Access and the University
Key considerations for diverse societies

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Social and cultural capital

Physical - infrastructure & transport

Financial

Epistemic

Communicative / Linguistic

Access – it sometimes seems as though some people have it and some don't. But **what if access is much more than such an individual state of affairs?** What if access is much more than a substantial, measurable entity? What if it is more like a way of judging or a way of perceiving?

Some of the time, people orient to self, others, spaces and events as issues of access. Sometimes access comes up as a question, at other times as an answer, and at still other times it doesn't come up at all. Nonetheless, taken-for-granted conceptions of who has an access issue and what access means, influence how people perceive these issues and act upon them. **This means that access *is* a way of bringing life to consciousness, a form of oriented social action, and a way of relating to people and places** (Weber, 1947:88).

Titchkosky, 2011: 3
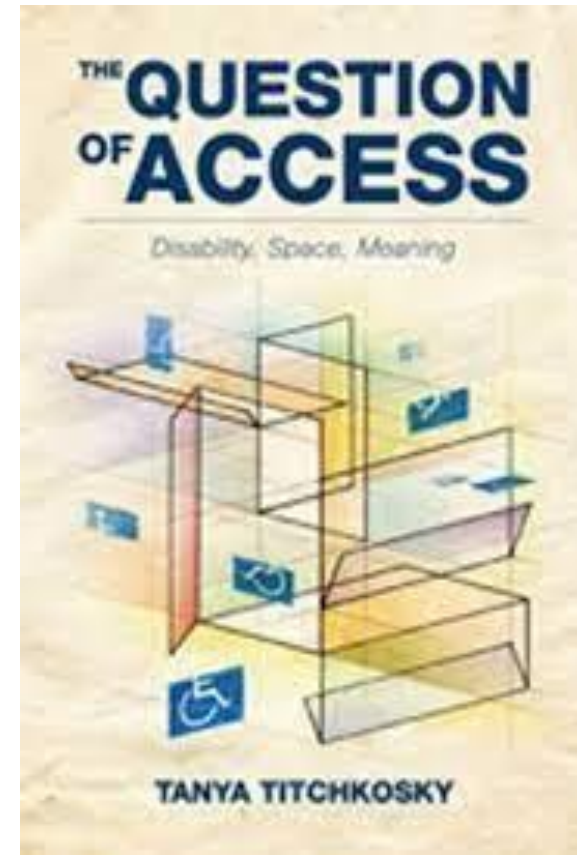
Universities as spaces of identity and difference

- Hetherington (1998: 15): Identity is about both similarity and difference. It is about how subjects see themselves in representation, and how they construct differences within that representation. Identity is about both correspondence and dissimilarity. Principally, identity is articulated through the relationship between belonging, recognition or identification and difference.

- Cresswell (1996: 154): 'places are fundamental creators of difference. [...] An outsider is not just someone literally from another location but someone who is existentially removed from the milieu of "our" place – someone who doesn't know the rules.'

National Plan for **Equity of Access** to Higher Education 2015-2019

Vision

To ensure that the student body entering, participating in and completing higher education at all levels reflects the diversity and social mix of Ireland's population.

Access as a policy concern

The under-represented groups in higher education prioritised by the National Access Office policy are:

- Those who are socially, economically or culturally under-represented in higher education

- Mature students

- Students with disabilities

- Students who participate in higher education on a part-time/flexible basis

- Students who enter higher education on the basis of a further education qualification

http://www.hea.ie/en/policy/national-access-office/introduction

Cities exist under what Wood and Landry (2008: 15) term the 'urge to define, sort and categorise' […] 'we build an intellectual architecture so we can categorize things, ideas and people to help decide and specify: Who am I? Who am I not? Who is 'insider' and who is 'outsider'?' (ibid).

Difference as 'a side-by-side particularity neither reducible to identity nor completely other. In this ideal groups do not stand in relations of inclusion and exclusion, but overlap and intermingle without becoming homogenous' (Young, 1990: 239).

Intersectionality is key

Broadly, the values that underlie both race-conscious and class-conscious affirmative action are the same: a conviction that diversity enhances the educational environment, an understanding that merit is something more than scores on standardized tests and high-school grades, and a concern that students who have faced disadvantages are often underestimated and therefore passed over for opportunities that will help them overcome those disadvantages. But the challenges associated with low socioeconomic status are different from those associated with minority status.

