

SPECIAL FEATURE/CONTRIBUTION SPECIALE

Lipset's *Continental Divide** and the Ideological Basis for Differences in Higher Education between Canada and United States

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The renowned American political sociologist, Seymour Lipset, has been interested in the study of cultural and institutional differences between Canada and the United States ever since he attempted to explain, in his doctoral thesis more than forty years ago, why the first socialist government in North America happened to come to power in Canada. *Continental Divide*, thus, represents more than forty years of study, reflection, and accumulation of data on differences between Canada and the United States with respect to political values, behaviour, and institutions.

Not surprisingly given this background to the undertaking, the book is extraordinarily well referenced, utilizing all the standard comparative works of historians, sociologists, political scientists, and economists, as well as bringing together considerable data from public opinion polls which reveal consistent [although often modest] differences between the United States, English, and French Canada. Lipset reaches both into the past to the observations of Tocqueville, and some surprising observations of Friedrich Engels, on the role of culture in explaining institutional differences between Canada and the United States, and into the immediate present to discuss the Meech Lake debate. He uses not only scholarly literature, but examines also the way that differences in national identity are revealed in fiction, films, and art. Indeed, Margaret Atwood and Robertson Davies are featured as prominently in his analysis as are S.D. Clark, Kenneth McNaught, Richard Simeon, and Northrup Frye.

Although Lipset analyzes many areas of culture and institutional behaviour in Canada and the United States, he gives no attention to elementary and secondary education and includes only a few brief comments about higher education. The purpose of this essay is to examine how Lipset's general explanation of cultural and institutional differences between Canada and the United States might serve to

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explain the considerable differences which exist between Canadian and U.S. higher education. Before considering the differences in higher education between the two countries, it is necessary first to summarize Lipset's general thesis.

THE THESIS OF *CONTINENTAL DIVIDE*

The major theme of the book is not new. It 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. Lipset then documents how these cultural differences are reflected in political attitudes and behaviour related to religion, law and deviance, economic behaviour, the arts, government, social welfare, philanthropy, social stratification, trade unionism, multiculturalism, and federal-provincial/state relations. He employs the metaphor of two trains, starting from distinct points, moving along parallel tracks.

Lipset 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.

A few examples of how Lipset attributes differences in various social phenomena to differences in founding principles might serve to illustrate the nature of the book. 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 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 a well-functioning public agency. To Lipset, these late Twentieth Century differences between Canada and the United States 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 fulfill 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 Robertson Davies' aphoristic description of Canada as a 'socialist monarchy'. In contrast, the liberal-Lockean tradition in the United States has inhibited the emergence of social democratic movements. What Lipset does not address, however, is whether recent disaffection with big government and the welfare state in Canada reflects an Americanization of our political culture or is simply a manifestation of a current world-wide love affair with the perceived material efficiency of the market mechanism.

To take one more example, I found the most central chapter in the book to be the one on Law and Deviance, which includes a section on constitutional rights. Symptomatic of the national differences in respect for law and those who uphold it has been the tendency for the gunslinger (or he might have said, Dillinger or Bonnie and Clyde) to be a national hero in the United States, whereas as Margaret Atwood has noted, "Canada must be the only country in the world where a policeman [the Mountie] is used as a national symbol". In this chapter, Lipset cites some fascinating 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.

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 emphasized 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 was 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.

Of course, Canada now has a Charter of Rights and Freedoms which has some similarities to the U.S. Bill of Rights, and one of the most interesting sections of the book is Lipset's comparison of these two instruments. Lipset cites many Canadian commentators who point out the various ways in which the Canadian Charter offers less extensive and stringent protection of individual freedoms (e.g. less protection of property rights, no protection from double jeopardy, little protection from self-incrimination, incomplete guarantee of trial by jury, and of course, the widely debated "notwithstanding" clause which perpetuates parliamentary supremacy with respect to certain categories of rights.) Some observers consider these differences so great as to argue, like Kenneth McNaught (quoted by Lipset), that "the Charter is distinctly un-American", as its basic stress is still on the "dependence of liberty on order".

