**Access to Australian higher education**

Literature Review

The major themes in this body of literature are:

* Admissions and selection tools: How the principal currency for entrance into higher education (the ATAR) works to disadvantage particular groups of students;
* The efficacy and equity of the ATAR (connecting with patterns of equity in schooling);
* The predictive validity of different forms of access (connecting with patterns of equity);
* Alternative entry schemes for non-traditional students (explicitly and implicitly addressing issues of inequitable access to higher education);
* Other initiatives to facilitate access and entry for particular groups, including residential and financial support; and
* Ideological underpinnings of access policies, processes and practices that impact on student equity

**Policy context**

Access is not only a key theme in the research literature; it is also a central policy driver for institutional equity practices. Access has been an explicit focus for equity work since the social justice-oriented policies of the Hawke Labor government, which promised “fair and equal access to essential services such as housing, health and education” (Hawke, 1988: 1); however, Gale & McNamee (1994) argue that Labor’s professed commitment to social justice in the Dawkins reforms to higher education (1988-90) was “a justice mediated by particular economic and managerial practices which tend to limit equity to issues of access” (p.8). The focus on access continued throughout subsequent policy reviews and reforms, albeit the ideological underpinnings shifted from an egalitarian-social democratic position to a more neoliberal position. The Bradley Review (2008) pushed an access-focused imperative for reforming higher education, which argued for the establishment of a “higher education is accessible to all and ensure education is high quality” (p.xiii), largely for the purposes of creating an ‘outstanding and internationally competitive’ higher education system to maintain our standards of living in context of ‘rapidly changing future’ (p.xi). This focus on access translated into policy targets in 2009 (for 20% of graduates to be from low SES backgrounds, and 40% of 25-34 year olds holding an undergraduate degree by 2020), with additional priority funding offered in the form of HEPP(P) funds. Access constituted the dominant focus on HEPP(P) funding until 2013, with 49.3% of HEPPP funding spent on pre-entry initiatives (Naylor, Baik & James, 2013).

**Admissions and selections processes**

The literature that attends to issues of admissions and selection criteria focus predominantly on the efficacy, transparency, predictive validity and equity of the Australian Tertiary Admissions Rank (ATAR) as the principal form of the currency for entering undergraduate studies in Australia. There are strong connections suggested in the literature between the high achievement in the ATAR and the socioeconomic background of the high school (Birrell et al., 2000; Cardak & Ryan, 2009; Palmer, Bexley & James, 2011; Harvey & Simpson, 2012; Willis & Joschko, 2012; Gale & Parker, 2013; Knipe, 2013; Cardak, Bowden & Bahtsevanoglou, 2015). This connects strongly with the educational disadvantage that results from schooling, especially in terms of equity groupings, particularly for low SES, Indigenous and rural & remote students (for example, Tranter, 2012; Cuervo, 2012). The use of the ATAR has also been critiqued for the way it reduces the complexity of schooling to a single number; indeed, Tim Pitman argues that the reduction of academic preparedness or merit to a single number is “fundamentally flawed” (Pitman, in Harvey et al., 2016), and inevitably contributes to entrenched patterns of inequality in terms of outcomes and futures. Beyond the ATAR, Cardak, Bowden & Bahtsevanoglou (2015) examine how the process of applying for university through a Tertiary Admissions Centre is also impacted by a student’s SES background. Their NCSEHE-funded research shows that low SES students are less active in the window between receiving their ATAR and the submission of an application, meaning that they are less likely than their high SES counterparts to take advantage of the window to update their applications. Cardak, Bowden & Bahtsevanoglou argue that their research strongly suggest that more needs to be done at school to help students better understand the processes and options when it comes to applying for university, particularly for low SES schools.

Following the introduction of the demand-driven system (DDS), there has been concern about the lowering of thresholds – most often connected with ATAR scores – driven by the policy imperative to expand participation in higher education. As Palmer, Bexley & James (2011) note, “Distinctions between selective and recruiting courses and institutions become blurred in expanding tertiary systems, where selection decisions are also informed by equity priorities” (p.1) Knipe (2013) argues that the setting of minimum thresholds (e.g. ATAR of 70) deemed to represent potential for ‘success’ in HE is arbitrary when universities adapt the entry requirements to suit the student demands. The strong connections noted in the previous paragraph about inequitable experiences and opportunities as a result of schooling are divisive in discussions of higher education. Many researchers are committed to the idea that the ATAR offers the most predictive reliability regarding students’ capacity to succeed in their undergraduate studies, particularly for high achievers. However, researchers note that middle band results (an ATAR of under 80) are a less reliable predictor of university success (Cardak & Ryan, 2009; Palmer, Bexley & James, 2011; Pitman, Koshy & Philimore, 2015). When compared with other entry pathways, such as VET articulation or enabling programs, other research suggests that ATAR makes little difference in terms of students’ performance in their first year of an undergraduate education program. Knipe’s (2013) study of enrolment patterns compared the completion rates of students who entered on the basis of their ATAR and students who entered from TAFE. Her findings suggest that once they have entered their program, “little difference in course completion rates between entry pathways” (p.37); leading Knipe to conclude that entry scores like ATAR are not necessarily a strong predictor of completion/success (see also Harvey & Simpson, 2012). A similar study by Willis & Joschko (2012) suggests that participants in their study who came from a TAFE pathway scored consistently higher grades that ATAR articulants.

**Alternative Entry Schemes**

In addition to discussions of the use of ATAR for admissions and selection[[1]](#footnote-1), there are also examples in the literature of alternative entry schemes:

* Palmer, Bexley & James (2011) discuss alternative selection tools to the ATAR, such as portfolio entry, the Special Tertiary Admissions Test (STAT), interviews
* Harvey & Simpson (2012) discuss the Schools Access La Trobe (SALT) alternative entry scheme which offers undergraduate places to students from low SES backgrounds on the basis of school recommendation;
* Cullity (2006) discusses patterns of access and participation in alternative entry programs (AEPs), focusing specifically on mature age learners. Christensen & Evamy (201) also report on a special access scheme (the “MAPS to Success” - Mature Age Access Pathway at UWA);
* Scull & Cuthill (2010) describe an outreach program as a form of AEP, which they describe as ‘tailored outreach’, which was developed out of community intervention and consultation with ‘at risk’ communities;
* Penman & Sawyer (2013) describe a University of South Australia program (‘UniReady‘), which was designed to attract and facilitate access for ‘immigrant families’ in a rural area of South Australia;
* Fleming & Grace (2014, 2015) report on pre-entry initiatives at the University of Canberra that straddle both access and aspiration-raising agendas, specifically targeting rural and remote students in the ACT; and
* There is some discussion of sub-bachelor programs, such as Monash University’s Diploma of Tertiary Studies (Levy & Murray, 2005; Willis & Joschko, 2012); see also the literature that looks at enabling education.

Other initiatives reported in the literature that work to improve access rates include:

* Residential services as mechanism to increase access and participation through targeted support, particularly for rural and remote students who need to relocate to attend university (Burge, 2012);
* Discussion of financial support and scholarships (Carson, 2010; Reed & Hurd, 2014; Zacharias et al., 2016).

**Socioeconomic, geographic and cultural patterns of (inequitable) access**.

There are clear patterns of historic under-representation and issues relating to inequitable access to higher education in the literature. In particular, and in line with the policy foci, low SES, rural and remote, and Indigenous students are most prominently disadvantaged. James et al., (2004) found that low SES students and Rural & Remote students required the most attention in terms of the equity policy framework and with regard to inconsistent ways of measuring these groups. Le & Miller’s (2005) study of the determinants of (access into and) participation in higher education came to similar conclusions, noting that early school achievement and family background are two strong influences on students’ likelihood to access higher education/ proceed beyond compulsory schooling. The connections between schooling, SES and achievement have been well documented (for example, James, 2001; Harvey & Simpson, 2012; Willis & Joschko, 2012; Gale & Parker, 2013). Le & Miller (2005) also note that females had “much higher tertiary participation rates than males” (p.157). The influence of parents and parental backgrounds is also a significant area of interest, with research strongly suggesting that the higher the level of education of at least one parent, the more likely a child is to aspire to, and access, higher education (Birrell et al., 2000; Le & Miller, 2005; Scull & Cutjill, 2010; Wilks & Wilson, 2012; Chesters & Watson, 2013).

Interestingly, the analysis presented in James et al. (2004) resulted in the recommendation that NESB students should no longer be considered an equity group on the basis of their performance data, and instead “universities should be encouraged to develop focused programs for specific groups of recent immigrants in their local areas, as part of their responsibility for community service and engagement” (2004: xiv). Similarly, Le & Miller note that students born overseas or to non-Australian parents are more likely to participate in higher education. On the surface, these findings suggest that NESB students should not be a focus of equity policy and practices. However, Mestan & Harvey’s (2014) research shows that while the access rates of NESB students suggest that they are proportionally represented in higher education, they are disadvantaged later in their higher education experience (post-access). Mestan & Harvey (2014) claim that although some ethnic-language groups are shown to perform well at school (Chinese/ Vietnamese), others perform less well (Turkish/Arabic/ Pacific Islander/ African groups). They note that in particular, students from refugee backgrounds and children of unskilled migrants likely to be most disadvantaged because “[t]he majority of Australian universities do not provide specific and systematic support for people from refugee backgrounds to access their institutions” (p.67).

**Ideological foundations of conceptions of access**

The ideologies underpinning the varying conceptions of access – in terms of reactions to federal and institutional policy, and in terms of practices designed to widen access to particular groups – is another theme evident in the literature. Gidley et al. (2010) note that within the discourse of social inclusion, “access, participation and success are ordered according to a spectrum of ideologies — neoliberalism, social justice and human potential, respectively — by way of a nested structure with human potential ideology offering the most embracing perspective” (p.124). The dominant ideology that underpins federal policy is predominantly based on a neoliberal thinking underpinned by human capital theory – with increasing graduate numbers for economic and future-oriented competition in the global knowledge economy the key drivers for widening access. A social justice imperative is also evident in federal policy, often under the phrase ‘social inclusion’, although this focus is subordinate to the notion of contributing to an individual’s productivity and therefore to the national economy. Gidley et al. (2010) argue that access viewed through the lens on neoliberalism works from a deficit position fuelled by a scarcity of resources. They argue that the reduction of a complex and nuanced social explanation to an economic-rational framework is both a “conceptual reductive integration” and a lifeworld reduction, leading to “cultural assimilation and stakeholder dominator hierarchies” (2010: 133).

There are two principal notions that frame access (albeit with differing readings depending on the ideological lens used): fairness and merit/capability/ potential.

Fairness

Tim Pitman (2015, 2016) has written extensively about the notion of ‘fairness’ that underpins access policies, including admissions tools and selection procedures. In his 2016 paper, Pitman argues that fairness is on a continuum that is informed by three conceptualisations of fairness: merit based, procedural and normative fairness, whereby:

* Merit-based fairness connects with notions of *talent, skill, intelligence, ability* and *effort*, underpinned by a distributive view of justice (justice for ‘the deserving’);
* Procedural fairness based on notions of transparency and systematic application of rules, with attempts made to convert all forms of entry into something that can be measured against a standard;
* Normative fairness rests on a ‘common-sense approach’, whereby policies instantiate the ‘iron law’ of regulations, and “seek to select the ‘right’ students, as opposed to the ‘best’ students” (p.1209).

Pitman (2016) used these three conceptualisations to probe the admissions policies of 36 Australian universities. He found that merit based fairness was found to be the primary characterisation of fairness in 12 universities and a tertiary frame in other 20 universities. In contrast, procedural fairness was a primary theme in 13 universities (with 10 focusing on transparency) and a tertiary frame in a further 4 universities. Normative fairness was privileged in policy by 11 of the universities. Despite this relatively broad spread of approaches (see also Kilpatrick & Johns, 2014 for a similar analysis of the positioning of social inclusion in Australian universities’ publicly available strategic documents), Pitman argues that merit based fairness was discursively the most prominent discourse across the sector, Pitman argues that this appears to have benefitted low SES students, based on enrolment data from 2013, but it places the onus of responsibility onto the individual: “the implicit assumption of merit-based policies of fairness is that students who are not selected are perceived as having failed on their own terms, without acknowledging the greater structural forces at play” (2016: 1214).

This discursive alignment with neoliberal principles is recognised in Southgate & Bennett’s (2014) characterisation of the ‘capable individual’, a person who is the ““quintessential neo-liberal subject who possesses ‘natural ability’, hope for social mobility and highly individualised and entrepreneurial disposition” (p.29). The connections between access and merit, or capability for study, are explored in Burke et al. (2016). Their work suggests that that conceptions of capability drawn on and reproduced in universities, and as understood by students themselves, impact on student equity and unwittingly reproduces inequities. These deeply entrenched conceptions of who is ‘worthy’ or most capable for higher education study require universities need to work proactively to challenge stereotypes of ‘capable students’, particularly for students from diverse and under-represented backgrounds.

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Zacharias, N.; Cherednichenko, B.; Ryan, J.; George, K.; Gasparini, L.; Kelly, M.; Mandre-Jackson, S.; Cairnduff, A.; & Sun, D. (2016*). Moving beyond ‘acts of faith’: effective scholarships for equity students*. National Centre for Student Equity in Higher Education: Perth.

**Equity and Higher Education Annotated Bibliography Series**

**Access/ Admissions to higher education**

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| **Citation** | **Annotation** |
| Alexander, K.; Fahey Palma, T; Nicholson, S. & Cleland, J. (2017). ‘Why not you?’ Discourses of widening access on UK medical school websites, *Medical Education*, 51, 598–611.UKAnnotation by Sally Baker | **Context:** UK medical schools and the widening participation agenda (‘widening access’; WA) = recruitment and admission of non-traditional students – numbers of low SES students = disproportionately low. UK context = different from other nations (e.g. USA and Canada) because 90% of programs are undergraduate. Cites previous work by co-author (Cleland et al. 2015) that found conflicting interpretations of WA policy when interviewing medical admissions staff – incongruence between opening access to diverse students and ‘selecting for excellence’. Cites other work from Canada that has examined tension between social justice and meritocratic selection for ‘excellence’**Aim:** To “investigate how the value of WA is communicated by UK medical schools through their websites, and how this may create expectations regarding who is ‘suitable’ for medicine” (abstract). Asks: “What are the barriers to applying to medicine for those from under-represented or ‘non-traditional’ groups?” (p.2); to examine the messages given about medical education. **Theoretical frame:** Foucault’s notion of discourse**Methodology:** Critical discourse analysis of medical school websites in paradigm of ‘criticalism’. Asked these questions of the data: “How is the value of WA to medicine communicated by UK medical schools through their WA webpages? What expectations are set up by these discourses with regard to who is ‘suitable’ for medicine and encouraged to apply?” (p.3). Data = 25 (from possible 34) medical schools = information on websites about WA initiatives (e.g. outreach, visits, mentoring), WA entry routes. Other 9 universities did not provide this information on their websites. Total corpus = 433815 words. 5 stages of analysis:1. familiarization phase
2. data collected through copying text
3. used analytic framework from Hyatt (2013) to examine 3 aspects: drivers, levers, warrants
4. examined differences and similarities in ways WA = constructed (looked at linguistic features such as evaluative language, tone, register and audience address; see p.5).
5. explored subject positions and subjectivities made available

Analysis= cross-checked and validated across the team**Findings:** Strong driver communicated by all schools = WA as need to ‘diversify the workforce or student body’ – thus focusing on what WA is, rather than why. Individuals = central to WA messages, conveying the value of WA as facilitating social mobility (warranted against ‘fairness’ and social justice) – desirable forms of merit = academic achievement, commitment to study and potential. Some schools indicated WA was about *improving* fairness of selection (italics in original; p.7). Two websites positioned WA as about diversifying the workforce (thus not focus on benefits of WA to individuals, but rather benefits to workforce). Medical schools position themselves as ‘helping’ WA students: “In a Foucauldian sense, this discourse creates and legitimises a subject position for medical schools in which they are responsible for ‘providing’ WA through support and information. Participants in WA initiatives are seen to require and receive medical schools’ actions, legitimising their position of disadvantage and deficit” (p.9).**Core argument:** Dominant message communicated on medical websites = individually-focused view of social mobility; “it is perhaps surprising how strongly this discourse overpowers the counterdiscourse of the value of WA for the improvement of service provision and patient care, especially given the increasing presence of this argument internationally” (p.9). Therefore, WA students = positioned as needing to demonstrate traditionally valued qualities for medicine, and justifications for WA = “intertwined with the promotion and preservation of the dominance of academic merit within selection” (p.10) |

