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This study analyzed the discourses prevalent in two landmark, federally commissioned reports that sought to define the purposes of higher education. Taking a humanities-oriented lens and drawing on critical social theories, the poststructural critical discourse method, “What’s the Problem Represented to Be” (WPR) guided analysis of access and educational opportunity in higher education in the reports.

In the Truman Report, the discourse of a limited democracy discursively restricted full access and educational opportunity. In the Spellings Report, the discourses of the market and disadvantage led to a fuller notion of access and educational opportunity tied specifically to neoliberal aims. The analysis of discourses, silences, and effects uncovered that problematizations discursively produced the ‘capable’ graduate in service to protecting democracy in the Truman Report and the ‘aspirant’ graduate in service to market needs in the Spellings Report.

I offer a conceptual recommendation considering the capabilities theory grounded in equity as an alternative. Whereas both Reports led to the tension that democratic and
market aims are an ‘either/or’ problem for access and educational opportunity, I contend that through the conceptual recommendation of *capabilities grounded in equity*, a ‘both/and’ framing of access and educational opportunity problems could disrupt the stalled polarization of the aims. This alternative conceptual recommendation could generate policies and practices that promote equitable access and educational opportunity in higher education.
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I never thought I would write the acknowledgements for my own dissertation–and here we are–our life circumstances shape and define us. The belief that others have in us and that we have in ourselves allows us to take our life circumstances and turn it into our life’s purpose. Through this dissertation, I am fulfilling a part of my life’s purpose as a first-generation college student reaching this place to achieve my doctoral degree! It has never been about the credentials–it has always been a deeply personal journey and I am beyond honored and excited to become Dr. DLA!
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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

Mettler (2014) wrote, “Over the past 30 years, our system of higher education has gone from facilitating upward mobility to exacerbating social inequality” (p. 4). The history of higher education in the United States has occupied a distinct role in the preservation and health of our democracy, serving as an important mechanism to ensure individual economic and social opportunity. Historically, federal and state policies to promote access and educational opportunity were developed to foster a promise of what degree attainment could deliver for both individual and publicly held goods. Despite these democratic ideals and aims, the concept of access and educational opportunity in higher education has been politically charged and challenged, with increased scrutiny for individuals from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, first-generation college students, and students from non-majority racial and ethnic backgrounds.

As early as the 1840s, the federal government promoted higher education as a public good, recognizing the vital economic and democratic role higher education institutions can serve in building a democratic nation. However, critics of access and educational opportunity since then have and continue to lament the public good ideology and policymaking of expanded access and educational opportunity, often seeking to restrict access with a focus on meritocracy and individualism or suggesting that higher education is not necessary given the debt incurred or needs of the job market. This
tension presents an important 21st century social justice and democratic challenge to society. As the majority of evidence indicates, the level of individual educational attainment correlates to increased social mobility, ability to live a flourishing life, and democratic and civic participation (Mettler, 2014). Given this, it is important to analyze the access and educational opportunity policies and how we frame the problem of access and educational opportunity in higher education. Is it a problem tied to the democratic and public good roles of higher education, a problem linked to ensuring a prepared workforce and the ability for the nation to compete globally, or solely an individual enterprise and benefit?

Present-day access and educational opportunity policies and practices in higher education (I will refer to throughout my dissertation as AO-HE) have been directly shaped by the rise in neoliberalism and increased marketization of higher education. Current policy, practice, and rhetoric has shifted away from the public and democratic values of higher education to questioning the promotion of higher education to all members in society, limiting access to those deemed ‘college ready’ and focusing financial aid and admissions practices on merit versus need and opportunity (Burke, 2012). These trends in policymaking, rhetoric, and practice continue despite ample research demonstrating the impact of higher education degree attainment on earnings, social mobility, life chances, overall wellness, and civic engagement (Cahalan & Perna, 2015). Data continue to demonstrate the significant impact of degree attainment in redressing economic gaps between low-income and those from non-dominant racial and
ethnic backgrounds and individuals from higher income brackets or a Caucasian background. For example, U.S. Census Bureau (2018) statistics cite increased economic advantage for African Americans who hold a four-year bachelor’s degree, earning on average $61,000 annually compared to $84,000 of similarly educated whites. John Dewey’s perspectives on education and democracy provide useful context:

The devotion of democracy to education is a familiar fact. The superficial explanation is that a government resting upon popular suffrage cannot be successful unless those who elect and who obey their governors are educated. Since a democratic society repudiates the principle of external authority, it must find a substitute in voluntary disposition and interest; these can be created only by education. (Dewey, 1916, p. 83)

By implication, the stratification of educational attainment is strongly associated with the stratification of civil engagement and democratic sustenance. Changes in policy and practice since the early 1980s have had a dampening impact on the public’s understanding of higher education attainment as a national priority and democratic imperative.

I intend to explore these issues using a humanities-oriented, critical social research approach. I will analyze two seminal texts in higher education policy that constructed the purposes and problems of access and educational opportunity in higher education in relation to broader social and democratic aims. These texts are Higher Education for American Democracy, also known as the Truman Report from 1947, and A
Test of Leadership: Charting the future of U.S. Higher Education, also known as the Spellings Report from 2006. My analysis is shaped by the following guiding questions:

1. How are AO-HE problems represented in the Truman and Spellings Reports?
2. How are solutions related to AO-HE problems constructed in the Truman and Spellings Reports?
3. What discourses are employed to shape these problems (within the reports and other discourses influenced by the reports)?
4. What realities are discursively constructed for AO-HE?

I will use a poststructural method, “What’s the Problem Represented to Be” (Bacchi, 1999) to conduct my analysis of the two texts.

A Brief History of Expanded Access and Education Opportunity

The efforts to increase access and educational opportunity in higher education have been the subject of government reports, federal legislation, national dialogue, and social commissions since the early 1800’s. Specifically, the passage of the Morrill Act of 1862 led to the creation of what is known as public, land-grant universities. Prior to this, the majority of higher education institutions were rooted in religious education (predominantly Protestant) and served mainly men in the elite, upper-strata of society (Delbanco, 2012). The passage of the Morrill Act of 1862 was significant in creating higher education institutions focused on increasing access for the purposes of teaching agriculture and mechanical arts alongside science and the classics. “The history of land
grant colleges of agriculture is intertwined with the history of higher education for U.S. citizens of average means” (National Research Council, Consensus Report, 1995, p. 1).

Though the original legislation was passed in 1862, it was not until the passage of the Morrill Act of 1890 that funds were appropriated through the federal government to support and grow this network of land-grant institutions, including those institutions that eventually became Historically Black Colleges and Universities (Rudolph, 1990). This inclusion to ensure designation of institutions for African Americans is significant for considerations of access and educational opportunity as the second Morrill Act prohibited racial discrimination.

Both Morrill Acts are historically pivotal given the commitment to creating increased access to higher education led and resourced by the government. “In the land-grant institutions the American people achieved popular higher education for the first time” (Rudolph, 1990, p. 265) and the notion of the “state college” became synonymous with opportunity. The significance of the Morrill Acts and subsequent development of land-grant institutions in shaping present day understanding of public higher education and issues of access and educational opportunity cannot be understated. The resulting historical effects established a notable link between state and federal support for higher education, recognized higher education as an economic engine for social mobility, and created a common-school mentality on a higher level (Rudolph, 1990). However, it is also worth noting that this access was not equitable or accessible to all, which shapes the eventual framing of the purposes of AO-HE in future policy and legislation. Higher
education would continue to be deeply shaped by historical influences and such was the case with progressivism and World War II (referred to as WWII).

Large-scale federal investments to open doors to higher education began with the passage of the G.I. Bill, also known as the Servicemen's Readjustment Act, in 1944 in response to high numbers of veterans returning from WWII (Delbanco, 2012). In 1947, Truman’s administration published the President's Commission on Higher Education which called for unprecedented access to higher education tied to democratic aims (Kim & Rury, 2007). The Commission proposed a revolutionary idea for half of the United States population to benefit from participation in higher education.

The report developed by the Commission, titled Higher Education for America's Democracy, asserted that equal access to higher education was essential yet could only be achieved through significant federal investments (in the forms of scholarships and aid for example) (Hutcheson, 2007). The report called on higher education to consider curriculum that would provide students with a general education to foster broader understandings of a nation and world with diverse cultures. This landmark and controversial report called for national and institutional-level policy, economic, and legislative actions to ensure an outcome that the "potential leaders and socially competent citizens" of the United States are not denied higher education opportunities due to economic barriers (Hutcheson, 2007).

It is especially serious than not more of our talented young people continue their schooling beyond high school in this day when the complexity of life and of our
social problems means we need every bit of trained intelligence we can assemble.

(Truman report as quoted in Mettler, 2014, p. 191)

Truman’s report generated criticism and a response from the Commission on Financing Higher Education, funded by the Rockefeller Foundation (Hutcheson, 2007), calling for a more elitist vision for higher education access:

The primary purpose of higher education is to advance the intellectual resources of our society and to stimulate the development of the student of intellectual promise and interest. This raises the question of which young people are to be defined as ‘college material.’….We believe higher education should accept as its first concern the education of those young people who fall approximately within the top 25 percent in intellectual capacity. (p. 47)

According to the Rockefeller-funded report, "we as a nation should call a halt at this time to the introduction of new programs of direct federal aid to colleges and universities" (p. 50). The report suggested that the federal government should not provide aid to individual students and criticized Truman's vision for AO-HE. These two widely varying perspectives in these reports accurately reflect the tension that continues to exist today on the politics of expanding access and educational opportunity to higher education, the role of the federal government, and questions of AO-HE for whom, to what type of institution, and to who’s benefit—society’s or the individual’s.

The significance of Truman Commission’s vision is that it was the first federal level report to call attention to access and educational opportunity issues in higher
education. However, it was not until the resulting policy and legislative actions that followed the Civic Rights Movement that many of the goals outlined by the Truman Report came to fruition. These federal-level laws included the Economic Opportunity and Civil Rights Acts of 1964 as well as the Higher Education Acts of 1965 (Grout, 2003), legislative arrangements that were closely aligned with the goals of Truman’s *Higher Education for America's Democracy* report. The legislative actions further established accountability mechanisms, policy frameworks, funding, and programmatic investments into access and educational opportunity in higher education. Outcomes included a range of government-funded programs to target poverty and increased opportunities for educational access and attainment in higher education, including the Federal TRIO Programs and the creation of federal, need-based financial aid programs such as the Pell Grant (Grout, 2003).

Between the G.I. Bill and the Civil Rights Movement, the country witnessed tremendous growth in access and educational opportunity in higher education. In 1940, only one in twenty Americans held a four-year degree; by 1977, that number increased to one in four (Mettler, 2014). A surge of legislative, social mobilization, and economic forces contributed to a societal climate in which broadening access and educational opportunity in higher education was both a national and democratic priority. There was what appeared to be a national consensus that the benefits of higher education were public and private, social and individual. The private benefits included increased social
mobility and health; the societal benefits included greater civic engagement, reduced unemployment and crime rates, and economic growth (Steinberg, et. al, 2009).

**Understanding the Current Realities of AO-HE**

The period from the early 1940's to 1980 was marked by progressive social policies that expanded higher education participation, access, and attainment (Mortenson, 2011). However, thereafter, since 1980 to the time of this writing, states and the federal government have sharply decreased the support of public higher education and shifted financial aid policies to prioritize merit over need within a neoliberal political environment, seeking to reform higher education through efficiency, accountability, accreditation, and international competitiveness (Torres in Burke, 2012). This has in part contributed to the skyrocketing costs of higher education. Measurements of merit replaced inclusive access-oriented policy and political environments leading to serious sociological consequences. This period since the 1980’s witnessed significant increases in many forms of inequality such as economic, educational, overall social mobility, and health (Mettler, 2014).

The current political, economic, and policy environment contributes to a conflicting reality as public polling in 2013 by the Gallup and the Lumina Foundation indicated 94% of respondents believed that having a certificate or degree beyond high school was *important to very important*. The report, *What America Needs to Know About Higher Education Redesign*, published by Gallup in 2013 concluded that “Americans are largely convinced that higher education is very important and that it will be even more
critical in the future. Nevertheless, most say higher education is not affordable” (p. 6). In a recent poll published by the Pew Institute in July 2017, the increasing influence of political beliefs on the value and purpose of higher education creates a distinct tension. Republicans surveyed in the poll felt that colleges and universities had a negative effect on the country yet held value in preparing people for jobs in the economy (Fingerhut, 2017). The poll further demonstrates wide partisan-based gaps on the purpose of higher education linked to level of education and political affiliation.

There are still publicly viewed benefits to higher education as there were over sixty years ago, yet social movements to broaden access and educational opportunity in higher education have faced several challenges that are compounded for low-income and historically underrepresented groups (Steinberg, et.al., 2009). These include new state funding models that focus on degree completion versus access, questions as to whether federal investments should fund educational opportunity programs and need-based aid, shifts in federal financial aid away from grants to loans, and an overemphasis on the market value for higher education degrees as compared to democratic value.

Mortenson (2011) expresses other concerns with these merit-focused trends that have dominated policy and funding. Through the 1980's to today, there is evidence of federal, state, and institutional policy decisions that “sharply restrict access, choice, persistence, and attainment of higher education” (p. 4) for underrepresented groups despite growing student demand and increased financial need. Higher education costs have sharply climbed concurrent with decreases in need-based aid and shifts to merit-
based aid. This has occurred alongside substantial decreases in federal and state funding for higher education.

As the notions of market fundamentalism and meritocracy have become deeply rooted in America’s policy, social, and educational fabric, higher education has responded with actions, policies, and practices that have worked to exacerbate economic and social inequality, as most clearly demonstrated in the politics of public higher education costs and funding. Eckler and King (2004) state, “one of the perennial questions in American higher education finance is how much of the cost of education should be borne by government, and how much by students and families” (p. 5).

This ideological tension over the funding of AO-HE has allowed for the rise of controversial for-profit institutions to enter the market to offer low-cost, easily accessible alternatives to traditional four-year public higher education institutions. “In effect, public higher education has become increasingly privatized as students and their families have been left to shoulder the increased costs,” shares Mettler (2014, p. 11) in Degrees of Inequality. Her research demonstrates that the impact of these trends on low-income groups is particularly concerning, as rising costs drive low-income families to for-profits institutions whose inputs in educational opportunity are significantly lower than four-year public or private institutions. In fact, the rhetoric surrounding the issue of loan debt is significantly skewed when parceling out the data between for-profit and non-profit higher education institutions. For students attending for-profit institutions, 94% who attained a bachelor’s degree and 97% who earned an associate’s degree accumulated student loan
debt in comparison to 33% of students at community colleges and 58% at four-year publics (Mettler, 2014). This has also resulted in an increase of first-generation, low-income students who enroll part-time, stop-out or dropout due to increased costs and limited choices for postsecondary options due to costs (Pell Institute, 2012).

These regressive trends since the 1980’s have also resulted in growing gaps in college access and in persistence and graduation rates for groups from various racial, ethnic, and lower socioeconomic backgrounds (Bergerson, 2010). In a comparison of college degree attainments in 1970 to 2011 by income quartile, Mortenson (2012) found that 71% of Americans in the upper income quartile completed a bachelor’s degree by age 24 as compared with only 10% of those in the lowest quartile. Income-based inequalities in education represent disconcerting facts and have serious social implications. According to the Pell Institute report, Developing 20/20 Vision on the 20/20 Degree Attainment Goal (2011), data from the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development showed that the US was 9th in bachelor degree completion among industrialized nations in 2010; however, when data was disaggregated by income, the US was first for the upper income population and falls to 37 out of 38 countries for the lower income population (Pell Institute, 2011). These statistics raise concerns given other data on the impact of degree attainment on democratic participation, earnings over a lifetime, and life chances.

Karen (1991) found that patterns of representation in higher education have also reflected the ability of certain groups (women, African Americans) to mobilize. Since
the late 1970's, Karen suggests that we have been in a social period marked by counter-
mobilization, in which certain groups have been discouraged purposefully or have been
less successful in mobilizing for social opportunities in higher education.

This is a complex problem linked directly to issues in K-12 education, family
background, and socioeconomic structures. According to the 2012 National Center for
significant gaps in enrollment rates, persistence toward degree completion, and actual
completion rates existed between low-income and middle to upper income students as
well as between various ethnic and race groups. The study found that 73% of Caucasian,
51% of African American, and 50% of Hispanic first-time, full-time students who
attended a four-year institution in 2003-2004 attained a bachelor's degree by June 2009
(Ross et. al., 2012).

These inequalities in AO-HE outcomes become a societal concern as national
census data demonstrate that higher levels of educational attainment correlate with higher
earnings, democratic participation, and increases in overall life chances. During the
recent recession in 2010, the unemployment rate for high school dropouts was 17.9%; for
those with a bachelor's degree, it was only 5.9% (Educational Attainment in the US,
2009). In 2016, unemployment rates for those with a high school degree or less averaged
5.1% as compared to 2.0% for those with a bachelor’s degree or higher (Bureau of Labor
Statistics, 2017). Clearly, there is an economic benefit to attaining education beyond high
school. Nevertheless, there is rhetoric accompanying the regressive trends that question
the value of higher education and the impact of loan debt incurred by low- to middle-income students.

Current trends have led to policy decisions that limit the amount of loans and financial aid a student can receive without making ‘sufficient academic progress’ and state-level funding mechanisms that punish institutions failing to adequately retain and graduate students. The results of these policies and trends have led to public institutions closing the door on students perceived to be academically risky, less qualified, or unlikely to be able to afford the high costs of attendance.

Since the 1940’s, a noted shift has occurred from valuing education as a public, democratic good to one that is viewed as a private, market good. Labaree (1997) discusses America's struggle in defining educational goals as private versus public. Labaree contends that America's inability to articulate clear aims for educational goals has led to policy, funding, and institutionalized structures which are conflicting and ineffective. In March 2014, the Chronicle of Higher Education issued several reports including the article, “From Public to Private Good” (Hebel, 2014). The article, using survey data and interviews, indicated the public's lack of interest in financially supporting higher education despite recognizing its value:

Students are about to pay a larger share of the costs of a public education than that of states. In almost half of states, they already do. That’s a significant change from even a decade ago, when students picked up about one-third of the tab and states paid the rest. Public colleges’ growing reliance on tuition means that
student debt, which has already topped $1-trillion, is poised only to rise. Once embraced as a collective good, a public higher education is increasingly viewed—and paid for—as a private one. (p. 3)

The lack of concrete aims for higher education coupled with ineffective policy frameworks has yielded a modern-day crisis for access and educational opportunity as well-illustrated by the 2018 *Indicators of Higher Education Equity in the United States* Report published by the Pell Institute:

Whether or not we believe that higher education is a civil right, an essential element of a full democratic society or a fundamental requirement for achieving the American dream, the 2018 *Indicators* report, like previous reports, shows that higher education opportunity and outcomes remain highly inequitable across family income groups. Moreover, on many indicators, gaps are larger now than in the past. The disinvestment of state funds for public colleges and universities since the 1980s and the declining value of federal student grant aid have aided in the creation of a higher education system that is stained with inequality. Once known for wide accessibility to and excellence within its higher education system, the U.S. now has an educational system that sorts students in ways that have profound implications for later life chances. More work is required to ensure that all youth have the opportunity to use their creative potential to realize the many benefits of higher education and advance the well-being and progress of the nation (p. 7).
Purpose

This problem is the focus for my analysis. My inquiry into expanded access and education opportunity in higher education seeks to explore these issues in relation to democratic and larger societal implications. I will analyze two federally commissioned reports on higher education: The Truman Report of 1947: *Higher Education for American Democracy* and the Spellings Report: *A Test of Leadership: Charting the Future of U.S. Higher Education* from 2006. These two reports were chosen due to their explicit focus on higher education and their historical significance. They were also both developed out the work of appointed commissions that developed recommendations based on concerns for higher education perceived at the time the reports were written. Hutcheson (2002) discusses that the Truman Report was the first time a national rhetoric on higher education was developed. Though many of the recommendations took several decades to be considered let alone adopted, the Report has been considered groundbreaking and prescient (Gilbert & Heller, 2010).

The Spellings Report, though not possessing the same level of impact, has been considered a significant step in the neoliberalization of higher education being viewed as a market place (Greenwood, 2009). The Report is credited with laying the groundwork to simplify the Free Application for Federal Student Aid and establishing data systems to track performance indicators for higher education (Liu, 2017).

I will use a critical poststructural policy method called “What the Problem Represented to Be” (WPR) developed by Carol Bacchi (1999) to analyze the reports.
Through my analysis and understanding of the ways access and educational opportunity issues are defined as problems, I intend to contribute to the growing body of literature and research that raises attention to ways higher education contributes to or alleviates social inequality and inequity.

**Guiding Research Questions**

I intend to analyze access and educational opportunity in higher education through two seminal texts in higher education policy that discuss the aims of access and educational opportunity in higher education. These texts are *Higher Education for American Democracy*, also known as the Truman Report from 1947, and *A Test of Leadership: Charting the future of U.S. Higher Education*, also known as the Spellings Report from 2006. My analysis is led by the following guiding questions:

- **GQ1**: How are AO-HE problems represented in the Truman and Spellings Reports?
- **GQ2**: How are solutions related to AO-HE problems constructed in the Truman and Spellings Reports?
- **GQ3**: What discourses are employed to shape these problems (within the reports and other discourses influenced by the reports)?
- **GQ4**: What realities are discursively constructed for AO-HE?
Conceptual Framework

This section outlines the theoretical and conceptual underpinnings for my analysis into expanded access and educational opportunity in higher education (AO-HE) using a poststructural method to perform a critical discourse analysis. The section provides a broad overview of key theoretical approaches and concepts that shape my own thinking on AO-HE. These approaches include a brief overview of humanities-oriented research and critical social research with attention to feminist poststructuralism and concepts of power and knowledge. These theoretical approaches serve as the foundation for the analytical method I have chosen. The method, “What the Problem Represented to Be” draws heavily upon feminist poststructuralism and Foucauldian concepts. They serve as foundational theories that inform and shape the process of WPR. WPR is an analytical tool to facilitate poststructural policy analysis (Bacchi & Goodwin, 2016). During my research to identify an appropriate method to use for my study, I’ve always been interested in Foucault’s work on power and knowledge and discourse analysis. I have been equally interested in feminist poststructural ideas related to uncovering silences, power dynamics, and marginalized voices as embedded in policies and language. What I found in the WPR method is a way to apply the theoretical concepts of Foucault and feminist poststructuralism to conduct my analysis on my selected text. The WPR method utilizes various Foucauldian concepts and feminist poststructural approaches to develop its strategy. I discuss each below and the ways they inform the WPR method.
Humanities-Oriented Critical Social Research

Humanities-oriented research in education serves as an appropriate umbrella to undertake my analysis into AO-HE. This type of inquiry is grounded in interpretative methods that aim to uncover the history, discourses, norms, and beliefs of particular phenomenon in social life (AERA, 2009). Humanities-oriented research in education tends to fall within three domains: traditional humanities (history, philosophy, linguistics), interpretative-theoretical studies such as cultural and sociological disciplines, and approaches that orient from a critical lens (AERA, 2009). This inquiry into AO-HE primarily falls within the critical aspects of humanities-oriented research.

Specifically, I use a critical social research approach which provides a specific set of tools, theories, and methodologies to explore AO-HE. Through a critical social research lens, I challenge “taken-for-granted norms” related to expanded access and educational opportunity in higher education (AO-HE). I further connect critical social theories with consideration of praxis as proposed by Lather (1986). She claims that research ought to and can be emancipatory in that “emancipatory knowledge increases awareness of the contradictions hidden or distorted by everyday understandings, and in doing so it directs attention to the possibilities for social transformation inherent in the present configuration of social process” (p. 259). In these ways, the implications of this analysis of AO-HE are the generation of “transformative action” and “consciousness raising” (Lather, 1986, p. 259) that may shape or change AO-HE discourse and policy.
Critical social research draws upon several fields and concepts; for my analysis I am drawing upon feminist poststructuralism and the concepts of power and knowledge as these are foundational ideas to the “What’s the Problem Represented to Be” (WPR) method.

**Feminist Poststructuralism (FPS)**

“Critical and feminist researchers are committed to the development of methodologies ‘which empower those involved in change’ as well as in critically understanding the social world” (Lather, 1991, p. 3). These ideas are described by an aversion to positivism and knowledge claims constructed independent of self or society as well as the goal to de-construct and unpack the ways power, knowledge construction, and ways of knowing have come to structure society in often male-defined ways (Agger, 1991; Heimer Dadds in Levinson, 2011).