Lipset, however, argues that, in spite of giving weaker protection of individual liberty than the U.S. Constitution, the Charter is a significant departure from Canadian political tradition, and that

it [the Charter] probably goes further toward taking the country in an American direction than any other enacted structural change, including the Canada-U.S. Free Trade Agreement. The Charter's stress on due process and individual rights, although less stringent than that of the U.S. Bill of Rights, should increase individualism and litigiousness north of the border.

There are two points that I would like to make in regard to the above quotation. First, this quotation has been prominent in the radio and newspaper reviews of the book that I have heard and seen, and on the basis of this remark some commentators have dismissed the book as propaganda put out by the supporters of free trade. The book was, after all, published by the Canada America Committee, an entity sponsored jointly by the C.D. Howe Institute in Canada and the National Planning Association in the United States, both of which were advocates of the Free Trade Agreement. On the other hand, *Continental Divide* is a scholarly analysis of value and institutional differences between Canada and the United States which contains no other reference to the Free Trade Agreement. The book provides a balanced treatment of its topic, and I can find no instances of the author expressing a preference for one or the other set of values and institutions. In what is most certainly not a brief in favour of free trade, the passage quoted above serves only to emphasize the author's judgment of the significance of the Charter in changing Canadian political culture in the direction of that in the United States. That said, for the sake of appearance, Lipset might have been more prudent if he had used a different publisher.

The other point about the above passage that merits comment is that Lipset treats the introduction of the Charter as totally exogenous to his analysis, i.e. he makes no attempt to explain why after the two trains had moved on parallel tracks from different starting points for two centuries, one train should start wandering toward the path of the other. One wonders if some structural factors might be lurking; for example, the increasing ethnic diversity of the Canadian population which has

weakened the social cohesiveness of the Confederation that was based upon the heritage of the two founding groups. Or could the major factor have been the increased transmission of values from south to north, e.g. Canadian viewers of U.S. television wanting the same rights that they see on U.S. crime shows? Insofar as cultural transmission helps to explain why we now have a Charter of Rights and Freedoms, Lipset may be flat wrong in the passage quoted above. That is, the Charter may be a *result* of the flow of products, people, and ideas between the two countries – which free trade will likely accelerate – and hence at least as much an outcome of structurally induced Americanization as a cause. At any rate, if Lipset is correct in giving the Charter as much prominence as he does, he is remiss in not exploring its genesis and how its adoption fits with his central thesis.

DIFFERENCES IN HIGHER EDUCATION IN CANADA AND THE UNITED STATES

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*. Apart from quoting former University of Toronto President, Claude Bissell, about the Americanization of Canadian universities in regard to a shift from humanities to more practical and vocationally relevant subjects and the expansion of graduate programs and research, the only discussion of education involves some brief comments on university participation (except for noting that there is “not a single large private university” in Canada).

After noting that the United States is last among OECD countries in all areas of welfare spending except education, where in many respects it is first, he explains that anomaly in terms of the extraordinarily high value that Americans place on equality of opportunity, as opposed to equality of results, which in turn is attributed to the high value placed on individualism. Though this is a popular explanation, it is not an entirely satisfactory one, and it is certainly incomplete. For one thing, it is odd that a nation that is thought to be so strongly committed to using education to achieve equality of opportunity should have probably the most unequal postsecondary education system in the world. The diversity of postsecondary institutions in the U.S., in regard to funding level, reputation, quality, and career enhancement effect, is enormous (Birnbaum, 1983). This diversity certainly reflects individualism, but there is room for debate as to how much meaningful equality of educational opportunity it produces, given the enormous range in quality of education and value of degrees across the spectrum of postsecondary institutions.

There are at least three other factors which Lipset does not mention which contribute to the higher level of spending on education in the United States than in Canada, or other OECD countries. One is the assumed connection between education and economic growth which provided underpinning for both the Morrill Act that spawned the state universities in the Nineteenth Century and the post-World War II expansion of education. Nowhere does Lipset observe that a society

which is not rooted in traditions of a monarchy tied to a Church Establishment is likely to be more materialistic than one which has such traditions. The greater materialistic orientation of the United States than of Canada or the European democracies which had ties of monarchy, Church Establishment, and related traditional values thus may help to explain the higher priority given education in the U.S. A related factor, which Lipset notes but does not connect with education, is that in the absence of monarchy, Church Establishment, and other elements of a common cultural heritage, Americanism had necessarily to be defined in terms of ideology rather than nationality or community as was originally the case with Canada. Lipset attributes the historical American penchant for political witchhunts to this factor, observing that to reject American values (e.g. by embracing communism) is un-American, whereas to deviate politically in England, Sweden, or Canada is not to reject being English, Swedish, or Canadian. Education was deemed essential in socializing youth into American ideology to a degree that was not as important in England, Sweden, or Canada, and hence was accorded a greater priority in the United States than elsewhere.

