



AMERICAN HIGHER EDUCATION, LEADERSHIP, AND POLICY

CRITICAL ISSUES AND
THE PUBLIC GOOD

PENNY A. PASQUE

FOREWORD BY EDWARD P. ST. JOHN
AND LESLEY A. REX



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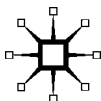
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*To the next generation of college students including Cassie,
Maggie, Brooke, Leo, Annabella, Lively, and baby Natalie.*

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FOREWORD

It is rare that a recent PhD is able to write a book that has something profound to say to the higher education community and its leadership, but in *American Higher Education, Leadership and Policy: Critical Issues and the Public Good*, Penny Pasque exceeds this high standard of contribution. Dr. Pasque has written a book that confronts and critiques the tacit assumptions of educational leaders who dominate the conversations that occur behind closed doors.

The United States is suddenly more diverse than before and, finally, has a president who represents this diversity. President Obama shows the potential for bridging the great gap between discourses controlled by the powerful and the voices that emerge from the experiences of people within the communities, schools, and colleges that make up this diverse democracy.

In her research, Dr. Pasque had access to the private conversations of high-level leaders as they discussed their images of the public good in relation to the current trajectory of higher education in this nation. Clashing images of the public good dominated these conversations, just as they have dominated the literature and public policy over the past thirty years. At best, the espoused notions that divide the public discourse are feeble attempts to reconcile the neoliberal rationales of individual gain with the need for broader access and increased funding. What becomes clear in Dr. Pasque's text is that voices of women and people of color have been systematically quieted in debates on the definitions of public good and strategies to achieve it.

The clash between the two camps of conventional values becomes evident in this outstanding book. The older notions echo through the halls of Congress and dominate the air waves, but these loud voices are no more important than deeply held concerns about inequality among diverse citizens who have been silenced for so long.

It takes powerful research to break through entrenched notions and systems of ideas and values about public good and who can speak for it. The investigation that undergirds Dr. Pasque's arguments meets that criterion. Her study takes its power from established social

science methods, while trailblazing a novel approach to designing and conducting research in higher education. She focuses on discourse—local dialogues and the societal values and beliefs that animate them. She fine-tunes her conceptual lenses to bring into view race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, and class in the discourse practices of heavily invested higher education gatekeepers. And, as though stopping time and holding their discourses under a microscope, she dissects their consequential meanings, laying open a view that the public has rarely been able to access, let alone scrutinize.

Through Critical Discourse Analysis, the study peers into the social identities performed and created and the values enacted and reified in the dialogues. We see not only that talk matters but also *how* it matters and to whom. By transcribing the talk that so often flies unexamined across meeting rooms, the renderings supplant the domineering influences of time and space. Moments become permanently fixed so that analytical interpretations can reveal why they matter. Dr. Pasque illuminates why talk matters during moments of reflection on what is meant by *education for the public good*. More importantly, the remarkable strength of her analysis is in the way she connects dozens, scores, hundreds of moments to illustrate how during important dialogues people and their ideas are positioned into and out of power. We are shown how having one's say is a fraught and consequential event for those with less institutional authority and their important agendas.

So how can discourse analysis, coupled with open critical reflection on the definition of the public good, help us to overcome the conflicted condition of higher education policy in the United States? As Dr. Pasque's book eloquently argues, the voices of those who have been left out must be heard, as they are the basis for informing the redefinition of the public good and how we might achieve it. It is no longer tolerable, nor economically wise, to leave people out who don't fit molds of the wealthy and powerful. The strategies used to fund and guide higher education for three decades—privatizing public colleges by emphasizing benefits to those who can pay or borrow—must be reconstructed, just as educational leaders and policymakers must take time to listen to others in the room.

We may have a new president who inspires many of us to take fresh stances on critical issues, but we still need to listen more before we throw these ideas into the discursive space of public and private meetings that shape public policy. Indeed, the president himself runs into clashes between neoliberals and neoconservatives—the dialectic of the powerful—as he attempts to create new discourses on the future

of the economy, health care, and education. As the shouting out at public forums on health care so boldly demonstrated, it is not easy to broaden the conversation, to get past old and worn out images of what works and what should not be tried. It is time for fresh thinking. Dr. Pasque's concepts of discourse illuminate possible new approaches to studying tactics used by those who attempt to change the policy conversation and public policy.

