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AMERICAN HIGHER EDUCATION: "EXCEPTIONAL" OR JUST DIFFERENT? *

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The Exceptionalism of American Higher Education

In this paper I would like to discuss some differences between the systems of higher education in the United States and those of other advanced industrial societies. Obviously, there are great difficulties in generalizing to the whole of western Europe and Japan. (I exclude discussion of East European countries since their basic assumptions regarding the role and functions of education are fundamentally different from those in the West.) And any generalization to the educational systems of societies as different as Sweden and Japan, Italy and Great Britain, are necessarily very broad and inevitably distort the picture of any particular system. Nevertheless, taken together, the higher education systems of western Europe and their outposts elsewhere in the world (including Japan) differ enough from that of the United States to throw into bold relief the "exceptionalism," the uniqueness, of the American system.

Differences between the United States and other countries in their forms and structures of higher education are obscured by the fact that we tend to call elements of our systems by similar names. We all have professors and lecturers, colleges and universities, research institutes and laboratories; we

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all award academic degrees that resemble one another if they are not identical. In addition, our differences are not only obscured but diminished by the international scope of science and scholarship. The fundamental building blocks of teaching and learning in colleges and universities throughout the world are academic disciplines which have an international presence. A sociologist in the United States speaks easily to one in Paris or Stockholm or Tokyo; they read the same books and deal with the same problems. And that is true, on the whole, for physicists and philosophers and economists as well. There are national characteristics that mark the work of any scholarly community, but these bear much the same relation to a discipline as it exists internationally as a regional dialect bears to the common language of a nation. Thus, to describe and understand some of the activities of academic life, particularly the development of modern science and learning, the products of research and scholarship, it is possible to subordinate (if not wholly ignore) the differences between national systems, and the unique social and historical circumstances out of which those differences arise.

Nevertheless, for many purposes the differences between American and European systems are very large, and cannot be ignored. I will look briefly at ten ways in which American higher education differs from that of most other systems of higher education.

1. Attitudes regarding higher education: First there is the American belief in education for its own sake. We have a broad national commitment to education for everybody for as long as people can be persuaded to attend formal institutions of education. Our youngsters are constantly being warned about the costs and dangers of dropping out of high school, and are encouraged over television and on the backs of matchbooks to attend college, "the college of their choice." Americans have an almost religious belief in the desirability and efficacy of postsecondary education for almost everybody; no other nation

in the world makes that commitment or holds that belief. We back that belief with the provision of postsecondary schooling somewhere for everyone who wants an education beyond high school, most notably in a broad system of community colleges which admit students without reference to their high school performance, and in many places without even the requirement of a high school diploma.

The United States made its commitment to mass higher education, and created the structures that would permit its growth to its present size, long before large numbers were enrolled. By 1900, when only 4 percent of Americans of college age were attending college, we already had in place almost all of the central structural characteristics of American higher education: the lay board of trustees, the strong president and his administrative staff, the well-defined structure of faculty ranks, and, in the selective institutions, promotion through academic reputation linked to publication and a readiness to move from institution to institution in pursuit of a career. On the side of the curriculum the elective system, the modular course, credit accumulation and transfer based on the transcript of grades, all were in place by 1900, as were the academic departments covering all known spheres of knowledge, and some not so well known. Underpinning all was the spirit of competition, institutional diversity, responsiveness to markets (and especially to the market for students) and institutional autonomy marked by strong leadership and a diversity of sources of support. The United States already had the organizational and structural framework for a system of mass higher education long before it had mass enrollments. All that was needed was growth.

What has happened since to American higher education? Of course, there has been growth--an enormous expansion in the numbers of students, institutions, staff, research support, and everything else. But apart from

expansion and growth, the most important structural change in American higher education this century has been the development of the community college system, and the way that has tied the four-year institutions and their degrees to the world of continuing and vocational education. Academic freedom is more firmly and broadly protected than at the turn of the century, thanks in part to the American Association of University Professors (AAUP). In addition, there is now broad federal support for student aid in the form of grants and loans, and this has supplemented rather than replaced other and earlier forms of student aid. Federal agencies support university-based research at a level that could hardly have been imagined 90, or even 50, years ago. The machinery of fund-raising, the organization of alumni and the associated development of big-time sports has gone further than one would have imagined, though the roots of all that were already in place at the turn of the century. And there are faculty unions in some hundreds of colleges and universities, though not in the leading research universities. But what is impressive about American higher education at the end of the '80s is not how much it differs from the system that existed at the turn of the century, but how similar it is in basic structure, diversity, mission, governance and finance.

The question may be raised of how it came to be that a century ago the United States had already created a preternaturally precocious system of higher education with an enormous capacity for expansion without fundamental structural change. Part of the answer lies in the weakness of central government in America throughout the nineteenth century, and a federal constitution which gave to the states the primary responsibility for the provision of education. This translated into the absence of a national academic standard, which elsewhere has prevented the rapid expansion of higher education by preventing the creation of new institutions which could not meet that standard. By contrast, the many colleges and universities which have been

established in this country since the Revolution were granted charters by the states without having to meet high academic standards. As a result, a few decades after the Civil War England was serving a population of 23 million with four universities; the state of Ohio, with three million, already boasted 37 institutions of higher education (Rudolph, 1962, pp. 47-48). By 1910 the United States had already established nearly 1,000 colleges and universities, with a third of a million students, at a time when 16 universities in France enrolled altogether about 40,000 students, a number nearly equaled by the number of faculty members in American colleges and universities.

In most European countries, including England, enrollment rates in higher education just after World War II ran from three to 5 percent of the age grade. With the exception of the United Kingdom, the four decades after World War II have seen a growth in enrollment rates in Western Europe to somewhere between 25 and 35 percent, depending on the country and how one counts. Britain enrolls about 14 percent of the age grade in degree-granting institutions or courses, a figure roughly stable for the past decade. The enormous post-war growth in higher education in every European country was of course initiated and planned by government; there is almost no private higher education in Europe--some church-related universities and a few linked to the business community are relatively small and do not affect overall national policy. Throughout Europe, central governments provide most of the funds for the support of higher education, both for teaching and research.

The sources of the post-war growth in Europe were many, but private initiative was not one of them. Throughout Western Europe, the end of World War II saw a broad growth of democratic sentiment, reflected (among other things) in demands for a wider access to both secondary and higher education. The expansion of secondary education and the growth of the welfare state both

increased the demand for people with some kind of postsecondary education. Moreover, European governments came increasingly to believe in the contribution of education, and especially of higher education, to economic development and thus to military strength. This led in many of these countries to forms of manpower planning which depended heavily on investment in higher education.

Despite the post-war growth of higher education throughout the world, the American system remains much larger and more diverse than any European system. Its 3400 accredited colleges and universities and 12.5 million enrolled students represent about 50 percent of the "college-age" cohort; since opportunities for continuing education are widely available, the proportion of Americans who ultimately take degree-credit postsecondary study is over 50 percent.¹ The size of American higher education is not determined by central government planning or policy, but by the demand for postsecondary education in the society at large, and by decisions regarding admissions standards and tuition costs made by or for the institutions of postsecondary education.

2. Public and private sectors: America's colleges and universities are a mixture of public and private institutions with the privately-supported institutions present at every level of excellence and in every category of function. While it is true that nearly four out of five of our students are currently (1989) enrolled in public institutions, the private sector remains enormously important as models for the public sector. For example, of the ten leading research universities, eight are private; of the top 20 research universities, 15 are private institutions. And the best undergraduate four-

¹It is hard to estimate the proportion of the college age cohort who go on to some form of postsecondary education, since so much of higher education is also "continuing education," available all through life. About 75 percent of young Americans finish high school. In a follow-up of the high school graduation class of 1972, roughly two-thirds of those graduates report having had some exposure to higher education seven years later, (which would mean about 47 percent of the cohort), and about 35 percent had earned a bachelors degree by 1984 (Adelman 1987, p. 31, Table 11).

year colleges are also part of the private sector. Many private institutions are regional and more modest in their aspirations, but at all levels of selectivity there is easy movement of students and faculty, and ideas about teaching and learning, between the public and private institutions. This relationship is almost unique in the world of advanced industrial societies. (Japan is a partial exception among industrial societies, in having a very large private sector of higher education, though with the state-supported "national" (formerly "Imperial") universities on the whole at the top of the hierarchy.) By contrast, for a variety of political and historical reasons, European countries discourage private institutions of higher education by withholding charters, support, and institutional autonomy or discretion. Currently, although in a number of European countries support is being sought for higher education in the private sector, less than five percent of operating costs in European higher education comes from private sources (Geiger, 1980, p. 18; Geiger, 1986).

Perhaps the crucial difference in the United States is not the existence of a large and prestigious private sector, but rather the multiplicity and diversity of funding sources for both private and leading public institutions. Overall, American higher education is currently (1988-89) spending about \$135 billion in operating expenses, roughly 2.7 percent of the gross national product (Higher Education and National Affairs, September 1988; Digest of Education Statistics, 1988, Table 23, p. 29). Government at all levels together provides nearly half of all current revenues for American higher education, not including federal aid given directly to students, which shows up for the most part in tuition and fees. The federal government provides only about 13 percent of the total funds for higher education, including its support for research and development in the universities, but excluding the aid it

provides directly to students, currently running at about \$10 billion in a combination of student grants and loans. State and local governments (mostly state) provide one-third of the funds for higher education. Students provide another one-third of the funds for higher education, including federal aid they have received, and the institutions themselves about 15 percent from their endowments and other sources. If federal aid to students is counted as federal support, it increases the federal contribution to about 23 percent of total, and reduces the student contribution to about the same percentage. About 6 percent is provided by individuals, foundations, and private business firms in the form of gifts, grants, and contracts (Trow, 1988a, p. 19).

