CONFLICTING PURPOSES OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN FEDERAL LANGUAGE: DEFINING A LIMINAL DISCOURSE

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Abstract: Colleges and universities currently face challenges in the form of calls for increased accountability, clear economic outcomes and return on investments in education. These challenges emanate from many sectors, including students and families, employers in industry, and state and federal governments. The language of these calls for accountability and return on investment comprise a neoliberal rhetoric that posits education as a tool for economic development and prosperity, often at the expense of the more traditional purpose of higher education. This study explores this rhetoric at the federal level, as manifested in commencement addresses delivered by President Barack Obama, Vice President Joe Biden, Secretary of Education Arne Duncan, Under Secretary of Education Martha Kanter, and Deputy Secretary of Education Tony Miller, from 2009 to 2012. The study examines to what extent neoliberal ideology shapes the rhetoric. This study also examines whether the discourse creates an ideal to which institutions must aspire. Study findings reveal a liminal rhetoric that embraces the traditional and neoliberal agendas for higher education, and an ideal that also combines traditional and neoliberal ideologies.

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CHAPTER I

NEOLIBERALISM, POWER, AND IDEALS:
PURPOSE AND CONTEXT OF THE STUDY

In January of 2012, President Barack Obama addressed an audience at the University of Michigan and announced plans to put colleges on notice with an annual institutional report card, produced by the newly-created Consumer Finance Protection Bureau (CFPB). The purpose of this report card includes providing to the public clear indications of the affordability of colleges and universities and their success in educating students (Obama, 2012c). While this report card remains in planning stages, the CFPB has implemented for 2013-2014 a "Financial Aid Shopping Sheet" to assist students and families to compare aid packages and see the exact costs of attendance at multiple institutions (Consumer Finance Protection Bureau, 2012). Implementation of such measures results in part from calls for increased accountability within higher education; other examples of accountability measures include new state funding formulas based on graduation rates and other performance goals, rather than traditional budgeting practices (Lieb, 2012). The language and rhetoric surrounding these examples of increased levels of accountability represent examples of federal-level language that regards American higher education in neoliberal terms of efficiency, human capital, and economic

return-on-investment (Burke, 2005; Giroux, 2002; Jones, 2009; Loss, 2012). Accordingly, the discourse of neoliberalism and its potential implications for higher education represent a necessary area of research for scholars of higher education. This chapter will introduce the study presented here, with an overview of the rationale for the study, followed by the research questions that guided the study. The methodological design for the study will next be described, followed by a discussion of the potential significance of the study. The next section situates the study within an ongoing conversation among scholars and other higher education stakeholders about the purpose of postsecondary education and its complicated relationships with the general public and the federal government.

The Intricate Relationship among Institutions, the Public, and the Government

Many scholars have developed complicated theories and schema to describe the relationship among educational institutions, the public and/or private sectors, and the government, with foci ranging from community engagement, to access issues, to copyright and technology transfer (for example, see Etzkowitz & Leydesdorff, 2000; Pasque, 2010; St. John, Hu, & Fisher, 2011; Washburn, 2005). Most often these relationships are framed by considerations of money – which stakeholders have/do not have it, who controls it, and what are the expectations in exchange for distributions of it. The first section of this chapter implies a pressing question of public priorities: What value lies in funding of public postsecondary education today? This question does not indicate that public postsecondary education has *no* value; rather, in a time of economic hardship and recession on a global level, expenditures on postsecondary education are being reexamined and reevaluated against other competing funding priorities.

This issue of funding priorities is highly political as well. At all levels of government, elected officials keep a weather eye on potential campaign issues and the pulse of voters as they make decisions on budgets and other polarizing issues. This study delves into the political and social practices that shape federal discourses on higher education, and explores the intricacies of those discourses and their implications for higher education. Specifically, this study examines federal discourse as manifested in language at the highest levels of the executive branch of the federal government, delivered in commencement speeches over a defined period of years, by President Obama, Vice President Joe Biden, Secretary of Education Arne Duncan, and two other high-ranking executives within the Department of Education.

Commencement addresses represent a unique and potentially compelling body of data for this study for two reasons. First, delineating a specific subset of federal discourse is important to provide focus of the research; commencement addresses comprise a precise corpus of data with a narrow rhetorical purpose and content. The addresses contain focused thoughts and ideas presented by the speakers, dealing directly with higher education, its role and its impact in the United States. Second, this selection of speakers and addresses captures the discourse from federal actors who wield significant direct influence over the Department of Education, public perception of higher education, and federal funding. This study will critically examine the language of these important federal actors and investigate how the discourse of neoliberalism plays a role in the data, and thus contribute to the growing body of scholarship on this issue.

Current scholarship on neoliberal ideology and its potential impacts on postsecondary education rely mostly on anecdotal evidence and speculation, with only a

few studies measuring the phenomenon in depth. Some previous studies have investigated federal legislation such as the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (Hursh, 2007; Leyva, 2009), while others (Jones, 2009) have studied federal commission reports such as *A Test of Leadership: Charting the Future of U.S. Higher Education*, more commonly known as the Spellings Commission Report (Spellings, 2006). In a study that provided a model for the research study presented here, Suspitsyna (2012) performed a critical discourse analysis of 2005-2007 Department of Education releases and speeches. Studies such as these provide a foundation for understanding neoliberalism and how it shapes thinking and practice in higher education, and the topic certainly merits further investigation.

The research study presented here may add depth to the exploration of the federal discourse on higher education by exploring the extent to which neoliberalism exists in that discourse and examining what implications it may have for institutions. The purpose of this study is to turn a critical eye on this federal discourse to determine how pervasive neoliberal ideology is within the discourse, and what this ideology could mean for higher education scholars and practitioners. In doing so, this study makes a small but clear contribution to the ongoing debates about higher education, its purpose, and the intricate relationship among institutions, the public, and the government. To develop such a contribution, four research questions guide this study:

1) With regard to higher education, what themes characterize commencement addresses delivered between May of 2009 and May of 2012 by President Barack Obama, Vice President Joseph Biden, Secretary of Education Arne Duncan, Under Secretary of Education Martha Kanter, or Deputy Secretary of Education Tony Miller?

2) To what extent is neoliberal ideology evident among themes which characterize the addresses?
3) To what extent does the federal discourse on higher education, as evidenced in these commencement addresses, create an ideal to which institutions must aspire?
4) If such an ideal is created in federal discourse on higher education as evidenced in these commencement addresses, what are the defining elements of the ideal as articulated within the selected discourse?

Overview of Methodology

This qualitative study uses critical discourse analysis (CDA) to explore federal discourses on higher education as manifested within commencement addresses delivered by President Obama and other senior administrators from 2009 to 2012.

Although definitions of "discourse" vary among CDA scholars, for this study, discourse is defined as interaction of social practices and situations with power, as manifested in written or spoken language. This operational definition is intentionally broad to give the widest base possible for analysis of data. Some definitions focus more closely on grammar and language, while others emphasize the social practice aspects of discourse. This study emphasizes the language of the commencement addresses and the dynamics of power implied within it.

A critical discourse analysis seeks to identify power relationships between actors and facilitate elimination of oppression at a systems level (Wodak & Meyer, 2009). To more deeply understand the potential implications and impacts of federal discourse on higher education, the political and social contexts of the discourse – both its production and interpretation by subjects – must be explored. CDA provides a methodological tool

set with which to accomplish this task, as it "aims to produce interpretations and explanations of areas of social life which both identify the causes of social wrongs and produce knowledge which could…contribute to righting or mitigating them," (Fairclough, 2010). Use of CDA as a method of inquiry allows for a critical examination of power and influence of federal discourses on higher education.

CDA stems from sociological linguistic research traditions, and examines and challenges accepted power structures via discourse as shaping, and shaped by, society (Fairclough, 2010; Fairclough, 2006; Gill, 2000; Suspitsyna, 2012; Suspitsyna, 2010; Wodak & Meyer, 2009). The four stages of analysis include data collection, coding of the data, analysis and interpretation (Fairclough, 2006; Gill, 2000). Specifically, this analysis seeks to determine to what extent the federal discourse on education creates an idealized subject (Fairclough, 2001) to which people and institutions must aspire. To do so, this study includes an analysis of texts of federal discourse within micro contexts of production and researcher interpretation, as well as within broader contexts of social production and interpretation (Fairclough, 2001).

Analysis of data included four stages; the first was a simple sorting of data into pieces that substantively include higher education, and pieces that focus solely on P-12 education. The second round of analysis included identification of frequently-occurring words and phrases, which were used as initial codes for the next round of analysis. Using these codes, emergent themes were identified for the final two rounds of analysis, which also included attention to the social and political conditions surrounding the discourse practice. Particular attention was paid to any data that addresses one or more of the research questions that guide this study.

Significance and Rationale

The timing for this study coincides with President Obama's recent reelection to a second term in the White House and a time of intense fiscal debate at all levels of government. Virtually all programs that receive funding from federal or state governments are coming under examination and being vetted for continuation, reduction, or elimination. Higher education is no exception to this vetting. The timing for this study also comes in the midst of a larger, ongoing debate on the purpose of higher education, a debate that reaches back to the roots of American history. In a climate of budget pressures and calls for increased accountability and production of human capital (Lumina Foundation for Education, 2010; Olssen & Peters, 2005), the research study presented here may be timely in helping to shape a response. The role and mission of higher education within American society is also included in this ongoing debate (Kezar, 2004; McLendon, 2003; Scott, 2006), with some scholars and members of the private sector emphasizing workforce preparedness and job skills; meanwhile, others call for a return to the democratic mission of higher education (such as Giroux & Giroux, 2009). Both sides of the argument contain intricate nuances and compelling arguments; this study adds to the debate with a deep exploration of federal discourse as one of many sources of influence. This study does not produce findings aimed at moving the debate in one direction or another, but is instead designed to provide evidence to further refine the ongoing conversation. In particular, this study may substantiate the presence of the neoliberal discourse in additional forms of federal language on higher education. This study may also determine the degree to which a neoliberal ideal is created within the language, and what implications such an ideal may include for institutions.

This study examines this federal language, picking up at the transition from the Bush to Obama administrations, and exploring themes that emerge in the discourse of the new administration as manifested in the language of the selected commencement addresses. In doing so, the study may identify challenges that institutions face in shaping the future of higher education in the United States. Such an investigation may reveal what assumptions or generalizations may characterize the government's attitude toward higher education, and help institutions anticipate change and adaptation. The impact of federal discourse on higher education certainly deserves critical attention, especially for scholars of higher education and institutions to maintain an active role in shaping the future of colleges and universities.

Overview of the Study

The study presented here may help focus the ongoing conversation about neoliberalism and higher education by examining power dynamics among the federal government, institutions, and the public. Currently, scholars of higher education debate the merits and impacts of neoliberalism on institutions (Giroux, 2002; Hursh & Henderson, 2011; Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004); this research study seeks to contribute to the discussion with a critical discourse analysis of federal language as represented in commencement addresses delivered during the first three years of President Obama's first term in office. Further, this research study examines whether this selected federal discourse on higher education creates an ideal (Fairclough, 2001) to which institutions must aspire, and what implications may result.

This study is grounded in literature on the neoliberal paradigm (literature both in favor of it, and against it) and explores the impacts of this neoliberal frame on higher

education, including effects on curricula, hiring and promotion practices, and institutional mission. This introductory chapter works to establish the background and scholarly need for the study, and describes the significance as well. The chapter includes a brief description of critical discourse analysis and an operational definition of "discourse" to be utilized.

The next chapter includes a review of neoliberal literature, as well as a section on the changing mission of higher education as resulting from neoliberal and other shaping forces. The third chapter of this document includes a review of the methodology for the study, critical discourse analysis, and a detailed description of how this method was employed. This chapter also includes a specific description of what federal texts comprise the body of discourse to be analyzed, and the role that critical theory plays in shaping design of the study, as well as future analysis and interpretation. The fourth chapter describes data that emerged from inductive analysis, and the fifth chapter includes a description of findings and implications based on the data.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF RELEVANT LITERATURE

In order to situate this project within a broader body of research, I endeavored to gather and review any and all relevant empirical and theoretical scholarship. This review process was recursive, as I continually consulted relevant literature at all phases of planning, researching, drafting, and revising. The section below describes the search process I undertook to gather and review scholarship related to this project, and is followed by the review of the literature. The literature is organized around Pasque's (2010) typology that situates the dynamic relationships between government, education, and the public.

The Search Process

For the research undertaking presented here, I performed extensive and repetitive online searches of the Education Resources Information Center (ERIC) with search terms and phrases including neoliberalism, higher education, mission of higher education, federal discourse on education, federal education policy, etc. I consulted *Review of Educational Research* and *Review of Research in Education* for bibliographical reviews of research. Conference proceedings and publications from the Association for the Study of Higher Education (ASHE) and the American Educational Research Association

(AERA) were reviewed in order to find the most recent sources of scholarship. In order to attempt to capture relevant resources that may not reside specifically within educational research, I made use of online scholarly search engines such as Google Scholar to identify resources from other disciplines. Finally, archived issues of *Critical Discourse Studies*, a peer-reviewed journal devoted to critical discourse analysis scholarship, were reviewed closely for literature relevant to methodology, which is included in Chapter 3.

Before moving into literature on neoliberalism, the next section will describe a typology developed by Pasque (2010) that provides a theoretical structure for understanding relationships among educational institutions, society, and the government. This theoretical structure provides a useful frame for a review of literature on neoliberalism, and is presented below.

Pasque's Typology

Pasque (2010) provides a typology comprised of four frames for understanding the relationship between government, society, and higher education, and effectively captures the overarching themes that emerge in the corpus of literature on neoliberalism and higher education. The frames describe distinct attitudes regarding the role of government and higher education as beneficial to individual citizens or society. Benefits of higher education in these frames may either be economic or social, and may manifest as benefits to individual citizens or society as a whole. Each frame is also characterized by the actors who operate within it, from legislators, to policy makers, to higher education leaders. These groups of actors pursue agendas based on subscription to different beliefs about the role and purpose of higher education, ranging from economic

catalyst, to producer of democratically engaged citizens, to champion of social justice. The four frames and associated actors, described briefly below, capture the nuances of the debate about neoliberalism and higher education.

Private good. This frame posits the benefits of the education of private individuals as employable, economic contributors, and thereby beneficial to the greater good through economic growth resulting from individual contributions and economic success. Emphasizing financial outputs, this frame is also characterized by the argument for continued state support of higher education to maintain this private educational benefit (and thereby benefit the public good) through continued economic success. This frame aligns closely with neoliberal values of the economic benefits of education above all others, positing the value of education funding as a means of economic production.

Actors in this frame tend to include government agencies, policy scholars, business leaders, and other economically-focused actors. Such actors tend to have deeply-vested interests in economic performance of the country, and also at the level of individual corporations, colleges, and universities. These actors emphasize the interactional relationship between higher education and a healthy American economy, and stand in stark contrast to actors within the public good frame.

Public good. Citing the public mission of higher education as educating citizens for active and constructive democratic participation, this frame emphasizes higher education's responsibility to society rather than to individuals. This frame calls for institutions to foster environments conducive to public debate and learning, and dissemination of knowledge for the public good. This frame represents the antithesis to

neoliberal tendencies in higher education and highlights traditional, democratic purposes of higher education.

Actors in this frame are almost exclusively university presidents and other public spokespersons of institutions, as well as educational scholars, who desire a return to the more democratic, traditional mission of higher education. These individuals tend to define the benefit of higher education in terms of contributions to a productive democracy and an educated citizenry. This frame does not readily accept potential economic value as articulated within the public good frame. The next frame, which is defined by balance, does so.

Public and private goods: A balanced frame. This frame accepts both public and private benefits of higher education to both individuals and society as a whole. In doing so, the frame acknowledges arenas of benefits, public and private, which exist separately but affect one another nonetheless. This frame may create a dichotomy of economic and social benefits of higher education, measured respectively in fiscal outputs (i.e., tax revenues, workforce productivity) and social benefits (i.e., reduced crime rates, community relationships and charitable giving).

Actors in this frame most often include policy scholars in national educational organizations who operate within the realm of national politics, and see both sets of issues related to the traditional mission of higher education compared to national economic conditions. Actors in this frame allow for the shared existence of both private and public educational goods and emphasize the need for a balance between the two. The final frame, emphasizing advocacy, calls not for balance, but for leaders in higher education to reject neoliberal tendencies altogether.

Public and private goods: An interconnected and advocacy frame. This advocacy frame contains direct opposition to neoliberal impacts on higher education by describing the blurred boundaries between public and private benefits of education, indicating that the two are neither mutually exclusive nor necessarily completely separate. Actors in this frame call for institutions to move from economic motivations to considerations of equality and social justice. Almost exclusively, scholars of higher education comprise the actors in this frame, and go so far as to indict leadership in higher education as failing, and cite a lack of governance that has allowed neoliberalism to gain a strong foothold in shaping institutional behavior and the mission of higher education in the United States. Actors in this frame focus at times on issues of social justice and social capital, and demand that colleges and universities seek to address inequities that exist across lines of race, class, and gender, as the primary focus of higher education.

The first and fourth of Pasque's frames represent the bulk of the literature on neoliberalism and its impacts on higher education. Advocates of neoliberalism tend to fall within the first frame, which situates higher education as a private good; as a private good, higher education leads to the economic success of individuals and thus to the larger economy. Conversely, opponents of neoliberalism tend to fall within the fourth frame, calling for a reemphasis of the democratic and social value of higher education over economic production and human capital. The following section presents a history of neoliberalism and a set of definitions of the paradigm as found in scholarship on higher education.

History and Definitions of Neoliberalism

This portion of the review of literature explores the historical development and multiple definitions of neoliberalism. Each definition of neoliberalism contributes variations on a theme, a theme of encroaching economic values that diminish the role of the state in terms of social services, and which relegate higher education to an industry of production of human capital to benefit global economic competitiveness of the United States. Definitions of neoliberal values and tenets vary only slightly among scholars, focusing primarily on economic motivations and accountabilities; consequently, neoliberalism in general may be seen to reside in Pasque's (2010) Private Goods frame, as is demonstrated in this first section of the literature. Additionally, the neoliberal value system may be understood in terms of the actors within it, including government, citizens, and (for the purposes of this study) institutions of higher education. An historical overview of neoliberalism is necessary first, however, to understand its current manifestations.

