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What is This?

Nostalgia, Entrepreneurship, and Redemption: Understanding Prototypes in Higher Education

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Recent developments in cognitive science and linguistics provide strong evidence that understanding decision-making processes in higher education requires close attention to not only rational and consciously controlled dynamics but also those aspects that are less consciously controlled than previously assumed. When deciding to favor or reject higher education policies, people use prototypical ways of thinking, involving unconscious reaction and comprehension. This research uses Rosch's and Lakoff's notions of prototypes and Fairclough's critical discourse analysis as the main tools for understanding the prototypes for the conceptual category institutions of higher education. The data for this study come from a sample of all the higher education editorials and opinion articles (1,000 pieces) published over 26 years in three influential U.S. newspapers. Three higher education prototypes are identified and their elements described: academic nostalgia (present but not dominant), educational entrepreneurship (dominant, both positive and negative), and redemptive educational–consumerism (emerging).

KEYWORDS: cognition, educational policy, research methodology, media

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Recent developments in cognitive sciences and linguistics (Feldman, 2006) demonstrate that there is more to understanding concepts such as education, schools, research, and policy than what meets the conscious mind's eye. Thus, the examination of cognitive categories and prototypes (Lakoff, 1987, 2002; Rosch, 1977, 1978, 1999), which are central aspects of human thought, can tell us a great deal about how people and, through them, agencies perceive higher education and related research and policy development. Properly applied, prototypes about conceptual categories related to higher education can help overcome limitations of policy research (Glass, 2008; Henig, 2008; Hess, 2008; Whitehurst, 2002), thereby making it more understandable and, in so doing, improving its relevance and usefulness. Incorporating prototype analysis can also provide evidence on the relationship between public support for specific higher education policies and news media presentations (Haas & Lakoff, 2009; Kumashiro, 2008; Moses, 2007).

This research project uses close text analyses of opinion articles and editorials (op-eds) to identify and describe prototypes for the conceptual category *institutions of higher education*—in other words, how do people understand the concepts *college* and *university?* By doing so, we aim to demonstrate the advantages of using prototypes of social institutions as an analytical tool—one that provides a more comprehensive and, thus, more relevant understanding of higher education policymaking.

Because op-eds are a rich source of information about ideas and trends in public policy debates (Alterman, 2003; Bell, 1991; Fowler, 1991; Starr, 2004), we analyzed the prototypes about higher education in the op-eds of three large circulation and influential metropolitan U.S. newspars (*New York Times, Los Angeles Times,* and *Washington Post*) over an extended period (1980–2005). Strong empirical evidence supports the view that through op-eds, the press plays an active part in determining what can count as a public concern while presenting current common public ideas about those concerns so that they may be understood (DellaVigna & Kaplan, 2006; Gentzkow & Shapiro, 2004, 2006; Gerber, Karlan, & Bergan, 2006; Strömberg, 2004). Ours is an explicitly social constructionist approach, which argues that public policies and the allocation of resources are closely related to the degree that an issue becomes a public concern. In that sense, we believe that the analytical approach that we are proposing can be applied to other forms of journalistic media, such as television or Internet-based reporting.

We have organized this article into four parts. The first section presents an experientialist theory of knowledge and the notion of prototypes, which helped us in structuring our research. The next section describes the methods employed in this study. The third section presents the data and analysis, and the fourth, the conclusions.

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Conceptualizing Higher Education: Cognition, Categories, and Prototypes

Cognitive studies have assertively demonstrated that people understand the world by constructing mental models of categories or groupings of concepts—everything from the physical, such as *bird* and *chair*, to the more abstract and culturally determined, such as *art, science, work, female, grandmother*, and even *things to take on vacation* or *things to take from one's home when it's burning* (Armstrong, Gleitman, & Gleitman, 1983; Barsalou, 1983, 1991; Feldman, 2006; Hampton, 1981; Lakoff, 1987, 2002; Rosch, 1977, 1978, 1999). As human beings, we understand these conceptual categories not through definitions—that is, a list of the necessary and sufficient components of *bird* or *work* or *female*—but through prototypes.

Prototypes are central examples of the concept that represent the primary features of how we have categorized the many single examples that we have experienced (Lakoff, 1987; Murphy, 2002; Prinz, 2002; Rosch, 1977, 1978, 1999). We use prototypes, mostly unconsciously, as a whole in our thinking (Lakoff, 2002). "We experience them as a *gestalt*; that is the complex of [component] properties occurring together is more basic to our experience than their separate occurrence" (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980/ 2003, p. 71; italics in original). As a result, each of us begins to understand other experiences and objects in relation to prototypes. Thus, prototypes have an effect on our thinking because they are considered best examples of a conceptual category (Lakoff, 1987; Rosch, 1999).

Prototypes are highly significant because they are the starting point for how we understand a concept and how we reason about it and with it. They are, literally, the first idea of a concept that comes to our minds. Prototypes are more basic than the conscious definitional component properties we describe them with (Hampton, 1993; Lakoff, 1987; Rosch, Mervis, Gray, Johnson, & Boyes-Braem, 1976). Above all, prototypes, like the concepts they represent, are mental constructions—they do not exist objectively in the world (Lakoff, 1987). Thus, prototypes do not have to fit all the available facts or even be the most common example of a concept within our individual experiences (Rosch, 1999). For conceptual categories related to nature, such as *bird*, a sparrow is the most common prototype in the United States (and probably other similar places), whereas an ostrich or eagle is not (Murphy, 2002; Prinz, 2002; Rosch & Mervis, 1975). There is likely little social consequence to the prevalence of one bird prototype over another. In contrast, social prototypes, those related to human social activities, are also best examples of a concept and so contain implicit "cultural expectations" (Lakoff, 1987, p. 79) and, thus, social judgment. For example, studies on typicality effects[1] suggest that in general "a ballerina is a better example of a *female* than a policewoman, and a gray-haired, brownie-dispensing woman is a better example of a *grandmother* than Zsa Zsa Gabor" (Prinz,

2002, p. 58; italics in original). As a result, saying that a policewoman is the best example of womanhood, or Ms. Gabor of grannies, would likely be perceived as odd or even wrong. The prevalence of this type of dissonance can be seen in terms such as *female cop*, *male nurse*, or *sexy grandmother*, where conscious descriptive additions are used to rectify the difference between our unconscious prototype and the formal definitional fit of these individuals to the category.

Prototypes develop from our direct experiences as well as from our secondary experiences—the information and representations we receive from others, including the media, colleagues, family members, and friends. The strength of each piece of information in prototype formation depends on a number of factors, such as emotional impact, exposure frequency, and relevance to an individual's social success (Lakoff & Johnson, 1999; Murphy, 2002; Prinz, 2002). In sum, the more a prototype is used, the more it is confirmed. This is how human beings think. As Lakoff and Johnson (1999) stated,

> we cannot . . . "get beyond" our categories [and their prototypes] and have a purely uncategorized and unconceptualized experience. Neural beings cannot do that. . . In short, prototype-based reasoning constitutes a large portion of the actual reasoning we do. Reasoning with prototypes is, indeed, so common that it is inconceivable that we could function for long without it. (p. 19)

Almost by definition, the social prototypes presented by mass media—in this case, for higher education—can have a profound effect on how we understand a concept at issue and whether related policies make sense or not. Given the mostly unconscious nature of these understandings, propositions that appear to favor the most prevalent prototype will have political advantage—their policies and programs will have an initial gut-level rationality and importance that others' will not. And, if sufficiently prevalent, a social prototype may even prevent the conceptualization of alternatives. They will be part of what we refer to as "common sense" (Lakoff, 2002, p. 4). Evans and Green (2006) made this point, describing the likely effect that *Oxford* has as a well-known example of an institution of higher education.