These proportions differ between public and private colleges and universities, of course, though it must be stressed that all American colleges and universities are supported by a mixture of public and private funds. For example, while in 1985-86 public colleges and universities got 45 percent of their operating budgets from state governments, private institutions got less than 2 percent of theirs from state sources. (On the other hand, private colleges got a slightly larger proportion of their support funds from the federal government than did public four-year institutions, 17 percent versus 11 percent.) Another big difference between public and private institutions lies in the much greater importance of student tuition fees and payments for services (monthly room and board) in private schools: they account for less than one-third of the revenues of public institutions but nearly two-thirds of the support for private institutions (Digest, 1988, p. 140). These proportions differ sharply among even finer categories of colleges and universities--for example, as between public research universities and public four-year colleges.

But even in the public sector, among the leading research universities like Berkeley, state support may be only half or less of operating expenses, the rest coming from federal research grants, gifts, endowment income, fees and

tuition, and payment for services, as, for example, from patients in university-operated hospitals (UC Focus, September 1987, p. 2).

In the United States, the diversity of funding sources has increased in past decades with federal aid to students, tuition payments and private gifts all growing rapidly. During the same period, since World War II, the diversity of funding sources in the U.K. has until very recently been decreasing, as central government has taken over tuition payments and student support. Where central government in the U.K. provided only about a third of operating expenses for the universities just before World War II, and about two-thirds just after it, that figure grew to about 90 percent by the mid-'60s (Heyck, 1987; Moore, 1987).

3. "General education" as part of the curriculum: American higher education is marked by a commitment to the idea of a "liberal" or "general" education for all (or at least most) undergraduates. Elsewhere, with few exceptions, a broad liberal education in our sense of the word is gained, by the minority who get it, in the upper secondary schools which prepare for universities; and beyond that, outside of the formal curriculum altogether. Higher education in Europe is for the most part highly specialized and oriented toward professional or pre-professional training. American colleges and universities provide a good deal of "general education" that elsewhere is done in the upper secondary schools in part because of the broad comprehensive nature, and (in European terms) consequent academic weakness of our secondary schools, which are designed to bring as many young people as possible to the end of secondary schooling so that they can qualify for entry to higher education. Currently, about 75 percent of American students finish high school and are qualified for entry to some kind of college or university. By contrast, about 30 percent of the age group in France are qualified to enter

higher education, and in England the proportion is under 20 percent. The proportions of the age grade who actually do enter some form of higher education are, of course, lower--in Britain currently around 14 percent, in France about 25 percent, as compared with roughly 50 percent in the United States.

4. The elective system, the modular course, and the unit credit as academic currency: Another unique characteristic of American higher education is the phenomenon of the modular course with its attached "credits," (Rothblatt 1987) and the definition of the requirements for a degree in terms of the accumulation of course credits rather than, as elsewhere, through success on an examination or the presentation of a thesis. The unit credit is the currency of American higher education. Credits which can be accumulated over time and transferred between institutions and between different major fields of study within colleges and universities make it relatively easy for students to "stop out" and return at a later date, with their past work not wasted but safely "banked" on their transcripts. In addition, the credit system greatly facilitates the transfer of students from one institution to another, and makes possible links between continuing education and earlier studies. But while this kind of academic currency introduces enormous flexibility into our system and allows students to change their institution or fields of study two or three or more times before earning their degrees or credentials, it also tends to reduce the socializing impact of a concentrated period of study in a single university.

5. The academic profession: There are marked differences between the academic profession in the United States and that of most other countries. In Europe, on the whole, academic departments have been characterized by a single professor and many assistants. In the traditional European university, from the early or middle nineteenth century until World War II, the central figure

in the university was the chairholder. In Germany the ordinarius professor represented his discipline in his university, and in his several roles he not only taught, directed and carried on research, but together with other chairholders, also governed his own faculty, and the university through the election of a rector from among their midst. Since World War II, and especially since the middle '60s, the "junior" (non-professorial) teaching staff in European universities have gained more power along with the students in the governance of departments and universities. This governance system is formalized in various boards and committees on which are found representatives of the professors, junior faculty, students, and sometimes non-academic "staff," each elected by the "estate" which its members represent. In many European societies these elections are contested along the lines of the national political parties and are thus deeply politicized; the political divisions within the society are thus brought directly into the heart of the academic institutions.

In Britain the professor did not have quite the same overwhelming power and authority as did his counterparts on the Continent, largely due to the power of the college fellows in Oxford and Cambridge who actually govern the colleges which were (and are) the units of those ancient universities. While professors have been much stronger in the University of London and in the provincial universities than in Oxbridge, the tradition of "a democracy of gentlemen" impeded the emergence of a professorial oligarchy of the kind found in Continental universities. In the U.K., as on the Continent, professors still comprise only a fraction (in the U.K. about 10 percent) of all university teachers, and the rank is not the normal terminal career grade of the academic profession. The United States is almost alone in having a relatively flat academic hierarchy: the ranks of lecturer, assistant professor and associate

professor are understood to be stepping stones to the final career grade of full professor. Since all young entering assistant professors can expect to become full professors in time, they tend not to see their interests as opposed to those of the full professors, but acquire the values of their seniors in the course of becoming professors themselves. And thus they are not represented in university government as a special interest group--the "non-professorial staff"--as in most Continental countries. Moreover, American departments are more egalitarian both in the autonomy given to assistant and associate professors and in the parts they play in departmental and university decisions. (See also below.)

6. Governance structures: There are basic differences in the governance of American colleges and universities as compared with their counterparts in England and on the Continent. England aside, everywhere else a ministry of education or its equivalent plays a central role in a) the appointment of academic staff, especially professors; b) the allocation of budget among and within universities; c) the criteria for access to universities; and d) the determination of the standards--the examinations or theses--required to earn a degree. In most cases this ministry is located in central government; in Germany the state governments have primary responsibility for higher education, with some powers, especially for the support of research, reserved to the Federal ministry in Bonn. As a result, the administrative staffs for higher education are typically located in the ministry rather than in the institution itself. By contrast, in the United States there is no federal ministry of education--our Department of Education plays a very small role in relation to higher education, apart from administering substantial programs of student grants and loans. In American private colleges and universities, the whole of the administrative apparatus is located within the institution and is an arm of the university president. In public institutions most of the administrators

also serve the president, though some decisions are held in the hands of a state department or commission (and this varies among the states and between different classes of institutions). Whether the administrative staff lies inside or outside the university has great consequences for the kinds of decisions it can take, and thus for its autonomy.

7. Academic leadership: In the United States the president of a college or university is both the head of "the administration" and also the academic leader. He serves by appointment of a lay board of trustees and is responsible only to them. So long as he has their confidence and support the American college president has a very high degree of power and authority within his own institution. By contrast, European institutions (again Britain aside) have no lay boards of governors, and ordinarily their chief academic officer is a weak rector, formerly elected by the full professors, and more commonly now by a vote of the various estates of the university. The rector (by whatever name) ordinarily is only the chairman of the various governing committees and serves a relatively short period of time, returning thereafter to his professorial chair. On the Continent he has alongside him a permanent administrative official appointed by the ministry and responsible for the finances and most of the internal administrative decisions. This administrative officer--the Kurator in Germany--is a civil servant on long-term appointment, and commonly comes to exercise a very large amount of authority and power within the university. The weak rector cannot make decisions, as American college presidents can, about the internal allocation of funds, most academic matters, or ultimate decisions on academic personnel.

8. The lay board: The American college or university invariably has a lay board, which at once ensures its ultimate accountability to its local, regional or national constituencies in the broader society, but also insulates

it from the direct management and intervention of the government of the day. Such boards ordinarily have the ultimate legal authority over the institution, and come to identify with it and its interests even though appointed, in the case of most public institutions, by the governor of the state. In European countries the direct accountability of the institution to the broader society is ensured by the authority of the ministry and its officials over the institution. The autonomy of European universities is a function of traditional restraints on government from interfering directly in academic affairs, thus permitting a high measure of academic freedom, discussion and debate within the walls of the institution. Apart from the freedom to teach and to learn, the university rarely has much authority to manage its own size and shape, its entry or exit requirements, or its broad character and functions. As in many other respects, the U.K. stands somewhere between the United States and the Continental countries in this respect. British universities, with the exception of Oxford and Cambridge, do have lay boards, but they are weaker than their American counterparts, and the instruments of central government, the Department of Education and Science and the newly created statutory funding bodies increasingly play, or threaten to play, a more dirigiste role, similar to their counterparts in France and Germany.

9. "Vocational" and "technical" studies and continuing education: Almost every European country has created a variety of non-degree-granting postsecondary institutions, largely committed to vocational and technical education. These "postsecondary" institutions are very often not included in the category of "higher education;" access to them is through different routes than to the universities, and there is almost no movement of students from those institutions to the institutions of higher education, since they provide shorter courses, and do not offer the same degrees as the universities and their counterparts. Most of these institutions have been created since World

War II to provide easier access to forms of postsecondary education that are responsive to local and regional interests, and that offer technical and vocational studies that have difficulty in expanding within the traditional universities, or are not offered there at all.

In the United States many of the functions of these institutions are provided by community colleges, with the big difference that the community colleges are understood there to be part of the broad system of higher education. Credits within them are transferable to degree-granting institutions, and their faculty members are trained in the four-year colleges and research universities. Community colleges in the United States, and many four-year colleges and universities, both public and private, also provide a good deal of "continuing education" for adults seeking to keep up with their fields, or to change them, or to extend their education in directions that are not vocationally oriented. In Europe the continuing education of adults has not on the whole been provided in the traditional institutions, but in other institutions which ordinarily have few links with the traditional institutions of higher education.