Classical neoliberalism on a global scale may trace its roots to 18th century trade in the Caribbean (Forman, 2011), or to the relationship between universities and the American government during wartime (Loss, 2012). However, more recently, current American neoliberalism finds its roots in the 1970s as a reaction to progressive developments in education and media (Davies & Bansel, 2007). Modern neoliberalism traces its roots to a later historical era in which global leaders Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher ushered in an era of conservatism in the 1980s, including limited governmental spending (Doherty, 2007; Klees, 2008; Hursh & Henderson, 2011). Additionally, policies originating in the World Bank and International Monetary Fund

(IMF) that began in this era govern much global neoliberal activity and thinking (Klees, 2008; Hursh & Henderson, 2011; Lakes & Carter, 2011). The concept and name of neoliberalism was preceded by the Washington Consensus of the 1980s, which represented an effort by the World Bank and other global power brokers to reduce regulation and the power of the state, effectively a precursor to modern neoliberalism (Lakes & Carter, 2011).

Since that time the ideology of neoliberalism slowly grew into a dominant philosophy for state action in terms of economic governance and education (Suspitsyna, 2012). In terms of higher education, this growth took place in particular in the curricula as a "creeping vocationalization and subordination of learning to the dictates of the market," (Giroux, 2003, p. 185). Strains of commonality that emerge from these definitions include the role of government as facilitator of a free market, the valuing of individual success over social welfare, and the utility of higher education for workforce preparedness and global economic competitiveness. Limited governmental involvement as recommended in neoliberal doctrine stems from public choice theory, which posits that governmental failure to intervene in social issues such as education or healthcare is a worse eventuality than similar failures of private market interventions in social issues – thus, private market interventions are preferable to increased governmental activity (Doherty, 2007; Klees, 2008).

In terms of economic theory, neoliberalism is commonly described as a shift from Keynesian liberal economics to the classical economic liberalism of Milton Friedman (Doherty, 2007; Hursh & Henderson, 2011; Lakes & Carter, 2011; Olssen, 2004). Neoliberalism includes a "no new taxes" mentality (Klees, 2008, p. 318) that demands

that any new funding for education be cut from another competing budget area. Neoliberalism may be understood as economic policies and doctrine aimed at reducing government involvement in social support programs and increasing reliance instead on deregulated free markets (Rogers, Mosely, & Folkes, 2009; Olssen, 2004). Relative to colleges and universities, neoliberalism seeks to reform education without addressing the root causes of system-level issues (Hursh & Henderson, 2011). Neoliberal doctrine values the education of citizens based primarily on economic, rather than democratic, benefits (Doherty, 2007; Giroux, 2002).

Neoliberalism may also be characterized by the types and forms of evaluation and assessment of budget practices it recommends. Most neoliberal budgeting tends to center on financial inputs and outputs and ignore less-tangible values. Such "public good value[s]" or "externalities" of education (Klees, 2008, p. 314-315) prohibit effective use of return-on-investment (ROI) assessments of educational outcomes. These non-financial benefits – such as improved health, functioning democracy, lower crime, or social equality – increase the value of education in ways that ROI assessments specifically, and neoliberalism in general, fail to include. Additionally, "output-based aid" (OBA) (Klees, 2008, p. 325) defines assessment and budgeting practices within neoliberal doctrine. Such budgeting practices predicate funding on measurable outcomes at the expense of those outcomes that are more difficult to quantify in financial terms (Doherty, 2007). Other defining aspects of neoliberalism are addressed in the following section.

Micro- and macro-conceptualizations of neoliberalism. First, neoliberalism may be seen as a promotion of individual market choice and a reconceptualization of the relationship between government and society to maximize the economic success of both

the individual and government (Hursh, 2007). This definition highlights the dominance of individual choice and economic freedom as defining values in neoliberalism. In this line of thinking, the government should no longer provide social support for individuals; instead, citizens should rely on their own actions in economic marketplaces for survival. This definition clearly fits within the Private Good frame, as it emphasizes the economic benefits of higher education to individuals, and thus to society as a whole.

Also residing in the Private Good frame, but operating on a scale of nations rather than individual citizens, neoliberalism may be understood globally by its influence on economic relationships between nation-states (Olssen and Peters, 2005). In this case, the supremacy of free market ideals influences global markets and relationships between nations. In terms of government action, neoliberalism may be differentiated from classical liberalism as the former calls for governments to act to create conditions for the existence of the free market, while the latter conceives of state power as an entity from which citizens need to be freed, and includes little emphasis on economic responsibilities of the government (Olssen & Peters, 2005). While this definition minimizes the role of individual citizens, it still emphasizes the economic value of educating citizens for national benefit, thereby fitting it most closely in the Private Good frame.

Another definition incorporates direct relationships between private citizens and private corporate actors, and look to governments solely to foster these relationships (Davies & Bansel, 2007). In this definition, private citizens and corporations interact with each other more directly with minimal governmental intervention; citizens and corporations look to governments to facilitate an economically-friendly environment for

private success. This definition also calls for governments to minimize social welfare spending and rely on free markets to provide for the survival of individual citizens.

Neoliberalism mandates the role of the state to be that of an enabler of free market forces and no longer a welfare provider (Davies & Bansel, 2007). The state may work to benefit its citizens by fostering the free market and thus indirectly encouraging the development of human capital, but through no other direct action. Institutions such as schools and hospitals, once direct recipients of state largesse, should enter the market and compete with one another to stay in existence. Previous Keynesian philosophies suggested the state should fund these institutions and thereby encourage improvement in the quality of the workforce. Neoliberalism no longer values this manner of workforce development, favoring instead the transformation of education as a saleable commodity (Davies & Bansel, 2007) rather than as a funding obligation of the state. While this definition does not directly address education, it may also be seen to fit within the Private Goods frame based on its emphasis on private economic success of corporations and individuals.

Finally, and also within the Private Goods frame, the neoliberal tendency to reduce governmental action for social welfare includes political ramifications, as the ideology is both economic and political (Jones, 2009). Politics and economics serve and shape each other in the public sphere, as evidenced in the federal discourse analyzed in later sections of this study. This relationship of mutual shared influence between political and economic concerns defines the power of neoliberalism, as it yields both financial and political influence.

The preceding micro- and macro-definitions indicate clearly that neoliberalism, both as a general philosophy and set of standards, belongs in the Private Goods frame based on its emphasis on the private economic success of individuals and corporate actors. Additionally, neoliberalism calls for the role of government to be relegated to that of an economic facilitator, leaving social welfare to be worked out privately and in the free market, rather than at the state or federal level; such strategies that rely heavily on the free market also reside in the Private Goods frame.

Resistance to neoliberalism. Moving beyond the Private Goods frame to Pasque's fourth frame (Public and Private Goods: An Interconnectedness and Advocacy frame), the following literature provides definitions of neoliberalism based on the interconnected nature of the public and private benefits of higher education. Scholars in this frame tend to advocate for reshaping the mission of higher education after its historical roots in democratic education and training of engaged citizens. This section includes specific recommendations from scholars who suggest paradigms as alternatives to neoliberalism.

Neoliberalism may be understood in terms of the behavior of both educational institutions and private citizens. Neoliberalism alters the social function of colleges and universities by applying new standards of rationality and fiscal accountability; meanwhile, private citizens exercise free choice with a similar economic rationality, defining success through entrepreneurship and financial success (Suspitsyna, 2012). In this model, as in others, the role of the government is understood to be that of an accountant, documenting expenditures on education and verifying the return of value on them.

These shifts in the role of government in neoliberal society may also portend greater societal changes in terms of social services. Giroux (2003) describes additional neoliberal shifts in society, economy, and government as nearly violent, as the neoliberal value system "aggressively attempts to break the power of unions, decouple income from productivity, subordinate the needs of society to the market, and deem public services and amenities a luxury" (p. 180). These shifts separate private issues from public, and weaken any notion of governmental role in providing social services. Further, neoliberal values marginalize "noncommodified public spheres" (Giroux, 2002, p. 427) that serve purposes of public good by "mystify[ing] the basic contradiction between democratic values and market fundamentalism, and weaken[ing] any viable notion of political agency by offering no language capable of connecting private considerations to public issues," (p. 428). Additionally, consumerism replaces participatory democracy as the primary behavior of citizens (Ayers, 2005), which results in a continued power imbalance, leaving those with political influence in control over average private citizens more concerned with economic success than active participation in government or society (Giroux, 2002). Motivated to focus on individual, private financial success, individual citizens also accept by extension a reduced governmental role in providing for private welfare; both these elements are key to definitions of neoliberalism.

For the purposes of the work presented here, neoliberalism specific to higher education is defined as the forces that call for accountability and efficiency among educational institutions in exchange for public or private funding, forces valuing academic disciplines and research that yield financial returns over those that do not, and forces that prioritize the free market over democratic social values. Additionally,

neoliberalism functions as a political tool for federal leaders, and a means to gain influence over institutions of higher education as producers of human capital for a globally-competitive American workforce. This working definition of neoliberalism provided criteria for the critical discourse analysis performed in this study.

Other Relevant Literature

Neoliberalism and its effects on higher education comprise the primary body of literature informing this study. This review includes works on definitions of neoliberalism, already described above. The next sections consider the impact of neoliberalism on institutions and curricula, colonization of the mission and discourse of higher education, and the role of government in public education. Additionally, neoliberalism and education abroad is considered with a review of scholarship from other countries. The final section reviews four studies similar to the one presented here, with critical analyses of federal discourse on education.

The first section of this portion of the literature review samples private and governmental literature that defines the benefits of neoliberalism in global economic terms, as well as in terms of improvements to social conditions for citizens. This includes a cross-section of a very broad current literature base calling for neoliberal shifts in higher education. While actors among these proponents do not refer to themselves as neoliberals, they nonetheless embody the neoliberal paradigm.

The next section opens with a focused review of the connections between neoliberalism and education, emphasizing direct relationships between neoliberal shifts in a society and their potential impacts on behavior of educational institutions. A review of neoliberalism on a global scale is included, with a short review of studies performed in

other countries. Following the review of international literature, the next section includes a focused review of recent scholarship documenting shifts in the generally accepted mission of higher education that result directly or indirectly from neoliberal policies and paradigms. This section most closely illustrates the potential impact of the subject of this study, demonstrating the influence that federal discourse may have on higher education at the highest public levels.

The review of literature concludes with four studies similar to the research presented here, studies that performed critical discourse analyses of federal legislation or policy relevant to education. The findings and methods of these studies inform this research study. But before an examination of model studies, the connections between neoliberalism and higher education should be briefly explained.

Making the case for neoliberalism. Proponents of neoliberalism do not refer to themselves as neoliberals, and very few of them are active scholars of higher education. Instead, current literature favoring neoliberal recommendations for higher education tends to reside in private corporate literature or government studies of the economy and 21st century workforce. The sections below describe the arguments in favor of neoliberalism, beginning with a description of global economic forces that result in neoliberal pressures on education. Specific issues in 21st century workforce preparedness follow, including shortages of workers, educational credentialing, and specific skills necessary for the 21st century workforce. Finally, literature describing beneficial impacts of neoliberalism is included. The works reviewed in this section represent a sampling of many other documents and studies dealing with the 21st century workforce and changes in higher education that will be necessary for the United States to remain competitive.

Their inclusion represents a body of work supporting the neoliberal paradigm within higher education practice and policy.

Global forces resulting in neoliberalism. Globalization of manufacturing and trade significantly altered the manufacturing industry in the United States, creating a need for change in workforce preparation in postsecondary education, as well as a concerted partnership between government, industry, and postsecondary educational institutions to meet 21st century global market demands (Stone, Kaminski, & Gloeckner, 2009). Such partnerships might include improvement in the "educational pipeline" (Business-Higher Education Forum, 2010, p. 4) to include strategies aimed specifically at workforce preparedness for the 21st century. Even more specifically, some corporate leaders call for specific alignment of PK-12 and postsecondary educational outcomes with employer-identified skill sets requisite for entry into the workplace (Business-Higher Education Forum, 2010). Other such partnerships may include federal legislation such as the Workforce Investment Act of 1998, which provided targeted funding to community colleges for worker training based on regional workforce needs (Workforce Investment Act, 1998).

21st century workforce preparedness. Employer demands changed in the 21st century, creating a gap between postsecondary training and expected capabilities upon entering the workforce, and resulting in demands for educational institutions to reexamine curricula and practices for workforce preparedness (Stone, Kaminski, & Gloeckner, 2009; Judy & D'Amico, 1997). According to *Are They Really Ready to Work* (Conference Board, 2006), employers in the United States believe that "the future U.S. workforce is here – and it is woefully ill-prepared for the demands of today's (and

tomorrow's) workplace" (p. 9). Based on a survey of 431 employers, representing more than 2 million domestic employees, *Are They Ready to Work* indicates four skill sets that are most important in the workplace: professionalism/work ethic, oral and written communications, teamwork/collaboration, and critical thinking/problem solving (p. 9). The same survey findings indicate that traditional academic disciplines and preparation remain fundamental for workforce readiness, but applied skills such as these are even more critical, and largely lacking among workers entering the workplace from two- and four-year institutions. Additionally, 21st century workforce preparation includes demands for educational institutions to incorporate training for soft skills such as leadership, teamwork, and creativity (Gewertz, 2007). Such skills may be developed in more informal learning environments, which the neoliberal paradigm favors for worker training and development (van der Linde, 2000; van Dam, 2012).

Multiple factors necessitate constant retraining of the 21st century workforce (van Dam, 2012) including emerging technologies and "shelf life" (p. 49) of knowledge; these factors inform neoliberal demands on higher education as a source of workforce training and development. The U.S. Chamber of Commerce (2011) includes in the "Education and Workforce Development" section of its 2011 Policy Priorities: "Continue to support and promote a federal employment and training system that is driven by the actual needs of employers based on accurate and timely local labor market data," (p. 4). Neoliberal pressures on education also stem from anticipated trade imbalances in excess of $600 billion in imports over domestic exports (Stone, Kaminski, & Gloeckner, 2009).

Pending waves of retirement of older workers in the near future will result in a shortage of educated workers, a shortage ranging in estimated size from 16 to 30 million

in 10 to 20 years (Business-Higher Education Forum, 2010; Lumina Foundation, 2010; Stone, Kaminski, & Gloeckner, 2009). Widening gaps in college attainment between first-generation, low-income students and students of color and other students, and a national degree attainment rate of only 39%, combine to form a very alarming picture of U.S. workforce readiness for the global economy (Lumina Foundation, 2010, 5-6). This shortage results from the inability of educational institutions to produce graduates at pace with a growing need for an educated workforce (Business-Higher Education Forum, 2010; Government Accountability Office, 2008).

Concurrent with these alarmingly low attainment rates is the escalating need for degrees in the job market. A study conducted by the Georgetown Center on Education and the Workforce (Carnivale, Smith, & Strohl, 2010) documents an increase from 28 to 59 percent in U.S. jobs requiring some postsecondary education from 1973 to 2008, and projects that figure to increase again to 63 percent by 2020. Anointing postsecondary degree attainment as "the gatekeeper to the middle and upper class" (p. 3), the study tracks the steeply increasing trajectory of correlation between the global knowledge economy and educational attainment. A similar study by the Government Accountability Office (2008) posits that 54 percent of all jobs will require a bachelor degree or higher by 2014.

Individual benefits of neoliberalism. Beyond workforce preparation many proponents of neoliberalism point to the individual benefits of education and the economic impact on social conditions. Neoliberal beliefs regarding education include individual prosperity and employability as a function of education (Judy & D'Amico, 1997; Stone, Kaminski, & Gloeckner, 2009). Other benefits of education in this

paradigm include reduction in crime and violence (van der Linde, 2000). To achieve these benefits, some neoliberal leaders call for shared accountability in achieving goals relative to workforce preparedness, advocating cooperation between educational institutions and private corporations in doing so (Business-Higher Education Forum, 2010). Discussions of workforce preparedness almost always include references to changes necessary in secondary and postsecondary education in order for the United States to remain competitive. The connection between the global economy and education is described in the next section.

Connecting Neoliberalism to Education

Nations that experienced neoliberal shifts in society, government, and education likely participate in the larger global economy (Davies & Bansel, 2007). Such shifts usually include among its advocates those with much to gain financially from the neoliberal changes in labor practices and human capital development. This new model shifts the role of government from one of responsibility for social welfare to one of facilitation of individual and corporate economic growth and competitiveness (Davies & Bansel, 2007; Giroux, 2002; Giroux, 2003; Olssen & Peters, 2005).

Further, competitiveness of any national market in the global economy is tied to the economic survival of that nation's individuals, a link that characterizes neoliberalism (Davies & Bansel, 2007; Suspitsyna, 2012). This linked survival means that the success of individual citizens as economic actors is paramount to national economic development, which in turn puts a premium on the educational development of human capital to bring about this individual success (Labaree, 1997) and implies a contract between society and higher education to produce that human capital (Vavakova, 1998).

Services and institutions that contribute to the development of human capital – including those related to health care, social services, and education, to name a few – now participate in their own independent markets for survival, where once they were state-funded, or at least subsidized, enterprises (Davies & Bansel, 2007). This marketization of non-commodified public spheres (Giroux, 2002) increasingly shifts the role of citizens in neoliberal societies to that of a market consumer rather than a democratic participant in society. And the neoliberal impact comes full circle as a result, as education and other human capital-developing institutions react to these market behaviors and begin to commoditize themselves as products and services competing for market share (Slaughter & Rhodes, 2004).

Neoliberalism in Higher Education Scholarship

Impacts and conceptualizations of neoliberalism span many more social and governmental areas than just higher education based on roots in a global knowledge economy (Olssen & Peters, 2005). However, for the purposes of this study, the following section of the review includes scholarship that treats neoliberalism primarily as it relates to higher education. The first part focuses on the practical impacts of neoliberalism at the institutional level is reviewed, from effects on curriculum, to the roles of faculty members, to institutional missions. Impacts on public education will be included as well. International studies on neoliberalism and shifts in institutional mission comprise the next two sections in the review of neoliberal literature. The accepted colonization of the mission of American higher education may be one of the most dramatic and visible impacts of neoliberalism. Each of these sections will also be connected back to Pasque's (2010) typology as a way of understanding neoliberalism based on the literature.

Impacts of neoliberalism. The literature on neoliberalism demonstrates clear impacts and implications for higher education, from vocationalization of the curricula, to diminished faculty governance, to shifts in institutional mission. This section describes these potential impact areas.

Neoliberal shifts in academic curricula include emphasis on areas lucrative for research at the expense of the traditional liberal arts (Giroux, 2002). The financial benefits of corporate-sponsored research present a lucrative alternative to other, less-profitable ventures in many cases. The downsizing of areas such as public health research and the humanities represents another impact of neoliberalism; such research areas represent civic and social good, but minimal profitability. Neoliberalism in higher education is a continuation of the hidden curriculum of vocationalization and subservience to market forces that have come to influence educational practices more and more in recent years (Giroux, 2003).