> For instance, Oxford University is a salient example of a university, in part due to its history (it received its royal charter in the thirteenth century), in part due to the esteem in which its teaching and scholarship have traditionally been held and in part due to the nature of the colleges that make up the university, both in terms of the structure of the institution and its architecture. Although in many ways atypical in terms of British and other international higher education institutions, people, particularly in the United Kingdom, often rely upon Oxford as a point of comparison for other universities. Typicality effects occur when Oxford serves to establish a means of evaluating and assessing another university. In other words, salient examples, like prototypes in general, provide cognitive reference

points that . . . can influence the decisions we make, for instance whether we decide to go to a particular university based on how similar it is to a salient example like Oxford. (p. 275)

As a fundamental aspect of human thinking, prototypes are used in all forms of discourses and are thus particularly relevant for understanding policy messages. At the same time, the power of any individual social prototype in public arenas derives from both its prevalence and its resonance with lived experience in a given context. That is, politicians, policymakers, and the media (among others) commonly use prototypes to influence how society understands and experiences events; in addition, events can support or contradict current common prototypes, further solidifying them or fueling the emergence of new prototypes (Fowler, 1991; Lakoff, 2008).

As we discussed before, prototype prevalence combines conscious and unconscious elements. This combination matters and is often overlooked in higher education policy analysis. What we are claiming is that understanding social prototypes and changing them involves more than debates centered on disembodied ideas. In sum, the significance of social prototypes to human thinking and policy is fourfold:

1. Prototypes emerge from social interactions developed in particular historical and spatial contexts; thus, they change and they do not have to correspond to a set of contemporary empirically testable facts to exist and have effect.
2. Prototypes are mostly implicit—they are our unconscious initial understanding of what a concept is, (to a certain extent) what it should be, and what it cannot be.
3. Prototypes develop on the basis of perception, experience, and exposure, with repetition creating and reinforcing (or strengthening) one prototype over another.
4. Established prototypes are self-reinforcing—that is, when we think with one prototype, we understand the world through it, becoming comfortable with the experiences and ideas that work with it, rather than contradict it.

In essence, we contend that prototypes are structuring the general understanding of higher education, as seen in public discourses and debates, such as those presented in newspaper op-eds. Making explicit the most common social prototypes in media presentations of higher education gives us a window into our thinking and can help us better understand the policies that will likely flow from that understanding.

Method and Data Sources

We gathered 3,894 op-eds on education from the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post*, and the *Los Angeles Times* at approximately 2-year intervals during the period 1980–2005. Of these op-eds, 1,053 (27.0%) concerned higher education. The op-eds were gathered predominantly through a keyword search of the Lexis-Nexis database. False positives were removed. These newspapers were selected because they have large circulations and are usually cited

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as being influential and attempting to be somewhat ideologically balanced and nonpartisan.[2] In addition, given the somewhat heterogeneous readership of these newspapers, they are more likely to incorporate varied prototypes.

Op-eds are rich data for understanding the commonly held prototypes about higher education in both the media itself and the public at large. To be understood, op-eds must reflect generally accepted representations, understandings, and ideologies (Allan, 1999; Cotter, 2000; Fairclough, 1995a, 1995b; Lakoff & Johnson, 1980/2003; Sperber & Wilson, 1986; Wilson, 2000). The abbreviated format of op-eds precludes the in-depth explanations necessary to communicate lesser-known or challenging information, including unfamiliar prototypes (Fairclough, 1995a, 1995b). For example, an opinion writer must shape a news report on higher education in part on what he or she believes the *Washington Post*'s audience already understands about education and universities. Beyond striving for mere comprehension, news organizations appear to keep both their news and op-ed sections strictly within the limits of public understanding and tolerance to maintain large circulations and high advertising revenues (Herman & Chomsky, 1988; McChesney, 1999). Thus, the news media generally sustain and replicate the widely held understandings of its audience, including prototypes (Allan, 1999; van Dijk, 1988b, 2000). Finally, Allan (1999), quoting from Hallin (1986), described how the news media can embody the state of social change:

> Although news content "may not mirror the facts," media institutions "do reflect the prevailing pattern of political debate: when consensus is strong, they tend to stay within the limits of the political discussion it defines; when it begins to break down, coverage becomes increasingly critical and diverse in the viewpoints it represents, and increasingly difficult for officials to control." (p. 72)

In sum, the presence (or absence) of particular prototypes of higher education, as well as their level of structure and consistency, in news op-eds is important evidence of their pervasiveness and stability (or lack thereof) in general public perceptions (Fairclough, 1995b). We analyzed the op-eds by conducting mutlilevel coding using NVivo 8 (QSR International), a qualitative software program designed for doing open coding. First, we conducted coding on objective–descriptive patterns of all 3,894 education op-eds, which provided some descriptive context to the news population writing the op-eds and to the sociopolitical events that triggered the pieces. Table 1 presents the codes.

Second, we conducted a series of iterative close text analyses of a randomly selected subset ($n = 249$, 23.6%) of the op-eds coded as *higher education* ($n = 1,053$). We used an open-coding constant comparative methodology consistent with grounded theory (Glaser, 1978; Glaser & Strauss, 1967) to describe discourse patterns (Fairclough, 1995a) that formed the basis for the identification of the prototypes for the concept *higher education*. Initially, we read the

Table 1
Objective Codes for Entire Education Sample (*N* = 3,894)

Code	Values
Newspaper	*Los Angeles Times*
	New York Times
	Washington Post
Date	Year
	Month
	Day
Piece type	Editorial
	Syndicated column
	Invited opinion
Author	Name
	Occupation
	Gender
	Race
Education level	Prekindergarten
	Elementary
	Middle school/junior high
	High school
	Higher education
	All education/education generally

articles numerous times, openly coding and recoding as we went. We then collected the codes into groups until we had categories that were internally homogeneous and heterogeneous across groups (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). These categories were of two basic types: first, the larger sociopolitical context as discussed in the op-ed and, second, the elements of the op-ed argument. We then reviewed and recoded, as necessary, the entire selected sample of op-eds for these categories. At this level, our approach was similar to that of other textual analyses, including discourse and critical discourse analyses[3] (see, e.g., Alsup, 2006; Brookes, 1995; Lawrence, 2000; McAdams & Henry, 2006; Rogers, 2003; Smagorinsky & Taxel, 2005; Stamou, 2001; Thomas, 2003; Valentino, 1999; van Dijk, 1988a, 1998). Table 2 presents the codes by category 2.

From this analysis, the following patterns emerged concerning the higher education discourse in these op-eds. The majority of the policy op-eds were discussed within a narrow ideological range as influenced by the institutional filters of the news media process (Allan, 1999; Herman & Chomsky, 1988) and four key tensions within higher education policy: access to higher education, maintaining excellence in higher education, the private benefit to individuals of higher education, and the public benefit to society as a whole from higher education. Figure 1 describes the central influential elements as a formula.