10. Service to the society, as well as to the state: Alongside its commitments to research and to teaching American higher education has a broad commitment to service to almost any organized interest that asks for it, and can pay for it. This is necessarily so since American colleges and universities are supported by the society broadly and not just by the state. They need student tuition, private gifts, and public and private research support as well subventions directly by the state to state-aided institutions. By contrast, European universities do not have this same kind of general commitment to serve society; they are creatures of the state and do what the state asks them to do in return for full funding (or near it) by state

agencies. From the early nineteenth century until very recently European universities have been largely (though not exclusively) engaged in the preparation of graduates for public service of various kinds (including teaching, and in Protestant countries, the established churches). And student numbers have on the whole been constrained by the limited demand for state employees. As recently as 1976-78, in West Germany between two-thirds and three-quarters of jobs open to graduates were in the public sector; in Sweden and Denmark, about two-thirds; in France, three-quarters of the arts graduates and 60 percent of the science graduates went into the public sector and only 17 percent into the private sector. In 1978 in Great Britain, 44 percent of the graduates went into public administration, teaching or the nationalized industries while 45 percent took further coursework, did research or continued in academic careers (Wasser 1985, p. 69). Even in Italy, with its enormously inflated university enrollments, public service was and is the goal of most graduates. But in recent years, the sharp decline in the number of positions available in the public sector, and especially in teaching and research, together with the democratization and expansion of European higher education, has greatly attenuated that link between the universities and public service, and has forced graduates to look elsewhere than to the civil service for employment; in some countries this has accelerated the professionalization of business management.

But since their conceptions of service have been so dominated by their relations to the state, European universities have not been highly responsive to the emergence of new needs and interests in the society that are not yet reflected in public policy or in the directives of ministries. Moreover, their full funding has given them less incentive to be responsive to local and regional interests, particularly in business and industry. In the past few years some European nations have shown considerable interest in encouraging

their institutions of higher education to develop closer ties with industry, with varying degrees of success. In some cases, governments, as in the U.K., have cut the budgets of the universities so as to force them to seek support from business and industry. This has been dramatically "successful" in some universities (e.g., Salford) where the cuts were very deep. But it is an ineffective strategy where the university does not have the resources to serve local interests, or where it has not built up a network of links of service and attitudes of responsiveness over decades.

There are, of course, many exceptions to this generalization, and more all the time; the "Americanization" of European higher education reflects itself not so much in broader access or a less specialized curriculum as in a growing sensitivity to the needs of business and industry in return for increasing levels of support by the business community. This is clearest in some British universities and polytechnics, in the "petit grandes écoles" in France, which are often directly sponsored by local chambers of commerce, and in such institutions as the University of Turin, known colloquially as "Fiat University" for its close links to that large firm.

This is by no means an exhaustive inventory of unique characteristics of American higher education. Other features of the system flow from those cited above. For example, the relative youth of American students, the great distances that so many have had to travel to college from home, and the early and continuing religious ties of so many colleges and universities, all have led American colleges and universities to accept a greater responsibility for their students' physical and moral welfare, in loco parentis, than most European universities. This in turn has led to the growth of very large and highly professionalized student services in such areas as health, counseling, halls of residence, intramural sports, among others, staffed for the most part

by nonacademic professionals. These large staffs are directly responsible to the college or university president, and give him direct control over resources, of people and money, that his European counterparts do not have.

Or to take another example of the way unique characteristics generate others: the large measure of institutional autonomy in American higher education, the modular course and the absence of national examinations together make it relatively easy to create new courses, new departments and professional fields, interdisciplinary courses, and educational innovations of all kinds.

This last point suggests a broader or more general way of looking at the specific differences that I have enumerated above. This more general perspective pivots around the distinction among "elite," "mass," and "universal access" systems of higher education (Trow, 1974). On the whole, until World War II, European systems of higher education supported elite systems of higher education, offering access to no more than three or four or five percent of the university age grade. Since World War II, all European systems of higher education have expanded very considerably, moving toward structures which allow the entry of 15, 25, and even 35 percent of the age grade.

This transformation from an elite to a mass system involves not merely the expansion of small institutions into bigger ones, or the creation of many new colleges and universities. It involves profound changes in attitudes toward higher education on the part of students and teachers; in its organization, finance and governance; in the structure of secondary education; in the criteria for admission to higher education; in the recruitment and education of faculty; in curriculum, physical planning, and much else. But the history of European higher education since World War II has been the story of their efforts to grow in size and in functions without radically transforming their institutional structures, and of the ensuing difficulties all European systems have encountered in trying to accommodate mass numbers and mass functions

within structures designed for elite higher education. These efforts have been marked by very great strains and difficulties, and have been only partially successful. The difficulties became especially pronounced when most European systems began, some 15 years ago, to accept more than 15 percent of the age grade in degree-granting institutions of higher education. (The British have held their proportion to just under 15 percent, in an effort to preserve the forms, structures and standards of elite higher education in all their degree-granting institutions.) By contrast, the organizational structure of mass higher education in the United States was already in place 100 years ago. American higher education has many problems of its own, arising directly out of its broad access and relaxed standards--the recurrent discussions about the quality of undergraduate education are a case in point (Boyer, 1987; Bloom, 1987). But on the whole we have a precocious system, without many of the problems, and weak solutions, that mark contemporary European higher education. How we have come to develop such a unique, and uniquely adaptive and responsive, system is the subject of the next section, in which the question is raised in the context of a comparison with the history and organization of higher education in the U.K. Many, but not all, the comparisons made in that section would apply to Continental countries as well. But Britain has its own forms of "exceptionalism"; American higher education differs in different ways from the higher educational systems of different countries.

U.S.-U.K. Comparisons

It is common knowledge that Harvard College was created on the model of a college of Cambridge University. But we know also that almost from the first moment American forms of higher education began to diverge from the English model--and that divergence has continued apace over three and a half centuries. Already by the time of the American Revolution the Colonies had eight

institutions of higher learning, while two were still adequate for the much richer and more populous mother country. And by the Civil War the United States had hundreds of colleges and universities, while four--the two ancient universities plus Durham and London--were all that England had chartered.

The divergence has continued--so that today England has a relatively small system of degree-granting institutions--universities, polytechnics and colleges--with relatively high and common standards for the first degree and low rates of attrition, enrolling the smallest proportion of the age grade--just under 15 percent--of any modern industrial society, while the U.S. has the largest and most diverse system in the world--enrolling some 12.5 million students in some 3400 institutions earning credits toward degrees, working at every level of academic standard.

That quantitative comparison, of course, is "unfair" to the U.K. in that it excludes the whole of its Further Education sector, with its 1.3 million students, while it includes the American community colleges, a large part of whose work is in "vocational" studies that are not of degree standard in England (or in the U.S.), and much else which is at or below the standard of English sixth form work. (On the other hand, the American figures also exclude an enormous amount of postsecondary continuing education that is not pursued in degree-credit courses.)

But even if we are not making invidious quantitative comparisons, then it is of some considerable importance for other reasons that in the U.K. the institutions of further education are not part of higher education, whereas in the U.S. the community colleges are. And that is only one of many significant differences between these two national systems, differences whose nature and origins challenge our understanding.

Thus we can pose the question: why is it that these two systems, starting from common assumptions and models, evolved in such sharply different directions over the centuries? Or put differently, how can we explain the fact that the United States has developed a large diverse system of colleges and universities with near universal access to students of all abilities, ages and interests, where "any student can study any subject," while by contrast, the U.K. has created a system of universities, polytechnics and colleges for academically-gifted students, enrolling altogether a much smaller proportion of the postsecondary school age grade, a system marked also by high academic standards, low rates of attrition, deep and close attention to teaching, and distinguished levels of scholarship and research carried on within the universities themselves?

Contrasting Sequences

If we place the historical development of two great systems of higher education over two centuries side by side, and perhaps in no other way, we may discover a number of occasions in which the sequences of development in the two societies have differed, and that these differing sequences have on one side their roots in the characteristics of the larger societies, and on the other a broad range of ramified consequences for those societies. Sequences, for the chronicler of a single society, almost never excite special notice or attention: it is simply the way things occurred in time, the way history happened. But there is surprise, and questions arise, when one places two chronologies side by side and discovers that the sequences which seem to be the "normal" progression in one society did not occur that way in the other. And the questions that arise out of that recognition take a familiar set of forms:

- 1) Are the phenomena themselves, whose sequences we are chronicling, the "same" phenomena in the two societies, or if similar how do they differ?
- 2) Why do these sequences occur differently in these two societies--how do we account for those differences?
- 3) What consequences flow from the fact that these sequences differ?

I want to point to five of these "sequence reversals"--though there are others in the comparative modern histories of these two societies and their educational systems--to suggest their importance both as sources of subsequent differences between the two systems, and as reflections of prior differences in the basic character and development of the two societies.

1. In America, in Louis Hartz' vivid phrase, the market preceded the society (Hartz, 1955), and its institutions of higher education; in the United Kingdom, Oxford and Cambridge, the powerful models for all subsequent higher education, were created in the medieval world before market forces came to dominate social and institutional relations.

2. In America, the presidents of our colleges and universities were present before the creation of a body of teachers and scholars which later became the faculty and even later the academic profession. In the U.K., a class of learned men preceded the creation of the university and its leadership; their coming together in fact created Oxford and Cambridge, and over time they came to elect or choose their own institutional leaders (Cobban, 1988, pp. 49-50). Put somewhat differently, in the U.K. the academic guilds preceded the modern university; in America the university, initially only the lay board, a president, and a few assistants, came over time to create the academic guilds.

3. In America, for the most part, colleges and universities developed before the emergence of a broad system of upper secondary schooling (Rudolph 1962, p. 281ff). In the U.K. by contrast, while mass secondary schooling was also a late development of the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the schools that prepared students for university (when they were not tutored privately at home) were in place all through the modern period, and indeed changes in the leading secondary schools--the public schools--stimulated change and reform in the ancient universities in the second half of the nineteenth century (Rothblatt 1968).

4. In America, the professional guilds have been relatively weak as compared with professional education in the universities; on the whole professional education has created the professions and still gives them leadership. Professional schools and colleges (as we all know) are enormously strong in American universities and colleges. In the U.K., by contrast, professional education was largely excluded from the universities. There the professional guilds have dominated professional education, often providing the bulk of it themselves through a form of apprenticeship as in law and, to a large degree, in engineering. Even where they do not provide it all themselves, the professions and their organizations continue to be strong in relation to university-based professional education.