In addition to altering the curricular content to favor disciplines with high potential returns on financial investment, neoliberalism also affects how curriculum is delivered. Such impacts include increases in cost-efficient distance learning, reduction in physical facilities such as libraries, and greater reliance on part-time faculty as cost-savings measures. Additionally, neoliberal education policies gave rise to for-profit educational management organizations (EMO's) thought to provide more fiscally-efficient educational services and delivery of curriculum (Klees, 2008; Rogers, Mosely, & Folkes, 2000). In some cases, private corporations created their own universities with the specific purpose of providing ongoing training and development for employees (van Dam, 2012).

Cost-conscious adjustments such as these may result from neoliberal shifts in decision-making and management style on campuses that produce awkward social or cultural situations for faculty members on campuses. Specifically, neoliberal models of management in higher education affect decision-making, and institutional language of accountability replaces that of social responsibility (Giroux, 2003; Kodelja, 2013; Schoorman & Acker-Hocevar, 2013). This shift in management to focus on markets and accountability may also affect the ability of institutions to address inequities experienced by faculty members of color (Osei-Kofi, 2012) and female faculty members (Schmeichel, 2011).

In performing a critical discourse analysis of 144 community college mission statements, Ayers (2005) depicts two more alarming effects of neoliberal ideologies on education. First, the mission of community colleges shifted from a focus on educational ends to economic ends at the expense of the learners; second, administrators now make decisions about the curriculum based on market and employer needs. These impacts resulted from a discourse analysis that yielded two themes common to the mission statements: learners at community colleges were reduced to economic (human capital) entities rather than students, and curriculum decisions now emanate from ever-changing market conditions (Ayers, 2005). Other impacts of neoliberalism in education include user fees, privatization, and output-based assessment (Klees, 2008; Lakes & Carter, 2011). Additionally, neoliberal privatization of education increases inequality and reduces efficiency (Klees, 2008) by facilitating creation of wealthy private schools at the expense of funding for public schools.

In terms of public education, specific impacts may include an emphasis on voucher programs for private or charter schools (Doherty, 2007; Hursh & Henderson, 2011; Klees, 2008; Lakes & Carter, 2011; Rogers, Mosley, & Folkes, 2009). Such programs and other endeavors to privatize education in order to improve efficiencies in systems often result in the neglect and abandonment of public education (Means, 2008).

Other impacts of neoliberalism in public education include merit-based pay for teachers and curriculum focused on the improvement of student performance on standardized tests (Doherty, 2007; Hursh & Henderson, 2011; Klees, 2008). Teacher education programs are also affected, as they face pressure to produce teachers who teach well to standardized tests and deemphasize traditional preparation requirements (Baltodano, 2012; Mette, 2013). All these developments come at the expense of the liberal arts curriculum while promoting vocationalized curricular pursuits (Doherty, 2007; Giroux, 2002). These conflicts originate in exchanges of, and struggles over, power, which is included in the next section of the review.

Power in neoliberalism. In the neoliberal model, benefits to corporations and the wealthy exceed those to other private citizens, resulting in a power imbalance. Neoliberalism serves to reproduce the power of those already in control via financial gain, labor practices, and "flows of capital" (Davies & Bansel, 2007, p. 248). Neoliberal effects on institutions' missions and behavior actually serve to perpetuate socio-economic inequality, effectively benefitting those with economic influence and power over those without (Ayers 2005) through social reproduction (MacLeod, 1995; Cassel & Nelson, 2013) of power imbalances and attitudes.

Neoliberalism also represents the resistance of power elites to the empowerment of the working class and poor (Hursh & Henderson, 2011). Neoliberalism perpetuates the under-education of workforces in developing countries, stunting their economic development to the benefit of industrialized nations competing in the first-world global economy (Doherty, 2007; Klees, 2008; Lakes & Carter, 2011; Olssen, 2004). Neoliberal policies limit public discourse by making the doctrine and its implementation seem inevitable in a time of crisis (Hursh & Henderson, 2011). Finally, neoliberalism actively frustrates social policy initiatives that protect underrepresented populations (Olssen, 2004). In doing so, neoliberalism marginalizes particular groups of people (Lakes & Carter, 2011) and their residential geography by implying an inability of communities to solve their own problems, and by recommending instead reliance on private markets for solutions to social issues (Hursh & Henderson, 2011).

In spite of this power imbalance, citizens in a neoliberal state become "…productive entrepreneurs of their own lives" (Davies & Bansel, 2007, p. 248). This shift is reflected in populations of students, seen as consumers of the commodity of higher education. Additionally, neoliberal ideology equates economic vitality and the success of individual citizens with a national level of economic vitality and growth (Cassell & Nelson, 2013). In addition to shifts in power between citizens, corporations, and the government, neoliberalism includes power implications for educational institutions and control of the purpose and mission of education. The next section explores the implications of neoliberalism for the mission of higher education.

Colonization of the mission of higher education. The changing purpose and mission for American higher education have been disputed for many years. Mission-

related goals may include democratic equality, social efficiency (including workforce training), and social mobility (Labree, 1997). While the traditional mission of colleges and universities was democratic participation, community improvement, scholarly research and other social contributions (Checkoway, 2001; Kezar, 2004; Labaree, 1997), neoliberal discourse began to colonize (Fairclough, 2001) the mission of higher education at the expense of mission components such as civic virtues and democratic participation (McLendon, 2003; Scott, 2006). Traditional civic values of higher education are sacrificed to make space for dominant discourses of commercialism, deregulation, and privatization (Giroux, 2002). Further, as these civic values wane, the "noncommodified public spheres" (p. 427) in which such values are generated (including colleges and universities), find themselves overtaken by corporate cultures as well. These shifts equate education as synonymous with job training.

Ayers (2005) asserts that the traditional mission of the community college, which was recolonized by neoliberal discourse, shifted from helping students fulfill "a broad range of human capacities" to emphasizing and fostering their individual economic earning potential (p. 529). The discourse was recontextualized to represent a means to economic development.

Human capital theory comprises a foundational element of neoliberal ideology, and represents another main purpose of higher education (Ayers, 2005). The purpose of education no longer focuses on democratic ends, but instead on the production of economic benefit through the production of human capital. This emphasis on human capital allows legislators to justify funding for public and higher education as an investment rather than an expenditure, with an expected financial return. This subtle

change in nomenclature regarding funding allocated for education comprises a major shift in the discourse on higher education. Community colleges are also cast as producers of human capital and economic benefit in discourse on higher education (Ayers, 2005).

Cultures of inquiry and debate were replaced with performance and output accountability (Olssen & Peters, 2005). In this view, neoliberal models position higher education economic tools wherein "academics must demonstrate their utility to society by placing themselves in an open market and accordingly competing for students…[and] tuition fees" (p. 328). Institutions become retail actors in this model, and may be seen as commodity brokers in the knowledge economy, as "the shift to a knowledge economy…requires a profound rethinking of education as emerging forms of knowledge, capitalism, involving knowledge creation, acquisition, transmission and organization" (p. 331).

Encroachment of neoliberal ideology upon higher education results in a tension between the values of the free market with those of a civil society; institutions of higher education represent a "central site" for keeping those tensions alive (Giroux, 2003, p. 183). This tension develops as the traditional mission of higher education threatens neoliberalism: "The notion that higher education should be defended as centers of critical scholarship, social responsibility, and enlightened teaching in order to expand the scope of freedom and democracy appears irrelevant if not dangerous in this [neoliberal] discourse" (Giroux, 2003, p. 186). Instead, corporate leaders such as Bill Gates, Warren Buffett, and others gained increasing amounts of influence in shaping the discourse on higher education, apparently based on their business acumen and accumulation of wealth

(Giroux, 2003; Mette, 2013). Influence wielded by economic actors is not limited to American higher education, as the next section of the literature review illustrates.

International Neoliberalism

Governments and societies around the world tend to adhere to models of neoliberalism depicted above, with varying impacts on education and society. Three examples included in this section display the ongoing conflict that surrounds neoliberal developments in countries across the globe. Each example demonstrates potential benefits of neoliberalism in very clear terms of economic development in various regions; however, each example also includes descriptions of simultaneously damaging impacts that neoliberalism had on educational or social conditions.

In Hyderabad, India, the development of a HITEC (Hyderabad Information Technology Engineering Consultancy) city promoted investment in education for technology and the global economy that came at the expense of democracy and citizenship (Kamat, 2011). While the intense focus on development of a technologically advanced and economically thriving city resulted in great success (dozens of multinational technology companies such as Oracle, Google, and Microsoft opened large operations in Hyderabad), the needs of established local communities went largely ignored. The merits of these development efforts remain in dispute in Indian society, and demonstrate the conflicting impacts of neoliberal development.

In New Zealand, a narrow view of citizenship as economic participation is framed by the neoliberal desire to participate in the knowledge economy and the demands of global capitalism (Roberts, 2009). New definitions of patriotism have arisen that position citizens as primarily economic actors. These new definitions also position

tertiary education in New Zealand as a national asset and a critical component in development of a strong New Zealand economy. To promote this development, the New Zealand government provided additional funding and assistance in growing educational resources. This represents another set of complications that accompany neoliberal tendencies – government funding made available to otherwise cash-strapped institutions in exchange for neoliberal shifts in their practices and educational delivery. Institutions must determine to what extent they are willing to meet demands that accompany badly-needed funding.

In the United Kingdom, Third Way neoliberal policies blur boundaries between the traditional liberal role of government in providing for social welfare and new privatized versions of such programs (Doherty, 2007). The dominant Labour Party agenda for education focuses on the knowledge economy and development of a consumer-based democracy, and diminishes opportunity for reductions in educational inequalities across classes.

These examples of neoliberal tendencies and practices abroad may illustrate the positive and negative impacts of the doctrine on social and educational programming. A much larger body of scholarship documenting developments around the world exists, of which the three above examples are a cross section. These examples demonstrate that the arguments for and against the neoliberal paradigm is not limited to American soil, and is instead an international phenomenon. The next section will include four studies focusing on neoliberalism in the United States within the realm of federal reports and legislation.

Other Critical Analyses of the Federal Discourse on Education

Four earlier studies provide models for the research presented here in terms of both purpose and methodology, and are presented below in chronological order. Each study was conducted by a scholar of higher education with clear positionality opposed to neoliberal trends in the discourse on higher education. Their findings, then, represent only one side of the argument regarding the impacts of neoliberalism on education. They identify, however, a prevalent neoliberal discourse in a variety of federal-level documents, including legislation and special commission reports. In all, the studies are precursors to this research study.

Neoliberalism in community college mission statements (Ayers, 2005). In performing a critical discourse analysis of 144 community college mission statements, Ayers (2005) charted a shift in community college mission from open-access teaching in comprehensive, community based programs, to a neoliberal focus on workforce preparedness characterized by hegemony and servitude of workers and learners to employers. Moreover, neoliberal interpretations of community college institutional missions actually perpetuate class and other inequalities as a result of "hegemonic" (p. 535) acceptance of the neoliberal discourse. Two discursive practices emerged from Ayers's examination: one posited students as economic entities and contributors of human capital as priorities over the student's role as a learner. The second emergent theme demonstrated the increasing influence of market and employer forces on the academic curriculum of institutions. Ayers concluded by describing the recontextualization (p. 545) of educational processes by market forces that took place at the expense of students and families.

Neoliberal context for No Child Left Behind (Hursh, 2007). Similarly, Hursh's (2007) critical discourse analysis of the *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001* (NCLB) demonstrated additional perpetuated inequalities, this time in terms of achievement gaps based on race, as well as high school dropout rates. Hursh (2007) posited that passage of NCLB stemmed less from aims to close such achievement gaps than the intent to introduce a market-based system of education with standardized achievement testing, private schools, and voucher systems (p. 504). In analyzing the historical shift from social democratic to neoliberal policies that resulted in passage of NCLB, Hursh (2007) cited studies performed by the Center on Educational Policy (2007) and the Harvard Civil Rights Project (Lee, 2006) that demonstrated the failure of NCLB to meet its educational goals.

Neoliberalism in the Spellings Report (Jones, 2009). Jones (2009) analyzes another controversial government document, *A Test of Leadership: Charting the Future of U.S. Higher Education* (2006) (more commonly known as the Spellings Report), with similar findings to Hursh (2007) and Ayers (2005). In his critical discourse analysis, Jones (2009) describes three "identities" (p. 51) created by neoliberal ideology and language in the Spellings Report: identity of students as workers, identification of knowledge as work skills, and identity of higher education as private industry (p. 51-53). These three identities in the Spellings Report represent a microcosm of the larger impacts of neoliberalism on education, according to Jones.

Neoliberalism in the Department of Education discourse (Suspitsyna, 2012). Finally, Suspitsyna (2012) provides a model for the research study presented here, having performed a critical discourse analysis of speeches and releases from the Department of

Education from January 2005 to December 2007. Suspitsyna (2012) chronicles the discourse of the department under then-Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings and finds 10 themes in the discourse; five relate higher education directly to the national economy or global competitiveness of the United States, two themes describe higher education as an investment and its own economic marketplace, and two additional themes call for accountability and measurement of affordability and access in quantifiable terms. Only one identified theme, with the next-to-lowest frequency of occurrence in the analysis, described higher education as related to democracy and civic engagement. Suspitsyna's work demonstrates the deep-rooted presence of neoliberalism in the federal discourse on higher education at that time.

Conclusions from the Literature

The neoliberal paradigm casts institutions of higher education into the role of preparers of a globally-competitive workforce, replete with minimal governmental influence and maximized profitability. In doing so, neoliberal values reshape curriculum, institutional management, and the expectations of students and taxpayers. The neoliberal shift in the mission of higher education demands financial returns on expenditures, viewing higher education as an investment rather than a necessary social expenditure.

Arguments in favor of these neoliberal shifts point toward a grim 21st century workforce reality, with shortages of educated workers and a less-competitive United States on the global economic stage. Opponents of neoliberalism identify shifts in mission and the very role of higher education in the United States, with movement toward market-driven curricula at the expense of traditional curricula fostering democratic civic engagement.

The impacts of neoliberalism, whether positive or negative remain to be investigated and quantified. The study presented here will contribute to the growing body of scholarship on the existence of neoliberal language in the federal discourse on higher education. Critical discourse analysis, described in Chapter 3, provides a methodology for doing so.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Current scholarship on neoliberalism deserves scrutiny to more closely gauge the impact of neoliberalism on higher education. Although several scholars utilize anecdotal evidence to illustrate potential negative impacts of neoliberalism, only a few studies seek to explore or measure these impacts in depth. Multiple studies of neoliberalism in federal discourse on higher education examined legislation such as the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001(Hursh, 2007; Leyva, 2009), while others tackled language in the Spellings Commission Report of 2006 (Jones, 2009). Suspitsyna (2012) performed a critical discourse analysis of 2005 to 2007 Department of Education releases and speeches from the Bush administration, which provides a precursor to the research study presented here. All these studies point to elements of neoliberalism in the discourse; the study undertaken here goes a step further, beyond seeking to identify the neoliberal discourse. It explores the degree to which expressions of neoliberalism in the discourse result in an ideal with which higher education institutions must negotiate as mission and purpose are debated.

This chapter describes the epistemology and theory that will guide the research process, as well as methods of data collection and analysis. The first section below describes the research paradigm and theoretical framework employed in the design of this

research. It also includes a detailed description of critical discourse analysis (CDA) as both a theoretical frame and methodology. The next section presents the research problem statement and research questions, followed by a brief description of researcher positionality. The final section describes specific data collection and analysis.

Epistemology and Guiding Theory

This project represents a qualitative undertaking, which involves inductive identification of themes in a research corpus as emergent from assembled data pieces, as interpreted by the researcher (Creswell, 2009). Further, a qualitative project such as this one allows for an opportunity to further the causes of social justice and critique through education and research (Luttrell, 2010). Particularly, the research presented here seeks to understand meaning and reality as socially constructed (Stage & Manning, 2003), with particular attention paid to power dynamics within that construction. This emphasis on power interactions reflects a use of a critical theory lens within the project. Critical theory assumes the existence of multiple forms of oppression within a society, and critical research is designed to identify such oppression (Crotty, 2010). Additionally, critical theory involves certain assumptions about the nature of knowledge, power and communication, including the central role of language in conscious and subconscious awareness within subjects (Crotty, 2010). With these assumptions in mind, this project is designed with special interest in the power of language in the analyzed data.

Further, this project makes use of "orientational" theory (Patton, 2002, p. 129), in that a specific theoretical framework, critical discourse analysis (CDA), shapes the research and interpretation of findings. Rather than seeking understanding and applicable theory as emergent from the analysis of data, CDA (Fairclough, 2001; Gill, 2000; Wodak

& Meyer, 2009) provides shape for the entire process. CDA includes heavy influence from critical theory traditions. The study presented here employs a modified version of CDA to identify emergent themes from the selected corpus of texts. The following section provides an overview of literature on CDA, including varying definitions of discourse within the methodology. The last section on CDA describes creation of an idealized subject within mass-distributed discourses (Fairclough, 2001). This theory of an idealized subject represents the crux of the power dynamics at play between the federal government and postsecondary institutions as manifested in the language analyzed herein. The final sections of this chapter describe data collection and analysis.

Critical discourse analysis. CDA is one of more than 50 estimated varieties of discourse analysis (Gill, 2000). Among these varieties, CDA does not represent a singular, well-defined methodology, but instead its own grouping of variants. CDA traditions include dispositive analysis, the socio-cognitive approach, the discourse-historical approach (DHA), the corpus linguistics approach (CLA), and the dialectical-relational approach (DRA) (Wodak & Meyer, 2009). The modern version of CDA that has come to be employed often in social sciences (Fairclough, 2001) stems from sociological linguistics and includes a number of theoretically-based iterations guided by disciplinary context and research agenda. One common element across schools of CDA includes the critical component, which examines and challenges accepted power structures; the other common element is the discourse component, the linguistic context and source for power that shapes, and is shaped by, society (Fairclough, 2010; Fairclough, 2006; Gill, 2000; Suspitsyna, 2012; Suspitsyna, 2010; Wodak & Meyer, 2009). Additionally, CDA subscribes to the critical position that the broad global

environment is in fact defined by technological modes of communication, and could not exist without it (Fairclough, Graham, Lemke & Wodak, 2004). As a result, critical analysis of modes and substance of communication and discourse is key to understanding power dynamics at play between actors in a social setting.