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| Allison, D. (2013). [Putting Undergraduate Admissions into Context: A Case Study](https://www.ingentaconnect.com/content/openu/jwpll/2013/00000015/00000003/art00006;jsessionid=gfj4h1so0p48.x-ic-live-02), *Widening Participation and Lifelong Learning,* 15(3), 77–82.UKAnnotation by Sally BakerKeywords: *admissions, contextual, widening access, foundation year.* | **Context:** Discusses use of contextual data in admissions processes in UK HE. Offers example of practice in School of Pharmacy in Manchester. Contextual data = “data that puts academic attainment in the context of circumstances in which it has been obtained” (p.77), including school background/ SES/ care background. Contextual data can identify applicants with ‘merit’. Most universities collect contextual data but few use it for admissions = absence of shared understanding, methodology, **Aim:** To describe how contextual data can be used to widen participation to students with ‘potential’ who do not meet academic entry requirements**Theoretical frame:** None explicit**Methodology:** Published as ‘Innovative Practice’ paper: description of pilot project (2007, School of Pharmacy, Uni of Manchester)**Discussion:** Process = based on key principles:• that each applicant would be considered on their own merits;• that decisions would be evidence-based, verifiable and reliable and relevant to the admission-decision making process;• that such mechanisms would only be used to complement and enhance existing selective mechanisms; and• that what, how and when information is used will be transparent to applicants (p.79).4 indicators = predicted A-level results, area of disadvantage, first in family?, care background (self-report)? Contextual analysis ‘flags’ students for further consideration. Pilot study details: 1261 applicants = 27% = satisfy contextual requirements. 20 invited for interview. 13 offers made, 5 accepted (but one did not get grades and could not start). 3 completed MPharm with 2:1 and one left due to personal circumstances. Process of using contextual data also led to creation of Pharmacy Foundation Year. **Core argument:** Using contextual data in admissions processes = part of WP agenda; it “generally aligns with an HEI’s aim to widen access to higher education and to achieve and maintain excellence” (p.82). |
| Ball, S.; Davies, J.; David, M. & Reay, D. (2002). [‘Classification’ and ‘Judgement’: social class and the ‘cognitive structures’ of choice of Higher Education](https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/01425690120102854), *British Journal of Sociology of Education,* 23(1), 51–72.UKAnnotation by Sally Baker | **Context:** Considers the social dimensions of students’ choices (aka decision-making) and status perceptions with regard to access to English HE. Argument drawn from data collected from ESRC-funded project on choice in HE. Choice = immensely complex interplay of different factors: “cultural and social capital, material constraints (see Reay, 2000) social perceptions and distinctions, and forms of self-exclusion (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990) are all at work in the processes of choice” (p.54).**Aim:** To propose a ‘sociology of choice’ in relation to HE. Seeks to develop understanding of “how such decision-making is exercised differently and works differently for different groups of young people” (p.56)**Theoretical frame:** Bourdieu’s notions of ‘classification’ and ‘judgement’: “It is in the empirical examination of the relationships between classifiable practices and classificatory judgements in particular ‘fields’ that‘habitus’, as a ‘generative formula’, fleetingly comes ‘into view’” (p.53); Beck (1993) – self-reflexive biographies; social conflict theorists. Authors note that structures are significant in offering opportunities and constraints for students’ choices, but also go beyond a structural analysis by acknowledging individual agency across different ‘opportunity structures’ (Roberts, 1993)**Methodology:** Draws from mixed-methods large scale project on choice and HE. Quant= survey data; qual = focus group, observations, interview data. Labelled as a ‘numbers and narratives methodology’ (ref to Nash, 1999) on p.54**Findings:** HE choice takes place in two registers: cognitive/ performative and social/cultural. In some ways, choice of university = lifestyle and matter of taste and social class = important factor. Authors = keen to make it clear that class patterns = not true for all; not all working class students go to new unis. Authors note Bourdieu & Passeron’s argument that not going to university for working class students can be considered a ‘non-decision’ because it is so normalised. However, as HE access/ participation becomes more democratised, stratification and differentiation of completion/ retention rates become more significant in relation to social differentiation (see p.54). Work of authors suggests that social class = major determinant of school choice and GCSE attainment, and that GCSE attainment = significant driver for choosing HE courses.Data offers support for the notion of ‘pragmatically radical decision-making’ (Hodkinson & Sparkes, 1997) = resocialising of rational within choice. Vignettes on p.56 illustrate differentiated factors driving students’ choices. Authors draw on work of Du Bois-Raymond’s notion of ‘normal biography’ (“linear, anticipated and predictable,unreflexive transitions, often gender and class specific, rooted in well-established lifeworlds”, p.57; also = ‘absence of decisions’; fish in water- Bourdieu, 1990). Decision-making for middle classes = which university? (aka not should I go to university?). Working class/ ethnically diverse students = ‘choice biography’ = reflect on options and make justified decision, which is often related to getting ‘a good job’. This doesn’t apply to FE/ mature/ private students who made decisions more based on subject interests/ personal or intellectual interests.Choice = driven by the ‘school effect’ (aka institutional habitus) – discussion of institutional decision-making drivers on p.58. Predictable patterns evident from survey data about high status schools choosing higher status universities etc. (less than 2% of private school students chose ‘new’ uni as 1st choice). Path analysis = suggests career is also significant motive. Students more motivated by seeing themselves represented (e.g. ethnic/ cultural mix) = more likely to cite home/ family as important and least likely to apply to high status unis. Analysis of school subjects by class of school = significant. State schools = drama/ social sciences/ education = popular but not for independent schools, where traditional humanities and science are more popular: “In as much that degrees are related to jobs, demarcations between state and private professions are likely to be reproduced” (p.60). Analysis of perceptions of institutional status = interesting results. Top four high status universities = recognized by most students (e.g. Oxford, Cambridge) but less so for other universities, with private school girls most accurate; community school students = least accurate.Analysis of why students rejected particular institutions = connected to advertising (particularly if the institution is perceived to be ‘pleading’ for enrolments), portrayals of student life/ social reputation, not a place ‘for people like us’ (see p.67-8) **Core argument:** Choice about HE = complex, differentiated and stratified along class lines: “Different kinds of practical knowledge are at work in choice-making. Knowledge about and use of status hierarchies and reputations is uneven and varies systematically between schools and families” (p.69). Self-exclusion as a choice = evident and significant, particularly for students with ‘choice biographies’ (see Beck, 1992): “The risks and reflexivity of the middle classes are about staying as they are and who they are. Those of the working classes are about being different people in different places, about who they might become and what they must give up” (p.69).In context of seeking to better understand WP, access has to understood as part of process of decision-making activities: “The distribution of classes and minority ethnic groups within HE and across HE institutions has to be understood as the outcome of several stages of decision-making in which choices and constraints or barriers inter-weave. Many students, especially working-class students, never get to a position where they can contemplate HE” (p.70). |
| Birrell, B.; Calderon, A.; Dobson, I.; & Smith, F. (2000). [Equity in Access to Higher Education Revisited](https://monash.figshare.com/articles/Equity_in_access_to_higher_education_revisited/4976009), *People and Place,* 8(1), 50–61.AUSAnnotation by Sally Baker | **Context:** Focus on SES dimension of equity (“high degree of overlap” between low SES/ indigenous/ rurality). Main issue = how much is low participation shaped by families’ financial resources (which could impact on capacity to get gov’t benefits: Youth Allowance). Danger of dismissing the significance of family income could be a prioritisation of engineering parent value change**Hypothesis:** overrepresentation of high SES students in higher education = due to families’ financial circumstances (contrasting with dominant view that high SES children have other characteristics which favour them and their ‘intellectual capital’ and their parents are better able/willing to make sacrifices – but see ACER research that says family income is of limited significance: “In 1998 the Government-initiated West Review of higher education seized on the ACER work to justify its decision to ignore student complaints about the low level and inaccessibility of Austudy (now the Youth Allowance)” p.52)**Findings:** Cites ACER research which showed that more clerical/ blue collar children staying on to Year 12 (and would be more likely to consider university due to getting “some exposure to year 12 culture, mixed with students who intend to go on to university “ (p.54), but still comparatively lower than students with professional/ managerial parents. A much lower proportion of clerical/working class students actually go to university = widening “a gulf”.Also considers impact of private schooling (as another way wealth can impact entry to university) = census data confirms that parental income positively influences private school participation and independently educated students = more likely to score 80+ in HSCs, which explains disproportionate enrolments of these students in more elite Victorian universities. |
| Birrell, B.; Rapson, V.; & Smith, T. (2010). [The 40 Per Cent Degree-Qualified Target: How Feasible?](https://monash.figshare.com/articles/The_40_per_cent_target_qualified_target_how_feasible_/4969247/1), *People and Place,* 18(4), 13–29.AUSAnnotation by Sally BakerKeywords: *40% target, feasibility, demographics, increase, access* | **Context:** Examines the 40% target set in the Bradley Review/ Transforming Australia’s Higher Education System. Authors argue that 40% target is in tune with increases in professional occupations with UG degrees and holds with Access Economics predictions, meaning that more young people need to enter higher education (or hope for increase in immigration or mass further education for older workers). Authors note that no modelling done of how target could be met (based on figures from Europe) and was adopted wholesale without any further testing/modelling. In Victorian context, need to increase student enrolments by 10-12,000 per year until 2025 to meet 40% target. However, other ABS data (from ‘Education and Work’ labour survey) suggested a larger proportion of 25-34 had degrees by 2009 (34.6%) so meeting 40% target wouldn’t be too much of a stretch.**Aim:** To probe how quickly domestic enrolments need to increase/ by when for 40% target be achievable. **Theoretical frame:****Methodology:** Uses ABS modelling of population increases and immigration growth. Develop new modelling to test Go8 position (no need to do anything; target will be met ‘naturally’ – see p.17)**Discussion:** Authors’ modelling accounts for age of graduates (time lag around completion/ ageing out = when graduate hits 35 yoa). Based on this modelling/evidence, growth in domestic UG enrolments has not made much difference, accounting for barely ¼ of increase between 2006-9. Authors suggest that overseas students (domestic via migration) may aid achievement of target (settlers on permanent/ 457 visas or NZ citizens). Ageing out happens more quickly/often for migrants (50% migrants are 30yoa+). Based on modelling, net gain of migrants = likely to decline. Also need to account for net loss of residents as they move overseas (‘brain drain’)**Core argument:** 40% target is not feasible. There was a rapid rise in enrolments from 2006-2009 but this is not a predictor of future increases and achievement of 40% target because of domestic students ageing out and immigration not matching the rate of expansion needed. |
| Boliver, V. (2013). [How fair is access to more prestigious universities?,](https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1111/1468-4446.12021) *The British Journal of Sociology,* 64(2), 344–364.UKAnnotation by Sally BakerKeywords: *Fair access; higher education; Russell Group universities; tuition fees* | **Context:** Fair access in context of £9000 tuition fees, particularly for Russell Group universities. Notes growth of higher education in UK since 1960s and commensurate rate of participation, and how prestige has continued despite the ‘unifying’ of sector post-1992. Also discusses the context of under-representation of working class students at old/ RG universities – ref to Sutton Group research. Term ‘fair access’ first used in 2003 White Paper proposing increase in tuition fees to £3000. Asks what ‘fair access’ means? Does it mean entry? – danger with this definition is that it foregrounds students’ choices and conceals the power of institutions to make decisions on who they admit (‘fairness’ of application and admission) – paper is positioned in this gap (dual focus on admission and application in context of prestigious universities). **Aim:** To examine impact of increased tuition fees on ‘fair access’ to prestigious universities. UK contextual factor: students are more likely to move away to attend prestigious institutions which may have skewed the impact of class on application to/ participation in higher education in these universities by working class/ ‘disadvantaged’ students (see p.348); to answer these RQs:1) To what extent are social group differences in rates of access to more prestigious universities due to the application choices that prospective students make on the one hand, and to the admissions decisions thatuniversities make on the other?2) To what extent are social group differences in propensities to apply and to receive offers of admission to more prestigious universities due to corresponding social group differences in prior attainment?3) How, if at all, have social group differences in propensities to apply and to receive offers of admission to more prestigious universities changed with the introduction of tuition fees in 1998 and their increase in 2006? (p.348)**Theoretical frame:****Methodology:** Draws on UCAS data from 1996-2006 of 2.5% random sample of applicants (‘home’ students in England only; n=49,162 applicants; n=228,441 applications) to understand how fair access played out over time and in context of increased tuition fees. Examines RG universities: applications to and offers of admission sent. Independent variables = social class, school attended, ethnic group, prior attainment**Findings:** Summary of descriptive stats: way more working class, some ethnic groups (Black/ Pakistani and Bangladeshi), public entrants to ‘new’ universities than RG (social class = 13% RG, 70% new; state ed = 20% RG, 60% new)Access to RG universities is far from ‘fair’ (defined as “equal access for those equally qualified by virtue of prior attainment at A-level or in an equivalent qualification” (p.358), the reasons for which vary. For working class = largely related to barriers to application; for Black/ Pakistani students = appears to be due to differential treatment during admissions process; for state school applicants = due to both application and admissions. Therefore, state educated/ ethnic and working class students need to be better qualified than private schooled students to gain access to RG universities. Essentially = no change between 1996 - 2006**Core argument:** National policy on ‘fair access’ = inadequate and reductive – fails to address system class and racial bias in system at both application and admission levels |
| Boliver, V. (2016). Exploring Ethnic Inequalities in Admission to Russell Group Universities, *Sociology,* 50(2): 247-266.UKAnnotation by Sally BakerKeywords: *ethnicity, fair access, Russell Group universities* | **Context:** drills down on issue of ‘fair access’ to RG universities (see Bolliver 2013) for ethnic minority students who are significantly less likely to be offered places at RG unis. Literature review scopes issues of racism and notes research that suggests that teachers have lower expectations for ethnic minority (EM) students – p.249). Contends that case is likely to be same/similar in HE. Notes other possible reason for inequitable representation of students in RG universities – tend to apply for oversubscribed courses (e.g. medicine and law, dentistry, business, maths) and are statistically overrepresented in these fields (and underrepresented in Humanities, Arts, Languages, Physical Sciences). Questions whether admissions decisions = based on notion of ‘fairness’ “as ultimate representativeness rather than fairness as equal treatment” (p.251) – author makes point that representativeness and fairness = not the same: “Simply equating fairness with ultimate representativeness is clearly problematic given that a group whose members apply in high numbers could end up being well-represented among students relative to their proportion of the wider population despite being treated unfairly at the point of admission” (p.251-2).**Aim:** To examine underrepresentation of EM students in RG universities, controlling directly for variation in numerical competitiveness of entry, and to test for hypothesis that: “controlling for the numerical competitiveness of different courses and for applicants’ prior attainment, ethnic differences in the chances of receiving an offer from a Russell Group university widen as the percentage of ethnic minority applicants to particular degree subject areas at particular institutions increases” (p.251).**Theoretical frame:****Methodology:** Uses UCAS data = 10% random sample of home applicants 2010/11, 2011/12, 2012/13 (n=151,281 applications = units of analysis). Analysis = series binary logistic regression models. Numerical competitiveness = calculation of initial rejection rate for 23 degree subject areas x 20 RG universities = 460 possible/ 398 actual combinations for numerical competitiveness variable**Findings:** Two major findings: 1) EM students = 1) more likely to apply to oversubscribed courses but are also less likely to receive offers from RG universities; 2) “ethnic inequalities in admissions chances are greater for degree subject areas at Russell Group universities where the percentage of ethnic minority applicants is higher” (p.261) – suggested reason for this = idea that some admissions decisions made in order to build national representative picture of English population mix (thus rejecting some EM students on basis there are too many in some programs). More research is needed: how aware are admissions selectors of their decisions with regard to EM students? Also, more qualitative research needed **Core argument:** EM students are disadvantaged in applications to RG universities. |
| Boughey, C. (2002). From Equity to Efficiency: Access to higher education in South Africa, *Arts & Humanities in Higher Education,* 2(1): 65-71.SAAnnotation by Sally BakerKeywords: *access, efficiency, equity, higher education, South Africa* | **Context:** Examines issues of equity and access in post-Apartheid South Africa. **Aim:** To “examine issues related to access not only in terms of the theoretical debate just outlined but also in terms of the way financial and other constraints impact on the higher education system itself” (abstract).**Theoretical frame:** Not explicit**Methodology:** Critical reflection/ historical account**Discussion:** Notes how SA’s long history of apartheid cannot be ameliorated quickly by/ in the higher education system. Scopes history of attempts towards equity: in 1980s small number of liberal and elite universities used loopholes to admit small number of black students – focus on black students to address their ‘deficiencies’… later in decade, discourse shifted to universities changing (curriculum, pedagogies, assessment literacies) – but met with resistance. Gee’s work in 1990s opened up new ways of thinking about discourse(s) and identity(ies) and ‘epistemological access’ (Morrow, 1993). This coincided with pushes to develop curriculum, where staff were marginalised, as were ‘academic support units’, resulting in underdevelopment of critical theories to support shift of responsibility. National policy reforms and creation of National Qualifications Framework = led to lots of curriculum reform. Political changes post-Apartheid led to massive expansion in student numbers, but with commensurate (if not more) attrition, and SA gov’t could not continue to fund increasing student numbers. Consequences = increased competition between universities as ‘successful’ student numbers dropped (+ impact of HIV/AIDS); setting of enrolment targets.**Core argument:** Equitable access to HE = problematic in SA due to historical separation of people and underdeveloped understandings of equity and access. |
| Boughey, C. (2005). Epistemological access to the university: An alternative perspective, *South African Journal of Higher Education,* 19(3): 638-650.SAAnnotation by Sally BakerKeywords: *Access to Higher Education, Equity, Language Proficiency, Literacy, Academic Development, Bridging Programmes, South Africa* | **Context:** Foundation programmes in South Africa (as result of widening participation post-Apartheid) – particularly examining how to open access to powerful epistemologies, particularly with reference to language development.**Aim:** To report on an ethnographic study of students’ experience in a first year philosophy course**Theoretical frame:** Epistemological access (Morrow, 1994)**Methodology:** Ethnographic study of first year students at a ‘black university’: year long engagement (class observation, written work, interviews (formal and serendipitous) with students and staff + evaluation of class. Systemic Functional Linguistics (Halliday) = analytic lens**Findings:** Analysis by field/ tenor/ mode*Field*: In interacting with content, students tended to impose commonsense understandings without substantiation = mismatch of expectations*Tenor*: ‘Lack of knowledge’ impacted on text production and engagement with philosophers and audience – students tended to treat content as ‘gospel’ rather than something to critically engage with/ misrecognise the philosophers’ critical engagement with profound and complex concepts/ questions. Also impacts on students as writers (relationship with reader/lecturer). Voice = significant and complex issue.*Mode*: connected to conventions of genre; students demonstrate more spoken features in their writing: “it demonstrates a common sense approach to essay writing, which has grown out of students’ familiarity with primary discourses rather than an approach that has been developed by more formal, school-based, secondary discourses” (p. 246)**Core argument:** Analysis of students’ texts through lenses of field, tenor and mode illustrate how students are drawing on different expectations and understandings than their lecturers due to “differences in the cultural contexts serving as reference points for each” (p.649); therefore, epistemological access is more than ‘how-to’, and more “about bridging the gaps between the respective worlds students and lecturers draw on” (p.649). Has important implications for staffing. |
| Bravenboer, D. (2012). The official discourse of fair access to higher education. *Widening Participation and Lifelong Learning*, 14(3): 120-140.UKAnnotation by Sally Baker | **Context:** UK Widening Participation policy – official higher education discourse**;** ‘disadvantaged young people’ less likely to attend higher tariff institutions. Bravenboer argues that “a tacit ‘deficit model’ of widening participation in selective universities serves to position the lack of progress in widening access as principally an applicant issue” (p.123)**Methodology:** Application of frame of ‘constructive description’ to 3 official texts (positioned as sociocultural objects/artefacts): the Schwartz Report (AHESG, 2004), Higher ambitions: The future of universities in a knowledge economy (BIS, 2009) and Higher education: Students at the heart of the system (BIS, 2011 – hereafter described as the ‘White Paper’). Four steps were followed (p.125):1. Localising and bounding of the text in the higher education field as an object of analysis2. Identification of oppositions and alliances within a reading of object text 3. Construction of modes of action by recontextualising identified oppositions and alliances4. Analysis of the dynamics of the strategic distribution and exclusion of textual objects in relation to the discursive space constructed as modes of action**Findings:** Proposes two sets of conceptual tools for exploring fairness and merit/potential.Fairness constructed as binary: impartial/partial approaches to determining access (p.125): 4 possible modes of action: admissional, privileged, recognitional, excepted. Gatekeepers: *Admissional:* impartial/ participation is closed. *Privileged*: approaches to deciding access = partial/ participation is closed. Open Access: *Recognitional*: approaches to deciding access = impartial/ participation is open. *Excepted*: approaches to deciding access = partial/ participation is open. Merit/potential (considered synonymous) subject to binary variables of valid/non-valid and reliable/non-reliable. *Valid but non-reliable* = predictable but not replicable measurement of merit (e.g. references or personal statements). *Non-valid/non-reliable* = diametrically opposed to fair assessment (aka nepotistic). *Reliable/ non-valid* = systemic adoption of nepotistic practices would make them reliable/reproducable (but still non-valid) – e.g. automatically (not) selecting on basis of school attended or total exclusion of ‘wider contextual factors’/ certain kinds of qualifications. “…the Schwartz Report’s terms ofreference explicitly do not provide the discursive authority with which to establish a common currency for determining a candidate’s merit and potential to benefit from higher education” (p.135). Professionalism in admissions is subject to assumptions; there are no explicit guidelines on what is reliable/valid.**Core argument:** Focus/strong defence of institutional autonomy means that robust exploration of discourses that underpin concept of ‘fairness’ is difficult to undertake.  |
| Budd, R. (2016). Disadvantaged by degrees? How widening participation students are not only hindered in accessing HE, but also during – and after – university, *Perspectives: Policy and Practice in Higher Education*, DOI:10.1080/13603108.2016.1169230UKAnnotation by Sally BakerKeywords: *UK, higher education; widening participation;**graduate employability; student experience* | **Context:** Looks at continuing ‘disadvantage’ for ‘WP’ students after they have accessed higher education (during and after). **Aim:** To discuss issues that WP students face in accessing, during, and after studying UG level**Theoretical frame:** Nothing explicit**Methodology:** Critical discussion**Discussion:** Sets paper in context of educational policies that have failed to improve social mobility (such as extended compulsory schooling). Examines UK context – notes that students who attend schools ‘less oriented to university’ and with parents/ teachers ‘less savvy’ about HE, students = more likely to attend local university (and are thus less mobile in many senses) – draws a fair bit on Sutton Trust 2011 report. Notes the diversity of responses to WP (ACCESS) by universities (and lack of empirical comparison of effectiveness of strategies) and briefly discusses ‘contextual admissions’ (see Hoare & Johnson, 2011; Allison, 2013). Also discusses WP in context of increased personal cost of HE. Scopes literature on ‘student experience’ (DURING) – notes diversity in experience and problematic collapse of this into the term ‘the experience’; touches on issues of diversity of experience with transition, pathways, experience when studying (with ‘minority’ status). Discusses post-graduation experience: briefly discusses employment patterns – different patterns of getting ‘positional edge’ to enhance CV between traditional/WP students. Brief paragraph on postgrad students (p.4) **Core argument:** WP students suffer from disadvantage beyond access to HE; need to focus both on what universities can do to ameliorate this but also attend to entrenched systemic disadvantage in schooling system and thinking about ‘transition out’ into workplace. |
| Burge, L. (2012). Infinite possibilities: exploring opportunities for non-traditional students to become global citizens, *Widening Participation and Lifelong Learning,* 13: 6-18.AUSAnnotation by Sally Baker*Keywords: residential; support; success; access; community.* | **Context:** Works from premise that non-traditional/equity students – focusing specifically on rural and remote students - have ‘an important role to play’ in diversity and quality of HE but this “remains undervalued and relatively untapped” (abstract). Paper from perspective of Residential Services at La Trobe and goes beyond access to exploring support. Argues that “‘success’ today implies a wider frame of reference than in the past” (p.6). In La Trobe, 33.6% of student body were R&R; Residential Services supports all the students who live in ‘colleges’. Works on a “cyclical process” – introducing/ integrating new students, providing ongoing guidance, opportunity to draw on experiences to engage with peers (peer mentoring) = “interlocking suite of programmes” (p.8) and ‘beyond the classroom’ living and learning environment. Residential Services “delivers outcomes in employability skills and career readiness… [and] pathways to personal growth” (p.9)**Aim:** To describe what La Trobe’s Residential Services offer**Theoretical frame:** None**Methodology:** Case study of Residential Services/ ‘tailored support mechanisms’ at La Trobe (outlines programs and examines the results: academic results and core graduate attributes). Presents evaluations of 4 programmes**Description:**Residential Services offers 4 key programs:1. Pastoral Care & Welfare programme (welfare and wellbeing)2. Academic Mentoring & Support programme (academic mentoring and the ‘NET’ program for ‘at risk’ students)3. Community & Outreach programmes (‘outreach’/community programs in other countries = subsidized) 4. Student leadership opportunities(competitive student leadership roles = for pay/kudos)Evaluation: comparison of academic performance of residential students compared with wider university student body (residential students = 18% more As/ 21% more Bs)Retention rates = higher for residential students (e.g. 83% compared with 76% La Trobe average)Student satisfaction surveys (part of uni community/ part of group/ studied with other students/ ECAs) = consistently higher for residential students.Suggestions* Build stronger connections between residential and non-residential students (e.g. open selected orientation/socal activities to non-residential students)
* Duplicate some activities (e.g. opportunities for students to travel/volunteer) to wider student body
* Create ‘spin off’ of transition program (e.g. 6-week mentoring program)
* Create a buddy program for new entrants/ Yr 1 students
* Introduce student leadership opportunities
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| Burke, P.J. & McManus, J. (2011). Art for a few: exclusions and misrecognitions in higher education admissions practices, *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education*, 32(5): 699-712.UKAnnotation by Sally BakerKeywords: *admissions; widening participation; policy discourse; subjectivity; misrecognition; exclusion* | **Context:** Reports on NALN-funded research into admissions practices of Art and Design courses in UK. Set in context of WP/ massification of UK higher education (specifically English context, post-New Labour policies). Argues that central tenet of WP work focuses on ‘barriers’ at individual level, rather than examining broader “cultural, historical, discursive and subjective dimensions of HE exclusions and inequalities” (p.700). Critiques uncritical notions of ‘fair admissions’ and meritocracy in context of ‘success’ and ‘failure’**Aim:** To discuss research that was “designed to uncover the complexity of processes of admission and to deconstruct the key assumptions underpinning the selection of students” (p.702)**Theoretical frame:** Draws on ‘conceptual tools’ of subjectivity and (mis)recognition (Fraser, 1997), drawing from feminist and post-structural theory, including Foucault’s conceptualisation of power as “exercised in unpredictable ways; moments of resistance can be both transformative and recuperative” (p.704).**Methodology:** Qualitative, case study: included review of admissions policies, prospectuses and websites; in-depth interviews with admissions tutors (n=10); observations of selection interviews (n=70); reflexive field diary. Five HEIs took part.**Findings:** Mis/recognition and exclusion at level of identity politics/ subjectivities. WP subjects (as inscribed in policy) = positioned relationally against / with imagined ‘ideal’ [or ‘traditional’] student. Applying to university involves each subject being “individualized, categorized, classified and provoked to disciplinary practices of self-surveillance” (p.705; see Youdell, 2006). Authors present extensive list of assessable attributes compiled from interviews with/ observations of admissions tutors, which are problematic because (a) they are expectations of 17-18 year olds pre-study and (b) because they “are tied in with ontological perspectives that value certaindispositions and attitudes more highly than others, and this is inextricably connected to classed and racialized inequalities and subjectivities” (p.706) = creates ‘polarizing discourses’ (Williams, 1997; Burke, 2002) of ‘normal’ and ‘abnormal’ subject-applicants.Selection interviews = spaces of mis/recognition = allowing for discursive possibility of uptake (or not) of applicant’s ‘potential’. Gives example of Nina, whose rejection was based on her ‘taste’ (“all hip-hop and sport tops”) and ethnicity (black) and class (working class) + her ‘below average’ portfolio, style, confidence and intention to stay living at home (sign of immaturity). Nina was rejected but a young white male was accepted despite having poorer qualifications (and failed GCSE Art). Thus, Nina “was not recognized as a legitimate subject of art and design studies because she cited a form of fashion seen as invalid in the HE context” (p.708)**Core argument:** “admissions practices are tied up with complex operations of exclusion and misrecognition” (p.709). Critical reflexivity needed on part of institution and admissions tutors, “to interrogate the ways that their decisions might be shaped by exclusive values and perspectives, which profoundly influence how candidates are (or are not) recognized as having talent, ability and potential” (p.710). |
| Burke, P.J. & Kuo, Y.C. (2015). Widening Participation in Higher Education: Policy Regimes and Globalizing Discourses. In Huisman, J.; H. de Boer; D. Dill & M. Souto-Otero (Eds.) The Palgrave International Handbook of Higher Education Policy and Governance. XX: Palgrave Macmillan UK. P.AUS/ US/ UKAnnotation by Sally Baker | **Context:** An overview of WP policy regimes in China, USA, UK, exploring how discourses of excellence, meritocracy are increasingly foregrounded in HE policy, and how this relates to/ impacts on positioning of WP in policy. Focus of access on different groups; traditionally China = focused on rural and remotes groups; US = people of colour; UK = working class, low-participation neighbourhoods and people with disabilities. Student mobility also a significant part of the jigsaw**Aim:** To “show that meanings attached to ‘WP’ are not only highly contextual but are also connected to diverse and competing values and perspectives, as well as interconnected policy regimes” (p.548) and to show “messiness” of policy formation**Theoretical frame:** Regime theory (e.g. Krasner, 1982; Wilson, 2000): “sets of implicit or explicit principles, norms, rules and decision-making procedures” (Krasner, 1982: 186, cited on p.548)/ concept of ‘assemblage’ = policy formation at level of gov’t but also web of local, institutional and global contexts (p.549)**Methodology:** Literature/ policy review: critical analysis**Findings:** Discussion of tension between excellence and equity (p.550-2)*China*: vast regional differences in quality and access. Chinese government is committed to set of ‘world-class university’ initiatives (competing in global ranking). Fees have increased, government investment has declined. Access to HE impeded by family background, place of residence, gender, finance (parents’ background and earnings). Rich, urban children more likely to attend Tier 1 universities (1.48 times higher); one-child policy favours male students over female. Chinese HE has expanded quickly – impacted on quality. Chinese government’s ability to increase opportunities to socially and economically marginalised people has been diminished because of lack of regulation of fee-charging by Chinese gov’t. Discourses such as ‘socialist market economy’ that China has embraced and can be seen in HE policy, about HE supporting modernisation of socialism (p.556) but needs to be seen within context of competing in global ‘market’ of HE*USA*: “relatively progressive agenda with affirmative action used as a mechanism to redress the social inequalities between historically disadvantaged and privileged groups” (p.556). Discourses of meritocracy and excellence “increasingly countered and undermined such values and perspectives” (p.557) as seen in the way that financial aid/ scholarships available to students with strong academic records/ sporting and musical ability. Research universities are elite and meritocratic (Altbach, 2011)*England*: Thatcher’s government promoted neoliberalism and New Labour did little to reform the marketization and privatisation of key services, including HE and this has been pushed forward by Con-Lib Dem coalition gov’t – “cementing trends towards ‘enterprise’ and decentralisation” (p.560). Decrease in public spending/ increase in student contributions. However, New Labour pushed WP agenda to heart of HE reforms (1997). Meanings of WP = “contested and shifting in England” (p.560) and connected to student fees [similar to HECS argument in Aus: deferring payment is WP initiative bc all students can access HE and pay later]. Concentration of WP funds to outreach and access “has tended to ignore issues of participation” (p.563). Stratification of HE in England may lead to WP happening more intensely in particular kinds of institutions, “with concomitant social justice implications for students” (p.562).**Core argument:** China: binary system aims to bring together Chinese socialism and ‘unethical’ western market practicesUS: excellence intertwined with merit-based financial aid mechanismEngland: meritocratic view and embedded WP towards marketised system |
| Cardak, B., Bowden, M. & Bahtsevanoglou, J. (2015.) *Are Low SES Students Disadvantaged in the University Application Process?*Report submitted to the National Centre for Student Equity in Higher Education (NCSEHE), Perth: Curtin University.AUSAnnotation by Sally Baker | **Context:** Focuses on university admissions/ application processes, in particular examining differences between high and low SES students. Based on VTAC data (2011 VCE). Works from other research that suggests low SES students are less likely to participate in HE**Aim:** To develop an economic model to explain student behaviour and decisions regarding university applications by exploring the number of changes to admissions portfolios post-ATAR**Theoretical frame:****Methodology:** **Findings:** * High SES students “seem to construct application portfolios that are more attentive to the application process and ultimate admission” (p.63). They also make more changes to their application portfolios than low SES students;Students who make more changes to their application portfolio get more benefits from the opportunity to revise, therefore high SES get more benefits than low SES;
* NESB student portfolios are more ambitious or aggressive (p.58);
* Students applying for p/t study/ deferred offer have less ambitious portfolios;
* Students from independent schools/ Catholic schools and adult schools submit more aggressive portfolios;
* Low SES students are not as active in window between ATAR and finalizing application; aka – do not take advantage of window to update it;
* Authors suggest these differences occur because high SES understand the university application procedure better than low SES students, which is partly a consequence of different knowledge sources/ unfamiliarity at home/ cultural capital

