A Comparative Analysis of Arrangements for State Coordination of Higher Education in Canada and the United States

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Lore Whitten

Let's start...
A Comparative Analysis of Arrangements for State Coordination of Higher Education
in Canada and the United States

Given the close proximity and substantial economic and cultural interaction between Canada and the United States, there has been less comparative analysis of institutional arrangements in various realms of social policy between the two nations than one might expect. American social scientists have tended to ignore Canada, and their Canadian counterparts have been ambivalent about undertaking comparative studies with the United States.

Two events of the past few years have stimulated greater interest in the United States on the part of Canadians, and might possibly encourage the converse as well. One of these, the Canada - United States Free Trade Agreement, which came into being in January 1989, will change the framework for economic relations between the two countries. The other, the failure of the provinces to approve an amendment to the Canadian constitution which would have addressed Quebec's concerns about its role in the Canadian Confederation has left Canada in a state of constitutional disarray. It is widely believed that a resolution of the present constitutional impasse will, at the very least, involve reshaping the relationships among Canadian jurisdictions and may, as an extreme measure, involve the secession of Quebec. Changes in relationships within Canada may, in turn, have some impact on the structural relationships between Canada and the United States.

Both events may have some impact on higher education in these two countries. Though in most respects, universities are sheltered from the direct provisions of the Free Trade Agreement, it is quite likely that the closer economic integration between the two countries will have significant implications for universities, and even more so for community colleges (Council of Ontario Universities, 1989; Donner and others, 1987). The increased mobility of professionals between the two countries, which the Free Trade Agreement establishes, is already generating interest in the development of common credentials for certification in some professions - a joint study committee has already been established for the architecture profession - and this would impact on

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1Brym (1989) observes that Canadian social scientists have oscillated between the thesis that English Canadians are just like Americans and the antithesis that they are fundamentally different.
2While opinions differ somewhat regarding the cause of the breakdown of the attempt at constitutional reform, most analysts have attributed the failure to the fact that the process took place behind closed doors until the public was presented with a fait accompli, and it addressed only the concerns of Quebec, not those of other minorities which also had interests in constitutional reform.
university curricula. More generally, it has been suggested that the Free Trade Agreement will generate pressures toward a convergence of social policies and arrangements between the two countries, and education might be one of areas where such pressures for convergence could be manifested most strongly.

As for the constitutional issues, there is some concern that if Quebec secedes, the remaining nine provinces might not be able to continue as a single, viable political entity, especially as in that event other regional differences would come to the fore, and the remaining provinces would not be geographically contiguous. Among the scenarios which have been brooded about in public discussion of the possible consequences of Quebec's secession is one in which some or all remaining provinces seek to join the United States3. While its impact on higher education would not be the most dramatic or significant of the consequences of a radical shift in political boundaries and structures on the North American Continent, any such realignment could be expected to have a profound impact on higher education.

These factors underline - perhaps in an overly dramatic way - the importance of understanding the current differences between higher education in Canada and the United States, for future developments will, to a large extent, be guided by the current arrangements and structures. This paper examines differences between Canada and the United States with respect to the relationship between state/provincial governments and universities, particularly in regard to arrangements for state coordination of public universities. In attempting to attribute such differences as are identified to salient cultural and political differences between the two countries, the paper employs the analytical framework developed by Seymour Lipset in his comprehensive study, Continental Divide: The Values and Institutions of the United States and Canada4. We hope that by examining these basic differences we will stimulate further comparative research on this and other aspects of higher education in these jurisdictions.

FRAMEWORK

3For example, an entire recent issue of Canada's national news magazine, MacLean's (June 25, 1990), was devoted to examining this prospect. However, it should be said that scenarios involving the breakup of English Canada are considered pretty farfetched.
4Unlike Lipset, most of the contributors to the literature on differences between Canada and the United States are Canadian, no doubt because it is more difficult for Canadians to overlook the United States than for Americans to overlook Canada.
Within the field of comparative education, studies involving the United States have tended to be worldwide in scope, for the sake of comprehensiveness, or to focus on comparisons with European nations or Japan, possibly because of size and wealth of these jurisdictions, and because the U.S. is presumed to have enough in common with these jurisdictions, as compared say, to the Third World - technologically, economically, and to some extent, politically - to make such comparisons relevant for both, and enough not in common to make the comparisons illuminating. U.S.-Canada comparative studies, especially by American authors, are rather infrequent, perhaps because so many things about the two countries are so similar.

However, it because of the apparent similarities between the two nations in so many realms that Seymour Lipset argues that U.S.-Canada comparative studies can be particularly instructive: His premise is that "nations can be understood only in comparative perspective" (p. xiii), and the more similar the units being compared, the more informative the comparison. Thus, for Lipset, "knowledge of Canada or the United States is the best way to gain insight into the other North American country" (p. xiii).

Lipset's book analyzes cultural and institutional differences between the United States and Canada over the broad range of social and political enterprise, covering such areas as religion, law and deviance, economic behaviour, the arts, social welfare, trade unionism, philanthropy, multiculturalism, and federalism. Surprisingly, in view of the extent to which education is generally thought to both shape and reflect national culture, very little attention is given to education in Continental Divide 5.