CDA as a research methodology must be executed with care. Most versions of CDA tend to focus on identification and exploration of oppressive spaces, without substantive investigation of liberational spaces or discourses. And many instances of CDA focus on reproduction of power rather than on transformation of it (Rogers, Malancharuvil-Berkes, Mosley, Hui, & Joseph, 2005). This study, then, employs CDA as a research methodology with close attention to these potential pit falls via frequent researcher introspection and reflexive activities.

The precarious and multifaceted nature of CDA requires users to determine the analytical path before examining text, effectively subscribing to a particular school (or modifying a version of CDA according to the research questions being examined). Whichever CDA school an analyst chooses, scholars agree on four basic phases of CDA: collection of data (a set of spoken or written texts), coding of the data, analysis and interpretation (Fairclough, 2006; Gill, 2000). These four stages represent the methodological design for the research conducted here. The specific design for this project is described below, beginning with an analysis of multiple potential definitions of discourse before articulating the definition of discourse that guided this research.

Definitions of discourse. Employment of CDA as a research methodology is predicated on selection and analysis of a body of discourse; but different versions of CDA conceive types of discourse differently. Fairclough and Wodak (1997) define

discourse as "a form of 'social practice' … [that] implies a dialectical relationship between a particular discursive event and the situation(s), institution(s), and social structure(s), which frame it: The discursive event is shaped by them [the situations, etc.], but it also shapes them" (p. 258). More simply, Fairclough (2001) defines discourse as "language as a form of social practice" (p. 16). Discourse may also be seen as "an unusual form of communication in which the participants subject themselves to the force of the better argument, with the view of coming to an agreement about the validity or invalidity or problematic claims" (Crotty, 2009, p. 144). Finally, although several other definitional variations exist but will not be listed here, Blommaert and Bulcaen (2000) describe discourse as "an opaque power object in modern societies and CDA aims to make it [this object] more visible and transparent" (p. 448).

Discourses may be understood as functions of their original production processes as well as processes of the interpreter conducting the analysis; texts are also shaped by social conditions that also affect both their production and interpretation. The simultaneous production and interpretation of the text at a micro level, as it is situated in a broader social context, comprise the broader discourse for analysis. As a result, the idea of discourse may be understood to be much more intricate than a single text; instead, discourses are shaped by broad and local social power dynamics, which influence both the production of a text as well as its interpretation. Fairclough (2001) provides a visual schema (See Fig. 2.1) for understanding discourse as a function of processes and social conditions of texts under examination.

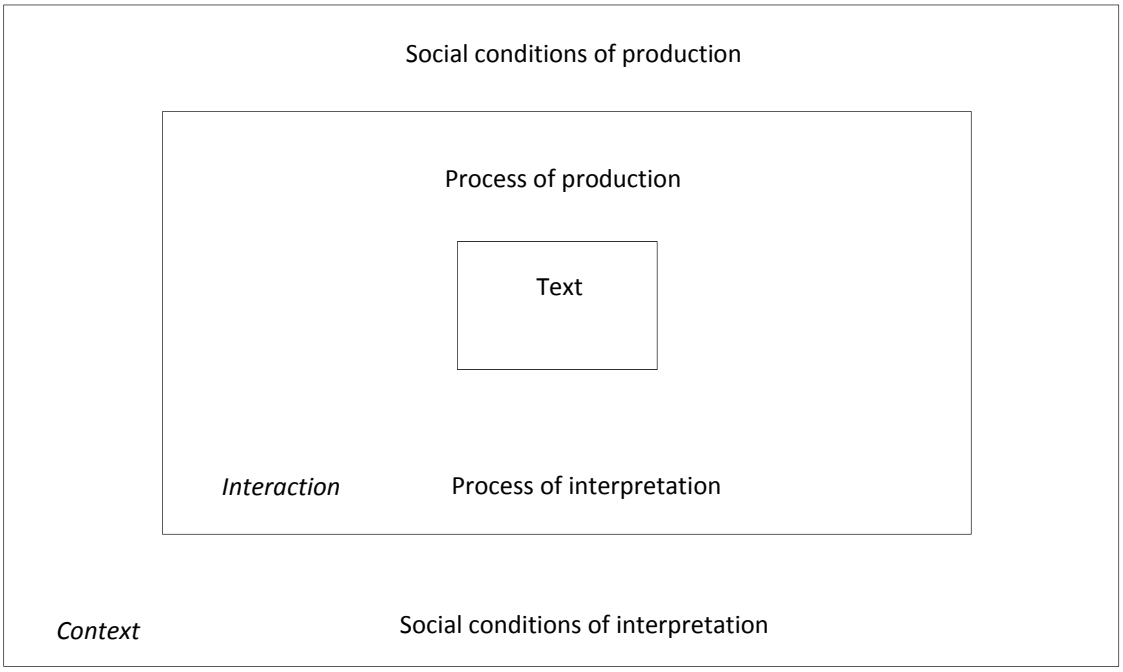

Figure 3.1 Discourse as text, interaction and context (Fairclough, 2001). This figure illustrates the interactional elements that comprise a body of discourse.

For this project, I operated with a definition of discourse that blends the above described ideas. "Discourse" is defined as the interaction between social practices/situations and power, as manifested in written or spoken language exchanges. With this operational definition in mind, the next section describes how individual subjects of a discourse may come to be idealized if that discourse is broadcast to a large group.

Idealized subjects in discourse. Fairclough (2001) describes the creation of an ideal, a fictional, perfect subject of a discourse. This hypothetical, ideal subject results from creation of a discourse designed for mass consumption, as in a media campaign or news story. The communication effectively operates in only one direction, forcing subjects to negotiate their existence and rectify it against the intended ideal within the

discourse. The terms of this negotiation come from the shape of the ideal as communicated in language by the dominant majority in a society, and represents significant power over the subjects who read or hear the text of the discourse. This creation of an ideal does not take place within communication between individual actors or even groups, but on a mass scale, wherein producers of the discourse cannot adapt the discourse to multiple different consumers. Instead, these producers create the discourse with an ideal subject in mind, and readers of or listeners to the discourse must then negotiate their own existence and reality in relationship to that of the ideal (p. 49).

Although Fairclough's (2001) theorizing about ideals focuses mainly on advertisements and news media, his ideas are applicable to governmental language as well. The President, Vice President, Secretary of Education and two other senior executives in the Department of Education represent central and very powerful figures with influence over education at virtually all levels. These cabinet-level actors exercise influence over postsecondary institutions via grant and other funding opportunities, including public speeches or relationships with educational leaders. Federal student aid represents a major source of revenue for most postsecondary institutions, and the Department of Education directly influences the awarding and distributing processes of all federal loans and grants. The federal government and the Department of Education also contribute to shaping public perception and opinion of education, as well as agendas for activities of professional associations, accrediting agencies, state boards, and institutions (Suspitsyna, 2012). In short, the language of these selected individuals wields tremendous influence on postsecondary education. With these notions of federal influence and idealized subjects in mind, four research questions guide this study:

1) With regard to higher education, what themes characterize commencement addresses delivered between May of 2009 and May of 2012 by President Barack Obama, Vice President Joseph Biden, Secretary of Education Arne Duncan, Under Secretary of Education Marta Kanter, or Deputy Secretary of Education Tony Miller?
2) To what extent is neoliberal ideology evident among themes which characterize the addresses?
3) To what extent does the federal discourse on higher education, as evidenced in these commencement addresses, create an ideal to which institutions must aspire?
4) If such an ideal is created in federal discourse on higher education as evidenced in these commencement addresses, what are the defining elements of the ideal as articulated within the selected discourse?

Data Collection

The corpus of data for this project included commencement addresses delivered by President Obama, Vice President Biden, Secretary of Education Arne Duncan, Under Secretary of Education Martha Kanter, and Deputy Secretary of Education Tony Miller, delivered during the first Obama term in the Whitehouse, from May 2009 to May 2012. Addresses delivered by the President and Vice President were downloaded from the Speeches and Remarks page of the White House website (www.whitehouse.gov), and speeches from the Secretary and Undersecretaries were downloaded from the Speeches page of the Department of Education website (www.ed.gov). 24 addresses, totaling 124 pages and 66,736 words, were analyzed. The following section describes coding and analysis procedures.

Coding and Analysis

The first round of coding included a simple manual filtering of the data to sort out portions dealing specifically with higher education. Data treating P-12 education with no substantive inclusion of higher education were excluded from further coding and analysis. I then identified critical excerpts within the data that encompassed singular thoughts or concepts regarding higher education. These chunks of data were considered critical if they included any language at all about colleges and universities, including community colleges. I excluded any data that did not treat colleges and universities; such exclusions included language about the institution's sports teams, geographical location, and other unrelated topics. I also excluded language typical of the formality of the occasion, in which the speaker may thank the institution for inviting him or her to speak, and perhaps recognize the institution's president, chancellor, or other primary administrator. In this way, I identified 248 critical excerpts within the data. These excerpts varied in length from a single sentence to more than a hundred words in multiple sentences. I identified boundaries for excerpts based on the thoughts they contained, separating them when I perceived a new thought being presented by the speaker. I captured some thoughts in single phrases of only a few words, while other thoughts took multiple paragraphs to capture. These words and phrases were organized according to topic in order to begin to identify emergent themes in the data, addressing Research Question 1.

A third round of coding was conducted with specific attention to the remaining research questions, including ways in which language in the data works to establish an ideal to which institutions must aspire. The following sections describe how research

findings are represented, followed by a description of steps taken to address researcher positionality and trustworthiness in analysis.

Representation of the Data

Findings of data analysis are presented thematically. Emergent themes based on early coding are depicted in tables associating themes with their textual referents. Each theme is described and contextualized with other themes and within the larger corpus of data. Discrepant cases (Patton, 2002) that do not align with the dominant framings in the data are included as well, in both the tabular representation as well as the contextualization with other themes, as appropriate.

The final sections of this chapter address trustworthiness and validity, opening with a discussion of my positionality as a researcher, followed by steps taken to consider that positionality in the data analysis, as well as steps taken to improve trustworthiness of the analytical process.

Researcher Positionality

First and foremost, I should acknowledge the critical positioning (Crotty, 2002) that shaped my conduction of this research study. In conducting a review of literature on neoliberalism and higher education, I became convinced of the existence of a dominant neoliberal value system at play in American society with regard to higher education, with significant implications for institutions. Additionally, with early academic training in English literature and composition, I place a particular value on the liberal arts curriculum; pursuing a terminal degree in higher education, I clearly am an active scholar in the social sciences as well. Neoliberal trends threaten both these areas of the

curriculum, which clearly motivates me to better understand neoliberalism and work to counteract its negative impacts.

Finally, I am a believer in the role of government in providing a social safety net to the citizenry through efficient and regulated systems. This includes funding mechanisms for public education, health, and other controversial areas of government. To address these major areas that comprise my sensibility as a researcher, I logged sporadic reflexive journal entries during the data analysis process. Researcher positionality cannot be removed from the research process, and qualitative researchers should not aspire to objectivity, as the researcher is the human instrument in a qualitative study such as this one (Patton, 2002). Moreover, Critical methodologies proceed with the understanding that researchers hold particular identities and investments that shape their conduct of analysis and research. Thus, reflexive steps like the journal allow an accurate depiction of my personal history and how it may have shaped data collection and analysis (Pillow, 2003) These steps acknowledge the balance I sought between an accurate depiction my self-awareness and reflexivity (Patton, 2002), coupled with steps taken to ensure trustworthiness in the analytical process, described below.

Trustworthiness

Although qualitative research does not seek an objective depiction of research data devoid of researcher influence, qualitative projects must still demonstrate trustworthiness and validity in their design and execution (Pillow, 2003). Lincoln and Guba (1986) call for dependability and authenticity in naturalistic inquiry, and I sought to establish a version of those measures for this study. As triangulation of the data was not possible for this study, with only one data type, I instead relied on seeking discrepant

cases within the data (Patton, 2002). By checking for instances within the data that contradict the presence or influence of neoliberalism or its impacts, I created more reliable observations of the occurrence of relevant thematic data as well. I also drafted a series of code memos and constantly compare these codes to the data to ensure consistent meaning of codes throughout the analysis process (Creswell, 2009). These two measures helped ensure fit (Patton, 2002) of interpretation to data and increase trustworthiness.

This chapter describes the epistemological stance shaping this study and described critical discourse analysis as the appropriate methodology to be employed. This chapter also provides an operationalized definition of discourse to be applied. The corpus of data to be examined is described, followed by an articulation of analysis and representation steps. It closes with a discussion of researcher positionality and trustworthiness.

The research study presented here seeks to add depth to ongoing research on neoliberalism and higher education by exploring to what extent neoliberalism exists within federal discourse on higher education. This study is designed to understand to how neoliberalism operates in that discourse, and to what extent it may create an ideal with which educational institutions must negotiate, and that may influence the publically-accepted mission of higher education. The findings of this study may contribute to ongoing conversations about the future role of higher education in American society. Chapter 4 includes results of the analysis as a starting point for this contribution.

CHAPTER 4

FINDING THE POWER:

CONFLICTING PATTERNS AND IDEALS

President Barack Obama has made repeated calls for increased accountability regarding the funding for higher education, as well as greater affordability and improved consumer protections for students and their families (Obama, 2012c; 2013). The specific language within these calls for increased accountability based on outcomes such as graduation rates and job placement (Lieb, 2012), represent examples of state and federal-level discourse that regards American higher education in neoliberal terms of efficiency, human capital, and economic return-on-investment (Burke, 2005; Giroux, 2002; Jones, 2009; Loss, 2012). This chapter presents data patterns that emerged in an inductive analysis of the text of commencement speeches. The analysis explores underlying discourses about higher education and examines those discourse traces to explore their implications for institutions. Further, I define discourse as the interaction between social practices/situations and power, as manifested in written or spoken language exchanges.

The chapter is organized around conceptual statements identified within the data. These statements represent a broad range of concerns regarding the contemporary role of

higher education in American society, including a set of data that present conflicting ideals. On one hand, these data include neoliberal assertions about higher education and economic impacts that reflect the neoliberal paradigm; however, several such assertions immediately preceded statements that outline traditional, societal benefits of education, directly contradicting the neoliberal paradigm. These incongruous statements represent a compelling and unexpected set of data. In addition, analytical interpretation of data revealed excerpts both commensurate with the neoliberal paradigm and others that better fit a more traditional paradigm for higher education. Finally, data include specific characteristics that embody an ideal to which institutions must aspire. This chapter presents these data from the study to answer four guiding research questions:

1) With regard to higher education, what patterns characterize commencement addresses delivered between May of 2009 and May of 2012 by President Barack Obama, Vice President Joseph Biden, Secretary of Education Arne Duncan, Under Secretary of Education Marta Kanter, or Deputy Secretary of Education Tony Miller?
2) To what extent is neoliberal ideology evident among patterns that characterize the addresses?
3) To what extent does the federal discourse on higher education, as evidenced in these commencement addresses, create an ideal to which institutions must aspire?
4) If such an ideal is created in federal discourse on higher education, as evidenced in these commencement addresses, what are the defining elements of the ideal as articulated within the selected discourse?

The first research question represents the broadest of the four, employing inductive content analysis (Patton, 2002) to identify whatever patterns exist in the

discourse with any regard to higher education. The second question investigates whether patterns in the data include neoliberal ideology, and to what extent. The third and fourth questions seek to determine if an ideal is created within the discourse to which institutions must aspire, and to identify specific characteristic components of that ideal if one exists.

This chapter presents data in an order that loosely matches the order of the guiding research questions; all emergent patterns are presented first, followed by an examination of neoliberal patterns within the discourse. Additionally, the chapter includes a set of data that combine neoliberal and traditional purposes for higher education. The final section describes the emergent data that articulates an ideal (Fairclough, 2001) to which institutions must aspire, and the characteristics that make up that ideal. In this order, data are presented in a broad-to-narrow focus, beginning with an analysis on all emergent patterns.

Definitional Patterns within the Discourse

In order to identify patterns emergent among the critical excerpts, I performed an inductive content analysis (Patton, 2002), and in this way identified 58 patterns in nine categories. This chapter presents the patterns and categories in table format in addition to narrative description; tables allow the ability to display large chunks of data with descriptive information as adjunct to the narrative analyses and discussion (Creswell, 2009). Table 4.1 lists all patterns and categorical themes. The nine themes in the left column are organized based on content area such as the "Role of Higher Education in the American Identity" or the "Inflection Points Define the Present." (Oxford Dictionary (2013) defines "inflection point" as "a point of a curve at which change in…direction

Table 4.1

Themes from the Discourse

Theme Category	Analytic Statements
Resilience of the Class of 2010	The current generation of graduates has faced greater obstacles to success than past generations
	More non-traditional students have overcome barriers related to school/life balance than in past generations
	Community colleges play a critical role in the resilience of this class
	President Obama's open letter to the class of 2010 bestows a responsibility for the American future on members of the class
Critical Need to Embrace Change	Non-action will also yield change in a difficult future
	This generation must steel its spine and embrace change
	The consequence of changed circumstances effect historical change
	Past conflict and strife shape the future
Inflection Points Define the Present	Current graduates enter the world at an inflection point in history
	The present is very different from the not-too-distant past
	This generation should bend history in the service of a better day
	Current foreign wars impact U.S. global success
Graduates' Self-Agency Shapes the Future	This generation faces a difficult future ahead
	Current graduates can control their own destiny
	Non-action will also yield change in a difficult future
	There is reason for optimism in spite of a difficult future
	Graduates help the United States is in a global race for the future
	President Obama's Goal 2020, as shaped by graduates' self-agency, is critical for U.S. global success in the future
Role of Higher Education in the American Identity	Americans have a commitment to one another to help and uplift each other
	Americans enjoy a promise of our ideals and values as a benefit of citizenship
	Education is the great American equalizer
	Higher education is a greater good for society
	Americans are entering another great American century
	American society still enjoys American exceptionalism on the global stage
Role of Service in the Future Vitality of America	This generation should bend history in the service of a better day
	There is a great current need for and commitment to community service among this generation
	Military service is to be highly valued among college students
	This generation must encourage those behind them to go to college
	Higher education is a greater good for society

Defining American Higher Education Relative to Social Goods & Economic Roles		Higher education means powerful ideas and innovation
		Higher education means economic efficiency and constant process improvement
		Higher education means lifting up the underserved
		Higher education as a social equalizer is critical to American democracy
		Higher education has a deep connection to civil rights in American history
		Higher education means all American citizens have an opportunity for success
		Higher education means freedom
		Higher education is a greater good for society
A Neoliberal Role for Higher Education	Neoliberal Statements	Good jobs are hard to find
		Individuals with higher education can expect a financial benefit as a result
		The current global recession represents a momentous challenge and opportunity
		Colleges and universities should emphasize STEM preparation
		Higher education is key to keeping the United States competitive in the global knowledge economy
		Federal investments in higher education should yield economic benefits in the global knowledge economy
		Higher education should provide economic value commensurate with the debt assumed by students and families
		Advances in technology yield a more connected globe
		The United States are active in global competition for economic leadership
		The United States must be a global economic leader in the 21st century
	Blended Statements	Public education needs to be valued more highly in American society
		The United States needs to invest in the educational future of its children
		Higher education should be available to all Americans
		Education is the great American equalizer
		Higher education is a greater good for society
Power in the Discourse		Congressional action is necessary for improvement of access and affordability for college
		Diversity is critical to a successful American democracy
		Social justice is critical to a successful American democracy
		Speakers articulate statements of representation of other, higher-level federal actors
		The speaker has a personal connection to the audience via a shared experience

…occurs.") The analytic statements on the right include specific attitudes or assertions as identified and articulated by the researcher during early data analysis. As is common in qualitative data analysis, the categories emerging from the inductive content analysis are not necessarily discrete from each other, meaning some patterns fit into more than one category, reflecting multiple discourses and may be repeated in the table. One theme, "Power Dynamics in the Discourse," includes data that highlight power dynamics among and between the commencement speakers, or in American society more broadly. Further, the themes are presented in an order moving from a focus on students in "The Resilience of the Class of 2010," to emphasizing individual and collective social benefits of education in the next four categories, ending with definitions of higher education relative to economics and other concerns in the final three themes. Discussions of these theme groupings follow this same order.