**Core argument:** More needs to be done at school to help students better understand process and options: “policy actions should be taken towards the end of high school to improve student understanding of university application processes and thereby outcomes for low SES students” (p.2) |
| Cardak, B. & Ryan, C. (2009). Participation in Higher Education in Australia: Equity and Access. *The Economic Record*, 85(271), 433-448.AUSAnnotation by Sally Baker | **Context:** Equity and access in Australian schooling/ higher education**Aim:** Study relationship between SES and tertiary ranking ENTER (now ATAR) to challenge Le & Millar (2005) who argued that, on the basis that low SES students are less likely to attend university, more financial support should be offered to address the ‘positive SES gradient’. Authors argue that ENTER **Theoretical frame:** They use the notion of ‘eligibility’ and argue “The intutition is relatively straightforward, even very wealthy students cannot attend university if they do not have a valid ENTER or if their ENTER is of a very low standard” (p.434)**Methodology:** Use LSAY data (relating to Year 9 cohort from 1995) in 2002/ ‘estimation methodology’**Findings:** Students with a given ENTER (or equivalent) are equally likely to attend university, irrespective of SES (if controlled for eligibility by ENTER score). However, low SES students are less likely to earn an ENTER score, and if they do (which they would have to now given school reforms keeping students in education until 18 ??), their ENTER scores are generally lower than those of higher SES students. Many low SES students are ‘poor candidates’ for university study by the time they reach Year 9 (p.444) |
| Carson, T. (2010). Overcoming student hardship at Swinburne University, Australia: an insight into theimpact of equity scholarships on financially disadvantaged university students, *Widening Participation & Lifelong Learning,* 12(3), 36–59.AUSAnnotation by Sally BakerKeywords*: equity; equity scholarships; financially disadvantaged students; higher education; Australia; retention; financial assistance; financial support.* | **Context:** Explores impact of scholarships on students in financial need at Swinburne University (2005 study of equity scholarships) in context of massified/ more competitive global HE systems that all seek to increase participation of ‘under-represented cohorts’. Slippage in terms used to talk about money offered: bursaries, scholarships, grants. Cites two major reviews (Long & Hayden, 2001; James et al. 2007) which both reported that students need more financial support for their studies. Swinburne = 10% low SES rate (VIC UG average = 13.52%). Government support = insufficient (also see Munro, 2012; Birrell et al. 2000). Argues = strong connection between likelihood to aspire to HE study and financial circumstances/SES background.; also discusses in terms of rurality and reliance on computers (digital divide).**Aim:** To present evidence of the relief that financial support (from university) can bring to students in need**Theoretical frame:** None**Methodology:** Student Equity Unit conducted ‘client satisfaction’ survey with 2003/4 recipients of equity scholarships. Respondents outlined disadvantage they had encountered: not being able to afford food, travel (for study), heating, photocopy, study materials. Follow up research in 2005 (drawn on in paper) = impact of scholarship on financial hardship, students from rural areas and digital divide. Questionnaires posted: 38% (53/140: 42 = rural, 11 = metro; 26 = m, 27 = f; most traditional students = straight from school, 9 = 3-10+ years out of school). Financial disadvantage operationalized: computer at home? Afford books, clothing, food etc.? Considered deferring/dropping out because of money? Rural disadvantage operationalized: If from rural area, was it stressful leaving home/ moving to city/ financially? Digital divide: computer at home? How old? Internet access? Broadband?**Findings:** Most students (80.4%) had worked to save up prior to attending university.All students had borrowed money – but once student received scholarship, reliance on other sources (e.g. families) contributing to costs diminished to 55.8% and did not need to work as much (49.1%).‘Dramatic decrease’ in students considering deferring (from 57.7% to 3.8%)Degree of financial hardship decreased (all could afford rent and food, only 5.7% could not afford textbooks, compared with 19.2% pre-scholarship)Two thirds considered the scholarship had given financial security and improved quality of life (64.2%)For rural students, only 2 (5%) had not experienced strain from moving to Melbourne and all had experienced some degree of financial strain. Rural students less likely to have a computer at home. The scholarship allowed these students to purchase a computer**Core argument:** Scholarships have a positive impact: “It appears the scholarships are giving students the ability to work less, allowing them to concentrate more fully on their studies” (p.55) and also decreased students’ decisions to defer or drop out |
| Chesters, J. & Watson, L. (2013). Understanding the persistence of inequality in higher education: evidence from Australia, *Journal of Education Policy*, 28(2): 198-215.AUSAnnotation by Sally BakerKeywords: *higher education policy; participation; access; social class; students; intergenerational mobility; low socio-economic status* | **Context:** Examines persistence of inequity in proportional representation of student groups in Australian HE. Examines key literature pointing to demographic trends in participation and arguments that call for systemic change. Navigates policy changes (from 1974-2009), and notes the literature that illustrates SES connections with school achievement/ATAR**Aim:** To investigate the impact of having at least one university-educated parent on chances of getting a degree**Theoretical frame:** ‘Maximally maintained inequality’ (MMI) and ‘relative risk aversion’ (RRA) as interpretive lenses. RRA view = “inequalities in educational attainment persist because young people, regardless of socio-economic background are more concerned with avoiding downward mobility than with achieving upward mobility” (p.201). MMI view= widening participation can/will only happen when traditional sources have been satiated: “An increase in the number of students from low socio-economic backgrounds will only occur when all of the students from the privileged class are accommodated and supply of university places continues to exceed demand” (p.201)**Methodology:** Quantitative: applies logistic regressions to data from 3 student surveys collected between 1987 and 2005 (National Social Science Survey: 1987-88 (n=1663); 1994 (n=1378); 2005 ‘neoliberalism, inequality and politics project’ (n=1623).**Findings:** Parents’ education level = important factor for students participating in HE: “having a university-educated parent continues to exert a direct effect on an individual’s propensity to graduate from university” (abstract)Expansion of HE system since 1970s has ameliorated inequity related to gender but inequality related to SES (low) persists.Males with a university-educated father = 2.8 times more likely to have graduated than other men.Women with a university-educated father = 3.7 times more likely to have graduated than other women (p.208)**Core argument:** Structural impediment to meeting 40% target = “lower number of ‘eligible’ higher education students within the lower socioeconomic strata of society because these students are less likely to complete secondary school and those who do complete secondary school tend to have lower levels of attainment than their more privileged peers” (p.210). Also need to consider impact of private schools (‘artificial inflation of of ENTER), so university admissions should amend policies accordingly. Also notes arguments about contested measurement of SES based on postcode. |
| Childs, R.; Ferguson, A.; Herbert, M.; Broad, K. & Zhang, J. (2016). Evaluating admission criteria effects for under-represented groups, *Higher Education Research & Development*, 35(4): 658-668.CANAnnotation by Sally BakerKeywords: *Admission criteria; diversity; evaluation; selection; underrepresentation* | **Context:** Evaluation of admissions criteria and effects on under-represented students**Aim:** To take “a closer look at the effects that specific admission criteria and selection rules may have for under-represented groups” (p.659). Context = Ontario, Canada; has 20 HEIs**Theoretical frame:** Nothing explicit**Methodology:** Uses data collected from pre-service teacher education program on Indigenous and FinF students at University of Toronto (2011-12). 4078 applications for 1060 spaces in the program, 3238 of which met criteria for Ind/FinF students. Minimum eligibility requirements for program =three-year undergraduate degree, B-range average on the 15 best undergraduate courses, adequate English language proficiency as demonstrated by TOEFL scores or a post-secondary degree in which the language of instruction was English, and at least a ‘Low Pass’ rating on each of three essays (p.660). Applies two sets of analyses: 1) ‘survival analysis’ (form of regression analysis) to compare admission criteria against admissibility of applicants; 2) compares actual admissions decisions made against set of 8 alternative criteria**Findings:** Analysis 1) hazard analysis shows that under-represented students = higher hazards (less likely to survive) 3rd-4th phases (acceptable degree/ acceptable marks) compared with ‘traditional’ students**Core argument:** Admission criteria and selection rules = impact on efforts to reduce under-representation of particular student groups (e.g. Indigenous/ first in family) |
| Childs, R.; Hanson, M.; Carnegie-Douglas, S. & Archbold, A. (2016). Investigating the effects of access initiatives for underrepresented groups, *Perspectives: Policy and Practice in Higher Education,* DOI: 10.1080/13603108.2016.1231720CANAnnotation by Sally BakerKeywords: *Access; admission criteria; evaluation; higher education; underrepresentation; diversity* | **Context:** Evaluation of initiatives to widen participation (purposeful) to post-secondary education (PSE) in Canada. Initiatives included = outreach programs, changed admissions requirements, financial assistance = all premised on assumptions about underrepresented groups (e.g. that money is a defining factor). ‘Underrepresented’ based on population parity **Aim:** To examine underpinning assumptions in development/implementation of access initiatives**Theoretical frame:** Deliberately uses language of program evaluation (intervention, determinant, outcome. Change model)**Methodology:** Evaluation. Initiatives categorised as cross-institution access initiatives or institution-specific access initiatives**Findings:** Offers case study of change model for BEd at University of Toronto **Core argument:** Suggest that using a change model to evaluate access initiatives can expose assumptions and underlying determinants and help to plan and evaluate. |
| Christensen, L. & Evamy, S. (2011). MAPs to Success: Improving the First Year Experience of alternative entrymature age students, *The International Journal of the First Year in Higher Education,* 2(2): 35-48.AUSAnnotation by Sally BakerKeywords: *mature age, fye, equity* | **Context:** Describes equity as needing ‘coherent blend’ of admin, social and academic support. Describes MAPS to Success access scheme at UWA for ‘underprepared mature age students’. UWA – Go8 – highest proportion (90%) of school leavers. MAP to Success related to MAP scheme (Mature age Access Pathway) which began in 2008. MAPS to Success “was devised to make more explicit links to existing services as well as developing MAP-specific activities to ensure that the academic and support needs of these— and subsequent MAP students— were adequately met” (p.37). Aims of program = increase retention, reduce harm to students (incurring debt/ personal cost) – p.37**Aim:** **Theoretical frame:** None**Methodology:** Description**Findings:** MAPS to SuccessPre-semester: all applicants have to attend Information Session (one in evening; one in morning to accommodate ‘non-traditional’ students. Students have to complete a diagnostic test (MCQ/ writing task) – each student then given a Learning Action Plan (recommended/ optional activities change for each individual depending on results of diagnostic). If student needs to be FT because of Centrelink and needs ‘high levels of support’, they are advised to take minimum 3 units to qualify rather than 4. Each year = 80-100 studentsThroughout semester: All students recommended to attend an interview in first 5 weeks. Students required one-to-one consultation if student fails any units; optional one-to-one interview in Semester 2. Social activities run/ specific-MAPS ‘study skills’ workshops.Steady increase in number of MAPS students; “small but definite improvement” in outcomes: fewer are withdrawing; rate at which MAP students complete units to become provisional is increasing**Core argument:** Says little of note. All descriptive. No reflexivity or theorisation evident (SB). |
| Clancy, P. & Goastellec, G. (2007). Exploring Access and Equity in Higher Education: Policy and Performance in a Comparative Perspective. *Higher Education Quarterly,* 61(2): 136–154.IRE/FRAAnnotation by Sally Baker  | **Context:** Comparative analysis of definitions of access and equity reveals important (dis)connections – patterns suggest movement from meritocratic (‘inherited merit’) to affirmative action approaches for under-represented groups – all accompanied by growing understanding of need to nuance when identifying and characterising equity groups**Aim:** To review attempts to measure equity in access to HE so as to develop a programme of comparative research. Poses two key questions: how are access and equity defined, nationally and globally; and how are access and equity measured nationally and globally? (p.137)**Theoretical frame:****Methodology:** Analysed data from EUROSTUDENT project**Findings:** Comparison of history of access in several countries shows “common evolution of access norms reflects a broader understanding of social diversity” (p.137). Three broad patterns: inherited merit, equality of rights and equity (equality of access) (compares origins of HE in Indonesia/ SA/ USA/ France). Next = equality of rights (accompanying massification movement, post-WW2 and into 1950s and 60s; opening to women and ethnic minorities) but inherited merit/privilege remains a constant. Next = equity/ equality of opportunity = “take account of differences in the opportunity structure” (p.139). Each country identifies under-represented in different ways (regionality/ethnicity/socio-professional status of parents/SES) – in their comparison, authors note “a shift from racial to social and vice versa” (p.141). Key question about this is: who are the main players in the identification of the identities?Measuring equity: (driven by competitive ranking; countries = keen to ‘benchmark’). 3 measurements used to measure: entry measures, enrolment measures and output measures but difficult to operationalize because OECD definition of Type A and Type B universities -also difficult because measurements and equity groups are different. However, for countries who have 20+ years of data, there are patterns: appears to be significant reduction in SES inequalities (but uneven patterns of change) – not in Australia though (measure = fathers’ education). Continued tension between merit and equality norms**Core argument:** Absence of common/systematic research data means that comparison of countries by policy and performance = impossible. “The persistence of large, and in some countries growing, disparities in wealth and opportunity will not be cancelled out by the limited scale of affirmative action that we find in education” (p.152) |
| Clarke, M. (2014). The sublime objects of education policy: quality, equity and ideology, *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education,* 35(4): 584-598.AUSAnnotation by Sally BakerKeywords: *education policy; equity; quality; ideology; psychoanalysis; neoliberalism* | **Context:** Asks what (greater) equity and quality mean in education – based on notion that their slipperiness in discourse and policy render them as ‘sublime objects’ that are base desires reflected in objects (Freudian notion, related in his work to sexual desire represented in art): “function as sites for the investment of desire, while simultaneously covering over and compensating for the ultimate impossibility of a complete and harmonious society” (p.584, abstract). As such, they hold ideological force through their opaqueness. Quality = synonymous with excellence. Who could possibly argue against more quality and more equity? Examines equity and quality in context of policy as ‘joined up’ (between related areas, local-trans-national trends) and imaginary dimensions of policy (Castoriadis, 1997). Reconstitution of education reflects economic concerns (knowledge economy/ competition) and political concerns (sustaining democratic ideals) and the disconnect (contradiction) between notion of ‘winners and losers’ and democratic open access, participation **Aim:** **Theoretical frame:** Lacanian psychoanalytic theory and theory of the sublime: “as things that are at once elevated and elusive, as untouchable objects of inestimable value that serve as ultimate horizons, fascinating and capturing us as ‘ policy subjects’”, which are constantly under threat (p.585); Butler & Laclau (2004)’s argument that naming (policy) = hegemonic and empty because of ‘transient stabilizations’ (p.344; on p.585) **Methodology:** Essay**Findings:** Contradictory alignment of equity and quality/excellence = sublime (desires reflected in policy); impossible to achieve because the two together “posits a ‘ fantasmatically’ complete and harmonious world… in which the tensions between equity and a quality agenda premised on notions of choice and accountability are occluded” (p.587).Quality = vague: who sets the criteria for what counts as quality? Who is served by these constructions (see Biesta, 2010; p.588) – quality = typically constructed as improvements in test scores and measured against others (students, institutions, states, nations), leading to “largely utilitarian” views of education (p.589); “quality becomes a sublime object, as the constitutive uncertainties and ambiguities in knowledge and education are sacrificed to the desire for certainty and self-contained totality” (p.589). Issue 1: relationship between means and ends (assumption these can be separated; mutually constitutive relationships can be ignored) – teaching to the test. Issue 2 = blindness/ ignorance of exclusions and silences = all curricula choices mean that there were possibilities not chosen which signify a hierarchy of significance; thus privileging standardized tests means that time and resources are concentrated on those activities and thus are not spent elsewhere. Issue 3: quality education is premised on notion of scarcity = not all education can be ‘quality’ in a hierarchy. Tests are designed to be failed. Therefore, notions of quality centred on testing = “high-stakes testing programmes, are in effect technologies for ‘ devising inequality’ (p.590). Policy as numbers approach (Lingard, 2007) = commodification of education.Equity = no single accepted definition (Espinoza, 2007); generally connected to social justice/ fairness and often used (problematically) as interchangeable with equality. Explores OECD report ‘Quality and equity in education’ = equity = inclusion and fairness. No Child Left Behind (US/Bush policy which had punitive measures to ensure ‘fairness’ and equality’ serves as reminder that “equity functions as a sublime object of desire, in this case a desire on the part of policy-makers for all to succeed, as part of a fantasmatic vision of an inclusive society” (p.592). Argues that equity policies (in context of increased neoliberal operations) = “rethought within the calculative frames of competitive individualism” (p.593), so that equity becomes commensurate with access (and thus amenable to ‘policy as numbers’ approach)**Core argument:** Both quality and equity = problematic notions – complex and heavy with political contestations: “both discourses of quality and of equity are premised on a fundamental lack, on the inadequate provision of each entity in contemporary education” (p.594). Quality and equity = sublime objects, which “sustain their emptiness, while simultaneously promising fullness, by being linked to more concrete1 signifiers (Glynos, 2001 , p. 198), like ‘ tests’ , ‘ results’ , ‘ scores’ , ‘ achievement’ or ‘ evidence’” (p.595) |
| Cocks, T. & Stokes, J. (2013). Policy into practice: a case study of widening participation in Australian higher education, *Widening Participation and Lifelong Learning,* 15(1): 22-38.AUSAnnotation by Sally BakerKeywords: *inclusive policy and practice, widening participation, Australia, foundation studies.* | **Context:** Explores/ discusses enabling programs (specifically Foundation Studies at UniSA) as a “strategy that universities employ to engage students from traditionally underrepresented groups” (abstract) for widening participation to meet 20% Bradley review targets. Raises issue of overexploration of access (due to neoliberal focus on quality) into higher education at the expense of participation, engagement and success. Transition from Foundation Studies to undergraduate studies = 50-55% in 2012 (p.26). Two thirds = FiF (p.27). Had retention rate of 79% in 2012 (compared with national average of 50%) – p.33.**Aim:** To explore realities of implementing widening participation policy (aka Bradley reviews and Transforming Australia’s Future) through a case study of Foundation Studies. **Theoretical frame:** Draws on work of Gidley et al.’s (2010) framework of social inclusion - different discourses of social inclusion: neoliberalism, social justice, human potential**Methodology:** Case study**Findings:** Authors claim Foundation Studies meets inclusion/ engagement needs of students by (p.26-:* College staff being aware of student diversity [unclear where is awareness comes from or whether it is made explicit]
* Dedicated space on campus for learner identity development/ develop peer networks
* Students encouraged [by who?] to build relationships with broader university services
* Providing “an authentic university experience” on city campus (p.27)
* College staff aim to get to know students [to what extent/ how not offered]; are highly accessible to students; organise and attend ECAs; model values such as “empathy, endeavour and tolerance” (p.28)