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Introduction to the Contemporary Context

The relationships between higher education and society are changing in the twenty-first century. Changes are taking place in terms of who pays for college, who gains access to college, and the universities' role in the global marketplace. For example, there have been decreases in public support for higher education (KRC Consulting, 2002; McMahon, 2009; Porter, 2002) and in state funding for public colleges and universities (Brandl & Holdsworth, 2003; Cage, 1991; Hansen, 2004), at a time when state and federal policies have linked higher education to the market in order to create jobs and increase economic viability (Bok, 2003; Jafee, 2000; Slaughter & Rhoades, 1996, 2004).

Recent national and global economic changes have caused ripple effects beyond Wall Street and Main Street; the ramifications have reached what I term Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevards across urban areas and College Avenues from coast to coast. Paul Krugman (2009), recipient of the 2008 Nobel Prize in economics, characterizes the situation this way:

I'm tempted to say that the crisis is like nothing we've ever seen before. But it might be more accurate to say that it's like everything we've seen before, all at once: a bursting real estate bubble comparable to what happened in Japan at the end of the 1980s; a wave of bank runs comparable to those in the early 1930s (albeit mainly involving the shadow banking system rather than conventional banks); a liquidity trap in the United States, again reminiscent of Japan; and, most recently, a disruption of international capital flows and a wave of currency crises all too reminiscent of what happened to Asia in the late 1990s. (p. 165–166)

These “all at once” effects on Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard and College Avenue are less of a focus in the mainstream media, but the

crisis has nonetheless impacted the daily lives of people across the United States. The economic issues are forcing many students, potential students, and parents to weight their academic options in ways like never before as articles with titles such as “Why Don’t Colleges Cut Costs, Tuition?” (Erb, 2009) and “What Is a Masters Degree Worth?” (Taylor et al., 2009) flood local newspapers across the country.

Although some crises have improved since 2008 and 2009, the ramifications of the economic downturn on College Avenue remain and include the reduction of endowments, furloughs, the rising costs of college, students’ ability to pay, cancelation of student-centered co-curricular programs, and the struggle for survival of the local college town gift shop, to name a few. This shift, however, began prior to the recent economic changes and is reflected in an increase in the commercialization of higher education and academic capitalism (Bok, 2003; Giroux & Giroux, 2004; Kerr, 1963/2001; Kezar, 2005; Slaughter & Rhoades, 1996) during an era of conservative modernization (Apple, 2006). Public institutions are mirroring aspects of for-profit online institutions, dining halls often moonlight as catering businesses, summer camps are stuffed in residence halls, and faculty compete increasingly for external dollars tied to market-related research (Slaughter & Leslie, 1997). In conjunction with these pressures, educational equity issues have been devalued in policy discourse in order to focus on economic worth and rationalize public funding for higher education (St. John, 2007; St. John & Hu, 2006).

Moreover, recent state budget cutbacks, “along with the declining share of state funding devoted to higher education, suggest that state colleges and universities have reason to be concerned about the reliability of government support” (Lee & Cleary, 2004, p. 34) and this concern grows with each budget cycle as higher education allocations will continue to decrease throughout the next decade (Jones, 2002). As Zemsky (2005) points out,

State governments...have consistently used market forces to solve their own short-term budgetary shortfalls by driving up the prices that publicly owned colleges and universities charge. This result occurs every time the business cycle reduces state revenues and forces state governments to choose between reducing state services and increasing state taxes. What the governor and legislature rediscover at that moment is that prisoners don’t pay rent, Medicaid recipients can’t pay much for health care, and public schools can’t charge tuition. But, thankfully, publicly funded colleges can. (p. 279)

Such influences put incredible pressure on college and university leaders for economic survival and on state legislators to create policies that increase the number of high school graduates, improve college access, and promote graduation from college in order to increase states' "education capital" and economic development. States have decreased financial support for public colleges and universities as they have expanded demands for accountability (Tierney, 2006a). This "accountability triangle" includes state priorities, academic concerns, and market forces (Burke, 2005). Some argue that each point of the triangle holds a contradictory position, where reductive accountability from the state focuses on centralization and control whereas autonomy maintains academic freedom, but others argue the constructs are negotiable (Dee, 2006).