Table 4.2 displays data excerpts from each theme, including information on the speaker, date, and location of the address. The following sections briefly describe each of the nine themes. The sections are ordered to reflect the nature of the patterns that emerged in the data. The first five sections do not necessarily reflect neoliberal ideology, and in most cases actually directly contradict the neoliberal paradigm. The seventh section, "Defining Higher Education Relative to Social Good and Economics," acts as a bridge to the section dealing with the "Role of Higher Education in Global Economics," wherein the neoliberal ideology is prevalent. The final section will examine the heavy use of metaphors within the discourse. Each section below begins with a data epigraph to give specific focus to the analysis.

Table 4.2

Textual Excerpts as Examples of Themes

Theme Category	Textual Excerpt from Category	Speaker, Location, and Date
Resilience of the Class of 2010	The class of 2010 has had to climb steps and overcome obstacles that younger students at four-year residential colleges typically don't face.	Arne Duncan, Foothill College, 2010
Critical Need to Embrace Change	There is… greater risk in accepting a situation we know we cannot sustain than in steeling our spine and embracing the promise of change…	Joe Biden, Syracuse University, 2009
Inflection Points Define the Present	Absent our input and leadership, we will continue to careen in the direction the momentum is now taking it. That…is an inflection point.	Joe Biden, Syracuse University, 2009
Graduates' Self-Agency Shapes the Future	As you cross the stage today to receive your degrees, you will usher in society's next generation of graduates…you will become role models for your family, friends, co-workers…who will also have the chance to follow the path of education and lifelong learning, essential to our social [and] economic…future.	Martha Kanter, Palo Alto University, 2010
Role of Higher Education in the American Identity	If we rise to this moment in history, if we meet our responsibilities then…the 21st century will be another great American Century.	Barack Obama, Air Force Academy, 2012
Role of Service in the Future Vitality of America	Acts of sacrifice and decency without regard to what's in it for you…create…ripple effects - ones that lift up families and communities; that spread opportunity and boost our economy.	Barack Obama, Arizona State University, 2009
Defining American Higher Education Relative to Social Good & Economics	America's economic preeminence, our ability to outcompete other countries, will be shaped not just in our boardrooms, not just on our factory floors, but in our classrooms, and our schools, at universities…	Barack Obama, Hampton University, 2010
A Neoliberal Role for Higher Education	President Obama…wants the United States, once again, "to have the best educated, most competitive workforce in the world."	Martha Kanter, Excelsior College, 2010
Power Dynamics in the Discourse	So don't accept somebody else's construction of the way things ought to be…It's up to you to hold the system accountable and sometimes upend it entirely.	Barack Obama, Barnard College, 2012

The resilience of the Class of 2010:

It takes hard work and tenacity to earn a degree or certificate….But the truth is that…the class of 2010 has had to climb steps and overcome obstacles that younger students at four-year residential colleges typically don't face. (Duncan, 2010b)

This theme category deals with the particular challenges the class of 2010 faced graduating during "the worst recession since the Great Depression," (Obama, 2012a). The tone of this set of data is one of congratulations and praise, as the speakers seem to seek to acknowledge and champion the graduates' ability to overcome a set of unique challenges. The discourse highlights the particular struggles of this graduating class relative to the economic malaise of the country, and uses these unique challenges as a context for the need to embrace change brought about by the recession, which is captured in the next theme category.

Critical need to embrace change:

There is much greater risk in accepting a situation we know we cannot sustain than in steeling our spine and embracing the promise of change. (Biden, 2009b)

Nine conceptual assertions comprise this category, each addressing the need for positive change, and the high potential for college graduates to enact it. The language in this category sets a tone of encouragement and warning, calling for change rather than maintaining the status quo. In the epigraph for this section, Vice President Biden calls for Americans to "steel [their] spine" and embrace change, using a metaphor that brings to mind images of hard-working Americans, unyielding in the face of adversity. This

image evolves within the data, to include foreign wars and other sweeping historical events, described below.

Two statements center on the United States' involvement in current or past wars, and the challenge that these conflicts present to students and the entire country. In these instances, speakers also used American resilience in these conflicts as illustrative of the American spirit, possessed by new college graduates:

> When bombs fell on Pearl Harbor, when an Iron Curtain fell over Europe, when the threat of nuclear war loomed just 90 miles from [Miami], when a brilliant September morning was darkened by terror – in none of those instances did we falter. We endured. We carried the dream forward. (Obama, 2011b)

These dramatic images work to make earning a college degree synonymous with patriotism and perpetuating the American dream, further emphasizing the critical role that higher education must play if the United States is to remain a dominant global competitor. Although this language refers to actual warfare rather than economic competition, this phrasing nonetheless places a responsibility on college graduates to tend to the welfare of the entire nation.

Similarly, four other statements in this category call for college graduates to act, to "bend [history] in service of a better day," (Biden, 2009a). Citing historical "inflection points" (Biden, 2012; 2009a; 2009b) in multiple addresses, Vice President Joe Biden repeatedly urges graduates to take action to improve the future, rather than opt for inaction. Undersecretary of Education Martha Kanter describes the choice facing new graduates as a liminal moment:

> Today you are experiencing a 'liminal' moment in your life, a time when you

> stand not on one bank or the other, but in the middle of the river, crossing over to new freedoms and new fears, made possible by the new knowledge you have gained. In 'liminal' space, like in twilight, we are betwixt and between - no longer who we were and not yet who we will become...But mostly it is a time of opportunity. (Kanter, 2010c)

Data such as these pose an either/or situation to college graduates, to either accept the current status of the country, or work to change it. These data describe moments of opportunity and obligation to act.

The data within this theme category also serve to illustrate the high and historical stakes that face new college graduates, whom these speakers charge with ensuring the future vitality of the country. That the future of the country may rest on the shoulders of college graduates is not necessarily a neoliberal notion, but at least reflects the high value the speakers place on higher education and the need for further federal-level investment in it. This data situates the role of higher education within the context of the American Dream as a vehicle for national survival. Choice of certain actions over others to promote survival represents "inflection points," which comprise the next theme category.

Inflection points define the present:

> *Absent our leadership, [the world] will continue down the path we're going now. That…is an inflection point. (Biden, 2009a)*

Vice President Biden, on multiple occasions, references the "inflection points" currently faced by the American people. These points seem to be moments of high potential and opportunity, and the Vice President encourages graduates and their families to grasp them: "Do nothing, or take history into our own and like few generations that are

given the chance, bend it – it in the service of a better day," (Biden, 2009b). The Vice President glorifies images of past generations who have faced similar inflection points, encouraging graduates to follow in their generational example and seize the moment before them. This motivational rhetoric serves to capture the speakers' repeatedly articulated belief, throughout the data set, that the graduating classes they address hold the key to the social and economic future of the American people, a notion further explored in the next section.

Graduates' self-agency shapes the future:

> *As you cross the stage today to receive your degrees, you will usher in society's next generation of graduates. In doing so, you will become role models for your family, friends, co-workers…who will also have the chance to follow the path of education and lifelong learning, essential to our social, economic, environmental and political future. (Kanter, 2010c)*

This category includes five conceptual statements that deal directly with the future for graduates and for the United States in general. The language and tone of this category describe what stakes new graduates face: the very future of their nation, and the welfare of their family, friends, and co-workers. The tone of this set of data urgently implies specific responsibilities on the shoulders of graduates.

Speakers tend to describe a future with difficult challenges for graduates in the audiences they addressed, but the speakers are also likely to describe the difficult future with optimism. In one example, President Obama predicts a new American Century: "I firmly believe that if we rise to this moment in history, if we meet our responsibilities, then – just like the 20th century – the 21st century will be another great American

Century…That's the future [new graduates] can build," (Obama, 2012b). In this address delivered to the Air Force Academy in 2012, the President describes those "responsibilities" as keeping America competitive through investments in education, manufacturing, science and innovation. Investing in these areas, according to the President, would also result in economic benefits, including increased and improved employment opportunities for college graduates. In short, success in a difficult future is tied directly to the success of new college graduates.

This theme category also characterizes a race for the future, in which continued American supremacy is predicated on educational investments for economic success. Speaking to the United States Naval Academy in 2009, President Obama outlines the stakes and rules of the economic game of the future:

> We must educate our children to compete in an age where knowledge is capital, and the marketplace is global…We have to pursue science and research that unlocks wonders as unforeseen to us today as the microchip and the surface of the moon were a century ago. (Obama, 2009b)

This quote and others like it capture the broader neoliberal discourse and traces its reliance on knowledge as capital, the high value of innovation in STEM disciplines, and the expectation that education yields particular value for the nation.

Finally, this category captures multiple instances in which speakers refer to the President's Goal 2020, a goal that quantifies increased access to higher education as a means to continued economic vitality:

> To reach the President's [Goal 2020], we have to increase from 40 to 60% the number of Americans with college and university degrees by 2020, bringing more

> than 8 million students into American higher education over the next decade beyond the proportion that will graduate due to population growth. (Kanter, 2010c)

In this sentence citing the President's driving goal for higher education, Undersecretary of Education Martha Kanter directly equates increased production of college degrees with increased American competitiveness in the global workforce, reaffirming the neoliberal correlation between postsecondary education and 21st century workforce preparedness (Gewertz, 2007; Judy & D'Amico, 1997; Stone, Kaminski, & Gloeckner, 2009; van Dam, 2012; van der Linde, 2000). Seizing on opportunities to improve the educational and economic future of the United States characterizes this theme category dealing with the future, and such belief in the future represents a key element in the American identity, explored in the next section.

Role of higher education in the American identity:

> *An education can fortify us to meet the…tests of our times…What ultimately makes us American, quintessentially American, is something that can't be taught – a stubborn insistence on pursuing our dreams. (Obama, 2010b)*

This category includes six conceptual statements that reflect broader discursive focus on ideals and beliefs that the speakers present as values that define what it means to be an American, in terms of the rights and duties of individual citizens. In this category, speakers tend to focus on intoning patriotism and American exceptionalism, seeking to parlay patriotic ideals into action on the part of the new graduates.

Three of the categories describe the commitment Americans can expect to make to one another, and to their country as part of the "American identity" as described by the

speakers:

> Throughout history, what has distinguished us from all other nations is not just our wealth; it's not just our power. It's been our deep commitment to individual freedom and personal responsibility, but also our unshakeable commitment to one another. (Obama 2011b)

This excerpt and other data from the discourse further connect higher education to American values by situating it within this discourse of "individual freedom and personal responsibility."

Other assertions in this category reflect the concept of American exceptionalism, a belief that the United States can and should hold a role of global leadership and influence, in part through a commitment to higher education: "Time and again, Americans have risen to meet and shape moments of change. This is one of those moments - an era of economic transformation and individual empowerment," (Obama, 2009b). Excerpts such as this situate higher education as a catalyst for transformation and empowerment. The tone of the rhetoric becomes lofty and broad in such excerpts, befitting language to capture the idea of American exceptionalism and the role of education in fostering a national identity. Within this data, the speakers present higher education as an integral catalyst for transformation and American global success. American global leadership and higher education are presented in tandem, and in such a way as to present them as nearly synonymous.

Finally, a dominant theme in this category and within the larger discourse posits higher education as the great American equalizer. Citing the ability to get and keep quality jobs, overcome social barriers, and otherwise improve social conditions, data

from Deputy Secretary of Education Tony Miller captures this theme: "In the knowledge economy, education…is the great equalizer. It is the one force today that can consistently overcome differences in background, culture, and privilege," (Miller, 2011). Secretary of Education Arne Duncan echoes the sentiment: "I urge you to remember that poverty is not destiny. Education, above all, must be the great equalizer in America," (Duncan, 2010c). Education as the great equalizer serves to once again reinforce the role higher education plays in American society, empowering individual citizens.

The statements in this category present a mixed set of data in terms of the prevalence and characteristics of the neoliberal paradigm. In particular, higher education as a social equalizer ascribes a traditional, classical liberal role to education. Positioning higher education as a catalyst for global economic development and transformation fits the neoliberal paradigm more closely. So the statements dealing with American values within the discourse vary between neoliberal and traditional purposes for higher education, from economics to social equality. Community service is another element of social equality, and is captured in the next theme category.

Role of service in the future vitality of America:

Acts of sacrifice and decency without regard to what's in it for you…create…ripple effects - ones that lift up families and communities; that spread opportunity and boost our economy; that reach folks in forgotten corners of the world, who, in committed young people like you, see the true face of America: our strength, our goodness, our diversity, our enduring power, our ideals. (Obama, 2009d)

Within this category, the dominant conceptual statements deal with a need for

community service by college graduates upon entering society, and the need for college graduates to encourage others to seek out opportunities in higher education. Once again, the speakers' language and tone describe obligations faced by new graduates, "ripple effects" in the epigraph above. Referring to graduates as "the true face of America," the President endorses graduates as an embodiment of the American identity and protectors of the future.

In another instance, Undersecretary of Education Martha Kanter equates service and democracy in describing the role of new graduates in the future of America: "The third ingredient of a vibrant democracy is service…I am asking every graduate to make service an ongoing part of your life, beyond what you have already done," (Kanter, 2010a). By doing so, Kanter indicates that college graduates may "lift society as a whole," (Kanter, 2010b). Connecting higher education to social welfare and improvement definitely subscribes to the more traditional purpose of higher education and contradicts the neoliberal paradigm. Whereas the neoliberal paradigm calls for education to promote economic vitality and success, the excerpt above equates education with social uplift, regardless of economic impact. Graduates leave university not only with economic tools and knowledge, but the ability to help, encourage, and facilitate the success of their fellow person.

Encouraging others to attend college may also be seen as contradicting the neoliberal paradigm, to the extent that doing so also leads to social uplift. Whereas the neoliberal paradigm calls for reliance on the free market to provide solutions to social ills (Rogers, Mosely, & Folkes, 2009; Olssen, 2004), Arne Duncan places the obligation of improving social conditions on the shoulders of college graduates: "[Whatever success

you find] carries with it responsibilities – to give something back to your community – to make it easier for those who come behind you," (Duncan, 2012). Tony Miller echoes this sentiment:

> I hope that every graduate comes to feels an obligation to be involved in some way in transforming education so that the students behind you go to college and earn their degrees too. Take your education and pay it forward. (Miller, 2011)

Describing an obligation to "pay…forward" the benefits of higher education affirms the presence of the speakers' subscription, at least in part, to the traditional elements of the purpose of higher education that includes democratic participation, community improvement and other social contributions (Checkoway, 2001; Kezar, 2004; Labaree, 1997). This particular element, social improvement, is one way in which higher education is defined within the discourse; the next theme category describes other definitions of higher education also present in the data, definitions that demonstrate social and economic impacts of higher education.

Defining higher education relative to social goods and economic roles:

> *More and more, America's economic preeminence, our ability to outcompete other countries, will be shaped not just in our boardrooms, not just on our factory floors, but in our classrooms, and our schools, at universities. (Obama, 2010b)*

The language and tone of this data promotes bringing global competition into academic classrooms, positioning students as key contributors to "America's economic preeminence." The language in the epigraph above positions students as equal economic contributors as factory workers and corporate board members, a significant elevation of the role of students.

Assertions in this category also include defining higher education in terms of freedom and opportunity. According to Arne Duncan, "The future…is inspiring…With an education there are no boundaries. It's the best and most lasting form of freedom," (Duncan, 2012). Also referring to higher education as "the civil rights issue of our generation," (Miller, 2011), this theme portrays higher education within the context of struggles for equality. Doing so is yet another way in which the speakers' language indirectly contradicts the neoliberal paradigm. Neoliberal thinking would have free market services address issues of social inequity, while the definition of higher education in this theme category equates such equality with democratic ideals of guaranteed individual freedom achievable through education. Coding for this theme category included use of the word "economic" as a signal for the neoliberal paradigm. This term may also signify references to America as a whole, students getting jobs, or other concerns that are not specifically neoliberal. Specific neoliberal language is described in the next theme category.

A neoliberal role for higher education:

President Obama has asked all of our 6,000 colleges and universities in America to increase by 50% the proportion of college graduates by the year 2020…he wants the United States, once again, "to have the best educated, most competitive workforce in the world. (Kanter, 2010a)

Containing 15 conceptual statements, this category is the largest that emerged from the analysis, and contains excerpts that lend a neoliberal bend to the data. The rhetoric in this data is the most heavily laden with economically quantifiable terms and competitive language. The resulting tone is heavily neoliberal and economically focused.

Ten statements focus squarely on neoliberal concerns, and the other four statements contain a mixture of traditional and neoliberal thinking, demonstrating examples of a discourse that combines the two paradigms. The next two sections describe these theme groups, beginning with the neoliberal statements, followed by statements that reflect both the neoliberal and traditional paradigms for higher education.