Challenges: Discusses issues that students with low proficiency in Academic English have (specifically NESB; compares lack of English test on enrolment with entry requirements for International students: “therefore it is reasonable to conclude that a proportion of NESB students are disadvantaged with basic levels of language proficiency, so that they have little chance of passing the Foundation Studies program, let alone gaining entrance into undergraduate studies” (p.29). Issues are not apparent until teaching starts. Foundation Studies does have ESL option, specifically designed for NESB students – but all NESB grouped together, no streaming possible, focus perhaps on ‘literacy skills’ or ‘fundamental reading and writing tasks’ (p.30). Students required to self-identify for support but not doing so led to frustration; therefore a Diagnostic Writing Exercise has been implemented and “Students found to have critically low English proficiency levels from the Diagnostic Writing Exercise have been advised to undertake English language bridging programs before enrolling in the Foundation Studies program” (p.30). Authors also discuss plagiarism and communication etiquette. In this context, authors make the argument that “minimal entry requirements for access… may encourage those with low English language proficiency to develop unrealistic expectations of undergraduate success” (p.32) |
| Cullity, M. (2006). Challenges in understanding and assisting mature-age students who participate in alternative entry programs, *Australian Journal of Adult Learning*, 46(2): 175-201.AUSAnnotation by Sally Baker | **Context:** Explores experiences of mature-age students within Australian sub-degree cohort/ alternative entry pathway program. Mature age students = contribute to diversified student cohort. At time of writing, author claims there were 13/44 universities that offered Alternative Entry Programs (AEPs) which provide admission for mature students who did not meet ‘traditional’ entry requirements. AEPs = introduce academic culture, including practices and expectations. Alternative access schemes: STAT/ Special Entry Provision/ admissions test/ pre-admissions exam/ ‘other basis’ = enabling programs. Few universities published data (in 2006) on numbers of mature age students. Data presented on p.180 (from DEST) suggests that mature age students prefer enabling courses (in terms of numbers entering via). 20-30 years olds most likely to enter via ‘other basis’/ AEP. AEPs could include enabling courses (Open Foundation mentioned on p.185) but this is not made explicit.**Aim:** To illustrate how mature students’ decisions to attend an AEP are influenced by a complex mix of adult circumstances (p.177) – taken from case study of nature and outcomes of AEPs for mature age students (not including NESB or indigenous students).**Methodology:** Literature review/discussion paper**Key points**: More women than men enrol in AEPs; women who were early school leavers or had been prohibited from further study = most keen to enrol in AEPs = ‘catch up education’ (p.182). Limited data on equity groupings. People from low SES background/rural or regional background = most likely to enter AEP. Generally = Australian, non-indigenous, English speaking students access AEPs – generally universities offer specialist courses for indigenous students and ‘international students’ [author seems to be conflating NESB and international students].Interviews with staff reflect perception that demographic is shifting from women in middle-income households to broader mix of people: “They are a younger, fragile, less skilled, less confident student … The traditional upper-middle-class mum has changed to a broader demographic: people with mental illness, more people with issues (Cullity 2005: 182). Notes increase in numbers of unemployed people on benefitsPedagogical implications: draws on New Literacy Studies work that points to gaps in expectations and realities in terms of students’ knowledges, practices and expectations (regarding literacies). Also draws on ‘approaches to learning’ literatureChallenges: lack of understanding of mature age learners’ backgrounds/ characteristics of mature age learners = limitation |
| Douglass, J.A. (2005). A Comparative Look at the Challenges of Access and Equity: Changing Patterns of Policy making and Authority in the UK and US Higher Education, *Higher Education Policy,* 18: 87-116.USAnnotation by Sally BakerKeywords: *mass higher education; access; UK and US higher education* | **Context:** Compares and contrasts approaches to equity and access to HE in UK and USA. Author notes that there are two main reasons for WP: 1) increase SES mobility for more equitable society; 2) ‘bolster economic development’. Author identifies 7 general phases (not strictly chronological): 1. restructuring of HE to less elite network (broadly, focus on class in UK; on race in USA)
2. establishment of new public institutions
3. expansion of scholarships and government financial aid for studying = first 3 phases = ‘build it and they will come’ framework (p.89)
4. purposeful interventions to encourage/ motivate/ attract under-represented groups
5. development of systems approach to enrolment
6. establishment of institutional admissions procedures to target under-represented students
7. “increased politicization of admissions issues and the emergence of new policy regimes created or heavily influenced by the government and, in the case of the US, influenced by court decisions” (p.90) (purposeful target setting, e.g. 50% New Labour target in UK)

Overview of differences between US and UK systems on p.92-3**Aim:** To compare access/ equity issues in UK and US HE**Theoretical frame:** None explicit**Methodology:** Critical discussion**Findings:** Three major themes:Shift in admissions policies/ practice from internal decision making to external-publicly accountable processesCultural differences between UK and USAOrganisational differences between UK and USA: “In both the US and the UK, issues of access, participation, and representation have grown in their political saliency” (p.111).**Core argument:** Despite different sources of power and authority exist between UK and USA, = ‘convergence’ in policy goals to widen participation. Offers useful historical overview of both countries and an overview of US context/ HE system |
| Fleming, M. & Grace, D. (2015). Beyond aspirations: addressing the unique barriers faced by rural Australian students contemplating university, *Journal of Further and Higher Education,* DOI: 10.1080/0309877X.2015.1100718AUSAnnotation by Sally BakerKeywords*: Widening participation; rural students; university access; barriers; higher education* | **Context:** Discusses rural and remote students’ transitions through ACT Experience camp (a joint venture with Country Education Foundation ((CEF)) Australia, Uni of Canberra and ANU) providing “academically able” (abstract) rural students with taster of urban/university life. CEF’s mission is in part to support rural and regional communities/ young people to participate in post-school education and training. ACT Experience = HEPPP funded. Every year, 50 students (Years 9-11) travel to Canberra – students chosen on basis of ‘academic ability’. Purpose of camps “to provide a unique experience relevant to rural youth who, despite performing well academically and perhaps already considering university, have difficulty envisioning themselves at university” (p.3). Camps also offer information about finances and scholarships. Discusses: adolescents’ post-school decisions, rural students’ views on university**Theoretical frame:** Draws on discussion of ‘imagined futures’**Methodology:** Mixed methods (quantitative and qualitative). Pilot study: 41 (31f: 10m; 35 = Yr10, 6 = Yr9; 3 = Indigenous) from 5 high schools in 2012; students asked about views of university at start/end of camp (survey = demographic data, questions about future plans; students asked write down 3 words that come to mind). Words rated as positive, negative, neutral. Main study: 48 (24f: 24m; 39 = Yr10; 9 =Yr11; 3 x Indigenous) from 5 high schools. Pre/post-course surveys + focus groups 7 weeks after.**Findings:** Pilot study: 82% interested in uni before camp; 17% undecided. Students = positive words about university got more positiveMain study: went into 2014 camp with “the intention of more accurately ascertaining students’ attitudes toward university, and addressing potential barriers” (p.6), particularly knowledge of university, confidence to transition and successfully live in city. Also included parents’ and friend’s plans for future. Students were surveyed and had to complete reflection (various formats) of what the camp meant to them (small groups).Findings (main study): prior, 70% intended to go to university. Little change post camp. Focus group data themes: positive expectations/ learning something interesting; concerns about university (financial cost, accommodation/ moving away from home; students’ impressions of university: most students had not seen a university before; students’ changed views of university: after visiting two campuses, students were more positive; imagined selves as university students (expectations about workloads, work, friends, classes + going home at weekends); imagined selves beyond university.**Core argument:** Rural students are generally “less confident about their ability to succeed at university given their self-perceptions as being different to urban/metropolitan young people” (p.11). “[S]tudents reported (1) greater understanding of university, of their post-school options and of living in a city; and (2) increased confidence in their decision-making and in their ability to move away from home” (p.9); latter point= particularly relevant for rural/remote students. However, rural/remote students still need “assistance to believe that they can make the transition to university and (albeit temporarily) city life” (p.11). |
| Gale, T. & McNamee, P. (1994). Just out of reach: Access to equity in Australian higher education, *Australian universities’ review,* 37(2): 8-12.AUSAnnotation by Sally Baker | **Context:** Australian HE landscape following Labor HE reforms in early 1990s**Aim:** To provide an account of access and equity in Aus HE following ‘A Fair Chance For All’, positioned within changing national and global conditions and New Right ideologies (neo-liberalism). Offers historical review of equity from 1942 (financial support for particular social groups). Labor’s ‘Towards a Fairer Australia’ paper foregrounded education as a “central link between social and economic policy domains” (p.9). Authors note how ‘A Fair Chance For All’ changed the equity agenda, from having ‘patchy’ influence to compulsory part of each institution’s profile [compact?] to engineer the social composition of the student body by linking funding to ‘performance’ (my word).  **“**Higher Education Equity Program was an incentive based scheme that invited higher education institutions to make funding submissions for courses and strategies, which were approved on the basis of Commonwealth equity principles. In part, the scheme sought to extend and expand those existing bridging and enclave programs within severa1 institutions which were designed to enhance the study skills of their special entry students and in particular those of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander status.” P.9Explores tensions between equity, efficiency and effectiveness (in terms of practices and values ascribed). Gov’t attempted to balance out these competing discourses through a logic of multiple pay-offs and a ‘relationship of coherence’ (p.10). Efficiency = “discourse of achievement via restraint” aka “doing more with less” (p.10), so that the “"Best" equity programs become those that minimise costs; benefits that are more immediate, visible and measurable in comparison to those of social justice” (p.10). Effectiveness = “discourse of demonstrated achievement of control over outcomes” (p.11) – often measured with numbers and metrics (to permit measurement and comparison). Examples = institutional targets (to broad to allow nuance) and has furthered the stratification of Aus HE.**Core argument:** That Labor’s professed commitment to social justice (captured in ‘A Fair Chance For All’) “is a justice mediated by particular economic and managerial practices which tend to limit equity to issues of access” (p.8) so that it became “an equity constrained by particular efficient and effective practices” (p.10)Equity of access, participation and completion = institutionalised – but focus on access without similar attention to curriculum = “symptomatic of central weakness” of equity agenda (Marginson, 1993) |
| Gidley, J,; Hampson, G.; Wheeler, L.; Bereded-Samuel, E. (2010). From Access to Success: An Integrated Approach to Quality Higher Education Informed by Social Inclusion Theory and Practice. *Higher Education Policy,* 23: 123-147.AUSAnnotation by Sally Baker | **Context:** Explores quality, access and success from variety of perspectives. Starts from notion that quality, access and success are “complex and multi-perspectival” and depend on the underlying ideologies (p.124). The authors take the position that equitable access and success are closely connected to social inclusion. “…access, participation and success are ordered according to a **spectrum of ideologies** — neoliberalism, social justice and human potential, respectively — by way of a nested structure with human potential ideology offering the most embracing perspective” (p.124, SB’s emphasis).Spectrum of ideologies = reflected in degrees of social inclusion.Contextualises the paper in terms of globalization of HE; tensions between elite unis and massification (competition, commodification of knowledge, economic rationales); shifting notions of quality – tension between neoliberalism and social justice: “‘the trade-off between excellence and equity’ (Lunt, 2008; on page 128). Authors contest neoliberal notion of quality as a measure of an individual university’s “competitive edge” (p.128).Social inclusion = could be poised to take over dominance of equity and access. Social inclusion policy pays insufficient attention to certain groups: CALD (inc. refugees), rurual/remote, ageing populations and incarcerated people. Also, level of policy/ discourse direction is significant: If policies and interventions remain at the level of top down imposition of assumed common values, then it is likely that many of the groups discussed above, even if given access to higher education, may choose not to participate wholeheartedly” (p.130).Degrees of social inclusion: *Access through lens of neoliberalism* = investments in human capital/ contribution to knowledge economy, so that access is about creating higher numbers (to fuel economic production) from outside of ‘saturated’ populations; works from deficit position and scarcity of resources; reduction of social explanation to economic framework is a “conceptual reductive integration” and lifeworld reduction = “cultural assimilation and stakeholder dominator hierarchies” (p.133).Participation and engagement through lens of social justice = “is about human rights, egalitarianism of opportunity, human dignity and fairness for all” (p.134). Notes link with critical educational theories (e.g. Giroux and Freire). University-community partnerships = example that shifts away from notion of ‘ivory towers’ of academy**Aim:** Responds to this question: ‘Are equitable access, success and quality three essential ingredients or three mutually exclusive concepts for higher education development? Key question: ‘To what extent does the new term, social inclusion , reflect a shift in policy; or is it merely old policies repackaged?’ (p.129)**Theoretical frame:** Integrative analysis. Uses integrative — or joined-up — thinking to offer some futurepolicy directions.**Methodology:** Literature review**Findings:** Human potential ideology – goes beyond economic/social justice notions to idea that equal rights = “to maximise the potential of each human being [through] cultural transformation” (p.135) = opposite to deficit model/ ideology. Refers to Hope Theory (see Synder in Egan et al 2008). Based on notion that there is no one ideal model of human development – people do not ‘fit in’, rather they “bring with them the richness of their individual difference” (p.137)*Suggestions of interventions to increase access* (p.139) include more equity scholarships, better income support, better regional infrastructure, improved physical modification of facilities for people with disabilities, more teaching (language-culture) support for CALD students, better counselling services*Suggestions of interventions to increase participation* (p.140): partnerships, social enterprise, mentoring, learning networks, arts/sports interventions, outreach*Suggestions of interventions to increase success and empowerment* (p.141) = pathways, hearing voices, dialogue, futures interventions, hope interventions, cultural festivals.**Core argument:** Presents 2 notions of quality: *justice globalism* (prioritising collaboration rather than competition) and *human potential* (related to human potential and transformation)Towards an integrative approach to quality: involves spectrum of ideologies and degrees of social inclusion; “quality in higher education is synonymous with a broad interpretation of social inclusion in higher education in that both are concerned with equitable access, participatory engagement and empowered success” (p.142). |
| Harvey, A. (2014). Early and delayed offers to under-represented university students. *Australian Journal of Education,* 58(2): 167-181.AUSAnnotation by Sally Baker | **Context:** Explores possibilities of early offers /delayed selection, which reduce reliance on ATAR, for attracting under-represented students to engage with HE. Harvey notes existing literature connecting ATAR to previous educational experience. Particular attention= systematic implications of growth of both options. Contextualised in post-Bradley HE landscape (20% target driving institutional change). Early offer schemes allow universities to make offers away from ATAR system. ‘The Melbourne Model’ (generalist UG courses and professional PG) has promoted/ advocated delayed offers (see Uni Melb/UWA)**Aim:** To examine early/delayed offer models according to their transparency, efficiency, predictive validity and equity (from Palmer, Bexley & James 2011)**Findings:** *Early offers***:** List of early offer schemes on p.169 [nothing listed for UON – because of Open Foundation, see p.172]. Early offer schemes = more “opaque” than transparency offered by ATAR because they are more subjective, resting in part on school nominations/ student nomination-school corroboration. ATAR = also more efficient; efficiency of early offers = variable and there is “greater risk of systemic inefficiency in the proliferation of the schemes” (p.173) – see devolution of responsibility from universities to schools. Predictive validity of school recommendation schemes appears to be high (see Harvey & Simpson, 2012); self-nomination likely to be strong predictor (but these students likely to be accepted through ATAR system too). Equity = not all under-represented students using early offer schemes, meaning self-nomination might be related to students access to capital (rather than reflecting disadvantage) – model also doesn’t necessarily recognise issue of voice for disadvantaged students (possibly need more encouragement to self-nominate). Differences in schemes also potentially problematic: “If universities provide entry schemes of differing depth and quality, there may be confusion among secondary students and parents but also potentially a new arena of disadvantage” (p.175). “For school students, parents, teachers and principals, the rise of early offer schemes is challenging to comprehend, communicate and administer” (p.179)*Delayed offers:* could improve transparency more broadly if they are able to reduce reliance on ATAR (which would also reduce need for schemes like early offers) and could improve efficiency by removing distortion of ATAR and reducing “established hierarchy of courses which drives student selection” (p.176) – because students strategically select courses to improve ranking. Supports equity agenda in principle (selecting students for more elite courses on basis of generalist UG study) but doesn’t account for ‘pipeline effect’ = less low SES UG students = less low SES PG students (low SES = 10.5% of PG population). Also, delayed selection place attention on universities’ assessment models/literacies. Delayed selection = costly in terms of money and time for institutions and students |
| Harvey, A., McNamara, P., Andrewartha, L. and Luckman, M. (2015). *Out of care, into university: Raising higher education access and achievement of care leavers*. National Centre for Student Equity in Higher Education (NCSEHE), Perth: Curtin University.AUSAnnotation by Sally Baker | **Context:** Approximately 40,000 children = in OOHC context. Care leavers rarely move on to HE but at time of report, there was no national agenda to address extremely low rates of participation in HE**Aim:** To provide the basis for such an agenda by highlighting the nature and extent of the problem, andsuggesting practical solutions within both the education and community service sectors**Methodology:** Literature review, examination of national data sets, online survey of Australian universities, interviews with senior reps from OOHC providers **Recommendations:** Offers set of 26 recommendations, based around main three:1. Need to develop system to collect nationally consistent data
2. Policy reform needed = greater recognition by HEIs (federal government)-needing category to be added to 6 identified equity groups because “the extent and nature of their disadvantage requires tailored policies and specific data collection” (p.6). Universities could collect data on enrolments/admissions.
3. In Community/ Care sector, legislative reform needed to better support children to adulthood
4. Need for cultural change: shift culture of ‘soft bigotry’ (low expectations)
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| Harvey, A. & Simpson, A. (2012). Powers of prediction: Can school recommendations forecast university achievement?, *Widening Participation & Lifelong Learning,* 14(3): 157-171.AUSAnnotation by Sally BakerKeywords*: access; participation; prediction; achievement; schools.* | **Context:** Set in context of Australian universities using recommendations from secondary schools to create early pathways into university as part of widening participation agenda (based on knowledge that low SES students = less likely to get high ATAR). Seeks to develop/set predictive validity of school recommendations. Notes a number of universities (in Aus/UK) that have similar ‘alternative/early offer’ entry programs. However, the “selection process of school-based recommendations can be opaque, and there is generally some discretion at both school and university level” (p.159). Authors argue: “The clearer the guidelines established by both school and university, the more transparent the scheme will be and the less susceptible to subjectivity or misuse. A feedback loop between school and university is also important to establish” (p.160).**Aim:** To explore “whether the SALT scheme was effective at attracting disadvantaged students, how these students performed academically once at university, and how successful schools were in recommending academically capable students for the scheme” (p.158)**Theoretical frame:****Methodology:** Focuses on ‘Schools Access La Trobe’ (SALT) scheme – provides nominated students with an offer prior to release of ATARs. 2011 SALT cohort evaluated (n=696); aka 696 offered early place but only 338 (49%) took up place through SALT scheme. Of 338, 63% = f; 31% = low SES; 56% = FiF. Average ATAR = 69.7 (compared with 70.8 overall population average). 57 students were rejected by La Trobe but entered university on basis of exceeding predicted ATAR**Findings:** School recommendations ‘produce’ successful students, but not based on reliable predictive validity of school nomination. Also, the challenges of combining academic requirements and school recommendations could add “an additional and unnecessary layer of selection for disadvantaged students” (abstract/p.157)Significant differences between SALT schools in terms of grading/ nominating students = likely to result from ambiguity of guidelinesStudents who are not predicted to succeed still perform relatively well if accepted into the university (p.166)ATAR = better predictor of university academic achievement than school recommendationsSelf-nomination for early access offer scheme = appears to be good predictor of future achievement**Core argument:** School recommendations can be effective predictors if a familiar teacher is asked to nominate, rather than distant head/principal. Most disadvantaged students will need additional support/encouragement to nominate. Need to identify indicators away from school academic achievement that indicate future achievement (e.g. ECAs/ community or volunteer work). Some schools appear to be playing the game (better kudos for more offers/ enrolments): “The relationship between school ranking and academic achievement is further limited by some schools potentially being pragmatic rather than wholly objective when selecting their rankings” (p.167). More research needed on why students don’t take up offers received. |
| Hoare, A. & Johnston, R. (2011). Widening participation through admissions policy – a British case study of school and university performance, *Studies in Higher Education,* 36(1): 21-41.UKAnnotation by Sally BakerKeywords: *widening participation; underachievement; academic achievement; admission conditions; university practices* | **Context:** Performance in undergraduate studies at elite universities in context of WP. Authors scope WP internationally; pose question – does it work/ has it achieved its goals? In UK, the OFFA WP contract/ agreement agreed between universities and OFFA = ‘devolved’ policy to individual universities rather than national/central policy. In UK, WP = 4 contributions: outreach, WP students (defined by each university), financial support (bursaries/ scholarship), WP criteria in UCAS offers. Offers overview of application/ admissions process (p.23-4). Authors note that WP students get lower school grades due to ‘educational disadvantage’ relating to personal/ familial/ community/ school circumstances**Aim:** To examine whether ‘WP’ students in elite universities perform as well as independent school (IS)-educated students; to explore performance at A-level, in first and final year UG**Theoretical frame:****Methodology:** Case study of University of Bristol; draws on data collected on student cohorts who entered UniBristol in 2002/3 – 2004/5 (n=4305 students). All data analysed for these dependent variables:● their summed A-level grades, expressed as a points score using the standard procedure (A = 120, B = 100);● their performance at the end of their first year at the University, expressed as an average percentage mark;● their performance at the end of their final year at the University, also expressed as an average percentage mark; and ● their degree classification on the conventional UK university system (first, upper second, lower second, etc.) and independent variables – school attended, academic performance of school, area of residence with low HE participation rates, SES, disability, age, gender (p.30)**Findings:** Independent schooled students performed better in A-levels but not in university examinations. Analysis shows that while IS students = better average A-level grades but lower Year 1 grades than state school (SS) students and SS students overall get higher classification of degree (see p.31 for overview of all independent variables).**Core argument:** IS-educated students = more likely to get better A-level results but less likely to get first class degree than SS-educated students. High achieving A-level results from SS = more likely to get first class degree than IS counterparts (SS = on average outperform IS students). Non-white students = perform less well than white students and same for ‘blue-collar households’ (but could be particular to Bristol). |
|  James, R.; Baldwin, G.; Coates, H.; Krause, K.L.; & McInnis, C. (2004). *Analysis of Equity Groups in Higher Education 1991-2002*. Centre for the Study of Higher Education: The University of Melbourne.AUSAnnotation by Sally Baker | **Context:** Report based on commissioned research to examine performance of equity group students in HE between 1991-2002 using HE Student Statistics Collection (5 groups: not including indigenous students). Performance = measured according to 5 indicators: access, participation, retention, success, completion**Methodology:** Statistical analysis. Two phases of research. Phase 1 answered this question: “How has the performance of the five equity groups in higher education changed over the last twelve years (1991-2002)? How does it compare with the performance of the overall student population?” (p.2). Phase 2 answered: “Do the current definitions of the equity groups include those in the Australian population most disadvantaged in accessing and participating in higher education?” (p.3)**Findings:** Most significant equity gaps = access rates (thus participation rates): “where the greatest breakthroughs remain to be made and are the major equity challenge for the higher education system” (p.10)**Recommendations**: *General*: special emphasis should be placed on low SES, with recognition of particular effects of low SES and R&RUniversities should be required to monitor and report performance of equity groups*Low SES*: should be measured by parents’ occupational status (for mature age students: parents’ occupation status when MAS were at secondary school). More emphasis in equity policy framework needed on low SES/ fields of study with lowest representation and more attention to access for low SES students needed. Low SES presented as National, State and Urban= “leads to potentially misleading information” (p.xiii) – a national SES classification should be adopted*Rural & Remote*: continue to be significantly underrepresented and needed special consideration in equity policy framework. Classification methods also needed updating*Disability*: need to offer a list of examples when asking students to self-identify as having a disability*NESB*: should no longer be considered an equity target group; “universities should be encouraged to develop focused programs for specific groups of recent immigrants in their local areas, as part of their responsibility for community service and engagement” (p.xiv).*WINTA*: keep targets for women in Engineering and IT; set targets for men in nursing, society and culture and education and identify as equity group if patterns remain unchanged.Suggests universities being required to target particular schools in locales: “It is possible to conceive universities being rewarded for raising the higher education access rates of particular schools within their student catchment areas. The benefit of this approach is that it would encourage institutional equity programs to confront one of the root causes of inequity in higher education, which is competitive selection methods” (p.58).  |
| James, R. (2007). Social equity in a mass, globalised higher education environment: the unresolved issue of widening access to university. Presented at *Faculty of Education Dean’s Lecture Series 2007*, Centre of the Study of Higher Education, The University of Melbourne.AUSAnnotation by Sally Baker | **Aim:** To foreground and provide a rationale for the continued focus on equity (note: this paper was produced the year before the Bradley Review) and to ‘myth-bust’ six assumptions about equity**Key points from literature review:** Equity usually involved vague notions of merit, fairness and equality of opportunity (p.2); it is difficult to make comparisons of patterns of access to HE on basis of low SES because of use of different indicators and scales. Internationally, comparisons are difficult because HE is classified differently across the world. James notes that Australia’s participation patterns for equity groups were “far from satisfactory for a nation that takes pride in its egalitarianism” (p.5). **Findings:** Presents 6 myths for critique (p.10-12):1. *Expanding the HE system/ increasing places will improve patterns of participation for equity groups*