However, the analytic framework which Lipset employs to elucidate U.S.-Canada differences in other realms appears to be quite useful when applied to higher education. In another paper, one of the authors has used this framework to explain some of the more striking differences between Canadian and American higher education (Skolnik, 1990a). Some of these differences - like the virtual absence of private universities in Canada - are apparent even to the casual observer. Others, having to do with the intricacies of government-university relations, provide the subject matter of this paper.

5 The only references to education include a quotation by a former President of the University of Toronto about the shift in Canadian universities from humanities to more practical and vocationally relevant subjects and the expansion of graduate programs and research which were alleged to have resulted from American influence; a few comments on differences in university participation rates between the United States and other OECD countries; and the observation that there is "not a single large private university" in Canada.
Lipset's thesis is not new, but rather draws upon a longstanding perspective in the works of various - mostly Canadian - political and social researchers and commentators. What Lipset has done is to synthesize the contributions of the many who have laboured in this vineyard; provide extensive documentation of differences between the two nations, especially drawing upon public opinion data; and apply his central hypothesis, to diverse areas of social, economic, and political behaviour.

The thesis, briefly stated, is that longstanding differences between Canada and the United States are rooted in the respective organizing principles of the two North American nations that grew out of the American Revolution:

The United States is a country of the revolution, Canada of the counterrevolution. These very different formative events set indelible marks on the two nations. One celebrates the overthrow of an oppressive state, the triumph of the people, a successful effort to create a type of government never seen before. The other commemorates a defeat and a long struggle to preserve a historical source of legitimacy: a government's deriving its title-to-rule from a monarchy linked to a church establishment. Government power is feared in the south; uninhibited popular sovereignty has been a concern in the north (p. 1).

From this difference in formative principles, one nation devolved a political culture characterized by antistatism, individualism, populism, and egalitarianism; the other more class-conscious, elitist, law-abiding, statist, collectivity-oriented, and particularistic.

A few examples of how Lipset attributes differences in various social phenomena to differences in founding principles helps to illustrate the argument. One of the most striking differences between the two nations is in the relative degree of involvement of government in areas such as ownership of industry, provision of welfare and social services, and regulation of private economic behaviour. In Canada, the state has always dominated the economy, and even conservative politicians have referred to the welfare system as "a sacred

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6Lipset is aware of the challenges to his ‘cultural determinist’ paradigm and considers alternative explanations for differences between Canada and United States, chiefly structural theories which emphasize such differences as geography, climate, population density, and market size, and (very briefly) economic lag theories which posit that cultural differences will disappear as levels of economic development and economic structures converge. He concludes, however, that "structure largely reinforces culture", and that historic differences in political values have persisted as the productivity gap has narrowed and differences in income and occupational structures have been reduced.
trust. In the United States, even something as basic as health care is allocated largely on an ability to pay basis, and a badly functioning private marketplace is generally thought superior to well-functioning public enterprise.

To Lipset, these differences between Canada and the United States regarding the role of government which persist in the late Twentieth Century reflect the differences between the original Tory statist ideology in the former and the liberal-Whig commitment to an anti-statist, individualism in the latter. He notes further the compatibility between the founding statist conservatism in Canada and socialism, as both are collectivist ideologies which embrace the idea of public mobilization of resources to fulfil group objectives. In arguing that the social democratic movement is the other side of statist conservatism - and hence a natural development in Canadian political evolution - Lipset quotes novelist Robertson Davies' aphoristic description of Canada as a 'socialist monarchy'. In contrast to Canada where social democratic movements have been quite strong and social democratic parties (i.e. the New Democratic Party) have been elected in several provinces, the liberal-Lockean tradition in the United States has inhibited the emergence of social democratic movements.

Perhaps one of the areas that best illustrates his thesis is that of law and deviance. Symptomatic of national differences in respect for law and those who uphold it has been the tendency for the gunslinger to be a national hero in the United States, whereas as novelist Margaret Atwood has noted, "Canada must be the only country in the world where a policeman [the Mountie] is used as a national symbol". Lipset cites public opinion poll data which shows how Canadians and Americans differ consistently in the values placed on social order relative to individual liberty. For example, in response to the proposition, "it is better to live in an orderly society than to allow people so much freedom they can become disruptive", the proportions of respondents agreeing [in 1988] were: Americans 51, Anglophone Canadians 61, and Francophone Canadians 77. Other opinion poll data shows substantially larger differences in attitudes toward gun control or restrictions on cars, smoking, door-to-door salesmen, and other private behaviour.

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7 In September of 1990 the New Democratic Party formed a majority government in Ontario, the wealthiest, and arguably the most conservative, province in Canada.
8 In fact, Lipset's interest in Canada-U.S. comparisons commenced when he attempted to explain, in his doctoral thesis more than forty years ago, why the first socialist government in North America happened to have come to power in Canada (Saskatchewan).
Lipset argues that such differences stem from the two countries' dissimilar histories, "the successful revolt in one and the reaffirmation of the monarchical base of legitimacy in the other", and that the differences in founding principles were reinforced by the respective legal and constitutional arrangements established by each country in its formative period. In the United States, the Constitution and Bill of Rights emphasize due process and the protection of the individual from encroachment by the state. In contrast to the emphasis on individual rights in the United States, the Canadian tradition is one of emphasis on social order and the collective good, and to some degree, group rights, the latter in large measure prompted by the need to work out a peaceful accommodation between the victorious Anglophones and the Francophone minority.