In addition to this financial retrenchment and political directive, disparities regarding who has access to college remain. For example, Carnevale and Fry (2001) found that in 1997, nearly 80 percent of high school graduates from high-income families went directly on to higher education, while only 50 percent of high school graduates from low-income families went on to higher education. In the same year they found that 46 percent of college-age white high school graduates were enrolled in college, whereas only 39 percent of African American and 36 percent of Latina/o high school graduates were enrolled in college. However, these statistics speak nothing of the high school graduation rates for students of the same populations, where, in 2000, 77 percent of African Americans in the 18–24 age group completed high school and only 59.6 percent of Latina/os completed high school (American Council on Education [ACE], 2002). In light of these statistics, approximately 39 percent of 77 percent of all 18–24-year-old African Americans (30 percent total) and 36 percent of 59.6 percent of all 18–24-year-old Latina/os (21 percent total) were enrolled in post-secondary education¹—a much smaller proportion than any one statistic reveals alone.

US statistics reported by the Pathways to College Network (2004) are just as compelling. They state that by their late twenties more than one-third of whites have at least a bachelor's degree but only 18 percent of African Americans and 10 percent of Latina/os have attained degrees. These statistics may change dramatically over the next 15 years when 1–2 million additional young adults will be seeking access to higher education and a large proportion of the potential students in this group will be students of color from low-income families (Carneval & Fry, 2001), albeit which institutions of postsecondary education they would have access to is not always fully addressed

and may continue to perpetuate current inequities (Brint & Karabel, 1989; Hurtado & Wathington, 2001).

Further, a perceptual gap continues to exist between students across race which has a direct impact on academic and life decisions. When comparing student perceptions of their academic performance, the importance of obtaining a high GPA declines over the college years for all ethnic groups (Sidaniusw, Levan, van Laar, & Sears, 2008). In addition, discounting academic feedback and disidentification from academics increases significantly for all students, particularly for African American students. There is also a higher level of doubt about individual academic performance in African American and Latina/o students than in white students. Moreover, access to college by people from middle- and lower-income families has been sharply reduced in recent years (McMahon, 2009).

To address such concerns about college access, the government has taken a number of national initiatives such as President Obama's American Graduation Initiative (2009), which focuses on community colleges and has set goals such as redirecting \$12 billion for community colleges over the next 10 years, increasing the number of students from 5 to 10 million by 2020, instilling policies and processes that make it easier to transfer (a lesson learned from the Bologna Agreement), modernizing facilities, and establishing more online classes. More pointedly, support structures and barriers that influence access to higher education continue to shift. This shift has led contemporary theorists, practitioners, and legislators to attempt to understand higher education's current role in contemporary society and how higher education may help to increase access to college during a time of economic change as well as address the world's problems: higher education and the public good.

Friedman (2008) sums up the world's problems:

It is getting hot, flat, and crowded. That is, global warming, the stunning rise of the middle classes all over the world and rapid population growth have converged in a way that could make our planet dangerously unstable. In particular, the convergence of hot, flat and crowded is tightening energy supplies, intensifying the extinction of plants and animals, deepening energy poverty, strengthening petro-dictatorship, and accelerating climate change. How we address these interwoven global trends will determine a lot about the quality of life on earth in the twenty-first century. (p. 5)

I take the position that higher education needs to play an instrumental role in researching and addressing myriad issues facing the

world today in order to live each institutional mission and participate as conscientious community members in a diverse democracy. In this way, higher education may support the “quality of life on earth” for all, not just a select few. The importance of sincere collaboration across community-university partnerships to address problems cannot be stressed enough (Bringle & Hatcher, 2002; Fitzgerald et al., 2010; Galura et al., 2004; Pasque, 2010; Thomas, 2004; Weerts & Sandmann, 2008; White, 2005). In this sense, the pressure on higher education is twofold: (1) to tackle innumerable issues confronting students, institutions, and the system of higher education and (2) to work collaboratively with local and global communities to address complex issues including health care, the environment (land, air, and sea), incarceration rates, drug and human trafficking, educational and economic inequities, food and water sustainability, and other issues of disparities and social justice.

In order to attempt to address the complexities of these deep and connected topics, conferences and seminars have been held across the country designed to gather leaders together to discuss the future of the relationship/s between higher education and society (for example, gatherings have been sponsored by the American Association of Colleges and Universities [AACU], 2002; AACU, 2006; American Council for Education [ACE], 2006; American Federation of Teachers, Higher Education, 2009; Association for the Study of Higher Education [ASHE], 2006, Campus Compact & AACU, 2006; Council of Graduate Schools [CGS], 2008; Department of Education, 2006; Kettering Foundation, 2008; National Forum on Higher Education for the Public Good, 2002; National Association for Equal Opportunity in Higher Education [NAFEO], 2009; State Higher Education Executive Officers [SHEEO], 2009; W.K. Kellogg Foundation, 2002). Such gatherings often present a paradox for higher education leaders interested in addressing complex issues; leaders have the responsibility to speak to a relatively small number of influential leaders about large constituencies that may or may not be represented in these small groups within a space that is not necessarily reflective of the majority of people’s lives.

