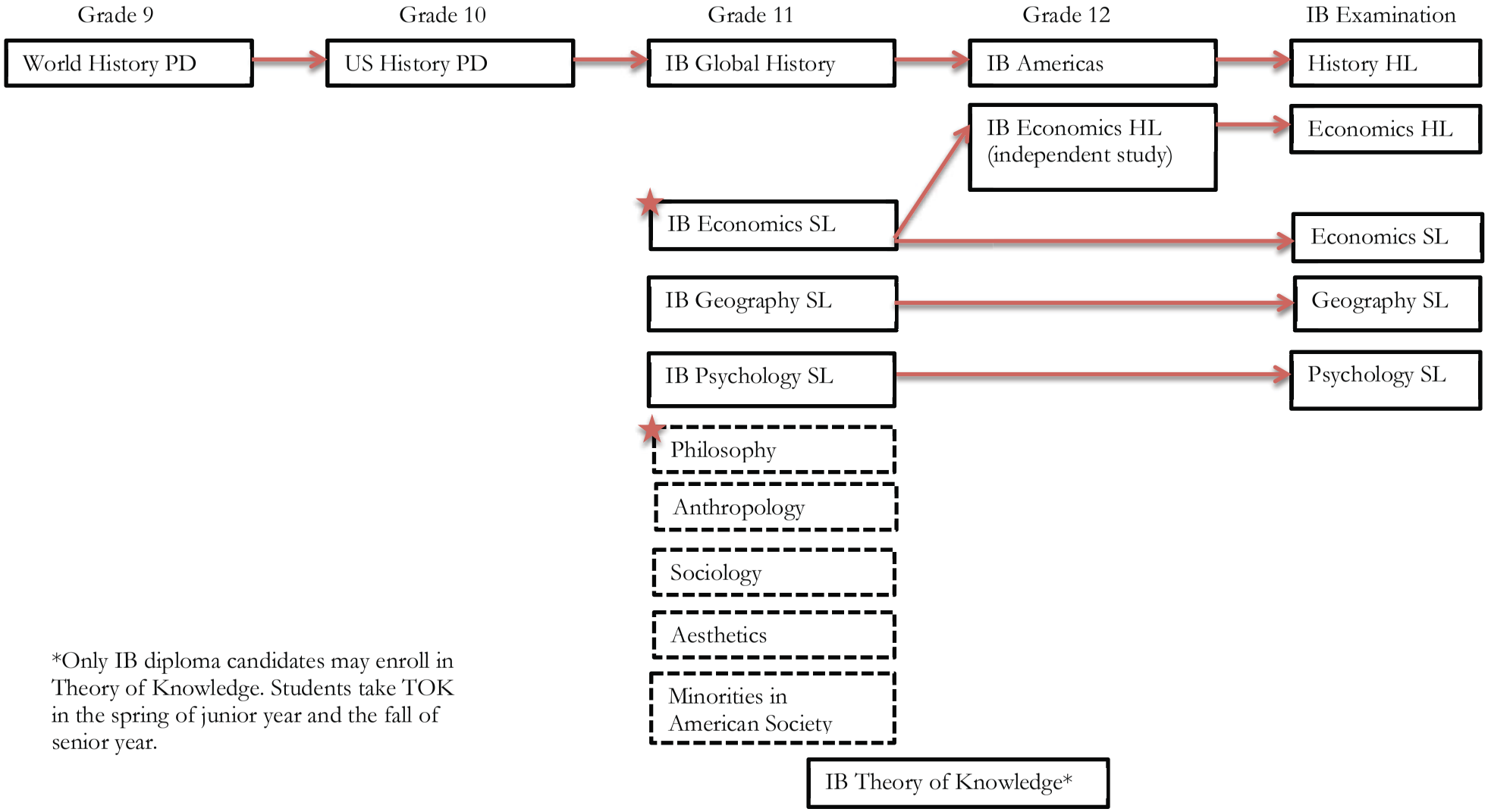
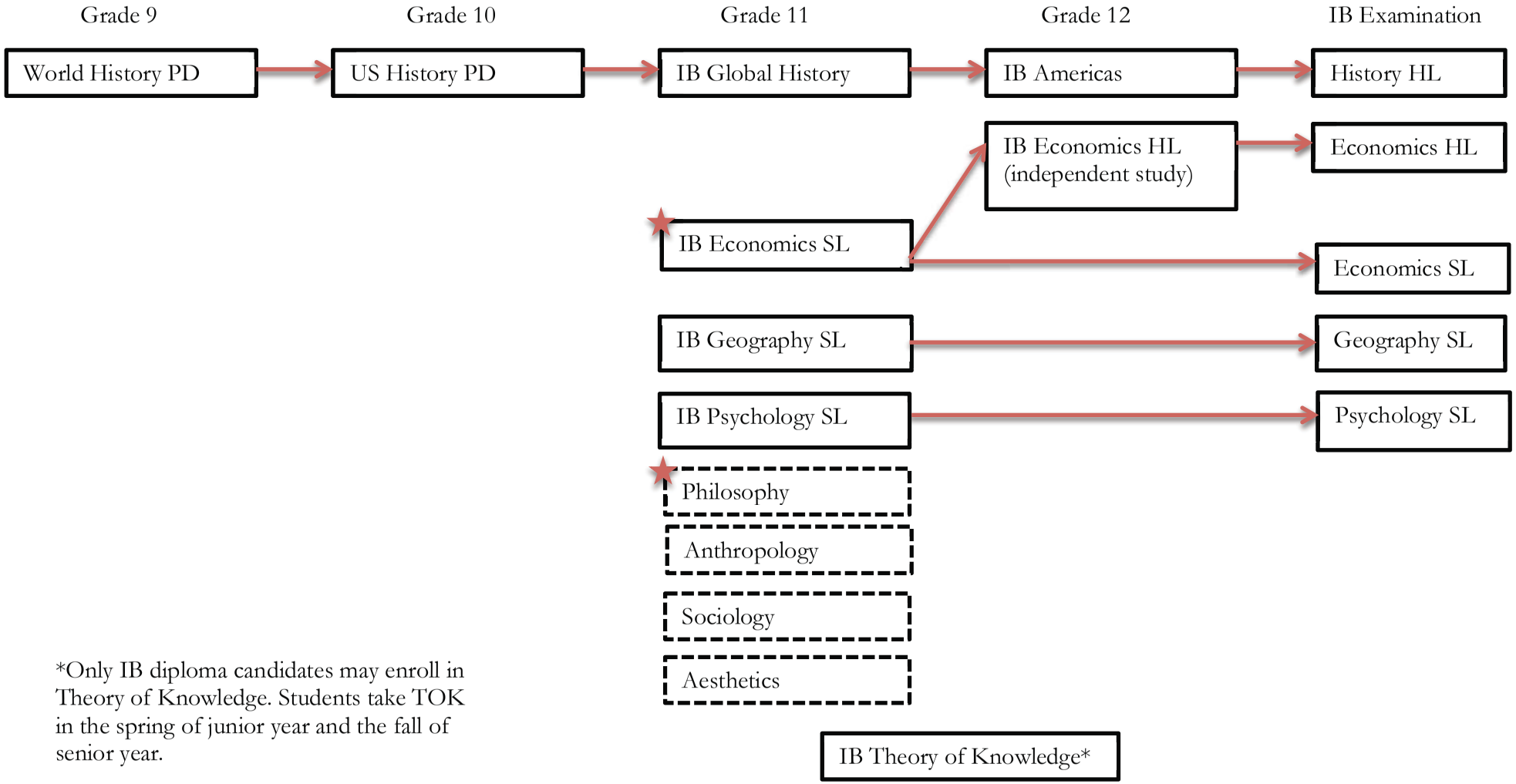


Figure F-3a. Individuals and Societies – Class of 2011



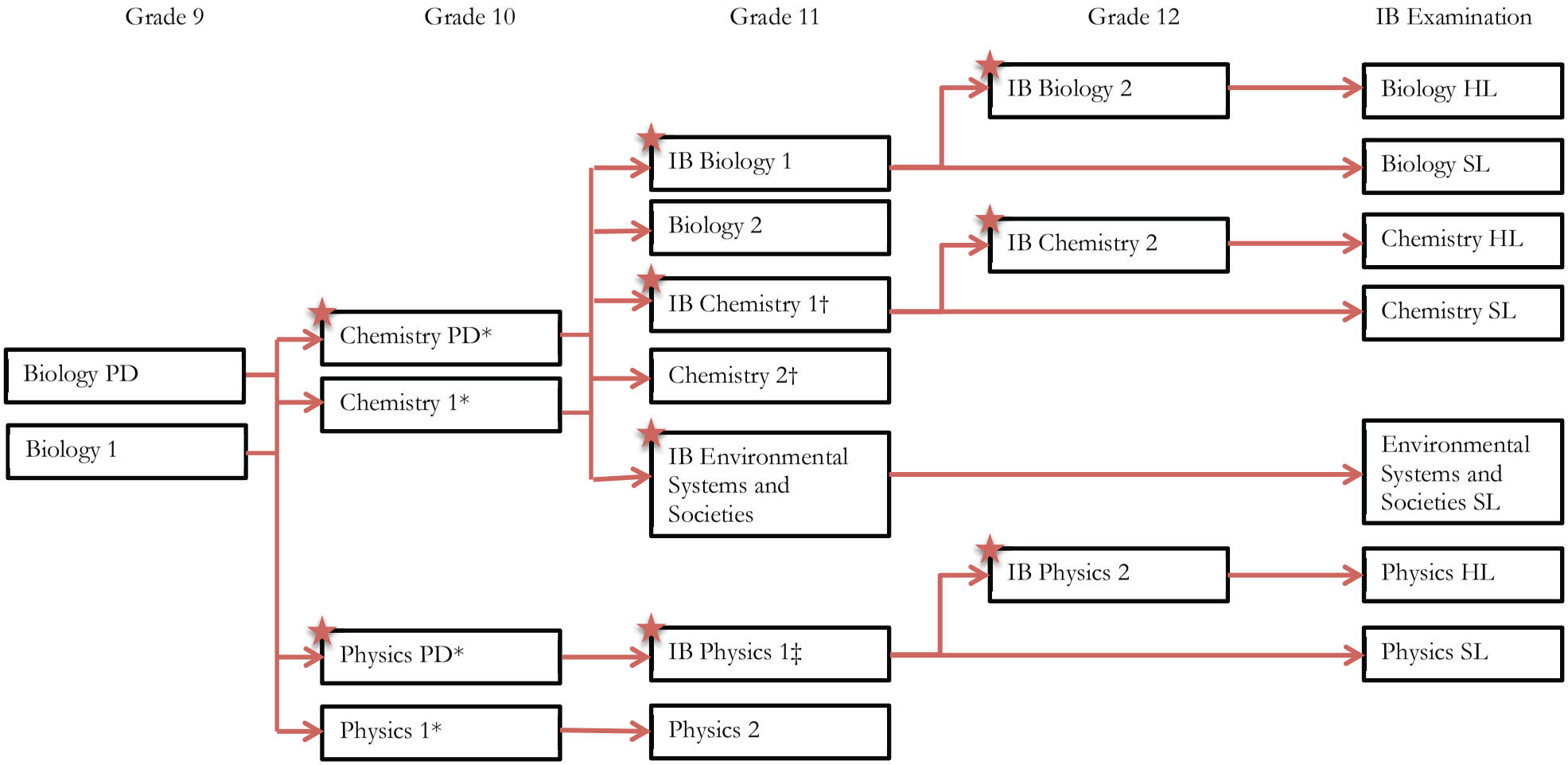
*Only IB diploma candidates may enroll in Theory of Knowledge. Students take TOK in the spring of junior year and the fall of senior year.