The third factor contributing to the priority given education in the U.S. was related to that nation's revolutionary tradition. Not inhibited by conservatism and tradition, the United States has welcomed change, often equating it with progress, and education has been viewed as a powerful, if not the most powerful, instrument for generating change. Its founding fathers believed strongly in the post-Enlightenment credo of unlimited human progress through education, and this credo has always had much more influence in the United States than in Canada, largely because of the greater value attached to progress. As well, with these three factors supporting a strong public role in education, especially within the larger context of a general anti-statist philosophy, governments in the United States may even have tended to rely excessively on education in addressing social and economic problems, as the more direct types of government intervention available to governments in Canada were unacceptable in the United States.

Getting back to equality in education, Lipset's assertion that the United States emphasizes equality of opportunity while Canada emphasizes equality of results would have been strengthened by referring to Peter Leslie's (1980, pp. 56–65) observation that higher education in Canada is in one respect more equal than in the United States, in another respect less equal. The Canadian system is more equal in that the quality of education and the value of a degree varies 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. Which of the two models is a better one depends upon the vantage point of the person doing the judging. For the working poor, single parent of minority extraction with a weak academic background, the American model is likely to be far more appealing, as it would be for the exceptionally bright student. However, the average student or those who just manage to get into

university are probably better served in the Canadian model. Also, the notion that Canadian education bears the stamp of a more elitist, class-bound society is supported by the research findings cited by Lipset that socioeconomic status is a more potent determinant of university participation in Canada than in the United States. But other research findings – which Lipset does not cite – that the rate of return to investment in higher education in the United States varies significantly by socioeconomic class confirm that opportunity does not equate with results.

This difference between American and Canadian higher education that Leslie noted is just one of many significant differences between the higher education systems in the two countries. Differences between the higher education systems of the two nations have frequently been noted, but there have been few attempts to explain how these differences came about, or how they have been maintained in the face of extensive interaction between universities in the two countries. In the remainder of this essay, I will outline other significant differences between the two systems and indicate how Lipset's analysis – by extrapolation – might help to explain them.

Perhaps the most striking differences in higher education between the two nations are along the public-private axis. In the United States, about half the universities – including most of the most prestigious ones – are private institutions which account for nearly one-third of enrolment. In Canada, except for two very small, church affiliated institutions (one in Ontario, one in British Columbia), all degree granting institutions are public in that (i) they are chartered by an act of a provincial parliament; (ii) they are dependent upon public funding for the vast bulk of their operating revenue; and (iii) their tuition fees are controlled by the government.

The difference in incidence of private universities in the two countries no doubt reflects the differing ideologies regarding the respective roles of public and private enterprise in the two countries which Lipset has documented. However, these differences in ideology might have resulted only in a difference in the *balance* between private and public higher education on the two sides of the border, not the almost total absence of secular degree granting institutions in Canada and the general policy of disallowing private institutions. While Canada is generally less friendly to private enterprise than the United States – as public opinion poll data cited by Lipset documents – and ascribes a larger role to the public sector in various areas, it has a thriving private sector in many fields. In some fields, like transportation and communications, policy has encouraged a dual public-private system. Thus, the *general* tendency to give a larger role to public enterprise relative to private enterprise than the United States may influence but cannot completely account for the policy preference in regard to a particular sector like higher education.

Why is it then that private institutions are acceptable to Canadians in some sectors, but not in higher education? Lipset's analysis suggests two possible explanations. First, as noted earlier, Canadians place a higher value on order relative to freedom than do Americans. An exclusively public university system

like Canada's is definitely a lot more orderly than the American system with its incredibly heterogeneous mix of institutional types, variety of standards, and outright hucksterism. That said, the question would still remain as to why order would be deemed so important for degree level education, but not for elementary, secondary, or non-degree postsecondary education where private institutions are common. Possibly it is because the degree is considered such an important passport to social status and professional practice, and because of the traditional association of the degree with monarchy and church.