An increase in numbers will not necessarily change proportional representation (**since proved correct**)1. *Free or lower cost of HE will improve patterns of participation for equity groups*

Needs differential levels of financial support: “everything possible must be done to achieve minimal costs for students who otherwise would not be able to participate…” (p.11)1. *Improving equity involves the removal of barriers to access*

Challenge is to not only remove barriers but also to build possibilities and choices1. The onus is with universities to resolve equity issues

The role of school and wider society needs to be brought into the mix1. *Widening Participation will lower standards*

Notion of standards based on students entrance qualifications = ‘shallow thinking’ (p.11)1. Students can be selected on basis of academic merit

Critique offered here of investment in measurements such as ENTER (now ATAR) as an indicator of merit: they are at best partial measurements of ‘cumulative advantage or disadvantage’**Recommendations:** * Build policy and practice out of a multi-causal understanding of why under-representation is as it is
* Improve definition and measurement of SES
* Set targets/ provide incentives for universities (**now in place**)
* Outreach into schools much earlier
* Consider flexible admissions policies (less reliant on ENTER)
* Renew Year 1 curricula
* Develop better ways of measuring graduate outcomes

Special note: Consider international students = 25% of student body**Relevant for UON:** Mention of Newcastle’s ‘thriving Foundation program that is without parallel in Australian HE’ (p.7) |
| Knipe, S. (2013). University Course Completion and ATAR Scores: Is There a Connection? *Journal of Educational Enquiry**,* 12(1): 25-39AUSAnnotation by Sally BakerKeywords: *entrance requirements, ATAR, TAFE, pathway, access* | **Context:** Examines enrolment patterns in the context of the deregulated system and in the context of widened participation in HE. Looks specifically at the ATAR – describes the arbitrary nature of setting minimum thresholds (e.g. ATAR of 70) – which is deemed to represent potential for ‘success’ in HE - when universities adapt the entry requirements. **Aim:** To investigate the relationship between the method of entry (whether with an ATAR score or without an ATAR score) to an undergraduate teacher education course; to challenge current perceptions about student entry scores, course progression and course completion rates. Posed this RQ (p.26):* Do students who enter the first year of a university course with an ATAR score have better completions rates than students without an ATAR score, and is there a difference between course completion rates for students with an ATAR score of 70 and students with an ATAR score below 70?

**Theoretical frame:****Methodology:** Participants = 609 students enrolled in 5 teacher education courses between 2006 – 2009 at CSU (2 early/primary with 2/3 of participants; 3 secondary with 1/3 of participants). Collected data pertaining to entry route (ATAR/TAFE etc.), ATAR score, course completion, SES, school attended and gender. 26.6% = m; 73.3% = f**Findings:** CSU had lowest low SES intake by % terms in 199727.7% of teacher enrolments were from low SES backgrounds (8% high SES;64% mid-SES)2/3 of teacher-trainees were from public schools (23% from Catholic;9.4% from independent schools)20% of students came from TAFE pathway, 24% came from Yr 12Just under 75% had got an ATAR but 28% primary and 26% secondary students came through direct school-uni pathwayFor students who didn’t have an ATAR, 75% came via TAFE pathwayOf ATAR scores, 70% of primary/early students got under 69; 74% of secondary students got under 69No SES difference for course completionsIn 2009, 67% primary/early and 72% secondary students had completed or were one semester away from completing, meaning that 33% and 28% of students dropped outOf the drop outs, 23.5% had an ATAR of 70+ and 32% had an ATAR of 69 or below22% of students who came via TAFE dropped out, 28% of higher education pathway, 33% of Yr 12, 34% of special entry, 40% of ‘other’No significant difference found between 3 types of schools attended**Core argument:** Findings challenge public perceptions of how students enter university: only ¼ came via school/ Yr 12. Most came via ‘special entry’ [including enabling?] Knipe argues that “for all the concern about entry standards and ATAR, there was little difference in course completion rates between entry pathways” (p.37); therefore entry scores like ATAR are not necessarily a strong predictor of completion/success. |
| Le, A. & Miller, P. (2005). Participation in Higher Education: Equity & Access?, *The Economic Record,* 81(253): 152-165.AUSAnnotation by Sally BakerKeywords: leaving school; decision-making; equity | **Context:** Responds to debates around equity and access from 2003 (Nelson reforms) and proposed changes to HECS: HECS-HELP and FEE-HELP – suggested that these were consistent with maintaining SES mix of student body. Asks whether scholarships and targeted fee-waivers could make difference in proportional representation of different social groups. Suggests that placing these at high school level = misplaced?Refers to previous work by Miller & Volker (1989) – statistic analysis of LAS showed that focusing attention on encouraging school completion = most important. Later research shows that parents’ occupational status and performance in literacy/numeracy tests in early education = very important influences**Aim:** “to study the determinants of participation in tertiary studies within a framework that enables the influence of earlier school-leaving decisions to be taken into account” (p.152) and consider wider range of influences on decision-making. To explore whether massification + allowances available to school pupils = impact on patterns of school continuation by SES background.**Methodology:** Draws on data from late 1990s/early 2000s**Findings:** Strong influences on likelihood/decision to proceed beyond school:Early school achievementFamily background (father’s SES and educational level = positive influence/ number of children = negative)Students born overseas/ to non-Australian parents = more likely to participateFemales = “much higher tertiary participation rates than males” (p.157)Students from Catholic/independent schools have higher results but doesn’t translate into strong influenceResidence in rural area**Core argument:** Changes in HECS would appear to impact on low SES students more than high SES students; therefore universities should increase contributions to fund scholarships/fee-waivers. For rural students, support should start in Year 10. |
| Leibowitz, B. & Bozalek, S. (2014). Access to higher education in South Africa: A social realist account, *Widening Participation and Lifelong Learning,* 16(1): 91-109.SAAnnotation by Sally BakerKeywords: *Socio-economic; access to higher education; challenges; society and schooling* | **Context:** Explores access to HE in South Africa 20 years after end of Apartheid. Notes issues of racial categories used in SA (harking back to Apartheid days). SA has major issues with inequality and poverty, with considerable inequality evident in school results and access to HE (see p.94-5). SA has 3-tiered university system: Research Intensive, Comprehensive & Technology universities; also = layer of historical d.**Aim:** To describe issues in SA society and school system that perpetuates unequitable access to HE; to “present an overview of the educational context in South Africa and the challenges that it faces” (p.92)**Theoretical frame:** Draws on social realist account (Archer, 1995), namely ‘morphogenetic’ analysis, to make sense of openings and constraints for social transformation. Social domain comprises = structure, agency, culture (structure and culture = objective; human interaction with structure and culture can lead to change (morphogenesis) or no change (morphostasis)**Methodology:** Reports on NRF- funded project on structure, culture and agency that explored issues of teaching and academic development in SA HE. Draws on variety of sources including national documents, policies, websites and interviews with middle management person with responsibility for policy and strategy at 8 SA universities (range of types).**Findings:** Policy level (conceived as structures/ enactment of culture) – traces developments in positioning of equity/ access from 1997 to 2012. Boughey & Bozalek (2012) argue that policy trends in neoliberal context = ‘apolitical’ and lead to morphostasis.Responses to national policy: draws on interview data and includes topics such as Extended Curriculum Programmes (ECPs), bridging programs and bursaries. Some universities engage in innovative and targeted outreach (e.g. weekend classes at rural/ working class schools, school visits, disseminating recruitment materials) – but not much evaluation of this WP work, with exception of ECP. The lack of success = “A key reason why this is so, is that these schemes do not speak to the broader systemic features of society includingstructure and culture, which might influence how transformation does or does not occur, and they don’t take into sufficient account how individuals and groups of individuals might exercise their own agency to influence how the policies are interpreted and implemented” (p.102). Meso level (culture) = analysis of 21 universities suggests little public positioning on WP and if it is there, it is buried in section on admissions.Analysis of talk from participants on widening access showed interesting diversity: in historically disadvantaged universities, the use of terms/ nomenclature =of less concern; in historically advantaged universities = concern with defining and measuring disadvantage. Discussion of targeted approaches (e.g. only offering places to black students), but authors note how this can play out in less equitable ways (see p.103).**Core argument:** Nature of political settlement (playing out at structural and cultural levels) maintains inequity because privileged institutions are privileged by ‘predatory elites’. In SA, treatment of issue of race = important and difficult. Students vote with their feet, meaning that structural efforts (policy/ funding) perpetuate stratification of universities in terms of balance of different types of students served. |
| Levy, S. & Murray, J. (2005). Tertiary Entrance Scores Need Not Determine Academic Success: An analysis of student performance in an equity and access program, *Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management*, 27(1): 129-141.AUSAnnotation by Sally BakerKeywords: diploma, foundation studies, tertiary preparation, entrance requirements, ENTER | **Context:** Looks at Diploma of Foundation Studies (DFS) at Monash – began in 1999 as 1 year, FT program (regional equity and access scheme = at Gippsland Campus – see Munro, 2012). Student performance translated into ENTER (Equivalent National Tertiary Entrance Rank). All DFS students have low ENTER = ‘at risk’ for UG study. “The objective of this program is to equip students with the necessary academic skills and tertiary literacy to progress to studying full degrees. These skills include: effective use of lectures and tutorials; conducting research and developing research strategies; effective engagement with the university’s online student interface; essay writing; referencing ideas; exam preparation; thinking critically; problem-solving; project development; and effective communication” (p.130). Program growth (23 in 1999 to 110 in 2003). All applicants = short interview prior to starting DFS. No guarantee of entry on basis of completing DFS/ Students receive advance standing credit for between 4-8 units, depending on destination program**Methodology:** Description of program/ reporting of student data**Description:** Core unit = Understanding University Learning – students explicitly unpack assumptions and expectations about transition into tertiary study. This module has longer tutorials and smaller class sizes (‘ess-threatening’). Only selected staff teach into 3/4 core subjectsStudent outcomes: 283 students between 2000-2003 = 45% completed/passed all units; of these student, over 70% offered place and 45% got into UG program. Aggregate retention into Year 2 = 77%Extended discussion of entrance scores (p.134-139)**Core argument:** ENTER =not reliable guide/ predictor of academic success or student performance |
| Luckett, K. & Hunma, A. (2014). Making gazes explicit: facilitating epistemic access in the Humanities, *Higher Education,* 67: 183-198.SAAnnotation by Sally BakerKeywords: *Bernstein, Curriculum studies, Humanities, Legitimation Code Theory, Sociology of education* | **Context**: Examines curriculum design and epistemic access for Humanities-based foundation courses (programs specifically for first-generation/ ‘disadvantaged’ learners) in South Africa. Scopes South African context (uneven school results, unequal school system, affirmative action policies in SA universities) – foundation courses = one mechanism to address disadvantages. Foundation courses = often focused on academic skills/ literacies rather than content. Takes Maton’s (2013) argument that in order to provide epistemic access, designers should “attempt to design a curriculum that makes explicit the epistemic, recontextualising and evaluative logics… of pedagogic discourses to which they will be exposed” (p.184)**Aim**: To describe attempt to design for epistemic access in two Humanities-based foundation courses, responding to RQ: “Is it possible to offer disadvantaged students a platform of powerful knowledge in Foundation courses on which they can build when they begin their disciplinary majors?” (p.185)“we aimed to move beyond the genericism typical of many foundation courses and facilitate epistemic access by making the various gazes and lenses identified in large Humanities first-year courses more explicit” (p.185).Theoretical frame: Social realism (Bernstein and critical realism: “namely that one can both acknowledge that knowledge is socially produced and historically situated—and therefore always partial and fallible—and at thesame time assert that knowledge is about an ontologically real world whose structure will affect what it is possible to know” (Bhaskar, 1979; p.184). Critical social realism = highlights conflation of social hierarchies with hierarchies of knowledge. **Analytic frame**: Uses Maton’s legitimation code theory to ‘uncover knowledge/knower structures (based on Bernstein’s notion of horizontal knowledge) = knowledge structures – implicit but dominant ‘knower codes’ (as opposed to knowledge codes). Two types of relations: Epistemic relations (ER) –what can be and is known - and social relations (SR) between knowledge practices and knowers (subjects/ actors). Two codes= • Knowledge codes (ER+/ SR-)• Knower codes (ER-/SR+)• Elite codes = specialist knowledge + knower dispositions• Relativist codes = none matterTwo forms of social relations: subjective relations (between knowledge practices and ‘kinds of knowers’, such as the social category of the knower) and interactional relations (between knowledge practices and ‘ways of knowing’). Relationship between these relations created 4 modalities or gazes:1. Cultivated gaze (“weakly bounds and controls legitimate categories of knower but strongly bounds and controls legitimate interactions with significant others”; ‘feel’ for practices)2. Social gaze (bounds/ controls kinds of knowers who can claim legitimacy)3. Born gaze (bounds/ controls legitimate kinds of knowers/ways of knowing)4. Trained gaze (weakly bounds/ controls as above = social relations are weak) (p.185-87)**Methodology**: Analysis of curriculum documents and assessment materials (exam papers) = examples of ‘pedagogic discourse’**Findings**: Offers analysis of four first year courses: Psychology course + exam, Language & Literature course + exam, Historical Studies course + exam, Film & Media course + exam. Psychology = cultivated knowledge code; other 3 = knower codes: “this suggests that successful performance in these courses is based on knower attributes, dispositions and an ability to carry out certain intellectual practices in particular ways” (p.195).**Core argument**: Pedagogic challenge for Humanities = how to explicate what is valued, what dispositions are valued, how to ‘model the gazes’, how to produce legitimate texts = suggests one way to do so is to discuss disciplines in context of histories, foci and practices; better but more labour intensive way = “to model the practices and to scaffold students’ acquisition of these” (p.196) |
| Mangan, J.; Hughes, A.; Davies, P. & Slack, K. (2010). Fair access, achievement and geography: explaining the association between social class and students’ choice of university, *Studies in Higher Education,* 35(3): 335-350.UKAnnotation by Sally BakerKeywords: *fair access; university choice, multivariate model* | **Context:** Students’ choice of university (of different status) according to student groups in context of UK policy push towards ‘fair access’. Scopes literature on social class and university choice – notes qualitative work that suggests (in contrast to Baker & Brown’s 2007 study) that working-class students are more likely to apply to lower-ranking universities so as to ‘fit in’. Chowdry et al. (2008) also drawn on heavily (effect of maternal deprivation, parents’ education and ethnicity on likelihood of getting into 41 high-prestige universities)**Aim:** To explore students’ choice of university (particularly elite universities) may differ on basis of students’ location (place of residence) and estimates size of effect according to prior attainment, income/class background, and individual variables. Important point of difference from other work: considers variables *together* and focuses on applications rather than admissions.**Theoretical frame:****Methodology:** Quantitative: based on survey of students’ intentions, beliefs and background (not use of national databases) that impacted on students’ approach to university choice. Survey conducted in two large urban areas in UK.**Findings:** “Social class background is strongly associated with the type of university to which students intend to apply” (p.346) – but do not directly affect choice of university; “there is no support here for the proposition that school students (as this study uses data from 17/18 year old students) match themselves by social class with universities of a particular status” ([.346). Instead, data suggests associations between social class and factors such as examination grades, attending an independent school, proximity of a high-ranking university and fear of debtSchool type attended and fear of debt are significant independent factorsSocial factors and types of information = not significant at this pointLocality and availability of high status university = significant, especially **Core argument:** There is a ‘postcode lottery’ with regards to what appears to be available options (HE institutions) for particular students. Interventions to facilitate fair access = need to happen at school level, helping underrepresented groups to get better exam grades. |
| McCaig, C. (2015). The impact of the changing English higher education marketplace on widening participation and fair access: evidence from a discourse analysis of access agreements, *Widening Participation and Lifelong Learning,* 17(1): 5-22.UKAnnotation by Sally BakerKeywords: *Widening Participation, Fair Access, Office for Fair Access, National Scholarship Programme, Differentiation, Marketisation* | **Context:** UK HE in time of Conservative government (post-‘Students at the heart of the system’ White Paper, Browne Review, National Scholarship Programme, OFFA policies re: Access Agreements) and in context of higher tuition fees and changing policy field. Author argues that these changes have resulted in changes towards positioning of WP and students over time (comparing 2006/7 to 2012/13) – more emphasis on ‘brightest’ rather than traditional WP activities focused on all people. National Scholarship Programme (NSP) = funded 1/6 of number of students supported in previous iteration = shift from increasing overall number of students to increasing (smaller) number of WP students into prestigious universities/ courses. Review of WP in UK (p.9-10).**Aim:** To identify discourses of marketization in UK HE policy, particularly differentiation of/between different types of universities as a result of policy changes (tuition fee increases); looking at possibilities for WP in different types of universities through DA of policy documents/ Access Agreements**Theoretical frame:** Critical discourse theory + theory of marketisation**Methodology:** Discourse analysis of 20 Access Agreement statements from 2006/7 and 20 from 2012/13 (same 10 RG and same 10 post-92 universities for both periods)**Findings:** Key themes derived from analysis = strategic aims and objectives, historical record on access, access enhancement statements, outreach targeting.Post-1992 universities = particularly vulnerable “to the changing context for widening participation created by economic downturn and the introduction of higher fees, as well as competitive market pressures for potentially contracting student numbers during the 2006-2012 period” (p.11). In 2012/13, post-92 unis had to focus more on retention and success, lead to post-92 universities appearing.Pre-1992 universities had to work towards helping disadvantaged students to meet grades requirements. Discusses ‘Realising Opportunity’ scheme run by some RG universities to prepare young people for any research-intensive university. Therefore, pre-92 universities have not had to adapt far from their original and stated goal = to recruit the brightest and best – but with consideration of WP principles**Core argument:** McCaig’s analysis suggests that, in reaction to increased marketization and intra-university competition, “Institutions are seeking to create and sustain narratives that differentiate them from institutions of another type” (p.18); post-92 universities have had to accommodate more towards new policy field: “reflecting the ongoing differentiation of the sector due to long term marketisation as well as the specific policy changes” (p.19). Post-92 universities are particularly threatened by policy changes (declines in typical student bodies (e.g, mature age/ part time). |
| McCowan, T. (2012). Is There a Universal Right to Higher Education, *British Journal of Educational Studies,* 60(2): 111-128.UKAnnotation by Sally BakerKeywords: *access to higher education, higher education policy, human rights, right to education, widening participation* | **Context:** Offers conceptual exploration of notion of higher education as a ‘right’ – rather than a privilege, based on international law. Probes questions of whether higher education = private or public good. McCowan takes the position that access to elementary education = human right, but questions if same can be said of higher education (notes that HE = contested term that includes lots of options). HE = defined as 1) for adults; 2) in-depth/ sustained study; 3) specialisation in area of knowledge.**Aim:** To assess “the validity of claims that access to higher education might be a right, and explores the nature and scope of such a right” (p.111).**Theoretical frame:** International law – probes concepts of rights, goods and moral bases for arguments about HE**Methodology:** Essay**Findings:** Human rights = McCowan follows Sen’s (2004, 2005) arguments that human rights = ethical demands. Higher education should be accessible but not necessarily available to all (see Beiter, 2006) – conditions of entry should be made on basis of merit, not affordability. Scopes legal acts – notes argument in 1960 Convention against Discrimination in Education that uses term ‘capacity’, and notes that capacity and merit are not the same = “in that it relates to future potential rather than ‘students’ past academic achievements’” (p.114; argument credited to Beiter 2006). HE doesn’t need to be free according to 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child, rather it needs to be available on basis of capacity by appropriate means (making student loans appropriate). Scopes literature and law on justifications for human right to education:Hodgson (1998) = 4 justifications:*Social utilitarian**Public interest perspective* (supporting democratic participation)*Prerequisite to individual dignity* (acquisition of essential skills)*Individual welfare perspective* (supporting people to meet basic needs) (see p.115)Haydon (1977) = 3 bases for right:*Socialization* (acquisition of essential skills)*Optional education* (supporting liberatory capacity)*Autonomy* (see p.115)Education = often seen as necessary for enacting/ enabling series of other human rights: Wringe (1986) = education is essential for avoiding subjugation; Spring (2000) = education is essential for minority groups to negotiate challenges of contemporary society (e.g. indigenous people). Restriction of right to education to elementary level = not justified because it’s impossible to put an end point on what people need to achieve/ learn: “Any threshold of educational development established to mark the ending of the entitlement would be arbitrary” and should have no start or end point (p.116).Scopes intrinsic/ instrumental value of higher education (see p.117-9). Positional advantage accrued through higher education plays out in a restricted/skewed system; others contend there is non-instrumental value of HE that is a right (experience of learning). Probes question of HE as right or privilege (p.119-20); university for all? (p.120-22) – human rights = freedoms not obligations, so not necessary for everyone to access HE. Touches on debates about massification and quality – examines limitations resulting from funding restrictions but notes Sen’s argument that “we should not reign in our deliberation on rights by only considering what might now be practically possible in a particular country” (p.123)**Core argument:** Two main responses to question:“(1) Higher education is a right of all people, but only as one of a range of educational opportunities available to adults.(2) Non-discriminatory access procedures are important, but not adequate in themselves; sufficient places must be available for all those desiring to study and with a minimum level of preparation” (p.124)Higher education as a right rests on its non-instrumental valueAttention needs to be paid to procedural fairness of access to higher education. “The right to higher education, therefore, should be seen in the context of a general right to intrinsically valuable education that runs through life” (p.117).  |
| McCowan, T. (2015). Three dimensions of equity of access to higher education. *Compare: A journal of Comparative and International Education,* DOI: 10.1080/03057925.2015.1043237UKAnnotation by Sally BakerKeywords: *access to higher education; equity; higher education policy; widening participation; university admissions* | **Context:** Compares initial access/equity policies of England, Brazil and Kenya = all three are significantly different countries but all have implemented expansion of HE systems and access to university, resulting in increased stratification (quality and prestige). Heart of problem = expansion doesn’t mean recognitive distribution of places/ proportional distribution. Lists dichotomies that characterise tension: “tensions between equity and efficiency, public versus private, academic versus vocational and views on human ability and potential” (p.2). Author makes conceptual distinction between equity and equality (p.4)**Aim:** To contribute “the ‘bare bones’ of a common understanding of equity (p.2) – but acknowledges heterogeneity of global picture (uneven resources). Questions ‘sufficientarianism’ in that is it ok for everyone “to have access *some* form of higher education… but for significant inequality to be allowed in relation to the nature of the higher education?” (p.5) – explored through analysis of benefits each form offers (intrinsic, instrumental, positional). Discusses notion of ‘affirmative action’ for ameliorating positional disadvantage in terms of access/admissions (e.g. bonus points if student comes from low SES area) = example of tension between procedural and social justices. Also discusses epistemological access (access doesn’t necessarily translate into meaningful engagement and curricula privilege particular ways of knowing/knowledges – see Clegg 2011 and Wheelahan 2007).McCowan rejects a universalist position (aka all people should go to university) on grounds of desire and ability. “Access to higher education institutions then should be based on criteria, not competitive allocation of a fixed (and small) number of places” and higher education systems are not fair if they restrict certain individuals and groups to institutions and experiences that confer less positional advantage (p.8).**Theoretical frame:** Explores notion of equity (position taken akin to ‘fairness’) and underpinning approaches: (egalitarianism and sufficientarianism). Egalitarianism = ‘equal’ distribution of resources/ opportunities; sufficientarianism = “a minimal level to which all people should be raised, but that inequality beyond that point is acceptable” (p.4), which means not inadvertently disadvantaging those with most talent/ putting in most effort. Social justice requires egalitarian approach.**Methodology:** Case study of 3 counties (high income-long established HE system; middle-income, rapidly expanding HE system; low-income, expanding but limited ((to age)) HE system). They have enrolment rates of approximately 49%, 15% and 4%, respectively (p.10)**Findings:** Three countries have developed “diverse policy responses” to equity agenda (p.3).Entry to HE = academic performance (e.g. = end of school exams v. entrance tests) and payment of fees. Availability of places = extremely diverse across world and related to national wealth.*Description of England –* public system, highly stratified, universal loan system*Description of Brazil –* public (state-run, totally free – access dependent on competitive exams) and private (direct fees to students) universities. Most prestigious universities in public sector (exception of Catholic universities). Expansion in 1990s – privatisation = more private HEIs and rapid growth in student numbers. Access for low SES students “severely limited” (p.12) because of connections with prior educational experience (impact on ability to pass entrance test). Therefore, fees are a major deterrent for low SES students in private unis. Since 2002 (Workers’ Party governance), student places have grown – mostly through tax breaks for private universities to offer free places to low SES students. BUT = lower prestige HEIs = lower value on employment market. Also discusses policy of quotas (e.g. for students from gov schools/ African Brazilians = “having a significant impact on the composition of students in the high-prestige public universities, although in the context of limited expansion of the overall number of free-of-charge places” (p.12-3)*Description of Kenya* – 22 public and 21 private universities in Kenya. Access is very limited (only 4% gross enrolment ratio) – low rates of female participation and regional areas. Public = entrance tests; private = fees; “competitive exams for public universities and fees for private universities ensure that lower-income students have access to neither” (p.13). However, students who don’t pass entrance test to prestigious public unis can pay high fees for place – but there is no distinction in qualification (aka employers don’t know who got in on merit and who got in by paying). Model of expansion = limit free places but allow for expansion of fee-paying places in both public and private universities.**Core argument:** Proposes three principles for understanding equity: availability, accessibility and horizontality. All 3 countries have sought to increase availability but this is not always accompanied by increases in accessibility (because of competitive exams and fees). Two examples of policy to address this: student loans in England and scholarships in Brazil; also see affirmative action (racial quotas) in Brazil. However, equity issues persist for students who have lower/less access to resources. Instead, McCowan suggests horizontality to address stratification of HE: “the characteristic of even prestige and qualityacross the system” so that “this diversity should exist in the context of consistently high quality and recognition of diplomas in the broader society” (p.15). A horizontal system would not mean uniformity in HEIs; rather it would allow less privileged students into more elite institutions. It would “not preclude differentiation in study type or outcome” and could allow for “highly specialised forms of training and subsequent work”. More work needs to be done on variability of fees that contributes to stratified system (e.g. Brazilian system). Affirmative action can address access and horizontality but not availability. Academic preparation (minimum level) = one selection criterion that address all 3 principles – but requires a whole-of-system approach (and free of charge preparation should be offered for students whose schools are resource-poor) and there should be easy re-entry points for students who take a non-linear pathway (p.17). |
| Mestan, K. & Harvey, A. (2014). The higher education continuum: access, achievement and outcomes among students from non-English speaking backgrounds, *Higher Education Review,* 46(2): 61-80.AUSAnnotation by Sally BakerKeywords: *Higher education; equity; access; achievement; employment outcomes* | **Context:** Explores trajectory in and out of HE: from access alongside academic achievement and graduate outcomes, viewed through case study of NESB students – who experience more disadvantage through/post studies than with access. NESB students “are often relative under-achievers at university and under-employed after it” (p.61). Examines WP policy context (UK/US/AUS). Notes inconsistency in use of NESB label (e.g. ABS use CALD instead). Australian Government defines the NESB cohort as domestic students who have been in Australia for less than ten years and come from a home where a language other than English is spoken (DEEWR, 2012) – p.64. Notes 10 year clause = contested. Diversity notes in terms of definitions used by different universities. Notes that NESB = heterogeneous with different groups experiencing differing levels of disadvantage, but in general this disadvantage plays out later than access (later stages of the continuum/trajectory). **Theoretical frame:****Methodology:** Essay. Draws on existing data (established surveys, gov’t data, university data and literature) to explore policy context and NESB student outcome**Findings:** People from a NESB are well represented at university, but typically under-achieve and then face relatively poor employment outcomes.Access: NESB were under-represented in late 80s/early 90s but were then over-represented by 1995 (in terms of proportional representation): “In 2007, NESB people comprised 3.7 per cent of the general population and comprised 3.8 per cent of the higher education cohort, which constitutes a ratio of 1.02 (Bradley et al, 2008: 29), p.66. NESB people = now 5.3% but participation has remained stable (3.7%), suggesting they are again under-represented – reflective of migration program (many = post-international students who have already completed studies and therefore are less likely to be enrolled in UG study.Some ethnic-language groups are shown to perform well at school (Chinese/ Vietmanese); others perform less well (Turkish/Arabic/ Pacific Islander/ African groups) – evidence in James et al.2004/ Windle, 2004. In particular, sfrb and children of unskilled migrants likely to be most disadvantaged: “The majority of Australian universities do not provide specific and systematic support for people from refugee backgrounds to accesstheir institutions” (p.67)Achievement: Although NESB students are seemingly well-represented, they underperform. Cites evidence that suggests NESB fail more modules but have higher rates of retention. One thesis = NESB have less employment options and therefore persist with education. Notes ‘language issues’ = e.g. lead to less perception of usefulness of tutorials/ group learning – problematics of centralized language support. Notes some universities offer sfrb-specific support (e.g. La Trobe and WSU). Discuss need to shift pedagogies/ pedagogic practices to more multicultural/inclusive models because NESB students tend to eschew remedial support mechanisms. Teachers need to adapt communicative practices (e.g. speak more slowly/ avoid colloquial language/ recognize language backgrounds/ preferences, such as people from oral cultures preferring to speak over writing.Graduate outcomes: NESB students are less likely to find work after study. Graduate outcomes = not funded and thus receive less institutional attention than access/ retention. NESB students = 67% more likely than NES students to be seeking f/t employment [presumably post-graduation] (see p.72). Also, graduate salaries tend to be lower by 6% (see p.73) – calls into question claims of ‘value-added degrees’**Core argument:** NESB students are disadvantaged later in HE experience (post-access).  |
| Mountford-Zimdars, A.; Moore, J. & Graham, J. (2016). Is contextualised admission the answer to the access challenge?, *Perspectives: Policy and Practice in Higher Education,* DOI: 10.1080/13603108.2016.1203369UKAnnotation by Sally BakerKeywords: *Widening participation; outreach; inequality;**disadvantage; undergraduate admission; Russell Group;**selection* | **Context:** Fair access push (policy/ discourse) in UK for different student groups = acknowledges ‘primary’ (entrenched and systemic) barriers and questions whether contextualised admission (CA) could increase transition rates into higher education for under-represented students. 3 key features of CA: contextual data, contextual information (gained through personal statement and school references in UCAS form) and contextual outreach (targeted), thus contextualising academic attainment: “CA is an attempt to make sure some relatively high achieving students who may be educationally and socio-economically at a disadvantage to other applicants remain eligible for places at selective universities” (p.2). CA = now commonplace in RG universities**Aim:** To discuss challenges CA could address, how it works in practice and challenges/criticism**Theoretical frame:** None explicit**Methodology:** Essay**Findings:** Rationale behind CA: social justice, ‘corporate responsibility’ ‘social returns’ (US context), economic + social mobility. References work that shows that students from disadvantaged schools outperform schools from high attaining schools in UG studies.Lack of evidence about who benefits from CA (so far). Flagging = usually based on constellation of factors of disadvantage (social background, educational, geographic/geodemographic, and personal circumstances). Offers case study of how CA works with ‘Shamina’.Critique of CA: 1) flexibility in admissions “may confer legitimacy to a system of elite and non-elite institutionsand focus attention away from the fact that most disadvantaged students participate in the lower prestigeforms of education in any stratified higher education system” (p.5); 2) risks ‘taking the cream’ and creating illusion of social mobility; 3) CA= not widening participation but ‘shifting participation’ (because hgh achievers are likely to secure a place, but maybe at a less prestigious institution); 4) CA does not go far enough.**Core argument:** CA can enhance access to HE especially to selective universities: “CA needs to be part of an integrated approach that encompasses support and outreach prior to higher education and continues throughout the student lifecycle or student progression within higher education into further study and employment” (p.1). CA only happens in stratified systems (e.g. not really relevant in German/ Danish/ Swedish contexts). Is only partial answer to question posed in title of paper. |
| Naylor, R.; Baik, C.; & James, R. (2013). *Developing a Critical Interventions Framework for advancing equity in Australian higher education**.* Melbourne: Centre for the Study of Higher Education.AUSAnnotation by Sally Baker | **Aim:** To add to the evidence base – to help build a stronger platform for research and evaluation**Context:** Critical Interventions Framework (CIF) was designed “to assist in advancing equity in higher education” (p.5). Report includes – summary of patterns of access and participation post-Bradley Review, literature review, typology of equity initiatives (CIF), summary of plausibility and evidence base for initiatives in CIF, broad summary of national patterns of equity initiatives (analysis of HEPPP reports) against CIF.Access/Participation since Bradley Review: uncapping system (demand-driven system) “may have been the single most significant factor in the rising numbers of students from equity target groups who have been admitted to higher education” (p.5), but rise in numbers = “across the board”, meaning that proportional representation has not changed. **HEPPP** funding has allowed “institutions, often working in partnerships, to influence particular key points in the student ‘life cycle’ to encourage more students from equity target groups to, among other things, consider higher education to be a possibility for them, to build academic attainment and to be more fully conversant with the opportunities available to them” (p.6). *Key issues*Student share (1.0 = parity): * low SES = 0.62
* indigenous = 0.55
* remote = 0.39