Figure F-3b. Individuals and Societies – Classes of 2012-2014



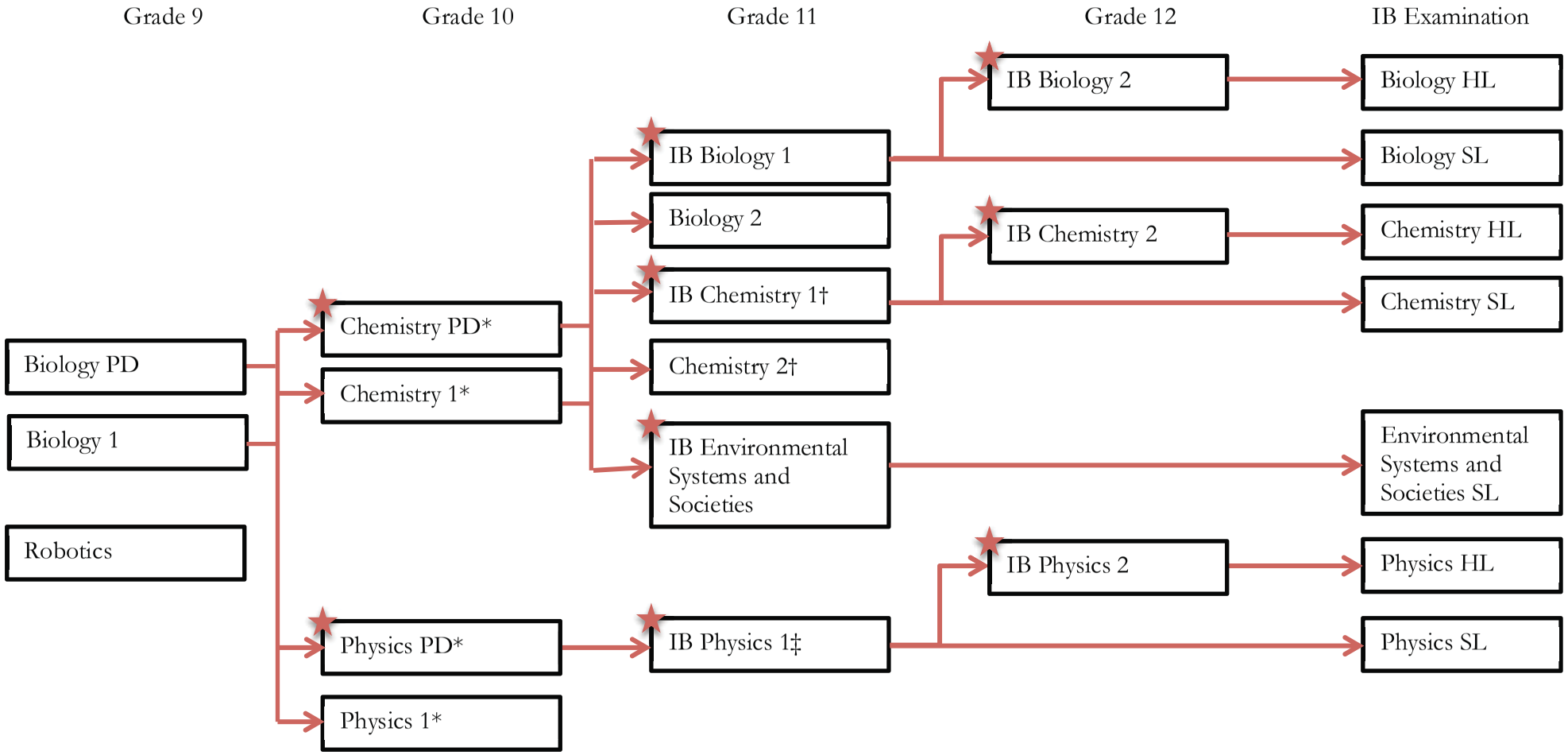
*Only IB diploma candidates may enroll in Theory of Knowledge. Students take TOK in the spring of junior year and the fall of senior year.

Figure F-4a. Science – Classes of 2011 and 2012



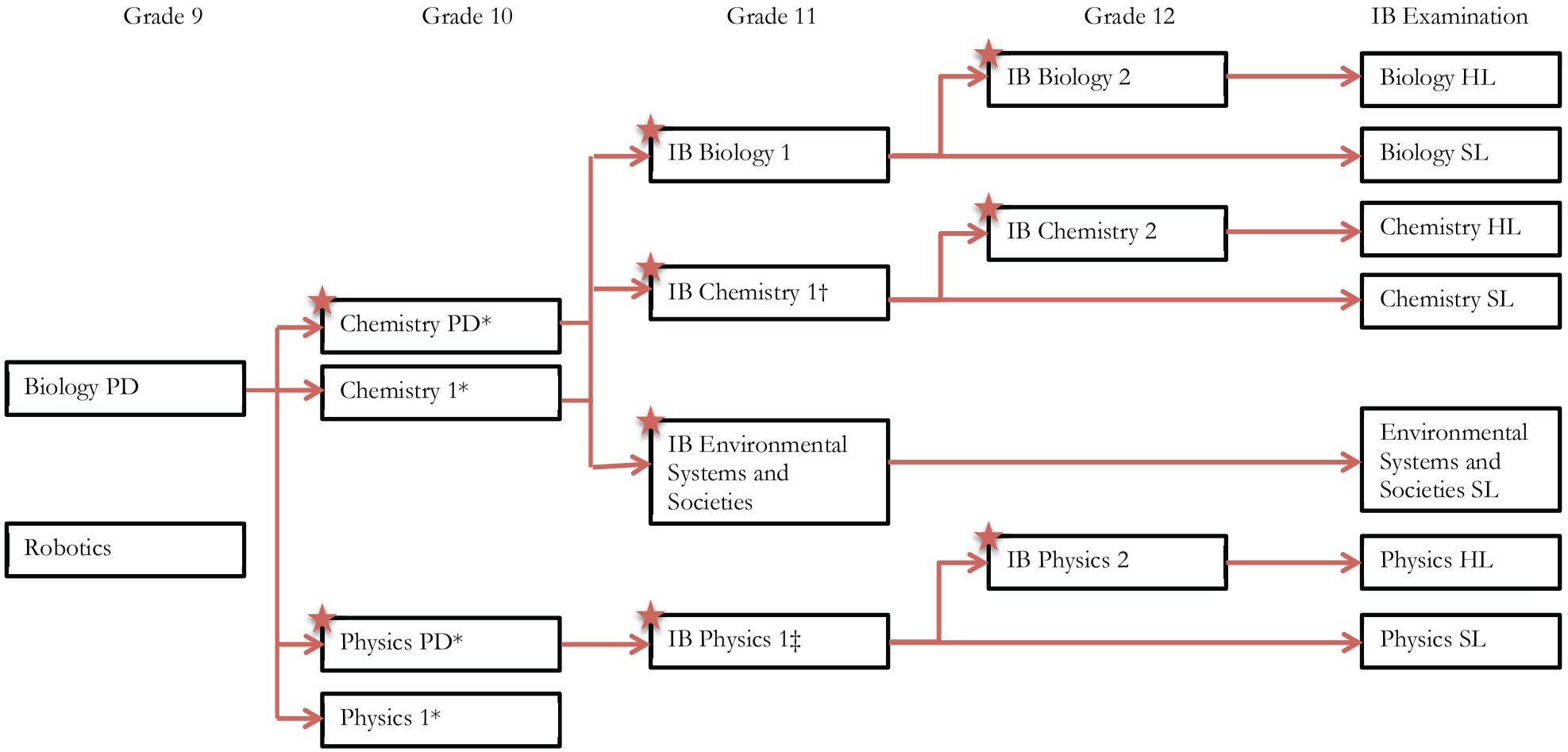
*Also requires Algebra. †Also requires Algebra 2/Trigonometry. ‡Also requires pre-calculus.

Figure F-4b. Science – Class of 2013



*Also requires Algebra. †Also requires Algebra 2/Trigonometry. ‡Also requires pre-calculus.