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Table 2
**Open Codes for Randomly Selected Subsample of
Higher Education Op-Eds (n = 249)**

Code	Values
Category 1 = Sociopolitical Context	
Arena	USA
	International
	Sports
	Anecdotes
Topic type	Policy
	Management
Trigger	Court ruling
	Higher education activity
	Federal government action
	State/local government action
	Nongovernmental organization report
	Other news report
	Unplanned event or protest
	Self-initiated/no clear event trigger
Category 2 = Argument Elements	
Access: Who	Faculty
	Students
	Military recruiters
Access: Means	Merit/"traditional" standards (pro, con, mixed)
	Targeted group development/support (pro, con, mixed)
	Affirmative action (pro, con, mixed)
	Discrimination (exist, not exist)
	Market mechanisms (pro, con, mixed)
Quality: Institutional management	General improvement needed; no specific solution
	Market mechanisms, privatization (pro, con, mixed)
	Institutional autonomy, government support (pro, con, mixed)
	Combination market mechanisms, institutional autonomy
Quality: Teaching/learning	Academic freedom/viewpoint, student diversity (pro, con, mixed)
	Pro–classic liberal arts education
	Pro–improve classroom teaching practices
	Raising standards (pro, con, mixed)
	Career purpose (pro, con, mixed)
	Pro–community service
	Pro–student diversity
Quality: Research	Higher education–government partnerships (pro, con, mixed)
	Higher education–private partnerships (pro, con, mixed)
	Combination higher education with government, private partnerships
	Faculty makeup: anti–affirmative action
	Faculty makeup: pro–salary increases
	Faculty makeup: pro-diversity
Benefit of education	Public/society
	Private individual

News Filters
(Sociopolitical Triggers, Topic Types, Author Characteristics, Arena)

+

Policy Tensions
(Access–Quality, Private interest–Public interest)

=

Higher Education Op-Ed Publication and Content

Figure 1. **Elements influencing higher education op-eds.**

One or more of the four policy tensions were present in 88.4% of the higher education op-eds ($n = 220$ of 249). The remaining op-eds (11.6%, $n = 29$) concerned sports, foreign institutions of higher education, and personal anecdotes about higher education. These tensions—especially, the tension between access and quality—are consistent with other analyses of higher education policy debates (Fischman, Igo, & Rhoten, in press).

We took an additional analytic step. In the last round of analysis, we examined the op-eds' presentation of how the institutions were structured to manage the quality–access, public–private tensions as a whole: the underlying beliefs about higher education, the larger societal values, and the institutional means to achieve the proposed goals. Continuing the recursive method of constant comparison, we looked for instances of each tension in a manner based on a prototype lens; that is, we looked for a related set of characteristics that formed a gestalt institutional structure, or prototype. Thus, we were looking for something closer to correlational clusters (Rosch et al., 1976), as opposed to being bound by a counting approach that values all characteristics equally in a necessary and sufficient definition of the category, as found in classic category theory (e.g., Hull, 1920; discussed in Murphy, 2002). Through this analysis, we aim to bridge prototype analysis, as understood in cognitive linguistics, and critical discourse analysis in a direct empirical application (Hart & Luke, 2007).

Using this theoretical lens, we sought how the op-ed authors conceived what a university or college is and should be like—what is and should be taught, how students are and should be admitted and graduated, how institutions of higher education are and should be funded, and the actual and desired purpose of higher education, and so on (Lakoff, 1987). We saw that the op-eds coalesced around three institutional prototypes, two settled and one emerging. Two were well formed, distinct, and consistently structured. We labeled them *academic nostalgia* (AN) and *educational entrepreneurship* (EE). The third, *redemptive educational–consumerism* (REC), was partially formed—a contested attempt to find a middle road that reconciles

aspects of both AN and EE into a single institutional model yet is distinct from both. Finally, all articles in the subset were reviewed and recoded with these prototypes to confirm (or not) their general presence and strength and to provide a situational analysis of their presence in the news media (Clarke, 2005). The following section describes the elements of these prototypes, their frequency, and representative examples.

Findings: Descriptive Overview

Prototypes are sociohistorical constructions, so it is important to note the context in which the op-eds were written. The majority of the op-eds (77%) were triggered by an institutional event (e.g., court case, pending legislation, university action). Of the 23% remaining, 13% had no stated trigger, whereas 10% were triggered by an unexpected or noninstitutional event (e.g., student and faculty protests, racial attacks on campus).

Approximately 14% ($n = 34$ of 249) of the higher education op-eds kept exclusively to a managerial frame, providing a solution to an instance of university mismanagement. Nearly 76% ($n = 188$) discussed larger policy issues, as grounded in six basic purposes of higher education, both pro and con. Listed from most prominent to least, they include

1. targeted group educational initiatives, such as affirmative action;
2. economic development, both individual and societal;
3. democratic development, both individual and societal;
4. meritocratic sorting;
5. cultural enlightenment, particularly through classic Western liberal arts curriculum; and
6. higher education institutions as profit-making entities.

The remaining 27 op-eds, almost 11%, included both policy and management frames, discussing the management of specific institutions of higher education as exemplars of the effect of a larger policy issue.

In terms of the objective characteristic of the authors, we analyzed gender and profession. When it was possible to identify the gender, it was clear that the majority of the authors were male, with an average male authorship of 84% per year within a range of annual percentages from 76% to 92%. Among authors, journalists were always the most common professional group. They had an annual yearly percentage of 49%, within a range from 30% to 60%. The next-leading professional group was that of higher education personnel, administrators and faculty, with an average annual percentage of 24%. Business people, think tank personnel, politicians, and preK–12 educators formed a third tier of authors, where each was present mostly in the single-digit percentages. All other designees combined, such as lawyer and scientist, annually averaged 12% of the authors. In sum, the
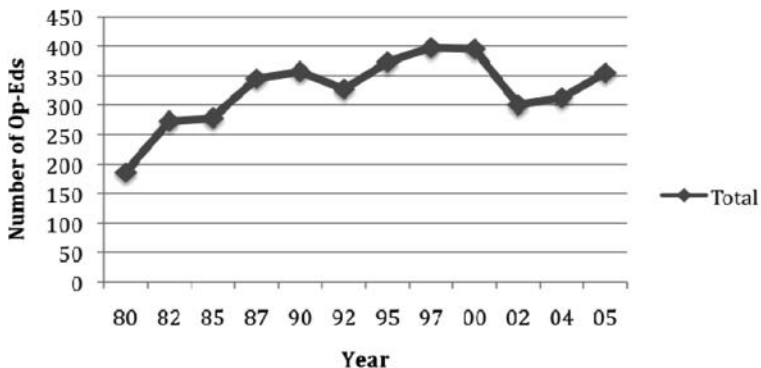
Figure 2. **Total number of education op-eds in the three newspapers (*n* = 3,894).**
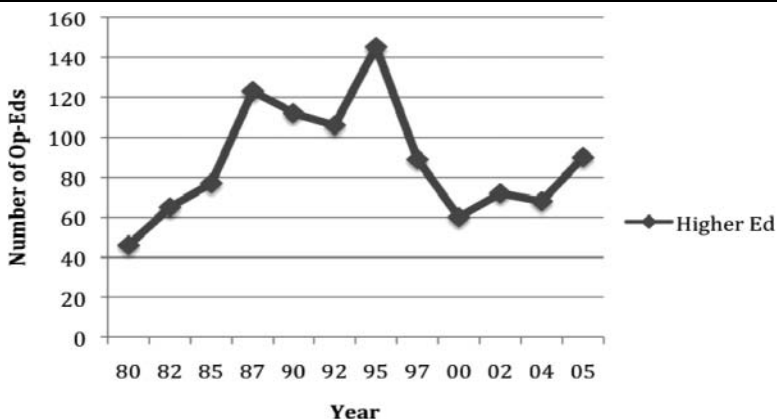

Figure 3. **Total number of higher education op-eds in the three newspapers (*n* = 1,053).**

typical op-ed was authored by a male journalist writing about an education policy in response to an action by another institution.