Statements reflecting the neoliberal paradigm. Ten conceptual statements in this category include elements of the neoliberal paradigm, ranging from emphasis on disciplines that produce STEM and technological developments, to more return-on-investment prioritizing, to the competitive nature of goods and services in relation to money. I include three excerpts below to give examples of these statements.

Describing the need to create jobs to boost the economy, President Obama cites a focus on STEM job fields: "We're going to put America back to work by investing in the things that keep us competitive - education and high-tech manufacturing, science and innovation," (Obama, 2012a). In this excerpt education becomes synonymous with technological advances, with implications for prioritizing academic disciplines that produce such advances.

Meanwhile, nine excerpts mention the 21st century and the challenges that new graduates face as they seek jobs. Such excerpts call on colleges to provide skills and training to graduates to make them competitive workers: "These skills - managing uncertainty, adaption, innovation and influence - are the defining elements of a 21st century education," (Duncan, 2010b). Although the skills Secretary Duncan mentions are not strictly related to STEM disciplines, the implication remains that the purpose of higher education is primarily to prepare students for the job market. Further, this is one

of many examples that position educational institutions as producers of human capital (Ayers, 2005), preparing workers to succeed in the global knowledge economy.

Finally, this category includes a theme dealing with the concept of educational funding as an investment for America. Listing federal funding priorities, President Obama includes education as a budget line-item, aimed at success for individuals and the country: "We've chosen to invest in our people and their future - building public schools, sending a generation to college on the GI Bill, laying highways and roads, building ports all across the country," (Obama, 2011b). This excerpt captures the President's emphasis in this speech that higher education is an investment with an expected return, similar to roads and shipping ports, rather than a necessary governmental expenditure (Davies & Bansel, 2007); viewing education in this way requires justification in terms of human capital outputs in return for the investment, a firm element of the neoliberal paradigm (Ayers, 2005). However, expecting returns on investments in education to include individual and social benefits blends neoliberal thinking with the traditional purposes of education, and these instances of blended paradigms comprise an unexpected set of data. The next section describes these blended assertions.

Statements blending neoliberal and traditional educational paradigms. Two more assertions reflect contradictions to the neoliberal paradigm, positing education as a greater good for society, and one that should be available to all Americans. These excerpts subscribe to the traditional role of higher education as preparation for citizenship, extended to all citizens via individual self-scrutiny (Nussbaum, 1997). But these two conceptual statements contain neoliberal elements within them as well. Speaking to Rhodes State College, Martha Kanter describes the impact of higher

education on society: “I know we can count on you to take the knowledge you gained here and go out and apply it in your careers and community service to lift society as a whole,” (Kanter, 2010b). This particular piece of the data focuses on a graduate’s community service as a social good, combined with professional success, to “lift society as a whole.” Doing so blends the neoliberal (professional knowledge and work-place preparation) with the non-neoliberal (social uplift prioritized equally individual success), creating a new discourse, which is described later in this chapter.

President Obama also blends the neoliberal with the non-neoliberal in order to recommend making education available to all: “So all of us have a responsibility, as Americans…to offer every single child in this country an education that will make them competitive in our global knowledge economy. That is our obligation as a nation,” (Obama, 2010b). Citing the need to be competitive in the global knowledge economy gives this quote a neoliberal shade, but describing the responsibility to ensure that every child receives an education emphasizes a different, non-neoliberal social obligation. This is another example of the combined discourse, with the traditional and neoliberal discourses working side by side.

Continuing the idea of access and making education available to all, another theme in this category emphasizes the financial burden facing students and their families when it comes to paying for college, raising questions of equity and access. Data in this theme call for increased federal funding in order to make attending college more accessible to all; but this funding is viewed as an investment, thereby making it a neoliberal priority with expected returns. Citing “unprecedented” (Duncan, 2010a) increases to federal Pell grants and other aid, Arne Duncan emphasizes the priority placed

on higher education, in order to make it available to all. President Obama displays sensitivity to the financial plight of students, acknowledging struggles with student loans, credit card debt, and "ensur[ing] that your children have the same opportunities you've had to get an education and pursue their dreams," (Obama, 2009d).

However, President Obama also describes the expectations that accompany funding for education: "Your nation has great expectations [of you]…We've made an enormous investment to build you into the leaders that you are," (Obama, 2011a). The use of the term "investment" in this excerpt clearly captures the return-on-investment conceptualizing that characterizes the neoliberal paradigm (Klees, 2008). The return-on-investment paradigm represents a power differential, between those who invest, and those who make use of the investment. The next section examines the role of power within the discourse.

Power in the discourse:

Our children, our community, our country cannot win the race for the future if we let children and youth fall behind at the starting line. That is why Secretary Duncan says education is the civil rights issue of our generation. (Miller, 2011)

Within this portion of the data, speakers refer to power: power operating within American society, as well as power operating between the speakers themselves. Undersecretaries Miller and Kanter specifically reference Secretary Arne Duncan on multiple occasions, describing his goals and positions on education and taking these positions as their own. Vice President Biden mentions the goals that he and the President share as well (Biden, 2009b).

In terms of power in American society, the President and other speakers

emphasize the critical elements of social justice associated with diversity and equality:

> So don't accept somebody else's construction of the way things ought to be. It's up to you to right wrongs. It's up to you to point out injustice. It's up to you to hold the system accountable and sometimes upend it entirely. (Obama, 2009d)

Such language and tone seem intended to motivate graduates to work as guardians of social justice and equality, using their education to construct their own view of "the way things out to be" and "upend the system" if necessary. The reference to the "system" of American society in the excerpt above is one example of metaphors at work within the data, as explored in the next section.

Metaphors in the discourse. In commencement speeches delivered by politicians, it is not surprising to find heavy reliance on metaphorical imagery and language. Every address had employed multiple metaphors, using symbolic imagery to describe challenges faced by students as "steps" graduates had to "climb," (Duncan, 2010b), to the "path of education and lifelong learning" that new graduates can help family and friends follow (Kanter, 2010c). Vice President Biden encourages graduates and their families to "steel yours spines" in the face of adversity and opportunity (Biden, 2009b). In contrast to steel, President Obama describes "ripple effects" of social uplift, calling to mind serene, but moving, waters (Obama, 2009d).

These metaphors had an overall effect on the tone of the discourse, a tone that characterizes struggle, success, and care for others. This tone also emanates hope within the rhetoric, and gives a positive encouragement to graduates. The use of metaphor does not necessarily have any direct relationship to the question of the role of neoliberalism within the discourse; nevertheless, the prominence of metaphor within the data makes it

noteworthy.

Excerpts from the Data that Reflect Neoliberal Discourse

To explore the extent to which patterns in the data included neoliberal ideology, I developed a set of coding criteria specific to definitions of neoliberalism as presented in Chapter 2 of this study. These criteria identified any language that could be related to neoliberal ideology, including concepts such as efficiency, human capital, and economic return-on-investment (Burke, 2005; Giroux, 2002; Jones, 2009; Loss, 2012). Applying these coding criteria to the critical excerpts, I identified 90 excerpts that included one or more elements of the neoliberal paradigm. Table 4.3 provides examples of excerpts from the text that were identified as neoliberal.

Table 4.3

Examples of Neoliberal Discourse within the Data

Neoliberal Excerpts	Speaker, Location, and Date
This generation…is the one that must find a path back to prosperity and decide how we respond to a global economy that left millions behind …	Barack Obama, University of Notre Dame, 2009
[You} are about to enter the next phase of your life at a time of great uncertainty. You'll be called to help restore a free market that's also fair to all who are willing to work.	Barack Obama, University of Notre Dame, 2009
We must educate our children to compete in an age where knowledge is capital, and the marketplace is global…	Barack Obama, United States Naval Academy, 2009
The future belongs to young people with an education and the imagination to create. That is the source of power in this century.	Barack Obama, New Economic School (Russia), 2009
You can help us build a democracy that serves the top 100% of Americans with an education that prepares them to compete in the global economy.	Martha Kanter, Rhodes State College, 2010
President Obama has asked all of our 6,000 colleges and universities in America to increase by 50% the proportion of college graduates by the year 2020…	Martha Kanter, Excelsior College, 2010
We're going to put America back to work by investing in the things that keep us competitive - education and high-tech manufacturing, science and innovation.	Barack Obama, United States Air Force Academy, 2012

Systematic data analysis necessitates seeking "discrepant cases" (Patton, 2002) in the data to better understand the phenomenon under study, consider the data in more depth and detail, and thereby also enhance the validity of the analysis process and eventual findings. In order to do so, I identified language excerpts that I interpreted as specifically contradictory to neoliberal ideology. This search for contra-neoliberal instances within the data yielded 46 instances among the critical excerpts. Table 4.4 provides examples of data that emerged from this search for discrepant cases.

Table 4.4

Examples of Traditional Excerpts from the Discourse

Non- Neoliberal Excerpts	Speaker, Location, and Date
Your generation is volunteering in record numbers.	Joe Biden, Wake Forest University, 2009
Yesterday I visited the National Archives and the halls that hold our Constitution, our Declaration of Independence, and our Bill of Rights…The values and ideals in those documents are not simply words written into aging parchment, they are the bedrock of our liberty and our security.	Barack Obama, United States Naval Academy, 2009
You serve as a reminder and a challenge to your fellow Americans to fulfill the true meaning of citizenship.	Barack Obama, United States Naval Academy, 2009
The success of [democracy as envisioned by Thomas Jefferson and other Founding Fathers] depended on participation of its people - the participation of Americans like you.	Barack Obama, Hampton University, 2010
Great teaching is about more than education; it is a daily fight for social justice.	Arne Duncan, Lesley University, 2010
So when you leave here, be true to your essential self and follow your passion. Run for office. Volunteer at a local school. Tutor or coach - even if it sometimes seems the tougher path to take.	Arne Duncan, Foothill College, 2010
Every graduate faces this question: What can I offer besides my labor?	Arne Duncan, Navajo Technical College, 2012

Having searched both for instances of neoliberal ideology as well as instances that contradicted neoliberal ideology, I found several excerpts that included sentences or even

entire paragraphs that embraced both paradigms. These excerpts included language that subscribes to neoliberal ideology based on the developed criteria I used, as well as language at odds with neoliberalism. These contradictory data represent a blending of public and private purposes of higher education, positing economic benefits for the entire nation, coupled with individual social benefits (Marginson, 2007). For example, speaking to the graduating class of 2010 at Hampton University, President Obama captures the spirit of the disputed purpose of higher education: "So, allowing you to compete in the global economy is the first way your education can prepare you. But it can also prepare you as citizens," (Obama, 2010b). In a single short statement, the President cites the main neoliberal motivator for higher education, competing in the global knowledge economy (Davies & Bansel, 2007; Hursh, 2007) followed by reference to the traditional purpose of higher education, preparing an educated citizenry (Checkoway, 2001; Kezar, 2004; Labaree, 1997).

Having identified such instances early in this stage of the analysis, I identified 17 critical excerpts that met the dual criterion. Table 4.5 includes a listing of all 17 excerpts. These excerpts that I have classified as containing both neoliberal and traditional paradigms for higher education may be the most surprising data of the study. The discourse highlighted in this table displays the speakers' emphasis both on individual empowerment and equality, along with economic vitality and growth at the national level. These data echo sentiments such as those from the Association of American Colleges and University (AAC&U) that call for changes in educational outcomes that benefit the student, the national economy, and the social community (American Association of Colleges and Universities, 2007). As will be discussed further in Chapter 5, these

excerpts articulate a blended discourse describing higher education in the 21st century that combines neoliberal and traditional purposes. Such a discourse may be embodied by ideals generated in it. The next section describes related data.

Table 4.5

Excerpts Combining Neoliberal and Traditional Paradigms

Excerpt	Speaker, Location, and Date
Acts of sacrifice and decency…lift up families and communities; that spread opportunity and boost our economy; that reach folks in forgotten corners of the world, who, in committed young people like you, see the true face of America: our strength, our goodness, our diversity, our enduring power, our ideals.	Barack Obama, Arizona State University, 2009
Time and again, Americans have risen to meet and shape moments of change. This is one of those moments - an era of economic transformation and individual empowerment…	Barack Obama, United States Naval Academy, 2009
So, allowing you to compete in the global economy is the first way your education can prepare you. But it can also prepare you as citizens.	Barack Obama, Hampton University, 2010
The value of the education we now celebrate is gauged by how well it equips and inspires you to improve your piece of the world.	Martha Kanter, Palo Alto University, 2010
All of you have shown us that you understand the responsibility you have to serve others…You came here to gather knowledge and apply it in the real world to help others and lift society as a whole.	Martha Kanter, Palo Alto University, 2010
You will become role models for your family, friends …who will also have the chance to follow the path of education and lifelong learning, essential to our social, economic, environmental and political future.	Martha Kanter, Palo Alto University, 2010
President Obama said that by 2020, the United States must become, once again, "the best educated, most competitive workforce in the world." He said this because he understands that education is the key to our country's economic and social prosperity. And he recently proclaimed that "our leadership in the world relies upon its citizens who are not only well-educated, but also driven by their humanity and civic virtue."	Martha Kanter, Excelsior College, 2010
Through savings in the federal student loan program, the President and Congress approved $68 billion dollars to ensure that students who thought they could not afford college will have Pell grants and loans available to them for the next decade…	Martha Kanter, Rhodes State College, 2010

Your individual achievements…will give you more freedom - freedom to make better informed choices…freedom to chart your own path to a life with greater meaning and fulfillment, and freedom to help others improve their lives.	Martha Kanter, Rhodes State College, 2010
Let me ask you to strengthen your connection with someone who can benefit from a college education. Reach out to [someone] and encourage him or her to do the hard work that it takes to enter and complete college…It will not only make a difference in someone else's life, but you will also be helping your country by helping to meet President Obama's 2020 goal...	Martha Kanter, Rhodes State College, 2010
Today, in spite of the fact that we are facing tough economic times, in spite of…our tight job market, graduation from college is a truly remarkable achievement and one that gives you the special responsibility to lead the next generation of graduates that will strengthen our democracy.	Martha Kanter, Excelsior College, 2010
Because throughout history, what has distinguished us from all other nations is not just our wealth, it's not just our power. It's been our deep commitment to individual freedom and personal responsibility, but also our unshakeable commitment to one another.	Barack Obama, Miami Dade College, 2011
The first Americans were understandably skeptical of government. And ever since we've held on to the belief that government doesn't have all the answers, and we have cherished and fiercely defended our individual freedom. That's a strand of our nation's DNA. But the other strand is the belief that there are some things we can only do together, as one nation - and that our government must keep pace with the times.	Barack Obama, Miami Dade College, 2011
We have chosen to build a nation where everybody has a shot at opportunity, where everyone can succeed. We've chosen to invest in our people and their future - building public schools, sending a generation to college on the GI Bill, laying highways and roads, building ports all across the country.	Barack Obama, Miami Dade College, 2011
You have an education that helped prepare you to compete in a global economy…But the question remains: What are you going to do with a 21st century education now that you have it?	Tony Miller, Fayetteville State University, 2011

Creation of an Institutional Ideal

I performed a two-part analysis of the critical excerpts in order to explore data that articulated an institutional ideal. First, I read and sorted the data corpus, and identified in this way data related to establishing an ideal to which institutions must aspire. Potentially related data were identified via a simple word search of the data for

any excerpt that included the word "college" or "university." In this way excerpts that contained language that treated institutions either directly or indirectly were identified. The second stage of the analysis was deeper, and included a review of all 248 critical excerpts for any statement that included explicit or implicit imperatives for institutions. For example, any statement among the excerpts that included language about what a student will be able to do after graduation may indirectly indicate what an institution should accomplish in order to prepare the student to do it. Data that emerged in response to the research question, "To what extent does the federal discourse on higher education, as evidenced in these commencement addresses, create an ideal to which institutions must aspire?" are a matter of researcher interpretation. It is impossible to determine intent behind language in a given discourse (Fairclough, 2001), so for this portion of the analysis, data were included based on student abilities and obligations that are articulated within the commencement addresses.

In one example, President Obama charged the class of 2009 at the University of Notre Dame to "help restore a free market that's also fair to all who are willing to work," (Obama, 2009c). This quote suggests that institutions should provide curricular and other experiences that prepare graduates to take on such responsibilities. If a graduate reaches the end of his or her undergraduate career equipped to take on this challenge, it is due in part to the institution's meeting its responsibility to prepare students to meet such challenges. This excerpt implies that the University of Notre Dame gave students skills to restore the free market, for example.

Additionally, statements about the condition of the nation or global community, or about the future predicated on the behavior of students after graduation, also represent

indirect imperatives for institutions to prepare students. Addressing the 2009 graduating class at the U.S. Naval Academy, President Obama articulates such an indirect imperative:

> American innovation must be the foundation of American power, because at no time in human history has a nation of diminished economic vitality maintained its military and political primacy…. We cannot leave it to those in uniform to defend this country. We have to make sure that America is building on its strengths. (Obama, 2009b)

This excerpt suggests another possible implication, that graduates from institutions of higher education must help build these strengths, and institutions are obligated to make this reality possible by delivering an undergraduate experience commensurate with these strengths. In reviewing and organizing these excerpts around their content areas, I identified 10 expectations of college graduates, displayed in Table 4.6. The left column describes expectations for graduates, a skill or outcome they are expected to enact after receiving proper preparation in an institution of higher education. The column on the right gives a textual excerpt articulating that expectation. This set of 10 characteristics captures the ideal human capital outputs as articulated within the discourse analyzed in this study, and comprises the speakers' expectations of institutions. The table also includes each of the expectations and a corresponding excerpt from the data. Examples such as may be found in the displayed data do not spell out clear prescriptions for institutional behavior or education outcomes. Instead, the data portray implied functionality and ideal characteristics for institutions based on outcomes articulated within the discourse.