The contribution of poststructural feminism to critical social research lies in the ways of discourse analysis and the ways discourse conveys perceptions of society; the role of self in knowledge-construction, an understanding that “the personal is the political”; views of power as “productive versus repressive forces”; and strong ties to activist, praxis, empowerment, and emancipatory ends (Allan, Iverson & Ropers-Huilman, 2010). FPS is often applied to issues of gender yet is applicable to subjects within which gender is not the central focal point of inquiry. This concept is important to my analysis of the two texts that draw attention to how the problem of access and educational opportunity in higher education is constructed. Another core tenet of
feminist poststructuralism is the role of reflexivity on the part of the researcher, as “reflexivity requires that we examine how our values insert themselves in the social processes of conducting research” (Burke, 2012, p. 72). My positionality deeply influences the choices I am making in this dissertation. Burke (2012) tackles similar issues to my own line of inquiry through methodological and theoretical lenses that include critical, feminist, and poststructural analysis:

...There is no way to challenge deep-rooted inequalities without engaging with the critical theoretical literature on education inequalities…this includes both sociological work that uncovers patterns of inequality and under-representation at stake, but also research that digs beneath those patterns to explore questions of why and how they come into being and might be disrupted. Critical, feminist and post-structural theories offer a way to deconstruct how the ‘right’ to higher education is denied to certain subjects on the basis of their perceived ‘lack’ of the right attributes, characteristics, potential, ability, aspiration and motivation. (p. 81)

Burke is suggesting we de-center knowledge claims about whom we deem “college-ready” and I intend to extend her work further through my own analysis. The “What the Problem Represented to Be” method is grounded in feminist poststructural ways of thinking with particular interest to disrupt heterogeneous and often male-influenced ways society is shaped through discourse (Bacchi & Goodwin, 2016). The process works to challenge taken-for-granted notions about entities such as ‘institutions
of higher education’ or ‘standardized tests’ to uncover the ways these things are constructed based on societal, often male-defined ideas. The method suggests that traditional forms of policy analysis grounded in rationalism focus on problem-solving versus problem-making, implying that this is a neutral process (Bacchi, 1999). A feminist poststructural approach to policy analysis, such as the WPR method, focuses attention to the ways problems are structured to be solved, recognizing the gender and other power dynamics that frame issues in particular ways to be addressed.

**Power and Knowledge**

The WPR method (Bacchi & Goodwin, 2016), outlined in the next chapter, draws deeply upon Foucauldian thinking to develop analytical tools to uncover the ways problems come to be known and addressed. The method integrates several Foucauldian concepts and methods. In particular, there are two key concepts threaded together that underlie the WPR method, ‘power and knowledge,’ that are also key concepts in critical social research and poststructural feminist approaches.

The concept of ‘power’\(^1\) is central to understanding poststructural policy analysis as influenced by Foucault. Whereas traditional forms of understanding ‘power’ link it to ideas of agency and “power over others” (Bacchi & Goodwin, 2016), poststructural perspectives informed by Foucault view ‘power’ as constituted, constructed, and produced. Foucault’s perspectives on ‘power’ link it as something that is pervasive and

\(^1\) The use of singular quotes around words is to signify the produced or constructed ideas of the topic. This practice is used by Bacchi and Goodwin for the WPR method and thus is continued here to remain consistent with the intended understanding of key terms of the method (Bacchi & Goodwin, 2016).
permeates systems, codes, laws, and other mechanisms that seek to regulate the conduct of others.

“In fact, power produces; it produces reality; it produces domains of objects and rituals of truths. The individual and the knowledge that may be gained of him (sic) belong to this production” (Foucault quoted in Bacchi & Goodwin, 2016, p. 29). This understanding of ‘power’ allows for interrogation of discourses to uncover how policy produces realities as represented through problems, subjects, objects, and places used in the WPR method. I specifically analyze two policy texts from different historical periods, using the WPR method, to understand the ways ‘power’ is used to construct different ideas of expanded access and educational opportunity.

I further draw an understanding of ‘power’ from Amy Allen’s work on feminist theory. Allen (1999) suggests that feminists are interested in ‘power’ so we can criticize, understand, challenge, and overturn the multitude of ways oppression intersects and impacts the lives of women. She constructs an understanding of ‘power’ in three different ways: power-over: the ways one or groups of people limit the choices for others; power-to: the capacity of individuals or groups to act or be empowered to act in spite of the forms of domination or power-over dynamics that exist; and power-with: this concept emerges from Arendt’s own definition of power as “the human ability not just to act but to act in concert” (p. 126) and views ‘power’ as a collaborative process resulting from receptivity to each other and reciprocity (Allen, 1999). Influenced by Foucault as well as Arendt and Butler, Allen suggests that feminists can best interrupt forms of
domination, identify places of resistance, and form solidarity in change through these concepts of ‘power.’

‘Knowledge’ becomes the vehicle within which ‘power’ is diffused through social apparatuses, institutions, government, and technology (Bacchi & Goodwin, 2016). Foucauldian notions of ‘knowledge’ lie in the understanding that ‘knowledge’ does not equate to ‘truth’ but rather seeks to understand what is accepted as ‘true.’ ‘Knowledge’ becomes a discursive practice to exercise power through social institutions (Foucault, 1972). To understand the analytical intent of the WPR method is to understand how Foucault links ‘knowledge’ and ‘power’ as forms of discourse. Discourse becomes known as “socially produced forms of knowledge that sets limits upon what it is possible to think, write or speak about a given social object or practice” (McHoul & Grace, 1993, p. 32). Knowledge construction is not an apolitical or an objective practice despite positivistic traditions that suggest this to be the case. Knowledge-construction is “highly contextualized and constructed through, and indeed structured by, classed, gendered, racialized and sexualized relations, epistemologies and discourses” (Burke, 2012, p. 70).

‘Knowledge’ and ‘power’ are tightly coupled constructed concepts that work together to inform society what is possible and conversely those things that are not; in the case of my dissertation, this is expressed through two government-funded reports on AOH. The WPR method draws on additional Foucauldian concepts to inform the construction of its analysis. Those ideas include but are not limited to the ideas of problematizations, governmentality, genealogy, and dividing practices. I will refer to the
concepts more relevant to my approach and intend to use the WPR method throughout the next chapter, as my intent is not an exhaustive review of Foucault’s work. Yet, it is important to reference the pivotal nature of Foucault’s influences in developing the WPR method. Figure 1 provides a visual of how the concepts work together to provide a seamless foundation for my dissertation. The analysis using the WPR method is at the center of the Figure, providing the tools to conduct my research. The framework is defined by the outer layers presented.

*Figure 1. Visual Representation of the Context of Concepts and Theories.*

**Significance**

The potential implications and insights resulting from analysis into access and educational opportunity in higher education will contribute to humanities-oriented
foundational research in education. As Tozer (2010) notes the central function of social foundations research is to better understand the ways education exists within constructs of power, knowledge, and culture. This research has similar goals in the exploration of AO-HE. Through understanding the way norms for AO-HE have been constructed and contribute to power differentials that disproportionately affect historically underrepresented groups, this analysis hopes to contribute to the growing body of critical democratic and social justice research of higher education.

Though there has been a great deal of examination of the unequal access and educational opportunity for historically underrepresented groups in higher education, much of the research has remained focused on individual circumstances (choices, motivation, family background, income). There has been relatively little research applying socially constructed power dynamics embedded in policy discourses that directly consider the way AO-HE is constructed as a problem in specific policy texts. The goal of the current analysis is to help reshape the conversation and public dialogue on the role of higher education in our democracy and its impact on opportunities for social equality and equity.

My dissertation is also significant as the literature that attends to expanded access and educational opportunity for low-income students and those from various ethnic and racial backgrounds tends to focus on community colleges as a primary means to increase access. My dissertation intends to consider this notion in much broader terms, specifically four-year, public higher education.
Concepts

In my analysis, I draw upon several concepts that provide the basic building blocks to my inquiry.

Access

I use the term access to refer to the efforts to increase the numbers of historically underrepresented students who enroll and participate in public 4-year higher education institutions. According to Eckel and King (2004):

Higher education was an elite activity for much of its history, excluding individuals based on gender, religion, race/ethnicity, and social class. However, during the 20th century, economic and social changes transformed higher education into a primary gateway to the middle-class, and women and minorities made inroads against longstanding exclusion from mainstream higher education. Americans came to view broad access to higher education as a necessary component of the nation’s ideal as a “land of opportunity.” Higher education responded by broadening access.

(p. i)

Educational Opportunity in Higher Education & Underrepresented Groups

The concept of educational opportunity in higher education is more complex to concretely define and has held various embedded, normative assumptions. The primary normative contexts have mostly swung on a pendulum between educational opportunity for social and democratic goals and meritocratic, human capital goals specifically
targeting underrepresented groups. I am grounding my definition of educational opportunity in higher education in the work of the Pell Institute and the research of Penny Burke, a social foundations scholar.

Burke (2012) challenges market views of “widening participation for higher education” and claims that educational opportunity should seek to redress historical exclusions and inequalities and “reconsider the right to higher education from a social justice perspective” (p. 188). This aligns well with the research by the Pell Institute, a national research institute that encourages policymakers and educators to improve educational opportunities and outcomes for low-income, first-generation college, and disabled students (pellinstitute.org). Educational opportunity in higher education becomes the vehicle within which social inequalities can be addressed. The term underrepresented refers to groups that have historically been numerically underrepresented in higher education. These groups include individuals from various racial and ethnic backgrounds, low socioeconomic status, and first-generation college students.

**Discourse**

The concept of discourse is central to my analysis. My intention in using discourse is to understand that it may mean anything from “a historical moment, a lieu de memoire, a policy, a political strategy, narratives in a restricted or broad sense of the term, text, talk, a speech, topic-related conversations to language per se” (Wodak &
Meyer, 2008, p.3). Discourse can also be understood as social practice as defined by Fairclough (Rogers et al., 2005):

[Discourse] is particularly appropriate for critical policy analysis because it allows a detailed investigation of the relationship of language to other social processes, and of how language works within power relations. CDA provides a framework for a systematic analysis—researchers can go beyond speculation and demonstrate how policy texts work. (Taylor quoted in Graham, 2011, p. 114)

Discourse will be further developed in chapter 2 through a Foucauldian lens as it is a core piece of the WPR method I have chosen to use for my analysis of AO-HE.

**Problematisations**

Problematisations is central to the “What’s the Problem Represented to Be” method I am using for my analysis. The term is used throughout to interrogate the concepts, discourses, assumptions, and presumptions made in both documents. As explained by Bacchi and Goodwin (2016), “Foucault-influenced poststructural policy analysis, therefore encourages policy workers / analysts to problematize (interrogate) the problematization (deep-seated conceptualizations of “problems”) in the policies and policy proposals they develop and implement” (p. 40). Using the WPR method, understanding problems and the ways they are problematized are important steps to analyze discourse.
Delimitations

In this examination, I am not attempting to explore the full scope of expanded access and educational opportunity. This would extend far beyond the confines of this dissertation. I am limiting my analysis to focus on two historical texts that have shaped (Hutcheson, 2002; Liu, 2017) access and expanded educational opportunity. Through understanding the way norms for AO-HE have been constructed and contribute to power differentials that disproportionately affect historically underrepresented groups, this analysis hopes to contribute to the growing body of critical democratic and social justice research of higher education.

Secondly, I recognize that the issues of expanded access and educational opportunity do not exist in a vacuum independent of issues in K-12 systems, family social structures, and societal constructs. It is my intention to provide a focused critical analysis and draw out implications for alternative framing of AO-HE policies at the federal level, with attention to policy discourse and institutional practice.

There is also considerable debate in the current era of rising costs of higher education in the 21st century on whether higher education should be promoted for all students. Concerns have included economic and capitalistic concerns (Tannock, 2006; Glass & Nygreen, 2011) and democratic, philosophical issues (Noddings, 2011; Reay, 2011). Though I believe this is a very important aspect to consider, it is beyond the scope of my intended inquiry. However, I am asserting a stance that by not promoting
expanded access and educational opportunity through higher education to all students, we create a dangerous silence as to who does get to access such opportunities.

This is the silent crisis in higher education, as ample data shows that those with the economic means disproportionately access higher education opportunity and those with less economic means are disproportionately excluded. Though I will attend to aspects of the philosophical premise of whether higher education should be promoted for all students, I will not center on it.

**Dissertation Positionality**

I am the first and only person in my family to pursue and attain postsecondary education at the bachelor’s, masters and the doctoral level. At age 17, my mother gave birth to a baby girl, me. She was not ready to be a mother and most of my life I was raised by my grandmother, grandfather and when able, my mother. I always had strong women around me and education was something that was always promoted. I distinctly remember, “do better than we did” and “we are so proud of you” when academic accomplishments happened. My family has always been blue collar and my mom to this day works in a factory. Early on, I knew I loved school but did not know what that meant as any sort of future. I was ‘good’ at school, as I loved to read, loved to learn, and loved the classroom. As such, I was rewarded and supported as a student and my educational journey in K-12 was mainly positive. I was a ‘student of promise’ coming from a non-traditional family background and limited financial means. This resulted in a counselor taking notice and encouraging me to consider college. She introduced me to her alma
mater and this simple act changed my life and continues to through to this day. This history deeply shapes my positionality as a researcher, professional, human being, and writer of this work.

Today, my life chances, engagement as a citizen, professional paths, and ways of thinking about the world are directly correlated to the experiences, opportunities, and doors that postsecondary education afforded me. As a first-generation, limited income student, my chances to have the life that I have today were and are statistically lower than those with a family college background and financial security. This evidence is anecdotal and clear in my own life as I am the only person in my immediate family without a criminal record or drug history. I no longer struggle to live paycheck to paycheck and have developed various networks and skills that allow me to have a different quality of life than others in my family. In comparison, my cousin who is two years younger than I had a very different path. He dropped out of school in the 9th grade; he was not considered ‘a student of promise’ and found school difficult, normed around behaviors that promoted staying in a seat. He was incredibly active and to date has a high acumen for doing things with his hands—early on he loved to learn through using his hands, however, these predispositions were not supported within a school setting.

As such, his ‘hyperactivity’ was seen as behavioral problems and such this is very much the story that shaped his educational path. Fast-forward to today, his own son at 17 is no longer in school and following in his father’s footsteps. Their story conforms too well to the statistics as my cousin and his son struggle with drug addition, poverty, lack
of sustainable employment opportunities, or life chances. It is without question that this is an oversimplified version of my cousin’s path, but I continually wonder if he had had better opportunities in school that enhanced his capabilities leading to postsecondary options, might his own life chances and experiences have been as valued by him as mine are by me?

As a researcher, my personal journey is my lens that influences how I interpret, shape, and develop my dissertation. I recognize that the promotion of postsecondary education is a contested ideology. Yet, evidence continues to demonstrate the profound impact on individual and societal outcomes when one experiences and attains postsecondary education, particularly a four-year bachelor’s degree. Anecdotally, it is my own lived experience that drives my focus for this analysis of access in higher education. It is a journey that has deeply shaped my personal and professional endeavors and is intricately tied to the way I frame, analyze, and consider this inquiry into AO-HE. Michelle Fine (cited in Carspecken’s 1996) argues that all researchers are agents, “in the flesh and collective” (p. x), making choices among sets of political and epistemological positions. Fine’s descriptions of stances researchers take—ventriloquism, voices, and activism—is offered as ways to understand the role of the researcher in constructing research and subsequent knowledge that may be produced. I find that I am discovering my stance between voice and activism and have evolved through my doctoral coursework into a full-fledged criticalist.
I began my doctoral journey with a specific set of questions related to the experiences of first-generation, low-income students in my federally funded TRIO Upward Bound pre-college program—why did some of the students successfully enter into and persist in higher education while others did not, despite having participated in the same program or with relatively similar home/educational environments? Through reading Bourdieu, Freire, Foucault, Martin, Noddings, Greene, and others, I realized that I was placing the burden of success in accessing and participating in educational opportunity in higher education solely on the students without consideration of the societal structures, institutional apparatuses, policy environments, and discourses that have clear and present impact on their opportunities to be successful. From this point forward, I have been uncovering within myself what it means to be a critical researcher deeply tied to feminist, poststructural lenses and the ways to approach this work authentically. This path and set of experiences shaped my approaches for this dissertation.

Conclusion

The “What’s the Problem Represented to Be” method provides a set of tools guided by questions to unpack and decenter taken for granted norms and ‘truths.’ The WPR method draws attention to see why change occurs in some ways but not in others. Its use brings attention to the way problems come to be known to provide critical insight and attention for consideration of alternatives and more inclusive practices in policymaking. Grounded in feminist poststructuralism and Foucauldian influences, this
critical social method provides the analytical tools to uncover and explore expanded access and educational opportunity in higher education through my selected texts. It also allows space to contest and interrupt normative practices and discourse in AO-HE to consider new ways to produce ‘knowledge’ and discourse on AO-HE, particularly with considerations of capabilities grounded in equity.
CHAPTER II

METHODOLOGY

For my analysis of AO-HE, I am using Carol Bacchi’s (1999) “What the Problem Represented to Be” (WPR) method:

WPR is an analytic strategy that puts in question the common view that the role of governments is to solve problems that sit outside them, waiting to be “addressed.” Rather, it considers how governmental practices, understood broadly, produce “problems” as particular kinds of problems. Alongside and through the production of “problems,” governmental practices contribute to the production of “subjects”, “objects”, and “places.” The WPR approach heralds the importance of directing critical attention to this productive activity. (Bacchi & Goodwin, 2016, p. 14)

Initially developed in 1999, this method draws upon Foucauldian concepts of ‘knowledge’ and ‘power’ and feminist poststructuralism to develop an accessible approach to critically examine the ways problems are problematized in policy and discourse. Bacchi suggests that we are governed through the way problems are shaped in society and the ways policy is then developed to respond or solve such problems. Given this, it is important to focus attention on how problems come to be known and represented as problems. “These exact goals—identifying, reconstructing, and interrogating problematizations—are accomplished through the forms of questioning and analysis in a WPR application” (Bacchi & Goodwin, 2016, p. 19).
An illustration is useful to understand the intent of the WPR method. In *Women, Policy and Politics* (1999), Bacchi discusses how problems associated with women’s inequality have come to be represented. In her chapter on pay equity, she discusses the difference between framing pay differentials between men and women as equal pay for equal work versus comparable worth and pay equity (valuing work through pay equity that is typically associated with women). The difference in how the problem of pay equity is represented leads into the way the dialogue surrounds the issue and drives policy, social behavior, and social norms.

The WPR method interrogates through a critical research lens how policies shape how we come to know, be, and are permitted to become as ‘subjective’ beings. The method seeks to uncover the way ‘subjects,’ ‘objects,’ and ‘places’ are produced. The WPR method thus analyzes how ‘problems’ are made and unmade. In contrast to other forms of policy analysis grounded in positivist traditions or those that seek to develop policies to solve problems, the WPR approach discerns how problems are represented and come to be known as problems. This is referred to as problematizations. Its premise is built upon the theoretical understanding that knowledge is constructed through the activity of problematizations (understanding the conceptualization of problems) and the way problems come to be in society. For example, Bacchi (1991) draws distinction between traditional forms of policy analysis that focus on problem solutions and her WPR method that seeks to understand problem representation. This opens up discourse
to understand why particular choices are made in identifying problems and to explore what is not problematized.

The WPR approach is driven by the act of analyzing problematizations which focuses analysis on how ‘problems’ are shaped and thus able to be interrogated. This analysis demonstrates ways issues come to be known as problems and the political, denaturalized way that problems are conceptualized (Bacchi & Goodwin, 2016). For consideration, we may assume everyone understands or agrees that poverty is a problem. The WPR method challenges us to uncover the ways the problem of poverty (e.g. laziness, tied to certain demographics, self-induced rather than a product of institutionalized economic and social policy decisions) is represented that in turn shapes decisions on policymaking and social behavior. Within problematizations, it is important to understand which issues are problematized and which are not, what underlying assumptions contribute to the framing of problems and resulting implications, and the importance of self-problematizations (the work of uncovering one’s own assumptions in shaping issues into problems).

The WPR approach to policy analysis is composed of seven steps that include six questions and the application of that process to one’s own line of inquiry. Bacchi (2009) suggests that the process is heuristic and should be adhered to as such. The process will be expanded upon later in this chapter. A summative overview is provided here:

1. What’s the problem represented to be in a specific policy or policies?
2. What deep-seated presuppositions or assumptions underlie this representation of the “problem”? 

3. How has this representation of the “problem” come about? 

4. What is left unproblematic in this problem representation? Where are the silences? Can the “problem” be conceptualized differently? 

5. What effects (discursive, subjectification, lived) are produced by this representation of the “problem”? 

6. How and where has this representation of the “problem” been produced, disseminated and defended? How has it been and/or how can it be disrupted and replaced? 

7. Apply the list of questions to your own problem representations.

For my analysis on AO-HE, I specifically move through questions one through five to guide my analysis and question six to frame my discussion and findings. The following section provides additional context and understanding of the steps that guide the analytical work of using the WPR method.

The “What’s the Problem Represented to Be” Method 

Question one of the WPR asks, what is the problem represented to be in a specific policy or policies? This question approach establishes a starting point for the analysis. The key function is to identify a problem and begin to unpack the problem to understand the way it has been problematized and represented through the analysis. The goal is to “start from stated ‘solutions’ to inquire into their implicit problematization(s)” (Bacchi &
Mapping the problematizations through understanding the way something has been proposed to be addressed (in the case of this research, access and educational opportunity) is an important function to trace how certain problems have come to be known and not known.

For example, using the pay equity problem noted earlier, Bacchi begins with mapping the difference between problematizing pay equity as an issue of unequal wages between women and men doing similar work and problematizing pay equity as an issue of a wage gap between male-dominated and female-dominated occupations (Bacchi, 1999). Each of these problematizations develop unique policy and social patterns that are able to be interrogated due to the analysis of the problematizations versus the solutions or policies that premise a generally shared agreement on a particular issue (such as unequal pay). This initial mapping driven by question one sets the stage and builds the foundation for the remaining questions and process of analysis. I use question one to interrogate both texts to uncover the AO-HE problems each text identifies and recommended solutions.

Question two asks what deep-seated presuppositions or assumptions underlie the representation of the ‘problem,’ and begins the deeper dive into understanding the way the identified problem has come to be known, specifically through assumptions, unexamined ways of thinking, ‘knowledge,’ and discourse (Bacchi & Goodwin, 2016). This examination is through the policy, discourse, practices, programs, or technical instruments versus those that construct the policy itself. Discourse within this context is
considered to be the “socially produced forms of knowledge” (p.35) that permit what is possible to think, speak, write, or come to be known about a given social object or practice (McHoul & Grace, 1993). The use of discourse in the WPR method draws directly from Foucauldian and feminist poststructural concepts. These concepts include power and knowledge and the way discourse embeds power and knowledge. Bacchi considers how the mapping of different types of problematizations leads us to better understand the meanings behind the problematizations. Using the pay equity example, we can analyze the meaning behind problematizing equal pay for equal work differently than equal pay for equal value. Each of these problematizations considers the issue of unequal pay between men and women differently. Question two seeks to understand the implicit and explicit meanings various problematizations may carry.

Question two further seeks to uncover the binary concepts (Foucauldian dividing practices) used to frame a problem (public good versus individual, woman versus man, etc.). We may consider here two commonly used terms in access and educational opportunity work, college-ready versus not college-ready or college material versus not college material as central binaries constructed around AO-HE that has produced particular problems. Other binaries commonly associated with access and educational opportunity specifically associate the purposes of policies—for democratic aims versus economic aims.

The third aspect of question two draws upon the Foucauldian concept of governmentality. This Foucauldian concept focuses attention to the productive role of
governments and political bodies in shaping norms, ways of beings, and ‘truths’ within a society through acts of governing (policy, technologies, codes of conducts, rules, laws, etc.). To understand how a problem comes to be known is to understand what it was not defined to be through acts of governmentality, a central function to the purposes of question two (Bacchi & Goodwin, 2016). In the pay equity example, Bacchi maps how affirmative action policies and legislation problematizes women’s lack of access to high-paying jobs due to structural discrimination (p.74). This is an example of government rules and practices shaping particular discourse based on how the problem of equal pay was problematized (Bacchi, 1999).