Gaertner & Hart, 2013: 401

Considering Class: College Access and Diversity

Matthew N. Gaertner* & Melissa Hart**

I. INTRODUCTION

Even in the immediate wake of the Supreme Court's June 2013 decision in *Fisher v. University of Texas*,[1] the future of race-conscious affirmative action remains uncertain. The *Fisher* decision did not deliver the much-feared death blow to affirmative action in college admissions. Indeed, the majority reaffirmed the principle that diversity in higher education is a compelling state interest. At the same time, however, the Court emphatically cautioned that race-conscious affirmative action could only be used if no race-neutral approach could achieve the diversity essential to educational goals.[2] And many commentators have predicted that the decision will lead to an increase in litigation over college admissions policies.[3] Anticipating this possibility, colleges and universities will continue to explore what admissions policies will best yield a diverse mix of students. This article suggests an admissions strategy that accounts for socioeconomic disadvantage, and presents the results of a study from the University of Colorado that demonstrates that class-based affirmative action efforts are not only valuable for

Access & Retention ⟶ Engagement & Belonging

Liz Thomas (2012): at the heart of successful retention and success is a strong sense of belonging in HE for all students. This is most effectively nurtured through mainstream activities that all students participate in.

Institutional approaches that promote belonging will have the following characteristics:

- supportive **peer relations**;

- meaningful **interaction between staff and students**;

- developing **knowledge, confidence and identity** as successful HE learners;

- an HE experience that is **relevant to interests and future goals**.

(Thomas, 2012: 72)
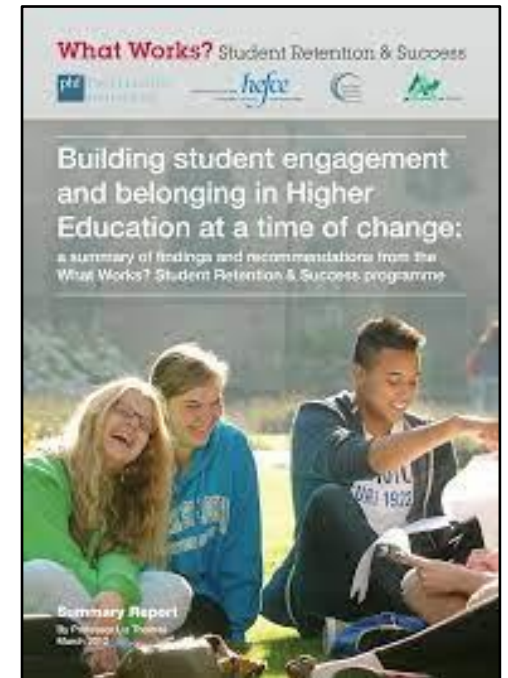
Access without support is not opportunity. That institutions do not intentionally exclude students from college does not mean that they are including them as fully valued members of the institution and providing them with support that enables them to translate access into success. Too often our conversations about access ignore the fact that without support many students, especially those who are poor or academically under- prepared, are unlikely to succeed.