High levels of differentiation between institutions (% of low SES)Assumptions that changing student profile = drop in quality/ retention. Retention/success is generally the same (96% of domestic students overall) but this is not the case for indigenous (85% retention; 81% success) or remote students (91% retention; 94% success).CIF typology (Fig. 1.1): 1) plausibility or theoretical case for types of equity initiatives based on timing and method; 2) available evidence on effectiveness; 3) analysis of HEPPP reportsTypology “derived from widespread assumptions about potential barriers or inhibitors for low SES students rather than a comprehensive empirical conception of the terrain, for none exists” (p.9). Literature suggests there are 5 broad periods in a student’s life cycle: a) prior to seeking access, b) at point of selection/admissions, c) during transition, d) during studies, e) post-completion period of finding work. Outreach is core of initiatives for aspiration-raising but there is little effectiveness. Literature points to school performance/ low SES so there is “an argument for implementing early initiatives aimed at improving students’ academic achievement and year 12 retention rates; scholarships/ financial support are important but cost might not be the only barrier to participation. Literature strongly supports idea that transition/orientation initiatives are valuable. Evidence suggests that low SES students less likely to make use of support services – better/ more extensive support services doesn’t necessarily increase retention.*Prior to starting HE* – discussion of Year 12 (p.15); aspirations (p.16); VET-HE (p.17)*Selection/ Admissions* – scholarships and grants (p.18-9)*During transition* – transition/ transition programs (p.19-20*During studies –* effective factors in successful completion for low SES, childcare, mature age, not seeking/using support servicesp.21-2**Methodology:** Draws on gov’t (DIIRSRTE) data to examine % representation. Two methods use for determining low SES: postcode and census collection districts (CD measure) = see page 31-2. Examined 38 HEPPP reports for 2011**Findings:** Data analysis shows that population parity was still far off in 2011 (disability = 5.07 std pop v. 10.6% Aus pop; indigenous = = 1.38 std pop v. 2.5% Aus pop; NESB = = 3.1 std pop v. 3.8% Aus pop; WINTA = = 17.47 std pop v. 50.6% Aus pop; low SES = = 16.76 std pop v. 25% Aus pop; Regional = 18.63 std pop v. 29% Aus pop; Remote = 0.91 std pop v. 2.3% Aus pop**).** Studentsfrom equity groups “are almost as likely to successfully complete their studies as any other student” (p.25) – but see lower retention and success rates of indigenous students and attrition rates of remote students, especially in Year 1. Chapter 4: CIF and evidence/ plausibility table. Chapter 5: Distribution of HEPPP against CIF. 49.3% of HEPPP = pre-entry initiatives; 34.5% on post-entry and 16.2% on costs associated with management of equity programs. Highest % of HEPPP funding spent on provision of student services, scholarships and later-year outreach to schools. Lowest % was spent on marketing, school curriculum enhancement and adult ed outreach |
| Ogg, T.; Zimdars, A. & Heath, A. (2009). Schooling effects on degree performance: a comparison of the predictive validity of aptitude testing and secondary school grades at Oxford University, *British Educational Research Journal,* 35(5): 781-807.UKAnnotation by Sally Baker | **Context:** Looks at ‘school type effect’ and predictive validity of aptitude testing v. GCSE results for Oxford University (UK) in context where ‘underrepresented groups’/ less state schooled students enter Oxbridge (see Sutton Trust, 2004; 2007)**Aim:** To examine impact of school type on gaining first degree at Oxford University; to compare the predictive power of an aptitude test and GCSEs and Oxford Admissions Study data**Theoretical frame:****Methodology:** Quantitative: statistical analysis of “predictive validity of secondary school grades and aptitude test scores in the achievement of first class degrees by school type, across arts and science subjects atOxford University” (p.784)**Findings:** Private school students perform less well than state school students, “but they do not under perform relative to their aptitude test scores or in gross terms” (abstract). Analysis suggests that ‘teaching effect’ is a key cause for differences across school types**Core argument:** Key point: “the school type effect at Oxford University is likely to be driven by short-term teaching effects upon the secondary school grades of private school students” (p.802). |
| Palmer, N., Bexley, E., & James, R. (2011). *Selection and Participation in Higher Education: University selection in support of student success and diversity of participation. Prepared for the Group of Eight*. Centre for the Study of Higher Education: The University of Melbourne.AUSAnnotation by Sally BakerKeywords: *selection, admissions, ATAR* | **Context:** Written (I assume) in context of reform to ‘demand-driven’ system (“might imply a shift from selection to recruitment” p.iii) – 3 primary challenges* Ensuring fairness and transparency in student selection
* Identifying potential for student success
* “Improving equity of participation and equality of educational opportunity” (p.iii)