Question three asks how has this representation of the ‘problem’ come about? Bacchi’s (1999) work draws heavily from Foucault’s genealogical method for question three in order to uncover how certain problems and problematizations have evolved and come to be known over time. Genealogy traces the historical descent of various elements that work to produce the identified problem representation (such as AO-HE) with the intent to reveal how things that may appear as apparent or accepted ‘truths’ are in fact contingent upon the various, non-linear progression of history that shapes how things come to be known. The inquiry seeks to reveal the power factors and conflicts that shape ‘knowledge’ and what society comes to accept (Metro-Roland, 2011).
The purpose is to understand the historical influences and events\(^2\) that shape the produced understanding of particular problematizations such as access and educational opportunity in higher education or the unequal pay examples used. The application of this question in my analysis explores the way AO-HE has come to be known through the selected texts in both periods of time that in turned shaped policy and practice. The intent of question three is to understand how a problem was made and thus how then we can potentially unmake a particular problem. Both texts that I have chosen to analyze are directly influenced by events and other historical factors that shape the problematizations, discourses, and assumptions.

Question four has several parts: what is left unproblematic in this ‘problem’ representation, where are the silences, and can the ‘problem’ be conceptualized differently? Bacchi’s (1999) intent for question four is to open up consideration for other possibilities through critical analysis and thinking. The foundation to do this work is contingent upon the analysis conducted through questions two and three. Bacchi and Goodwin (2016) state, “the point is to destabilize an existing problem representation by drawing attention to the silences, or unproblematized elements, within it” (p. 22). A common tool to achieve this analysis is through comparing problematizations over time to see shifts and how certain influences allow something to be problematized (or not).

\(^2\) Foucault described events as the practices and produced small and large occurrences that shape knowledge. Events are heterogeneous in nature and not linear or specific to moments in time (Bacchi & Goodwin, 2016). For example, the neoliberal shifts from the late 1970s–today may be considered events that influence knowledge production.
Question four also should bring attention to voices or experiences missing and opportunities to think differently about particular problematizations. It is a place to consider creative, inventive, and alternative possibilities. The practices, context, cultural, and social influences are all aspects that contribute to the analysis from question four. The unequal pay illustration is useful here to understand question four’s intent. Bacchi (1999) writes that opening up alternative ways to consider unequal pay shifts the problematization from women in poverty or de-valuing jobs that women tend to occupy to other opportunities to address the issue, such as considering the opportunity to problematize wage solidarity (p. 87). Through problematizing wage solidarity (as one example), we can consider several different alternatives to the issue of unequal pay for women. Question four’s critical nature opens up the door for this type of analysis.

Question five analyzes what effects (discursive, lived, subjectification) are produced by this representation of the ‘problem.’ Questions one through four focus attention on unpacking the problems and the ways particular problems have come to be shaped, known (and not known), and how. The fifth question considers the effects of the problematizations of the identified ‘problem,’ which for my analysis is access and educational opportunity in higher education. Drawing again on Foucault, this question considers effects of problems in three ways—discursive effects, subjectification effects, and lived effects (Bacchi & Goodwin, 2016).

Discursive effects are the parameters or boundaries that have come to be known about particular problems. It considers the ways things are permitted or not permitted in
how problematizations are shaped. Subjectification effects looks at how subjects are produced as types or specific subjects. Lived effects ties discursive and subjectification effects together to look at the way effects translate into people’s lives (Bacchi & Goodwin, 2016). This type of analysis within both texts opens up understanding to the way policy works in both texts to shape AO-HE and the way it has changed over time between the two documents.

Bacchi and Goodwin (2016) employ Foucault’s concept of dividing practices in question five, specifically calling attention to the way groups are divided from one another and thus become governable subjects. This notion is important when applying the WPR method to AO-HE as through these concepts, we can analyze the way income has served as dividing practice that has shaped policy and access and educational opportunity to higher education. “Question five thus makes it possible to reflect on the complex array of implications that problematizations entail in certain contexts and to promote interventions that aim to reduce the deleterious consequences for specific group of peoples” (Bacchi & Goodwin, 2016, p. 23).

Question six is composed of two parts: how and where has this representation of the “problem” been produced, disseminated, and defended, and how has it been and/or how can it be disrupted and replaced? The last question works to understand how problems come to represent produced ‘truths’ and the ways they work to normalize behavior, practice, policy, and governments–discourse. It also explores ways to resist, contest, and interrupt the practices that have produced the ‘truths’ and normalization.
This work is tied to the outcomes of the analysis of question two and three. Using Bacchi’s (1999) work on pay equity, she distinguishes between how understanding the distinct ways unequal pay for women have been problematized opens opportunities to address the issues differently. She notes the difference between problematizing the issue as women locked into ‘unskilled jobs’ versus undervaluing ‘women’s skills.’ Question six further unpacks how problems are produced and thus can be changed. Question six opens up discussion for future research on AO-HE resulting from my analysis.

Step seven states that the researcher apply this list of questions to their own problem representation. Bacchi and Goodwin (2016) describe the “last step in the WPR approach as an undertaking to apply its six questions to one’s own proposal and problem representations” (p. 24). Whereas questions one through six are inquiry-based, the last part of the method is considered a function in that you apply the process to your own thinking and assumptions. This notion of reflexivity is common practice in critical social research and feminist poststructural approaches to analysis. It ensures that one’s own ideas are critically examined to acknowledge the influence of current social, cultural, and related normative societal dynamics. I discuss my own lens through which I approach this analysis and considerations of limitations.

Data

I have chosen for my dissertation two primary policy documents commissioned by the federal government. These texts are *Higher Education for American Democracy*, also known as the Truman Report from 1947, and *A Test of Leadership: Charting the*
future of U.S. Higher Education, also known as the Spellings Report from 2006. Both
texts are considered pivotal in their influences on subsequent legislation and policy
actions, and specifically address issues and aims for access and educational opportunity
in higher education (Hutcheson, 2007; Mettler, 2014; Gilbert & Heller, 2010; Neuman,
2017).

My process for selection of these texts included a thorough literature review of
access and educational opportunity in higher education policy and texts. I narrowed my
search specifically to federally-led or commissioned reports due to the influence of these
reports on policymaking that impacts AO-HE. I further delineated my decision-making
to focus on texts that directly addressed AO-HE. Finally, I considered historical
significance and influence to finalize my decisions on data to apply the WPR method for
my analysis. This search led to the selection of the Truman Report, which has been
acknowledged as the beginning of a national dialogue on access and educational
opportunity (Hutcheson, 2007). For my second document, I originally considered A
Nation at Risk (1983) as it is regarded as another landmark document in educational
reports (Rothstein, 2008). In continuing my research, I concluded that the broad nature
of the Report (addressing all levels of education with more emphasis on K-12) would not
work well for my intended research goals. Thus, I chose the Spellings Report as my
second document as it expressly focuses on higher education with specific attention to
access and educational opportunity. Documents were retrieved from the Kent State
University library.
Analysis and Trustworthiness

In my research in selecting the “What the Problem Represented to be Method” I discovered a robust website hosted by the University of Adelaide (retrieved: https://www.adelaide.edu.au/carst/online-modules/wpr/). The website includes a 4.5-hour workshop delivered by Carol Bacchi to better understand the WPR method, theories that shape the method, and guidance to conduct the method. The site also includes a reading list. I completed the workshop and drew upon the content of the website to inform my own process and decision-making as a researcher using this method. I also returned to the workshop post-analysis to review my process in accordance to the guidance provided by Bacchi.

After completion of the workshop, I began my analysis process. I first began by creating a matrix overlaying my guiding research questions with the WPR method. My guiding research questions are presented in Table 1 as aligned to the appropriate questions in the WPR method. For example, I seek to understand how AO-HE problems are represented in the Truman and Spellings Reports. This connects to the WPR questions, what’s the problem represented in a specific policy, and what deep-seated presuppositions or assumptions underlie this representation of the problem.
Table 1

Summary of Guiding Research Questions and WPR Method

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Guiding Research Questions</th>
<th>“What’s the Problem Represented to Be” Method</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How are AO-HE problems represented in the Truman and Spellings Reports?</td>
<td>What’s the problem represented to be in a specific policy or policies?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What deep-seated presuppositions or assumptions underlie this representation of the “problem”?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What discourses are employed to shape these problems (within the reports and other discourses influenced by the reports)?</td>
<td>How has this representation of the “problem” come about?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What is left unproblematic in this problem representation? Where are the silences? Can the “problem” be conceptualized differently?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How are solutions related to AO-HE problems constructed in the Truman and Spellings Reports?</td>
<td>What effects (discursive, subjectification, lived) are produced by this representation of the “problem”?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What realities are discursively constructed for AO-HE?</td>
<td>What effects (discursive, subjectification, lived) are produced by this representation of the “problem”?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>How and where has this representation of the “problem” been produced, disseminated and defended? How has it been and/or how can it be disrupted and replaced?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From this point, I added a third column to generate notes for each text after initial reading to begin my coding process. My process pulled from qualitative coding methods,
in which “coding involves taking text data or pictures gathered during data collection, segmenting sentences (or paragraphs) or images into categories and labeling those categories with a term” (Creswell, 2009 p. 186).

For the second and third review of the texts, I further developed the coding process using color tabs and highlighters to code discourses found in each text aligned to each of the questions. I established terms based on the WPR method to use for my coding process. These terms were: problems, discourses, silences, and effects from discourses uncovered. I assigned a color to each term and used this process to conduct my sentence-level analysis. Prior to coding with color, I noted with letters (P for Problems, D for Discourse, S for Silences, and E for effects) to explore my initial analysis of the texts. I used my research journal to reflect on my categorization and debriefed with my chair and a content-expert that also serves as a committee member. From here, I used the coding process with colors to continue my analyzing. The following Figure 2 provides a visual overview and high-level example of each theme.
Chapters four and five provide the written results of my analysis using the coding process aligned to the WPR method. As I coded each Report, I considered how my themes (problems, discourses, silences, effects) correlated to my guiding research questions alongside the WPR steps. Upon drafts of each chapter, I reread each text to test my coding process aligned to each of the questions and to consider my assumptions and biases. I employed peer-readers, auditors, and a writing circle (both within Cultural Foundations and external) to review my analysis. Peer-readers were chosen for both their experience with the subject matter and the doctoral process. Auditors were chosen as individuals outside of my field. I used three auditors and four peer-readers, including those within the writing circle of fellow Cultural Foundations doctoral students. The use

Figure 2. Visual Representation of the Codes.
of peer-readers and auditors was incredibly valuable to clarify my intent and thinking presented in my writing. This is a tool that is common in this type of research to ensure credibility of the research (Lincoln & Guba, 1986). In several instances where I had felt I had clearly expressed a concept or idea, my debriefers would pose questions to push me to more clearly state in writing what is so often evident in my mind. This process aided in understanding areas where I may have missed connections in the data or patterns. One example that I distinctly remember is discussions on the sense of urgency and fear that emerged in both Reports. I had noted it but others in reading my analysis suggested it was a larger aspect than I had originally considered. Another example related to dialogue on the Truman Report helped me see where a non-dominant discourse of marketplace was embedded. These are a few examples of several that illustrated the importance of using peer readers and auditors in this process.

I also conducted secondary research to understand the historical influences that shaped each text. The use of historical research was to provide the contexts that shaped the development of each Report. This secondary research was focused on the political shifts and dynamics present at the commissioning of each Report, given that both Reports were federally commissioned. I did not use literature that interpreted or provided sociological context so as to remain as true to the WPR process as possible without predisposed ideas that may influence the analytical process. Though relevant, I made researcher decisions to limit secondary research to historical and high-level political
dynamics. This is located in the literature review and at the beginning of each of the analysis chapters.

Summary

The “What’s the Problem Represented to Be” method (Bacchi, 1999) is heuristic and involves six steps that will be used throughout the two texts. I have outlined my reasoning for my theoretical grounding in critical discourse analysis, feminist poststructuralism, and Foucauldian concepts that inform my own thinking on issues of power and knowledge that also undergird the WPR method.

Chapters three and four employ the WPR method to analyze two texts that have shaped AO-HE. Chapter three analyzes President Truman’s commissioned report *Higher Education for American Democracy*. Chapter four analyzes *A Test of Leadership*, also known as the Spellings Report. In the final chapter, I move into discussion of the analysis of findings from the two texts using questions five and six of the WPR method. Implications consider how constructing AO-HE through capabilities grounded in equity could be a viable way to problematize access and educational opportunity in higher education.
CHAPTER III
THE TRUMAN REPORT

This chapter begins the analysis of access and educational opportunity in higher education as problematized in the *Higher Education for America’s Democracy* Report (Truman Commission, 1947), using the “What’s the Problem Represented to Be” [WPR] (Bacchi, 1999) method. I will refer to this as the Truman Report. The chapter provides the historical context and significance of the Report, answering my guiding questions, how has this representation of the problems come about, as well as what discourses are employed to shape these problems within the Truman Report. I will move through my guiding questions alongside the questions of the WPR method to analyze access and educational opportunity in higher education as problematized in the Truman Report.

The Historical Context of Higher Education for America’s Democracy Report

After a mere 82 days after becoming Vice President, on April 12, 1945, Harry S. Truman unexpectedly assumed the helm as the 33rd President of the United States (Steinberg, 1999). The timing of Truman’s presidency in large part led to the ending of WWII, a period of time fraught with significant crises and problems in the international, democratic, and educational arena. These dynamics deeply shaped Truman’s perspectives on the future of the United States and needed policy leadership to prepare a country within a vastly changing global context. Truman served two terms and during this time made several key decisions that continue to shape the United States through to today.
Some of these decisions included finalizing the charter for the United Nations, dropping the atomic bomb on Japan, establishing an early anti-communist stance against the Soviet Union, and prioritizing a focus on domestic reforms to improve minimum wage, residential development, and education (Steinberg, 1999). His presidency would continue to be marred by international tension and war, and his tenure ended with some of the lowest approval ratings for a president. He focused his efforts on commissioning expertise on key issues facing the country to explore the role of the United States and its future. It is within this context that *Higher Education for America’s Democracy* was developed.

Truman and others were concerned with the alarming realities that resulted from WWII, including the rapid advancement of fearsome scientific knowledge and technical tools used in the War, the threat of authoritarian and nationalist governments to world peace and democracy, and an extensive number of veterans returning from WWII (Hutcheson, 2007). These concerns were further exacerbated by an emerging “cold war” and threat of large-scale and dangerous weapons of mass destruction (which Truman himself had authorized to end the war with Japan). At home, growing inequality and civil rights activism further contributed to Truman’s interest to explore how higher education could address these national issues (Steinberg, 1999). This is illustrated well by the Commission’s own words in the introduction to the Truman Report:

> We shall have to educate more of our people at each level of the educational program, and we shall have to devise patterns of education that will prepare them
more effectively than in the past for responsible roles in modern society. (Truman Report, 1947, p. 23)

During the summer of 1946, Truman commissioned a group of educators, politicians, and policymakers to consider these challenges:

The President’s Commission on Higher Education has been charged with the task of defining the responsibilities of colleges and universities in American democracy and international affairs—and, more specifically, with reexamining the objectives, methods, and facilities of higher education in the United States in the light of the social role it has to play. (Truman Report, 1947, Volume I, p. 1)

Led by George F. Zook, who served as president of the American Council of Education (and former president of the University of Akron), the 28-member Commission worked to develop a lengthy six-volume Report published toward the end of 1947 (Hutcheson, 2007). Volume I served as the foundational document for the Report outlining the challenge, goals, and summarized recommendations and conclusions. The remaining volumes were organized in the following structure: II, Equalizing and Expanding Individual Opportunity; III, Organizing Higher Education; IV, Staffing Higher Education; V, Financing Higher Education; and VI, Resource Data (Commission Report, 1947). For the purposes of my analysis, I focus solely on Volume I as it serves as a summative overview for the entire Report and provides context within which issues of access and educational opportunity are considered. I want to acknowledge that section II specifically calls attention to educational opportunity and provides further depth to AO-
HE issues outlined in Volume I. Yet, the overview provided in Volume I lends itself better to my analysis for the “What’s the Problem Represented to Be” method and for understanding the overarching problematization and context that drive access and educational opportunity recommendations for higher education made by the Truman Report.

**Higher Education for American Democracy, Volume 1: Establishing the Goals**

Published in 1947 by the U.S. Government Printing Office, Volume I of *Higher Education for America’s Democracy* serves as an executive summary of the primary facets of the entire six-volume Report. Volume I begins with a letter from the Commission’s chairperson, George F. Zook, to President Truman asserting that the Commission has completed its tasks and provided recommendations and findings on “examining the functions of higher education in our democracy and the means by which they can best be performed” (Appointing letter, p.ii). Volume I included a list of commission members, the appointing letter by Truman, and related contextual documents.

Volume I has 103 pages and is organized as an overview of the charge for the Commission followed by chapters titled: Education for a better nation and world (I); education for all (II); education for free men (III); education adjusted to needs (IV); and the social role of higher education (V). Each chapter provides context for the issues, both historical and demographic, as well as recommendations the Commission outlines to address the issues.
Access and educational opportunity (AO-HE) occupy a distinct role in the Truman Report, with an entire section devoted to the subject. This section analyzes AO-HE in the Truman Report, Volume I as aligned to my first two guiding questions and the “What’s the Problem Represented to Be” method. The chart below provides a summative overview.

Table 2

*Guiding Research Questions 1, 2 & WPR method*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What deep-seated presuppositions or assumptions underlie this representation of the “problem”?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What discourses are employed to shape these problems?</td>
<td>How has this representation of the “problem” come about?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What is left unproblematic in this problem representation? Where are the silences? Can the “problem” be conceptualized differently?</td>
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**How are AO-HE Problems Represented in the Truman Report, Volume I?**

My first guiding question aligns to questions one and two of the WPR method: what’s the problem represented to be in a specific policy or policies, and what deep-seated presuppositions or assumptions underlie the representations of the problem?

Specifically, the Report is focused on the role of higher education in American
democracy and international affairs (Truman Report, 1947, p. 1). Within this larger context, the issue of access and educational opportunity are discussed as foundational problems, with the need to increase the number of college-educated Americans with an understanding of democratic values:

Only by seeing today’s democracy in the light of our vision of democracy as it can be will we come to appreciate the size of the job that remains to be done. It is a task to challenge the energies of young people and one that is worthy of their passionate devotion. It must be so presented to them. (p. 13)

The realities that emerged from World War II, such as the atomic bomb and threat of authoritarian governments, are serious concerns that threaten the United States’ ability to promote and protect a democratic way of life. The Report posits that “education is the foundation of democratic liberties” (p. 25) and that education best enables American citizens to work in an increasingly international community. The Report further suggests that focusing on these matters within the United States is necessary to lead these efforts on an international stage. The Report suggests the strength of the nation’s own democracy impacts the promotion of democracy on an international scale. It states, “If we cannot reconcile conflicts of opinion and interest among the diverse groups that make up our own Nation, we are not likely to succeed in compromising the differences that divide nations” (p. 8).

This belief drives the primary problematization I have identified in Volume I is that the role of Higher Education in American democracy needs prioritized and defined.
Democracy is at risk resulting from the harsh realities in a post-WWII United States; the sense of urgency to strengthen and protect democratic principles at home and abroad then becomes the primary work of the U.S. government. This is the underlying premise to the development of the Truman Report, as the Commission believed that this responsibility should be the primary purpose of higher education.

There are two secondary problematizations that fall under this: Education has not been accessible for all Americans and this threatens a strong democracy, and the type of education provided at colleges and universities has not kept pace with changing social conditions. These secondary problematizations are nested within the primary problematization. This is a common function of the WPR method to uncover nested problems that function within each other (Bacchi, 1999). As part of the WPR method, each problematization is connected to underlying assumptions and presumptions I have identified in the text. This is an important process of the WPR method that is directly connected to Foucauldian and feminist poststructural influences, “to understand how these knowledges [problems] acquire “truth” status it is necessary to locate them with relevant networks of relations and practices that produce them, which Foucault called ‘discursive practices’” (Bacchi & Goodwin, 2016, p. 22). Table 3 provides an overview of the primary problematization I have identified with the primary assumptions/presumptions that undergird the identified problematizations.
Table 3

Problematizations & Assumptions/Presumptions in the Truman Report

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Problematization</th>
<th>Assumption/Presumptions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The role of higher education in American democracy needs prioritized and defined</td>
<td>Higher Education’s primary role should be to ensure a strong American democracy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Education has not been accessible to all Americans and this threatens democracy</td>
<td>Education (specifically higher education) should be for all citizens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The type of education provided at colleges and universities has not kept pace</td>
<td>Our nation is not prepared to preserve and sustain democratic principles due to post-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>with changing social conditions</td>
<td>WWII global challenges that demand an educated citizenry</td>
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<td>ability and effort</td>
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<td>Current higher education courses and structures have not kept pace with changing</td>
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<td>social dynamics and realities</td>
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The magnitude of impact of WWII cannot be understated as a significant influence on the ways problematizations are represented in Volume I. “Democracy rests upon a belief in the worth and dignity of human life, yet democratic nations within a generation have had forced upon them two world wars taking millions of lives” (Truman Report, p. 12). The realities that faced the United States post-WWII left the country grappling with new realities and the sense of importance to prioritize the reordering of higher education to achieve the larger aims of securing a strong democratic citizenry:

This is no careless or uncritical use of words. No thinking person doubts that we are living in a decisive moment of human history. Atomic scientists are doing
their utmost to make us realize how easily and quickly a world catastrophe may come. They know the fearful power for destruction possessed by the weapons their knowledge and skill have fashioned… And to the horror of atomic weapon, biological and chemical instruments of destruction are now being added. (p. 6-7)

Volume I provides recommendations and solutions to clarify the role of higher education in a democratic society: to increase educational opportunity, and to improve the process, structures, and curriculum in higher education to meet these objectives. This is illustrated in the following quote:

But disaster is not inevitable. The release of atomic energy that brought man within sight of world devastation has just as truly brought him the promise of a brighter future. The potentialities of atomic power are as great for human betterment as for human annihilation. Man can choose which he will have. The possibility of this choice is the supreme fact of our day, and it will necessarily influence the ordering of educational priorities. (p. 7)

This is the heart of the Truman Report, the need to reexamine the role of higher education in the country, as “education is an institution of every civilized society” (p. 5), with the purpose to clarify the aims of higher education toward serving broader, social roles needed by the country and the changing international world. The Commission was tasked to “define the responsibilities of colleges and universities in American democracy and in international affairs” (p. 1), clarifying the problematization in the Report is that role of Higher Education in American democracy needs prioritized and defined:
Thus American colleges and universities face the need both for improving the performance of their traditional tasks and for assuming the new tasks created for them by the new internal conditions and external relations under which the American people are striving to live and to grow as people. (p. 3)

The Commission proposed throughout the Report that the realignment of higher education was necessary to ensure a democratic future; “the fundamental goal of the United States must be the reeducation of the populations to the individual responsibilities of democracy” (p. 7). The Report suggests that higher education ought to be the primary venue through which this work should occur, “teaching and learning must be invested with public purpose” (p. 11). This teaching and learning should include the development of the individual and the individual’s understanding of the functions, roles, and purposes of democracy; the understanding of international peoples and need for cooperation through the dissemination of democratic principles; and toward the solution of social problems, specifically those that result from science and technology (Truman Commission, 1947).

The primary problem of understanding the role of higher education in a democratic society led the Commission to believe that the crucial challenges facing the United States are to increase the number of Americans that are educated through higher education and the need to restructure the type of education provided. This is to ensure the foundation of a strong democratic nation and preparation for the ever-increasing changes in the global community. The Report states, “Toward these ends, higher
education must inspire its graduates with high social aims as well as endow them with specialized information and technical skill” (p. 11).

**Secondary problematizations.** Within the larger problematization to understand the role of higher education in a democratic society, I have identified two secondary problematizations:

1. Education has not been accessible to all Americans and this threatens democracy.

2. The type of education provided at colleges and universities has not kept pace with changing social conditions.

Despite record growth in college enrollment up until the publication of the Report, the Commission asserted that it still fell well below what is needed to sustain a strong democracy. The Report further contended that this enrollment has largely been driven by conditions of “the community into which they [students] have happened to be born or, worse still, on the color of their skin or religion of their parents” (p. 27). The introduction of equality of opportunity in this section of the Report is helpful to understanding the problematizations of AO-HE as represented in Volume I. This section problematizes limitations in AO-HE as an issue of equality of opportunity tied to democratic aims, “one of the gravest charges to which American society is subject is that of failing to provide a reasonable equality of educational opportunity for its youth” (p. 27). This idea becomes one of the core tenets of the Truman Report and sets the stage for solutions to the problems grounded on the premise that higher education ought to be
something accessible beyond the elite few that at the time were the primary beneficiaries of higher education.