BROAD DIFFERENCES IN HIGHER EDUCATION BETWEEN THE TWO NATIONS

An American educator visiting Canada will immediately recognize two important differences in Canadian higher education. There are very few private universities in Canada, and there are no Church affiliated universities, whereas about the half the universities in the United States are private, and of these about a quarter are Church affiliated. Some Canadian universities refer to themselves as private, but as they were established by an act of a provincial legislature and receive the vast bulk of their funding through grants from a provincial government, their status is more akin to that of public universities in the United States than to U.S. private universities. There are bible colleges in Canada, but they are restricted to offering divinity, rather than secular, degrees, and serve mainly to prepare clergy. In terms of private universities, there are only two small

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9While the phrase "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness" was used in the founding documents of the United States, the preamble of the British North America Act, which was Canada's founding document, refers to "peace, order, and good government".

10Over the past several decades, prompted by the civil rights movement and demands of many minorities, the United States has made attempts to recognize group rights, but courts have had an uneasy time reconciling these with the Constitution. Moving in the other direction, Canada enacted a Charter of Rights in 1984 which has some similarities to the U.S. Bill of Rights. However, not surprisingly given its traditions, the Canadian Charter offers less extensive and stringent protection of individual freedoms than does the Bill of Rights, e.g. less protection of property rights, no protection from double jeopardy, little protection from self-incrimination, incomplete guarantee of trial by jury, and a "notwithstanding clause" which allows governments to override certain individual rights conferred by the Charter in the interests of the collectivity. Some observers consider these differences so great as to argue, like Kenneth McNaught (quoted by Lipset:103), that "the Charter is distinctly un-American", as its basic stress is still on the "dependence of liberty on order".
religious affiliated institutions (one in Ontario, one in British Columbia) which have limited authority to offer secular degrees. But in short, there are no Harvards or Stanfords, or Notre Dames or Georgetowns in Canada.

A more subtle, but even more fundamental difference is that universities in Canada are not hierarchically differentiated as they are in the United States. The emphasis in public policy has been on establishing networks of institutions of approximately equivalent standards\(^\text{11}\). To be sure, the older universities retain some edge in prestige, and possibly in quality too, but in the absence of national quality ratings of institutions - a uniquely American obsession - there is no evidence to confirm such suppositions. In recent years, there have been calls for provincial governments to differentiate among universities in per student grants - which are generally based on enrolment and program mix - and designate flagship institutions for higher funding levels (see Connell, 1989). However, within the prevailing ethos of equality, these calls have gone unheeded (Skolnik, 1987a:160-161).

There is also relatively little horizontal differentiation among Canadian universities, with most being comprehensive institutions, involved in graduate studies (which tends to account for from five to fifteen per cent of enrolment and nowhere more than twenty in contrast to some of the large research universities in the United States), normally including the doctoral level, professional programs, and research. Only a handful of institutions might be said to be specialized in regard to program area (such as technology or education), principal clientele (e.g. native peoples), or educational philosophy, mission, or program delivery (generally no nontraditional institutions except for a few in regard to distance education and one fledgling open learning institute).

Canada has substantially fewer degree granting institutions on a per capita basis than the United States. There are about 70 degree granting institutions in Canada - about the same number as the Boston area alone - of which eleven are in one of the smallest provinces, Nova Scotia, and only sixteen in the largest province, Ontario.

\(^{11}\) Peter Leslie (1980: 56-65) has observed that higher education in Canada is in one respect more egalitarian than in the United States, in another respect less egalitarian. It is more egalitarian in that the quality of education and the value of a degree varies relatively little from one institution to another compared to the situation in the United States. Hence, there is greater equality of results. On the other hand, the emphasis on common minimum standards in Canada means that for many persons for whom there would be some place, somewhere in the American system, there is no corresponding place in the Canadian university system.
The limited number of institutions, the absence of private or Church affiliated ones, and the limited extent of horizontal differentiation (including especially the near absence of nontraditional institutions) all result from attitudes which emphasize the role of university education as a public utility, suspicion of private enterprise in education, secularization of education, and equality of results as opposed to equality of opportunity, which stand in sharp contrast to the corresponding attitudes in the United States. These attitudes are backed by government policies and, in most provinces, legislation which strictly limits the authority to grant degrees\(^{12}\) (Skolnik, 1987b). In Canada, an institution cannot award degrees, or refer to itself as a university, without being authorized to do so by an act of a provincial legislature.

The remaining two differences of note between U.S. and Canadian higher education pertain to community college-university and federal-provincial relations. In most provinces, community colleges are mandated to provide only career, adult, and community education, not to serve as feeders to the universities. In only two provinces, British Columbia and Alberta, have the colleges had a transfer function like American colleges\(^{13}\). Quebec has a unique system in which secondary schooling terminates at Grade 11, after which any student aspiring to university must complete a two year pre-university program in a provincial college of general and professional education, an institution which has also a three year career preparation stream. In line with the distinct mandates of universities and community colleges, there are no consolidated higher education agencies which have purview over both sectors - though a recent survey of senior officials showed that a majority felt that improved structures for coordinating policy between these sectors was needed (Skolnik and Jones, 1991, forthcoming).