Figure F-4c. Science – Class of 2014



*Also requires Algebra. †Also requires Algebra 2/Trigonometry. ‡Also requires pre-calculus.

Figure F-5a. Mathematics – Classes of 2011 and 2012

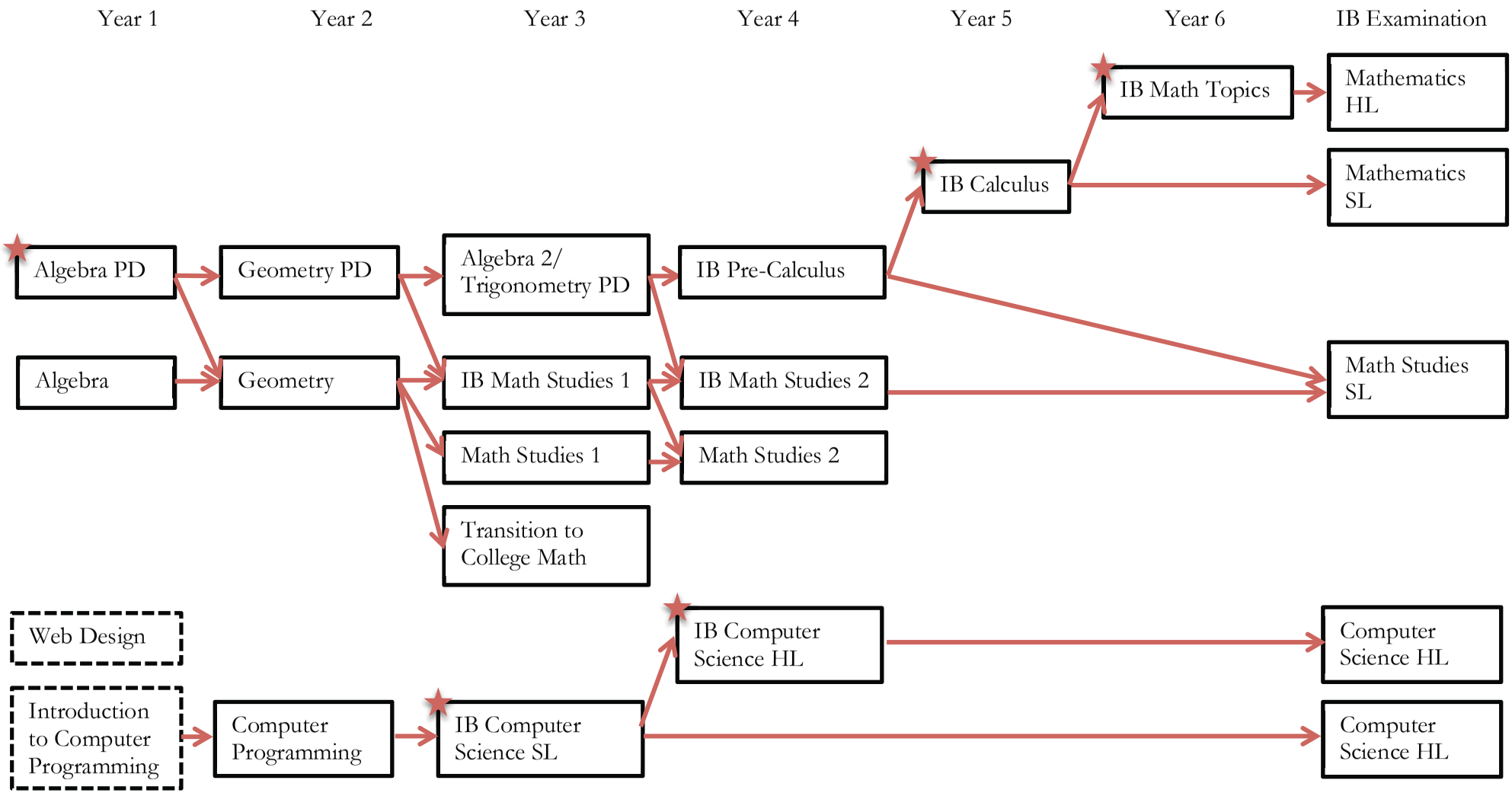


Figure F-5b. Mathematics – Classes of 2013 and 2014

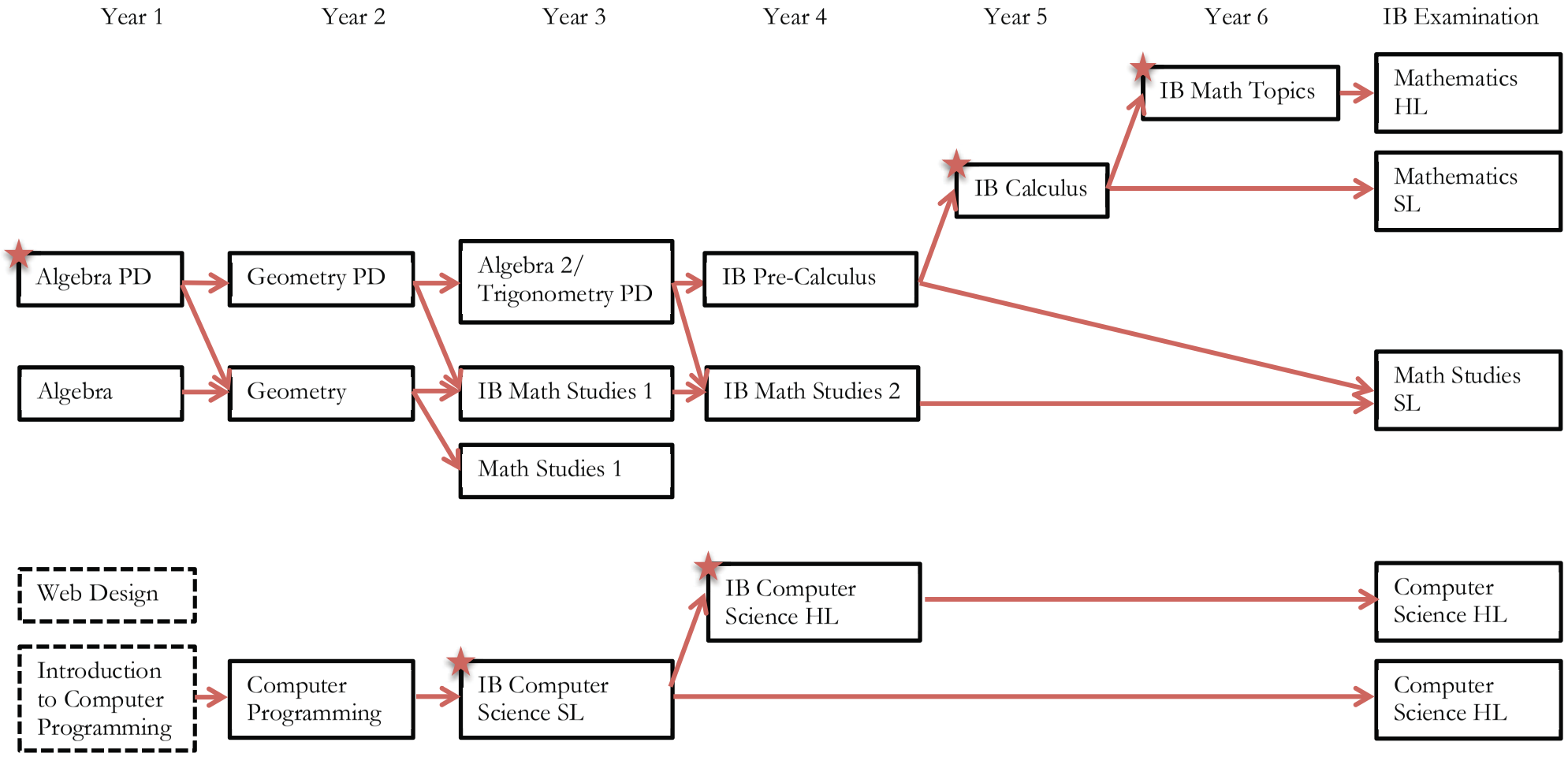