The evidence provided in the Report illustrated that access to education had been limited by demographics, religion, income, and race. Sections are devoted to describing the economic, regional, racial, and religious barriers that limit access and educational opportunity in higher education:

The American people should set as their ultimate goal an educational system in which at no level—high school, college, graduate school, or professional school—will a qualified individual in any part of the country encounter an insuperable economic barrier to the attainment of the kind of education suited to his aptitude and interests. (p. 36)

This section in Volume I uses vigorous language to call attention to the nation that has limited educational opportunity for much of its population, citing data that “represents a sobering failure to reach the educational goals implicit in the democratic creed, and they are indefensible in a society so richly endowed with material resources as our own” (p. 27). There are important assumptions held within this statement and much of this section of the Report claims it is a threat to our democracy to limit educational access and attainment; “We cannot allow so many of our people to remain so ill equipped either as human beings or as citizens of a democracy” (p. 27). The Commission concedes that the nation has the material resources to support addressing these issues yet has failed to invest meaningfully into higher education; “Great as the total American expenditure
for education may seem, we have not been devoting any really appreciable part of our vast wealth to higher education” (p. 27).

This is supported by the later recommendations discussed in the Report that the federal government and states take on the responsibility to provide expanded access to higher education in the form of creating community colleges (13th and 14th year schools), a broad-based test to ascertain skill and ability, and federal aid programs to cover the costs (in the form of scholarships and grants):

This means that we shall aim at making higher education equally available to all young people, as we now do education in the elementary and high schools, to the extent their capacity warrants a further social investment in their training. (p. 36)

Volume I directs attention to the problems of AO-HE and assumes that solutions rest with federal investment into higher education to increase access and equality of opportunity, “we must ensure that the education of every student includes the kind of learning and experience that is essential to fit free men to live in a free society” (p. 46). The suggested solutions also call on institutions to make changes to meet the national needs. Though there are inferences and implicit messages referencing ability, capability, and effort of individuals that may access higher education, the primary responsibility to address the problematizations is placed with the federal government through directives to institutions of higher education and creating paths and investments to increase the number of students reaching higher education. “The federal government is taking all
practical steps to assist institutions to meet this challenge [of veteran’s returning from WWII]” (Appointing letter, p. ii). This is further demonstrated in the following quote:

Part of the task ahead is to arouse public opinion once more to an awareness of the transcendent importance of education, so that it will not only support but insist on the necessary increase in appropriations for higher education. (p. 44)

The recommendation is that public interest should be raised for the federal government to invest in increasing access and educational opportunity in higher education. The recommendation is also that the federal government should provide oversight and guidance on how institutions of higher education ought to increase access and ensure an educational experience tied directly to democratic aims. As such, the Report details types of curriculum, infrastructure, targeted numbers, and programs the Commission believes are necessary to address the concerns:

Increase in the numbers to be educated will serve to intensify the problem of devising appropriate and effective programs for higher education. Simply to keep more of our youth in school for a longer period will not of itself, of course, achieve the personal and social ends we have in mind. The measure to which extended educational opportunities accomplish our purposes will depend on the kind of education provided. (Truman Commission, 1947, p. 44)

It is worth noting that there is an undercurrent of urgency that permeates the problematization of the role of higher education in American democracy needing to be
defined. The influence of urgency will be explored in context and comparison with the SPELLINGS analysis in the final chapter.

**What Discourses Are Employed to Shape these Problems?**

This section responds to WPR questions two and three: how has the representation of the problem come about, and what is left unproblematic in this problem representation? Where are the silences? Can the problem be conceptualized differently?

I have outlined in Table 4 the discourses that make visible the problematization of limiting higher education. I have identified the discourse of democracy with two discursive strands: equal opportunity and the public good of higher education.

Discourses discussed reflects the language used in the Report.

Table 4

_Problematizations, Assumptions and Discourses identified in the Truman Report_

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Problematization</th>
<th>Assumptions/Presumptions</th>
<th>Discourse(s)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The role of higher education in American democracy needs prioritized and defined</td>
<td>Higher education’s primary role should be to prepare graduates to ensure a strong democracy</td>
<td>Democracy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Education has not been accessible to all Americans and this threatens democracy</td>
<td>Education (specifically higher education) should be for all citizens</td>
<td>• Discursive Strand of Equal Opportunity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The type of education provided at colleges and universities has not kept pace with changing social conditions</td>
<td>Our nation is not prepared to preserve and sustain democratic principles due to post-WWII global challenges that demand an educated citizenry</td>
<td>• Discursive Strand of Public Good of higher education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Democracy is undermined when we limit educational access based on anything other than ability and effort</td>
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Current Higher Education courses and structures have not kept pace with changing social dynamics and realities

As discussed in the beginning of this chapter, WWII forced the United States to come to grips with an increasingly global and industrialized world. This reality included governments and peoples that held very different views and backgrounds than the United States and forced the world community to contend with human-made weapons of destruction on a scale never seen before. In the aftermath of WWII, the U.S. grappled with the conditions that led to WWII and recommitted to democratic principles and values. *Higher Education for American Democracy* is a direct response to this sense of fear and the belief that democracy must be sustained through forms of education. Throughout Volume I, the discourse of democracy is prevalent in supporting the Commission’s recommendations and challenges to the current systems of higher education. The discourse of democracy shapes the messages of the Report and thus the solutions. This discourse of democracy is supported by two strands: equal opportunity and the public good of higher education.

The process of discourse analysis using the WPR method aims to interrogate “socially produced forms of knowledge” (Bacchi & Goodwin, 2016, p. 35) that permit what is possible to think, speak, write or come to know about a given social object or practice (McHoul & Grace, 1993). This is one of the core components of the WPR method that draws upon Foucault and feminist poststructural thinking, through Foucault
in understanding the way power is embedded in knowledge and through FPS in how that power inhibits or permits certain voices to be heard and have power. These socially produced forms of knowledge are linked to access and educational opportunity in higher education (AO-HE) problematizations identified in the chart and link to the assumptions/presumptions I identify that are tied to each of those problems. I describe in this section the discourses that shape and produce the problematizations and follow with analysis of the silences.

**Discourse of Democracy**

The word “democracy” appears in the Report 74 times and is the foundation upon which the entire Report premises the role of higher education and issues of access and educational opportunity; “it is common place of the democratic faith that education is indispensable to the maintenance and growth of freedom of thought, faith, enterprise, and association” (Truman Commission, 1947, p. 5). WWII brought unprecedented loss of life and technological advances in warfare. These realities, coupled with strong economic growth, propelled the US post-WWII to a fervent belief in democratic principles and the desire to promote these principles abroad:

The dramatic events of the last few years have tended to focus our attention on the need for a world view, for global vision, for international-mindedness. This is an urgent necessity, but it would be unwise to let this necessity blind us to the fact that America’s leadership in world affairs can be effective only as it rests upon increasing strength and unity at home. (p. 8)
Volume I includes subheadings with revealing language as to the underlying beliefs inherent within the Report and the role of higher education in ensuring a strong democratic nation: “meaning of democracy” (p. 11); “processes of democracy” and “democracy’s unfinished business” (p. 12); and “allegiance to democracy” (p. 13). The choice of words and location of this section at the start of the entire Report suggests several things:

1. The experiences of WWII that directly threatened democratic ways of living led to a sense of urgency to ensure American citizens understood, valued, and were prepared to protect democracy. This should be the responsibility of colleges and universities under the direction of the federal government:

   Today we cannot be so sure that the future of democratic way of life is secure. Within recent decades of democratic principles have been dangerously challenged by authoritarianism, and World War II did not by any means resolve the conflict. The issue of a free society versus totalitarianism is still very much with us. It has been called “the critical and supreme political issue of today. (p. 9)

2. Democracy is not something that sustains itself or is assumed to be understood by the masses:

   This integration of democratic principles into the active life of a person and a people is not to be achieved merely by studying or discussing democracy. Classroom teaching of the American tradition, however
excellent, will not weave its spirit into the innermost fiber of the students. Experience in the give and take of free men in a free society is equally important. Democracy must be lived to be thoroughly understood. It must become an established attitude and activity, not just a body of remote and abstract doctrine—a way for men to live and work harmoniously together, not just words in a textbook or a series of slogans. (p. 14)

3. The importance of democracy and sustaining it serves as the foundation for the roles of higher education and in particular the ways access and educational opportunity are problematized:

If our colleges and universities are to graduate individuals who have learned to be free, they will have to concern themselves with the development of self-discipline and self-reliance, of ethical principles as a guide for conduct, of sensitivity to injustice and inequality, of insight into human motives and aspirations, of discriminating appreciation of a wide range of human values, of the spirit of democratic compromise and cooperation. (p. 10)

The principal discourse of democracy drives much of the way other problems are framed in the Report and resulting recommendations:

Education is an institution of every civilized society, but the purposes of education are not the same in all societies. An educational system finds its guiding principles and ultimate goals in the aims and philosophy of the social
order in which it functions….American society is a democracy….based on the principles of equal freedom and equal rights for all of its members, regardless of race, faith, sex, occupation, or economic status….education, which all leaders in the making of democracy have pointed out again and again is necessary to give effect to the equality prescribed by the law. (p. 5)

Entire sections are dedicated to developing an understanding of the roles and processes of democracy and the assumption that these roles and processes ought to be taught in colleges and universities. Democracy “is a way of life—a way of thinking, feeling, and acting in regard to the associations of men and of groups, one with another” (p. 11). “Many thoughtful observers are convinced that one of America’s urgent needs today is the continued commitment to democracy” (p. 13). The Report establishes the importance of democracy in very direct ways and the need for higher education to align itself toward its sustenance. “It becomes, then, an urgent task for our scholars and our teachers to restate and revivify the ideals of democracy” (p. 13). The Report is explicit in its recommendations that this role for higher education is addressed in both formal ways such as curriculum and teaching, “the task of college faculties is to inspire in our young people a consuming enthusiasm for the democratic way of life” (p. 14); and informal ways, “young people cannot be expected to develop a firm allegiance to the democratic faith they are taught in the classroom if their campus life is carried on in an authoritarian atmosphere” (p. 14). To this end, the specific recommendations are made to illustrate the role of education (higher education specifically) in a democratic society: “to achieve such
practice in democratic action the President’s Commission recommends a careful review of administrative policies in institutions of higher education. Revision may be necessary to give students every possible experience in democratic processes” (p. 14). The Report further spells out in great detail the changes higher education ought to make to ensure “higher education… [is in] line with the social purposes it professes to serve” (p. 47).

It is evident in the later sections of Volume 1 that the authors are producing specific types of knowledge through its recommendations of what colleges and universities need to do in order to ensure an educated citizenship equipped to protect the principles and ideals of democracy. This should take precedent over any other types of educational endeavors, specifically those that “trend toward specialization” (p. 48). The following quote captures well the discourse of education for democratic ends versus that of only vocational or technical ends (a driving tension and power dynamic in understanding the purposes of higher education as well as approaches to AO-HE):

Today’s college graduate may have gained technical or professional training in one field of work or another, but is only incidentally, if at all, made ready for performing his duties as a man, a parent, and a citizen. Too often he is “educated” in that he has acquired competence in some particular occupation, yet falls short of that human wholeness and civic conscience which the cooperative activities of citizenship require. (p. 48)

The discourse of democracy permeates the entire Report and creates knowledge and roles for the purpose of higher education and access to higher education grounded in
those ideals. Within this broader discourse, two strands of discourse emerge: the discourse of equal opportunity and the discourse of the public good role of higher education. These strands are tied to the umbrella discourse of democracy and contribute to the ways the discourses shape the problem of the role of higher education in American democracy needing to be prioritized and defined.

**Strand of Discourse of Equal Opportunity**

The Truman Report says “education by far is the biggest and most hopeful of the Nation’s enterprises. Long ago our people recognized that education for all is not only democracy’s obligation but is necessity” (p. 25). The discourse of equal opportunity directly underscores the problematization of access and educational opportunity in higher education being limited and thus threatens democracy. Chapter II is dedicated fully to “Education for All” (p. 25) and goes into extensive detail as to the numbers of college-eligible students, barriers to advancing education for all, specific steps and targets, and clear articulation as to who holds this responsibility to equalize educational opportunity—the federal government and institutions of higher education. “But in the nature of things, the major burden for equalizing educational opportunity must rest on publicly supported institutions” (p. 44).

The Commission prioritizes access and educational opportunity in higher education as a primary way to build a strong democracy. This experience in higher education should directly connect to broader social and national aims to graduate students that understand the principles and values of democratic citizenship. If higher education is
not accessible and promoted for all, this then limits the number of citizens that can lead and protect the democratic values of the nation:

By allowing the opportunity for higher education to depend so largely on the individual’s economic status, we are not only denying to millions of young people the chance of life to which they are entitled; we are also depriving the Nation of a vast amount of potential leadership and potential social competence that it sorely needs. (p. 29)

The authors call attention to the issues of inequality in educational opportunity and the consequences of denying such opportunity for the individual and the nation:

These various barriers to educational opportunity involve grave consequences for both the individual and for society. From the viewpoint of the individual they are denying to millions of young people what the democratic creed assumes to be their birthright; an equal chance with all others to make the most of their native abilities; from the viewpoint of society the barriers mean that far too few of our young people are getting enough preparation for assuming the personal, social, and civic responsibilities of adults living in a democratic society. (p. 35)

The knowledge being shaped by and produced by the Report is that equal opportunity to higher education is essential to a strong democracy; access and educational opportunity should be a publicly held value and invested in as such by the federal government and institutions of higher education.
We have proclaimed our faith in education as a means of equalizing the conditions of men…. It is obvious, then, that free and universal access to education, in terms of the interest, ability, and need of the student, must be a major goal in American education. (p. 36)

**Strand of Discourse of the Public Good of Higher Education**

The Commission asserts that the access and educational opportunity in higher education is limited and this threatens democracy. The Report suggests that it is of great importance to solve these problems, as they are public and social concerns, specifically tied to the welfare of the nation within a larger, changing international context. Thus, the responsibility for solving these public concerns lie with institutions of higher education guided and in part funded by the federal government. The Report uses a variety of references that I align under the public good discourse; this includes social role of higher education, public affairs, and federal/national interests. This public good role connects to the democratic aims that the Commission emphasizes higher education ought to serve in its role and is a strand tied to the discourse of democracy. The Report explains:

American colleges and universities must envision a much larger role for higher education in the national life. They can no longer consider themselves merely the instrument for producing an intellectual elite; they must become the means by which every citizen, youth, and adult is enabled and encouraged to carry his education, formal and informal, as far as his native capacities permit. (p. 101)
The Report identifies several recommendations that institutions of higher education should do to address these issues as well as the role of the federal government to invest in solving these concerns:

Thus American colleges and universities face the need both for improving the performance of their traditional tasks and for assuming the new tasks created for them by the new internal conditions and external relations under which the American people are striving to live and grow as a free people. (p. 3)

The Report develops a well-defined public role for higher education that is guided and partially funded by the federal government and connected directly to national needs and democratic priorities. The Report provides great detail as to the types of curriculum to be considered to achieve these ends, including the development of community colleges to expand access and the need to consider adult education.

At the same time and with equal urgency higher education must prepare Americans to contribute their utmost to the achievement of a world order and peace among men…. The task of the colleges here is to make the transition from a curriculum centered almost exclusively on the American-West European tradition to one that embodies the intellectual experience of the whole of mankind. (p. 102)

Given the explicit nature of the public good role of higher education discussed in the Report, there are also defined roles for the federal government to provide directives and guidance (such as in the form of this Report) and through financial investments:
“The Federal Government assumes responsibility for supplementing State and local efforts in military defense against the Nation’s enemies without; surely it may as justifiably assume responsibility for supplementing State and local efforts against educational deficiencies and inequalities that are democracy’s enemies within.” (p. 103)

The role of the federal government and social expectation of higher education is further defined as providing the “means for improvement and expansion” (p. 103) that American schools and colleges achieve to ensure democracy’s survival; this according the Report, “is the primary call upon the Nation’s resources” and “we dare not disregard it” (p. 103).

Thus the social role of education in a democratic society is at once to insure equal liberty and equal opportunity to differing individuals and groups, and to enable the citizens to understand, appraise, and redirect forces, men, and events as these tend to strengthen or to weaken their liberties. (p. 5)

The discourse of the public role of higher education is prominent in the Report. The Report is built and premised upon higher education’s purpose in securing a strong democratic citizenship that is prepared to protect these principles in a changing global context. This part of the Report prioritizes the democratic social investment into higher education and AO-HE as primary over economic or social mobility goals. The vocational is referenced, attending to curricular and co-curricular expectations at the undergraduate and graduate level as well as vocational considerations, yet it is within the auspices of democratic aims.
Although general education, as the term is currently used, is concerned with nonspecialized activities of living, it by no means antagonistic to vocational education. Rightly conceived, the two are complementary. General education should contribute to vocational competence by providing the breadth of view and perspective that make the individual a more effective worker and a more intelligent member of a society of freemen. (p. 61)

The Report is also clear that the federal government’s role is to provide oversight and direction to higher education institutions (specifically public) to achieve these social ends. This discourse shapes the role of access and educational opportunity to socially-defined roles for higher education and overarching public purposes tied to democratic aims.

**Unproblematized Areas and Silences**

One of the methodological steps in the WPR process is to uncover the silences and unproblematized areas. Silences and unproblematized areas shape knowledge and discourse, illuminating what becomes known about what has been “problematized” within a certain report or policy (Bacchi & Goodwin, 2016). This emerges to elucidate non-dominant and silenced discourses in the analysis, another aspect of the WPR method that draws upon feminist poststructuralism. In my analysis I have uncovered the following silences and unproblematized areas as the purposes of higher education for the individual, economic gain, stratified educational opportunity, and the tension between individual freedoms and public aims. These are framed as the discourses of
individualism and marketplace; meritocracy; and, a limited democracy. Table 5 provides a connected overview of these areas in relationship to problematizations, assumptions/presumptions, and discourses.

Table 5

*Problematizations, Assumptions, Discourses & Unproblematized Areas identified in the Truman Report*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Problematization</th>
<th>Assumptions/Presumptions</th>
<th>Discourse(s)</th>
<th>Unproblematized Areas/Silences</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The role of higher education in American democracy needs prioritized and defined</td>
<td>Higher Education’s primary role should be to prepare graduates to ensure a strong democracy Education (specifically higher education) should be for all citizens Our nation is not prepared to preserve and sustain democratic principles due to post-WWII global challenges that demand an educated citizenry Democracy is undermined when we limit educational access based on anything other than ability and effort Current higher education courses and structures have not kept pace with changing social dynamics and realities</td>
<td>Discursive Strands: Democracy Equal Opportunity Public Good of Higher education</td>
<td>Purpose of higher education for individual, economic gain (discourse of individualism and marketplace) Stratified educational opportunity (discourse of meritocracy) Silent tension between individual freedoms and public aims (discourse of limited democracy)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Silence on the Purpose of Higher Education for Individual, Economic Gain

“All too often the benefits of education have been sought and used for personal and private profit, to the neglect of public and social service” (Truman Commission, 1947, p. 10), states the Report. This rises to a level of a concern for some of the writers of the Report; however, the majority of the Report problematizes the need for an educated citizenry in the principles and mechanics of democracy. The authors of the Report, though recognizing the role of higher education and the workforce, believe that personal and private profit cannot be sought after through higher education at the expense of larger, civic goals:

The crucial task of higher education today, therefore, is to provide a unified general education for American youth. Colleges must find the right relationship between specialized training on the one hand, aiming at a thousand careers, and the transmission of a common cultural heritage toward a common citizenship on the other. (p. 49)

The discourse of marketplace and individualism emerges but it is a non-dominant discourse in the Report. There are very few instances when the Reports speaks to the dynamic between higher education for individual, economic gain and the collective aims tied to democracy. In fact, the focus is that the collective needs take priority:

It may be worthwhile to reiterate that the pervasive emphasis in this Report on the values and importance of the general and liberal phases of higher education is simply recognition of the shade into which they have fallen and from which, for
the good of society, they must be rescued. It does not mean that the Commission in any way minimizes the task the colleges and universities must perform in preparing the vast army of trained personnel required to carry on the work of the Nation. (p. 75)

This unproblematised discourse is interesting to acknowledge given the genealogical evolution of the issue of access and educational opportunity. As will be discussed in later chapters, higher education’s role tied to economic gain and workforce needs in later years becomes a primary driver of policy and institutional practices and the ideology of private gain goes on to shape access and educational opportunity. There is early evidence in the Report of these aims, yet they are relegated to a lesser position than the larger democratic aims and are not a dominant discourse:

Although direct vocational training is not part of the general education, occupational orientation should be. Few things make more difference in the quality of one’s life, in one’s vigor, good heart, and joy in living, than satisfaction in one’s daily work. (p. 56)

Though the Report considers workforce demands, it does so in the context of the needs of the nation versus individual gain or social advancement, or even the economic advantage for the country. The Report does suggest that “education must study carefully and continuously the professional requirements of society, so that the number of graduates in each field may approximate as closely as possible the estimated need for that
kind of service” (p. 75). This statement ties attention to aligning degree attainment to market needs.

The Report though also devotes several sections in the chapter Education Adjusted to Needs to detailing the potential needs, shortages, and occupational trends in professional areas (doctors, engineers), research, and graduate school. This tension between choice, occupational needs of the Nation, and democracy is captured in the below quote:

Free choice should exist in education as in all other areas of living in a democracy, and since no man can foresee the needs of the Nation in a more distant future, free choice will in the end serve society better than an attempt to direct developments. This fact, however, lays upon colleges and universities the obligation of providing students with adequate information about national occupational needs, so their free choices may be intelligent and properly based. (p. 95)

This illustrates the tension and non-dominant discourse tied to the role of higher education in social mobility and economic gain for individuals. However, since the Truman Report, the notion of private economic gain and social mobility has assumed a much more prominent role and is a primary dynamic shaping access and educational opportunity policies today.
Silence on the Stratification of Access and Educational Opportunity

The Report suggests that equalization of opportunity should be tied to a person’s aptitudes, interest, and abilities. “…We shall aim at making higher education equally available to all young people, as we now do education in the elementary and high schools, to the extent that their capacity warrants a further social investment in their training” (p. 36). The Report’s recommendations for equalizing and expanding access and educational opportunity are directly tied to competency which is determined by appraisals of talent and specific targets. “The Commission…has staked out what it believes to be the desirable goal in terms of the number of young people that higher education should serve” (p. 39). To achieve this end, the Commission promotes using the Army General Classification Test (AGCT) and draws many conclusions as to why this particular test is best suited to assess “talent” and readiness for access to educational opportunities (p. 39-41).

Volume I asserts that only an estimated percent (49%) of the population has the “mental ability” to complete at least 14 years of schooling and at least 32% has the “mental ability” to complete an advanced liberal or specialized professional education degree (p. 41). These projections are based on prior data gathered from the AGCT compared with data from the American Council on Education Psychological Examination from 1942, leading to what the Report described as a “national inventory of talent” (p. 41). The Report states, “upon these considerations, this Commission bases what it believes to be conservative estimates of the proportions of the population with reasonable
expectations of completing higher education at specific levels” (p. 41). Though the Report is premised upon the notion of preservation of democracy through “education for all” (dedicating a full chapter in Volume I and an entire Volume II focused equalizing and expanding opportunity), it contradicts itself in expecting fewer than half the population to evidence the “talent” to do so—based on a single assessment, the AGCT.

This is one of the silences that WPR method permits analysis to make visible in the way discourse and problems shape particular knowledge. The Report on one hand premises that all students need to access higher education to strengthen the U.S.’ democratic principles and to strengthen a democratic society in a post-WWII era. The silence is that the Report limits this access through the AGCT testing method and determination of the numbers that are “talented” enough to pursue higher education. The lack of resolving the contradiction between “all” and “49% sufficiently talented” creates an important silence. The lack of problematizing the contradiction between a talent meritocracy and educational opportunity for all students to strengthen a democratic society in a post-WWII era becomes even more conspicuous when the Report only briefly attends to the lack of access of African Americans to higher education.

The issue of segregation and experiences of “negroes” in higher education are discussed in one particular section in Volume I, “Education for All,” yet are absent from any other part of Volume I. Though the Commission believed that issues of AO-HE needed to address racial disparities, a footnote on p. 39 includes a notable dissent from these recommendations. The footnote references the full basis for the dissent which appears in
Volume II of the Truman Report, in the chapter Discrimination in Higher Education. The statement of dissent is shared fully below, and though lengthy, it is worth quoting in its entirety to illustrate the dynamics of the silences on deep-rooted inequality that shaped the Truman Report (also a footnote in Volume II):

The undersigned wish to record their dissent from the Commission’s pronouncements on “segregation,” especially as these pronouncements are related to education in the South. We recognize that many conditions affect adversely the lives of our Negro citizens, and that gross inequality of opportunity, economic and educational, is a fact. We are concerned that as rapidly as possible conditions should be improved, inequalities removed, and greater opportunity provided for all our people. But we believe that effort toward these ends must, in the South, be made within the established patterns of social relationships, which require separate educational institutions for whites and Negroes. We believe that pronouncements such as the those of the Commission on the question of segregation jeopardize these efforts, impede progress, and threaten tragedy to the people of the South, both white and Negro. We recognize the high purpose and the theoretical idealism of the Commission’s recommendations. But a doctrinaire position which ignores facts of history and the realities of the present is not one that will contribute constructively to the solution of difficult problems of human relationships. (Truman Report, Volume II, p. 29)
The footnote underscores the tensions between the discourse of “education for all” and the reality of what “education for all” meant in practice and in recommendations that follow from the Report.