\(^{12}\)In a few provinces, particularly Ontario, American universities have attempted to mount off-campus programs of a type not available in Canadian universities, particularly involving nontraditional study. Ontario universities have vigourously opposed these initiatives, but because of strong support from organizations which represent the clientele for such programs (especially school teachers' federations), the government has permitted the American programs subject to meeting a list of conditions of which demonstration that no Ontario university could offer the program has been the only occasional stumbling block (Skolnik, 1987b: 74-76). Private degree level education is, thus, the only service of which the authors are aware for which a jurisdiction prohibits its own residents from producing but licenses imports.

\(^{13}\)In other provinces, there is increased interest among community college graduates in subsequently going on to university, particularly to enhance their professional credentials, and articulation is a subject of policy review in most provinces, and planning initiatives in a few. Many community college graduates have been going to American universities to meet this need, and several Ontario colleges have formal articulation agreements with American universities (Marshall, 1989: 2-3).
As Canada has a federal system in some ways similar to that of the United States, the division of responsibility for higher education between the two levels of government is broadly similar between the two nations, for example, with the major source of research funding being national granting councils, and the major source of direct operating grants (for public institutions) coming from states/provinces. As in the United States, the respective roles of the two levels of government have tended to change from time to time as various fiscal exigencies and political expediencies have had to be reconciled with constitutional interpretations. At one time, the bulk of university operating funding was in the form of direct grants from the federal government to the universities. Now, in keeping with a general swing toward provincial autonomy but recognizing the greater revenue generating capacity of the federal government, the bulk of operating funds still come from the federal government, but in the form of unconditional transfers to the provinces, which the latter can spend as they wish, even if their wish is to spend it on hospitals or roads. In obeisance to provincial sensitivities over what is deemed to be their jurisdiction, there is no national department or office of postsecondary education even though the university community has argued repeatedly that such would be not only in their interests but in the national interest as well.

Differences in Arrangements for System Coordination

Aside from the broad differences described above, one can observe a number of specific differences in the structures and processes related to the coordination of higher education. These differences pertain to the role of the legislature and to the specific structures in place for state/province coordination.

The Role of the Legislature

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14 As these grants are unconditional, it is impossible to produce definitive estimates of the amount of federal funds that is directed toward universities, and the figures disseminated by the federal agency responsible for the transfers regularly provoke “data wars” with its provincial counterparts. One effect of the complex funding arrangements is that when universities complain about insufficient funding, the two levels of government can conveniently pass the buck back and forth.

15 During the late 1980’s, there had been considerable momentum toward some form of national coordination of postsecondary education, but the present constitutional imbroglio effectively brings a halt to any moves in this direction.
Some of the more fundamental differences in the coordination of higher education between states and provinces can be attributed to differences in government structure. The parliamentary system employed by the Canadian provinces involves a series of structures and a political dynamic which sharply contrasts with the American State model.

While there is a relatively clear separation of powers between the executive and legislative branches in U.S. states, the parliamentary system involves the linkage of both types of authority within the provincial cabinet. In each province a single cabinet minister is assigned responsibility for administering higher education policy, often in combination with other policy areas, as well as shaping the legislative agenda for higher education in cooperation with the cabinet. The Council of Ministers of Education, composed of provincial ministers who have been assigned responsibility for education and higher education, provides a national forum for the exchange of information and the development of cooperative initiatives.

There are also important differences in the role of the legislator. Under the parliamentary system, members are expected to vote only along partisan lines. Strict party loyalty is maintained since the defeat of a major piece of government-initiated legislation is traditionally viewed as a sign of non-confidence, and may require the government to resign.

These basic structural differences create a different political context for the coordination of higher education. It is generally the provincial cabinet, and not the legislature as a whole, which plays the dominant role in the development of legislated policy, in contrast to the dominant role that some state legislatures play within the coordination process (see McGuinness, 1986:7). While McGuinness notes that in the past two decades, "increasingly sophisticated legislators, backed by professional staffs, became more directly involved in both the substance and procedures of state higher education policy" (p. 9), the Canadian experience is that few legislators, except relevant cabinet and "shadow cabinet" members, play any formal or direct role in the policy process. The context for policy change and institutional lobbying is also influenced by the perception that the "window of opportunity" for influencing the content of legislation, in a parliamentary system, occurs before the legislation has been formally introduced. Public debate of legislation, if it occurs, is usually limited to a rather predictable adversarial (e.g. government versus opposition) approach following party lines. Higher education institutions which seek to change policy therefore concentrate their lobbying efforts on those few legislators and
senior civil servants who play a formal role in the coordination process, and on the party leadership in an attempt to change or influence party policy, especially during elections.