As an example, if you happen to be invited to the prestigious Wingspread Conference Center sponsored by the Johnson Foundation, you will be escorted by a chauffeur from the airport to the conference center through an unassuming small town. As the iron gates part to admit you onto the Wingspread grounds, the green prairie sprawls out on both sides of the winding drive. The drive is intentionally lined with pines, hardwoods, shrubs, and flowers, all perfectly manicured.

You breathe in the aroma of Lake Michigan as you round the corner to view the home that architect Frank Lloyd Wright crafted for the Johnson family (SC Johnson & Son). In the neighboring guesthouse where you will stay for the next three days, the scent of burning hickory permeates the air as the fire crackles at decibels just below recognition. The staff kindly checks you in as they reflect the caliber of hospitality for which Wingspread is known.

In your single room, you watch the sunset from large windows, sleep on pillows of feathers and sheets of Egyptian cotton, and get lost in the luxurious bathroom. The shared space of the living room is floored in warm Brazilian cherry. Books flank the fireplace of limestone, and the opposing wall is made of glass with French doors that open onto a terrace looking out to a lazily flowing river. Windows flow from floor to ceiling so you feel as if you are “in” nature, as opposed to observing nature. There is a short walk to the conference meeting house and another short walk to the former Johnson family home. You tour the various rooms of the family home, dine on a lavish meal, and even sit in the location that was a favorite of Eleanor Roosevelt when she was an overnight guest.

It is in this exquisite space where you will serve as a leader to voice issues critical to the future of higher education and the public good. Here exists the lived paradox; you are surrounded by elegance and hospitality as you wrestle with the difficult issues facing higher education and society. You must intentionally speak about how to address important community issues and at the same time not disconnect yourself from disparities around the world. From a different lens, this luxurious space provides an opportunity for leaders to focus on the critical issues at hand, rather than on their own hierarchy of needs (Maslow, 1943). This venue recognizes and elevates complex discourse while it provides a space where leaders may wrestle with important issues in order to make substantive change—an important mission, indeed.

This book focuses on the complex dialogues surrounding such paradoxes in higher education and society. Specifically, I consider the dynamic discourse between leaders who come together to discuss critical issues in higher education and the public good, albeit not at the Wingspread Conference Center venue. In the *Archeology of Knowledge*, Foucault (1976) describes that whoever holds the power regarding what counts as knowledge also has power over policy, systems, access to education, and other social processes. In the field of higher education, it is university presidents, legislators, faculty, administrators, funders, and national association researchers who hold

knowledge around higher education's multiple relationships with society and are the leaders in the field. Further, people often accept what leaders say as truth and allow them to be spokespeople for such truth (Johnstone, 2002). For these reasons, this book concentrates on higher education leaders who gather in important venues, who may or may not consider themselves gatekeepers for the field, but who do hold knowledge about higher education's multiple relationships with society.

Higher education leaders who engage in these ongoing discussions about higher education's responsibilities to society come to the conversation with competing visions, frames of reference, and worldviews (Bolman & Deal, 2008). In addition, each frame has a different set of ideas, assumptions, and implications for the continuation or interruption of current paradigms in research and policy. These leaders (legislators, university presidents, national association leaders, foundation officers, faculty, graduate students, and administrators) often talk about higher education's responsibility to serve society in extremely different ways and may—intentionally or unintentionally—labor against each other. In addition, leaders often talk about “society,” the “public,” or “communities” as abstractions, rather than providing specific inclusive or exclusive definitions about who or what they are talking about (Pasque, 2005). Yet, if legislators, policymakers, and the public are unclear about why higher education is important to society, then other public policy priorities may gain support at the expense of higher education (Kezar, 2004).