Despite the concerns for democracy, unspoken in Volume I is any mention of the lack of consensus in society on questions of access and educational opportunity for all. In addition to the fleeting attention given to African Americans, people from rural, poor farming communities, and those from particular religious affiliations, as well as women from all walks of life, received only briefest mention. It is important to understand that the silences on issues of these marginalized communities gave rise to a total lack of recommendations. Inequality, I assert, is a core issue that is left unproblematized and therefore undermines AO-HE as represented in the Report.

Much of Volume I and the entire Commission Report outlines the specific recommendations for institutions of higher education to increase access and educational opportunity. Yet, the curb and stratification of access is a silence and unproblematized discourse in the Report. Volume I established specific numbers and ways to assess talent to increase access and educational opportunity. The language of the Report suggests egalitarian and progressive (given the time period) notions of access for African Americans, women, and persons from various religious backgrounds, low-income, and rural communities. Yet, the ways to achieve increased access and educational opportunity are restrictive and grounded in a questionable single-test assessment of talent. For example, the establishment of community colleges has been heralded as a key
recommendation and outcome of the Report. The silence and lack of problematization, though, is that certain groups (whether determined by ability or identity) were a priori determined to be incapable of accessing four-year systems of higher education. The uncovering of silences as developed by Foucault and feminist poststructural approaches allows for these implicit power dynamics to become explicitly understood.

In review of the impact of the Truman Report and genealogically following historical trends in AO-HE, this stratification continued to prevail as evidenced in the historical demographic patterns who accesses higher education and at what levels. It is a disconcerting critique of the Report that the Commission made the decision to stratify access and educational opportunity at such a prescriptive and detailed level, citing the Army General Classification Test to measure “mental ability” and “talent”. This test, AGCT, used to justify the decisions and assessments of a “national inventory of talent” is built on faulty logic per the descriptions in the Report:

In arriving at the enrollment recommended for 1960, this Commission gave consideration to the results of the Army General Classification Test: the one test of mental ability that had been given to a large and representative group. During World War II almost 10,000,000 men entering the enlisted Army through induction centers took this test. (p. 40)

The Report states that “it may be assumed that the distribution of ability among women is approximately the same as among men” (p. 40), though it is not clear how many women may have taken the test as they were not drafted. The Report also suggests
that though a specific age range was tested (draft ages), “there is no reason to believe that the distribution of mental ability would be significantly different between various age groups” (p. 40). The use of the AGCT is significant in that it served as a funnel to access and educational opportunity, limiting to those deemed to have the “ability” per a test built on one segment of the population. The Report continued with specificity in the numbers and age ranges of who should access traditional four-year institutions and graduate or professional level schooling (p. 41-43).

This tension and silence of stratified access is unproblematized, leading to the conclusion that AO-HE was intended for the test-verified “talented” rather than “education for all” (p. 25) and gave rise to early notions of the discourse of meritocracy. **Silent Tension between Individual Freedoms and Public Aims**

“The fundamental concept of democracy is a belief in the inherent worth of the individual, in the dignity and value of human life” (p. 11). In my analysis, there is an overarching tension that is unspoken and serves as a silence to be explored. This tension emerges between individual freedoms that serve as a foundational element of a democracy and public aims.

The Truman Report focuses on recommendations for higher education to serve the democratic goals of the nation, as “the ends of democratic education in the United States will not be adequately served until we achieve a unification of our educational objectives and processes” (p. 62). Though the goals of preserving democracy may be noble and important, the Report stipulates that the federal government, through its role in
funding and prioritizing the needs of the nation, directly shape higher education, including who accesses it, to meet these needs:

The radical character of the adjustments required in higher education, their magnitude, and the pressure of time, all mean that neither individual institutions nor national educational organizations have the resources to effect the necessary changes without outside stimulation and financial assistance. These, the Commission believes, will have to come from the Federal Government. (p. 103)

The Report is asserting a stance for the federal government to ensure that higher education adopts the recommendations developed, yet these recommendations include a very specific formula for access and educational opportunity that is restrictive. I allege that there are silent tensions between individual choices and freedoms and the public aims of democracy. This quote illustrates well the silence and tension:

The first goal in education for democracy is the full, rounded, and continuing development of the person. The discovery, training, and utilization of individual talents is of fundamental importance in a free society. To liberate and perfect the intrinsic powers of every citizen is the central purpose of democracy, and its furtherance of individual self-realization its greatest glory. (p. 9)

Through the analysis of discourse in the Truman Report, there is a noticeable absence of individual choices and freedom. There is a considerable level of detail the Commission provides regarding who should access higher education and how that is to be determined; how increased access should be funded and by whom; the types of aims
and curriculum that should be in place to meet those aims; the ways research ought to serve public and national interests; and how higher education should be organized at each level. The Report falls short in discussing the role of the people or institutions of higher education in shaping these ideas or recommendations.

I believe this silence leaves unproblematized the type of democracy that the Report describes, and the tension leads to a discourse of limited democracy. The type of democracy discussed throughout the Report, in theory, alleges the broad principles and goals that became clear in a post-WWII era:

Democracy as a way of life uses varied institutional forms and changing patterns of cooperative association as time and circumstances may require, but it holds fast to its abiding elements: Its respect for human personality, its insistence on the fullest freedom of belief and expression of all citizens, its principle that all should participate in decision that concern themselves, its faith in reason, its deep obligation to promote human well-being. (p. 102)

Yet, in practice, the achievement of these principles is prescriptive and lack the inclusion of individual choices and full participation (given the restrictive nature of access and educational opportunity). The quote above continues, “these ideals and the processes through which they are translated into individual and social behavior must permeate American education from nursery school through the highest reaches of graduate and professional schools” (p. 102). The need to promote and protect democracy leads to a type of limited democracy given the suggestion for a unified educational system aligned
to democratic, public aims in a post-WWII era would supersede the other aspects of democracy discussed:

At the same time and with equal urgency higher education must prepare Americans to contribute their utmost to the achievement of world order and peace among men…. E Pluribus Unum—From many persons one nation, and from many people one world—indivisible and with justice for all. A strong and dynamic national community, intertwining in harmony and unity of purpose. (p. 102)

This silent tension leaves for consideration several unproblematized areas of the Report and opportunity for future exploration.

Summary

As pivotal and groundbreaking as Higher Education for American Democracy historically has proven to be, there are definitive silences and unproblematized areas. Both its pivotal recommendations and silences have evolved over time and shaped what we have come to know as higher education today. The premise of a Commission at the highest level of the government calling attention to issues of higher education as essential to the nation’s future was progressive and groundbreaking. It would be years later that legislative action would follow, but the groundwork was laid. This groundwork led to increased access and educational opportunity in the late 1960s. These core ideas have continued to be explored through various national Commissions through to modern day. The next chapter will explore a more recent report, A Test of Leadership, and provide brief context to the genealogical arcs that lead from the Truman Report.
CHAPTER IV
THE SPELLINGS REPORT

Chapter four is the analysis of *A Test of Leadership: Charting the Future of U.S. Higher Education* also known as the Spellings Report (Spellings Report, 2006). The “What’s the Problem Represented to Be” (WPR) method drives the analysis alongside my guiding questions to interrogate the problematizations, discourses, and silences as represented in the Spellings Report. The chapter is designed similarly to the analysis of the Truman Report beginning first with historical context that has shaped the Spellings Report followed by the analysis using my guiding questions and the WPR method.

**The Historical Influences of Neoliberalism on the Spellings Report**

In order to understand the fullest context of the Spellings Report, it is helpful to review *A Nation at Risk*, a federally commissioned report on education released in 1983. *A Nation at Risk* sets the stage for what has been termed the neoliberal movement in education (Scott, 2011). It serves as a meaningful Foucauldian genealogical event in that it set the stage for a sharp turn in the national discourse on education inclusive of higher education and resulting policies (Urban & Wagoner, 2014). *A Nation at Risk* begins with the following statement:

All, regardless of race or class or economic status, are entitled to a fair chance and to the tools for developing their individual powers of mind and spirit to the utmost. This promise means that all children by virtue of their own efforts, competently guided, can hope to attain the mature and informed judgement
needed to secure gainful employment, and to manage their own lives, thereby serving not only their own interests but also the progress of society itself.

(Gardner et. al, 1983, p. 9)

The discourse prevalent in *A Nation at Risk* calls for urgent attention to the inadequacies of our educational systems to prepare students to compete in the global marketplace. It states, “Our nation is at risk. Our once unchallenged preeminence in commerce, industry, science, and technological innovation is being overtaken by competitors throughout the world” (p. 9). This rhetoric follows a significant historical period from 1978–the early 80s in which momentous global and economic shifts occurred supported by the rise of neoliberal discourses (Harvey, 2005). The following quote provides a brief overview of neoliberalism that is worth quoting in full:

Neoliberalism is in the first instance a theory of political and economic practice that proposes that human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets, and free trade. The role of the state is to create and preserve an institutional framework appropriate to such practices. It must also set up those military, defense, police, and legal structures and functions required to secure private property rights and to guarantee, by force if need be, the proper functioning of markets. Furthermore, if markets do not exist (in areas such as land, water, education, health care, social
security, or environmental pollution) then they must be created, by state action if necessary. (Harvey, 2005, p. 2)

This economic concept, emerging more prominently with the election of Reagan in 1980, continues to greatly influence policy, practice, legislation, and social thought in the United States (Giroux, 2014).

The concept of developing markets fashioned by state influences in fields such as education and healthcare drives much of the criticism and attraction to neoliberal ideology. Specific to education, Scott (2005) notes that *A Nation at Risk* used neoliberal ideology and discourse to suggest our education system (including higher education) was failing to meet the national needs for a globally competitive workforce: “Neoliberal forces have had a major influence over the direction of the U.S. education policy over the past several decades. During this time corporations and policy makers have worked forcefully to incorporate the market into public education” (p. 273).

The historical impact of *A Nation at Risk* on educational policy and thought and its contribution to future iterations of education reports and policy cannot be understated. Other federal reports followed over the years carrying similar themes and overtures of neoliberal language and policy preferences in higher education (a new marketplace) (Scott, 2005). Table 6 provides an overview.
Table 6

Overview of Federal Reports, 1983 – Spellings Report

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Report / Legislation</th>
<th>Year / President</th>
<th>Themes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A Nation At Risk</td>
<td>1983 / Reagan</td>
<td>Reform, mediocrity, competition, expectations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GOALS 2000: Educate America Act</td>
<td>1994 / Clinton</td>
<td>Precursor to “No Child Left Behind” Act / Standards, skills, reform</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Child Left Behind Act</td>
<td>2002 / Bush (junior)</td>
<td>Measurement, improvement, choice, testing, merit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spellings Report</td>
<td>2006 / Bush (junior)</td>
<td>Discussed in analysis</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The purpose of the chart above is to show the Foucauldian genealogical influences that shaped the discursive construction of the Spellings Report. To understand the Report is to understand the context and rise of neoliberal rhetoric and ideology that preceded the Spellings Report, specifically the notion that postsecondary education should be viewed as a marketplace.

There are also considerable linkages between the elements of the *No Child Left Behind* legislation and recommendations provided in the Spellings Report, both coming under the administration of then President G. W. Bush (Wilson, 2017). This historical context and tracing allow for a more robust analysis using the “What’s the Problem Represented to Be” method.
A Test of Leadership: Charting the Future of U.S. Higher Education

On September 19, 2005, then U.S. Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings announced the formation of the Commission on the Future of Higher Education, also known as the Spellings Commission (Spellings Report, 2006). The Commission included nineteen members that ranged from corporate leaders to politicians and educational experts. The Commission was tasked to consider how well higher education was preparing students for the workplace. The specific purpose and function follows:

The purpose of the Commission is to consider how best to improve our system of higher education to ensure that our graduates are well prepared to meet our future workforce needs and are able to participate fully in the changing economy. To accomplish this purpose, the Commission shall consider Federal, state, local, and institutional roles in higher education and analysis whether the current goals of higher education are appropriate and achievable. (p. 30)

The Report, released on September 26, 2006 and 51 total pages (inclusive of appendices) in length, framed concerns and recommendations in four targeted areas: access, affordability, quality of instruction, and accountability (Spellings Report, 2006). The Report is structured with a preamble, summary, findings, recommendations, and conclusions.

It includes several appendices to supplement the formal Report consisting of issues papers, a charter, and records of the Commission’s work. The charter of the Commission claimed that there were unmet workforce needs and that higher education
held an important role in meeting those needs; “the country is encountering a significant change to its economic structure, resulting in unmet workforce needs” (p. 30).

These needs were prevalent in math and science fields, calling attention to the lack of preparation of students in secondary education for these fields (Spellings Report, 2006). Higher education is viewed as the primary social institution to ensure a future that must “…meet the needs of our diverse population, and in particular, the needs of traditionally underserved communities; provides enhanced opportunities for lifelong learning; and addresses the economic and workforce needs of the country” (p.30). The report is premised on a sense of fear and urgency echoing A Nation at Risk that the United States’ higher education system was failing to prepare students for the workforce and the competitive global marketplace. The role of the Commission was to develop a strategy to shift higher education policy and practice to address these concerns and fears (Spellings Report, 2006). My guiding questions, as aligned to the WPR method, direct the analysis.

Table 7 provides a summative overview.

Table 7

Guiding Research Questions & the WPR Method

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Guiding Questions</th>
<th>“What the Problem Represented to Be” Method</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How are AO-HE problems represented in the Truman and Spellings Reports?</td>
<td>What’s the problem represented to be in a specific policy or policies?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What deep-seated presuppositions or assumptions underlie this representation of the “problem?”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
How are AO-HE Problems Represented in the Spellings Report?

Question one of the “What’s the Problem Represented to Be” method intends to understand the way problems are represented and created as well as the underlying assumptions and presumptions that shape those problems. The assumption that shapes A Test of Leadership (Spellings Report) is that the United States is falling behind its global counterparts in educational attainment which contributes to urgent economic concerns.

Specifically, the country’s postsecondary institutions are a primary focus:

We remained so far ahead of our competitors for so long, however, that we began to take our postsecondary superiority for granted. The results of this inattention, though little known to many of our fellow citizens, are sobering. We may still have more than our share of the world’s best universities. But a lot of other countries have followed our lead, and they are now educating more of their citizens to more advanced levels than we are. Worse, they are passing us by at a time when education is more important to our collective prosperity than ever.

(Spellings Report, 2006, p. vi, vii)

The Spellings Commission recommendations directly follow from this fear and concern. “It is time to be frank. Among the vast and varied institutions that make up U.S. higher education, we have found much to applaud but also much that requires urgent reform” (p. vi), states the Report in setting up the context. These concerns frame three primary problematizations: 1) the United States’ inability to compete globally due, 2) an unprepared workforce, and 3) a lack of access to postsecondary education. Each of these
problematizations assume the United States is lacking in three key areas: global competition indicators (number of students attaining higher education, STEM degrees, innovation); number of students entering into needed workforce areas (STEM for example); and the number of possible students overall that should attain postsecondary credentials (Spellings Report, 2006). These problems are framed by three primary assumptions/presumptions.

1. Education is the primary driver for national prosperity, social mobility, global competitiveness, and economic security; higher education has inadequately served these needs due to a lack of accountability;

2. Significant gaps to higher education exist due to inflexible and complex higher education systems, lack of transparency, unprepared students, and rising costs; and,

3. Those that are most impacted by the lack of access and educational opportunity are underrepresented racial and ethnic communities and those from low-income backgrounds, robbing the United States’ of needed members of workforce.

Table 8 provides a summative overview of the problems and assumptions/presumptions.
Table 8

Problematizations & Assumptions/Presumptions identified in the Spellings Report

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Problematization</th>
<th>Assumptions/Presumptions</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The United States’ inability to compete globally due to an unprepared workforce</td>
<td>Education is a primary driver of a nation prepared to innovate future prosperity in the economic marketplace; education is the means by which social mobility and economic gains occur; there is a lack of accountability within higher education institutions on the aims to meet economic needs and compete globally</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The lack of access to postsecondary education to ensure a prepared workforce to compete globally</td>
<td>There are significant gaps in access to higher education due to inflexible and complex systems; lack of transparency; unprepared students; and rising costs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Those gaps most severely impact underrepresented racial, ethnic populations and families in the lower income quartile who lack the skills and education to contribute to the workforce and future global competitiveness of the United States; this eliminates a large contingent of the potential student market for higher education</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Problematization 1: an unprepared workforce. The Spelling Report states:

We acknowledge that not everyone needs to go to college. But everyone needs a postsecondary education. Indeed, we have seen ample evidence that some form of instruction is increasingly vital to an individual’s economic security. Yet, too many Americans just aren’t getting the education that they need—and that they deserve. (Spellings Report, 2006, p. vii)
An important idea advanced by the Spellings Report is that higher education needed to be expanded and diversified from the traditional four-year public or private institutions. This was necessary to increase the number of students prepared to compete in the global marketplace, of which the United States was falling behind. The primary language used throughout the report is postsecondary education rather than higher education. The Report asserted that more options should be available to the consumer (student) which later opened the door to the controversial for-profit movement in higher education (Mettler, 2014):

In this consumer-driven economy, students increasingly care little about the distinctions that sometimes preoccupy the academic establishments, from whether a college has a for-profit or nonprofit status to whether its classes are offered online or in brick-and-mortar buildings. Instead, they care—as we do—about results. (Spellings Report, 2006, p. viii)

The Spellings Commission stated that the existing structure of higher education institutions did not meet the market demands of a knowledge-economy; “American higher education has become what, in the business word, would be called a mature enterprise, increasingly risk-averse, at times self-satisfied, and unduly expensive” (p. ix). As such, “a mature enterprise” is unable to educate a future workforce prepared to meet the demands of the global market, and most concerning, the United States dominance and ability to compete is jeopardized. Where once the United States led the world in educational attainment, recent data from the Organization for Economic Cooperation and
Development indicate that our nation is now ranked 12th among major industrialized countries in higher education attainment (Spellings Report, 2006).

The Report builds on these ideologies in framing the problem of an unprepared workforce for the “ninety percent of the fastest-growing jobs in the new knowledge-driven economy [which] will require some postsecondary education” (p. 1). This reality illustrates the underlying belief held by the Commission that higher education is a significant driver of social mobility and meeting human capital needs and demands of the global market. The Report states that higher education has not adequately met this role:

Colleges and universities must continue to be the major route for new generations of Americans to achieve social mobility. And for the country as a whole, future economic growth will depend on our ability to sustain excellence, innovation, and leadership in higher education. But even the economic benefits could diminish if students don’t acquire the appropriate skills. (p. 1)

The Report emphasizes that higher education in its current state does not produce graduates equipped to meet current workforce demands, as “business and government leaders have repeatedly and urgently called for workers at all stages of life to continually upgrade their academic and practical skills. But both national and state policies of postsecondary institutions have not always made this easy” (p. 3).

The Report continues, “unacceptable numbers of college graduates enter the workforce without the skills employees say they need in an economy where, as the truism holds correctly, knowledge matters more than ever” (p. vii). The Spellings Report
defines the problem that the United States no longer leads in global educational
targets, postsecondary graduates are not meeting global workforce needs and
demands, “the transformation of the world economy increasingly demands a more highly
educated workforce with postsecondary skills and credentials” (p. 6), and these global
pressures come at a time when data from the U.S. Department of Labor indicate that
postsecondary education will ever be more important for workers hoping to fill the
fastest-growing jobs in our new economy (Spellings Report, 2006).

The Report underscores this first problematization, the United States’ inability to
compete globally due to an unprepared workforce, by alleging that higher education
institutions lack accountability and effectiveness. Higher education has become,
according the Report, inflexible and complex to navigate while simultaneously raising
costs to attend and erecting more barriers to access and educational opportunity. This
presents a concrete barrier to students that want and need to access some form of
postsecondary education to contribute to the world economy and meet workforce
demands. The Report also suggests the current model is outdated:

American higher education has taken little advantage of important innovations
that would increase institutional capacity, effectiveness and productivity.

Government and institutional policies created during a different era are impeding
the expansion of models designed to meet the nation’s workforce needs. (p. 14)

The Report claims that this has created a climate in higher education that promotes
inefficiency, lack of quality and clarity in measuring institutional performance, and a
disconnect from the needs of businesses and the marketplace. Specifically, these needs are tied to science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) fields which are essential fields to the United States’ efforts to compete globally and innovate for the future:

With too few exceptions, higher education has yet to address the fundamental issues of how academic programs and institutions must be transformed to serve the changing needs of a knowledge economy. We recommend that America’s colleges and universities embrace a culture of continuous innovation and quality improvement by developing new pedagogies, curricula, technologies to improve learning, particularly in the area of science and mathematical literacy. (p. 24)

This primary problematization drives the majority of the Report and its recommendations that “U.S. higher education needs to improve in dramatic ways” (p. vi) and evolve significantly to meet the needs of the 21st century global economy, “at a time when innovation occurs increasingly at the intersection of multiple disciplines (including business and social sciences), curricula and research funding remain largely contained in individual departments” (p. 15). Higher education, according the Spellings Report, must change.

**Problematization 2: The lack of access to postsecondary education.** The Spelling Report acknowledges:

Too few Americans prepare for, participate in, and complete higher education—especially those underserved and nontraditional groups who make up an ever-
greater proportion of the population. The nation will rely on these groups as a major source of new workers as the demographic shifts in the U.S. population continue. (Spellings Report, 2006, p. 7)

The Commission structured the report on various themes, and a primary theme centers on issues of access, cost and affordability, and financial aid serving as a barrier to increased access. These themes are foregrounded on the conclusion the Report makes that large numbers of low-income and students from historically underrepresented racial and ethnic backgrounds are not accessing higher education in the numbers needed to meet national workforce and global competitiveness priorities. The Report states, “We found that access to American higher education is unduly limited by the complex interplay of inadequate preparation, lack of information about college opportunities, and persistent financial barriers” (p. 1)

This problem is exacerbated for low-income students and students from racial and ethnic identities historically underrepresented and underserved in higher education:

Moreover, there is a troubling and persistent gap between the college attendance and graduation rates of low-income Americans and their more affluent peers. Similar gaps characterize the college attendance rates—and especially the college completion rates—of the nation’s growing population of racial and ethnic minorities. (p. 1)
The issues of access are discussed in the Report as problems with systems, preparation and information, affordability, and a lack of transparency and accountability in higher education institutions. Each will be discussed.

1. The Report finds that there are complicated systems-based barriers to access to higher education, “our higher education financing system is increasingly dysfunctional” (p. 9); the Report continues, “the entire financial aid system–including federal, state, institutional, and private programs–is confusing, complex, inefficient, duplicative, and frequently does not direct aid to students who truly need it” (p. 11). These systems and processes create unnecessary blocks to access and educational opportunity for students. The Report discusses several examples from ineffective means to measure learning outcomes to financial aid inefficiencies to illustrate its points.

2. The systems issue is also tied to the lack of alignment between K-12 and higher education, leading to students ill-prepared for the demands of postsecondary expectations. Inadequate high school preparation is compounded by poor alignment between high schools and colleges, which often creates an “expectations gap” between what colleges require and what high schools produce (p. 7). There is an interesting inference in the Report regarding K-12 issues that are implied to be the responsibility of higher education to resolve in order to meet national economic needs, noting that “little of the significant research of the past decade in areas such as cognitive science, neuroscience, and organizational theory
is making it into the American classroom practice, whether at the K-12 level or in colleges and universities” (p. 14). Higher education ought to inform the practices of K-12 instruction and ensure students are adequately prepared for college-level learning according to the Report.

3. Concerns with the lack of preparation of entering students are coupled with obfuscated information about higher education for families, leading to significant barriers to access, suggests the Report. “Several national studies confirm the insufficient preparation of high school graduates for either college-level work or the changing needs of the workforce” (p. 7). The Report cites various data sources such as ACT data, IPEDS, and course remediation enrollment to raise attention to the issues of preparation and lack of transparency. This data builds the case that things must change.