Table 4.6

Expectations of College Graduates Articulated within the Discourse

Expectations of Graduates	Example from the Text	
Unite the global community	You're connected with each other like no generation ever has been, and you're…unit[ing] a global community…	Joe Biden, Syracuse University, 2009
Change the world/create a bold new reality	[You] will help us seed an entire new era in world history…you will create for us a bold new reality.	Joe Biden, Syracuse University, 2009
Be the "true face" of America	Acts of sacrifice and decency without regard to what's in it for you create…ripple effects - ones that lift up families and communities…that reach folks in forgotten corners of the world, who…see the true face of America…	Barack Obama, Arizona State University, 2009
Help "those behind you"	[Success] carries with it responsibilities - to give something back to your community - to make it easier for those who come behind you.	Arne Duncan, Navajo Technical College, 2012
Be a participating American citizen	You serve as a reminder and a challenge to your fellow Americans to fulfill the true meaning of citizenship.	Barack Obama, United States Naval Academy, 2009
Goal 2020:	By receiving your degrees today, you have done your part in helping us move from 10th place to first in the world by the year 2020. Colleges and universities across the country are galvanizing together to meet this goal, even in such a challenging time as now as we move from these dire economic conditions into better times ahead.	Martha Kanter, Palo Alto University, 2010
Restore the free market	Now you, Class of 2009 [will] be called to help restore a free market that's also fair to all who are willing to work.	Barack Obama, University of Notre Dame, 2009
Foster innovation through STEM disciplines	America will only be as strong as our pursuit of scientific research and our leadership in technology and innovation.	Barack Obama, Miami Dade College, 2011
Keep America competitive	So all of us have a responsibility, as Americans…to offer every single child in this country an education that will make them competitive in our knowledge economy.	Barack Obama, Hampton University, 2010
Find a good job in a world in flux	Good jobs are hard to find…there's a global recession, a planet in peril, a world in flux.	Joe Biden, Wake Forest University, 2009

Table 4.7 translates the expectations for graduates into correlating characteristics of an ideal institution, phrasing the institutional characteristics as output statements.

Table 4.7

Characteristics of Ideal Created within the Discourse

Expectation of Graduates	Ideal Institutional Output Statement
Unite the global community	Produce leaders who are equipped to unite the global community.
Change the world/create a bold new reality	Produce creative, visionary leaders with skills to create a bold new reality for the world.
Be the "true face" of America	Produce citizens who represent the "true face" of America.
Help those "behind you" education.	Partner with state and federal governments, as well as other stakeholders to ensure access to higher education for all Americans.
Be a participating American citizen	Produce active citizens who participate in the democratic process.
Goal 2020: 60% of Americans have a degree by 2020	Ensure success of students in order to increase degree attainment.
Restore the free market	Produce graduates equipped to navigate economic flux and restore the free market.
Foster innovation through STEM disciplines	Produce graduates with STEM training who foster innovation and creation.
Keep America competitive	Produce graduates who can ensure the economic prosperity of the United States in the global knowledge economy.
Find a good job in a world in flux	Produce graduates with skills to find a good job in a world in flux.

These 10 output statements represent my interpretation of the data, inferring ideal characteristics based on expected skills and traits of graduates. These output statements and associated implications for institutions are discussed in Chapter 5.

Conflicted Data

This chapter describes conceptual statements emergent within the selected discourse body, with nine identified theme categories. The data at once affirm the presence of the neoliberal paradigm within the language of the commencement speeches, but also reveal a surprising presence of discourse subscribing to the traditional purposes of higher education, often in the same section of an address, or even within a single sentence. In total, the data include excerpts confirming the presence of the neoliberal paradigm, contra-indicative excerpts that subscribe to the more traditional purposes of

higher education in terms of educating an actively engaged democratic citizenry, and excerpts that do both. In terms of an ideal, this chapter identifies 10 specific ideal characteristics that emerge from the data. Chapter 5 discusses these data and findings that result from their implications.

CHAPTER 5

EXPANDING NEW SPACES:

DEFINING A LIMINAL DISCOURSE

The final chapter of this study explores the findings of the research, describing a liminal discourse emerging from a modified critical discourse analysis of neoliberal and classic liberal discourses on higher education. The chapter also includes a discussion of implications of this discourse for further research, theory and practice. In order to assist readers, this chapter restates the research topic, significance, and design of the study before moving into a discussion of the results. The first section of this chapter describes an overview of the study, followed by a brief section describing the methodology. The next two sections summarize the results of the study, and then discuss the new liminal discourse. The chapter ends with a discussion of implications.

Overview of the Study

This study adds to a growing body of scholarship treating the value of higher education as perceived by the public as well as with federal-level actors. Many scholarly works define this value relative to multiple factors, ranging from financial aid and access

(St. John, Hu, & Fisher, 2011) to technology transfer (Etzkowitz & Leydesdorff, 2000). This question of value arises as federal government seek protection from high pricing for tuition and fees on behalf of families (Consumer Finance Protection Bureau, 2012) and preparation for the 21st century job market (Lumina Foundation for Education, 2010). Such discussions have resulted in a debate over the broad purpose(s) of higher education, ranging from calls for traditional, democratic foundations of higher education (Giroux & Giroux, 2009), to calls for accountability and verifying value in the global knowledge economy (Olssen & Peters, 2005).

This study weighs in on this debate, considering implications as manifested in federal discourse on higher education. Specifically, this study explores federal discourse on higher education as manifested within speeches by President Obama and a select few others who represent him, and whether or not that discourse creates an ideal (Fairclough, 2001) to which institutions must aspire. As a result, the research presented here may help improve scholars' understanding of the discourse emanating from the Obama Administration with regard to a vision for the future of higher education.

To do so, this study is grounded in literature on the neoliberal paradigm of higher education (literature in support of, as well as opposing, the neoliberal paradigm) and considers potential implications for institutions. In a climate of tight state and federal budgets, this study responds to public calls for higher education institutions to provide increased accountability for public funding, and for increased production of human capital (Lumina Foundation for Education, 2010; Olssen & Peters, 2005) in order to remain competitive in the 21st century global knowledge economy.

Review of the Methodology

To accomplish the goals described in the previous section, this study employs a modified version of critical discourse analysis (CDA). The version of CDA used for this study focused on emergent patterns within a discourse of commencement addresses delivered by President Obama, Vice President Joseph Biden, Secretary of Education Arne Duncan, Undersecretary Martha Kanter, and Deputy Secretary of Education Tony Miller in commencement addresses delivered between 2009 and 2012, President Obama's first term in office. The next section describes CDA as a methodology, followed by a section listing limitations of the study, and concludes with descriptions of data selection and analysis.

Critical Discourse Analysis

CDA as a methodology is diverse in application, sharing roots in sociology and linguistics, but with broad recent applications in an array of social sciences (Gill, 2000). As a result of this diversity in use, CDA methods and steps vary from study to study, while basic guiding critical assumptions about language and power remain (Fairclough, 2001). Scholars generally agree on four basic phases of CDA: collection of data, coding of the data, analysis and interpretation (Fairclough, 2006; Gill, 2000). These four stages represent the methodological design for the research conducted here. Additionally, drawing on established versions of CDA, I defined discourse as the interaction between social practices/situations and power, as manifested in written or spoken language exchanges. This definition shaped data selection, described in the next section.

Data Selection

I selected this data corpus for two reasons: first, this selection allows a narrow

examination of a data set emphasizing higher education. Focusing on the discourse of higher education in commencement addresses given by members of the executive branch of the federal government, including the President, Vice President, and cabinet-level representatives captures the voices of major actors whose attitudes and decisions represent deep potential impacts for higher education institutions. Second, selection of commencement addresses represents a unique setting in which discussion of higher education and graduating students' roles as future leaders and productive citizens is the primary rhetorical purpose. A review of this data shows a strong presence of policy discussion, ranging from wars and military action abroad, to federal legislation on financial aid, to educational outcomes and assessment. In this way, examining commencement addresses allows a focused and deep analysis of federal-level discourse on higher education.

Analysis

The actual discourse analysis included three rounds: I first read and sorted the data to identify critical excerpts that treated higher education, discarding material with no substantive reference to higher education at all. I then analyzed the data generally, identifying emergent patterns. With this thematic analysis completed, I used the emergent patterns and four guiding research questions for a third round of analysis, using each question as a separate lens. The first and second research question focused on identifying patterns in the data, specifically seeking to determine whether neoliberal ideology was present and how prevalently it may shape the discourse. The third and fourth questions sought to determine whether the discourse creates an ideal to which institutions must aspire, and what characteristics comprise that ideal if one is created.

The next section summarizes the results in answer to these four research questions.

Summary of the Findings

The first round of analysis yielded 248 critical excerpts in the data that specifically dealt with the topic of higher education. Moving into the second round of analysis to identify patterns, I was able to identify nine dominant theme categories within the discourse. These categories did not all deal directly with education in the United States. Relative to higher education, the related categories that emerged from analysis included: socio-historical context for education, the definition of higher education, the economics of education, and the specific plight of the class of 2010.

Next, searching for instances of neoliberal ideology within the discourse, I identified 90 excerpts that included one or more elements of the neoliberal paradigm. I also identified 46 excerpts wherein the data directly contradicted the neoliberal paradigm and posited more traditional roles or purposes for higher education. In terms of whether the discourse created an ideal, 114 critical excerpts included language that characterized ideal outputs or behaviors for institutions; I sorted these excerpts into 10 general ideal characteristic categories.

Finally, and unexpectedly, 17 excerpts fell into a conflicting category, containing language that subscribed to the neoliberal paradigm, as well as language with the traditional mission of higher education articulated. These 17 excerpts that combined paradigms, along with the 46 excerpts that directly contradict the neoliberal paradigm, represent perhaps the most compelling findings and comprise what I am defining as a liminal discourse. The next section presents theory on liminality, followed by a discussion of the liminal data from the discourse.

Defining a Liminal Discourse

I refer to this combined vein of discourse as "liminal" (Turner, 1967) because it represents a threshold for change from established tradition to a new paradigm in terms of defining and assigning purpose to higher education in the United States. The term "liminal" also came from within the data as a member's term (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 2011) as Undersecretary Martha Kanter used the term to describe the moment of choice and action that new graduates face (Kanter, 2010c). This liminal discourse represents the convergence of two discourses with previously-exclusive posited missions for higher education. In this section I will include a brief discussion of the sociological history of the idea of liminality, followed by a detailed explanation of the liminal discourse that emerged from this study.

Sociological History of Liminality

Originating as terminology in Turner's (1967) study of symbolism and ritual among select African tribes, liminality as referring to rites of passage may be traced to van Gennep's (1909) work with transitions among individuals within social groups (as cited in Thomassen, 2009, p. 6). Turner (1967) describes transitions as occurring in three liminal stages: "separation, margin (or *limen*), and aggregation," (p. 94). The second stage comprises liminality, a stage of ambiguous change and movement from an earlier fixed point or condition to a new state.

Liminal moments may be understood as a singular "threshold" (Thomassen, 2009, p. 16) moment faced by an individual or an entire society, or may also be understood as a continuum of change. Certain rites generate liminal moments (Thomassen, 2009), and I contend here that graduation from college with a bachelor's degree comprises such a

ritual moment.

Further, individuals in a society may be emancipated when power is restructured around an existing vacuum, another liminal phenomenon (Wydra, 2009), and I contend that such a power restructuring is taking place with regard to higher education in the United States. Where colleges and universities once offered opportunities available to only the wealthiest Americans (Rudolph, 1990), the federal government and the general public are restructuring power to affirm the availability of higher education for all comers (Obama, 2012c). This restructuring of power around higher education constitutes a transformational event (Szakolczai, 2009) requisite for a liminal moment.

In this study, the data that emerged circumscribes movement within the discourse, a dislocation (Horvath, Thomassen, & Wydra, 2009) from two disparate starting points and arriving at a combined, complementary center. The historical purposes of higher education are one starting point, and the neoliberal paradigm is another; these two discourses overlap in key areas, creating a liminal discourse, described in the next section.

Liminal Discourse within this Study

Figure 5.2 represents select aspects from each discourse that reside within the liminal space, and other aspects that remain exclusive between the discourses. The circle on the left represents the discourse of the traditional role for education, solely to educate the citizenry via traditional academic disciplines. This circle allows no role for the free market in terms of social welfare, reserving that responsibility for state and federal governments. This circle captures all versions of the historical purposes of higher education. The circle on the right incorporates the neoliberal discourse for education,

linking it directly to economic development. This circle does not include social welfare or democratic engagement as purposes for education. It captures the emphasis on education as an economic tool at the expense of its traditional mission. The overlapping, liminal discourse captured in the center contains aspects of each discourse as they are manifested within the data, joining elements of each. This discourse allows for higher education to play a role in economic development and production of human capital, but not at the expense of the traditional liberal arts curriculum. This space posits higher education as a vehicle for social equity and welfare, and preparation of individuals

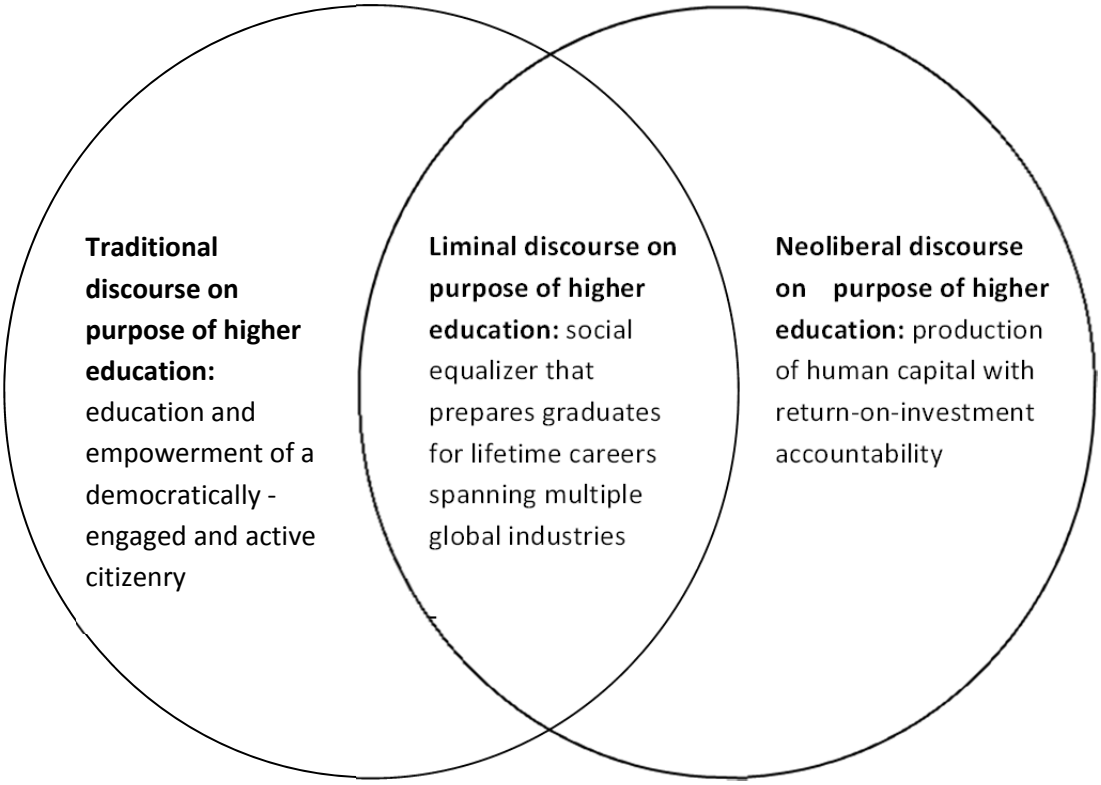

Figure 5.1
Traditional, Liminal, and Neoliberal Discourses on the Purpose of Higher Education

for their own benefit, as well as that of society as a whole, both economically and socially. The next section explores examples of this liminal discourse from the data.

Transitional Space between Categories

Although only a small percentage of critical excerpts combined the neoliberal and traditional paradigms, these excerpts represent the most significant finding of the study. These dual excerpts may represent a new space for higher education to occupy in the 21st century, moving into a model that embraces the realities of the global knowledge economy while maintaining a high level of fidelity to the historical mission of American higher education. In effect, the role and purpose of higher education is being expanded. It appears that the President and other speakers seek an ideal institutional role wherein students become prepared to engage the economic and social realities of our time. This frame posits education as key to both economic and social prosperity, and the key to understanding this frame is that its two components are not mutually exclusive. Where once there was a clear dichotomy between neoliberal and traditional missions of higher education, this data suggests there is room for complementary roles for the two paradigms, pairing development of an actively engaged democracy with economic growth. President Obama describes the "ripple effects" of these complementary roles in terms of what graduates may accomplish after college:

> Acts of sacrifice and decency without regard to what's in it for you - that…creates ripple effects - ones that lift up families and communities; that spread opportunity and boost our economy; that reach folks in forgotten corners of the world, who, in committed young people like you, see the true face of America: our strength, our goodness, our diversity, our enduring power, our ideals. (Obama, 2009d)

The language used by the President in the above excerpt, calling for graduates to "lift up" communities and simultaneously "boost our economy," describing education as

both a public and private good.

This blending of public and private occurs within Pasque's (2010) typology for understanding the relationship between government, society, and higher education. The typology includes a set of four frames, each with a cast of higher education stakeholders with varying views on the purpose of higher education. Benefits of higher education in these frames may either be economic or social, and may manifest as benefits to individual citizens or society as a whole. Each frame is also characterized by the actors who operate within it, from legislators, to policy makers, to higher education leaders. These groups of actors pursue agendas based on subscription to different beliefs about the role and purpose of higher education, ranging from economic catalyst, to producer of democratically engaged citizens, to champion of social justice. The names of each of the four frames describe the position of higher education relative to stakeholders. The frames are "Private good," "Public good," "Public and private goods: a balanced frame," and "Public and private goods: an interconnected and advocacy frame" (Pasque, 2010). Of these four frames, the "Public and private goods: a balanced frame" captures the liminal discourse described in this study.

Actors in the "balanced" frame see education as conferring both individual and societal benefits, with improvements to both social and economic conditions. This frame allows for a separate-but-complementary set of effects of higher education, spanning the traditional and neoliberal purposes. Scholars in this frame echo the neoliberal paradigm and need for the United States to remain economically competitive through education while also touting the development of educational or academic capital that results from education (Pasque, 2010, p. 31).

Figure 5.1 represents the Institute for Higher Education Policy's (IHEP) "Array of Benefits" (2005), a visual schema that Pasque (2010) uses to convey the meaning of the balanced frame. I contend that this representation also represents a way of conceiving the liminal discourse revealed in the data for this study. This figure displays benefits of higher education in quadrants, separating public, private, social and economic outcomes.