5. In the U.K. in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the college as a teaching institution, and the federation of colleges as modeled on Oxford and Cambridge, and embodied in London and Victoria Universities and the provincial colleges, preceded the emergence of the university, which granted degrees. Indeed, the "university" in the U.K. was and is the degree-granting body, as over against the colleges which have been the agencies for teaching. In Britain the authority to grant degrees is jealously guarded, and associated with the granting of a royal charter, but only to institutions which can

demonstrate that they can teach and examine to high and common academic standards; it is thus an instrument for quality control of undergraduate education. In the U.S., "university" came to mean an institution which offered higher degrees, and especially the doctorate, by contrast with a "college" which offered only the bachelors degree. Where in the U.K. the crucial issue was what body taught and what body examined and awarded degrees, in the U.S. these functions were carried out in the same institution, whether college or university. The crucial distinction here was whether an institution was concerned primarily with the transmission of knowledge, or at least equally with the creation of knowledge. The idea of the university as the locus and agency for the creation of knowledge came later in the U.K. and, it can be argued, never achieved full equality with the teaching function until after World War II, and even then only in a handful of universities, and centered on the professors. This helps account for the quite different weight and importance attached in the two countries to postgraduate education as compared with education for the first degree.

Let us look at three of these issues a little more closely:

1. America has been, almost since its earliest settlements, a liberal society, whose reliance on free markets and mistrust of central government is built deeply into our structures of society and government, for example in our constitutional separation of powers, in our federalism and the continuing power of the states, and in our Bill of Rights. We are not embarrassed by the enormous role of markets--and indeed, of commercial considerations--at the very heart of our institutions. For example, land speculation has been a significant motive in the creation of colleges and universities throughout American history.

By contrast, while the U.K. has had a stronger liberal tradition than most continental European societies, it never accepted the hegemony of the market over the sphere of high culture. If we set aside the dissenting academies (which collapsed at the end of the eighteenth century, probably because they could not get charters to give degrees), there was a brief window of liberal--that is, of private local--initiative in British higher education in the nineteenth century, taking the form first of the creation of University College and then of the University of London, but showing greater life in the second half of the nineteenth century with the creation of the provincial universities (Owens College, and the subsequent federation in 1880 of Owens, Leeds and Liverpool in the short-lived Victoria University). There were also colleges created in Newcastle, Birmingham and Bristol in the last decades of the nineteenth century, but most of the old civic universities did not gain charters as independent universities--that is, the right to award their own degrees--until the first decade of this century. Indeed the creation of the English provincial universities in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries can be seen as a response to local initiatives and demands arising in the market for graduates for local business and industry as well as for increased access to universities for local youth. But universities in England were, and continue to be, bedeviled by a conflict among different ideas of the university: the university as an instrument for the transmission of the high culture and the cultivation of the sensibilities and character of young gentlemen; the German and later American conception of the university as a locus of research and the creation of knowledge; and a third conception of universities, now regaining strength under severe cuts and pressures from central government, as places for practical, even vocational studies, and service to local business and industry.

The English provincial universities of the late nineteenth century were established by local notables and interests in part to provide trained graduates and services for local needs, though, as always, motives were mixed. But no British university could be established without the enormous weight of Oxford and Cambridge, as models and mentors, having a profound influence on their subsequent development. Indeed, the creation of the provincial universities coincided with reforms at Oxbridge, which led to their improving the quality of their teaching and a gradual raising of their academic standards (Rothblatt, 1968; Engel, 1982). These reforms made Oxford and Cambridge even weightier as models for the new institutions. But above all, Oxford and Cambridge were where England's national elites were educated, and for the provincial universities to seek academic distinction and social status meant moving out of their local orbits and the provision of services for local needs toward Oxford and Cambridge's standards and values, in the process becoming less local institutions and more and more part of a national system with common entry standards, common standards for the honors degree, a common academic salary scale, and above all a commitment to national rather than local service. This national system only developed slowly; the creation of the University Grants Committee in 1919 as the agency for the development of a common state budget request and the allocation of the block grant from the Treasury was an important milestone, but the national system had already begun to develop before that, and did not fully crystallize until after World War II (Trow, 1988b).

Nevertheless, it can be said that for the provincial universities, useful practical studies were linked to local ties, local support, and the kind of responsiveness to the market for graduates and services that marks the college and university in a liberal society. There was every motive for these new provincial colleges and universities to forgo those ties to their local

origins, to flee from their dependence on the market, to find a greater nobility of mission and function (as they saw it) in becoming linked to national public service and the old professions, coming under the benevolent wing of the Treasury and then of the University Grants Committee and its provision of public funds from central government. Indeed, the increasing dependency on the state has been dramatic over the past 60 years, and especially since World War II. In 1920, taking all British universities together, only about a third of their total income came on a direct grant from central government; between 1939 and 1949 that went up to nearly two thirds, and today it is roughly three quarters (Shattock 1987; Heyck 1987). For British universities, to gain support from central government was a liberation from the petty demands and ignoble interests of local government and local trade; we see the very same process occurring today, as the polytechnics, created with strong local ties in ways very similar to the creation of the provincial universities, welcome the severance of their remaining dependence on local government and local industry as central government assumes their whole direct support.*

The American contrast is well known: dependence almost from the beginning on markets of various kinds, and the need to provide services and products for those markets, have shaped every aspect of the subsequent development of our system of higher education. This is a force whose importance can hardly be exaggerated. We can look at this orientation to the market in two ways: On one hand, as an outcome of the absence of stable and assured support for our

* It was not until the late '70s and '80s of this century that British universities began to have second thoughts about their near total dependence on central government grants, and only under the most severe financial pressures and constraints have the British universities, or at least some of them, begun to cultivate anew their local ties, and seek out local missions and services in the hope of gaining local financial support. There is, under duress, what may be a new rebirth of liberal perspectives in the British universities.

colleges and universities from the state or established church has forced them to look for support from a multiplicity of other sources, notably student tuition and fees, contributions from alumni and other friends, and especially from wealthy benefactors and institutions. A constant concern for financial survival and resources for development and growth engendered a steady sensitivity to the needs and interests of this varied support community, reflected in the enormous diversity of activities and services that our institutions have provided. The other side of the coin shows the relative autonomy of our colleges and universities, even formally "public" institutions, from direct control and management by agents of state or central government.

The force of markets on American colleges and universities has also greatly increased the power of the student as consumer, and that in turn has driven the curriculum to meet the students' interests which in turn often reflect the interests of the job market. It also forces the colleges and universities to shape their curriculum to the realities of the primary and secondary schools, whose preparation the students bring with them. If our colleges and universities, for example, were to try to maintain a high and common standard for entry, as in the U.K., many of them would have no students at all. So the great diversity of entry standards, of curricular offerings, and of standards for the degree are all indirectly related to the need to attract students who ultimately support the institution in large part through their fees or generate support from state authorities by way of enrollment-based budgetary formulas.

If entry into markets implies sensitivity to the preferences of the buyers, it also suggests competition among the providers. Most American colleges and universities (though not all) were relatively poor at their founding (and some for long periods thereafter), and could only survive by finding ways to serve various constituencies which provided their support--

students, benefactors, religious denominations, state and local governments, more recently business organizations and federal governmental agencies, in various combinations. But the habits of service do not disappear with affluence and security. And that is because our colleges and universities are also competitive with each other for distinction and prestige--nationally, regionally, or in some functional category. And in the pursuit of distinction and relative status affluence provides no security. A college or university--even the richest--always needs more: another science building, higher faculty salaries, another chair in a new subject, more residence halls, and so on. So even our wealthiest colleges and universities act as if they were poor, always engaged in fund-raising, continually cultivating new friends and supporters, public and private, seeking always to find new ways of serving old and new constituencies in a constant exchange of service for support. The forms of service, as of support, are many and various, and the connections between them are often subtle, indirect and delayed (though equally often simple and direct, through the cash nexus). But our richest colleges and universities act, in this respect, as if they were poor. In the U.K. it is the most desperate university, Salford, whose budget was cut most deeply in 1981-82, which has been most energetic and successful in raising private funds. In the United States the most successful fund-raisers are the richest universities--Harvard, Stanford, Princeton, MIT--and among the colleges, their counterparts--Amherst, Swarthmore, and the like. They raise money so as to compete academically, and they also compete in how much money they can raise. And all with no embarrassment. That too is of long-standing.

But however strong these market forces may be, they are not all powerful, and part of the history of American higher education has been of the tension between the "popular" functions of these institutions, the services they

perform for other institutions in society and for the vocational interests of students and their future employers, on the one hand, and the "autonomous" functions, those that arise out of the intellectual life of the subjects that are taught and studied in the colleges and universities, on the other (Trow, 1975). Some colleges and universities have been able to provide a measure of resistance to the powerful demands of the market, asserting their own inherent logic and integrity, refusing to be pressed into some kinds of public service or subordinating "liberal" to "vocational" studies in their curriculum (Trow, 1976). Most successful in this have been the private colleges and universities with large endowments, those state institutions that have been able to count on substantial private support, and all institutions which have a multiplicity of financial support sources so that student fees are not the dominant or overwhelming element. All of those factors reduce the direct influence of student preferences and give the autonomous functions of the institution a measure of room to survive and in some places even to flourish.

So institutional autonomy, the ability of an institution to defend its own character and mission, is, I suggest, a function less of sheer wealth than of the multiplicity of sources of support. This can be shown over time in the U.S., and events in the U.K. since World War II, and especially since 1970, also support this thesis (Trow, 1988b). But there the direct intervention of central government into the private life of the universities--what they teach and study--has had to overcome the traditions of autonomy rooted in the models of Oxford and Cambridge and their centuries of self-governing and endowed colleges. Those traditions were institutionalized in 1919 after World War I in the University Grants Committee, which the present government has replaced with another body called the University Funding Council, directly responsive to central state policy. But the process is still underway there, and the outcomes uncertain.

2. I have said that in the United States, for the most part, colleges and universities developed before the emergence of a system of public secondary schooling. One consequence was that our colleges and universities all through their history have had to do considerable remedial work to bring students even up to the not very demanding standards that they have imposed. The continuing weakness of their links to the secondary schools has meant that most American colleges and universities have not been able to assume any general standard of accomplishment, and have had to teach students of widely varying ability and preparation. That has had consequences for their curriculum, methods of instruction and requirements for the degree.