Throughout this book, I argue that leaders cannot afford to be complacent in this climate of educational inequity and let dominant arguments about higher education prevail. Uncovering various visions of higher education's relationships to society is paramount during this time of dramatic change. If a more thorough understanding of myriad perspectives is not offered, then dominant communicative models shared in academic discourse genres may continue to perpetuate the current ideas of higher education's relationships with society—from solely an economic rationalization perspective—without consideration of alternative perspectives that may be useful in addressing critical issues and inequities.

By understanding more about various perspectives—or frames—and the tensions created between these frames, leaders are able to see more of the perspectives available and make more informed choices about how to work toward systemic and equitable change. In essence, it becomes imperative to view multiple frames shared through language in order to pull forward the strong points of one or more ideas or to

strengthen arguments for effective policy and action. Just as we should not permit the military to serve as our only resource when working toward peace across the globe, we cannot let one perspective serve as our only option when confronting critical issues and the public good. In addition, by viewing the same policy or action through multiple frames, we may consider whether we are truly enacting equitable and just policies and actions for *all* people in society or for a select few.

Specifically, the goal of this book is to explore various leaders' competing frames of reference and worldviews of higher education's relationships with society as found in the literature (193 research articles and speeches by prominent university presidents, policymakers, and scholars) and vocalized during hours of conversation at a national conference series (four, three-day national policy conference series, behind closed doors) in order to increase our understanding of the issues and implications of various perspectives. The book is designed as a tool for current leaders interested in exploring various conceptualizations of higher education and the public good, furthering their own perspectives and working to intentionally connect knowledge,

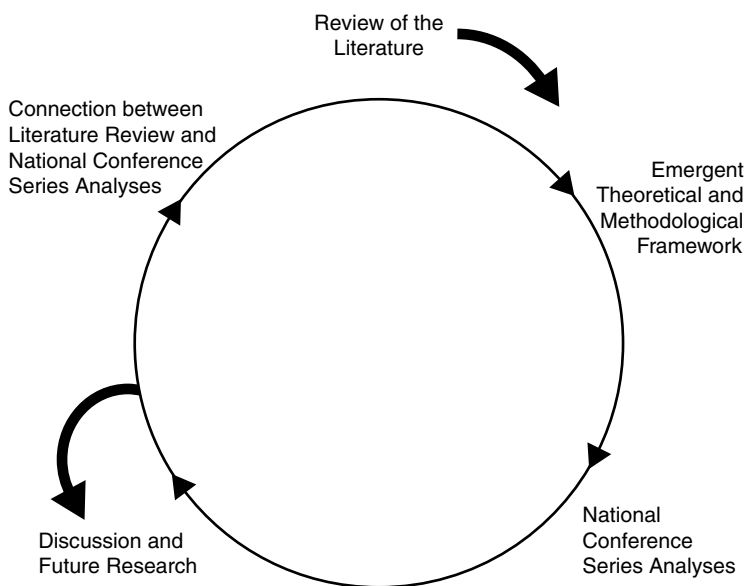


Figure 1.1 A Visual Representation of the Iterative Research Process

discourse, and action. My hope is that this information will help illuminate numerous perspectives on complex and changing issues, increase communication between leaders in various roles, influence policy decisions, and inform us so we may create equitable, idiosyncratic, and systemic change in the field of higher education.

In the remainder of this introduction, I provide an overview of each chapter. Each chapter builds upon the last in an iterative manner, furthering the depth and breadth of this analysis. See figure 1.1 for a visual representation of the iterative research process.

INTRODUCTION TO CHAPTERS

In *On Method and Hope*, Tierney (1994) mentions that research is meant to “struggle to investigate how individuals and groups might be better able to change their situations” (p. 99). I did not initiate this research study with a specific change in mind or envision that the end goal would be one of critique for critique’s sake. Instead, I approach this study with the intent that emergent findings may help leaders make sense of current perspectives and this, in turn, may help us explore the implications of current prevailing and alternative frames of educational in/equity. This is similar to what Friere (1973) terms “conscientization,” the knowing of reality in order to better inform it. It is with the goal of knowing, in order to make substantive equitable change, that I offer this detailed and challenging analysis about the contemporary complexities of higher education and the public good.