The second factor, paradoxically, is related to Lipset's observation about Canada being a more elitist nation than the United States. In a somewhat tortuous section entitled, "Elitism and Equalitarianism", Lipset argues that the Tory elitist impulse when combined with the equally Tory sense of communitarianism or noblesse oblige has produced a greater commitment to raise the position of the less privileged in contrast to the American emphasis on meritocratic competition. Lipset cites public opinion poll data which shows that Canadians are less willing to compromise the principle of equal treatment for the sake of freedom than are Americans. A striking example of this commitment to equal treatment in Canada is the health care system. The prohibition of a private sector in health goes further than is absolutely necessary to ensure that no one will be denied health care because of inability to pay; it ensures that the *same* quality and service should be available to all, i.e. that the standard available to the less privileged will be brought up to that available to the more privileged. One might infer from the way that university education is treated in Canada that it is regarded as being as important as health care (which is funded predominantly from the same federal transfer to the provinces), and the prohibition on private universities serves to provide a common standard for all, as Leslie has observed.

A somewhat related difference between the two nations along the public-private axis is the greater extent to which American universities are able to draw upon private funding than their Canadian counterparts. Lipset notes that the other side of the greater individualism and suspicion of government in the United States is a much greater propensity for private philanthropy and voluntary service in the United States, and he cites research which documents differences in these phenomena between the U.S. and Canada. What were formerly private, church-affiliated universities in Canada converted to public largely in order to qualify for public funding, and it remains to be seen whether new private universities, were they to be established, could obtain sufficient funds from private sources to be viable. However, philanthropy is an issue not just for private institutions. Canadian universities receive substantially less in gifts and endowments than do comparable public universities in the United States. While Lipset is content to attribute differences in philanthropy to ideological factors, it would be interesting to know how much these differences are related to a structural factor, taxation levels and laws.

Nearly a quarter of the private universities in the United States are church-affiliated institutions which offer secular degrees. Canada not only has no private

institutions, but only two free-standing, church-affiliated institutions offering secular degrees, neither affiliated with a major denomination. This difference in the incidence of church-affiliated universities – though not mentioned in the book – would seem to be consistent with Lipset's discussion of religious traditions and values on the two sides of the border. There he notes that not only was, and is, religion a much stronger force in the United States than in Canada, but also religion has always been more sect-oriented and there has been more emphasis on separation of church and state in the United States than in Canada. As a result of the lesser emphasis on separation of church and state in Canada, there has been greater tolerance of having church-affiliated colleges absorbed into public universities – and providing them full public funding – than is imaginable in the United States. And, the weaker sect orientation of religion in Canada has meant that church-affiliated colleges have felt less need to maintain complete independence and have been more willing to come together under the umbrella of a public university. Canadians, although less so than Americans, have wished to maintain some extent of church-affiliated university activity, but they do so within the milieu of a secular public university.

While the Canadian practices of absorbing church-affiliated institutions into predominantly secular public institutions has served the mainline denominations, it hasn't satisfied the interests of the smaller more evangelistic or fundamentalist denominations. The postsecondary education institutions of these groups have not been able to come to agreements with the public universities due to suspicion on both sides – on one side about atheism and moral relativism, on the other about what is perceived as dogmatism, divisiveness, and constraint on academic freedom – and possibly because these groups share the value of individualism which supports the practice of independent church-affiliated institutions in the United States (on the attempts of such institutions to affiliate with public universities in Ontario, see Ontario Council on University Affairs, 1989). That there is an interest in denominational postsecondary education among Canadians is evidenced by the fact that two of the four U.S. universities which enrol the greatest numbers of Canadians are Brigham Young (second) University and Calvin University (fourth), the other two being Harvard (third) and Lake Superior State University (first), the latter an institution which makes more generous provision than any Canadian university for granting advanced standing to graduates of Canadian community colleges (Donner et al., 1987, pp. 5–8). However, given the much greater prevalence and vigour of evangelical and fundamentalist sects in the United States, the pressure to have the corresponding denominational universities is immeasurably greater there than in Canada.