4. The Commission stresses that any qualified student ought to be able to enter postsecondary education with a clear understanding of costs and benefits. “The commission believes the nation must be committed to building and sustaining a higher education system that is accessible to all qualified students in all life stages (p. 7). The issues of access are further compounded by cost and affordability concerns, “Affordability is directly affected by a financing system that provides limited incentives for colleges and universities to take aggressive steps to improve institutional efficiency and productivity,” and again “there is no issue that worries the American public more about higher education than the soaring cost of
attending college” (p. 9). The Report connects the issues of affordability directly to public support of colleges and universities. The Report discusses at length the way higher education institutions are funded and how finances are managed, the issues of state subsidiaries, and the rise in costs to run institutions. “Next to institutional financial aid, the greatest growth has been in administrative costs for improvements in student services (including state-of-the-art fitness centers and dormitories)” (p. 9).

5. The lack of transparency and accountability affects access and public support:

   We have noted a remarkable shortage of clear, accessible information about crucial aspects of American colleges and universities, from financial aid to graduation rates. Because data systems are so limited and inadequate, it is hard for policymakers to obtain reliable information on students’ progress through the educational pipeline… This lack of useful data and accountability hinders policymakers and the public from making informed decisions and prevents higher education from demonstrating its contributions to the public good. (p. 4)

The Report suggests that consumers should have access to databases and easily obtained informational sheets to compare institutions on indicators tied to innovation, market needs, financial transparency and costs, and learning outcomes. This correlates directly with the No Child Left Behind legislation that created national scorecards, notions of choice, and competition. It is inferred,
though not explicitly stated, that higher education ought to mirror K-12 in this manner.

6. The intersections of the concerns outlined serve as a confluence of troubling dynamics for the Commission that directly impede access to higher education with more dramatic impacts on low-income students and students from historically underrepresented racial and ethnic backgrounds. “Several national studies highlight shortcomings in the quality of U.S. higher education as measured by literacy, rising time to degree, and disturbing racial and ethnic gaps in student achievement” (p. 12).

This leads the Commission to conclude that higher education is unable to serve a primary goal of the Report, as “we want a world-class higher-education system that creates new knowledge, contributes to economic prosperity and global competitiveness, and empowers citizens” (p. viii). This problematization, the lack of appropriate access and institutional parameters of postsecondary education as unable to ensure a prepared workforce to compete globally, is a central driver of the Report and the recommendations that followed:

The challenge before us is nothing less than securing the promise of the future and unleashing the potential of the American people. To that end, we offer recommendations that aim to improve access to higher education and make it more affordable. We seek to strengthen quality and innovation. And, we want to
bring much-needed transparency and accountability to our colleges and universities. (p. 16)

What Discourses are Employed to Shape these Problems?

This section responds to WPR questions two and three: how has the representation of the problem come about, and what is left unproblematic in this problem representation? As noted in previous sections, discourse as used in the WPR method draws heavily upon Foucault notions of discourse and feminist poststructural approaches. Bacchi (1999) shares, discourse is “the way in which language, or, more broadly, bodies of knowledge, conceptual and interpretative schema, define the terrain and consequently attempts at change” (p. 40). I have identified two primary discourses that shape the problematizations. The first is the discourse of marketplace that I suggest includes two Foucauldian discursive strands, as used by the WPR method. These discursive strands are managerialism and competition. The second discourse I identify is that of disadvantage with two discursive strands attached, the strand of processes and the strand of social mobility. Table 9 provides an overview aligned to the problematizations and assumptions/presumptions.

Table 9

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Problematization</th>
<th>Assumptions/Presumptions</th>
<th>Discourse(s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The United States’ inability to compete globally due to an unprepared workforce</td>
<td>Education is a primary driver of a nation prepared to innovate future prosperity in the economic marketplace; education is the means by which social mobility</td>
<td>Marketplace: • Discursive Strand of Competition</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The lack of access to postsecondary education to ensure a prepared workforce to compete globally and economic gains occur; there is a lack of accountability within higher education institutions on the aims to meet economic needs and compete globally.

There are significant gaps in access to higher education due to inflexible and complex systems; lack of transparency; unprepared students; and rising costs.

Those gaps most severely impact underrepresented racial, ethnic populations and families in the lower income quartile who lack the skills and education to contribute to the workforce and future global competitiveness of the United States; this eliminates a large contingent of the potential student market for higher education.

| Disadvantage: |
| - Discursive Strand of Managerialism |
| - Discursive Strand of Processes |
| - Discursive Strand of Social Mobility |

The Discourse of Marketplace

The Spellings Report embraces the discourse of the marketplace to shape its assumptions, conclusions, and ultimately recommendations. This discourse connects to the larger umbrella of neoliberalism discussed at the beginning of this chapter. Allan, Iverson & Ropers-Huilman (2010) discuss that one of the tenets of feminist poststructuralism is to examine how particular education realities have been constituted and regulated through discourse. The discourse of marketplace serves as a concrete
example of discourse that shape certain educational realities. The below quote captures this rhetoric that shapes much of the Report:

History is littered with examples of industries that, at their peril, failed to respond to—or even to notice—changes in the world around them, from railroads to steel manufacturers. Without serious self-examination and reform, institutions of higher education risk falling into the same trap; seeing their market share substantially reduced and their services increasingly characterized by obsolescence. (Spellings Report, 2006, p. ix)

By embracing neoliberal ideology that places higher education into the same economic category as industries such as steel manufacturing, the Commission is asserting a well-defined stance regarding their views of higher education, using language more commonly associated with corporate and for-profit settings, and how higher education must change to meet market demands. The Report explains:

But today that world is becoming tougher, more competitive, less forgiving of wasted resources and squandered opportunities [referencing higher education’s history]. In tomorrow’s world a nation’s wealth will derive from its capacity to educate, attract, and retain citizens who are able to work smarter and learn faster—making educational achievement ever more important both for society and individuals writ large. (Spellings Report, 2006, p. ix)

As higher education costs have risen and policies have shifted since the early 1980s from investing in educational opportunity as a publicly-held priority to placing the
burden on individuals, the marketplace discourse has seeped into all facets of higher education (Burke, 2002). The reconceptualization of education “is evidenced by an increasingly pervasive view of higher education as a marketplace: the degree is supposed to be the product, students and their parents the consumer” states Iverson (2005, p. 132).

The Spellings Report proposes:

We believe that improved accountability is vital to ensuring the success of all other reforms we propose. Colleges and universities must become more transparent about cost, price, and student success outcomes, and must share this information with students and families… This information should be made available to students, reported publicly in aggregate form to provide consumers and policymakers an accessible, understandable way to measure the relative effectiveness of different colleges and universities. (Spellings Report, 2006, p. 4)

The discourse of marketplace is so pervasive and inextricably linked to all aspects of the Spellings Report that I have identified the following strands to more clearly organize and discuss the way the marketplace discourse shapes both problematizations discussed earlier.

**Strand of managerialism.** The dominant discourses of managerialism permeate the Report through terms of efficiency, effectiveness, and the bottom-line to increase accountability, transparency, and ability to remain competitive. This is evidenced throughout the Spellings Report, where it explains that “traditionally, institutional quality is measured primarily through financial inputs and resources. In today’s environment,
these measures of inputs are no longer adequate, either within individual institutions or across all of higher education” (p. 13). The Report dedicates a section of issues followed by recommendations that illustrate the discursive thread of managerialism:

Our complex, decentralized postsecondary education system has no comprehensive strategy, particularly for undergraduate programs, to provide either adequate internal accountability systems or effective public information… Better data about real performance and lifelong working and learning ability is absolutely essential if we are to meet national needs and improve institutional performance. (p. 13)

The Report suggests that states ought to incentivize efforts to increase accountability and transparency; “the commission urges states to provide financial incentives to institutions that show they are fostering access, increasing productivity and cuttings costs” (p. 19). This discourse strand is evidenced in one of the main recommendations:

To meet the challenges of the 21st century, higher education must change from a system primarily based on reputation to one based on performance. We urge the creation of a robust culture of accountability and transparency throughout higher education. Every one of our goals, from improving access and affordability to enhancing quality and innovation, will be more easily achieved if higher education institutions embrace and implement serious accountability measures. (p. 20)
The discourse of managerialism further assumes that higher education institutions have not been accountable nor transparent to those they serve—students, families, and the nation. This discourse tied to marketplace creates associations and realities tied to the problematizations that suggest reform is needed and necessary. The Report alleges that postsecondary institutions, through accountability and transparency measures, provide more accurate and clear information to students so that they can make better informed decisions:

Higher education institutions should improve institutional cost management through the development of new performance benchmarks designed to measure and improve productivity and efficiency. Also, better measures of costs, beyond those designed for accounting purposes, should be provided to enable consumers [students and families] and policymakers to see institutional results in the areas of academic quality, productivity and efficiency. (p. 19)

Through analyzing the Spellings Report, this discursive strand of managerialism emerges in all of the recommendations and becomes one of the lightening rod issues that followed in response by the broader higher education community (Quevedo, 2007). Words such as accountability, world-class quality, and strategic actions are used throughout and evident in this passage found in the conclusion.

Our report has recommended strategic actions designed to make higher education more accessible, more affordable, and more accountable, while maintaining world-class quality. Our colleges and universities must become more transparent,
faster to respond to rapidly changing circumstances and increasingly productive in order to deal effectively with the powerful forces of change they now face.

(Spellings Report, 2006, p. 27)

This is in sharp contrast to higher education’s historical roots and one of the reasons the Spellings Report has been considered so controversial.

**Strand of competition.** Key ideas of marketplace discourse are the concepts of competition and innovation, suggesting an entrepreneurial identity for institutions of higher education. These ideas are dominant throughout the Spellings Report and serve as rationale to assemble the Commission to analyze the “complacency” (p. vi) of institutions of higher education to prioritize improvement, innovation, and shifts to meet market needs.

The United States must ensure the capacity of its universities to achieve global leadership in key strategic areas such as science, engineering, medicine, and other knowledge-intensive professions. We recommend increased federal investments in areas critical to our nation’s global competitiveness and a renewed commitment to attract the best and brightest minds from across the nation and around the world to lead the next wave of American innovation. (p. 26)

The Report stresses that public and private institutions of higher education have rested on reputation and have not kept pace with the changing demands of the knowledge-economy; “as higher education evolves in unexpected ways, this new landscape demands innovation and flexibility from the institutions that serve the nation’s
Innovation drives postsecondary education’s ability to compete, specifically when innovation is tied to STEM fields. The Report recommends “increasing federal and state investment in education and research in critical areas such as the STEM fields, teaching, nursing, biomedicine, and other professions along the lines recommended by President George W. Bush’ American Competitiveness Initiative.” (p. 26)

The competition discourse suggests that families should be able to consider a variety of factors in selecting a postsecondary institution and to compare between offerings. This competition for students drives higher education institutions to continually innovate to attract students through inventive degree programs, learning outcomes, and specialized training tied to market needs. This competition should also drive institutions into sharing openly assessment measures on student learning and graduation rates according to the Spellings Report.

Despite increased attention to student learning results by colleges and universities and accreditation agencies, parents and students have no solid evidence, comparable across institutions, of how much students learn in college or whether they will learn more at one college than another. (p. 13)

This discourse plainly states that choosing postsecondary options should be akin to buying a house or car in which costs, options, and benefits are clear.

A striking element of the Spellings Report is its use of other institutions that serve as model examples to illustrate the behavior the Report is promoting all institutions of
higher education to adopt. As evidence, the Report discusses the way the California State University System has increased access while also improving preparation with nearly a page-long description of their successes. By using other institutions as examples, the Report is promoting the discourse of competition to motivate others to embrace the recommendations. Another example is titled, “Quality and Innovation through Course Redesign,” (p. 20). This example discusses the way 30 institutions worked with a national organization to “enhance quality of instruction, improve student learning, and reduce costs” (p. 20). These examples provided throughout the Spellings Report explicitly carry out the discourse of competition to motivate the broader higher education community to follow suit.

**Strand of Discourse of Disadvantage**

The discourse of disadvantage emerges throughout the Spellings Report in reference to K-12 and higher education’s failure in meeting the needs of the nation’s most vulnerable populations, thus creating a disadvantage in their ability to compete and have a place in the knowledge economy. Iverson (2010) discusses the discourse of disadvantage in her research as those considered at-risk for educational failure and this discourse is evident in the Spellings Report. The Report states, “Access and achievement gaps disproportionately affect low-income and minority students. Historically these students are the very students who have faced the greatest academic and financial challenges in getting access to or completing college” (Spellings Report, 2006, p. 8). The framing of this discourse of disadvantage is connected to market needs as the lack of
access due to disadvantage robs the nation of valuable commodities (prepared students to meet market needs and drive innovation) to compete globally.

Not surprisingly, the consequences of substandard preparation and poor alignment between high schools and colleges persist in college. Remediation has become far too common an experience for American postsecondary students. Some 40 percent of all college students end up taking one remedial course—at an estimated cost to taxpayers of $1 billion. Additionally, industry spends significant financial resources on remediation and training. (p. 8)

The issues of disadvantage are tied to two discursive strands of process and social mobility that illustrate the ways disadvantage as a discourse is framed in the Spellings Report.

**Strand of Processes**

Throughout the Spellings Report, I have found evidence of a discourse of processes that undergirds the discourse of disadvantage. These processes include systems of financial aid, access (admissions), K-12 processes connected to postsecondary institutions, learning assessments, data measures, and accountability and transparency. The Spellings Report recommendations are heavily process-based with the primary process-owners being postsecondary institutions (as opposed to the federal government).

I define the processes of disadvantage as systems, mechanisms, practices, symbols, and policies that work toward managing behaviors and outcomes. It is through the processes that hegemonic practices of power and influence are embedded and produce certain types
of subjects—advantaged versus disadvantaged for instance (further discussed in the final chapter)—and create knowledge that appears as “common sense” discourse (Gross in Levinson, 2011), such as suggesting higher education should function like a free market that embraces choice, freedom, and competition as this benefits the students and families most. This is also illustrative of Foucault’s concepts of power, knowledge, and systems working to permit or inhibit certain behaviors and practices, where “power is a technique rather than simply an institution and ‘rooted in the whole system of the social’” (Metro-Roland in Levinson, 2011). As in the case of the Spellings Report, these systems are financial aid, admissions, and related processes that create a barrier to access for those identified as disadvantaged due to their complexity and inaccessibility.

This definition is informed by neoliberal ideology as described by Harvey (2005) at the start of this chapter. Specifically, Harvey discusses the role of contractual relations in the marketplace and frequency of transactions. This process discourse is used to support the larger discourse of disadvantage in the ways systems and processes work to create barriers to higher education and embed knowledge and power relationships. For instance, the Spellings Report states, “Many students and parents don’t understand the steps needed to prepare for college and the system fails to address this information gap,” (Spellings Report, 2006, p. 17). Therefore, by creating a “consumer-friendly information database with useful, reliable information on institutions, coupled with a search engine to enable students, parents, policy makers and others to weigh and rank institutional
performance” (p. 20), a process is created to facilitate a transactional relationship between the consumer student and the postsecondary institution.

The Spellings Report commits extensive time to discussing the inefficiency and ineffectiveness of various systems and processes of higher education and the lack of the right types of systems needed to improve. A significant system discussed is the financial aid system:

[The financial aid system] is overly complicated and its multitude of programs sometimes redundant and incomprehensible to all but a few experts. This complexity has the unfortunate effect of discouraging some low-income students from even applying to college…. The current system does not provide definitive information about freshman year aid until the spring of the senior year in high school, which makes it more difficult for families to plan and discourages college attendance. (p. 11)

The Report suggests that the “entire student financial aid system be restructured and new incentives put in place to improve the measurement and management of costs and institutional productivity” (p. 18). Given the role of financial aid to access and educational opportunity, the focus on this system is pivotal for the Report’s recommendations to address barriers to access for all students, particularly those that are disadvantaged by the current system. Other processes are discussed such as transfer credits, “barriers to the recognition of transfer credits between different types of institutions pose challenges to students and prevent institutions from increasing capacity”
K-12 alignment, “the commission believes higher education must assume responsibility for working with the K-12 system to ensure teachers are adequately trained, curricula are aligned and entrance standards are clear” (p. 16); and data systems, “the commission supports the development of a privacy-protected higher education information system that collects, analyzes and uses student level data as a vital tool for accountability, policy-making, and consumer choice” (p. 21).

This process discourse extends into issues with internal mechanism higher education institutions use such as accounting and finance systems, tying specifically into the market discourse. The Report asserts:

College and university finances are complex and made more so by accounting habits that confuse costs with revenues and obscure production costs. The lack of transparency in financing is not just a problem of public communication or metrics. It reflects a deeper problem: inadequate attention to cost measurement and cost management within institutions. (p. 10)

The Report contends that with better systems tied to accountability and transparency, higher education will strengthen its ability to meet market demands, consumer (student) interests, and policymaker and government expectations. In doing so, those disadvantaged currently by higher education processes, systems, practices, and policies will be able to better access and succeed and be able to contribute to the nation’s ability to compete globally.
**Strand of Social Mobility**

The Spellings Report refers to higher education as a primary means of social mobility. The commission calls on policymakers to address the needs of higher education in order to maintain social mobility and a high standard of living (p. 27). The notion of social mobility is directly tied to disadvantage through access and educational opportunity, whereas the Spellings Report is far bolder, more inclusive, and direct than the Truman Report. The Spellings Report recommends broadening access well beyond the traditional college student profile; “while many Americans envision an 18- to 22-year-old with a recently acquired high school diploma attending classes at a four-year institution, the facts are more complex” (p. viii). Thus, the Spellings Report suggests access should increase to include adult learners and calls upon postsecondary institutions to expand modes of learning through technology and other innovations. It recommends that “The secretary of education, in partnership with states and other federal agencies, should develop a national strategy that would result in better and more flexible learning opportunities, especially for adult learners” (p. 25).

The Spellings Report asserts several concrete recommendations to improve and increase access and educational opportunity for all students, including low-income students and those from historically marginalized groups:

America must ensure that our citizens have access to high quality and affordable educational, learning, and training opportunities throughout their lives. We recommend the development of a national strategy for lifelong learning that helps
citizens understand the importance of preparing for and participating in higher education throughout their lives.....the plan should include specific recommendations for legislative and regulatory changes needed to create an efficient, transparent and cost-effective system needed to enhance student mobility and meet U.S. workforce needs. (p. 25)

This idea is weaved throughout the Report as higher education is viewed as the “principal–some would say the principal–means of achieving social mobility” (p. ix) and provides another strand of discourse tied to disadvantage. By creating a plan, new processes, and systems, those that are most disadvantaged by the current system can access postsecondary education in order to improve their overall opportunities to engage in the workforce and support the U.S.’ goals to compete globally.

**Unproblematized Areas and Silences**

Uncovering the silences and unproblematized areas is a key analytical step in the WPR process. Silences and unproblematized areas shape knowledge and what become known about what has been “problematized” in a certain Report or policy (Bacchi & Goodwin, 2016). This part of the method draws from both Foucault and feminist poststructural approaches that consider how to uncover the voices often silenced or marginalized power dynamics that permeate systems and processes (Levinson, et. Al, 2011).

The silences and unproblematized areas I have coded and emerged through my analysis are the role of higher education in democracy and civic development and the
lack of public value and federal responsibility. Table 10 on the next page provides a comprehensive summary of all four key areas of the WPR method.

Table 10

**Problematizations, Assumptions, Discourses & Unproblematized Areas**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Problematization</th>
<th>Assumptions/Presumptions</th>
<th>Discourse(s)</th>
<th>Unproblematized Areas/Silences</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The United States inability to compete globally due to an unprepared workforce</td>
<td>Education is a primary driver of a nation prepared to innovate future prosperity in the economic marketplace; education is the means by which social mobility and economic gains occur; there is a lack of accountability within higher education institutions on the aims to meet economic needs and compete globally. There are significant gaps in access to higher education due to inflexible and complex systems; lack of transparency; unprepared students; and rising costs. Those gaps most severely impact underrepresented racial, ethnic populations and families in the lower income quartile who lack the skills and education to contribute to the workforce and future global competitiveness of the United States; this.</td>
<td>Marketplace: • Discursive Strand of Managerialism • Discursive Strand of Competition</td>
<td>Higher education’s role in democracy and civic-development. Lack of public value and federal responsibility.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The lack of access to postsecondary education to ensure a prepared workforce to compete globally</td>
<td></td>
<td>Disadvantage: • Discursive Strand of Processes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


eliminates a large contingent of the potential student market for higher education

**Silence on Higher Education’s role in Democracy and Civic Development**

Whereas in the Truman Report the word democracy appears more than 70 times in Volume I, it only appears once in the Spellings Report. It appears in the preamble following an outline of the goals of Report:

To reach these objectives, we believe that U.S. higher education institutions must recommit themselves to their core public purpose. For close to a century now, access to higher education has been a principal—some would say the principal—means to achieving social mobility. Much of our nation’s inventiveness has been centered in colleges and universities, as has our commitment to a kind of democracy that only an educated and informed citizenry makes possible.

*(Spellings Report, 2006, p. ix)*

There are very few other places in the Report that refer to any other purposes of postsecondary education beyond the marketplace, global competition, and social mobility goals. The Report does reference citizens about half a dozen times yet in the context of what citizens fail to understand about the dire status of higher education; “we remained so far ahead of our competitors for so long, however, that we began to take our postsecondary superiority for granted. The results of this in attention, though little known to many of our fellow citizens, are sobering” (p. vii). The other reference to
citizens is the need for citizens to remain competitive; “at the same time, we recommend the development of a national strategy for lifelong learning designed to keep our citizens and our nation at the forefront of the knowledge revolution” (p. 5). Concepts of the roles of citizens with regards to relationships to democracy is noticeable absent in the Report.

Each of the recommendations specifically emphasizes the work that must be done to reform the “marketability” of higher education and its internal processes to meet these economic needs and the various entities that must be engaged in the reform efforts:

Those findings [on access, affordability, quality, and accountability] are followed by six far-reaching recommendations aimed at all the parties whose efforts will be needed to ensure that reform takes root: college and universities; accrediting bodies and governing boards; state and federal policymakers; elementary and secondary schools; the business community; and parents and students themselves.

(p. x)

The sense of urgency and fear that drove the Truman Commission to develop a report concentrated on ensuring higher education’s role in securing an informed democratic citizenship all but fades away to a mere sentence in the Spellings Report. What is left unproblematized and a loud silence is any role of postsecondary education (using the term preferred by the Spellings Report) to ensure citizens that are informed and knowledgeable on democratic principles and maintenance. In fact, there are very few places when anything other than neoliberal purposes of higher education are referenced. Other than the brief mention of democracy noted earlier, there is one other passage that
gives a brief nod to the civic role of higher education, though it is tucked neatly at the end of an economic argument:

The benefits of higher education are significant both for individuals and for the nation as a whole. In 2003, for example, the median annual salary of an American worker with only a high school diploma was $30,800, compared to $37,600 for those with an associate’s degree and the $49,900 median for those with a bachelor’s degree. Over a lifetime, an individual with a bachelor’s degree will earn an average of $2.1 million—nearly twice as much as worker with only a high school diploma. Higher education also produces broader social gains. Colleges and universities are major economic engines, while also serving as civic and cultural centers. (p. 6)

The lack of any attention to other roles of postsecondary education other than economic is troublesome and historically significant given current political and policy shifts that have occurred since the Spellings Report was published. It is without question a clear signal that higher education first and foremost is an individually-held good that has direct benefits for the nation’s economic and global competitive gains. The role of democracy, civic engagement, or any other types of purposes that were once foundational to the Truman Report are silenced and left unproblematized.

**Silence on Public Value and Federal Responsibility**

The Spellings Commission asserts that higher education bears the majority of the responsibility to implement the Report’s recommendations, through incentives and
accountability initiatives enforced by states, accrediting bodies, public pressure, businesses, and the federal government. Public value is tied to postsecondary education being able to demonstrate its market value through the changes the Report alleges are needed. This is in stark contrast to the Truman Report that established the federal government as chiefly responsible for the needed national changes in higher education. I have identified this silence and unproblematized area as the lack of public value and federal responsibility.

This is evidenced throughout the Report in various places that are action-oriented, “the federal government should provide incentives for states, higher education associations, university systems, and institutions to develop interoperable outcomes-focused accountability systems” (p. 23); attend to public value, “there is inadequate transparency and accountability for measuring institutional performance, which is more and more necessary to maintaining public trust in higher education” (p. 13); suggest public value is threatened, “public concern about rising costs may ultimately contribute to the erosion of public confidence in higher education” (p. 9); and requiring specific obligation, “the commission believes higher education must assume responsibility for working with the K-12 system to ensure that teachers are adequately trained, curricula are aligned and entrance standard are clear” (p. 16).