Figure F-6a. Electives – Class of 2011

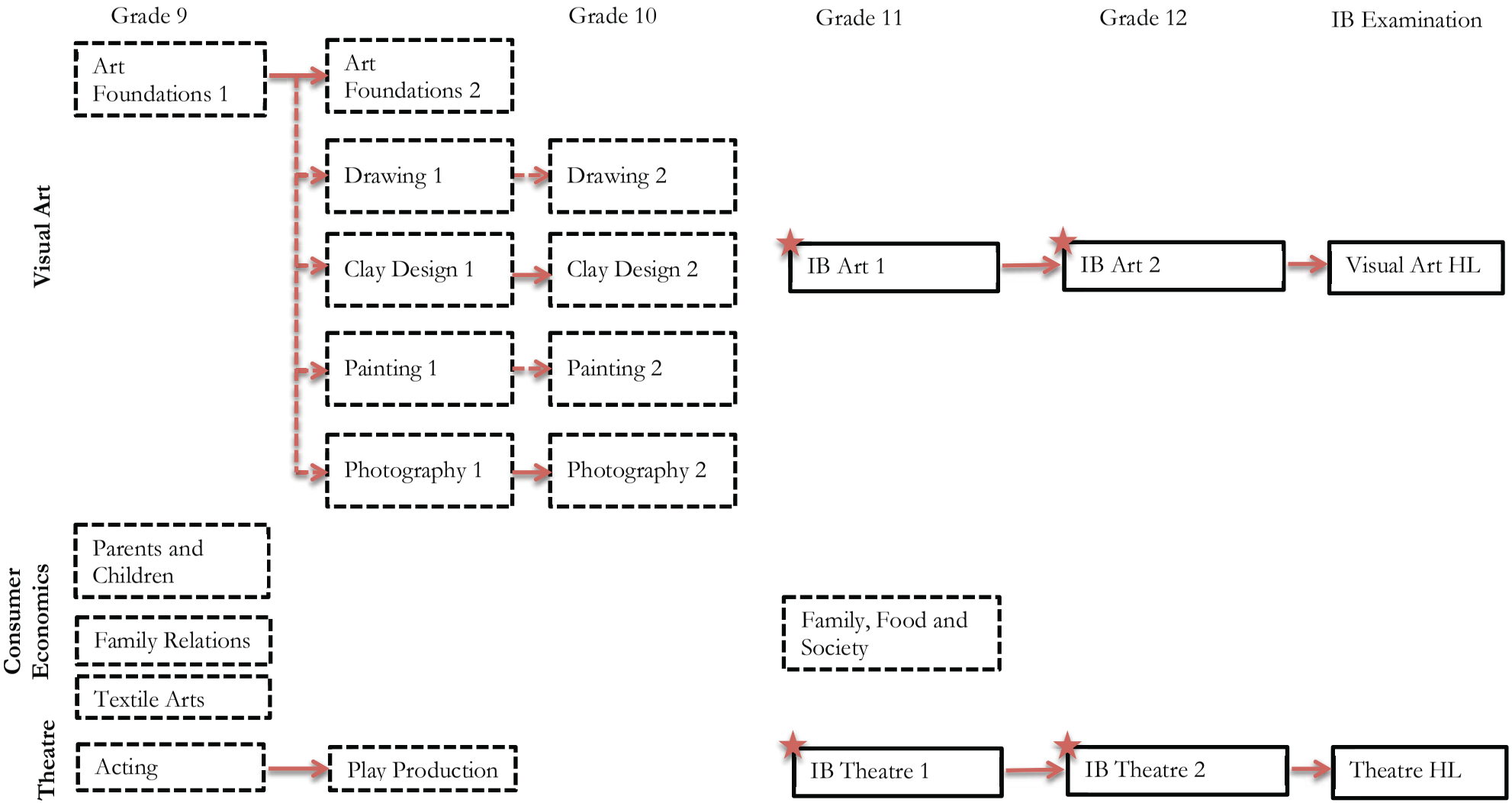


Figure F-6a. Electives – Class of 2011 (continued)

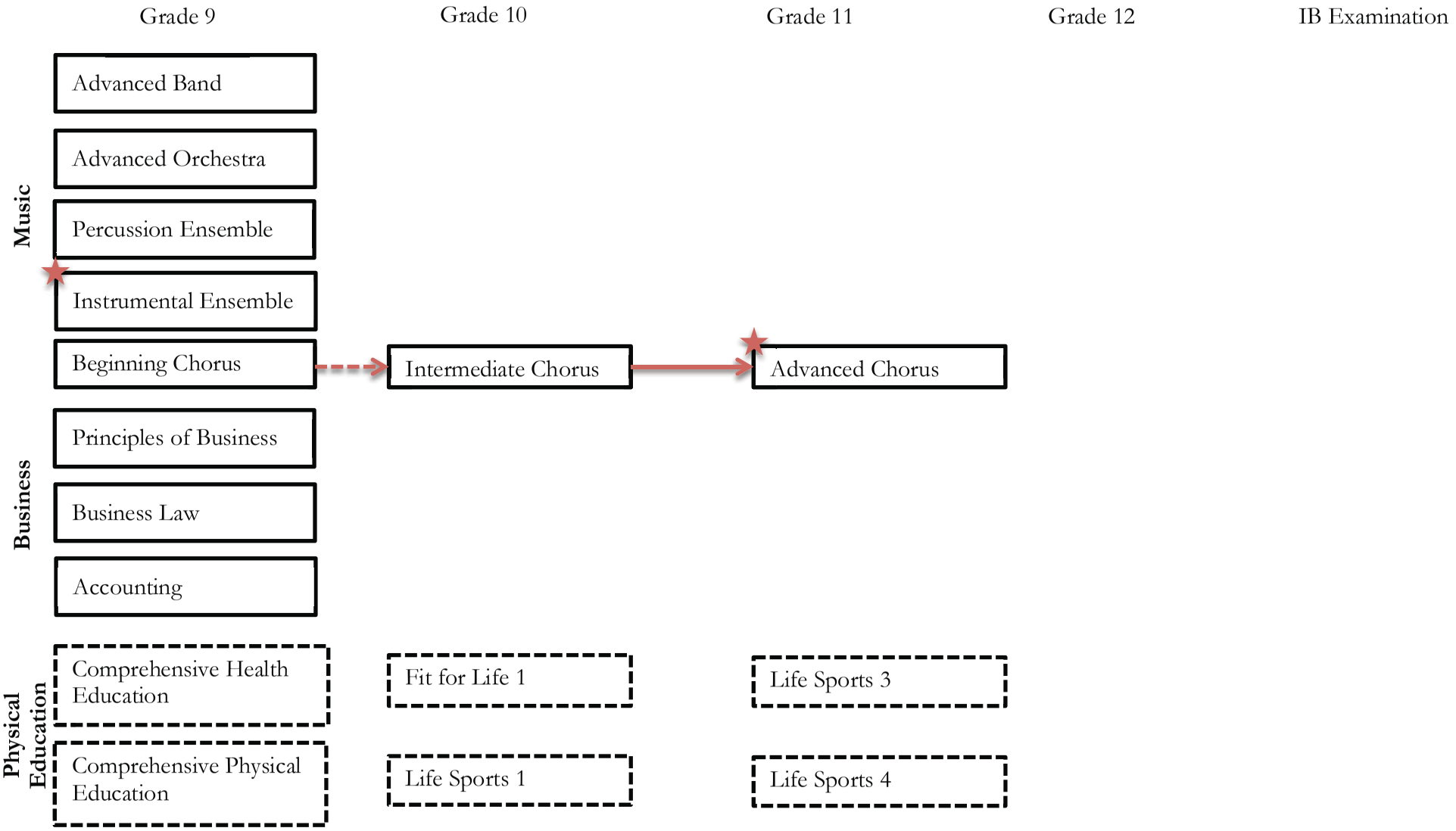


Figure F-6b. Electives – Class of 2012

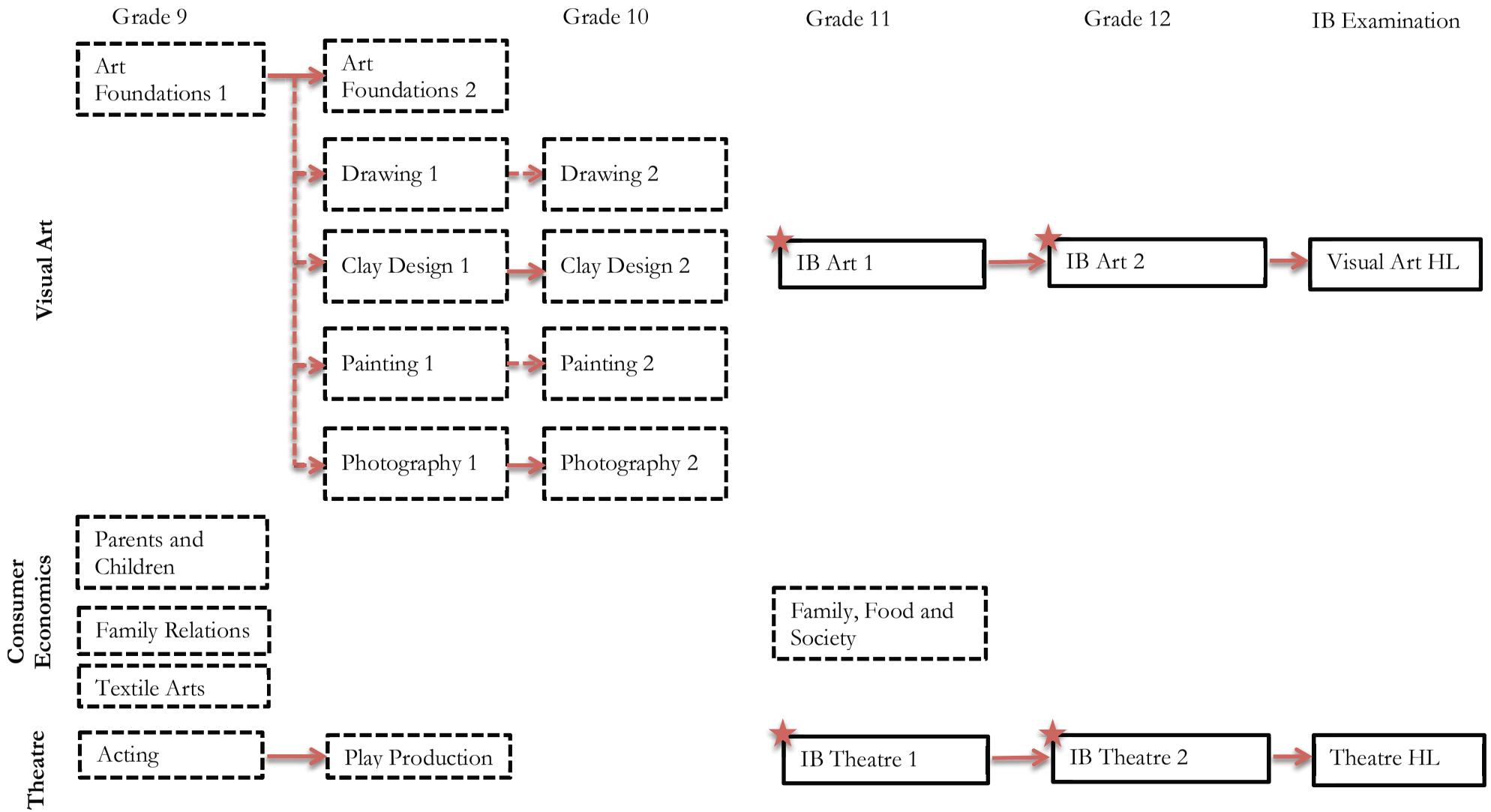


Figure F-6b. Electives – Class of 2012 (continued)