Tinto 2008
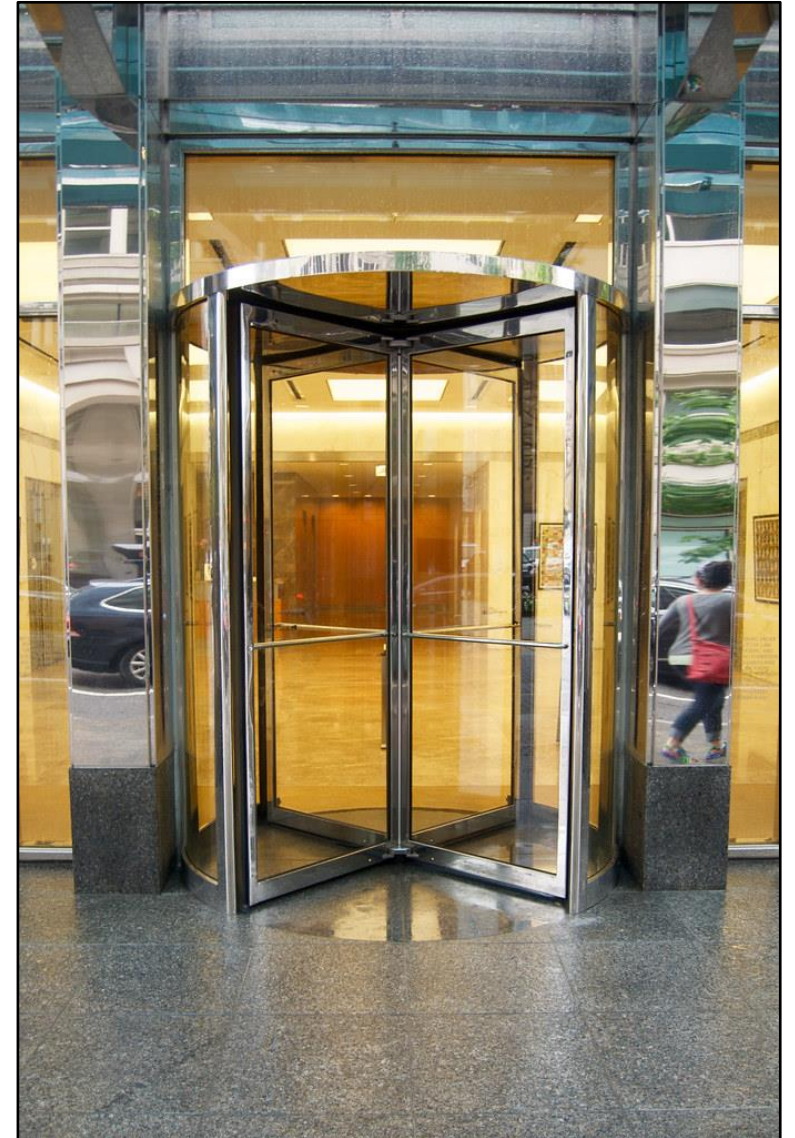
Students are more likely to progress when they are in settings that hold high expectations for their success, provide needed academic and social support, and frequent feedback about their performance.

 [Tinto (2010) cited in UCC Student Retention and Progression Report, 2014: 2)

- Interventions designed to enhance student retention and success include:

- pre-entry and induction activities,

- group and collaborative learning,

- personal tutoring and peer mentoring.

(Thomas, 2012)

Access: an individual and institutional concern

While access and inclusion often seem like unquestioned values, it is also true that **some people have to fight for access** while others are shocked or even irritated by this fight (Titchkosky, 2011: ix)

While it is true that there are more than a few programs [sic] for academically underprepared students, **few institutions have done anything to change the prevailing character of their educational experience** and therefore little to address the deeper roots of their continuing lack of success (Tinto, 2008)

To promote greater student success, institutions have to take seriously the notion that the failure of students to thrive in college lies not just in the students but also in **the ways they construct the environments in which the ask students to learn** (Engstrom and Tinto 2008)

under certain circumstances (e.g., supportive family environment), the background of such marginalized students equips them with the capacity to respond positively and productively to key challenges within the university. At a social level, they have developed their own network skills, resilience, and determination to emancipate themselves from poverty. We refer to this phenomenon as ''compensatory capital'' which includes compensatory skills such as coping mechanisms, self-reliance, perseverance, adaptability, and flexibility in the choices they make to their advantage.

Cross & Atinde, 2015: 309

Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group

The Pedagogy of the Marginalized: Understanding How Historically Disadvantaged Students Negotiate Their Epistemic Access in a Diverse University Environment

Michael Cross and Vivian Atinde

This article explores how successful undergraduate students from marginalized communities or historically disadvantaged backgrounds negotiate their performance within a university environment. It addresses one important question: How did they make their way up the academic ladder in the face of hardship determined by their unique historical circumstances? By ''marginalized'' we mean those individuals or social groups who, by virtue of their race, gender, geographical location (rural, township or poor neighborhood), etc., have historically been placed on the margins or periphery of the mainstream social and economic hierarchy. According to this definition, we targeted students who suffered a considerable degree of marginalization by virtue of being black, originating from poor families, and who graduated from relatively under resourced schools in rural areas, including gender given the lower status of girls compared to boys in these areas. As such, their experiences have become either a blind spot in current academic scholarship, or an object of knowledge misrepresentation that contributes to the perpetuation of their marginalization.