Furthermore, as shown in Figures 2 and 3, there has been a constant, if uneven, attention to higher education in the op-eds, as well as a generally steady increase in total education op-eds during the 26 years in this study. Overall, members of the public today are regularly and increasingly exposed to the pro-totypes that are related to education and higher education presented in the news media. The next section discusses the annual frequency of individual prototypes within those op-eds.

The Prototypes of Higher Education

The higher education prototypes were present in the op-eds in a variety of forms: individually and collectively, as well as positively, critically, and mixed without resolution. EE was both the most common and the most controversial of the three higher education prototypes. Table 3 presents the frequencies.

Note that the prototypes do not appear serially. Rather, as Table 4 shows, all three prototypes were present and discussed positively, critically, and with mixed appraisal throughout the 26-year period, including during each of the four presidential administrations.[4]

The data in Table 4 illustrate an important aspect of prototypes. When examined by annual frequency, national political context appears to influence the relative prevalence of one prototype over another, including the ratio of positive-to-critical discussions. However, the emphasis on one prototype or

Table 3
Higher Education Op-Eds (*n* = 249) by Prototype and Type of Comment

Prototypes	Positive	Negative	Mixed	Total
Educational entrepreneurship	103	32	3	138
Redemptive educational–consumerism	91	13	5	109
Academic nostalgia	76	9	3	88

Table 4
Higher Education Op-Eds (*n* = 249) by Year, Type, and Comment

Year	Academic Nostalgia			Educational Entrepreneurship			Redemptive Educational–Consumerism		
	+	–	+/–	+	–	+/–	+	–	+/–
1980	3			2	2	1	4		
1982	8		1	9	3	1	6	2	
1985	9			6	4		8		
1987	7	1		13	2	1	11	1	
1990	5	3		13	2		12	2	
1992	2	1		13	2		8	1	1
1995	13	2		12	2		9	2	2
1997	5		1	11	4		9	1	
2000	5			7	2		5	1	
2002	3			5	4		8		1
2004	8			8	4		4		
2005	8	2	1	4	1		7	3	1
Total	76	9	3	103	32	3	91	13	5

Note. Positive sign (+) = positive appraisal; negative sign (–) = criticized; both signs (+/–) = mixed appraisal.

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another varied. For example, in the years 1987 through 1997, there was a large spike in the number and ratio of positive discussions of the EE prototype, an increase in the number of critical AN discussions, and an increase in positive REC discussions. It was during this time that the George H. W. Bush and Clinton administrations began implementing more market-based educational policies (McIntush, 2006; White House, 2000) and federal courts declared affirmative action in education essentially unconstitutional (*Gratz v. Bollinger*, 2003; *Grutter v. Bollinger*, 2003; Hill Kay & Sharlot, 1997; *Hopwood v. Texas*, 1996), both of which actions were consistent with the EE prototype. Thus, it appears that prominent political institutions, such as presidential administrations, influence the prevalence of a prototype in op-eds by promoting those that fit their policies.[5] However, opponents understanding the same policy through other prototypes will continue to use those in critique. For news organizations seeking balance in a "he said, she said" format (Allan, 1999), these prototypes remain part of the discussion—at least initially. After time, one prototype may be accepted as common sense, and the discussion stabilizes, moving away from debate between prototypes to the practical merits of program success or failure within one prototype (Allan, 1999; Fairclough, 1995b). Table 4 indicates that the higher education debate remains contentious and unstable at the fundamental level of prototypes. In what follows are descriptions and examples of each prototype.

Academic Nostalgia

The AN prototype of higher education has five elements, of which three concern purpose (ANP) and two concern structure (ANS). One or more of these purposes or structural elements were present in each op-ed coded as AN:

ANP1: the teaching and learning of great, universal, and timeless truths, through their delivery from teacher to student;

ANP2: the production of knowledge for its own sake, including knowledge of the arts and the development of full, well-rounded students, regardless of direct economic advantage;

ANP3: improving society, with an emphasis on producing community leaders;

ANS1: being state supported; and

ANS2: being an autonomous institution with its own culture and processes, dependent on but "equal to" other sociocultural institutions.

One strong example—with our codes in bold and their antecedents in italics—is a 1987 opinion piece in the *Washington Post* entitled "The College Student's Journey." The author, R. Emmett Tyrrell Jr., an established conservative writer and publisher, describes what higher education should be about:

> This is the time of year when the highways of the republic fill with unusual caravans. Students are returning to campus, and those who will some day claim to be college educated have loaded down their

cars with all the accessories of college life and headed to college town. . . . *Away from the rest of society, students must bring all they need to survive.* **(ANS2)** . . . The American university has over the past two or three decades moved from *being society's preeminent institution for passing on intellectual standards, particularly in the arts and sciences* **(ANP1)**, to becoming an omnium gatherum of reform movements, radical enthusiasms, and childish indulgences that makes *yesteryear's Home Economics curriculum appear very cerebral by comparison. Every intellectual distraction imaginable from National Condom Week to lectures by dubious swamis finds hospitality on campus, and always to the enfeeblement of serious education* **(ANP2)**. Take a look at college lecture programs: where once serious minds lectured upon and debated serious issues, you now have patent charlatans and G. Gordon Liddy.

There was a day when the *college student's journey to college town* **(ANS2)** inspired celebrations in the minds of intellectuals like Allan Bloom. He saw students as standing at the threshold of a great intellectual adventure that might last throughout their lives as they enlarged their understanding of the world through books and ideas. *Their first full exposure to books and ideas came at college, and Bloom, a distinguished teacher, once was full of hope that he could present them with such a cultural and intellectual "feast"* **(ANP2)** that *they would pursue learning all their lives, thus spreading the benefits of civilized minds.* **(ANP3)** Now he is in doubt. He feels that American society does not encourage this feast and that popular culture's flies make it utterly uninviting to the young. (p. A23)

Tyrrell presents a powerful statement of the AN prototype of higher education. His ideal, in danger if not lost, is achieved through some powerful metaphors of an institution set apart, the storehouse of society's great knowledge. Such knowledge is delivered intact as a feast for students to digest. It is inherently good and inviting for all. Tyrrell implicitly addresses the structure needed for a AN-type higher education by using a journey metaphor, including the "threshold" that students must cross, leaving their previous life to arrive at the higher education institution. Aside from the title, Tyrrell's opening paragraph describes the journey that a student makes from home to college.

All three newspapers had examples of this prototype based on its purpose and structural elements. We labeled this prototype AN because it is generally understood to be the original structure of higher education, as well as one that is timeless and universal. It is the original and, for many, still-appropriate institutional model for higher education.