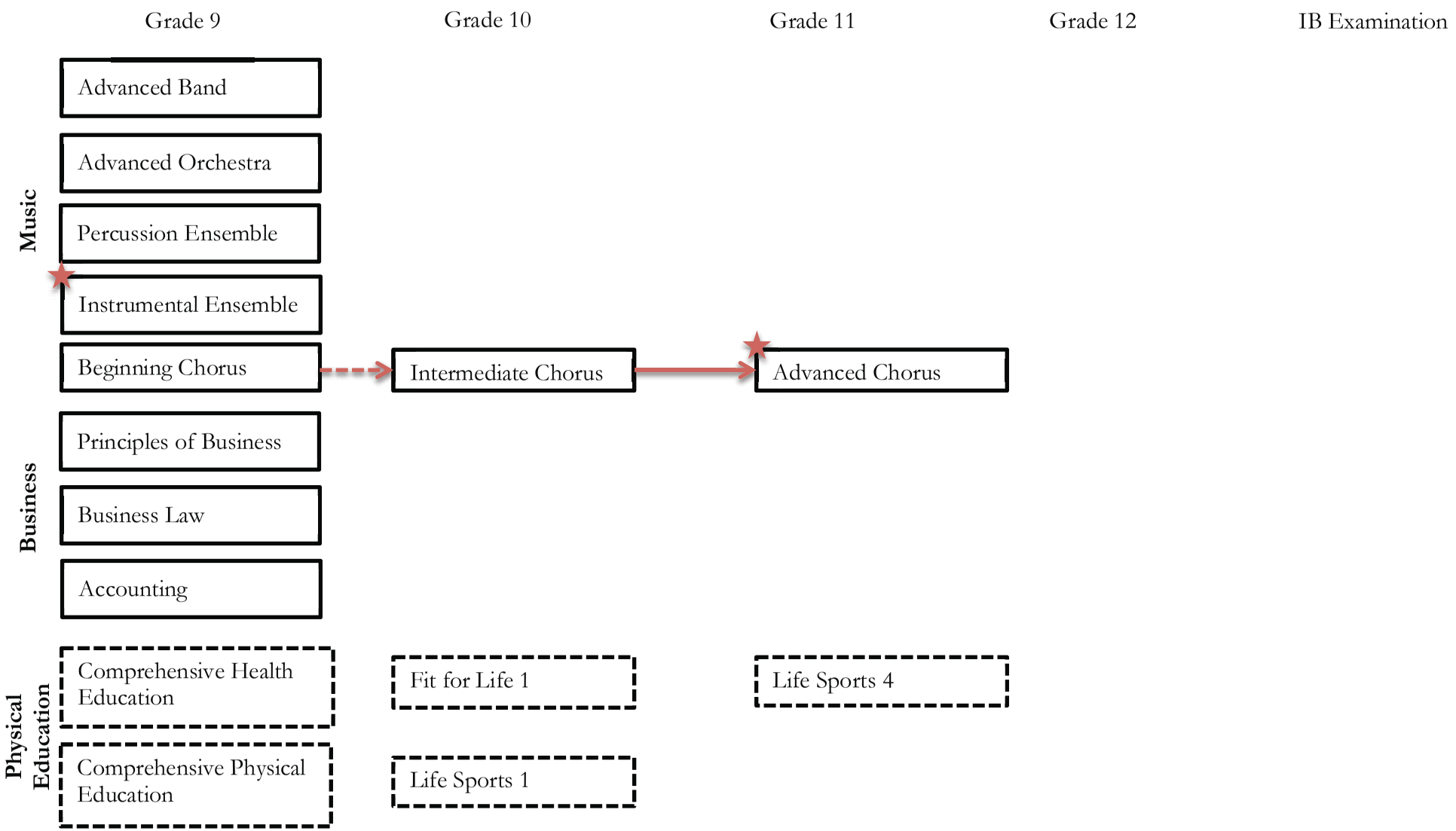


Figure F-6c. Electives – Class of 2013

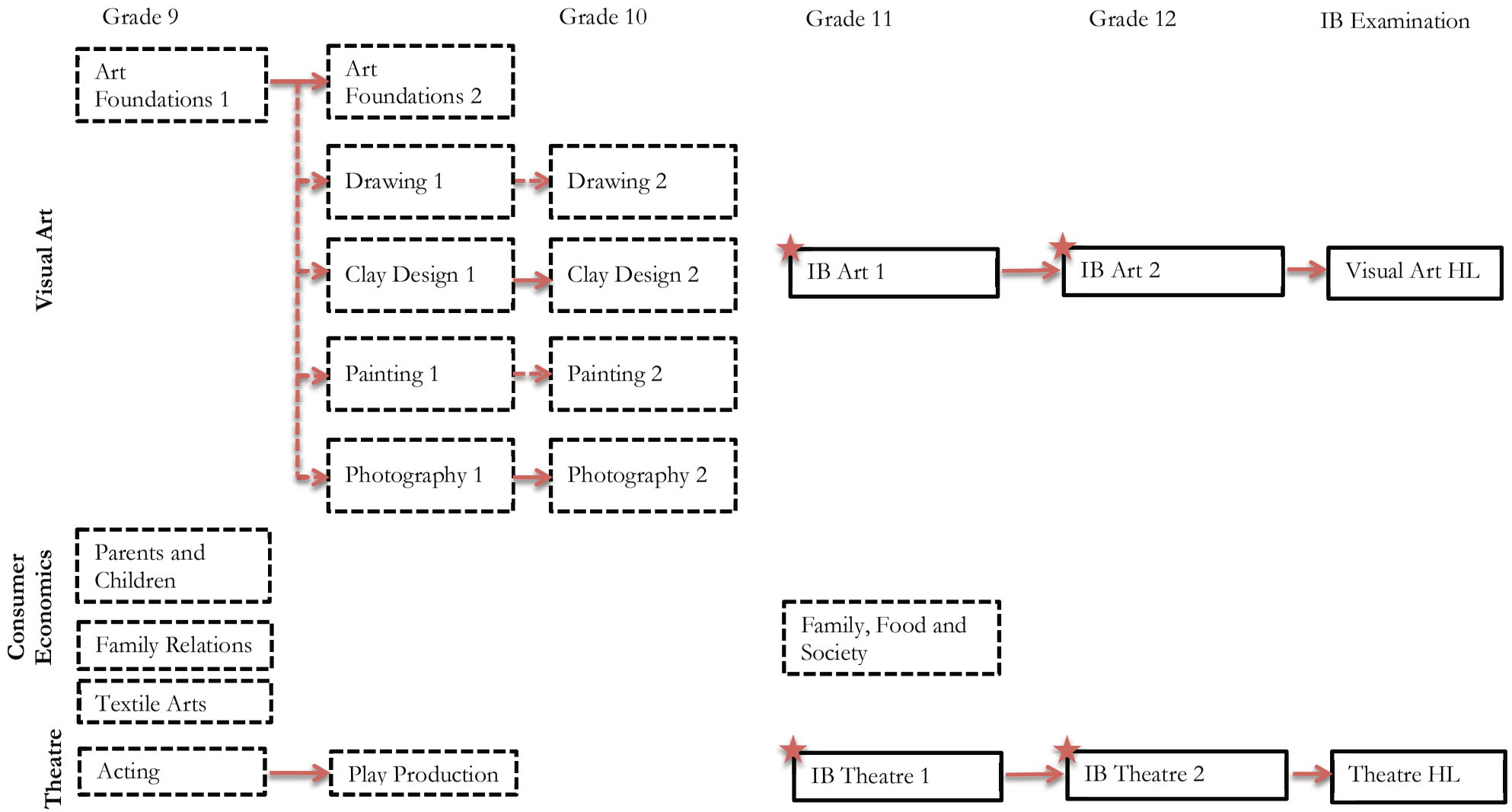


Figure F-6c. Electives – Class of 2013 (continued)