One result of the emergence of higher education before secondary schooling over the greater part of the United States, and the scarcity of what Europeans would call upper secondary education even to this day, is that throughout our history much of what colleges and universities do would seem to Europeans (and Englishmen) to be appropriate to the upper secondary schools. The whole idea of general education--the nonspecialized introduction to the main branches of learning which characterizes the first two years of almost all American higher education--is in Europe completed in secondary school, and indeed in the U.K. at age 16, before entry into the upper secondary school, the sixth form. In addition, there is the enormous variety of student services provided by our colleges and universities--health centers, centers for remedial studies, for academic counseling, psychological counseling, career counseling, learning centers, and many more--all staffed by professionals employed directly by the university. The elaborate facilities for sports and games, both intramural and intercollegiate, also staffed by professionals, also remind Europeans of the spirit of schools rather than of university, as do the many staff people who look after student residence halls. Everywhere we find counselors and older

students providing a certain measure of adult--and institutional--presence in situations where students in the Universities of Paris, Stockholm or Rome, or the British universities, would be astonished to find it.

This psychological climate of prolonged immature dependency, that is to say, the climate of the school, was more pronounced in American colleges and universities 25 years ago than it is today. Political and legal challenges to the concept of the college standing in loco parentis have reduced the weight of institutional authority in the American students' extracurricular life. But the universities' presence in extracurricular life is still large, and indeed has grown over these past two decades as student service staffs have become more highly professionalized, and have spun off subspecialties, professional associations, annual meetings, journals, and special post-graduate degrees that have become new professional credentials. All this activity now falls under the rubric of student services; no longer retaining the authoritarian overtones of a dean of students enforcing rules, representing the college or university in loco parentis, it has assumed the character of technical services rather than moral guidance. But these services inevitably have a moral dimension, and link the student to the institution more closely than is common in Europe.

In the U.K., by contrast, public and grammar schools had co-existed for centuries with Oxbridge, though many upper class students had been tutored privately for the universities, a much rarer pattern in the United States. But in the crucial middle years of the mid-nineteenth century, the Arnoldian reforms in the leading public schools had an impact on the universities through their graduates, the moral force of their headmasters, and the establishment of close links between the sixth forms in these public schools with the universities which made that avenue almost the only way into higher education, an avenue marked by many tied scholarships and strengthened by the Oxford and Cambridge entrance examinations (Rothblatt, 1968).

In important respects the secondary schools in the United States have been extensions of primary education upward, in their forms of teacher training and credentialing, in their structure, governance and finance, and in the status and qualifications of the secondary school teachers. By contrast, in the U.K. as in most other European countries, upper secondary education, both public and private, has been an extension of the universities downward, both in the character (and in the U.K., the specialization) of studies and teaching and in the origins and education of the sixth form teachers, university-trained scholars who might, in more expansive times, have held university posts. Again the exceptional patterns in the U.S. are illuminating: one thinks of the significant role of the selective preparatory high schools and streams in the public sector in the '20s and '30s, with Ph.D.s as department heads, before the great post-war expansion drew such people out of the high schools and into the colleges and universities.

It is hard to think of any fundamental ways in which American secondary schools have influenced American colleges and universities, except by the weakness of their curriculum and teaching, or, as in most of our history before the turn of this century, their near total absence. There is of course one outpost of the schools in our colleges and universities, and that is the departments and professional schools of education. But that linkage has inhibited the integration of schools of education into the university, and prevented them from gaining the relatively strong and independent status of other professional schools in the university. As Burton Clark has suggested (Clark 1985), the fundamental organizational, political and normative characteristics of public secondary schools in America have a strong "bias toward mediocrity," and are in this respect fundamentally different from the organizational characteristics of American colleges and universities (National

Commission, 1983; Trow 1987). Indeed one important characteristic of the educational system of the United States is the enormous contrast between its public secondary schools, which are arguably among the least effective major institutions in society, and its colleges and universities, which are among its most successful and effective. The differences in organization, character, and quality between American secondary schools, which are largely insulated from market forces, and its colleges and universities have many consequences for both the schools and the colleges. Burton Clark finds the sources of this inherent bias against academic excellence in certain structural characteristics of American secondary education. Looked at from a comparative perspective, the characteristics that he points to comprise a unique cluster that distinguishes American secondary education from that of other countries.

One of those characteristics is the commitment of American secondary schools to universal participation, and thus to a great diversity in the school population.

School persistence rates for the various age groups in the U.S. have been double those of European schoolchildren. Virtually all U.S. students enter the first year of high school...and, in 1980, about 75% of the age group graduated from high school. Thus, in our extremely heterogeneous society, the secondary school system has to cope with youngsters from a variety of social and cultural backgrounds. The system has been compelled to accommodate the deprived and the disaffected, as well as the advantaged and the highly motivated--to accommodate those for whom the school diploma is a terminal credential, as well as those bound for higher education (a roughly 50-50 split in recent years) (Clark 1985, p.392).

Another structural source of bias toward mediocrity in American secondary education, in Clark's view, is the relative absence of differentiation between and within schools. "The advantages of specialization--and especially of distinctiveness--are largely lost; instead, educational purpose has been dulled, and communities that share common interests have been dispersed"

(ibid. p. 393). Without differentiation any particular school cannot sustain a marked sense of its own character and distinctiveness, and without that sense there cannot be a strong commitment to excellence. (Although lack of differentiation still characterizes much of American secondary education, the situation in this respect may now be changing in response to the growth in the number of "magnet schools" which differ in important respects from the standard American comprehensive high schools.)

A third feature of the American secondary school is its closer ties with primary education than with higher education. In other countries upper secondary schools are closely linked to the universities for which they prepare. But mass secondary education in the United States developed around the turn of the century as a terminal system, one that in its comprehensiveness and emphasis on "education for life" simply carries further the education of the elementary school of which it was an outgrowth (Trow 1961). There have always been exceptions: academically selective high schools were established in many cities in the 19th and early 20th centuries, and some comprehensive high schools have encouraged and sustained strong academic streams, often against populist and anti-intellectual pressures. But on the whole, American secondary schools have been linked both philosophically and organizationally with primary schools; their governance and finance, their staff recruitment, training, and conditions of work are all much more like those of primary schools than like those of colleges and universities.

A fourth feature of American secondary schools is the element of local and political control; their part-time elected lay school boards, their big administrative staffs, and increasingly active parents groups all have a large influence on the working lives of secondary school teachers, an influence tending to undermine their commitment to high academic purpose.

All of these factors adversely affect the professional autonomy of U.S. teachers, and a malaise born of powerlessness becomes widespread. To a degree not widely recognized by Americans, the pattern of local control over secondary education contributes to a "deprofessionalization" of teaching (Clark 1985, p. 394).

Finally, public secondary schools have a near monopoly over the educational services available to students in a given geographic area. Private schools are few and expensive, and thus "we have diminished the amount of choice left to parents and students, virtually eliminated competition among schools for enrollment, and rendered scholastic comparisons among schools operationally harmless" (ibid., p. 394).

These characteristics that give most American high schools their distinctive character--universal secondary education; comprehensive school organization; close links with primary schools; local control, elected lay boards and big bureaucratic staffs; and the local monopoly--all tend to weaken the academic and intellectual role of those schools, and thus their links with higher education.

By contrast, American colleges and universities have structural advantages precisely to the extent that their characteristics differ from those of the high school. One crucial difference is that enrollment in higher education is voluntary. While it is a mass system, it is not a universal system; less capable and less highly motivated students do not make the transition to college or university. Moreover, colleges and universities are highly differentiated among themselves, and the larger ones are differentiated internally (Trow 1976). They can and do cultivate distinctive images, purposes and missions, and they can recruit and motivate faculty and students around those distinctive images. They have thus the enormous advantage for intellectual life that arises out of academic differentiation. In addition, higher education even at the undergraduate level is pulled toward new

knowledge, toward graduate education and research, and toward professional practice, both by its faculty and by the job and career orientations of its students. Colleges and universities differ from secondary schools further in their higher degree of autonomy in relation to government and their own boards of trustees. This autonomy, especially marked in the leading research universities, is rooted in the monopoly of expertise that academics have in the subjects they teach and study. Even in more modest institutions, faculty members not at the frontiers of their fields, who do little or no research, borrow their claim to autonomy from academics in the more prestigious institutions which provide the models for all of academic life.

Unlike secondary schools, American colleges and universities compete actively for students, for financial support, and for prestige. And these kinds of competition make them responsive to a wide range of trends and forces in American life, some of them economic and demographic, others intellectual. As a result, American higher education exhibits an enormously dynamic character, both as a system and in its component institutions. We see this in many ways, among them the ability of many private American colleges to survive in circumstances that many observers have predicted would lead to their closure (Cheit 1971, 1973).

This is all very much by contrast with the U.K. and other European societies where, as I have suggested, the preparatory upper secondary schools have over time become extensions of the universities downward into the schools. But that has allowed the maintenance of high and common entry standards, which replaced money and social status as the chief constraint on the expansion and democratization of access to British universities as they slowly became meritocratic in this century. By contrast, the looseness of the articulation of our schools and colleges, the weakness and variability of secondary

education in the U.S., all contributed to the ease of access to the latter since no general level of secondary school achievement could be either expected or examined. That meant in turn that admissions criteria (beyond, in this century, a high school diploma) would be for most American colleges and universities almost wholly lacking, and for others highly variable.

Indeed, it also helps explain the continued variability of achievement and ability among the entering class within any specific college or university, even those thought to be "selective." And this variability of preparation, and the extraordinary diversity of ability, achievement and motivation among the entering students, all have tended to force on the colleges and universities the virtues of the elective curriculum, and that in turn depended on the primacy of the autonomous modular course, taught and examined by the same college or university instructor at whatever level of standard that he could achieve or his students allow. This modular course structure which began to be introduced into American higher education after the Civil War is a crucial structural characteristic of the American organization of teaching and instruction, with a broad range of implications for other aspects of the life of our institutions and the curriculum.