This article challenges the assumption common in current South African literature that students from historically disadvantaged backgrounds are doomed to failure because of a lack, or inadequate forms, of social capital (Naidoo 2004; Jones et al. 2008; Czerniewicz and Brown 2011; Fataar 2012). Within this literature, Bourdieu's theory of social capital and habitus is popular. Drawing on the same theory, we show that some of these students offer different forms of assets that facilitate their academic integration and success at university, which are not easily intelligible when approached strictly within Bourdieu's conceptualization. We confine the idea of student ''success'' to productive use of accurate plans, development, and learning opportunities resulting in the completion of their academic goals. Broadly, we conceptualize academic integration and success as ''epistemic access.''

Access – a class act

- the centrality of the classroom to student success and the need to restructure our efforts and the support students receive in those places of learning which, for most low-income students, may be the only place on campus where they meet each other and the faculty and engage in learning (Tinto, 2008)

- The academic sphere is the most important site for nurturing participation of the type which engenders a sense of belonging. (Thomas, 2012: 6)
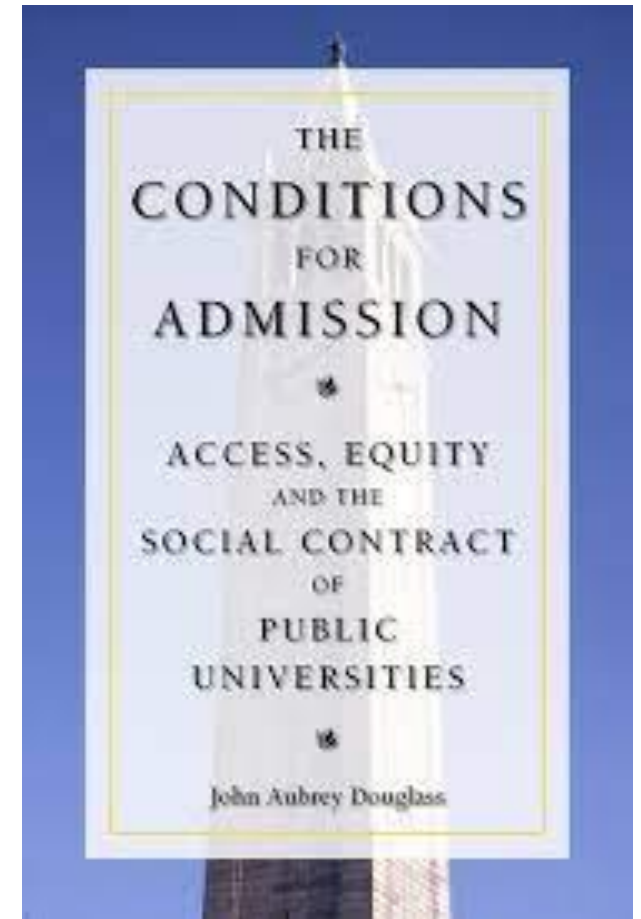
Concluding thoughts…

'by grasping the difference that difference makes, we can begin to understand why and how people do or do not participate in social and economic life, how inequalities in access to entitlements and the exercise of obligations impinge on the social order, and how people act to make things change or to keep them the same. The conduct of politics is embedded in, and articulated through, the negotiation, articulation and mobilization of sameness and difference.'

Smith (1999: 130)

Addressing strategically and simultaneously university issues of recruitment and retention, curriculum and pedagogy, bias, microaggressions, discrimination and harassment, procurement practices, community engagement, fiscal and human resource allocations, fundraising, space use and allocation, research and scholarly activity—in short, the totality of university endeavors [sic]—through the equity lens, is essential if equity is to increase in universities.

Suarez, Anderson and Young, 2018:74

THE
CONDITIONS
FOR
ADMISSION

ACCESS, EQUITY
AND THE
SOCIAL CONTRACT
OF
PUBLIC
UNIVERSITIES

John Aubrey Douglass

Thank You

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