“Distinctions between selective and recruiting courses and institutions become blurred in expanding tertiary systems, where selection decisions are also informed by equity priorities” (p.1)**Aim:** To provide an overview of university selection practices for “the desired mix of students” (p.iii). Fair and transparent are of particular importance**Main themes:** Selection/ admissions testing in Australia**:** demonstrating merit viaprior academic achievement (predictive validity of success); demonstrating merit via other selection tools (tests for aptitude/ interviews/ portfolios).Prior academic achievement: Tertiary entrance rank (ATAR) “remains the most prominent criterion” for UG admission. Middle band results = less reliable predictor of university success. Year 12 completion/ ATAR and school performance all correlate with SES. Overview of ATAR by state/territory and critique of ATAR (p.1-2)Tests of preparedness (e.g. STAT test) have “only moderate predictive power” (according to US research)Other selection tools (broader student attributes): Interviews appear to be a poor indicator of student success (and are costly). Portfolio appears to be “an effective means of identifying student potential” and for diversifying participation (p.iv). Students who enter via ‘special equity programmes’ (enabling? Access?) have similar rates of retention and success as other studentsSection 1.3 (p.5-9) Applications, enrolments and SES in Australia (2008-9): gives nuanced data according to SES and disciplines in 2009. Low SES students highly/overrepresented in Nursing and Education. Also higher low SES enrolments in Engineering and Related Technologies. Go8 universities = least likely to offer places to low SES students/ non-affiliated regional universities most likely (Table 4, p.8)Section 2 - Selection criteria (p.10-16): student attributes generally taken into consideration when selecting students: academic preparation, aptitude for study and ‘broader characteristics ’. Academic preparation is usually evident in prior study – with secondary school most common. Admissions tests are also sometimes used. ‘Broader characteristics’ can be assessed by psychometric testing/ essays/ referee reports etc.Discussion of school results as selection criteria – draws on study by Birch & Millar who offer overview of studies on prediction rates of school performance from 1975 -2001. School results have strong predictive power – which justifies use of school results – but tertiary entrance ranks are not so useful (below ATAR 80 = not good indicator of success at uni level) and these criteria hide the equity issues of impact of SES on school results (see Cardak & Ryan, 2009). VET, as an alternative pathway/ form of academic preparation accounted for 14.5% of students’ prior pathways in 2009. VET students appear to be academically on par with other students (ref to Wheelahan, 2005). Foundation programs (section 2.1.3) – “effective means of recruiting and supporting equity-group students” (p.15). Discussion of aptitude tests (Section 2.2.), including the STAT on p.17-8.Section 2.2.1: Equity and validity in admissions testing. Geiser (2009) discusses use of SAT in USA – often held up as meritocratic but they are relatively poor predictor of student performance and are more exclusive than inclusive – based on one exam rather than performance over time (school grades) – limitations on p.18-20. But in Australia (where school results are norm referenced and ranked by school/subject) there is evidence to suggest admissions tests might be more equitable/inclusive and add ‘incremental predictive validity’ when used alongside other measures (e.g. ATAR).Section 2.4: Student equity in university selection: mentions Special Entry programs (e.g. through UAC) and school type – references Dobson and Skuja (2005) who recommend new equity category based on school type due to ‘schooling effect’ on rank. James et al. 2008 = overview of universities that offer bonus points based on school attended. Discusses class rank models – pros and cons (p.28-9)Section 3: Strategic considerations in use of selection criteria. Starts with discussion of ‘non-school leavers’ and mature students – STAT originally brought in for mature students but increasingly is being used for younger students. Discussion of postgraduate student (3.2, p.31-3) – some PGCW applications managed by central agency, but most PGCW/RHD/ International PG applications managed by individual institution at faculty/school/departmental level. Prior academic achievement = prominent criterion. Discusses how “unduly narrow or strict application of criteria” potentially disadvantages students from under-represented groups for RHD study (p.32). PGCW appears to be the same - criteria used require some qual judgement.**Conclusions:** Important to acknowledge that reforms to selection and admissions would need to be complemented with outreach, engagement activities and effective support (p.33). Transparency of procedures and decisions also paramount. Also important to acknowledge behaviour changes (e.g. ‘teaching to the test’) |
| Parry, G. (2011). Mobility and hierarchy in the age of near-universal access, *Critical Studies in Education,* 52(2): 135-149.UKAnnotation by Sally Baker | **Context:** In context of ‘near-universal’ access to UK HE, Parry argues that the focus was been on globalisation and neoliberal logics that promote competition and positional/economic advantage. Parry attends to the localisation of HE “and the choice-making and mobility of students positioned in the lower tiers and outer reaches of distributed systems” (abstract), particularly when HE is located in ‘two-tier’ system – where inclusion/WP pushes HE out into community/college spaces. HE is both a recipient and agent for/of globalisation**Aim:** To discuss the dynamics of reform and systemic change, attending to importance of mobility and transfer as conditions and dimensions for equity/expansion**Theoretical frame:** Draws on Trow (XX); geographies/hierarchies of choice: “the selective universities, then, compete in international, national and statewide markets for highly qualified and geographically mobile students” (p.138). **Methodology:** Essay **Findings:** Discusses geography of choice in context of travelling to access HE and draws on research that suggests choice of HEI (‘moving sideways’, p.138) for students who couldn’t get into most selective HEIs in own country is limited to narrow field of countries (USA, CAN, AUS, NZ [= all Anglophone]. Notes that some countries stand to lose out in this global competition (including EU HEIs, see Brooks & Waters, 2009; p.139). Most students who travel to study – however – do not go to most selective unis – rather they mainly go to regional HEIs (not just international, also think moving away to attend uni in UK). Discusses impact of technology on Trow’s thesis (p.142). Discusses policy underpinning expansion: in UK, New Labor set radical targets, underpinned by radical changes: “the introduction of flat-rate and, later, variable fees for full-time undergraduate education; an array of measures to secure ‘fair access’ and reduce or remove disparities in participation between social groups; the invention of a ‘foundation degree’; and an enhanced role for further education colleges in teaching courses of higher education” (p.143). Foundation degrees in particular ‘carried the bulk’ of growth – and were (are?) typically taught in FE colleges and teaching-focused universities (50:50 split, p.146) – initially sold as aligning FE to HE but later had to take responsibility so ‘proper universities’ [my term] could get on with UG and PG education. This became a “hidden world of higher-level vocational education, where a variety of technical, professional and occupational subjects were studied mostly part-time by adults as well as recent school-leavers and by larger proportions of working-class and low-income students than found in the higher education sector” (p.144). When students finished these foundation degrees, they usually moved to “a university ranked higher than a further education college and lower than a research-intensive university” (p.144) – which has implications for potential positional advantage. Due to short-term cycle of more vocational quals in FE, students were asked to commit to UG study at earlier stages (than peers at uni?), which was variable and inconsistent, leading to the argument that this system was “inefficient and inequitable” (p.147).Locating different types of education in different spaces = contributes to ‘strategic deficit’. Splitting and separating HE and FE = “assumptive architecture” (p.147) – FE colleges cannot accredit their own courses so are held in subordinate position to HEIs |
| Penman, J. & Sawyer, J. (2013). Expanding Horizons: UniReady Program for Multicultural Groups, *Australian and International Journal of Rural Education*, 23(3): 71-81.AUSAnnotation by Sally Baker | **Context:** Examines ‘UniReady for Multicultural Groups’ at UniSA (in Whyalla) – aim is to attract ‘immigrant families’ to university. Pilot study = introduced participants to [idea of?] university study, degrees available and future planning for university. Set in context of widening participation. According to ABS data, in 2010, 719,600 migrants (unclear how they arrived; presumably economic migrants??) – 76% = born in LBOTE countries; 91% 15-41 years of age on arrival. 477,800 = temporary visas [457 visas??]. Describes educational backgrounds (e.g. 65% had ‘non-school qualification; 31% had received non-school qualifications since arriving in Australia; 46% of whom = BA or higher) – but unclear if these numbers include NES (UK/CAN/US etc.) **Theoretical frame:** None**Methodology:** 15**/**18 (83%) community members participated in pilot program = paper draws on experiences of participants and 4 staff members. Survey tool used = quantitative and qualitative data collected. Program advertised via flyers [unclear if these were translated]. Program consisted of 5 hours = intro to program, intro to pathways to study, discipline information sessions for Foundation studies, Engineering, Business, Social Work and Nursing.**Findings:** Potential students: Most important information = ‘how to get started’ and clarity of information given.Staff: “reported the need to encourage people to consider studying in the area of Business” (p.76) and ‘opportunity to spread the word’ |
| Pitman, T. (2015). Widening access in a fee de-regulated system: exploring contemporary ideals of ‘fair’ access to higher education, *Widening Participation and Lifelong Learning,* 17(3): 17-31.AUSAnnotation by Sally BakerKeywords: *fairness, access, fees, educational reform, Australia* | **Context:** Explores notion of ‘fairness’ in context of proposed reforms (2014) to deregulate student fees and introduce national equity scholarship scheme. Brief history of payment of Aus HE (free to students 1974-1988; introduction of HECS/student contribution in 1989- 2012; post 2012, uncapped places but limited tuition fees (max amount can be charged). 2014: Lib-Nat coalition put forward proposal to reduce commonwealth contribution per student (thus charging students more) and deregulate tuition fees (meaning HEIs could decide how much to charge), representing “a fuller transition to a demand-side higher education system, with both cost and supply being determined by the market” (p.18). Opposition parties opposed this reform on basis that it would be unfair, unequal, elitist (Aus Greens and Labor). Fairness = underpinned by assumptions of merit (but see Sen for argument about merit reflecting notions of what counts as ‘good society’). Draws on his own distinction between ‘procedural fairness’ and ‘normative fairness’ (Pitman, 2014). Problematises the massification approach to fairness (‘a rising tide lifts all boats’, p.20) – but this notion is underpinned by assumption that disadvantaged students will gain access once higher/middle classes = saturated. Such policies assume lack of places is more problematic than cost barriers. “In contrast, acts of redistribution occur when policy and action directly target disadvantaged students to increase their proportional representation within higher education” (p.20)**Aim:** To unpack the various conceptualisations of ‘fairness’ that fuelled the debate over 10 months**Theoretical frame:****Methodology:** Critical Discourse Analysis of public statements on proposed reforms**Core argument:** Fairness is on continuum |
| Pitman, T. (2016). Understanding ‘fairness’ in student selection: are there differences and does it make a difference anyway?, *Studies in Higher Education,* 41(7): 1203-1216.AUSAnnotation by Sally BakerKeywords: *higher education policy; equity and fairness in higher education; student selection; admission policy and practice; social justice* | **Context:** Understandings of fairness are contested yet underpin admissions policies in Australian HE. Access/ “student selection encompasses a wide range of personal circumstances, barriers and opportunities and prior learning, all of which ultimately influence whether or not a student is preferred above others” (p.1203). Universities (esp. elite ones) have often been accused of discriminatory/ unfair admissions practices/policies**Aim:** To present critical analysis of the use of ‘fairness’ in publicly available admissions policies, along with analysis of enrolment data**Theoretical frame:****Methodology:** Textual content analysis of the admissions policies of 36 Australian HEIs + interviews with 28 staff (13 = senior officials; 12 = admissions officers; 3 = academics who considered applications for specific courses). Also explored DET data on student enrolments to cross-reference low SES student numbers against policy**Findings:** Offers typology of fairness, with three main characterisations of fairness evident:*Merit based*: based on notions of talent, skill, intelligence, ability and effort = underpinned by distributive view of justice (justice for ‘the deserving’). Merit found to be primary characterisation of fairness in 12 universities and a tertiary frame in other 20 universities: “Almost universally, therefore, Australian universities expressed fairness as the idea that in a competitive environment, students would be ranked and selected from most to least deserving” (p.1206). UNSW = only uni to acknowledge that merit = subjective construct. Merit=most considered in terms of/ privilege ATAR/ school completion. Also connects with academic (and sociocultural) capital accrued through attending particular schools. This creates “strict hierarchies of knowledge” (p.1207)*Procedural*: “assumes that a selection process is fair when it is transparent and applied both systemically and systematically” (p.1208), but it often is not. Procedural = primary theme in 13 universities (with 10 focusing on transparency) and a tertiary frame in a further 4. Involves attempting to convert all forms of entry into something that can be measured against a standard. Most common feature = drawing on/ referring to external standards/ criteria. “Procedural fairness prioritised evidence over ability or potential, with frequent reference to prescribed procedures that foregrounded the responsibilities of the student in the admission process and highlighting penalties for providing, for example, ‘false information, false or falsified documentation [or] not complying with the Terms and Conditions of Admission’ (The University of Newcastle 2011)” – p.1208-9.*Normative*: suggests common-sense approach – whereby policies instantiate ‘iron law’ of regulations, and “seeks to select the ‘right’ students, as opposed to the ‘best’ students” (p.1209). 11 universities privileged this view of fairness. 19 universities inscribed ‘positive discrimination’ in their policies, reserving the right to amend admissions policy to account for educational disadvantage. Most policies signalled academic merit = privileged over equity considerations (and 17 did not).Low SES = did not appear to benefit from merit approach in 2013 enrolments“The three ‘types’ of fairness described above were discrete entities but did not operate discretely within university policy. Although certain discourses dominated within and across policy text and practice, each relied on and reinforced the other” (p.1211)**Core argument:** Merit based: discursively = preferred; “the implicit assumption of merit-based policies of fairness is that students who are not selected are perceived as having failed on their own terms, without acknowledging the greater structural forces at play” (p.1214)“Overwhelmingly, selection policies prioritised any form of prior academic achievement that could be converted to a numerical entry score” (p.1207).Fair admissions enhance social contract between country and people (via universities) but erode positional advantage accrued by individual universities |
| Pitman, T.; Koshy, P.; & Phillimore, J. (2015). Does accelerating access to higher education lower its quality? The Australian experience. *Higher Education Research & Development,* 34(3): 609-623.AUSAnnotation by Sally BakerKeywords: *access; higher education; measuring quality; quality; retention; widening participation* | **Context:** Looks at three proxies of educational quality (prior academic achievement), attrition/retention and progression rates to explore idea that accelerating access (as a result of uncapping places/ the demand driven system) leads to ‘lower quality’. Examines student data from 2006-2011 (particularly 2010-2011) \*regarding NESB\* NESB status = greater predictor [in Foster 2012] than international student status in terms of performing/ controlling for selection into courses, “suggesting that literacy rather than cultural conditioning was a greater issue” (p.613)**Aim:** To assess the extent to which concerns regarding higher education quality can be informed by the data.**Methodology:** Statistical analysis of student data sets**Findings:** Prior educational attainment: with DDS, more students “with lower (not low) academic grades gain access” (p.614), but so are more students with higher ATARs (because more competitive courses grew as well: “When access to supply was accelerated, universities first addressed the demand from ‘elite’ students… and only then moved to make offers of places to others”, p.615). Also, more mature-age students entering HE Attrition: with growing number of entrants, would expect attrition to increase but in many universities attrition rates dropped. Pre-DDS, Aus HE “was already tolerating institutional attrition variances of over 450%” (from 4.69% - 27.70% in 2008; 5.16% – 27.26% in 2011) – all p.616.**Core argument:** It would “not be correct to say that accelerated access universally leads to lower quality inputs” (p.615). There is “no evidence that admission processes are over-selecting students unprepared for university studies” (p.620). Focus on metrics reduces access/quality to attention to “minor statistical shifts in scores”; meaning that the question of what is quality “is overlooked” (p.621). “This ultimately devalues higher education institutions themselves, as it suggests their role is primarily one of certifying the prior educational achievement of the students rather than value-adding in meaningful ways” (p.621). |
| Reed, R. & Hurd, B. (2014). A value beyond money? Assessing the impact of equity scholarships: from access to success, *Studies in Higher Education,* DOI:10.1080/03075079.2014.968541AUSAnnotation by Sally Baker*Keywords: scholarship; equity; financial assistance; widening participation; educational outcomes* | **Context:** Reflects on impact of scholarship program for educationally disadvantaged students at Macquarie University. Works from Universities Australia (2013) figure of 2/3 university students living under the poverty line. In 2004, federal government introduced ‘Commonwealth Learning Scholarship’ program to supplement the existing scholarship provision, which had previously been at the whim of individual organisations. HEPPP has also contributed to growth in scholarships offered (p.2) Macquarie offer a range of scholarships, which are dependent on students providing evidence of financial need according to UAC formula. Literature suggests that scholarships are often positioned as incentivises in the context of neoliberal, student-as-consumer universities. Financial circumstances have been found to be barriers for low SES students (according to literature – but offers critique by connecting to aspirations literature). Notes that researchers have called for more exploration of impact of financial aid.**Theoretical frame:** Nothing explicit**Methodology:** Examining retention data and conducting interviews with 12 scholarship recipients. At MQ, 525 students received equity scholarships between 2009-2012 **Findings:** The scholarships not only improve retention (90% of 525 recipients of equity scholarships), the qualitative data also shows other positive effects, categorised as:*Resources* = what students were able to purchase (text books/ computers/ bills). Beyond material = intangible value of time (achieving better work-study balance; creating new opportunities for ECAs or invest in future careers), or for others the benefit “had been the security (see below) provided by the scholarship that emboldened them to take extra risks they would not otherwise have taken (such as studying abroad)”, p.6.*Access, belonging, security* = scholarship provided incentive to apply for uni (changed perceptions of being able to afford HE) or made full-time study a possibility. Knowing money was coming = reassuring (p.6) – reduced sense of precarity. Students also reported feeling more like they belonged to MQ: “gesture of recognition” (p.7), which enhanced self-efficacy and belief in own potential.*Motivation, engagement, self-efficacy* = increase in motivation to study, to ‘give back’ and “make sure they had ‘earned’ the opportunity through hard work, strengthening their commitment to their studies and their contribution to student life” (p.8)“It’s a value beyond money” (p.10)**Core argument:** The view of scholarships needs to be shifted from incentive to key institutional mechanisms. Offers model for visualising impact of drivers/ influences (rather than impact) of scholarships (according to themes above) = “’best-fit’ interpretation” (p.10). Need to find better ways of assessing *potential* that are not based on past education/achievement. |
| Richardson, M.; Llewellyn, P.; Williams, S.; Nias, S. & Phillips, R. (2017). Widening participation and a capabilities approach – making it work, *Widening Participation and Lifelong Learning,* 19(1): 33-58.UKAnnotation by Sally BakerKeywords: *Mental Health, Education, Capabilities Approach, Recovery, Aspirations* | **Context:** Looks at issues related to students’ mental health in the context of widening participation to HE in the UK; examines through the conceptual/ analytic frame of the capabilities approach. Authors make link between WP and improved mental health (due to reduced social exclusion, empowerement). However, WP activities (e.g., targeted outreach) rarely specifically include people with mental health issues. Authors argue that therapeutic group therapy and symptom management are common, but using capabilities approach could be useful. Reviews literature on WP (Gorard’s contention that WP = for ‘the usual suspects’, see p.37)**Aim:** To “discuss a WP project in which a small group of people experiencing mental health problems took part in a student-led research study, informed by the capabilities approach” (abstract). Focus group guided by 2 questions:* To explore the nature of the involvement of the archive group and the links between students experiencing mental health problems and their study of the archived records of the former lunatic asylum.
* To explore the educational dimensions of this involvement and its meaning for the students.

**Theoretical frame:** Capabilities approach (Sen; Nussbaum). Authors argue that this approach is useful for foregrounding the convert resources to opportunities for people with mental health issues: “For people with mental health problems, there is a demonstrable relationship between the ability to convert resources and to be recognised as a human being with value, worth and meaning within that conversion, which is more than a process of symptom alleviation” (p.40). Recovery = understood as a resource**Methodology:** Student-led research study of WP/ mental health; presented as case study from WARM (Widening Access Research and Mentoring) group. Project = archival research with students (student-led) into historic records of local Lunatic Asylum. Seven students in total; supported by tutor and archive staff. Focus group conducted toward end of project**Findings:** Focus group discussion: initially all students though the archive activity was something only an academic could do; students enjoyed the initially unstructured approach to the work; developed a sense of confidence.All students agreed that the timing was very significant (already familiar with WARM, mental health relatively stable at the time). Students all surprised at achievements, which they would have rejected had they been articulated as ‘learning targets’; own personal interest = significant. All thought their research skills improved**Core argument:** Because students were not given the label of students with mental health issues, rather parallel and multiple identities recognised, “They thus took on new social characteristics reaching ‘valuable states of being’ (Sen, 1993) and the freedom to achieve, which had been unavailable to them prior to the project at the archive” (p.51). Using a capabilities approach can facilitate ‘transformative’ approach to WP |
| Scull, S. & Cuthill, M. (2010). Engaged outreach: using community engagement to facilitate access to higher education for people from low socio-economic backgrounds, *Higher Education Research & Development,* 29(1): 59-74.AUSAnnotation by Sally BakerKeywords: *community engagement, equity, access, outreach, disadvantage* | **Context:** Discusses a model of ‘engaged outreach’ –based on principles of community engagement to develop stronger links between universities and local communities -as an alternative to traditional outreach. Outreach program is specifically focused on two Pacific Island communities in southeast QLD (area of ‘high social deprivation’). Purposes of outreach = building aspirations and increasing access to HE.**Aim:** **Theoretical frame:** Initiative based on notion of ‘engaged scholarship’: “engaged outreach seeks to promotea framework based on active engagement with multiple stakeholders, who work collaboratively to address factors impacting on higher education access” (p.60) – working with broad group of stakeholders – developing a sense of [co-]ownership of the program**Methodology:** 2-year study to develop engaged outreach with two identified communities (based on a view of multiple disadvantage: low SES/CALD). Intentional move away from school-based outreach to collaboration and negotiation with range of stakeholders (see fig, p.63) = community-based participatory action research approachStage 1: preliminary scan of area for issues relating to access to HE for CALD communities = informal meetings with 76 different people (via snowball recruitment). Stage 2: interviews/ committee meetings/ literature review. Also recruitment of community liaison officers and community leaders identified. Stage 3: stakeholder analysis, community leaders’ workshop, action planning meetings. 24 interviews conducted in Stage 2: 11 young people/ 13 parents**Findings:**1. Access to HE is an issue for low SES/ CALD students
2. Lack of RPL = issue for adults from these communities
3. English language proficiency and time needed to acquire appropriate level for tertiary study = concern for many

Findings specific to Pacific Islander participants:* Cost = significant issue
* Parental involvement in children’s education = minimal
* School engagement and attainment = ‘major issue’
* HE perceived to take a lot of time and investment and thus, while highly regarded, HE = not always prioritised
* Few HE-educated role models in the communities studied

Three key strategies identified through community consultation:Provision of accessible informationProvision of better support at schoolRaise aspiration to higher education**Core argument:** “Key to facilitating increased access is a comprehensive understanding of current community attitudes and aspirations towards higher education and of the specific constraints impacting on higher education access” (p.71) |
| Signor, L. & Moore, C. (2014). Open Access in Higher Education–Strategies for Engaging Diverse Student Cohorts, *Open Praxis,* 6(3): 305-313.AUSAnnotation by Sally BakerKeywords: *Diversity; e-Learning; higher education; learning design; mature age; open access* | **Context:** Discusses growth in online learning to suit diverse groups of learners (increased diversity). Presents case study of online program offered by Swinburne that employs informed learning design. The case study = open access – UG information systems program – attracts mature age student. Authors claim the program has an ‘innovative pedagogy’ which encourages students to remain connected via active learning and tailored assessments. Program = offered in partnership with OUA. The program “supports workers who either desire to credential existing work-based experience or are looking to enhance their career and employability prospects” (p.306)**Theoretical frame:** None**Methodology:** Description of program**Discussion of program:** Learner engagement = key; has developed bank of learning objects that “caters for different learning requirements” and offers support for ‘equity’ by providing materials in different formats (virtual lectures, transcripts, videos) and students can access them at their own pace. Learning objects make the program more individualised, offered as “smaller, self-contained, portable or reusable units of learning presented in manageable segments” (p.307).Effective protocols established for timely feedback to prevent students from feeling isolated/ disengaged. Communicative mechanisms include asynchronous online discussion boards, synchronous chats,Active learning in assessments: based on real-life cases/scenarios (so as not to exclude people who are not working, and they build on previous assessments. Tutors offer inclusive formative feedback, such as audio feedback (which also helps to build rapport) |
| Walker, M. (2008). Widening participation: widening capability, *London Review of Education,* 6(3): 267-279.UK/SAAnnotation by Sally BakerKeywords: *widening participation; higher education policy; equality; capability formation; student learning* | **Context:** Takes a view of WP as about first-in-family entry and participation in HE, and specifically related to working class students. Uses Sen’s (1992) thinking about capability and the potential for students to become ‘strong evaluators’ (see Taylor, 1985) about what is a ‘good life’ for them. Offers a critique of WP policy as primarily driven by human and economic capital arguments. Questions the normative drivers for equality [note: not equity] research and advocates the questioning of “what sort of equality ought higher education to be promoting for widening participation students” (see p.268). Taking a capabilities approach permits the inclusion of being and doing to the dominant valuing of knowing in HE: “Equality in higher education in these terms would mean equality of valuable capabilities” (p.268). Takes three key developments as starting points: 1) establishment of Equalities and Human Rights Commission (thinking about employment equality in HE, which is an area where UK was not achieving equality = e.g. gender pay gap, ethnicity gap, disabilities gap); 2) increase in economic logics in neoliberal HE, and commensurate shifts in what ‘counts’ in HE; 3) the measure of inequalities taken by the Equalities and Human Rights Commission = based on Sen’s work**Aim:** To argue for a reframing of widening participation as ‘widening capability’; to ask “how higher education contributes to the formation of a society which is free, fair and equal in the way it provides for each individual to realise his or her fullest potential reflectively to choose and lead a good life” (p.269)**Theoretical frame:** Amrtya Sen’s work on capabilities as a measure of justice and equality (as opposed to metrics based on individual preferences, income or wealth); Sen does not eschew human capital theory in his thinking, but he sees beyond the economics, seeking to include the intrinsic benefit of education and its social impact/ responsibility: “a capability discourse would also value non-economic ends and more expansive understandings of what is valuable in human lives and for human flourishing” (p.270). Thus capabilities = judged on “real and actual freedoms that people have to do and to be what they value being and doing” (p.270), rather than a narrow focus on achievements.**Methodology:** Draws on previous research (two projects) on students’ experiences of university/ learning and a focus on WP in one. Offers interview data from both projects**Findings:** Working from a notion of ‘widening capabilities’, WP = we need to ask questions of how students are enabled to develop ideas of what the ‘good life’ is in reflexive ways that contribute to self-understanding: “Todevelop students’ capability as strong evaluators is to develop them as agents able to reflect on and re-examine their valued ends, when challenged to do so through teaching and learning experiences. Students would reflect on what is of more or less ethical significance in the narrative interpretation of their lives” (p.271).Three barriers to the success of WP:1. neoliberalism and human capital theory: HE = dominantly positioned as instrumental (investment in future earnings), and New Labour policy in England = appropriated the language of social justice/ egalitarian. The marketization of HE/ New Labour policy has stratified the sector into gold, silver, bronze education (see also Archer, 2007) = insurmountable tension between equity/ social justice and neoliberalism/ human capital
2. Purposive rationality: skills discourse that shaped pedagogy/ critical thinking: “embedded in purposive (instrumental) rationality, technicism and instrumentality”, p.273) = dominant paradigm under neoliberal regime because of how it serves the market and performative logics; second = purposive rationality privileges success in the task at hand, rather than the goals, means, meanings attached
3. Pedagogies of disrepair (Luke, 2006) = limited access to valued ‘capitals’ of HE for particular groups (e.g. working class students) “sets up classroom cultures in which being confident and middle class is the norm against which all students are judged by each other and by lecturers” (p.273). Pedagogy can ‘undermine’ the project of inclusive and equitable teaching; instead it can expose the knowledge and power structures at play in HE.