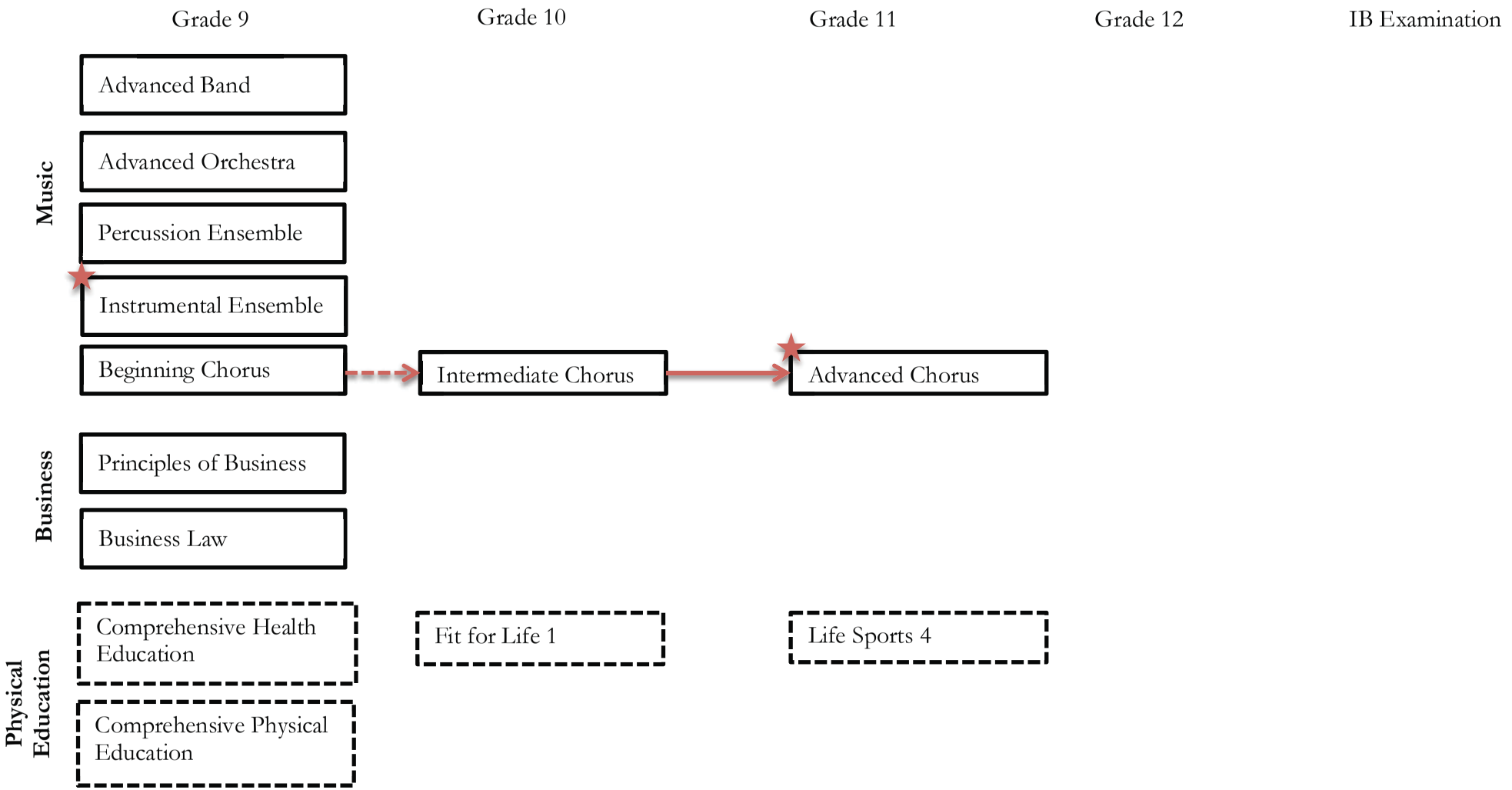


Figure F-6d. Electives – Class of 2014

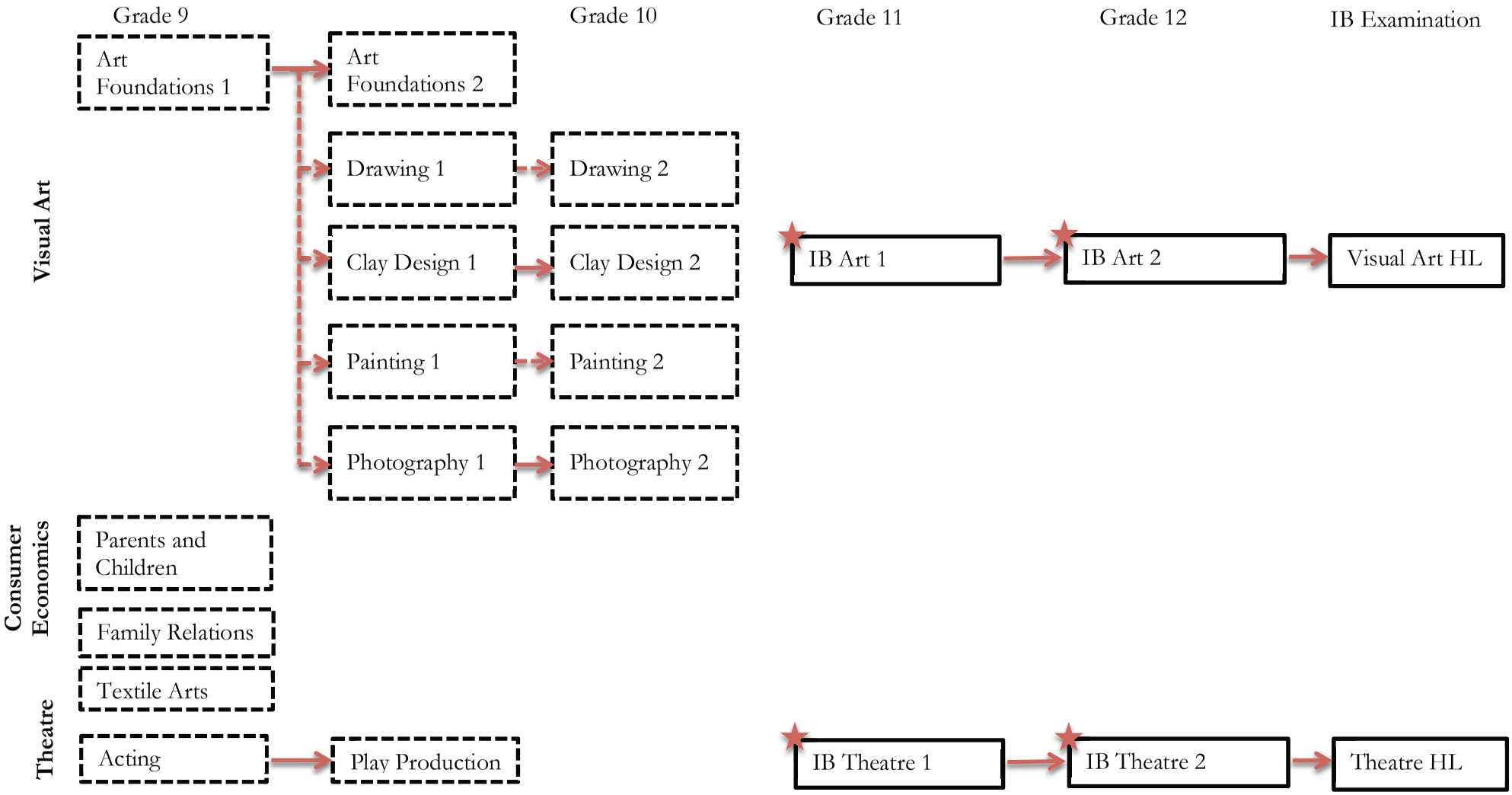
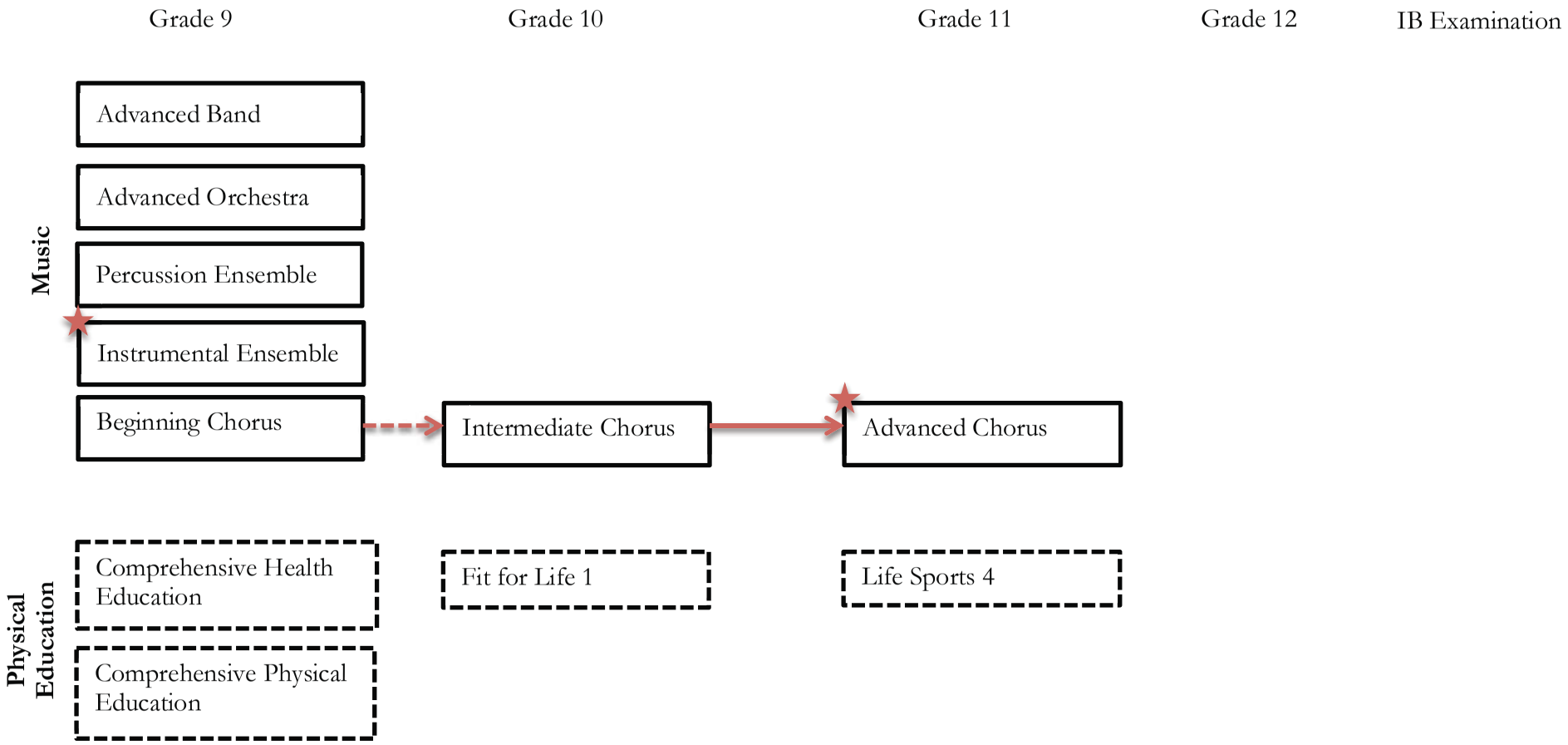


Figure F-6d. Electives – Class of 2014 (continued)



Appendix G. Course Enrollment Data[50]