	Public	Private
Economic	• Increased tax revenues • Greater productivity • Increased consumption • Increased workforce flexibility • Decreased reliance on government financial support	• Higher salaries and benefits • Employment • Higher savings levels • Improved working conditions • Personal & professional mobility
Social	• Reduced crime rates • Increased charitable giving / community service • Increased quality of civic life • Social cohesion / appreciation of diversity • Improved ability to adapt to and use technology	• Improved health / life expectancy • Improved quality of life for offspring • Better consumer decision making • Increased personal status • More hobbies, leisure activities

Figure 5.2
Array of Benefits from the Institute for Higher Education Policy (2005)

This array blends economic outcomes resulting from relationships between governments and citizens (Hursh, 2007) with outcomes resulting from economic relationships between private corporations and citizens (Davies & Bansel, 2007). However, while this depicts the outcomes as related-but-discrete, I contend that the liminal discourse that emerged from the data in this study blends these outcomes, and thereby diminishes the separation between them. Martha Kanter captures this blending in describing the President's vision for the future:

> President Obama said that by 2020, the United States must become, once again, "the best educated, most competitive workforce in the world." He said this because he understands that education is the key to our country's economic and social prosperity. And he recently proclaimed that "our leadership in the world relies upon its citizens who are not only well-educated, but also driven by their humanity and civic virtue." (Kanter, 2010a)

This excerpt and others like it articulate a shift from dichotomous language separating the potential purposes of education to a liminal discourse that links the outcomes by articulating the movement from the old dichotomy, through a transformation into the complementary, liminal discourse. The liminal discourse moves to one that allows for the economic outcomes of education as articulated in the neoliberal paradigm, but not at the expense of the social or liberal arts purposes of education.

More specifically, while Pasque's (2010) balanced frame and the IHEP Array of Benefits (2005) conceive of the public and private benefits of education as mutually exclusive, the findings of the study presented here contradict that mutual exclusivity. Instead of separate, competing outcomes, these public and private benefits may complement one another in the liminal discourse described here. The findings of this study indicate the existence of a space in which these ideologies of the traditional and neoliberal purposes of higher education may operate in tandem instead of in competition, completing the movement to a new state of being, as required for Turner's (1967) definition of liminal. These linkages between purpose and outcomes comprise questions and implications for institutions, which create a new ideal with which they must negotiate, described in the next section.

Creation of an Ideal

The purpose of this study was, in part, to seek to determine whether the selected federal discourse on higher education creates an ideal to which institutions must aspire, and to identify what characterizes such an ideal, if one is created. In identifying 114 critical excerpts that included language that shaped an ideal for institutions, I sorted ideal characteristics into 10 categories, which are listed with textual excerpts in Chapter 4. The discourse articulates an ideal implicitly; very few excerpts include direct imperative language in which the speaker articulates what an institution of higher education should be or do. Instead, these imperatives arise subtly through language about what graduates should be able to do upon graduation. By extension, this means graduates' time in college should prepare and equip them for such outcomes, thereby describing ideal functionality for institutions.

This is an example of Fairclough's (2001) "hidden power" (p. 49) that results in the creation and dissemination of discourse to mass audiences, resulting in an idealized subject. The power in a discourse exchange such as this, in which one-to-one communication is impossible, becomes hidden by the producer's inability to adjust their message based on a receiver's feedback. Instead, the producer of the discourse exercises power by crafting a message intended for an imagined, and ideal, subject. For this study, institutions of higher education represent that idealized subject. The speakers delivering commencement addresses delivered a discourse message with idealized institutions in mind. The next section explores the characteristics of that ideal.

Characteristics of an Ideal Institution

The institutional ideal implied within the discourse fits the dual role for higher

education that emerged within answers to Research Questions 1 and 2. Of the 10 identified characteristic categories (see Table 4.7), five have roots embedded within the neoliberal paradigm:

- Produce graduates with skills to find a good job in a world in flux.
- Produce graduates equipped to navigate economic flux and restore the free market.
- Produce graduates with STEM training who foster innovation and creation.
- Produce graduates who can ensure the economic prosperity of the United States in the global knowledge economy.
- Ensure success of students in order to increase degree attainment.

Three other characteristics, meanwhile, subscribe to the traditional purposes of higher education:

- Produce citizens who represent the "true face" of America.
- Produce active citizens who participate in the democratic process.
- Partner with state and federal governments to ensure access to higher education for all Americans.

Finally, the two remaining characteristics blend neoliberal and traditional roles for higher education:

- Produce leaders who are equipped to unite the global community.
- Produce creative, visionary leaders with skills to create a bold new reality for the world.

The following sections will discuss each of these three groupings and implications for

institutions.

Neoliberal Characteristics of the Ideal

The five neoliberal characteristics may be the most ambitious of the ten, saddling graduates and institutions with the huge responsibility of ensuring America's future economic vitality. This set of categories implies how that may be achieved through President Obama's goal for 60% degree attainment for all Americans by 2020, coupled with an emphasis on STEM disciplines. If these two imperatives are met, then the other three may result as outcomes; graduates and institutions may "restore a free market that is fair to all who are willing to work," (Obama, 2009c). Further, these categories align with neoliberal ideology in that they imply individual economic success via macro-level economic development (Doherty, 2007; Giroux, 2002). As the national economy improves through higher education, individual job prospects, and thus income potential, improve as well (Hursh, 2007). Interestingly, this thinking does not include the zero-sum funding mentality that calls for any new funding for education to be cut from another existing budget item (Klees, 2008); the discourse analyzed in this study did not delve into sources of funding for the investments in education each speaker called for. The absence of funding discussion within the discourse may be a deliberate omission on the part of the various speakers to avoid contentious debates over governmental spending, and allow a more amicable space in which to include other traditional purposes for education and institutions.

Traditional Characteristics of the Ideal

The three traditional characteristics emphasize active democracy, social justice, and equity. These characteristics describe higher education as an incubator for American

democracy, an incubator that fosters the growth of active and informed citizens. This thinking captures the "noncommodified public spheres" that Giroux (2002, p. 427) warns us are in danger if the neoliberal paradigm dominates the future of higher education. If institutions do not protect these characteristics, then private citizens may become more concerned with their own economic welfare, at the expense of participating in an engaged democracy (Ayers, 2005; Giroux, 2003; 2002). Within this thinking, graduates and institutions share a responsibility for the continued vitality of the American dream, with particular attention to economic access to the middle class through education (St. John, Hu, & Fisher, 2011). Higher education is described as "the one force today that can consistently overcome differences in background, culture, and privilege," (Miller, 2011). Higher education may play a critical role in increasing social equity and justice.

Characteristics of a Blended Ideal

The final two ideal characteristics call for a bold future with a unified global community in which all citizens have access to higher education and are protected from rising costs of attendance (Consumer Finance Protection Bureau, 2012). This set of utopian ideal characteristics is also highly ambitious, pitting institutions and graduates as catalysts for social equity and economic prosperity, while calling for accountability based on graduation rates and other performance outcomes (Lieb, 2012). Asking graduates to imagine "a country that lifts up the windows of opportunities" and "an America brought together by powerful ideas" (Biden, 2009b), the commencement discourse places a lofty set of aspirational outcomes on students and institutions. Additionally, President Obama and the other speakers repeatedly emphasize the need to empower others to attend college, further emphasizing the role higher education is set to play as a social equalizer.

The vision of the future as described in these statements includes action on the part of institutions and graduates to alter the public discourse on the role of higher education "to one that better serves an inclusive and diverse public good in order to promote educational equity and justice," (Pasque, 2010, p 31). These statements blend the focus on equity and justice with a commensurate emphasis on individual economic empowerment; the focus on equity and justice place them squarely within Pasque's (2010) "Public and private goods: An interconnected and advocacy frame." At the same time, the discourse incorporates the neoliberal paradigm as well, as described in other places in this study. The potential impact and implications of this blended discourse are far reaching, and described in the next section.

Implications of the Findings

Previous studies have found concentrated instances of neoliberalism within federal discourse on higher education (Hursh, 2007; Jones, 2009; Leyva, 2009; Suspitsyna, 2012). Within this context, the findings of this study suggest that scholars may benefit from a more nuanced understanding of discourse on higher education emanating from the federal level, as well as their exposure to discursive spaces such as speeches in which such language is evident. Scholars and institutions should study this liminal discourse and begin to move away from the current debate that suggests the mutual exclusivity of the neoliberal and traditional agendas for education. Additionally, beyond simply studying the discourse, scholars and institutional leaders should take steps to ensure that they remain a part of it, and help shape it. For institutions, such implications include opportunities to reform institutional missions to incorporate neoliberal outcomes as complementary to, not in replacement of, liberal arts and other

traditional curricula. Implications for research and theory include expanding research foci to examine multiple competing federal discourses on higher education to seek a better understanding of their import. The following sections explore these implications and include specific recommendations for each.

Implications for Institutions

Based on characteristics described in Chapter 3, institutions must negotiate with an ideal (Fairclough, 2001) created within the discourse examined in this study. In doing so, institutions may maintain an active role in shaping their reality in terms of federal expectations and requirements, as well as public perception. To do so, institutions may consider the following recommendations.

Recommendation 1: Enact a social conscience. The ideal manifested within the data requires institutions to enact a social conscience, promoting activities and attitudes among graduates aimed at social justice and equity. Tony Miller describes how education fits within this social justice focus: "In the knowledge economy, education…is the great equalizer. It is the one force today that can consistently overcome differences in background, culture, and privilege," (Miller, 2011). Framing this suggestion within the context of the knowledge economy, Miller suggests that higher education may in fact diminish the social inequities within that same knowledge economy. If institutions accomplish ideal goals such as those described within this excerpt, and successfully instill these traits and abilities in graduates, then institutions will become further synonymous with the development of economic vitality and human morality. However, in order to do so, institutions will likely have to lead the discussion by developing strategies that embrace both sides of the debate, as in the liminal discourse.

Recommendation 2: Maintain a leadership role via the liminal discourse. Current scholarship on the impacts of neoliberalism on higher education seems not to allow room for both paradigms to operate simultaneously (Giroux 2002; 2003), so institutions will have to take a leadership role to make such a possibility a reality. Institutions may make use of the liminal discourse in taking a leadership role, operating within liminal terms that are acceptable to all parties. The new discourse described in this study makes available a common lexicon to actors with previously very different language and perspective. So this new discourse may unite institutions with others with a common language; this common language provides the basis for the next recommendation.

Recommendation 3: Use common language to develop pathways. Institutions may make use of this common language to work with industry and continue developing academic pathways in concert with employer needs, while still maintaining a level of fidelity to the liberal arts and other "noncommodified" disciplines (Giroux, 2008, p. 180). Institutions may also use this lexicon to take a leadership role in shaping public and governmental perceptions of the mission and outcomes of higher education in a way that meets intensified calls for accountability and return on investment (Burke, 2005; Jones, 2009; Loss, 2012).

Recommendation 4: Use the liminal discourse to shape institutional policy. Institutions should take pains to reshape policy and practice with regard to affordability and access in order to meet calls for accountability. Questions of affordability and access derive directly from neoliberal calls for accountability and return-on-investment, and answering these questions will allow institutions to maximize state and federal aid dollars

to benefit as many potential students as possible to provide high access value in exchange for tuition revenues. For example, such policies may include tuition waivers based on students' areas of study (to promote STEM and other critical disciplines in tandem with the liberal arts curricula), or provide opportunities in the form of internships, community service, or job placement, either within the institution or in the local or state communities. Such institutional policies may help demonstrate how the traditional and neoliberal purposes of education may be unified within practices that promote the value of education in economic terms as well as in terms of personal and professional growth.

Implications for Research

Scholars of neoliberalism in higher education have made the case for the presence of the paradigm within the federal discourse, but have only done so in broad ways that do not account for multiple competing discourses within the federal government. This study attempted to analyze a singular discourse emanating from the executive branch of the government, as delivered by only five speakers. Such a narrow focus provides an opportunity for deep and rich analysis of a body of discourse.

Accordingly, research on levels of federal discourse should be designed to identify and explore multiple discourse sources and study them in similar deep and rich ways, moving away from an understanding that addresses only a monolithic concept of the federal government. Differences among speakers, situations, and rhetorical purposes within the federal government will allow for a much more specific understanding of the discourse bodies and potential implications for institutions and leaders in higher education. The following sections explore each of these recommendation areas for potential implications for future research.

Recommendation 1: Explore other discourses. Other sources of discourse on higher education should be examined, at federal, state, and even municipal levels. For example, discourse emanating from Congress may take the shape of legislation, Congressional hearings, white papers, and other formal discourse. State legislative bodies may also produce discourse with similar value. These discourses likely include ties to budgets, policies, and laws, and represent a very specific set of influencing factors for scholars to explore. Language from judicial bodies, on the other hand, may comprise a discourse aimed at interpreting and enforcing federal law. Judicial decisions from the municipal level to the highest levels of the Supreme Court hold high import for higher education as well. Within the context of a courtroom setting, discourses may range from the language used by lawyers representing behaviors of actors within the knowledge economy, to judgments that interpret laws, to the language of juries that give insight into the mind of the public.

Besides Congressional or judicial discourses, discourse among and between individual governmental actors may represent a rich data set as well. Interviews, memos, meetings and interactions may all be carefully inventoried and explored to further understand how federal-level actors regard higher education. Such data sources may serve to nuance the findings of this study, providing different angles from which to view the discourse of the individuals studied here. For example, although President Obama may portray a particular positionality in a commencement address analyzed in this study, separate analysis of his memos, letters, and other correspondence may provide an alternate interpretation of that positionality. Various angles from which to approach the discourse of different actors within the government will provide critical verification or

alteration of the findings in this study. In addition, understanding these actors themselves represents another area for further research.

Recommendation 2: Further explore the speakers' roles and backgrounds. This study did not include examination of speakers' backgrounds or other personal context, but future research certainly should. For example, President Obama is in his first decade in federal public service, while Vice President Biden has been an elected federal official since the 1960's. Vice President Biden takes what a deliberately optimistic tone in his addresses, an optimism that stems from his decades of lived experience working in public service:

> I may be too optimistic. I say no, I'm not optimistic - I'm realistic. Despite the uncertainty, I was optimistic when I graduated in 1965 and again in '68…And there's good reason for my optimism…As a student of history, it's the history behind me and the people in front of me that give me such a degree of optimism. (Biden, 2009a)

Vice President Biden can speak about history having lived through his own examples, while President Obama draws on a more limited lived experience due to their differences in age. The perspectives of these two speakers will certainly vary based on their experiences, even if their knowledge is commensurate with one another.

Similarly, Secretary of Education Arne Duncan, Under Secretary Martha Kantor, and Deputy Secretary Tony Miller each bring widely different perspectives to their addresses. Nominated to their federal posts by a superior (by the President himself, in the case of Secretary Duncan), these speakers certainly pay attention to the trappings of their appointed office and official role in crafting their discourse. Martha Kanter is clear to

articulate her relationship with her “boss,” Arne Duncan:

> The drive to push farther, dream bigger, and accomplish more, is a basic human value. It's a basic American value my boss, Secretary of Education Arne Duncan has compared to our country's drive for education reform today to our nation's space race…our generation's "moon shot." (Kanter, 2010b)

There is clearly a power dynamic to consider when an individual speaks on behalf of their superior; Kanter may speak with more limited freedom than does her “boss,” for example. Future research on federal discourse on higher education certainly should work to account for such differences among speakers. Just as every speaker is unique and a source for analysis and understanding, so too is the setting for a discourse, which is explored in the next section.

Recommendation 3: Better understand the rhetorical setting. Future research on federal discourse on higher education should take the rhetorical setting of the discourse into account. With regard to commencement addresses, the rhetorical purpose of the speaker has a specific bent: to provide congratulations and a functional charge to graduates, a charge reflecting the current conditions of the society into which they graduate. For example, the words “congratulate” or “congratulations” appeared 49 times within the addresses selected for this study. Such a purpose is rarely contentious or meets with any form of dispute; on the other hand, other potential settings for federal discourse on higher education may be highly charged for conflict, providing another aspect to consider when examining the discourse situation. For example, debates over proposed legislation may take a completely different tenor and occasionally more impromptu quality than commencement addresses, and provide valuable insights as a result. A

campaign speech, yet another rhetorical setting, could provide equally different-yet-valuable insights. Future research should seek to capture differences across discourses as a function of rhetorical setting.

Recommendation 4: Make further use of CDA as a methodology research related to higher education. Critical discourse analysis represents what I consider to be an underutilized set of tools in higher education research. A great deal of power lies in language, and CDA provides a means by which to illuminate power structures and relationships. Scholars such as Fairclough (2001) will caution that CDA should be used in specific ways, adhering to certain standards and assumptions. Scholars of higher education may be able to explore problems facing higher education in new ways by exploring the power in language– language of institutional leaders, governmental actors, policy makers, and other stakeholders – by using CDA as a methodology in order to provide insight on how institutions should behave in the new global knowledge economy.

Recommendation 5: Further explore federal and other discourse on higher education. The data and findings in this study are insufficient to truly substantiate the existence of a liminal discourse as interpreted herein. This study identifies elements of the selected federal discourse that seem to contradict the mutually exclusive paradigms of the traditional and neoliberal purposes for education, but other interpretations of the data may arise that would contradict that interpretation as liminal. Additional research is needed in other parts of the federal discourse, emanating from a broader array of actors, such as elected Congressional actors or federal agency actors who interpret and implement policy. Analyzing discourse of these and other groups may help to determine whether this discourse truly blends the traditional and the neoliberal, and is thereby

liminal, or if it is simply a way to make the neoliberal more palatable for those who would resist it. Further, similar research should also be conducted on discourses located in other sectors besides the federal government, such as educational policy think tanks, chambers of commerce, and other stakeholders who shape the mission of higher education. Actors in these groups, along with institutional leaders, not only interpret and shape implementation of federal policy, but they help shape it as well.

Conclusion

This study was designed to provide insight into the ongoing debate about the neoliberal paradigm and its influence on higher education via federal discourse. In doing so, findings of this study suggest exploration of this liminal space in the current debate, and that neoliberal and traditional roles and purposes for higher education need not be mutually exclusive. However, others might interpret the presence of multiple paradigms in the language of commencement speeches as a gradual infusion of neoliberal goals in even traditional democratic framing of the mission of higher education. This is another potential lens for future study.

Drawing on examples from the discourse, this study shows that potential for a blended role for higher education exists in the discourse of actors at the highest level of the executive branch of the federal government. Findings of this study suggest that leaders in higher education may do well to seek mutual ground and buttress both old and new purposes of higher education. The President and other speakers included in this study call for institutions to produce an educated and active democratic citizenry among its graduates, but who can also lead the global knowledge economy of the 21st century. These speakers call for institutions of higher education to lead progress in STEM

research and innovation at the same time they lead progress in social equity and justice. Further, this change in the role of higher education is being manifested in a new liminal discourse as identified in this study. This discourse provides a new body of data for examination of federal discourse on higher education and a potential new lens for future study. This discourse captures change that has arrived for higher education, change that will allow institutions of higher education continue to be catalysts for innovation and social progress in the 21st century.

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