This is not to suggest that provincial legislators are uninterested in higher education policy. A Manitoba study found that most legislators wanted to learn more about, and increase their contact with, the province's largest university. At the same time, respondents warned that increased lobbying efforts could create dangerous perceptions of institutional politicization or partisanship (Jones, 1989), another reason why lobbying efforts tend to focus only on those who play a formal role in the policy development process. Thus, in the Canadian system, the cabinet is the dominant political force, and the important political dynamics centre on the relationship between senior government officials and the universities, individually or collectively.\textsuperscript{16}

\textbf{Coordinating Structures}

There are major differences in the structures in place for the coordination of higher education in Canadian provinces and American states. There are no consolidated provincial governing boards in Canada, whereas nearly half the states have consolidated governing boards for all or most public higher education institutions. In fact, while the multicampus system is a common model for public universities in the United States, there is only one comparable multicampus system in Canada, the University of Quebec\textsuperscript{17}. Further, while more than half the state governing boards have jurisdiction over universities and community colleges, no province has a public agency, apart from the government ministry of higher education, which has responsibility for all postsecondary sectors (Skolnik and Jones, 1991, forthcoming). While all states have one or more public agencies

\textsuperscript{16}Occasionally, the legislature may be involved independently of the government. In one instance where the Ontario Government attempted to merge two institutions, an institution which opposed the merger managed to prevent it by successfully lobbying all members of the legislature, including those on the government side (Guttman, 1988). In that case, the intermediary body was neither asked to, nor did it make any statements on the proposed merger. In another case in Ontario, a denominational institution obtained limited authority to grant secular degrees through lobbying legislators (Skolnik, 1987b:72). These cases are exceptional in Canada, whereas lobbying legislatures is quite normal in the United States (Hines, 1988:33-35).

\textsuperscript{17}A few of the larger universities, like the University of Toronto, have some satellite campuses, but they are not regarded as multicampus systems.
responsible for universities - a consolidated governing board or a coordinating board, or in a few cases, a planning agency - four of the ten provinces have no intermediary body of any kind.\(^{18}\)

With respect to nomenclature, the United States has, in addition to the 23 consolidated governing boards, 28 coordinating boards and 3 planning agencies (McGuinness, 1986:6). The higher education agencies in Canada are formally designated as councils (Quebec and Ontario) or commissions (Manitoba and the single agency - the Maritime Provinces Higher Education Commission - which has responsibility for universities and related institutions for the three Maritime Provinces, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, and Prince Edward Island), and are collectively referred to as intermediary bodies.

Millett notes that U.S. coordinating boards have the authority to prepare a master plan, to approve degree programs, and to review and recommend the appropriation needs of institutions (1984:101-102). McGuinness reports that while the majority of boards have program approval authority, a substantial minority have recommending power only (p. 6a). Canadian intermediary bodies generally have less formal authority and stature than their U.S. counterparts. None have program approval authority, though all have the power to recommend. While all have the role of advising their respective provincial governments on the general development of the system, none are seen as having the authority to prepare meaningful master plans.\(^{19}\) With respect to advising on the appropriations needs of institutions, Canadian intermediary bodies play a similar role to that of coordinating boards in the U.S., in both cases the role consisting mainly of presiding over the application of funding formulae rather than adjudicating the merits of the arguments made by university funding officers.

While recent trends in the United States have been towards formalizing and strengthening state level arrangements for governing/coordinating higher education, trends in Canada have been in the opposite direction. By 1972, 47 states had either consolidated governing boards or coordinating boards. Since then, the other three states have adopted some type of state level board, several states have replaced coordinating boards by

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\(^{18}\)British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Newfoundland do not have any form of intermediary body.

\(^{19}\)In Ontario, when the government wanted a master plan for restructuring the system a few years ago, it established a special commission to do the job rather than requesting the intermediary body to do it, possibly because the task was thought to be too contentious for a regular agency. In the end, the special commission opted not to produce a master plan, but to recommend some tinkering with the funding formula instead (Skolnik, 1987a:161).
governing boards, and many states reorganized their structures to strengthen their coordinating mechanisms (McGuinness, pp. 8-10). In contrast, three Canadian provinces eliminated intermediary bodies during the 1970's and 1980's, and the four intermediary bodies which continue to exist have not undergone any significant changes since the 1970's.

It is also important to recognize that provincial intermediary bodies are wholly composed of government-appointed and ex officio members, and that, within the context of the parliamentary system, intermediary bodies generally provide advice to the cabinet minister/government department assigned responsibility for higher education, rather than to the legislature as a whole. Aside from annual reports, which are widely distributed, specific advice to the government is often treated with at least some degree of confidentiality.

In summary, structures for system level governance, coordination, and planning are more extensive, more formalized, and give more power to arms-length public agencies in the United States than in Canada. Given the frequent existence of multicampus governing boards, the more extensive network of higher education agencies, and the separation of the legislative and executive branches, the policy and planning environment for higher education in the United States is more complex and multi-faceted than in Canada, where major decisions frequently result from the interplay of only senior officials of the ministry responsible for higher education and university presidents. These differences in the arrangements for system coordination give rise to questions regarding basis for the differences in structures and the impact of the differences. These questions are addressed in the next section.

ADDRESSING THE DIFFERENCES

While the greater prominence and stature of intermediary bodies in the United States than in Canada could reflect significant differences in the value attached to, or interpretations of, institutional autonomy vis-a-vis government and/or academic freedom, such is not the case. The articulation of the principles of academic freedom

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20 The Ontario Council on University Affairs publicly releases the advice it has provided to the Minister of Colleges and Universities only after the Minister has had an opportunity to respond. This information, along with the government response, is published in the Council's annual reports (see Beard, 1983). Manitoba's Universities Grants Commission treats the advice it provides to government with a high degree of confidence, though its annual reports summarize important changes in policy.
and the mobilization of collective faculty efforts in its defense developed later in Canada than in the United States, but academic freedom is at least as well respected and defended in Canada as in the United States, and probably is more secure in Canada. No governments in Canada have ever demanded loyalty oaths from professors in publicly supported universities, and no governments have dismissed faculty on ideological grounds (Neatby, 1987:26). There have been a few cases where political belief was alleged to be a factor in denial of tenure, but nothing approaching the frequency with which such cases are reported in the Chronicle of Higher Education.