Table G-1. English

		Share of class			Average per student		
Course	Students	IB	Drop	SPED	GPA	Academic GPA	Absences per class
American Authors PD 2007-08, 2008-09, 2009-10, 2010-11	691	.374	.070	.007	3.049	2.935	4.037
Literary Studies 1 PD 2009-10, 2010-11	214	--	--	.014	2.640	2.466	3.878
English 9 Survey PD 2007-08, 2008-09	254	.149	.040	.110	2.638	2.504	5.279
British Authors PD 2008-09, 2009-10, 2010-11, 2011-12	889	.364	.081	.010	3.055	2.946	3.851
Literary Studies 2 PD 2011-12	63	--	--	.063	2.316	2.103	6.291
Thinking and Writing about Literature 2008-09, 2009-10, 2010-11	270	.041	0	.107	2.280	2.099	6.493
IB English 1 2009-10, 2010-11, 2011-12	496	.411	.092	.006	3.070	2.973	4.125
IB Language and Literature 1 2011-12	158	--	--	.013	2.969	2.856	3.617
IB Literature and Performance 1 2011-12	68	--	--	.044	2.417	2.218	6.053
American Authors 2009-10, 2010-11	153	0	0	.078	2.323	2.166	6.727
IB English 2 2010-11, 2011-12	295	.563	.095	.010	3.222	3.140	3.762
Creative Writing/ Communications Media 2010-11	92	0	.033	.076	2.408	2.261	7.842
American Ethnic Literature/ Mythology and Folklore 2010-11, 2011-12	191	0	.038	.068	2.454	2.316	6.162
Advanced Composition/ World Literature 2010-11, 2011-12	159	.020	.026	.057	2.424	2.264	5.725

[50] After each course title, I have listed the years in which the transcript data offer a complete or nearly complete record of enrollment. The data displayed are calculated for coursetaking in those years. See Chapter 3 for a description of the measures presented in these tables.

Table G-2. World Languages[51]

Course	Students	Share of class			Average per student		
		IB	Drop	SPED	GPA	Academic GPA	Absences per class
Spanish 1	575	.072	.022	.170	2.421	2.260	5.976
Spanish 1 Accelerated	305	.351	.068	.013	3.010	2.898	4.024
Spanish 2	729	.134	.039	.053	2.585	2.429	5.197
Spanish 3 PD	615	.319	.065	.010	3.032	2.929	3.864
Spanish 4	43	0	0	.023	2.62	2.506	4.353
IB Spanish 1	295	.500	.084	.010	3.241	3.159	3.894
IB Spanish 2	110	.495	.069	.009	3.252	3.171	3.859
IB Spanish 3	65	.631	.062	.000	3.327	3.275	4.226
French 1	103	.274	.032	.039	2.845	2.732	4.613
French 2	62	.265	.020	0	3.016	2.926	4.357
French 3 PD	27	.519	.037	.037	3.166	3.088	5.236
French 4	3	.333	0	0	2.804	2.707	3.452
IB French 1	12	.833	.083	0	3.443	3.425	5.121
IB French 2	14	.857	.071	0	3.499	3.469	4.122
German 1	132	.177	.028	.098	2.638	2.513	6.093
German 2	79	.273	.030	.076	2.767	2.633	4.989
German 3	75	.422	.089	.040	2.938	2.823	4.446
German 4	9	0	0	0	2.239	2.116	6.260
IB German 1	31	.524	.143	.032	3.233	3.139	4.072
IB German 2	37	.588	.118	.027	3.281	3.178	4.239
German 6	17	.588	.118	0	3.352	3.265	3.198
Italian 1	2	0	0	0	2.368	2.279	11.684
Italian 2	3	0	0	0	2.495	2.481	11.136
Latin 1	140	.344	.115	.043	2.994	2.869	3.395
Latin 2	121	.392	.137	.017	3.082	2.960	3.326
IB Latin 1	59	.463	.171	0	3.129	3.024	3.567
IB Latin 2	35	.600	.143	0	3.274	3.183	4.114

[51] Most world language courses at Lincoln are heterogeneous with respect to students' grade level, since some students enter with advanced standing in a language and others take an introductory language course in the junior or senior year to accumulate credits. To account for this phenomenon, the tables for world language courses incorporate all available data for the 2007-08 through 2011-12 school years, inclusive.

Table G-3. Social Studies

Course	Students	Share of class			Average per student		
		IB	Drop	SPED	GPA	Academic GPA	Absences per class
World History PD 2007-08, 2008-09, 2009-10, 2010-11	1189	.272	.057	.055	2.851	2.721	4.544
US History PD 2008-09, 2009-10, 2010-11, 2011-12	1307	.256	.054	.060	2.787	2.656	4.884
IB Global History 2009-10, 2010-11, 2011-12	709	.300	.069	.023	2.864	2.749	4.781
IB Psychology 2009-10, 2010-11, 2011-12	203	.287	.077	.015	2.795	2.667	5.189
IB Geography 2009-10, 2010-11, 2011-12	242	.296	.067	.008	2.883	2.769	4.451
IB Economics 1 2009-10, 2010-11, 2011-12	169	.355	.073	0	3.026	2.923	4.466
IB Theory of Knowledge (junior spring) 2009-10, 2010-11	202	.822	.178	.010	3.299	3.227	3.548
IB Americas 2010-11, 2011-12	315	.444	.079	.019	3.048	2.960	4.464
IB Theory of Knowledge (senior fall) 2010-11, 2011-12	166	1	0	.012	3.386	3.327	3.438
Minorities in American Society 2010-11	67	0	0	.179	2.556	2.434	7.338
Philosophy 2010-11	31	0	0	.161	2.569	2.445	6.749
Aesthetics 2010-11, 2011-12	100	.012	.024	.060	2.400	2.260	6.147
Sociology 2010-11, 2011-12	164	.007	.020	.159	2.364	2.216	6.557
Anthropology 2010-11	28	.074	.185	.143	2.384	2.219	6.801

Table G-4. Science

Course	Students	Share of class			Average per student		
		IB	Drop	SPED	GPA	Academic GPA	Absences per class
Biology PD 2007-08, 2008-09, 2009-10, 2010-11	722	.432	.079	.040	2.965	2.839	4.209
Biology 1 2007-08, 2008-09, 2009-10	540	.128	.036	.115	2.586	2.448	5.488
Chemistry PD 2008-09, 2009-10, 2010-11, 2011-12	727	.427	.088	.007	3.168	3.069	3.558
Chemistry 1 2008-09, 2009-10, 2010-11, 2011-12	545	.071	.023	.125	2.340	2.168	6.155
Physics PD 2009-10, 2010-11, 2011-12	276	.361	.049	.004	3.243	3.163	3.084
Physics 1 2009-10, 2010-11, 2011-12	120	.069	.050	.017	2.620	2.488	5.789
IB Biology 1 2009-10, 2010-11, 2011-12	361	.387	.089	.014	3.065	2.965	4.257
Biology 2 2009-10, 2010-11, 2011-12	335	0	.007	.140	2.360	2.199	6.679
IB Chemistry 1 2009-10, 2010-11, 2011-12	297	.466	.095	0	3.145	3.062	3.970
Chemistry 2 2009-10, 2010-11, 2011-12	120	0	.011	.050	2.441	2.288	5.605
IB Physics 1 2009-10, 2010-11, 2011-12	276	.361	.049	.004	3.243	3.163	3.084
Physics 2 2010-11	3	0	0	0	2.806	2.689	10.543
IB Environmentals 2009-10, 2010-11, 2011-12	106	.259	.086	.047	2.933	2.832	4.060
IB Biology 2 2010-11, 2011-12	160	.519	.075	.013	3.181	3.098	4.152
IB Chemistry 2 2010-11, 2011-12	131	.611	.069	0	3.304	3.238	3.635
IB Physics 2 2010-11, 2011-12	11	.727	.091	0	3.408	3.343	2.836

Table G-5. Mathematics

Course	Students	Share of class			Average per student		
		IB	Drop	SPED	GPA	Academic GPA	Absences per class
Algebra PD 2007-08, 2008-09, 2009-10, 2010-11	506	.416	.084	.004	3.194	3.096	3.772
Algebra 2007-08, 2008-09, 2009-10, 2010-11	675	.097	.032	.130	2.428	2.260	5.676
Geometry PD 2008-09, 2009-10, 2010-11, 2011-12	559	.465	.085	.005	3.292	3.211	3.440
Geometry 2008-09, 2009-10, 2010-11, 2011-12	709	.073	.035	.107	2.361	2.189	5.788
Algebra 2/Trigonometry PD 2009-10, 2010-11, 2011-12	267	.513	.085	0	3.479	3.423	2.988
IB Math Studies 1 2009-10, 2010-11, 2011-12	419	.255	.090	.010	2.876	2.753	4.409
Math Studies 1 2009-10, 2010-11, 2011-12	259	.005	0	.116	2.323	2.157	6.118
Transition to College Math 2010-11, 2011-12	69	0	0	.116	2.030	1.870	8.964
IB Pre-Calculus 2010-11, 2011-12	140	.516	.086	0	3.473	3.422	3.228
IB Math Studies 2 2010-11, 2011-12	258	.356	.099	.016	3.016	2.911	4.587
Math Studies 2 2010-11, 2011-12	164	0	.025	.037	2.522	2.369	5.333
IB Calculus 2010-11, 2011-12	70	.696	.043	0	3.559	3.525	3.650
IB Math Topics 2010-11, 2011-12	22	.636	0	0	3.517	3.495	3.837
Introduction to Programming 2008-09, 2009-10, 2010-11	47	0	.125	0	2.742	2.564	4.038
Computer Concepts 2008-09	84	.205	.036	.083	2.776	2.655	4.550
Computer Literacy 2008-09, 2009-10	93	.096	0	.086	2.557	2.464	5.425
Web Design 2010-11	238	.010	.010	.118	2.543	2.378	6.460
Computer Programming 2010-11, 2011-12	153	.038	.013	.046	2.689	2.539	4.122
IB Computers 1 2009-10, 2010-11, 2011-12	54	.357	.048	.037	2.872	2.766	4.485
IB Computers 2 2010-11, 2011-12	22	.455	.091	.045	3.110	3.003	3.971