The Spellings Report reasons that the reform necessary in higher education is to strengthen public value through ensuring that postsecondary outcomes link directly to skills, knowledge, and readiness in the market. The role of the federal government is to
provide incentives, needed regulation, competitive funding, and other motivating factors to engage and stimulate higher education institutions to adopt reforms the Spellings Commission allege are needed. Evidence of this is found in the below passage:

The Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education (FIPSE) should be revitalized and its funding increased. Its original mission of promoting improvement and innovation in higher education needs to be reenergized to sustain and enhance innovation in postsecondary education. The commission recommends that FIPSE prioritize, disseminate, and promote best practices in innovative teaching and learning models as well as the application of high-quality learning-related research in such rapidly growing areas as neuroscience, cognitive science and organizational sciences. (p. 24)

The Report asserts several recommendations that speak to process improvements specifically to the financial aid system and controlling costs, expanding access, evolving learning outcomes, aligning with K-12 institutions, and improving accountability and transparency. Yet, there is little acknowledgement of the role of the federal government to facilitate any of these recommendations beyond incentives and deregulation efforts; “another little-recognized source of cost increases is excessive state and federal regulation” (p. 10). There is a clear role for states though as discussed in the following passage:

The bottom line is that state funding for higher education will not grow enough to support enrollment demand without higher education addressing issues of
efficiency, productivity, transparency, and accountability clearly and successfully. However, based on our commission’s review of the education needs of our nation, we encourage states to continue their historic and necessary commitment to the support of public higher education. (p. 9)

There is a role for states to continue investing resources and, interestingly, specific to public higher education, despite the Spellings Report’s call to broaden postsecondary education. The federal government, recommending what ought to be done and by whom, is not shown to serve a central role to lead these efforts. Further, the Report ties public value directly to higher education’s ability to embrace neoliberal policies and practice. Whereas the Truman Report thoroughly discussed (and even assumed) the public good and value of higher education, the Spellings Report does not assume there is a public good value to higher education. Rather it critiques the inefficiency of the higher education market, lack of accountability and transparency, rising costs and questionable returns on investment, and a disconnect between global market needs and higher education products. These elements leave a silence and unproblematized area to analyze—that is the public value of higher education and the responsibility for public higher education.

The Spellings Report firmly suggests that that higher education (postsecondary) institutions are similar (or should be) to businesses in a market setting, with limited regulation by the federal government and subsidized by states yet individually responsible for their outcomes. This is in stark contrast to viewing higher education as a
publicly held value aligned to broader national interests such as democracy. The Spellings Report does not adequately attend to this question and at times contradicts its own recommendations as a result by suggesting the alignment of degrees to market needs.

**Conclusion**

Though not nearly as groundbreaking as the Truman Report was in 1947, the Spellings Report proved to be pivotal in other ways that resulted in fundamental policy, process, and philosophical changes affecting higher education policy and legislation. Some of these changes included an overhaul of the Free Application for Federal Student Aid form and setting the stage for a vastly different state-level funding model. Distinctive in this report are much more inclusive approaches to access and educational opportunity than in the Truman Report. Neoliberalist discourse serves as the premise for all critiques, recommendations, and actions. Thus, I assert, this creates an ethical question of whether higher education (education) should in fact be treated as a market versus a national priority to sustain and preserve a democratic nation, a silence clear in the Report.
CHAPTER V

My final chapter addresses the final two questions of the WPR method and my guiding research question. The chapter is designed to discuss the problematization, discursive realities, effects, and solutions in and implied by the Truman and Spellings Report. I further discuss ways to interrupt or consider alternative problematizations for future research, discuss limitations and implications for practice, as well as concluding thoughts.

Discussion and Findings

The last two guiding research questions align with questions five and six of the WPR method. I have chosen to address these questions as part of a discussion and findings section. In doing so, I discuss effects, solutions, and realities in comparison with both texts and utilize this analysis to consider alternatives and further research. The terminology that the Reports use is represented here for the analysis. An interpretation follows.

Table 11

Guiding Research Questions aligned to WPR Method

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Guiding Research Questions</th>
<th>“What’s the Problem Represented to Be” Method</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How are solutions related to AO-HE problems constructed in the Truman and Spellings Reports?</td>
<td>What effects (discursive, subjectification, lived) are produced by this representation of the “problem”?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What realities are discursively constructed for AO-HE?</td>
<td>What effects (discursive, subjectification, lived) are produced by this representation of the “problem”?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
How and where has this representation of the “problem” been produced, disseminated and defended? How has it been and/or how can it be disrupted and replaced?

| How and where has this representation of the “problem” been produced, disseminated and defended? How has it been and/or how can it be disrupted and replaced? |

**How are Solutions Constructed in the Truman and Spellings Reports?**

This guiding research question aligns with the WPR question five, which asks what effects are produced by this representation of the problem. The purpose of this part of the analytical process is to understand what the effects of the problems are as analyzed in the Truman and Spellings Reports. Effects consider what has become known about the problems; produced, specifically as it relates to subjects; and what are the lived experiences between what is known and what is produced in people’s lives (Bacchi & Goodwin, 2016). The purpose of question five is to illustrate the productive forces particular policies (and their problematizations) construct, norms defined, and behaviors permitted. The following table summarizes the problematizations and supporting discourses identified through analysis of the two Reports. Added to the table are the identified effects and solutions, using the terminology of the Reports.
Table 12.

*Effects & Solutions*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Problematization</th>
<th>Discourse(s)</th>
<th>Effects</th>
<th>Solutions</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Truman Report:</td>
<td>Discursive Strand of Democracy</td>
<td>Discursive: Democracy</td>
<td>Higher Education’s primary purpose is to prepare students to become citizens ready to defend and sustain democracy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The role of higher education in American democracy needs prioritized and defined</td>
<td>• Public Good of Higher Education</td>
<td>Subjectification (Produced): The ‘capable’ graduate in service to the protection of democracy</td>
<td>All capable students should access higher education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Education has not been accessible to all Americans and this threatens democracy</td>
<td>• Equal Opportunity</td>
<td>Lived: Nation First</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The type of education provided at colleges and universities has not kept pace with changing social conditions</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spellings Report:</td>
<td>Discursive Strand of Marketplace:</td>
<td>Discursive: Neoliberalism</td>
<td>Higher Education’s primary purpose is to align market needs and graduate students’ ready to those needs and compete globally</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The United States’ inability to compete globally due to an unprepared workforce;</td>
<td>• Managerialism</td>
<td>Subjectification (Produced): The ‘aspirant’ graduate in service to market needs</td>
<td>All students should have a fair chance to access postsecondary education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The lack of access to postsecondary education to ensure a prepared workforce to compete globally</td>
<td>• Competition</td>
<td>Lived: Competition and Market First Market Stakeholder</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Disadvantage:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Processes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Social Mobility</td>
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</table>
The two Reports article very different purposes for higher education. Effects and solutions follow from the defined purposes. Each is discussed.

**Effects.** In research question five, the WPR method identifies three specific areas of effects. *Effects* as used in the WPR method refers to what results from problematizations and discourse versus a cause and effect relationship (Bacchi, 1999). Discursive effects are the discursive practices that shape what is problematized and known within a policy. These effects produce subjectification, or what individuals experience and feel as a result of the discourse. Subjectification refers to how the effects are embedded into day-to-day experiences of subjects (people) and create new realities resulting from policies (Bacchi & Goodwin, 2016).

The Truman Report suggests the purpose for higher education is to prepare citizens who are knowledgeable about what the Report calls democracy and are able to defend it. Yet throughout, the Report structures clear parameters as to what is known, lived, and produced. The primary outcome of this is the produced subject as the ‘capable’ graduate in service to protect democracy. This subject position is produced out of the problematizations and discourses discussed in the analysis of the Truman Report and emerge through the discursive thread of democracy. According to Bacchi and Goodwin’s (2016) discussion on discursive practices as influenced by Foucault, “discursive practices comprise the multifarious practices and relationships involved in producing “knowledge” and “what is said” (p. 37). Within the Truman Report, the discursive thread of democracy is infused throughout the entire Report (see pp. 60–66).
All recommendations, solutions, and proposals that emerge out of the Truman Report are connected to this discursive thread of democracy.

What also emerges is the subject position of the capable individual (as assessed by the AGCT test) that should access higher education at the appropriate level. This refers to another common subject position found in educational research conducted by Southgate and Bennett (2014)–the cap(able) student (Bacchi & Goodwin, 2016). Southgate and Bennett (2014) as referenced in Bacchi & Goodwin discuss that higher education frames opportunity through the lens of those that have the ability to participate as determined by certain measures (such as the AGCT in the Truman Report) and demonstrate the capability to pursue higher education. This access, as discussed in the Truman Report, should not be limited by anything other than a person’s capability and, regardless of which level of higher education accessed, the education should include basic fundamentals in democratic citizenship (general education).

The Report suggests that a nation of prepared citizens ready to promote and defend the principles, values, and mechanics of democracy–both at home and abroad–would be created. As such, the subject position produced is the ‘capable’ graduate in service to the protection of democracy. These national goals take precedence over individual goals that may include social mobility or personal interest, thus becoming the lived experience of nation first above all else (market interests and personal interests). Though economic market needs are a facet of the purposes of higher education, in the
The Truman Report they are secondary. The prime objective is to ensure a strong democratic nation of individuals unified in service to the democratic aims of the nation.

Whereas the Truman Report makes strong assertions on the purposes of higher education in relationship to democracy, the Spellings Report asserts with similar conviction the primacy of neoliberal market aims. Neoliberalism is the discursive thread that permeates the Spellings Report, using language and discourses tied to accountability, innovation, competition, transparency, and choice. This discourse produces the subject position of the ‘aspirant’ graduate in service to market needs. This too draws on Southgate and Bennett’s research as discussed in Bacchi and Goodwin (2016), in that the ‘aspirant’ (or proper aspirant) discourse suggests that students that aspire to want to improve their lives and better their opportunities through postsecondary education ought to have that opportunity—and suggest those that do not aspire to better themselves are a burden to the market and system (Southgate & Bennett as referenced in Bacchi & Goodwin, 2016, p. 72). This aligns to the neoliberal discursive threads in the Spellings Report that suggest any student ought to be able to access postsecondary education without undue burden of systems, processes, and costs—particularly if that student demonstrates desire and interest (aspiration). Access and educational opportunity become essential to ensure a nation of graduates prepared to create a strong workforce and competitive global marketplace.

The lived experience of the individual is to ensure market needs are filled and met in order it to compete globally—thus their lived role as a stakeholder in the market. The
purposes of higher education for democratic aims is secondary (if existent at all) to the market aims. Access and educational opportunity are essential to ensure the nation is tapping into the fullest potential of all aspirant people who can access postsecondary education to contribute to the market and benefit from the social mobility that can result. Thus, higher education needs to adjust its practices, systems, costs, and curriculum to meet these goals.

In *Degrees of Inequality*, Mettler (2014) provides a helpful synopsis of what was produced following each significant policy period. About the Truman Report effect, she surmised:

In 1940, before it began, only one in twenty Americans held a four-year college degree; by 1977, that number had soared to one in four…. The experience of policy usage itself [GI Bill for example] generated active engagement. GI Bill beneficiaries took part in twice as many civic organizations and one-third more political activities during the postwar era…. (Mettler, 2014, p. 7)

Serving democratic aims, citizens went on to enroll into public universities and became civic and political leaders of the future due to robust policy frameworks and followed by legislative actions that promoted AO-HE (Hutcheson, 2007).

Mettler (2014) also discussed what happened from the 1980’s onward in which three significant public policy functions shifted in ways reflective of the Spellings Report. The first was financial aid, referred to at length in the Spellings Report, promoting opportunity far less effectively than during the period post-WWII; the second
was the diminishing state support for public higher education; and the third was the emergence of a new sector of the education ‘market’ in the form of for-profit higher education institutions. Mettler (2014) contends, “These three sets of policy developments, in combination, have transformed the US system of education from one that provides access and opportunity to one that widens economic inequality and fosters social division” (p. 12). The Spellings Report emerges out of this neoliberal reality and produces the ‘aspirant’ graduate in service of the market, in contrast to the ‘capable’ graduate in service to the protection of democracy (Southgate & Bennet, 2014). These effects align to the problematizations shaped by the discourses in both Reports.

**Solutions.** I align the discussion of solutions in relationship to the effects discussed in the previous section, as each Report offer a number of solutions to address the dominant problematizations and contribute to the shaping of each subject position. The Truman Report’s overarching solution is to ensure all capable citizens have access and educational opportunity to prepare for their role in a democratic nation. Several solutions that support this larger purpose range from the creation of year 13 and 14 of public school (which eventually became community colleges) to developing financial aid policies in the forms of grants and scholarships. Other solutions discussed reordering the purpose of higher education curriculum to ensure graduates understand fully the workings of democracy and the overarching investment into higher education as something that is a federal priority. The primary goal of the recommendations provided (solutions to the problem) are to strengthen the knowledge of democracy by graduates of
higher education—this occurs through increased access at varying levels and common curriculum across all sectors of education that builds an understanding of democratic principles. Figure 3 illustrates the solution-relationships to the ‘capable’ graduate in service to the protection of democracy.

Figure 3. Solution-Relationships, Truman Report

In the Spellings Report, the primary purpose of higher education is the alignment with economic market needs and preparation of graduates ready to compete globally. To this end and for the nation to compete in global markets, all students should have a fair chance to access postsecondary education based on their effort and readiness (aspirations). The recommendations developed in the Spellings Report tie to explicit themes (access, affordability, quality, and accountability). The solutions provided in the Spellings Report focus more so on the changes higher education must make to processes, systems, and behaviors to align to efficiencies more commonly seen in corporations and business. These changes include increased transparency in costs and learning outcomes.
(value for one’s money if they enroll), aligning degrees and certificates to meet market and innovation needs, and expanding to ideas of postsecondary education rather than higher education (introducing more choices in the market). Another key shift is in financial aid and the burden of who pays for higher education.

Within the Spellings Report, this burden falls to states, institutions, and the consumer more so than the federal government. The Report does reference investing in the Pell Grant as a primary mechanism to provide aid to low-income students, yet it is within a context that there are limits and focuses the attention on institutions to lower their costs through efficiency mechanism. The management of higher education costs is a key recommendation. Figure 4 outlines the solution-relationships to the ‘aspirant’ graduate in service of the market.

Figure 4. Solution-Relationships, Spellings Report
Whereas the Truman Report identified solutions serving the democratic interest of the nation through changes made by and to higher education, the Spellings Report identified solutions serving the economic market interests of the nation through changes made by and to higher education. The Truman Report includes references to economic market roles of higher education, yet they are subservient to the democratic needs. The Spellings Report, on the other hand, provides very little reference to democratic purposes of higher education; the word appeared only once in the entire Report. Both Reports assert that institutions of higher education must change to meet national needs. The role of the federal government is essential in both reports for very different reasons. For the Truman Report, the federal government is an important partner and guide to ensure the changes and recommendations needed to align with the democratic imperative of the nation. In the Spellings Report, the market imperative drives the role of the federal government to provide incentives to ensure that higher education institutions change and are held accountable.

Access and educational opportunity in higher education are prominent in both reports and serve as an intersecting point that drove resulting policy, federal aid, and other state and national legislation. In both reports, AO-HE is necessary to achieve the purposes of higher education discussed with specific consideration of low-income students and those from historically underrepresented racial backgrounds. The shift in the solutions from the Truman to Spellings Reports illustrates the political dynamics that continue to influence access and educational opportunity (such as the structure of the GI
Bill, Higher Education Act, financial aid, etc.) and are inherent in the notions of the ‘capable’ and the ‘aspirant’ student discourse. Hutcheson (2007) observes:

The Spellings report, in identifying access as a major challenge for higher education, echoes a concern of the Truman Commission. But, for the Spellings Commission, there is a different form of access, not one designed to educate citizens about the value of democracy. There is virtually no discussion of an “informed, thoughtful, tolerant people.” For the Spellings Commission, there is a different form of access, not one designed to educate citizens about the value of democracy much less analyzed, as a process. Rather it is viewed as an outcome, clearly evident in the commission’s concern that students are not completing their postsecondary education because they are not sufficiently prepared. Ironically, as the generation of World War II veterans who fought to make the world safe for democracy is passing away, it appears that the dominant purpose of higher education is to prepare better workers rather than citizens who represent the best of democratic virtues, as the authors of the Truman Commission report had recommended. (p. 112 – 113)

**What Realities are Discursively Constructed?**

My final guiding research questions also aligns to the WPR question five as well as addresses question six: how and where has this representation of the “problem” been produced, disseminated and defended, and how has it been and/or how can it be disrupted
and replaced? These questions center on understanding the realities created by each Report and outlined below in Table 13.

I have concluded that the major realities that emerge from both Reports are the same despite the different purposes and problematizations each assert for higher education. I suggest that the realities constructed are a sense of fear and urgency that frame the problematizations, the elevation of national interests above all else, and a centralized focus on access and educational opportunity. Both the Truman and Spellings Reports use similar arguments to construct realities tied to their distinctive discourses, effects, and solutions, yet they are premised on very different problematizations (see Table 13).

Table 13

Solutions and Realities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Problematization</th>
<th>Discourse(s)</th>
<th>Effects</th>
<th>Solutions</th>
<th>Realities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Truman Report:</td>
<td>Discursive</td>
<td>Discursive: Democracy</td>
<td>Higher Education’s primary purpose is to prepare students to become citizens ready to defend and sustain democracy</td>
<td>Living with a sense of a fear and urgency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The role of higher education in American democracy needs prioritized and defined</td>
<td>Strand of Democracy</td>
<td>Subjectification (Produced): The citizen in service of democratic aims</td>
<td>Nation First (Limited Democracy)</td>
<td>National Interests First</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Education has not been accessible to all Americans and this threatens democracy</td>
<td>Public Good of Higher Education</td>
<td>Lived: Nation First (Limited Democracy)</td>
<td>All capable students should access Higher Education</td>
<td>Access and educational opportunity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The type of education</td>
<td>Equal Opportunity</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
provided at colleges and universities has not kept pace with changing social conditions.

Spellings Report:
The United States’ inability to compete globally due to an unprepared workforce.
The lack of access to postsecondary education to ensure a prepared workforce to compete globally.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Discursive Strand of Marketplace:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Managerialism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competition</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Discursive: Neoliberalism Subjectification (Produced):</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The individual in service to market aims</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lived: Competition and Market First, Market stakeholder</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Higher Education’s primary purpose is to align market needs and graduate students’ ready to those needs and compete globally</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All students should have a fair chance to access postsecondary education</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Living with a sense of fear and urgency. In both Reports, discourse is prevalent that speaks to interests that are critical to the nation, and this rationale is employed to create a sense of urgency to ensure the recommendations emergent from the problematizations found in each Report are implemented. The Truman Report ties this sense of urgency to the harsh truths that emerged from WWII and the threat from governments that do not abide by democratic principles. This sense of fear and urgency is also fueled by the use of nuclear weapons and other forms of mass destruction during
the War. The Commission strongly felt that there was no greater need than to align the nation’s educational endeavors, particularly with regards to higher education, to ensuring a strong, democratic core of citizens prepared to strengthen and defend these principles at home and abroad. The word urgent or urgency is used over 25 times in the Report such as in this statement: “If anything is clear in these troubled times, it is the urgent need of soundly based ideals to guide personal and social relationships in a world where insecurity is steadily weakening trust between man and man” (Truman Commission, 1947, p. 50). Access and educational opportunity then become necessary to ensure that Americans receive a democratic upbringing in higher education—that is, all ‘capable’ Americans as discussed in the Truman chapter.

The Spellings Report uses a similar sense of fear and urgency in language and purpose to motivate action toward its recommendations. The urgency is due, however, to the United States falling behind in key global indicators and market benchmarks. The threat of other countries surpassing our global dominance in education is used to cultivate the fear and sense of urgency. This leads the Report to claim that higher education graduates are not prepared to meet market needs, create innovative technologies or ideas for the future, or ready to compete globally against other countries’ graduates. The concern is that complacency has befallen the ‘mature enterprise’ of higher education where reputation has become more important than competing for consumer interests and value. The closing section of the Spellings Report states, “in short, the Commission
believes it is imperative that the nation give urgent attention to improving its system of higher education” (Spellings Report, 2006, p. 27).

**National interests first.** Another reality constructed in both Reports is the promotion of national interests overall individual interests to drive discourse, problematizations, and recommendations. The Truman Report recommendations suggest that higher education purposes and practices need to be redefined by means of federal guidance, curricular changes, policy action, legislation, and resources to meet the democratic calling that emerged post-WWII. The Report states:

> It [higher education] will have to act quickly and boldly if it is to fit students for meeting the new problems and necessities America faces as the Nation takes on a responsibility for world leadership that is without parallel in history. (Truman Commission, 1947, p. 101)

The identified needs of the nation were well established in the Truman Report and shaped each of the recommendations. A significant recommendation was the Commission’s bold suggestion to change the face of those who could access higher education. Though this form of AO-HE was highly stratified and limited in proportion of population to be included, it was the first federal imperative following the Morrill Acts to recommend public and open access and educational opportunity. This hallmark of the Truman Report resulted from the understanding that national interests to preserve a strong democratic future required these major changes in higher education, specifically access and educational opportunity.
The Spellings Report also draws upon the promotion of nation first for its recommendations. This impetus, though, was connected to the perceived necessity of the nation to compete globally and to meet market needs. The Report contended that the nation was falling behind its counterparts in key global competitive categories and needed to realign higher education to meet these demands. The Report claimed:

…The country is encountering significant change to its economic structure, resulting in unmet workforce needs. This is particularly true with respect to highly skilled workers and in the fields of mathematics and science… As the need for highly skilled workers continues to grow, institutions of higher education must assess whether they are providing the necessary coursework and incentives that will enable American students to compete in the new global economy.

(Spellings Report, 2006, p. 30)

The Report offered that to meet the nation’s need for a more prepared, global workforce, higher education must compete for their students, constructing itself as an educational market. Therefore, it needed to shift its practices, curriculum, and processes. The role of the federal government and states would be to incentivize higher education institutions to improve accountability, transparency, and learning outcomes aligned to global market needs. The federal government would introduce competition in the form of for-profit institutions to motivate traditional higher education institutions to change and to provide more options to the consumer (student). Thus constructed, access and educational opportunity were viewed as drivers in this new educational marketplace.
Attention was given to individuals with historically limited access (first-generation, low-income, underrepresented racial and ethnic groups) by the introduction of more educational choices in the form of ‘postsecondary education’ versus higher education as traditionally defined. AO-HE recommendations in the Spellings Report are far more inclusive and suggest streamlining the processes to ensure a fair chance for any ‘aspirant’ person to meet the national imperative of global competition.

**Access and Educational Opportunity**

The primary purpose of my research is to understand the impact of policy discourse on access and educational opportunity in higher education. In both Reports, realities are constructed for AO-HE that are distinct and have historically shaped policymaking. Access and educational opportunity as problematized in the Truman Report was a matter of national interest to secure a democratic future. Yet, the policy recommendations that resulted were highly stratified based on notions of the ‘capable’ student as determined by the Army General Classification Test. This stratification led to a critical policy and legislative outcome from the Truman Report in the creation of what became community colleges (Gilbert & Heller, 2010). Given one’s capabilities, there needed to be an appropriate place for which that person could enter into higher education while not diminishing the prestige of the liberal arts or professional degrees. This is heralded as one of primary accomplishments of the Truman Report and for access and educational opportunity. Other significant outcomes from the Report include a national philosophy regarding the role of the federal government in higher education access and
educational opportunity (Gilbert & Heller, 2010). Figure 5 discusses the AO-HE realities constructed in the Truman Report.

Figure 5. Solutions and Realities in the Truman Report

The Truman Report asserted a strong commitment to expanding access and educational opportunity, challenging the elitist patterns of higher education that existed at the time. In doing so, the Report outlined a prescriptive and stratified equation to determine the number of ‘capable’ students that ought to access higher education and the place they should enter—community college (to be developed) or the traditional liberal arts college. National priorities tied to democratic aims led to increasing access and educational opportunity. These priorities were to be led by federal investments, legislation, grants and scholarships, and changes to the structure, curriculum, and overarching purposes of higher education. It would take several years until much of the
Truman’s Report vision for AO-HE would be realized (Gilbert & Heller, 2011), but the realities shaped by the discourse in the Report laid important foundations that shifted the realities of higher education, specifically for AO-HE.