In short, there is no evidence that a lesser respect for academic freedom is responsible for the lesser interest in intermediary bodies in Canada than in the United States. On the contrary, the lesser tendency of government officials and legislators to scrutinize the ideological conformity of professors in Canada may lessen the need for strong buffer bodies between government and the universities relative to the United States.

Turning to the more general question of institutional autonomy - and Berdahl argues that the cause of academic freedom is strengthened if it is disengaged from the question of institutional autonomy (1971:7) - it is not apparent that there are significant differences between Canada and the United States in regard to appreciation of the value of institutional autonomy. Interestingly, in his pathbreaking book devoted to the study of government-university relations in the United States, Berdahl, who is also co-author of the seminal study of university governance in Canada, presents a quotation from a president of the University of Toronto in the frontispiece. In fact, treatises on institutional autonomy by U.S. commentators (like Berdahl, 1971; Millett, 1984; Hines, 1988; or Brubacher; 1977) are not dissimilar from the remarks of Canadian commentators (like Bissell, 1968; Arthurs, 1987).

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\textsuperscript{21}Recently the Premier of Ontario stated publicly that he thought that the University of Western Ontario should fire a professor who has published papers purporting to show correlations between race and intelligence. The University, while not hiding its displeasure or embarrassment with the incident, defended the professor's right to research the topic and publish on the basis of academic freedom. In response to a public outcry, the Government gave formal consideration to instituting criminal proceedings under Canada's law against hate literature, but concluded that there were not sufficient grounds for prosecution. The Ontario intermediary body for universities and the association of universities maintained a posture of silence on the incident. Given the explosiveness of the topic - and the fact that the work was alleged to be of poor quality - this was not thought to be a propitious case for the university community to rally a defense of academic freedom, but such defense is not needed in more respectable cases. For comments on differences in academic freedom between the United States and Canada, see Skolnik, 1990b, forthcoming.
It may well be that the appreciation of the value of institutional autonomy and corresponding self-restraint by government is more important in maintaining institutional autonomy than the actions of an intermediary body. Of course, an intermediary body may play a valuable role in educating government in regard to "the complexity and fragility of a university and of the dangers of laying too heavy a hand on the management of its affairs" (Sibley, 1983:149). On the other hand, coordinating boards, and certainly consolidated governing boards, may provide a vehicle for more intrusion into the affairs of an institution than a government would undertake in the absence or weakness of such bodies. In fact, though degrees of institutional autonomy are almost impossible to measure, the authors' impression is that even with the absence or weakness of Canadian intermediary bodies, Canadian universities enjoy greater autonomy than American universities; certainly they are far more insulated from the whims of legislators or the discipline of a free market than are American institutions. But Sibley, who was the chairman of a now defunct intermediary body, suggests that were governments to embark on a more dirigiste course, intermediaries could do little to oppose the move (p. 149).

If it is not differences in attitudes towards academic freedom and institutional autonomy that explain the greater interest in coordinating mechanisms in the United States than in Canada, then what other factors can be identified that might explain this difference? Following Lipset, we suggest that the explanation might lie in the constellation of statism, penchant for order over the excesses of freedom and unbridled competition, and acceptance of a broad and pervasive role of government as both legitimate and healthy to the social order and the public good.

Canadians have tended to regard university education - like health care - as a public good, and, as with health care, they have accordingly deemed not only public provision of university education, but a public monopoly in this field, as necessary in order ensure an equivalent standard for all participants. The penchant for order relative to freedom has led them to shun not only competition from a private higher education sector, but also competition within the public sector. This aversion to competition is seen most clearly in the initial policy in the western provinces of having only one provincial university. Indeed, Harris cites a statement of a Minister of Education during the period before some of the western territories became provinces urging that the West avoid the "evils which by reason of competing institutions had been experienced in the Eastern Provinces", the evils referred to being those of destructive competition (1976:224). Not until the 1960's, with considerable population
growth and movement, was this policy relaxed, and the largest of the Western Provinces, British Columbia, still has only three universities. Berdahl observes that the desire to control premature expansion and proliferation of institutions was the principal motive for the establishment of consolidated governing boards in the United States (p. 27). In Canada, an explicit policy of strict Government control over the expansion and proliferation of institutions made consolidated governing/coordinate boards unnecessary for this end.²²

Southern, who was Secretary to the British Columbia intermediary body for the universities prior to its abolition in 1987, argues that an intermediary has two major roles (1987:41-44). One is the buffer role, to shield universities from bureaucratic control and political interference, and the other is system planning. He notes that the buffer role can be played alternatively by lay institutional governing boards and statutory safeguards concerning hiring, promotion, and discharge of academic staff, and that the principal justification for the existence of an intermediary is system planning.