3. I have been pointing to a series of questions which, I suggest, arise with special force and clarity from a comparative and historical study of inverted sequences in the development of our systems of higher education. Another such question is why the professorship--the chair--never assumed the overwhelming importance either in the U.K. or in the United States that it did on the continent, and particularly in Germany and German-influenced systems.

The chaired professor, often also directing his own research institute, was, until the major "reforms" of the 1960s the central figure in most European universities, in both the Humboldtian and Napoleonic systems. Indeed, in a sense the professors were the university; they dominated its intellectual and

scholarly life, they elected its deans and rectors, and shared with politicians and officials in the ministries the governance and direction of the university. And remnants of this system survive to this day, diluted by the great increase in their numbers and the presence on internal governance committees of representatives of non-professional teaching staff, students, and other staff members.

But neither the U.K. nor the U.S. have ever given the chairholding professor such enormous authority and power in their universities. The reasons for this in the two countries are quite different. In the case of the U.S., the absence of a large class of learned men throughout much of our history meant that almost without exception our colleges and universities have been created by a group of laymen who selected a president to actually direct and manage the day-to-day life of the institution. And this founding body and their successors, now the governing body, the lay board of trustees or "regents," together with their chosen agent, the president, have occupied the leading positions of authority and power in American colleges and universities, and still do.* While the academic staff--the "faculty"--in a few leading universities and colleges have managed to persuade their boards to delegate to them a substantial measure of authority over the academic life of the institution, that authority is almost always exercised through academic bodies (usually "Senates") consisting of all the members of the academic staff, or at least all the tenured ones, and further is actually exercised in steady consultation with the president and his senior academic staff--the academic vice-president, provosts, deans and department chairmen. There were few great scholars present at the birth of our colleges and universities, and no room for

*The decision of the Supreme Court in the Dartmouth College case (1819), confirmed their authority and the inviolability of their charters, against challenge by state authorities (Herbst, 1982).

them to exercise great powers when they finally did emerge through the development of their academic disciplines.

In the U.K. the power of the professors was constrained in the ancient universities not by a lay board and powerful president, as in the U.S., but by corporate bodies of academics--the fellows---who are the governing bodies of the Oxford and Cambridge colleges, and have been since their founding. These bodies have retained the egalitarian democracy (within their own elite membership) of medieval guilds of masters, and have little room for the hierarchical and authoritarian rule of professors of the traditional European universities. While the professorial chairholder has had a much more powerful position in the provincial universities than in Oxbridge, the influence of Oxford and Cambridge as models for the others, and the experience of most English professors as students or fellows in Oxbridge colleges, along with other factors, has inhibited the emergence of a dominant "professoriate" at any English university comparable to the power of chairholders on the continent. And the differences between professors in Oxbridge and elsewhere have been declining with the introduction of rotating and even elected headships of departments in the provinces.

The emerging shape and nature of the academic profession in the U.S. and U.K. poses an interesting contrast. Of particular interest is the emergence of an academic profession and career in the U.S. after the Civil War, marked by our familiar academic ranks--instructor, assistant professor, associate professor, "full" professor--in which it came early to be assumed that the ordinary career rank would be full professor, and that every new instructor could expect to become a full professor somewhere as the predictable outcome of competent service, rather than of extraordinary scholarly achievement as in the U.K. and the continental countries.

There are several problems here:

1. When did the crystallization of this academic hierarchy occur in the U.S., and with what variations among different institutions?
2. Why did the academic profession develop in this way--as nowhere else?
3. What have been the consequences of this set of arrangements for academics, and for their institutions?

A tentative answer to the second question, of why the profession developed this way, can be suggested in the following terms. The relative ease with which American academics could achieve the rank of professor may be oddly related to the relative poverty of our institutions. Academics in the U.S. were paid in part in rank and title rather than in money, and since professors collectively did not have much power (for reasons already discussed), the existing ones did not and could not resist further diluting the status of the rank by adding to its numbers.

This raises the question of the enormously greater role of "exit" over "voice" in the higher levels of the academic profession in the U.S., and the weakness of the guild as an instrument of "voice" as compared to the individual exercising his own power in the academic marketplace (Hirschman 1970). "Exit" of course is a function of the market for academics, which in turn is related to the sheer number of competing institutions. "Exit" as a threat scarcely exists as a serious way for a European academic to improve his situation in his own institution, though to be called elsewhere may be, and often is, a step in a progress upward. But that "call" (or in our language "offer") is rarely met by the home institution in the competitive way familiar to American colleges and universities.

One consequence of this arrangement in the U.S. has been to increase the importance of an individual's own scholarly distinction and reputation, and

slow the development of academic unions. If one's professional fate is so much more a function of one's own research work and reputation, this greatly reduces for American academics their sense of a shared life fate in the same rank, institution or system which is the main motivation for the development of an academic union. And not surprisingly faculty unions in the U.S. are found for the most part in the non-research institutions whose faculty are least able to exercise the power or threat of exit as a way of improving their own situations. And so they turn more to "voice" through a union than to exit or threat of exit as a way of strengthening their positions. This fact has clear consequences for the governance of institutions, both those full of research academics and those with non-research oriented teaching staffs.

But there are other consequences of a normal career linking instructor to full professor as well. The absence in the U.S. of a distinct body of junior non-professorial faculty who will never be professors, as found in the U.K. and on the Continent, is a factor in the anticipatory socialization of all academics in American colleges and universities to common norms. If most instructors and assistant professors see themselves as full professors in the future, they are less likely to want to reduce the power and perogatives of that status to which they realistically aspire. (But this does not apply to the growing body of part-time and "temporary" faculty in many American institutions, excluded from the "tenure-track," a reserve army that buffers these institutions against the vicissitudes of the market.) On the Continent, of course, the changes in university governance since the mid-sixties have been marked by sharp conflicts between the professoriate and the "junior" academic ranks. This is less visible in British universities, perhaps because British academics inherited the relatively egalitarian ethos and governance structures of Oxford and Cambridge, and perhaps also because the roughly 40 percent of all

academics currently in the "senior" ranks (Professor, Reader, Senior Lecturer) make achievement of those ranks a reasonable expectation for most junior staff (though one would guess a source of bitterness and resentment for the substantial minority who do not make it).

Events, Challenges and Contrasting Patterns of Response

Such questions as the above, which arise out of a comparative perspective, can be multiplied in number and extended in treatment. But there is another level of analysis which looks toward a more comprehensive statement about the intrinsic nature of these two systems, their internal development, and their evolving relationships with other groups and institutions in their societies.

Let me come back to the question of why it is that the United States, alone among modern nations and in sharp contrast with the U.K., had a system of mass higher education already in place 100 years ago, before it had the numbers that we associate with mass higher education? As a result of its structural and normative precocity, the great expansions of the twentieth century have not required any fundamental change in any of the basic structural, organizational or normative features of American higher education and its component parts; those features were already in place, ready to accept the growing numbers that would pour into them in this century, and especially rapidly since World War II. It was as if the system had been created in anticipation of growth, and to some extent that seems to be true. So much in the history of the United States has been predicated on the assumptions of growth: its location of towns and cities, its infrastructure of roads, canals and railroads, its very conception of itself (Boorstin 1967).

But we cannot make too much of the "intentionality" of higher educational policy; much of the premature readiness of the American system of higher education, before its movement to mass and then to universal access, was the

result of the way the system was already being created and growing in the period between the Revolution and the Civil War, and some of its characteristics were foreshadowed before that. It is, I believe, possible to show the marked similarities in origins, organization and behavior of American colleges created in 1815, 1870 and 1960. The continuities in their character and structure are striking, even if changes in the undergraduate curriculum over time are large, and the research function almost wholly missing from the pre-Civil War colleges.

We must root this discussion in the literature of theories of American exceptionalism, theories which try to explain the large and persistent differences between the American experience and that of most other advanced industrial societies. And this discussion must at least make reference to diverse approaches to this concern for exceptionalism: Louis Hartz' focus on the role of the market in American life (Hartz, 1955); Potter's on the role of general affluence and wealth in the American experience (Potter, 1954); Turner and his critics on the influence of the moving frontier (Turner, 1920; Hofstadter and Lipset, 1968); Lipset on our historical experience as "the first new nation," and on the economic and political forces that resulted in our being the only industrial society that never developed a strong socialist movement and tradition (Lipset, 1963); and above all Tocqueville's classic analysis of American democracy and the enormous weight it has placed on the equality of condition, on individual opportunity and achievement, and on our highly developed propensity to create and join private associations to accomplish all kinds of purposes (Tocqueville, [1835] 1966). Each of these (and other) broad perspectives on American history has its implications for the character and functions of our colleges and universities; they are by no means mutually contradictory or incompatible, and one task is to show how together they and other aspects of the American experience, and not least our experience

as a country of immigrants, had consequences for our colleges and universities, which in turn have reacted back upon other aspects of American life, other American institutions.

Similarly, there is a rich literature on English "exceptionalism"--on the unique features of its history and culture which have distinguished it not only from the U.S., but from other European nations. Among these surely are the social and political consequences of its revolution in the seventeenth century, its pioneering role in the industrial revolution, the continuing social and political roles played by its aristocracy, its steady extension of the concept of citizenship, and the evolving cultural roles of its several social classes. British and American colleges and universities were affected in part by characteristics of their internal life and structure--as in the ways they were chartered, or the forms of the academic profession and career that evolved on both sides of the Atlantic. But they were also shaped by characteristics of their societies and social structures, as for example in their contrasting patterns of access, or the different provisions they have made for engineering and other technical studies within the university.