Walker argues there are 4 resources for positive transformation/ rejection of contemporary logics:1. point to the disfunction of human capital arguments – knowledge economy is not delibering its promise of jobs (the ‘opportunity trap’; Brown, 2003) and credential creep = impacting on the graduate job market
2. Promote communicative rationality (Habermas): “oriented to human potential and actions for mutual understanding, formative dialogue, self-analysis, and transformation of ends” (p.275) = promotes ‘ethical goal revision’ (aka strong evaluation; aka reflexive decision making). “Thus as Sen would also argue, what matters is to choose rationally and freely, where reason is not reduced to purposive rationality and critical skills nor domesticated to serve instrumental ends” (p.275).
3. Reclaiming discourses of choice, agency and aspiration: being a ‘strong evaluator’ and raising awareness of the appropriation of key discourses in a way that serves the needs of the underpinning economic program driving HE = allows students to have and make ‘genuine choices’, which recognize “the conscious and deliberative aspects of human agency” and aspire to, and possibly disrupt, ideas of what ‘life is like’ for particular social groups (all p.276)
4. A promissory note (Habermas): optimism that universitites can flourish despite the rigidity of the neoliberal shape of contemporary HE; “universities ought to be defended as one of the remaining public spaces of reasoned argument and inclusive dialogue about important and difficult questions” (p.277).

**Core argument:** “Widening participation ought … to be conceptualised as widening capability as a matter of full justice” so as to support the development of students as ‘strong evaluators’ and the development of inclusive pedagogies that teach students “to be critical and active participants in democratic life” (p.277). |
| Webber, L. (2014). Accessing HE for non-traditional students: ‘Outside of my position’, *Research in Post-Compulsory Education*, 19(1): 91-106.UKAnnotation by Sally BakerKeywords: *non-traditional students; HE admissions; widening participation; social mobility; positioning; capital* | **Context:** UK pre-undergraduate space. Examines admissions to Early Childhood foundation degree – scopes context of foundation degrees as response to Leith report but notes “there is a lack of understanding about how institutions might need to change to accommodate [widening participation]” (p.91). Author = programme manager of Early Childhood foundation degree – set unwritten rule that all applicants need interview pre-enrolment (gatekeeper for drop out) – notes she may have “unconsciously adopted a deficit discourse, negatively positioning these students as likely to fail on the programme” (p.92), so interview = opportunity for non-traditional students to challenge that assumption.**Aim:** **Theoretical frame:** Bourdieu – capital, field, habitus**Methodology:** Narrative inquiry. Semi-structured interviews conducted with applicants (n=7); paper focuses on 3 participants in particular: Kat, Sarah and Chelsea. Data analysed with ‘thematic approach’**Findings:** Kat = mature age student, had NVQ level 3 in childcare, FinF, mother, part-time work in preschool. Cried during admissions interview because of emotional strain of having to prove herself worthyChelsea = 21 years old, preschool assistant, had A-levels and NVQ level 3, FinF but had partner who went through foundation degree in businessSarah = mature age, FinF, mother, had done NVQ level 3 as mature student.Emergent themes: *emotions* (author found this ‘surprising’): “Students feel quite exposed and open to criticism, therefore seeing it as both labour intensive and emotionally challenging” (p.98). *Positioning*: ‘high stocks of emotional capital’ = give students confidence and a sense of worth; also discusses how students were positioned by others (e.g., example of Sarah’s mother on p.100). *Changing positions*: author notes shifts in students’ approaches/ confidence. Interview could be seen as offering inspiration to students (a sense of ‘I can do this’). *Accumulating capital*: acquisition of study skills = reported by students; author argues that “through giving the students sufficient time and support, it could be argued that they were then in a more able position to accumulate capital and overcome any disadvantages once the programme had commenced” (p.102). However, Sarah dropped out, despite this ‘accrual of capital’**Core argument:** Recommendations: 1) institutions need to work out how to value individual experience and strengths that students bring with; 2) locate the problem with the institution, not the individual; 3) there is power in the interview (to bring forward tacit strengths and offer a space for myths and assumptions to be challenged). |
| Whiteford, G., Mashood, S., Chenicheri, S.N. (2013). Equity and Excellence are not Mutually Exclusive. *Quality Assurance in Education* 21(3): 299-310.AUSAnnotation by Georgina RamsayKeywords *Disadvantaged groups; social inclusion; higher education; government policy; academic standards; Australia, United Kingdom* | * Contemporary HEIs concurrently focusing on: access and widening participation; improving the quality and standard of HE; enhancing reputation and competitiveness. Are these aims mutually exclusive? Discourse: increased enrolments of students of disadvantaged backgrounds must not compromise quality outcomes
* Those working in academia have suggested that students with lower entry scores/disadvantaged backgrounds are able to compete with students with higher entry scores/privileged backgrounds if there is attention to inclusive curriculum, greater academic support, quality teaching, and counselling
* Difficulty for social inclusion agenda is pre-occupation with rankings at an international scale. Diversity is not accounted for in these leagues, and represents a risk for institutional reputation
* Class and race have complex factors that shape ‘success’ in HE
* Preconception that disadvantaged students will be underperforming students; and time spent with them disadvantages higher performing students (thus leading to academic decline)
* Research shows that student achievement and experience benefits from having diverse student cohorts (so this would be a protective factor in the ‘excellence’ paradigm)

Hence this article argues that a social inclusion agenda related to increasing the equity of access and participation of disadvantaged students does not have a negative impact on academic standards and outcomes, despite preconceptions; but argues that there needs to be adequate support structures through policy, community, adequacy of preparation, and the institution to enable this ‘excellence’ |
| Wilks, J. & Wilson, K. (2012). Going on to uni? Access and participation in university for students from backgrounds of disadvantage, *Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management,* 34(1): 79-90.AUSAnnotation by Sally BakerKeywords: *access; low socioeconomic status; participation; transition to university* | **Context:** Outlines the issues rural/remote students face in terms of participating in higher education**Aim:** To explore aspirations of low SES/ rural and remote primary and secondary pupils to enter higher education**Theoretical frame:** Nothing**Methodology:** Mixed methods. Study site = 8 schools in NE NSW: n=143 students focus groups of up to 10 children/young people aged 11-17 (84 girls, 59 boys). Questionnaires also sent home for parents to complete; 60% responses rate. Used ‘Leximancer’ text analysis software**Findings:** 82-100% of parents who had TAFE/ uni/ teachers/ nurses aspired for children to go to university or TAFE; similar results from parents with secondary school. Other parents mentioned a specific job or something about them being happy.Young people’s responses illustrated strong cultural capital (influence of parents and siblings) and social capital (local environment), especially in last 2 years of primary and first 2 years of secondary. Children in Years 5-7 demonstrated an understanding of value of education.Perceived challenges include: financial support/ distance from home/ leaving family and friends/ public transport/ cost of HE.Recommendations: need for early intervention – preparation programmes including “literacy and study skills, careers information and mentoring from adults to strengthen young people’s resolve and move beyond possible negative family influences” (p.88) |
| Willis, S. & Joschko, L. (2012). A ‘high quality, high access’ university that aims to marry excellence and equity, *Widening Participation and Lifelong Learning,* 14(1): 8-26.AUSAnnotation by Sally BakerKeywords: *quality, access, low SES* | **Context:** Works from Monash’s target to increase numbers of low SES students because of belief: “under-representation in higher education is a waste of talent and a social injustice” (abstract). Examines tensions between this stated belief and ethical ways of admitting students. Monash has 50% of top 10%/very best students. Authors note this kind of statement “raises the tricky question of what we mean by ‘best’, and challenges us to ensure that we do admit the most academically capable students and not confuse academic talent with social advantage” (p.8). In contrast, 12.4% = low SES students (compared with 45% high SES). Monash’s stated intention is to raise low SES participation to 16%, to be achieved by early identification, improved selection procedures/tools, alternative entry pathways, and targeted financial/ academic/ social support. Note there is mixed support for special entry provisions (both admissions tools and pathways). Author discuss funding/ compacts/ negotiated institutional targets (p.11-12). Notes arguments that critique use of ATAR as primary admissions criterion, but also note its strong predictive ability. They cite research that shows that students who do well at university didn’t all do well at school (inverse/ contradiction to predictive ability of ATAR). Authors also discuss SES/ATAR links. Cite Monash research that shows that public school educated students get better marks than independent school-educated students (1985/ 2005/2010). Describes Monash’s particular context (Go8/ metro campuses= full; regional campuses-struggle to fill places) on p.17-18**Aim:** To present evidence that students who enter via alternative provisions perform/achieve as well as other students**Methodology:** Essay**Findings:** Discusses admission of low SES dropped between 2005 and 2010 (hence target to increase to 16%). One approach = compile list of low SES schools and offer bonus points. 20% of enrolments come from SEAS or bonus point schemes – asking potential students to undertake General Aptitude Test (GAT) to select candidates in 20% SEAS. Also discusses Diploma of Tertiary Studies (DoTS), which “enables students who have not met normal Monash entry standards to enrol in first-year units and apply at the end of first year for admission to a bachelors degree based upon achievement in the diploma” (p.18) – 2 units = academic preparation units, remaining 6 = Yr 1 units + “strong learning skills provision” to support transitions (p.18). DoTS students are indistinguishable from other students but retention/ progression rates not great (992 students enrolled in DoTS, only 629 progressed to UG study).Go8 universities generally don’t support progression from TAFE to university – Monash relatively strong with 7.5% TAFE pathway students. When compared against ATAR students, TAFE pathway students score consistently higher grades, and have average score of 63.2 compared against 65 for ATAR/school leaversIn terms of employment outcomes, there are differences in SES for Monash students (82.9% for high SES, 80.6 for low SES), which is still higher than students from other universities (77.7% Victoria average, 77.5% national average, 80.5% Go8 average) and they generally earn similar wages (again above national/state/Go8 averages). However, low SES students are less likely to continue into postgraduate study (30.1% high SES/ 25.9% low SES).**Core argument:** “The effectiveness of our low SES participation strategy will in part be judged by its capacity to deliver to the university the talented students it will need in order to grow without risking its entry standards and, potentially also, graduate quality” (p.24) |
| Wilson-Strydom, M. (2015). University access and theories of social justice: contributions of the capabilities approach, *Higher Education,* 69: 143-155.SAAnnotation by Sally BakerKeywords: *Social justice, Capabilities approach, Access, Widening participation* | **Context:** University access in South African context. Examines social justice (theories of and application) in consideration of WP. Argues that social justice as a much-used term has lost much of its meaning; therefore justifiying the revisiting of social justice theory and how helpful it can be to understand inequality in HE: “The difference between increased participation and widened participation and the ways in which these terms are used in policy discourse and practice is one example of how competing social justice claims play out in the access terrain” (p.144). Offers an overview of the South African HE landscape post-Apartheid (now 23 HEIs). Proportional representation of African students (coloured/ black) = an issue, compared with White African participation**Theoretical frame:** Three theories of social justice drawn on: Rawls (distributive justice); Young (justice and the politics of difference), to argue for Capabilities Approach (Sen; Nussbaum)**Methodology:** Essay**Findings:** *Rawls (1999) = Justice as Fairness (aka distributive justice)* – This is an ideal notion of justice, which works from notion of ‘original position’ = hypothetical starting point of innocence/ ignorance of difference and status, which recognised the plurality of views of what a ‘good life’ is for different people/ groups. If this ‘original position’ existed, we would make decisions based on utilitarian notions of what is fair to all. Rawls proposed two main principles for basis of just society: 1) position in society = based on ‘natural lottery’, thus morally arbitrary; 2) = ‘difference principle’ = assessment of what ‘primary goods’ (means and resources): “inequalities can only be seen as just should the inequality lead to the greatest benefit for the least well off (in terms of their holdings of primary goods)” (p.146). Two arguments against applying Rawl’s ideas about justice to access to HE: 1) as Sen points out, the focus on primary goods does not take into account what people can do with their resources [aka: it only focuses on what people have, not how they use it] and 2) doesn’t take into account the circumstances within which people live (equality is not the same as equity) – see critique of distributive justice from Young and Fraser (below)*Young (1990) = Justice and the politics of difference*. This is a multidimensional notion. Begins with critique of distributive notion of justice because of the focus on the allocation of resources concealing the importance/ influence of sociocultural structures and institutional contexts. Where primary goods were explicated to include non-materials goods (such as agency, voice etc.), Young argued these were constructed in linear/ non-dynamic ways that fail to account for the complexity of social processes. Young argues that a focus on distribution is not enough; there are 2 social conditions that impede justice: oppression and domination, and she identifies 5 forms of oppression: exploitation, marginalisation, powerlessness, cultural imperialism, and violence – these make up the constituent parts of injustice. Eisenberg (2006) has taken up Young’s ideas in the context of education, and suggests that elements where concrete strategies to resist oppression play out at the level of curricula and programs, “that both reflect and raise awareness of societies consisting of multicultural, multinational and multilingual groupings, as well as tackling issues of oppression and domination such as racism, sexism and so on” (p.148), as well as seeking the involvement of people who represented disadvantaged groups. Limitation = not sufficient analytic space for understanding individual difference [as opposed to group difference] and agency. In the specific context of access to HE, therefore, needs the application of groups as units of analysis which can ignore the experiences of individuals; “Thus, Young’s analytical privileging of the group over the individual limits the value of this approach for fully understanding inequality and injustice in higher education” (p.149).*Fraser (1996, 1997) Parity of Participation* = also acknowledges the distribution is important but not sufficient for explaining issues of social justice. Her tritaparte version of social justice = redistribution (socioeconomic dimension/ form of socioeconomic justice), recognition (cultural dimension) and representation (political dimension). Together = form an analytic frame for examining parity of participation. With specific application to HE, widening access = broadly about expanding participation. Redistribution = largely understood at level of financial resources (e.g. funding, scholarships, other forms of financial support). Recognition = needs to connect with issues related to language of study/assessment, the welcoming of diverse students, support and identification of ‘at risk’ students. Leibowitz argues = based on the assumption “that higher education is an activity that is done to students and not with them” (2009: 94; cited p.150).*Sen (1999)/ Nussbaum (2000) = Capabilities approach.* Takes as starting point the well-being of individuals and quality of life/ values. With regard to university access = involves asking questions of what students can do and why they want to be there. Focus on wellbeing = antithesis to large-scale standardized assessment for enrolment. Capabilities = ‘opportunity freedoms’, therefore the freedom “an individual has to enjoy the functionings necessary for their well-being” (p.151). Capabilities brings agency and structure together (thus moving beyond the limitations of Young and Fraser) through ‘conversion factors’, so that the analytic lens can focus on how well (or not) people are able to convert opportunities into achievements, which allows for individual/ structural difference of opportunity to be accounted for. Conversion factors include “personal heterogeneities, environmental diversities, variations in social climate, differences in relational perspectives, and distribution within the family” (Sen, 1999: 71; cited p.151)**Core argument:** The capabilities approach offers a more holistic analytic frame for understanding issues of social justice in HE because it “draws attention to the importance of understanding students’ everyday lives and experiences, and the conditions (personal, social, economic, environmental) that enable and constrain students’wellbeing and performance” (p.152), and foregrounds the ‘unqeual conversion’ of HE opportunities. Making resources available (e.g. more places in HE) = not enough to address social justice issues; “It is the relationship between the available resources and the ability of each student to convert these into valued capabilities and then make choices which will inform their actual functionings (outcomes) that ought to be evaluated” (p.151-2) |
| Zacharias, N.; Cherednichenko, B.; Ryan, J.; George, K.; Gasparini, L.; Kelly, M.; Mandre-Jackson, S.; Cairnduff, A.; & Sun, D. (2016*).* *Moving beyond ‘acts of faith’: effective scholarships for equity students*. National Centre for Student Equity in Higher Education: Perth.AUSAnnotation by Sally BakerKeywords: *scholarships, equity, merit, impact, evaluation* | **Context:** Examines connections between equity scholarships and retention/ success outcomes of recipients at 3 different universities: QUT, Deakin, Sydney for 2013.**Methodology:** Examined two different kinds of scholarships: *equity* = for most disadvantaged and ‘at risk’ students, and *equity-merit* = for disadvantaged students most likely to succeed on basis of prior educational experience but with proven financial need. Three case studies presented of the three participant institutions in terms of retention rates of students with/without scholarships, responses to questionnaires about impact of receiving scholarships and success rates**Findings:** Equity scholarships = effective at retaining students of all groups. Participants/recipients reported receiving one reduced stress, boosted morale and gave them more time to studyEquity scholarships = worse outcomes for the recipients of highest value scholarshipsEquity-merit scholarships = outcomes best for students who received most valuable scholarshipsThe more complex the scheme, the less efficient it is/ more difficult it is to evaluate relationship between money and outcomesMultifactor assessment for scholarships = best Scholarships have ‘a value beyond money’ (such as psychological boosts/ confidence and morale)**Core argument:** Universities need to design simple scholarships, “with high volume products to generate effective student support, efficient processes and meaningful data” (p.8). Best financial support the Commonwealth can offer is a ‘predictable and appropriate’ level of payment through Centrelink system (means-tested grants). They argue that “scholarships help overcome financial disadvantage but cannot overcome the effects of very complex lives… [but they are] however, an important tool where financial hardship is seen as the greatest barrier to participation. ” (p.67) |
| Zimdars, A.; Sullivan, A. & Heath, A. (2009). Elite Higher Education Admissions in the Arts and Sciences: Is Cultural Capital the Key?, *Sociology,* 43(4): 648-666.UKAnnotation by Sally BakerKeywords: *cultural capital / cultural knowledge / higher education admission / private schools / quantitative methods / selective education / social stratification* | **Context:** University of Oxford, admissions, social background and ‘cultural capital’. Oxford University (as with Cambridge) do not follow conventional UK admissions procedures and use Oxbridge admissions tutors to act as gatekeepers. This practice has been questioned with relation to extent admissions/ offers are made on basis of social class/ whether there is bias against state schooled applicants (issues of gender, race/ethnicity = less contentious). Taps into debates about merit/ social mobility and engineering/ exam results as indicators of aptitude. Notes debates about access to HE = connected to credential creep and anxiety about falling standards of school testing. Oxford interviews candidates for range of subjects (unlike most English universities) and other disciplines use tests to short-list applicants**Aim:** To answer these RQs:1 How do Oxford applicants vary in their cultural participation and cultural knowledge, according to parents’ education, social class, gender and ethnicity?2 Does cultural capital predict acceptance to Oxford?3 If so, does its effect remain once we control for examination performance?4 Is cultural capital more important for admission to the arts and humanities faculties than to the sciences?5 To what extent does cultural capital mediate the effect of social class, parents’ education, private schooling, ethnicity and gender?” (p.653)**Theoretical frame:** Bourdieu – cultural reproduction/ capital (“including certain forms of skill and knowledge which are rewarded in the education system”, p.651-2), whereby participation in cultural activities is less important than the forms of cultural and linguistic capital that it permits access to, to discuss admissions practices in University of Oxford. Cultural capital = includes ‘beaux arts’, reading at home and cultural knowledge = used “to assess which cultural attributes, activities or resources are linked to success in the competition for a place at Oxford” (p.652), but doesn’t include embodied aspects of social class (such as clothes, appearance).**Methodology:** Multivariate analysis (notes Bourdieu’s dismissal of what it can tell us about reproduction). Data collected drawing on Oxford Admissions dataset (n=1700 applicants who applied in 2002). Variables = academic attainment, cultural capital, social background (see p.654 for detail). Ethnicity collapsed into larger categories of South Asian, Other and Ethnicity missing.**Findings:** No statistically significant relationship between admissions and parents’ educational level (perhaps due to lack of variability in the sample = most had graduate parents).Parents’ social class background = significant: 43.6% of applicants with two professional class parents were admitted, compared to 33.9% with parents in managerial class. Insignificant ‘working class coefficient’40% = male applicants admitted compared to 34.1% of females38.8% = white applicants admitted compared to 22.4% South AsianScores relating to cultural capital = lower for applicants without graduate parents; strong link between social class and cultural knowledge and participation: those with two professional parents = strongest link and significantly different from applicants with one professional parent, “thus emphasizing the importance of homogamy in consolidating class advantage“ (p.655)Ethnicity = significant (scoring lower on all measures of cultural capital than white peers)Private school students = scored higher than state school students.Table 2 = binary logistic regression of arts and science subjects: controlling for academic achievement.Observation: negative effect of not having 2 professional parents – more in arts than scienceFemales = disadvantaged despite academic achievementFor arts = negative effect of having attended private school: “In other words, prior academic attainments being equal, selectors for arts subjects at Oxford exhibit a preference for state school students over private school students” (p.658).Score on cultural knowledge test = most powerful measurement of cultural capital; therefore “cultural capital explains some of the lower success rate of non-professional class applicants and South Asians” (p.658)**Core argument:** Cultural knowledge test = “High scores were associated with having graduate parents, withtwo professional class parents, private school attendance and white ethnicity” (p.659). However, parents’ education had no impact on getting an offer on its own.* Participation in beaux arts = not related to success in gaining a place at University of Oxford
* Cultural knowledge = significant predictor of admission for arts
* Reading habits = significant predictor of admission for science (and there may be more direct discrimination against women and South Asians)

Article offers example of quantifying Bourdieu’s concept of cultural capital |

1. See current debates on whether ATAR is fit-for-purpose – for example, Harvey et al., 2016; Parker, 2016- and similar arguments made about A-levels in the UK – see Higton et al., 2012 [↑](#footnote-ref-1)