Given Southern's observation, it is ironic that the main planning for provincial university systems in Canada took place in the 1960's, prior to the establishment of the present intermediary bodies, and was done by government itself. Since the 1960's, there has been little system planning in Canada, until just recently in a few provinces, and no significant restructuring except in Quebec. As noted earlier, preparing effective master plans has not been seen as role for those intermediaries which do exist, and there has been insufficient enthusiasm for planning on the part of provincial governments to warrant establishing intermediaries where they do not exist or strengthening them where they do exist.

The Ontario experience is instructive in this regard, because there have been frequent calls in that province for restructuring the university system - primarily in order to reduce costs - and the suggested means for doing so has been through a strengthened intermediary body. However, successive governments there have not responded to the calls for restructuring and have taken no action even on a government commissioned study which called for minor changes in the role of the intermediary body (Skolnik, 1987a:162). In contrast, in some U.S.

²²As the provision of universities is regarded as a public responsibility, and because private philanthropy is of a much lower scale in Canada than in the United States - the other side of the greater value which Americans place on individualism - Canadian universities are dependent upon governments for funding any major expansion of facilities. In this respect Canadian universities have less autonomy from government than American universities.
states, system planning has been a priority in recent years and higher education boards have been actively involved in it (McGuinness, pp. 1-2).

Some of the same concerns which McGuinness (pp. 2-5) suggests underlie current state interest in system planning exist in Canada, for example, the need for a strong tie between higher education and the state's economy; but others are non-existent or weak in Canada: the feeling that there is a mismatch between the way that higher education is organized and the needs of the state and its people, perception of serious problems in the relationship between higher education and the public schools, and concerns that higher education may be overextended. Thus, while in the United States concerns about overextension have given rise to demands for system planning by intermediary bodies, in Canada, with the legacy of historically greater control over the development of higher education in Canada and the lesser size and complexity of its higher education systems which have resulted from that control, the corresponding demands for planning - and hence for strong intermediary bodies to carry out such planning - have been much weaker. In this context, one of the authors has characterized policy developments in higher education in Ontario in the past two decades as consisting of modest modifications within a framework of relatively stable structures (Jones, 1990, forthcoming).

Fisher notes that not only was the expansion of U.S. higher education in the 1960's facilitated by federal funding, but that the requirements for state administration of the federal funds which were provided was a major stimulus to the creation of state coordinating boards. In fact, Congress even provided funds to assist states in the establishing of coordinating boards and stipulated certain conditions that these boards must meet (Fisher, 1988:150). In Canada, as noted earlier, federal government transfers to the provinces for higher education are in the form of unconditional grants, and targeting funds for intermediary bodies or stipulating conditions which they must meet would have been considered an unacceptable intrusion into provincial jurisdiction.

Another motive for the establishment of consolidated governing and coordinating boards in the United States has been suspicion of public sector enterprise and the consequent interest in having a watchdog to ensure that public funds are used efficiently. With the greater acceptance of the legitimacy of the public sector in Canada, lay governing boards of individual institutions were deemed sufficient to protect the public interest and the creation of provincial level watchdogs was not seen as necessary. Even today, the vast efforts which state
governments and higher education agencies put into outcome assessment and performance indicators are unparalleled in Canada. Of course, this difference in external assessment of institutional performance reflects not only differences in attitudes toward public sector enterprise, but also differences in the structures of the two systems. The American approach is to allow relatively free entry into degree level education and to encourage competition and then to put emphasis upon grading the products. The Canadian approach is to strictly control the establishment of institutions and restrain competition, and then to assume that those which are allowed to operate will likely produce products of acceptable quality. As well, such policing of quality as is done in Canada is carried out cooperatively by institutions themselves, a practice which works effectively in a society which, as Lipset puts it, "eschews conflict and competition", and where it is far more common for enterprises in nearly all sectors to operate in an oligarchical manner than in the United States\(^{23}\).

With its far smaller number of universities, more elitist and statist-collectivist and less pluralist traditions, Canada has had less need for intermediaries to mediate among conflicting interests in higher education than has been the case in the United States. Neatby argues that for the first half of the Twentieth Century government intervention in universities in Canada was unnecessary because there was there were similar views on both sides regarding the social order, the universities' place in it, the universities' function, and how they could best achieve their objectives (pp. 34-35). Universities were doing what was expected of them and with only modest demands on provincial treasuries. In this context, it is not surprising that, as Arnold Naimark, President of the University of Manitoba, notes, there is a record of substantial achievement in Canada in shaping higher education through cooperation between governments and universities (1979:44).

The United States, being a more fractious society with greater diversity among its universities and much less of a consensus regarding their role and functioning, had a much greater need for some arrangements to mediate among conflicting interests and to impose order and direction on the sometimes wildly proliferating systems. Not surprisingly, intermediary bodies generally developed earlier and more extensively in the United

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\(^{23}\)The oligarchical approach to quality assessment has its downside in regard to discouraging innovation and intellectual deviation. One of the authors has attempted to show how the system for review of graduate programs operated by the Council of Ontario Universities tends to substitute conformity to academic orthodoxy for a more flexible interpretation of program quality (Skolnik, 1989).
States than in Canada, where expansion of higher education and increase in its costs ultimately gave rise to a perceived need for some type of coordinating body, but only in some provinces.