Surely one unique aspect of American higher education has been the character of the "policy" of the federal government toward higher education over the past 200 years. One might start with the early land grants, even before the Constitution was ratified, built into the Northwest Ordinance. But five other milestones over the past two centuries, define a pattern of relationship between the federal government and our colleges and universities:

First, the efforts made by George Washington and his immediate successors to establish a University of the United States, and the failure of those efforts. That precluded the emergence of a "capstone" institution able to establish national norms and standards, and thus constrain the proliferation of

colleges and universities. Second, the Supreme Court decision (1819) in the case of Dartmouth College which confirmed the right of private groups and bodies to establish colleges and to retain control of them in the face of efforts by state and local governments to take them over and operate them as public institutions. This ensured the survival of the many small private colleges which have characterized American higher education ever since. Third, the Land Grant (Morrill) Acts of 1862 and 1891 which provided federal money first to the states and then to the colleges themselves for the creation of institutions and programs devoted to a combination of liberal studies and the agricultural and mechanic arts, and did so with very few administrative controls or regulations. Fourth, the G.I. Bill of Rights which provided free tuition and support for over two million veterans to attend some form of postsecondary education after World War II. The G. I. Bill triggered the rapid expansion of enrollments in the post-war decades; it also became the model for later forms of federal support for student aid, and in particular the legislation passed in 1972 providing general student support for higher education in the form of grants and loans to individual students which they could take to any accredited institution, rather than grants to the institutions themselves. And, fifth, the growth of federal support for science during World War II, and the establishment of the National Science Foundation and the National Institutes of Health* after the war, with their support taking the form largely of direct grants to individual scientists through peer review organized by the federal funding agency.

I might have added to that list the Hatch Act of 1887 which funded the land-grant colleges directly rather than through the states, and the federal programs after World War II that provided colleges and universities with

*The National Institutes of Health also support a good deal of in-house research.

science buildings, instruments and aid to libraries. In each case the decision or policy contributed to the diversity of American higher education, a diversity of character, mission, academic standard and access. In each case public policy tended to strengthen the competitive market in higher education by weakening any central authority that could substitute regulations and standards for competition. It accomplished this by driving decisions downward and outward, by giving more resources and discretion to the consumers of education and the institutions most responsive to them: it increased the power of the states in relation to the federal government, as in the defeat of the University of the United States and the Morrill Acts; the power of the institutions in relation to state governments, as in the Dartmouth College case and the Hatch Act; and of the students in relation to their own institutions, as in the G.I. Bill and the Higher Education Act of 1972.

By contrast with the pattern in the United States where decisions at the center have tended to strengthen the principle of competition between institutions and within various markets for students, support and faculty, the English pattern has been a continued tendency to impose constraints from the center, and more recently to strengthen the direct role of central government in a way that begins to resemble the dirigisme of continental countries in respect to their systems of higher education. We can see this from the establishment of the universities of Durham and London in the first third of the nineteenth century. In both cases, central government exercised a tight control over the granting of their charters and the conditions under which degrees could be awarded. We also see the role of central government in the Oxbridge reforms of the 1860s and '70s, the introduction of civil service examinations and the effects of these on the university honors degree examinations, the establishment of the provincial universities and their slow

transformation and incorporation into a national system between 1880 and 1925. The creation of the University Grants Committee in 1919 provided an instrument for mediating the role of central government in the life of the universities where the central element of control over their establishment and of the standard of first degree had already been put in place. The British pattern was also visible in the character of their Veterans' Act of 1944 and the marked differences between that legislation and its counterpart in the United States, the G.I. Bill (Trow 1987). Post-war expansion in Britain took the form of the establishment of colleges of advanced technology and their incorporation in the '60s into the university system; the creation of new "plate-glass" universities in cathedral towns, small by American standards and only marginally different from the older provincial "red-brick" universities; and the establishment of the polytechnics in the '60s as a "public sector" side by side with the universities, though maintaining at least in principle the same standards for admission and the same high level for the first degree. All of this expansion was marked by (a) a tight control over growth, (b) a strong commitment to the maintenance of high and uniform academic standards for the first degree, and (c) the rhetorical encouragement, and actual discouragement, of diversity in the forms and content of British higher education. Since the middle '70s we have seen a pattern of budget cuts by central government, a steady increase in the influence of central government on the decisions of the individual universities, and the decline and subsequent disappearance of the UGC as a buffer between central government and the universities.

But the differences between the British and American systems of higher education go deeper than the dramatic events in the U.K. of the last decade, and the quite different kinds of criticism directed at American colleges and universities, and especially at undergraduate education, in the last few years

(Trow 1987). A broad comparative and historical perspective may help us better understand recent developments in both countries.

Trends and Countertrends: "The Americanization" of European Higher Education?

The issue of American exceptionalism can be looked at in a number of different ways: the nature and extent of differences between America and other countries, institution by institution, or as societies; the sources of those differences in history, geography, demography, culture and values, or whatever; and trends toward the convergence or divergence of America and other nations in specific or general respects. In this last section I will point to what I take to be trends in most European societies toward American-style forms and structures, which I see as inherent in their move toward mass higher education. But I do not assume that these trends will result in an absolute narrowing of the differences between American and European higher education over the next few decades, for several reasons, among these the strong resistance built into European countries and their educational systems to an expansion and differentiation of higher education on the American model, and the continuing evolution of mass higher education in the U.S.

In any event, I close by pointing to three broad trends in European systems of higher education toward American patterns which may (or may not) narrow the differences between our systems over the next few decades.

1. The first is the tendency in all European countries toward the further differentiation of function among institutions of higher education--a continuing differentiation between and sometimes within institutions that reflects the increasing heterogeneity of students in their social origins, their academic preparation and abilities, their ages, their experiences while in higher education, and their future careers. This increasing differentiation is a concomitant of the move from elite to mass forms of higher education, and

the consequent growth both in the number and variety of students and what they study.

This tendency toward diversity does not proceed without resistance in some countries, especially those in which the state has a monopoly, or near-monopoly, over higher education. Diversity causes problems for central state management. It is more difficult to administer different kinds of institutions, with different costs, functions, admissions policies, standards of instruction, variety of courses, etc. Moreover, with diversity inevitably comes inequalities among institutions and sectors--in student achievement, staff/student ratios, status and prestige in the larger society--inequalities which are natural concomitants of the different activities and functions of the institutions and of the kinds of people they recruit, both as students and as teachers.

But while these inequalities are inherent in diversity, they are extremely awkward when the state has a monopoly over the higher educational system. Public authorities are embarrassed by inequalities among institutions which formally have equal status; governments tend to try to reduce those inequalities by applying common standards for entry and for degrees, common salary schedules for staff, common funding formulas, common formulas for support of research, building and capital investment. These central efforts are in part a response to the tendency of bureaucracy to standardize its treatment of all dependent units, but also reflect norms in almost all societies which require that states treat institutions that are dependent on them equally and "fairly." These tendencies toward equality, which are inherent in the nature of public authority and bureaucratic management, run contrary to the inherent tendency of diversity to generate differences which can be perceived as inequalities.

It is possible for state authorities to plan for a certain measure of diversity within the state system--as for example the maintenance of three or four distinct strata of institutions of higher education. Examples are the differences between universities, polytechnics, and institutions of further education in England; in France the sharp differences between the grandes écoles, the universities and the IUTs; and in California, the differences between the University of California (with its nine campuses), the California State University system (on 19 campuses), and the 120 community colleges. In each case this formal differentiation, and the legitimation of marked differences in treatment among the sectors, is a partial response to the pressures for diversity in a system of mass higher education. But in each case there are strong pressures for equality between institutions within the same sector and, in some European nations, other pressures to reduce the differences in character, mission, and level of support between different segments (as, for example, between the universities and the polytechnics in the U.K.).

There is another reason why state authority has difficulty encouraging the emergence of a really wide diversity of institutions, and that is the political expectation that it make decisions, and correct decisions, in the face of alternatives. It is hard for political authorities to confess that they do not know which of a variety of forms of higher education ought to be the model for future development, or to say that all of them should be encouraged. The response of their political opponents is likely to be: "It is your responsibility to decide which of these forms of development is best and to choose it; anything else is to waste resources when resources are scarce, and when such waste is reprehensible or worse." How can a government defend itself against the charge that it is so indecisive it cannot even decide what form and shape an emerging publicly-supported system of higher education should take, and continues to support some forms which almost certainly will be shown to be

ineffective and inadequate? The only problem is that at the time these innovative institutions or programs are launched it is not at all clear which of them are likely to be successful. But politically this need to assert omniscience, and to show decisiveness and a mastery of events, is almost mandatory for political authorities who face opposition and criticism. That need to appear to be strong, wise, all-knowing and decisive forces public authorities to act with more conviction than they must feel in the design of educational systems. Or looked at another way, if they were to support a wide diversity of institutions on public funds, it could be charged that the government was consciously supporting institutions that would probably fail. That charge would be true, except that no one at the time could know which of them would in fact fail.

Americans accept, as on the whole Europeans do not, that competition in higher education, as in other areas of organized social life, is the most effective way of planning for an unpredictable future, on the ground that despite the appearance of waste, it creates a diversity of institutions some of which will be better fitted for future, as yet unpredictable, conditions and demands than any that can be designed by a central state authority. One illustration of what unrestrained market forces and competition in continuing education in the United States looks like is provided by Grand Rapids, Michigan, an industrial and market city of about 250,000 population, with about 400,000 in the broader metropolitan area. It is a leading center in the United States for the manufacture of office furniture (Trow, 1988). The city is served by a strong state-supported regional college, Grand Valley State College, which offers work through the Master's but not the doctoral degree to some 9,000 students, mainly traditional-aged studying full time. This college has a beautiful campus a few miles outside of town, and modest facilities in

Grand Rapids itself, where it currently provides some continuing education in graduate study in social welfare, education, public administration and business studies. However, also present in Grand Rapids and also offering continuing education in all kinds of subjects, mostly in rented space, are the following institutions:

1. Michigan State University--a branch of the big land-grant state research university;
2. Western Michigan University, a regional state university;
3. Ferris State College, a regional state college, like Grand Valley;
4. Aquinas College, a private Catholic institution;
5. Davenport College, a proprietary college offering a bachelor's degree in Business Studies;
6. Jordan College, a proprietary college;
7. Grand Rapids Community College, offering degree credit courses at the level of the first two years of the baccalaureate, plus many non-credit vocational studies;
8. Calvin College, a private church-related college;
9. Grand Rapids Baptist College, a private church-related college; and
10. Kendall School of Design, a proprietary college.