Table G-6. Electives[52]

Course	Students	Share of class			Average per student		
		IB	Drop	SPED	GPA	Academic GPA	Absences per class
Advanced Journalism[53]	33	.263	.105	0	3.023	2.925	5.625
Robotics[4]	17	1	0	.059	2.914	2.803	2.383
Art Foundations 1	906	.195	.042	.128	2.685	2.566	5.648
Art Foundations 2	56	.320	.060	.071	3.025	2.941	4.541
Drawing 1	56	.320	.060	.071	3.025	2.941	4.541
Drawing 2	29	.259	.037	.034	2.962	2.847	3.421
Clay Design 1	285	.127	.041	.081	2.757	2.633	5.335
Clay Design 2	30	.138	.034	.100	2.812	2.694	5.267
Painting 1	162	.124	.019	.080	2.744	2.609	4.606
Painting 2	7	.143	0	.571	3.400	3.372	3.945
Photography 1	222	.208	.069	.050	2.862	2.761	4.952
Photography 2	29	.345	.034	0	3.182	3.105	4.473
IB Art 1	61	.383	.085	.033	3.105	3.014	3.526
IB Art 2	32	.531	.063	.031	3.238	3.158	4.059
Principles of Business	49	.217	.043	0	2.626	2.503	4.512
Accounting	27	.185	0	0	2.773	2.706	6.218
Business Law	67	.155	.069	.075	2.545	2.433	5.655

[52] As with World Languages, statistics for electives are reported for all available years – 2007-08 through 2011-12 inclusive.

[53] These classes are offered in academic departments, but they do not count toward graduation requirements in English or science, respectively.

Table G-6. Electives (continued)

Course	Students	Share of class			Average per student		
		IB	Drop	SPED	GPA	Academic GPA	Absences per class
Parents and Children	188	.051	.029	.085	2.483	2.342	6.899
Family Relations	99	.013	.013	.131	2.447	2.296	5.788
Family, Food, and Society	47	.027	.054	.170	2.334	2.156	6.384
Textile Arts	174	.085	.028	.098	2.531	2.381	6.863
Band	383	.555	.085	.013	3.146	2.981	2.955
Orchestra	197	.392	.123	.020	3.056	2.890	4.064
Percussion Ensemble	19	.222	0	0	2.658	2.409	3.840
Beginning Chorus	157	.051	.061	.108	2.674	2.502	5.122
Intermediate Chorus	123	.058	.012	.065	2.607	2.382	5.174
Vocal Production	16	.067	0	.063	2.803	2.597	6.406
Comprehensive Health Education	1244	.270	.057	.071	2.824	2.696	4.636
Comprehensive Physical Education	1192	.270	.055	.079	2.836	2.705	4.622
Fit for Life 1	512	.096	.083	.123	2.737	2.594	4.992
Life Sports 1	535	.190	.054	.099	2.694	2.570	6.000
Life Sports 3	242	.282	.041	.058	2.823	2.708	5.717
Life Sports 4	596	.198	.059	.102	2.809	2.685	5.326
Weight Training	9	0	0	.556	2.215	2.209	12.702
Acting	409	.168	.035	.098	2.717	2.581	5.573
Play Production	158	.147	.034	.051	2.748	2.619	5.155
IB Theatre 1	52	.364	.152	.038	2.989	2.871	3.850
IB Theatre 2	29	.379	.138	.069	3.104	3.001	3.709
Contemporary Communications	536	.009	.072	.103	2.563	2.424	6.021

Appendix H. Course Transition Probabilities, Class of 2011

Table H-1. English

			Destination course										
			2008-09		2009-10				2010-11				
			British Authors PD	Thinking and Writing about Literature	IB English 1	American Authors	American Ethnic Lit/ Folklore and Mythology	Advanced Composition/ World Literature	IB English 2	Creative Writing/ Communications Media	American Ethnic Literature/ Folklore and Mythology	Advanced Composition/ World Literature	Enrollment – origin year
Origin course	2007-08	American Authors PD	.91	.09									145
		English 9 Survey PD	.44	.54									132
	2008-09	British Authors PD			.82	.08	.10	.20					206
		Thinking and Writing about Literature			.23	.57	.17	.02					93
	2009-10	IB English 1							.75	.11	.14	.07	195
		American Authors								.53	.38	.25	79
		American Ethnic Lit/ Folklore and Mythology								.62		.38	37
		Advanced Composition/ World Lit								.33	.67		6

Table H-2. World Languages

		Destination course							
		Spanish 1	Spanish 2	Spanish 3	IB Spanish 1	Spanish 4	IB Spanish 2	IB Spanish 3	Enrollment – all years
Origin course	Spanish 1	.06	.78	.03					141
	Spanish 1 Accelerated		.22	.78					46
	Spanish 2		.12	.57					196
	Spanish 3			.03	.61	.10			176
	IB Spanish 1						.44	.19	111
	Spanish 4						.05		19
	IB Spanish 2							.27	51

		Destination course						
		French 1	French 2	French 3	IB French 1	French 4	IB French 2	Enrollment – all years
Origin course	French 1	.03	.28	.45				29
	French 2			.57	.07			14
	French 3				.52	.10	.10	21
	IB French 1						.92	3
	French 4						.33	14

		Destination course						
		German 2	German 3	IB German 1	German 4	IB German 2	German 6	Enrollment – all years
Origin course	German 1	.55	.03					33
	German 2	.05	.77	.05				22
	German 3			.35	.15	.42		26
	IB German 1					.82		11
	German 4			.14		.29		7
	IB German 2						.41	22

Table H-2. World Languages (continued)

		Destination course	
		Italian 2	Enrollment – all years
Origin course	Italian 1	.50	6

		Destination course			
		Latin 2	IB Latin 1	IB Latin 2	Enrollment – all years
Origin course	Latin 1	.84			25
	Latin 2		.71		21
	IB Latin 1			.75	16

Table H-3. Social Studies

		Destination course														
		US History PD	IB Global	IB Economics	IB Geography	IB Psychology	IB TOK (junior spring)	IB Americas	IB Economics HL	IB TOK (senior fall)	Philosophy	Anthropology	Sociology	Aesthetics	Minorities in American Society	Enrollment – all years
Origin course	World History PD	.99														277
	US History PD	.04	.59	.11	.25	.12	.32	.01			.03	.02	.07	.02	.02	324
	IB Global			.14	.10	.03		.62	.07	.33	.04	.05	.12	.08	.07	220
	IB Economics		.01		.08	.04		.14	.18	.12	.03	.03	.12	.01	.01	76
	IB Geography		.14	.13		.06		.23	.05	.17	.08	.06	.14	.05	.14	111
	IB Psychology		.05	.11	.11			.18	.02	.32	.04	.07	.16	.04	.05	56
	IB TOK (junior spring)		.01	.19	.17	.02		.73	.14	.82		.06	.03	.02		108
	Philosophy	.03		.07				.03					.07			29
	Anthropology	.04											.04			27
	Sociology	.01	.04	.02		.01	.01	.02			.06	.04	.01	.02	.04	81
	Aesthetics		.03			.03		.03			.09		.06		.03	32
	Minorities in American Society	.02	.04					.02			.02	.02	.04			46

Table H-4. Science

		Destination course																
		Biology PD	Biology 1	Chemistry PD	Chemistry 1	IB Biology 1	IB Chemistry 1	IB Environmentals	Physics PD	Physics 1	IB Biology 2	IB Chemistry 2	IB Physics 1	IB Physics 2	Biology 2	Chemistry 2	Physics 2	Enrollment – all years
Origin course	Biology PD			.80	.13	.05		.01										125
	Biology 1	.01	.03	.29	.64	.01			.01	.01								188
	Chemistry PD					.45	.46	.04	.16	.03	.02		.02		.06	.02		162
	Chemistry 1				.03	.18	.10	.02	.05	.05	.01				.46	.10		153
	IB Biology 1						.02	.05	.05	.14	.68	.07	.03		.13	.03		111
	IB Chemistry 1						.01	.01	.17	.05	.12	.72	.13	.04	.09	.03		94
	IB Environ-mentals								.04	.08	.12	.12			.04	.04		25
	Physics PD					.03	.09	.03			.08	.23	.38		.06	.03		64
	Physics 1											.02	.03		.08	.03	.05	65
	IB Biology 2																	76
	IB Chemistry 2																	68
	IB Physics 1											.15		.15				26
	IB Physics 2																	4
	Biology 2	.01			.01		.01	.05	.02	.21	.01					.13		129
	Chemistry 2								.06	.11					.28			47

Table H-5. Mathematics

		Destination course												
		Algebra	Geometry PD	Geometry	Algebra2/ Trigonometry PD	IB Math Studies 1	Math Studies 1	IB Pre-Calculus	IB Math Studies 2	Math Studies 2	Transition to College Math	IB Calculus	IB Math Topics	Enrollment – all years
Origin course	Algebra PD	.03	.75	.24	.29									119
	Algebra	.05	.18	.70	.03									148
	Geometry PD		.01		.33	.32	.06	.22	.06	.01				139
	Geometry	.01		.09	.01	.39	.38		.01	.01	.07			176
	Algebra 2/ Trigonometry PD				.01	.01	.02	.70	.26	.01				101
	IB Math Studies 1						.01	.01	.76	.17	.05			119
	Math Studies 1								.16	.60	.20			85
	IB Pre-Calculus								.05	.05		.54	.10	82
	IB Math Studies 2							.07	.01	.01	.01			138
	Math Studies 2													73
	Transition to College Math													38
	IB Calculus												.16	44