In the context of the factors outlined in the paragraphs immediately above, however, it is important to introduce a qualification which applies not only to a discussion of higher education intermediary bodies, but should be applied to Lipset's analysis as well. That is to note that there is considerable diversity among both American states and Canadian provinces as well as between these two groups of entities. Some American states have a smaller and more homogeneous population and fewer universities than some Canadian provinces, Wyoming compared to Ontario for example. Thus, some American states, like Vermont or Nebraska, have had no more pressing needs for intermediary bodies than Newfoundland or Saskatchewan, and much less than Ontario or Quebec, and accordingly, those states do not have consolidated governing boards or coordinating boards (but they do have planning agencies). In spite of such exceptions, however, the broad generalizations about differences between the two countries in regard to the motivation for intermediary bodies still seem to fit.

The comments above pertain to the role and functions of intermediary bodies and the forces which have led to their establishment. Ideally, in an investigation of this sort, one would like to be able to say something about the comparative effectiveness of approaches to state/provincial coordination of higher education in Canada and the United States. However, evaluation of the operation of intermediaries is notoriously problematic. In considering this issue, Sibley cites Berdahl's remark that "we cannot find any objective canons of proof by which to evaluate the contributions of such agencies" (quoted in Sibley, p. 155), and he adds that "given the recondite nature of that process, one cannot pretend to know" (p. 152). Also, given the differences in systems structures, environments, and goals between Canada and the United States, it would be difficult to find common criteria for comparing the effectiveness of intermediaries in the two countries. What might be more to the point, since intermediaries are not universal in Canada, would be to compare the policymaking process between provinces which have an intermediary with that in provinces which do not have such a body. The single Canadian study which has done this involved a comparison between British Columbia and Alberta over a period in which the former had an intermediary and the latter did not. The authors' qualified conclusion was that the existence of the intermediary did not make much difference in the policy process or in the relation between universities and government (Southern and Dennison, 1985:86-88). This conclusion supports the notion that the
key relationships in public higher education are those between institutions and relevant government officials, and the most useful function that an intermediary can play is to facilitate these relationships.

CONCLUSIONS

Our analysis suggests that a number of institutional and cultural differences between Canada and the United States help to explain why higher education coordinating/governing bodies are more prevalent and generally more powerful in the United States than in Canada: the greater acceptance of the free market principle for higher education in the United States than in Canada; the greater suspicion of public sector enterprise in the United States; the greater tolerance of oligarchical behaviour in Canada; the stronger independent role of legislatures and legislators and the tradition of a more open political process in the United States; the more fractious nature of American than Canadian society; the larger and more complex and diversified higher education systems in the United States (which some observers now feel are overextended) than in Canada; and possibly the greater respect for academic freedom held by Canadian than by American governments. Insofar as this case study relates differences in the nature of higher education coordination between the two countries to relevant institutional and cultural differences, it serves to rationalize these observed differences.

However, it is reasonable to ask of a comparative case study that it go beyond rationalizing observed differences, and produce lessons that might be useful for either country in the further development of the structures and processes under consideration. For Canadian policymakers, the United States experience offers a variety of models of higher education coordinating and governing agencies which could be of interest if Canadian higher education systems and the environments in which they operate should evolve in the direction of those in the United States. As Lipset notes, some evolution in that direction has occurred in recent years with the adoption of a U.S. style Charter of Rights which will give more prominence to individual rights and should force more openness in the policymaking process. As well, the increasingly pluralist and fractious nature of Canadian society, which was reflected in the ability of various minorities to mobilize forces which scuttled the constitutional agreement, could imply that a more open policy making process which provides for the participation of diverse interest groups may be demanded in the future in other policy areas including that of higher education.
Within higher education itself, the increasing complexity of higher education systems, including that resulting from pressures for privatization, new forms of postsecondary education, and better coordination between the community college and university sectors, may also contribute to greater interest in more formal and stronger coordination mechanisms. In addition to these factors, the closer economic integration between Canada and the United States resulting from the Free Trade Agreement will likely engender demands for greater efficiency and accountability in the use of public funds for higher education in Canada, and possibly in structural changes which would make Canadian higher education more competitive with American higher education. One can, for example, observe many of these factors at work in Ontario, Canada's most ethnically diverse and industrialized province, where, as noted previously, government commissions have recommended strengthening the role of the intermediary body.

The lessons which the Canadian experience might hold for Americans are less readily apparent. Certainly, any reversal of the trend of the past two decades in the United States toward more widespread and stronger higher education coordinating and governing agencies is out of the question, especially as the conditions which stimulated these developments have continued apace. If there is a lesson for Americans in the Canadian experience, it is that a fixation on the role of high education intermediary bodies diverts attention away from other relationships which are necessary to the healthy functioning of higher education systems which exist in a complex policy environment. That Canada has been able to develop high quality and responsive public higher education systems with a reasonable degree of legitimacy and accountability and a strong measure of academic freedom and institutional accountability in the absence or weakness of intermediary bodies suggests both that it easy to exaggerate the importance of such bodies, and that they are no panacea for the effective development and overseeing of higher education. While the extent of harmonization between higher education interest groups and governments which has been achieved, at least until recently, through informal channels of communication in Canada might not be realizable (or as desirable) in the more fragmented policy environment in which American institutions operate, the Canadian experience underscores the importance of attending to the other relationships among key actors in the higher education policy environment besides those which centre on intermediary bodies.
REFERENCES