A few other differences between higher education in Canada and the United States and the relation of these differences to Lipset's distinction between founding principles may be noted briefly. As Leslie has observed, Canada has tended to emphasize comprehensive universities which offer a full range of programs and have modest-scale graduate schools. In contrast, the United States offers a bewildering array of special purpose institutions and has hundreds of

institutions which provide only undergraduate liberal arts education and others which are predominantly graduate schools and research centres. In part, this difference reflects the strong Canadian commitment to order and equality that was referenced earlier in regard to standards. However, the Canadian emphasis on comprehensive institutions is also a response to structural factors, chiefly the problem of bringing comparable opportunities to a population that was sparsely distributed over an immense geographical area. In its early years, the United States faced a similar problem, but with its greater affluence and population it was able to solve the problem of geographic accessibility and still have sufficient resources to establish a multitude of specialized institutions. A striking example is the Boston region which has about 70 different degree-granting institutions.

Reference to the latter structural factor has implications also with respect to competition and coordination among higher education institutions. While many would attribute the lesser emphasis on competition and the greater tolerance of monopoly or oligopoly in industry in Canada to its smaller and more dispersed markets, Lipset attributes these tendencies to Canada's counter-revolutionary ideology which "eschews conflict and competition". He notes that business networks are more integrated and business operates in a more oligarchical fashion in Canada than in the United States, under far less vigorous anti-combines legislation. Similar tendencies are found in higher education, as Canadian universities are less overtly competitive with one another than are American universities (some of which advertise vigorously and offer bounties for bringing in new students), and in some provinces Canadian universities operate in almost cartel-like fashion in regard to such issues as allocation of graduate and professional programs, reflecting the penchant for order in Canadian higher education.

Some of the most striking differences between higher education on the two sides of the border involve the incidence of innovative programs, curricula, and arrangements for study, and those features of university programming which are described by the catch-all term, "nontraditional". The latter includes such practices as granting advanced standing on the basis of work and life experience, giving concurrent credit for work and volunteer experience, offering non-resident professional and doctoral programs, and "universities without walls", a bizarre example being one which operates on a New York commuter train. Non-traditional programming has become widespread in the United States, and it is difficult to think of any area of practical study for which one cannot obtain a degree somewhere. Canadian universities – where it is still not possible to do a degree in Law or Library Science, let alone a Ph.D. on a part-time basis – have looked with shock, skepticism, and frequently scorn on such developments.

While many U.S. educators are equally dismayed by some of these practices, the commitment to competition and freedom there have left them unable to control the pace or direction of change, or some would say, standards, in higher education. Indeed, unbridled competition has been a major influence on innovation in U.S. higher education as institutions have aggressively sought to find new market

niches. Several factors are probably responsible for the reluctance of Canadian educators to follow Americans to the nirvana, or over the cliff, of nontraditional education, depending upon one's point of view about these developments. These include the absence of private institutions, which have been the leaders in the nontraditional movement in the United States; the lack of competitive pressure on institutions which enjoy a public monopoly to find new market niches; and the desire for equal standards referred to earlier. In addition, Lipset's discussion of differences between Canada and the United States suggests another factor. He cites several artists and art experts who observe that Canadian artists are generally less innovative than their counterparts in the United States, and one Canadian critic is quoted who argues that "Canadian artists' disaffection for revolutionary, avant garde movements reflects Canada's counter-revolutionary and loyalist past". As with art, it is arguable whether the revolutionary and avant garde in education is better than the more traditional, but it seems quite possible that a similar counter-revolutionary ideology helps to explain the greater conservatism of Canadian higher education as Canadian art – or for that matter, Canadian business.

While concern about quality and standards is manifested in public statements by educators and public officials who are responsible for higher education in both countries, the related practices differ considerably between the two jurisdictions. In the United States, all universities belong to accreditation associations and institutional accreditation is a major industry there. In addition, periodic review of the performance of universities by state legislatures and/or state higher education agencies, often tied to state budgetary allocations to universities, is quite common. Accountability for public funds and the corresponding development of sophisticated models for assessing student learning outcomes is a major focus of attention in U.S. higher education (Barak, 1982; Peterson, 1977).