For the Spellings Report, access and educational opportunity were also problematized as concerns tied to limiting those that can compete in the marketplace and support for the United States’ overall ability to compete globally. This led the Commission to discuss barriers to access and educational opportunity they felt were created (often arbitrarily) by higher education institutions. As such, any ‘aspirant’ student ought to be able to access postsecondary education without issue of systems or process barriers. They should also have clear and accurate information as to what return they will get on their investment, establishing choice and competition in the market of higher education. Figure 6 shows how the AO-HE constructed realities.
The Spellings Report in many ways called attention to a much broader concept of AO-HE that sought to ensure all students get a fair chance to access postsecondary education. Notable is the introduction of the concept of postsecondary education used in contrast to the language of higher education, whereby the Spellings Report stipulates the creation of increased options for students such as for-profit institutions. The shift to positioning postsecondary education as a marketplace drives concepts of AO-HE. Any barrier or issue, such as financial systems, that prevents individuals from participating in market of higher education should be streamlined and made accessible. There should also be increased attention to K-12 factors that produce students ill-prepared for postsecondary options. This ensures there are adequate numbers of students graduating
with degrees (specifically STEM-based degrees) to meet the national imperative of global competition.

The realities discursively constructed in the two Reports were used to defend and disseminate the representation of the problems in higher education. For the Truman Report, the problem was defining the purpose of higher education in terms of democratic aims; for the Spellings Report, the problem was defining the purpose of postsecondary education in terms of global educational and economic competition. In the two Reports, access and educational opportunity were presented as problems tied to significantly different aims. Effects and solutions followed from the distinctive purposes of the Reports.

Conclusion

The final question of the WPR method considers how the representation of the problem can be disrupted and replaced. This part of the process creates analytical space to consider alternatives to the existing problematizations represented in both Reports, which also serves as considerations for future research. To deliberate alternatives and ways to disrupt, I first contend we must understand what has been represented through the problematizations discussed in both Reports. The Truman Report problematized that the role of higher education in American democracy needed to be prioritized and defined; the Spellings Report problematized the United States inability to compete globally due to unprepared workforce and lack of access and educational opportunity. In looking at both
Reports, there is very little intersection between the problematizations and suggests a Foucauldian dividing practice as illustrated in Figure 7.

![Diagram showing the Problem of Democracy and the Problem of the Marketplace]

*Figure 7. Democratic and Market Problematizations*

Through analyzing the Truman and Spellings Report, it becomes evident to me that an either/or dynamic is created as to the purposes of higher education and the effects of the problematizations represented. The problems of democracy and the marketplace are set against each other and divide the purposes of higher education and subsequent policymaking to promote access and educational opportunity as disparate notions. This is, according to Foucault, a way governments ensure governable subjects—through the process of dividing them against each other and their own interests (Bacchi & Goodwin, 2016). In the case of my research, these divided positions are the democratic aim and the market aim that each produce the cap(able) graduate in service to the protection of democracy and the aspirant graduate in service to the market. These ideas emerge from the problematizations discussed in chapters three and four:

- The democratic (limited) aim: Higher Education ought to be aligned to ensure a nation of citizens that understand the principles and mechanics of democracy. In doing so, the nation is able to ensure the sustenance and defense of democracy.
• The market aim: Higher Education ought to be aligned to ensure a nation’s economic market needs are met. In doing so, the nation is able to ensure strong market forces and compete globally.

Both Reports assert that there is a compelling, urgent national problem to address the purpose of higher education in the nation. The Reports’ recommendations and resulting policy actions follow directly from the problematizations. Following from the era of the Truman Report, the G.I. Bill led to unprecedented, federally driven access and educational opportunity (Mettler, 2014). Several years later, the federal government would legislate key pieces of policy work to vastly increase access and educational opportunity (the Higher Education Act for example) and establish initiatives such as the Pell Grant, TRIO programs, and other efforts to advance broader access and educational opportunity.

As we continue to understand the historical shifts since the Truman Report, we are led to the very different realities that underscore the Spellings Report and subsequent policy developments. Mettler (2014) maintains that today, as I write this dissertation, higher education in the U.S. is squarely situated in the neoliberal, market-based purposes. Since the early 1980s, the idea of federal investments into higher education (and state) has been questioned and lessened significantly. The Pell Grant has not kept pace with rising inflation to meet the needs of low-income students and the shift has moved to increased loan burden on the student versus federal investments through grants and aid (Mettler, 2014; Mortenson, 2018). Though access and educational opportunity remain
priorities in rhetoric, we are witnessing the highest level of inequality in postsecondary educational attainment in our country’s history, most severely impacting low-income Americans and those from historically underrepresented racial and ethnic backgrounds (Mortenson, 2018). This reality exists as new data recently published continues to establish clear benefits for individuals that obtain some form of higher education. According to new research released by the Federal Reserve Bank of New York, the average return on investment is around 14% for a college degree (Abel and Deitz, 2019)–and this is just a study on the economic benefits.

I can offer first-hand anecdotal evidence. I was recently in a high-level meeting of the Board of Trustees of a prominent, four-year public university in which the discussion of the purposes of higher education were solely linked to job market trends. In fact, the discussion lauded degree programs that linked to market demographics in need of workers. At no point did any other purpose of higher education enter into the discussion. This dynamic and shift has been studied as well by scholars such as Mettler (2014), Giroux (2014), Guinier (2015), and others. Mettler (2014) specifically calls attention to the rise of the for-profit higher education industry and their predatory practices toward low-income students seeking to attain a degree in order to enter into the workforce. The Spellings Report proposes expanding the realm of higher education to postsecondary education with explicit inclusion of the for-profit educational industry. Yet, as Mettler demonstrates in her research, these institutions have had the highest rate
of loan default and lowest graduation rates with little to no accountability to the students, often low-income, left with high loan debt and no degree attainment.

Burke (2012) also studies this trend in higher education, specifically with regard to access and educational opportunity, stating:

The idea was to vocationalize higher education, integrating ‘enterprise’ into degree schemes more generally (Trowler, 1998). Entrepreneurial discourse concerned with enterprise and efficiency, underpinned by neoliberalism and managerialism, thus increasingly shaped debates about widening access and HE [higher education] expansion. (Burke, 2012, p. 14)

In any given week, you can peruse the Chronicle for Higher Education and see evidence of the market discourse and efforts to eliminate or streamline liberal arts degrees as those degrees do not clearly align to a market need.

I find most concerning that higher education inequality is at an all-time high (Smialek, 2019) despite language in the Spellings Report calling attention to access and educational opportunities for low-income students and those from underrepresented racial and ethnic backgrounds. In every indicator of access and educational opportunity, data on college-going rates, ACT/SAT scores, patterns of attendance and completion show that students from low-income backgrounds and non-white students are significantly behind their more affluent peers. These trends continue into the job market (Pell Institute, 2018). It is important that access and educational opportunity lead to outcomes that enable students, particular those from marginalized and low-income backgrounds, to
succeed in the current economic realities. I contend, though, that it should not be a zero-sum game solely focused on the economic/job market aspects of higher education.

This present-day issue of neoliberal influences on AO-HE relates well to Bacchi and Goodwin’s (2016) application of Foucault’s concept of dividing practices. Dividing practices are the discourses that produce norms and behaviors which are used to govern subjects (Bacchi & Goodwin, 2016). In the case of my dissertation, I am suggesting there is evidence of dividing practices between the democratic problematizations and market problematizations for higher education, specifically for AO-HE. This illustrates how the power of neoliberal discourse insidiously emerges in policies, practices, and assumptions to suggest that higher education (or postsecondary education) should serve economic market needs above all else.

The results though are the most extreme level of educational inequality in modern history (Mortenson, 2018) and a massive disconnect to any role of higher education for civic and democratic aims (Mettler, 2014). In the current neoliberal era the notion of any public interest, good, or social service is viewed as counter to the market and undermining the principles of a free market system (Giroux, 2014)–the dividing practice.

**An Alternative or Disruption to Consider**

One of the primary reasons I decided to embark on a critical analysis using the “What’s the Problem Represented to Be” method was to uncover the ways access and educational opportunity has been entrenched in neoliberal rhetoric and policymaking, resulting in limited and restricted access and educational opportunity. Critical social
research and the WPR method provided tools to uncover and trace genealogically, drawing on Foucauldian principles, the shifts that have occurred between the Truman Report and Spellings Report. In doing so, the WPR method also provides analytical room to consider alternatives and ways to disrupt existing problematizations studied in chosen texts (Bacchi & Goodwin, 2016).

This becomes a springboard to consider future research and a conceptual idea to think about these issues differently, as there is ample data that continues to demonstrate the significant corollary between life chances, civic engagement, life earnings, quality of life, health, and the level of education one achieves (Mettler 2014). The purpose of my research is to elucidate through two primary policy documents on higher education the very different ways these issues are problematized and create a dividing practice, a binary between democratic problematizations and market problematizations.

Through this understanding, it is possible to consider new ideas and other areas that could lead to different policy outcomes than the ones analyzed in this dissertation. I suggest that we consider the intersection of both problematizations as a space to explore what could exist—a ‘both/and’ conceptual recommendation rather than an either/or problematization of democracy or market. I propose the conceptual recommendation of the capabilities approach grounded in equity (see Figure 8).
I will give brief attention to this conceptual problematization as an area to consider for future research emerging out of my WPR analysis on the Truman and Spellings reports. Bacchi (1999) discusses the starting point for WPR is to consider proposals as represented in particular text.

I analyzed the Truman and Spellings reports and their proposed recommendations specific to understanding the ways access and educational opportunity are problematized and come to be known. In undertaking this analytical work, this step opens up the possibility to consider alternative proposals, which I will explore through the conceptual ideas of capabilities grounded in equity. I will provide a short overview of each concept followed by my thoughts for future research in joining the two concepts together as a place to explore alternatives to the existing discourse of AO-HE.

**Equity**

Equity in its fundamental sense speaks to conditions that promote or create fairness (Dowd and Bensimon, 2015). My conception of equity draws upon the work of...
Estela Bensimon and others that look at equity as a means to create opportunities for the success of historically underrepresented populations in higher education. Specifically, equity is defined as the conditions that permit just or unjust practices (Dowd & Bensimon, 2015). Bensimon’s work has focused on equity, organizational change, and learning through practitioner inquiry and socio-cultural practice theories. For this consideration, I expand the concept to include Dowd and Bensimon’s use of equity beyond conditions of fairness to include justice as care and justice as transformation. Justice as care emphasizes nondiscriminatory and non-oppressive practices. Justice as transformation draws on agency on the part of higher education practitioners, leaders, and policymakers to empower structural and institutional change to dismantle racist and classist barriers. We may consider the Spellings Report recommendations to streamline the federal form for financial aid so as to not create additional barriers to access as a practice to cultivate equity.

In “Closing the Achievement Gap in Higher Education: An Organizational Learning Perspective” (2005), Bensimon tackles the issue of unequal educational outcomes for historically underrepresented students. Bensimon suggests that there are three cognitive frames or mental maps that have historically shaped policy, institutional practice, and activities related to students historically underrepresented in higher education. These frames are diversity, deficit, and equity.

These frames tend to reflect dominant perspectives ingrained within the social fabric of higher education practice and policy (reflect society in general) as well as
opportunities to change based upon shifting cognitive frames. Bensimon and Dowd (2015) extend this research specific to expanding concepts of equity that are just, transformative, and non-oppressive. This type of discourse and resulting interruption to existing norms of meritocracy create a unique space to envision reconceptualizing AO-HE.

The Capabilities Approach

Sen’s (1999) groundbreaking work, Development as Freedom, challenged widely held politics, practices, and beliefs as to how a nation develops, specifically through its people. These commonly held and promoted beliefs focused almost solely on economic growth, alleging that through a robust economy and increased wealth, other developmental needs of a country would follow (education, health care, social services, etc.).

Sen challenged this idea by introducing the notion of freedom as the most salient factor in development, specifically for democratic nations:

Development can be seen, it is argued here, as the process of expanding the real freedoms that people enjoy…. There is deep complementarity between individual agency and social arrangements. It is important to give simultaneous recognition to the centrality of individual freedom and to the force of social influences on the extent and reach of individual freedom…. We have to see individual freedom as a social commitment. (Sen, 1999, p.3)
Sen suggests that development is intricately tied to a web of substantive freedoms or unfreedoms that people possess in connection to social conditions. There are two primary processes of development: *evaluative*, which assesses progress of development in relation to the ways people’s freedoms are enhanced, and *effectiveness*, which views the achievement of development through the free agency of people (Sen, 1999). Sen also distinguishes between the *constitutive* and *instrumental* roles of freedom, noting that the expansion of “real freedoms” ought to serve as the *primary end* (constitutive) of development as well as the *principal means* (instrumental) by which development occurs.

Sen identifies five substantive types of interconnected freedoms that are necessary for development. Each freedom is linked with no one instrumental freedom having more importance over another—the relationship and coordinated attention to each type of freedom is necessary for development. These freedoms include *economic facilities, political, social opportunities (inclusive of education and health care), transparency guarantees (trust with governing bodies), and protective security*. In *Development as Freedom*, Amartya Sen presented his treatise about the *capabilities approach* to human development in which individual agency should be cultivated through the attention to and enhancement of instrumental freedoms in society (structure, processes, systems). The capabilities approach promotes a social justice and moral imperative for individuals to lead lives they have reason to value due to the achievement of various types of freedom (Wells, 2012)—similar to the ideas Bensimon and Dowd (2014) are suggesting for equity. It is a normative framework used to understand wellbeing of individuals within social
arrangements that seek just outcomes (Wilson-Strydom, 2011) in contrast to utilitarian normative approaches to development ideology.

Applying this normative vision to the AO-HE discourse allows an evaluation of shifts in policy-making at institutional, state, and national levels that emphasizes expanded access and educational opportunity. Human freedoms and capabilities are then tied to democratic goods (Sen, 1999). Nussbaum (1999) extended the capabilities approach:

At the heart of this tradition [of liberal political thought] is a twofold intuition about human beings: namely, that all, just by being human, are of equal dignity and worth, no matter where they are situated in society, and that the primary source of this worth is a power of moral choice within them, a power that consists in the ability to plan a life in accordance with one's own evaluation of ends. (p. 57)

Walker (2005) built upon Sen and Nussbaum’s scholarship with specific attention to higher education and pedagogical practices that higher education is a capability in and of itself; one’s ability to participate and attain credentials through higher education allows for the development of rational choice-making and freedoms (p. 44).

Walker suggests that higher education increases specific capabilities that include practical reason; educational resilience; knowledge and imagination; learning disposition; social relations and social networks; respect, dignity and recognition; emotional integrity; and bodily integrity. Higher education ought to embed these capabilities into all facets of
the institution to enhance humanity, agency, and wellbeing (Lozano, et. al, 2012). The purpose of higher education should be in service to the problems of the world to support a “just, democratic, and sustainable” society (Boni & Walker, 2013) by fostering individual agency and capabilities. The Truman Report’s concern for the state of human relations post-WWII could be considered as part of the normative capability approach to expanding AO-HE.

The capabilities framework is an economically-driven philosophy, grounded in principles of development through economic and market areas yet not at the expense of those most marginalized and vulnerable (Lozano et. al, 2012). Though not expressly defined as an educational theory, Sen (1999) identified education as foundational to the capabilities approach, serving as a qualifying element for the expansion of freedoms and the cultivation of environments in which ‘being and doings’ that one values are prioritized (Sen in Walker, 2006). Sen (2003) wrote, “the ability to exercise freedom may, to a considerable extent, be directly dependent on the education we have received, and thus the development of the educational sector may have foundational connections with the capability-based approach” (p. 12).

The Capabilities-Equity Problematization

To consider an alternative using the WPR method is to consider what else might be possible to disrupt or change the existing narratives and problematizations. This is the power of the WPR method in uncovering the political nature of problem-making as what is identified as problems lead to what policy makers determine need addressed. I am
considering for future research what may be possible in exploring the conceptions of the capabilities approach grounded in equity. This could lead to discourses that assume/presume conditions that people would have reason to value, and would enhance their capabilities to co-create educational opportunities that promote equity. The capabilities theory is structured on principles of democracy and ties in agency and empowerment to opportunities that enhance freedoms—individuals leading lives they have reason to value (due to the achievement of various types of freedom) (Wells, 2012). I would also suggest this includes being able to live lives that are economically secure as well as democratically just. Equity, as discussed based on Bensimon and Dowd’s reasoning, through socially just practices generates conditions that transform those that limit oppression.

I envision the marriage of these two ideals as an interesting intellectual space to explore that may permit both/and opportunities to discover how one’s own agency and value can connect to social conditions that produce more equitable outcomes for access and educational opportunity. In doing so, we could ponder the strengthening of our citizenship and democracy through increased access and educational opportunity that simultaneously ties to job, health, and overall well-being securities. I suggest the capabilities grounded in equity conceptual recommendation could serve as a place to explore the space between the democratic and market aims, and disrupt the polarized and dividing practices that frame current AO-HE realities.
Capabilities and equity acknowledge the value of human dignity and individual choice while also attending to shaping a society that benefits all through non-oppressive, just behaviors. By considering the intentional ways capabilities and equity frame discourse, a new space is created to reconceptualize AO-HE that can truly embrace full democracy and social mobility and addresses systemic, structural barriers. Whereas the discourse today faults those individuals from low-income or various racial and ethnic groups as not “trying hard enough” or “not college material” (Bensimon & Dowd, 2015), or not being “properly aspirant” (Bacchi & Goodwin, 2016), exploring a capabilities approach grounded in equity could operate from an orientation that each person possesses dignity, value, and capabilities. Higher education is uniquely positioned to be a place in which those individual capabilities can be converted into freedoms and a “life one values is worth living,” and lead to more just social outcomes, met market needs, and structural changes that breakdown oppressive systems.

**Future Research Implications and Recommendations**

I envision future research to consider how policymaking could emerge from this type of conceptual theorizing of an alternative that could disrupt the narratives of the Truman and Spellings Reports. A few of these ideas are offered as implications for future research:

1. Problematizing capabilities grounded in equity could lead to new ways to change and frame AO-HE policy and practice. Recognizing higher education’s unique position to cultivate change in society and historic relationship to democracy as
analyzed in the Truman Report and exploring these areas could produce different discourse, policy, and practice for AO-HE, foregrounded in an ethic of justice, care, and transformation. Future research that problematizes capabilities grounded in equity can open the door for interrupting and disrupting existing imperatives, such as discussed in both Reports, and structural and systemic barriers in society, by attending to both individual agency and choice. I consider this area rich for future inquiry when we consider the problem of AO-HE as one of capabilities grounded in equity rather than either democracy or the market.

2. One of the primary implications of this dissertation is that policy formation problematizes issues of access and educational opportunity at the institutional, state, and federal level. When commissions or task forces are created to study an “issue,” the “What’s the Problem Represented to Be” method (2006) can provide a set of critical tools to uncover the political nature of defining the issues by asking a simple question as to what problem we are seeking to address by increasing access and educational opportunity. In the case of this dissertation study, the Reports problematized AO-HE for very different reasons with policy recommendations to follow. My analysis has demonstrated how understanding the problematizations of AO-HE discourse can provide the clarity that allows for space to reconceptualize. For instance, current federal financial aid policies that punish students for not making “sufficient academic progress” by denying federal
financial aid, when analyzed by WPR method, shows negative its impact on access and educational opportunity.

3. My dissertation study illustrates the ways discourse used in federally commissioned reports produced certain lived realities and subject positions (‘cap/able’ graduate in service to sustaining democracy and ‘aspirant’ graduate in service to the market). Higher education institutions could develop teams that draw upon the WPR practitioner-inquiry to review discourse and language utilized in policy and practice (classroom materials, admissions brochures, discipline policies, marketing materials, etc.) and draw out implications for lived reality and potential subject positions created. This practice would also apply to state and federal level policy-making.

Limitations

I acknowledge the limitations to my research. The first limitation is common to qualitative and critical research studies (Levinson et. al, 2015), generalizability. As discussed in chapter one, humanities-oriented research falls into the interpretative space of research. This limits the research in making broad claims and statements in interpretations of discourse found in both Reports. The second limitation is the selection of texts used in the analysis. The Truman Report has forty plus additional pages of content than the Spellings Report, leading to more discourse available for analysis. Upon reflection, I could have identified additional texts that would have provided more balance
between the content of both Reports as well as types of federal reports used for the analysis.

The third limitation refers to my own researcher bias and positionality discussed in chapter two. I also realized during the analytical process that I was far more drawn to the language and discourse of the Truman Report rather than the Spellings Report. I specifically worked to understand my bias and influence on my interpretative findings. This was done through debriefing with committee members, journaling my opinions and the ways they are influencing my research decisions, and using various credibility mechanisms (such as peer debriefers and auditors). What emerged from this process is discovering that what I originally thought was inclusive, access-oriented language in the Truman Report on access and educational opportunity was in fact far more stratified and limiting than I expected.

Summary

This dissertation study analyzed the discourses prevalent in two landmark, federally commissioned reports that sought to define the purposes of higher education. In Higher Education for American Democracy, also known as the Truman Report, the discourse of a limited democracy discursively restricted full access and educational opportunity. In A Test of Leadership: Charting the future of U.S. Higher Education, also known as the Spellings Report, the discourses of the market and disadvantage emerged, leading to a fuller notion of access and educational opportunity tied specifically to neoliberal aims. In both Reports, the problems defined led to sense of urgency on a
national level that discursively produced the ‘capable’ graduate in service to protect
democracy and the ‘aspirant’ graduate in service to market needs. Understanding the
way problematizations were identified in each Report led to analysis of discourse,
silences, and effects.

These insights led to the consideration of ways to disrupt or explore an alternative
to the existing polarized discourses. Whereas both Reports led to the tension that
democratic and market aims for access and educational opportunity are an ‘either/or’
problem, I contend that through the consideration of capabilities grounded in equity, a
‘both/and’ framing of access and educational opportunity problems could disrupt the
stalled polarization of democratic versus market policy aims that shape and restrict access
and educational opportunity. I offered a reconceptualization of AO-HE based in a
capabilities approach grounded in equity and its implication for future research.

By exploring capabilities grounded in equity as a ‘both/and’ alternative
thorization, policies and practices that promote access and educational opportunity may
be developed that are person-centered and driven by capabilities grounded equity and the
common good.

It is my hope that this study contributes to scholar-practitioners’ and
policymakers’ knowledge and understanding of AO-HE issues from a critical lens. By
using methods such as “What’s the Problem Represented to Be,” we can each consider
our sphere of influences in practice and policymaking. I further hope this research
contributes to the larger discussion of the purposes of public higher education and the
need to rearticulate its role in relationship to democracy, the promotion of just outcomes, and social equality given current climate dynamics that exist both nationally and globally.

**Personal Reflections**

I have several reflections upon concluding this process. I grew from a first-generation college student that always knew that attaining my doctoral degree was deeply important to me as an actual scholar-practitioner. I have learned that I am fully situated as a critical social researcher and this lens has shaped my work as a professional. I question normative assumptions and practices in my work and institution and identify ways to interrupt and disrupt policy, practice, and behaviors. I have language, tools, and methods to use as I sit in spaces to contribute to institutional decisions and practices.

I draw upon the work of Bacchi (1999) often and share it with others. Specifically, the practice of problematization is an incredibly useful tool as a scholar-practitioner. When we discuss issues of diversity, equity, access, and inclusion, I draw upon the research and this process to consider it differently and more broadly. I find myself considering the work of problematizations of particular issues as well as what we are ‘producing’ from our work. In the past, I often used neoliberal discourse to justify our work in diversity as a means to create buy-in with others that may doubt or question its purpose. In doing so, I am contributing to discourses that promote certain types of realities and effects tied to neoliberal values despite my own values and beliefs that differ. As a result of this dissertation process, I challenge myself in my own discourse and practice to align it to the values and beliefs of a capability-equity imperative.
I have emerged more convicted in my belief in the power of higher education for public, democratic aims. This doctoral journey has allowed me to better articulate why I so deeply believe in the transformative power of higher education beyond my own personal experience. Given the current realities in our nation and world, we need our public institutions of higher education to reaffirm and claim their role in the public sphere, specifically with regard to supporting the ideas of a full democracy, one that I believe can be achieved through a capabilities-equity imperative—the both/and equation. The ‘power’ over educational institutions and the dismantling of the public good since the early 1970s has led us to a precarious state. Public institutions of higher education, I assert, could be a formidable means to disrupt and reconceptualize access and educational opportunity tied to aims that are publicly held and individual valued (capabilities-equity).

Finally, I am changed personally by undergoing the dissertation process. I have gained confidence as a researcher and scholar-practitioner. I have found my voice despite challenges, self-doubt, working full time, and life. I have learned to own my expertise and knowledge and belief that I do have something to contribute.
REFERENCES
REFERENCES


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