The AN prototype addresses the access–quality tension largely by ignoring it. Quality is a given, for higher education is the primary means to enlightenment in U.S. society. It requires university autonomy with a meritocratic academic community, which presupposes a golden age of education without acknowledging the ethnic, class, racial, and gender discrimination that, in essence, allowed it to happen (Fischman et al., in press). In the present, AN does not address how a society can provide this type of labor-intensive,

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individual-growth model of education for all or even a majority of U.S. students. In the AN prototype, higher education simply comes to those who are intellectually ready for it. Equal opportunity is assumed.

The tension between public and private benefits is conceptualized as being complementary. Part of being enlightened is understanding one's obligation to serve the larger community as a member of its elite. Higher education must instill this value, and as quoted above, its graduates must spread "the benefit of their civilized minds."

Educational Entrepreneurship

The EE prototype of higher education has six elements, of which two concern purpose (EEP) and four concern structure (EES). One or more of these purposes or structural elements were present in each op-ed coded as EE:

> *EEP1:* delivering discrete objective units of knowledge to students who use them to improve their economic position (rather than developing full, well-rounded students);
>
> *EEP2:* producing skilled entrepreneurs, workers, and research knowledge because higher education is a key to U.S. economic prosperity (often against outside/foreign competition)
>
> *EES1:* being a financially self-supporting institution (adopting a corporate/ business model);
>
> *EES2:* producing objective knowledge and then selling it as economic advantage to its students and research clients;
>
> *EES3:* using measurable and objective criteria of academic achievement, for student admission and for demonstrating institutional quality criteria; and
>
> *EES4:* promoting competition, which is the key to improvement, among students for admission and among higher education institutions for students.

In most aspects, the EE prototype is the opposite of the AN prototype. The EE prototype emphasizes structural changes to the once-dominant, if not near-exclusive, AN institutional prototype, based on the assumption that efficient institutions operate according to market principles. In the EE prototype, markets are assumed to be natural and therefore providing of the most efficient principles for structuring universities. From this unassailable belief, the purpose is derived: the promotion of economic advantage for individuals and society. For students, that means that they are consumers who seek out the best value for their tuition dollar. In turn, colleges compete for the best students. Higher education value is measured in increased earning power. For society, higher education should promote a prosperous economy through producing lucrative scientific discoveries and developing students into skilled workers, mostly in engineering and technology. All of which is mutually reinforcing.

A typical EE article is the 2005 opinion piece by James C. Garland, president of Miami University of Ohio:

> The historical business model for public higher education is broken and cannot be fixed. The days are long gone when generous government subsidies allowed public colleges to keep tuition low. . . .
>
> *Public higher education is moving down the track toward privatization, and the train is not coming back.* **(EES1)** . . . But states could break the cycle [of decreasing state support and increasing state regulation] by investing their higher education dollars strategically.
>
> *First, turn all or part of each public four-year university into a private, nonprofit corporation, with legislation to protect research grants and centers and to honor personnel and pension obligations.* **(EES1)**
>
> Second, phase out each school's subsidy over, say, six years, to enable campuses to grandfather in current students and adjust to the new environment. Finally, reallocate the freed-up subsidy dollars to scholarships for new undergraduate and graduate students. *The scholarships, valid at any accredited four-year college in the state, would go primarily to middle- and low-income students, with some reserved for engineering majors, math teachers and other groups that meet state needs.* **(EEP2)**
>
> Consider the consequences of this change:
>
> - Middle- and low-income students' degree costs would significantly decrease; others would pay a larger share of their college costs.
> - Universities and colleges would scramble to attract scholarship-holding students. Students would choose schools that offered them the highest-quality programs, the most value and a competitive tuition. Colleges that lost market share would either improve their offerings, lower their prices or risk going out of business. **(EES1, EES3)**
> - *Lacking an automatic pricing advantage, formerly public colleges would raise tuition to make up their revenue shortfall, but no more than the market would allow.* **(EES1)**
> - *Competition would force campuses to become increasingly lean, efficient and strategic.* **(EES1, EES4)** (p. A27)

It is this last sentence that really encapsulates the EE mode of thought: Competition and consumer power, created here through "scholarships," are necessary for quality and fiscal responsibility, which together result in efficiency. Higher education is a business—a failed business in most cases. Only privatization can rescue it, in the form of market competition for students as consumers.

The EE prototype, as this article presents it, provides the solution to the problems in the form of privatization, which is natural and unavoidable: "Public higher education is moving down the track toward privatization, and the train is not coming back." Garlands writes using the language of the business sector, with a dominance of "investing," "market share," and

"pricing advantage." In the EE prototype, speaking about teaching and learning in terms of business interactions makes perfect sense.

As in any prototype, mechanisms that are considered successful in one area are extended to other areas (Feldman, 2006; Johnson, 1987; Lakoff, 1987). Thus, it is not surprising that the benefits of competition (as verified in other spheres of life) are present at multiple levels of higher education, from the institution to the student. The EE prototype has three fundamental presumptions: First, there is a level playing field; second, academic merit can be measured fairly and accurately using universal and objective data; third and therefore, the individual bears sole responsibility of and accountability for gaining access to a higher education institution and then being successful.

At the student level, a typical argument that uses these presumptions of the EE prototype is present in a *Los Angeles Times* opinion piece by Carol Jago (2000), who taught English at Santa Monica High School and directed the California Reading and Literature Project at the University of California, Los Angeles. She contends that achievement is an individual accomplishment assessed by grades and test scores, one neither assisted nor diminished by life circumstances. In fact, Jago discusses and then dismisses the effect of difficult life circumstances in academic achievement.

> Many are puzzled by the fact that Asian students appear to be extraordinarily successful navigating the very same academic waters that others find so perilous.
>
> *It's not that Asian students are smarter. They simply do the work. Admission to the UC system is largely determined by a combination of grades and SAT scores.* **(EES3, EES4)** . . . [Therefore,] *UC hopefuls need to be willing to devote their four years of high school almost entirely to schoolwork* **(EES4)**. Needless to say, the system isn't fair. Many students must work jobs to help their families survive. Others have changed schools many times as their parents move to find better jobs, making it difficult to qualify for honors classes in their new school. Some attend high schools where few advanced placement courses are offered. Often intelligent and talented young people are simply unwilling to spend 8 to 10 hours a day with their noses in a book. . . .
>
> *The formula for success is simple: challenging coursework plus enormous effort minus familial responsibilities and recreation equals admission.* **(EES3)** *How many students are willing to do the math? Given that a third of the students admitted this year to the University of California were Asian American, the answer is clear. They are.* **(EES4)** (Metro, p. B9)

Jago acknowledges that family hardships make the current admission criteria "unfair" on those students who must do much more than study. Yet, she almost immediately lumps these less advantaged students in with those who are "unwilling" to do the work. The clear message: The playing field

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is essentially level. All students can get into the top universities if they dedicate themselves to doing the work. Students alone are accountable for whether they are prepared enough to achieve acceptance.