One might think that that would be provision enough. But, no, Grand Valley State College has been given \$30 million by the State of Michigan to build a large building in Grand Rapids as a facility for a major expansion of its provision of continuing education. The college's engineering departments will be moving there, together with the department specializing in the study of work environments, primarily offering degree level and post-graduate engineering programs to adult employed learners. Moreover, there is little planning or coordination among these providers.

So in this representative American town we see a nearly free market for the provision of continuing education, some of it wholly self-supporting, some

of it partly subsidized. One might ask: Why this fierce competition? The answer seems to be that for each institution, more students mean more money either from their fees, or through enrollment-driven formula budgeting from the state, or from both. In addition, continuing education is yet another service that engenders support in the broader community for the provider. Thus the providers are all highly motivated to recruit students, that is, to create a learning society, and they are all highly sensitive to the consumers' interests. Above all, behind all this lies the assumption that "supply creates demand."

To many Europeans this picture of continuing education in America is marked by unnecessary diversity, lack of coordination or central control over quality, inefficient duplication, waste, and the absence of continuity. The standard American answer to all these criticisms is the answer of the market: "We cannot be inefficient and wasteful, or we would not be able to survive." And such an appeal to the "unseen hand" reduces the need to develop a more elaborate educational, political, or philosophical rationale; if students continue to enroll and pay, then the provision seems evidently needed and desirable.

That story, it seems to me, illustrates five characteristics of American higher education which are not shared in most European countries, and which help explain the peculiar form that continuing education takes in the U.S.:

1. The high measure of autonomy attached to our individual institutions, and their ability to go into the market without seeking approval elsewhere, in a ministry or a regional board.
2. The broad assumption in the U.S., very widely shared, that education is intrinsically a good thing, and that everyone should get as much of it as they can be persuaded to enroll for.

3. The fact that there is no cap, no upper limit to the number of students who can be enrolled in the state's public institutions of higher education. There are, of course, limits on entry to specific colleges or universities, but not to some institution in the system.
4. Most public institutions and systems are funded on a per capita basis, and thus have a continuing incentive to enroll as many students as possible.
5. A substantial part of continuing education in the U.S. (depending on how it is defined) is supported by student fees. That means that much continuing education in the U.S. is not felt to be competitive with other public goods like welfare, other levels of schooling, roads, health care, and the like, but rather with the students' own private consumption. Public policy issues ordinarily arise when some decision has to be made about the allocation of scarce public resources among competitive claims for different public services. Insofar as continuing education is self-supporting, or is treated as if it were, it does not have to justify expansion.

European systems have refused to go down this road of uncontrolled market-driven competition. Nevertheless, the next decades of higher education development in many countries will be marked by strong tensions between diversifying forces within institutions and between them, tensions arising out of the growing diversity of students and the explosion of knowledge on the one hand, and the constraining forces of public authority on the other.

Of all the issues in higher education policy currently being debated in Europe there is the broadest consensus on the importance of extending access to mature students, for reasons both of social justice and of technological advancement and economic growth. Nevertheless, the resistance to continuing education is strong, especially in the traditional universities and faculties, which see the education of mature part-time students as very clearly not a characteristic of elite education as it was known in the nineteenth and most of the twentieth century.

It may be that continuing education in Europe will take alternative forms which will show their relative merit in their capacity to respond effectively

to fast-changing and unpredictable conditions in society and industry-- introducing diversity through the back door, so to speak. But meanwhile, American higher education will continue to change during these next decades, among other things incorporating more part-time continuing education into our traditional colleges and universities, while further blurring the lines between university and society, life and learning, as more part-time education for degree credit is offered by business firms and the military (Eurich 1985; Bailey 1979).

2. The growth and democratization of higher education leads, among other things, to the development of closer organizational ties between universities and various non-university forms of postsecondary education. In every country these latter take many different forms: higher vocational colleges, teacher training institutions, schools of music, art, drama, nursing, agriculture and fisheries, administration and management, and other specialized vocations; extension services and other forms of continuing education; and open universities. In many countries these institutions have grown up in somewhat haphazard ways over the years in response to the efforts of a special interest or a powerful politician; sometimes they offer certificates, sometimes an academic degree, though usually a different one than the universities offer. The courses that they offer often overlap both with one another and with courses offered in university. Often these institutions, at least those in the public sector, are under the supervision of different ministries, sometimes with each government ministry having its own training institution. But rarely do these institutions provide access to the university sector; they are not, as we say, well articulated.

Governments may make efforts to rationalize this sector of postsecondary education--at least the public institutions in it--by bringing them into

regional groupings and other administrative relationships, as in Sweden. But again, the special interests which created these institutions, and the ministries which sponsor them, will resist this rationalization, usually successfully.

I have noted that these institutions currently rarely provide access directly to the universities. That may change. One well-documented finding of recent studies in many countries is that people who want to continue their education as adults are more likely to be those who already have had a lot of it (OECD 1977). Wanting more education is an acquired taste, acquired through education itself. If that is so, then the graduates of many of these non-university colleges and institutes will increasingly want to continue their higher education, and will seek higher academic degrees and the advanced study that the university offers. These opportunities exist now in most places for exceptional individuals. I anticipate that as this demand grows it may be made easier for mature students to "transfer" to the university, and enabled to earn the university degree.

The increase in the number of mature students in the university--we can already see this trend in many places--will have effects of various kinds on university education itself: on the curriculum, on modes of instruction, on student financial support, on the relations between student and teacher. Resistance to this trend from the universities lies in the traditional link between elite forms of higher education and the education of young men (and more recently women) usually from upper or upper-middle class origins, at a time when their minds and characters are being shaped and formed. Mature students are often of lower social origins (that is often why they didn't go to university directly from secondary school); they seek to increase their skills rather than to undergo character formation; they may not be interested in the university's notion of what constitutes appropriate higher education; and they

tend to make a university look increasingly like a technical or polytechnical institute, with the loss of status that implies.

Nevertheless, I believe that the movement of mature students, many with prior experience in non-university forms of higher education, into the university will continue, and that universities everywhere will change and adapt to this trend. Here again, private institutions (where they exist) will have the advantage of their greater adaptability to change.

3. Another trend I think we are seeing in many European countries is a trend toward stronger university presidents, whatever they may be called in different countries and institutions. This trend arises out of the tendency toward diversity that I've already spoken of, and also out of the rapidly changing environments in which higher educational institutions will be finding themselves. To turn to the last point first: where the characteristics and mission of "the university" is clear in the society, and where all of the universities in the society are similar, except for their age and distinction, then state authorities can manage them from outside the institution in a fairly routine and predictable way; the intellectual life of the institution goes on with a certain measure of continuity, while the civil servants in the ministries manage the relatively simple administrative and financial affairs of the institution from outside. Or in another setting where institutions have relatively clear and stable functions, they can be governed from inside by committees of academics, as in Oxford and Cambridge, or by committees of chairholders and full professors, with a weak elected rector, as in many European universities in the past. Both of those arrangements depend on relatively slowly changing external conditions and a broad consensual agreement on what the mission of the institution is. But as institutions of higher education become more varied in character, and as their relation to their

environments changes rapidly, they have to be more responsive to new situations. And this requires the kind of decisiveness and discretionary power at the center that we find in effective business organizations, which also have to act quickly and decisively in response to changing market and financial conditions. A strong chief institutional officer, I suggest, is the only authority who can point an institution of higher education in a new direction, who can seize opportunities when they arise and give an institution the leadership along various dimensions--academic, political, managerial, symbolic--that it needs for success in the competitive academic world that is emerging (Trow, 1985).

I do not underestimate the very strong cultural and institutional resistance to this tendency in European systems. Neither state authorities nor the powerful academic guilds look with kindness on strong administrative officers at the head of their institutions, nor do the strong academic, staff and student unions that have emerged as actors in the governance structures of many European institutions over the past few decades. So I am very far from suggesting that the strong university president will be common outside the United States very soon, especially in the public sectors of European higher education. But we can see it already in many countries outside of Europe, especially in the private sector, where institutions have the freedom to create their own governance arrangements (Geiger, 1986). And I think it is one of the organizational characteristics that will give private institutions a marginal advantage over public institutions in the decades ahead. Private universities not only are able to create a strong executive at their head, but they need a strong executive in order to survive in a world that may not give them the guarantees and subsidies that it does to public institutions.* Insofar as

*Though most "private" universities on the Continent, e.g., church-related universities in Belgium and the Netherlands, are fully funded by the state, and resemble the public institutions in their governance arrangements.

governments give publicly supported colleges and universities more autonomy and more responsibility for their own support and functions, they must also give more power and discretion to college and university presidents.

Conclusion

In this paper I have been exploring some of the differences between American higher education and the forms it takes in other modern societies. I have also touched on some of the historical sources of our "exceptionalism," in the course of which I have suggested some of the ways in which the peculiar characteristic of American society and government gave rise to and sustained its unique system of higher education. But a third aspect of this topic has been almost wholly neglected in this paper: the impact of American higher education on American society and on American democracy. For example, much research supports the assertion that higher education has substantial and enduring effects on the attitudes of those exposed to it (Hyman and Wright, 1979; Feldman and Newcomb 1969). And those changed attitudes in a population in turn make possible real changes in social relations, if and when they are accompanied by changes in law and institutional behavior. For example, in the U.S. the years after World War II saw a steady decline in hostility toward black Americans, and a growing readiness on the part of whites to give blacks equal treatment and fair access to education, housing and jobs. These changes in attitudes were strongly correlated with exposure to higher education. I believe that the considerable progress the United States made in race relations after World War II was made possible by the growth of mass higher education, and the marked decline in racial prejudice that accompanied it. If that is true, then it represents a very great contribution of American higher education to the life of the society. And the "affirmative action" policies of American colleges and universities may have helped to create and expand a black middle

class, policies that could not have been pursued in a society with high national standards for university access.

But this is merely one illustrative example of the effects of American higher education on American society. An institution now so broadly and deeply implicated in so many aspects of American life must have effects on it of many kinds, political, economic and cultural, both for good and ill. It may be that it is those connections between higher education and the institutions of American society that are of greatest relevance to this theme of "American exceptionalism."

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