In contrast, there is no institutional accreditation in Canadian higher education, and no periodic reviews of institutions or programs are conducted by Provincial governments. Such periodic reviews of program quality as are done in some provinces are undertaken by the universities themselves – individually or collectively – and are done mainly, if not exclusively, for graduate and professional programs. The American emphasis on outcome assessment of universities for purposes of accountability for public funds is foreign to the Canadian scene.

The difference in evaluation practices in the two jurisdictions probably reflects, at least in part, different attitudes toward public sector enterprise. Where the public sector is viewed generally with suspicion, there is likely to be a greater demand that it be held accountable for the grants which it receives from the state, and more detailed information will be required for this purpose, than where public enterprise is thought to be the norm and there is a more benign (trusting) attitude toward it. But the difference in evaluation practices seems related also to differences in the structural characteristics of the two systems which have been outlined earlier. In the American system, it is anticipated that emphasis on unrestrained competition, diversity, and thirst for innovation may undermine quality for at least some

institutions. Institutional accreditation was a natural response to the need to protect clients in a competitive, laissez faire system, and concerns that accreditation was not sufficiently stringent led to a demand for more effective mechanisms for quality control. In contrast, the lesser emphasis on external quality control in Canada reflects a view that where the number of institutions is strictly limited, where competition is constrained, and where institutions collectively and cooperatively police themselves, quality is more likely to be assured, and hence there is less pressure for accountability. One might say that while the American approach has been to allow relatively free entry into degree granting and then to put emphasis on the grading of the products of each institution, the Canadian approach has been to limit entry and to assume that any institution which gets through the screen will produce products of acceptable quality. As a result of these differences in philosophy, public universities in Canada are in many respects treated by government like private concerns (or perhaps, more accurately, crown corporations), while public universities in the United States are treated as an extension of the public service, for example with respect to accountability and even legislative intervention with regard to university curriculum requirements which has occurred in some states.

Finally, a comment about an area where it is not clear that there are significant differences between Canadian and American higher education, academic freedom. Given the generally stronger traditions and legal protection of civil liberties and the greater prestige of higher education in the United States than in Canada, one might have expected the academic freedom would be stronger there than in Canada. On the other hand, Lipset's observation that Americanism has been defined in terms of ideology rather than community and the intolerance of political deviation that this has produced might suggest the opposite. Indeed, just as some have suggested that while Canada has had less legal protection of civil liberties than the United States, it has had less need for such protection, the fact that a national association of university professors was established many years earlier in the United States and in Canada might be taken as evidence that there was less need for such an organization – one of whose major functions is to protect academic freedom – in Canada than in the United States. The evidence, however, is mixed. Canada did not have the wave of loyalty testing and dismissals that American universities had during the McCarthy period, and there have been many more celebrated academic freedom cases in the United States than the Crowe and Underhill cases which are always cited when academic freedom is discussed in Canada. On the other hand, the United States has no statutes comparable to the hate laws under which the Alberta teacher, James Keegstra, was convicted, and it is hard to imagine a government there giving formal consideration to bringing criminal charges against a Professor Rushton, as the Ontario government recently did. While on the surface, these differences might suggest that one country has greater tolerance of right-wing deviation, the other of left-wing deviation, Lipset's analysis suggests that the more fundamental difference is one of universalism-particularism. Professors in the United States are more likely to run into trouble

when they challenge over-arching national values; in Canada they need to be more respectful of group rights.

In commenting on the various differences between Canadian and American higher education outlined above, I have tried to avoid taking a position as to which of the contending characteristics are better – though it is for the reader to judge how well I have succeeded in remaining neutral. Each higher education system has its strengths and weaknesses, and the important questions are how these differences between two systems which have such a high degree of interaction came about and are maintained; and how each system serves the aspirations and values of its respective polity. In taking this approach to the comparative study of higher education on the two sides of the border, I follow Lipset whose objective was not to judge but to understand. His study was motivated by the belief that “nations can be understood only in comparative perspective”, 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”. So too, in higher education, I believe that comparison between Canada and the United States offers a particularly promising opportunity to improve our understanding of Canadian higher education as a basis for making informed choices as to which particular features of our system are imperative to retain or strengthen and which we might wish to modify.

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