As noted before, in the EE prototype, market competition resolves the tension between access and quality (or value). Entrepreneurial students compete for positions in the university that will give them the best economic advantage for their tuition dollar. Universities compete for the best students (and faculty and staff) to have the best educational product for which they can then charge the highest tuition, secure the most alumni contributions, and win the largest research grants and contracts. Merit is the criteria, and the successful thrive whereas the rest reinvent themselves or solidify their positions in niche areas of education. One of the key attributes of the EE prototype is that it does not have to rely on contextual and social parameters for its institutional model to be effective. Competition works in all places and times.

Like the AN prototype, the EE prototype falls short on equal opportunity. It presumes the notion of a level playing field, but in practical terms, life circumstances leave many behind. Individuals are expected to work harder to gain admission. To do otherwise would compromise the quality created through competition.

The tension between private and public benefits is resolved this way: The public should be the sum of all that is private. This is achieved in two ways. The autonomous, public-supported institutions of higher education should be brought into the private marketplace and run as businesses. As a society, we will benefit from the sum of what all these private institutions of higher education produce. This includes both research and students. There is no concern that there will be a shortage of students who choose careers in government or community service. These institutions and programs are inherently inefficient. Market competition can better decide the proper size government and the number of community-minded people whom society should support.

The REC prototype has developed, it appears, as a response to the shortcomings of both the AN prototype and the EE prototype—how to marry expanded access and quality and how to maintain needed aspects of the public sphere, including common infrastructure, in a cost-effective manner that supports individual and societal prosperity. This is an emerging logic, one that borrows from both the AN prototype and the EE prototype.

Redemptive Educational–Consumerism

The REC prototype of higher education has six elements, three each that concern purpose (RECP) and structure (RECS). One or more of these purposes or structural elements were present in each op-ed coded as REC:

RECP1: Higher education should increase its reach and be open and accessible to all kinds of meritorious students.

RECP2: Higher education should pursue the highest forms of knowledge to not only train a diverse body of students in a well-rounded academic discipline or profession (like AN) but also encourage entrepreneurial attitudes (like EE).

RECP3: As with both AN and EE, higher education has an obligation or role in bettering society but through its customers (students, their families, business, government).

RECS1: Admission to higher education should be merit based, involving measurement of educational achievement in the form of grades and standardized test scores, but merit need not be reduced to those measures alone. Merit can include student characteristics, such as adversity (the ability to overcome it), diversity in terms of contributions to academic life (talents such as music, math, and sports), and personal traits (race, gender, class, and so on).

RECS2: As with EE, competition is a key process to improve efficiency and fairness but can be compensated with some initial targeted support to develop some sense of a level playing field.

RECS3: There is a complementary role between state/public and private institutions. It is not opposed to public–private partnerships, as with EE, and it does not emphasize institutional autonomy, as with AN. The government should be a key financer of higher education through subsidies, usually through financial aid or tax credits, but university budgets must be complemented by other sources (individuals paying tuition and fees, research services and grants, contributions by private donors).

The central tenet of the REC prototype is the need for effective national action. In other words, the United States is an interdependent society, and so it must expand access to higher education because global competition and a knowledge-based economy demand a highly educated workforce.[6] The REC will accomplish such large expansion by overcoming two impediments. The first, and most agreed on, is the skyrocketing costs of higher education. Problems owing to lack of academic (and sometimes social) preparation or readiness constitute the second impediment, but there is less consensus about how to solve it. What ties these two impediments is the recognition that education is a scarce good (due to costs) and a valuable individual, social, and national tangible asset. In a global knowledge-based economy, higher education is seen as the institution with the greatest redemptive potential—that is, it cures social and individual problems. In the REC prototype, competition is understood as the best way of allocating scarce resources: It maintains the meritocratic nature of higher education while increasing the overall efficiency of the system and stimulating entrepreneurial individual prosperity and national competitiveness.

The following is a typical manifestation of the financial component of the REC prototype.

> If President Reagan has his way, at least 1 million college students
> will lose part or all of their financial aid next year. The Administra-
> tion proposes deep, destructive budget cuts of $3.7 billion that would
> reduce scholarships and eliminate work-study jobs. The proposals
> would also gradually eliminate guaranteed student loans, which
> have helped millions of students pay for college.
>
>   *The Administration reasons that students, not taxpayers, are the*
> *primary beneficiaries of higher education so that students, not*
> *taxpayers, should pay.* **(RECS3)** But the entire nation benefits from
> a well educated citizenry. Without citizens with talent and skills to
> compete in a high-tech world, the nation will pay in far more painful
> ways. **(RECP3)** . . . *College isn't an inalienable right, but students*
> *should have an equal shot based on brains, not on ability to pay*
> **(RECP1, RECS1)**. *It is in the best interest of future generations of stu-*
> *dents and of this nation to help more—not fewer—Americans obtain*
> *a college education. Congress should shelve the Administration's*
> *proposals.* **(RECP1 & RECS3)** ("Squeeze on Campus," p. 4)

This *Los Angeles Times* editorial illustrates a direct challenge against the rationale of the EE prototype embodied in President Reagan's ideas. It specifically addresses both the importance of merit and the general agreement within the REC prototype that the state must make higher education affordable for everyone because it benefits not only primarily students but the nation as a whole.

The REC seeks to answer structural changes that will achieve the goal of universal access while maintaining quality and financial efficiency. These are tremendous challenges, especially when considering the question of financial support for historically marginalized students. As well documented (Amrein-Beardsley & Berliner, 2003), standardized tests and grades favor elites; as such, to maintain quality and a meritocratic system, the concept of merit and how it is assessed for admission to universities must be expanded. It is important to highlight again that within a single prototype, there is no need to have conceptually or logically consistent principles. To illustrate this point, consider the next two examples of inconsistent REC-prototypical components related to "diversity" and "greater access" based on "expanded conceptions of merit."

An opinion piece in the *Los Angeles Times* written by Colby College president William D. Adams (2002) presents the admission of students of color not only as the successor to now-illegal affirmative action but also as one piece in a larger merit-of-diversity puzzle.

> For better or worse, a new framework seems both inevitable and
> necessary.
>
>   What sort of framework is it likely to be? . . . It is worth recalling
> two fundamental truths about American higher education at the
> beginning of this new century. The first concerns the educational
> value of diversity. Unlike employment practices, where remediation
> of the effects of past discrimination has been the primary philosoph-
> ical and legal hinge of affirmative action, *the legitimacy of seeking*

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> *diversity through the admission process has been linked to educational purposes and effects. That linkage is grounded in the notion that students learn more, and more powerfully, in settings that include individuals from many different backgrounds and perspectives. . . .* **(RECP1, RECP2, RECP3)**
>
> The opponents of affirmative action have tried to reduce the educational pursuit of diversity to the mechanical application of racial preferences. Racial differences are important to any meaningful notion of diversity, but at every liberal arts college I am acquainted with, the commitment to diversity is multifaceted. *We have dedicated considerable effort and financial resources, for instance, to recruiting students from different socioeconomic backgrounds, and we have consistently sought diversity of talents—athletes, bassoonists, debaters—in the construction of each class.* **(RECP2, RECS1)**
>
> More recently, we have increased dramatically the number of international students on our campuses, as well as students from all regions of the U.S. *All of these differences have educational value and significance for our students and faculty, and most are considered, though never mechanically, in admission decisions.* **(RECP2)** (p. 2)

The president of Colby College sees diversity as the link that connects expanded access and quality. A more diverse student body—which equates to greater access for historically marginalized groups but not larger numbers of total students—actually provides a more rigorous educational experience for all students. Yet, there is an ironic contradiction in this logic that flows from the REC prototype. With one hand, the president of a leading liberal arts college acknowledges the special place of race in student diversity; then with the other, he lists race as being essentially equivalent with having talent or living in the Southwest or a foreign country. In essence, Adams is treating race and other student differences as commodities that will add to the marketability of the product that he want to sell: his college.