Specifically, I explore the cognitive processing models of higher education leaders as found in the current literature and discourse. In this study, cognitive processing models are the ways in which leaders communicate their perspectives, or frames, about a topic. This analytical process considers the conceptual framework of the participants as it emerges from their situated discourse (Taylor, 2001). This approach is based upon the assumption that people learn socially, develop a cognitive process around a construct, and then use language to show how the construct has been reconstructed. For example, in the pilot study that informed this research study, Pasque and Rex (in press) consider the various cognitive processing models offered by higher education leaders as they talk about “higher education for the public good.” We state, “if we are to understand the role and purpose of higher education in a changing society, we are obliged to listen and observe what people say it is by virtue of their words and actions” (p. 2). We discern a number of cognitive processing models presented by leaders and represent the complexities of these models

through an analytical framework. It was evident through the analyses that leaders' identities, memories, attitudes, and emotions played an important role in defining the nature of the problems in transforming higher education for the public good and in arriving at solutions for those problems.

The current study learns from and expands upon the pilot study. As the current leaders often refer to leaders and scholars of the past, I situate in chapter 2 the various perspectives in this book within a brief historical context of higher education and the public good. In addition, I explore 193 research articles as well as theoretical writing and speeches of higher education leaders and present a typology of the frames of higher education's relationships with society. This detailed literature review and analysis helps uncover the nuances of the various perspectives and definitions of today's leaders. For example, a number of university presidents utilize the concept of higher education and the public good as a part of their presidential platform; these include chancellor of Syracuse University Nancy Cantor (2006), president of the University of Pennsylvania Amy Gutmann (2008), and president of Wagner College Richard Guarasci (2009). I explore various leaders' conceptualizations and offer the supportive evidence for each frame, so readers may understand the tenants of each perspective. I also offer a critical analysis of the dominant and marginalized frames in higher education and discuss the relationships among frames. For instance, I describe the ways in which "human capital" is defined by leaders, some of whom use the same language and yet have competing definitions of the term. This second chapter serves as a macro-analysis of the complex linguistic dynamics of various leaders.

In chapter 3, I share the research design for this study and the importance of resisting theoretical determinism (Lather, 2003). I discuss elements of trustworthiness, including triangulation, member checking, and researcher reflexivity. In addition, I describe the specific research methods that were used in the three major aspects of this study: (1) the macro-analysis of the literature, (2) the micro-analysis of the discourse through conversation analysis and communication theories, which helps me locate the phenomena to study in more detail, and (3) the micro-analysis of the discourse through a critical discourse analysis approach, which provides added depth to this critical analysis and discussion. I describe the site for further exploration of higher education leaders' perspectives as offered behind closed doors—a national conference series (four three-day conferences) on the topic of higher education's relationships with society. In this context, the team of "higher education leaders"

includes over 200 university presidents, legislators, administrators, faculty community organizers, foundation program officers, national association directors, graduate students, and a few undergraduate students.

Chapter 4 provides information on various communication theories and offers findings from a conversation analysis in order to locate the phenomena for further study. This face-to-face discussion provides a useful and natural site to explore further the discourse of the leaders on this topic from a micro-perspective of analysis. As Sacks (1964) notes, “the trouble with [interview studies] is that they’re using informants, that is, they’re asking questions of their subjects. That means that they’re studying the categories that Members use . . . they are not investigating their categories by attempting to find them in the activities in which they’re employed” (p. 27). This study considers naturally occurring spoken and written discourse in the current sociopolitical, economic, and cultural contexts.

Chapter 5 offers the emergent findings of what is said behind closed doors of national policy discussions regarding how to make change in our move toward higher education for the public good. The critical discourse analysis findings are quite compelling as they uncover the various dominant narratives and marginalized perspectives in these national discussions. Direct quotes from higher education leaders accompany a detailed analysis of the language used in order to reflect the natural progression of the discussion. Specifically, I explore the content (what) and process (how) of communication between higher education leaders in the hopes that both may be instructive.

In chapter 6, I dive deeper into the analysis and focus on the voices of women who resist dominant ideologies and share “advocacy” perspectives, women whose perspectives were reframed, redefined, and/or silenced in the discourse. In the analysis, I explore the content of what policy leaders missed by relegating these perspectives to the margins and how these perspectives may provide useful strategies for change. In this chapter, I focus the micro-analysis more intentionally on feminist theory, answering my own call in chapter 3 for depth of analysis through the use of one theoretical perspective after pulling from many. My hope is that this adds needed depth to the breadth of the findings from preceding chapters.

Chapter 7 offers an emergent Tricuspid Model for Advocacy and Educational Change, derived directly from the findings of this study and the voices of leaders themselves. This model focuses on organizational behavior and discourse. If such an organizational model is employed, then discourse containing concrete ideas in terms of *how*