Similarly, another *Los Angeles Times* opinion piece, this one by Alexander Astin (1995), director of the Higher Education Research Institute at the University of California, Los Angeles, states the historical nature and, thus, elevated status of racial discrimination while listing it with talent, geography, and personality traits.

> Opponents of affirmative action who claim reverse discrimination base their argument on an erroneous assumption: Applicants should be admitted automatically on the basis of their school grades or test scores. Universities have never admitted students in this manner, nor should they. *Selective colleges and universities have always given consideration to other qualities such as motivation, leadership, athletic or other special talents, being physically handicapped, coming from a foreign country, or living in a particular geographic region.* **(RECS1)**
>
> *Affirmative action—giving special consideration to members of racial/ethnic groups that historically have been deprived economically and discriminated against socially—is educationally sound*

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> *because having a diverse mix of students is an important element in a high-quality undergraduate education.* **(RECP2, RECP3)** *But there is another important reason why a public university should strive to enroll as many qualified members of underrepresented minorities as it can: Its larger responsibility to serve the state's population.* **(RECP1, RECP3)** (p. B5)

Despite listing race with difference, a move that might benefit wealthy White males most, Adams and Astin both seem genuinely interested in providing more opportunity for students of color.

But there are further pitfalls in this logic, a sort of redemptive pathology to this prototype that allows consumer commodification to undermine its intent of expanded access. If all differences are truly equivalent, then it is fair to treat them differently on the basis of how one wants to package educational rigor. To this end, the explicit support of already-successful groups is appropriate. But this is appropriate only if discrimination—the impetus for promoting expanded concepts of merit and educational rigor—has effectively ended. In a 2002 opinion piece in the *Washington Post*, columnist Richard Cohen argues for a logical application of the REC prototype: When all forms of difference are equivalent, it is appropriate for universities to recruit students to market group identities, including that of racial heritage.

> Vanderbilt University wants a few good men—preferably Jewish men (or women). The Nashville school, *determined to lift its academic standing,* **(RECP3)** thinks that enticing Jews to its campus is a way to do it. It's not the only school doing that. *Texas Christian University, for one, offers merit scholarships specifically for Jewish students. You read that right: Texas Christian.* **(RECP1, RECP2)**
>
> At these colleges and others, Jews are valued for what sounds like a stereotype—that Jews are smarter, for instance. . . . "Jewish students, by culture and by ability and by the very nature of their liveliness, make a university a much more habitable place in terms of intellectual life," Vanderbilt's chancellor, Gordon Gee, told the Wall Street Journal. "The very nature of their liveliness?" Is this man out of his mind?
>
> Actually, no. Gee is speaking both a specific truth and a larger truth: Not all groups are the same. This, I confess, is why I seized on the Vanderbilt story. For too long in this country, we have been determined not to notice what, literally, is sometimes in our faces: *Groups, cultures, call them what you want, have different behavioral characteristics. I don't know if Jews are smarter than other people, but I do know they do better than other groups on the College Boards.* **(RECS1)** *That makes them different.* **(RECP2)** (p. A17)

Vanderbilt's proposal could easily fit into the diversity recruitment of Colby College described earlier, although Adams did not rank ethnic groups. In contrast, Cohen's proposal is based explicitly on his belief that overt racial

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discrimination has ended and implicitly on his assumption that there is a level playing field among racial groups. Later in the piece, he describes society as such:

> Some Jews don't like what Vanderbilt and other schools are doing. I can understand that. If you single out Jews for real characteristics, what stops you from singling them out for fictitious ones? The answer, I both think and hope, is that we are past that.
> I would say something similar about other groups as well. Jim Crow is dead. *Racism exists, but it is waning, a spent force. We must insist on equality before the law. But we must insist also that we are not all the same.* (RECP3, RECS1) (p. A17)

Cohen's proposal, like that of Adams and Astin, appears to commodify race among a larger commodification of student difference as a means to legally expand student access, although in practice it does not appear to meet the intent of the affirmative action legislation that it attempts to replace.

There is a fallacy here that goes to the heart of the REC logic—namely, attempting to use the market as a magical mechanism to overcome long-standing structures of oppression whose vestiges, at a minimum, continue today. The spirit of the REC prototype—expanding access to education of AN quality—is likely to be colonized by the practices of consumerism of EE thinking.

The REC prototype is an emergent one, and it appears to depend heavily on the idea that social programs can be thoroughly engineered (Podgórecki, 1996) to achieve a level playing field and equity in education. In so doing, it seeks to simultaneously resolve the two key tensions of access–quality and public–private benefit. Its adherents look to government action and complex formulas to find ways to indirectly assist historically marginalized groups in getting greater access and success in higher education, using market mechanisms such as the commodification of diversity. The assistance has to be indirect because it is no longer legal to do so explicitly through affirmative action (Moses, 2001). The REC prototype then envisions a university that is accessible to all students, wherein students and society share a mutual responsibility for success: Students must meet required standards of academic achievement, and society must ensure that students are given every opportunity to develop and demonstrate their abilities. The REC prototype seeks to achieve the progressive goals of more equitable processes for getting a higher education degree and the benefits that go with it, through tinkering with accepted market mechanisms. This adjustment involves developing expanded concepts of merit that permit marginalized groups to compete through a more level playing field based on the commodification of difference. To achieve this, it is necessary to operate outside the dynamics of discrimination and exclusion associated to race, class, gender, and so on. Dynamics that have been significant in the development of higher education in the past cannot disappear with declarations of goodwill.

Conclusion

Recent advances in cognitive science tell us this, at least: Identifying and understanding prototypes is a required step in policy analysis because of their natural emergence as a fundamental aspect of human thinking—they are neither forced nor imposed. Like all prototypes, higher education prototypes develop as gestalts, involving unconscious as well as reflective processes resulting in discursive variations that, in strictly rationalistic approaches, tend to be dismissed as minor inconsistencies that can be solved by presenting more and better data. This tendency is also evident in the frustrating futility of many education policy debates: "Competing sides in contemporary policy debates typically match one another study for study, and muster equal indignation about their opponents' know-nothing refusal to bow to the power of the cold hard facts" (Henig, 2008, p. 4).

One of the chief goals of our project is to contribute insights that help overcome the limitations that lead to the shouting matches among educational researchers. We acknowledge that utilizing prototypes in education policy research requires a rather significant change in conceptual perspectives. When education researchers presume the existence of exclusively conscious, Cartesian-rational actors (Damasio, 1994), they overlook that "facts about education" are not universally understood or appreciated and neither are national goals and the institutions and policies necessary to achieve them (see, e.g., Cottle, 2008; Cummins, 2007; Gerstl-Pepin, 2002; Molnar, 2001; Moses, 2007; Moses & Saenz, 2008). Rigorous research and additional facts are important (Shavelson & Towne, 2002), even necessary, but not sufficient. We contend that embodied cognition and prototypes provide additional tools for understanding the persuasive dominance of one education policy over another and the process of policy change. So, what do the higher education prototype patterns from 1980 to 2005 tell us about policy development during this period? Specifically, what can we learn from these central findings?

> *Finding 1:* We identified three higher education prototypes—AN, EE, REC—and all three were present during the entire 26-year period.
> *Finding 2:* Of the three prototypes, the EE prototype was the most frequent and the most controversial.
> *Finding 3:* Last, the REC prototype blends aspects of the AN and EE prototypes, but it is more consistent with EE.

What can we learn from Finding 1? Higher education prototypes are durable gestalt constructions that do not come and go in policy debates, including those occurring in newspaper op-eds. Analyses of higher education policy development should include an examination of which prototype is currently dominant as common sense and which ones are present but passive as education policies are understood and embraced.

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What can we learn from Finding 2? The construction of higher education prototypes is an ongoing occurrence; however, the more durable ones deal with the fundamental aspects of the concept and are well aligned with lived experience. In the United States, there is a well-established notion that "private higher education is better" (Fischman, 2001), which is not the case in other contexts (Fischman et al., in press). The traditional hierarchies of elite, often private, higher education and the notions of educational meritocracy—as coupled with individual academic achievement and high-performance competition—are central components to the U.S. education system (Fischman & Haas, 2009; Haas & Poynor, 2005) and, as such, may help to explain why EE was the most frequent and controversial of the three prototypes. Op-ed proponents actively promoted the EE logic, whereas supporters of other higher education prototypes regularly sought to negate it, frequently critiquing it with facts (e.g., Botstein, 1985; Cox & Alm, 2005; "Congress Ducks the College Aid Crisis," 2004; "A Flimsy Student Aid Proposal," 2000). Rather than diminish the persuasive power of the EE prototype, research shows that these negations most often reinforce it (Mayo, Schul, & Burnstein, 2004).

Furthermore, the notions about the benefits about elite universities—with their components of meritocracy, individual academic achievement, and high-performance competition—are likely part of most people's lived experience through secondary sources. Although few people experience these elite schools directly, popular media, from films to newspapers, present elite universities as *the* model of higher education. Although not a focus of our present analysis, Harvard was by far the most often discussed university in the op-eds (e.g., Borowitz, 2005) and, at times, explicitly presented as the standard of what higher education is or should be (e.g., O'Brien, 1987). Similar to Oxford for the British (Evans & Green, 2006), this elite private university is likely the salient prototype of institutions of higher education for Americans and, as such, may contribute to the predominance of the EE prototype. Thus, media, from news to popular outlets, can promote or inhibit the rationality of specific higher education policies by repeating the foundational prototype. Media influence policy beyond presenting arguments explicitly for or against it.

What can we learn from Finding 3? The REC prototype can be understood as an attempt to reach a middle ground between AN and EE, which emerged in response to policy changes that promoted more EE-aligned programs, such as the elimination of affirmative action (e.g., Hill Kay & Sharlot, 1997; McKinley, 1995). However, there does not necessarily exist a middle prototype between two others, created from a little bit of each (Lakoff, 2008). As gestalt understandings, prototypes are generally replaced as a totality (moving from active to passive state) or through the addition of radial concepts that modify the central prototype for specific circumstances, such as a working mother as a radial category for the prototype of mother

(Lakoff, 1987). We believe that the EE elements of the emerging REC proto-type were more consistent with other social discourses and lived experience from 1980 to 2005; thus, it was feasible, if not more rational, to think about education as a commodity and universities as commercial enterprises. During this time of often-promoted neoliberal education reform (e.g., Hanushek, 1994), consumerism overwhelmed this attempt at compromise.

Given the large regional, if not national, audiences of these newspapers, we contend that our research likely indicates that REC, AN, and EE are the most prevalent prototypes for the period analyzed and will be durable in the near future. In addition, most newspapers are adopting new forms of digital report-ing, production, and distribution. The online presence of the three news-papers analyzed is quite strong, and their opinions and editorials are often reproduced by popular bloggers and circulated by numerous discussion lists and social networks. Although our study focused on printed opinion and edi-torials, the methodological and conceptual considerations can be extended to other media, such as blogs, Internet sites, popular magazines, television, and movies, as well as other newspapers and news sources. We expect that these sources will probably present these or similar prototypes, although in different ratios of emphasis and positive-negative support. Other contexts and histori-cal periods will almost certainly produce different prototypes in addition to the ones we described. Given the current financial, political, and demographic changes in the United States, additional prototypes of higher education will likely emerge in the coming decades. Keeping abreast of these changes can help us better understand which policies will dominate and why, which can only aid in developing policies that are more effective as well.

Persuasive policies are those that have a close alignment among their material, symbolic, and cognitive aspects—that is, a connection between relevant prototypes in the presented policy and the lived experience of the public. As we discussed previously, people can hold multiple proto-types, but changes in the sociopolitical context influence which ones become active or dominant as common sense about an important area of social life, such as higher education. The findings from this study, with the recent history of policy debates, should compel us to broaden our under-standing of the rationality of higher education policy development beyond reliance on idealized conceptions of Cartesian-rational decision making. To paraphrase Lakoff (2008), 21st-century higher education policy analysis requires more than 18th-century Enlightenment thinking.

Notes

[1]Typicality effects are the influence of one's prototype for a category on one's under-standing of the world (Fiske & Taylor, 1991). For example, people more quickly recognize something as a member of a category when it is closer to their existing prototype (see, e.g., Rosch, 1978; Smith, Shoben, & Rips, 1974). Also, as discussed in this section, a new object may not be initially recognized as a member of a category if it is understood

as being too different than one's prototype even though it fits within a formal definition for the category, such as a dolphin being a mammal or a woman being a Fortune 500 CEO, sexism notwithstanding (Prinz, 2002).

[2]The scholarly debate about bias in newspapers is enormous and beyond the scope of this article (see Gentzkow & Shapiro, 2006; Gerber, Karlan, & Bergan, 2006). However, our analysis in this regard is similar to the conclusions of John T. Gasper (2007), who questioned the notion that all news media have an essential bias, liberal or conservative—that such a position becomes "suspect when viewed over time. The findings presented here seem to indicate 'liberal' media during the early 1990's, but 'conservative' media by the end of the 1990's" (p. 12).

[3]Critics of this method of textual analysis point out that all language analysis involves interpretation (e.g., Widdowson, 1995). We do not attempt to eliminate interpretation but rather provide transparency on our research methods, as combined with data examples, to support our findings and conclusions such that the reader can reexperience the analytic process (e.g., Altheide, 1996).

[4]The four presidential administrations were as follows: Ronald Reagan, 1981–1988; George H. W. Bush, 1989–1992; Bill Clinton, 1993–2000; George W. Bush, 2001–2008.

[5]Whether conscious or unconscious, the promotion of a prototype that supports one's policy is somewhat self-evident. It is one's dominant or active prototype that influences one to choose corresponding policies.

[6]The presumed demands of a globalized economy and the knowledge-based economy and their relationship to higher education are each quite ambiguous, and there is no consensus about the need to increase the number of university graduates or to what extent such increases produce better economic outcomes. Regardless of the accuracy of those dynamics, they can be primary and key components in the structuring of a prototype (see, e.g., Lakoff, 1987, 2002).

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