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CANADIAN PROVINCE-BUILDING: THE STATE  
AS EDUCATOR AND ENTREPRENEUR IN  
ALBERTA

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DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

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*January 1998*

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ASTON UNIVERSITY  
**Canadian Province-Building: The State as  
Educator and Entrepreneur in Alberta**

*Marco Adria*  
*Doctor of Philosophy, January 1998*

THESIS SUMMARY

This study provides an account and analysis of the development of systems of educational provision in capitalist democracies, especially in connection with the social origin and relative autonomy of those systems. Using the case study of Athabasca University, a Canadian distance-education institution in the province of Alberta, the study is a critical work of historical sociology, in which the shifting social role of a system of educational provision during two transitions of a regional political economy is analyzed. Comparative observations are made in reference to other systems of educational provision and organizations, in particular the training department of a large Company based in the same region as the University.

The study explores the social origin and relative autonomy of systems of educational provision in relation to educational ideologies, which are themselves associated with social ideologies. Pierre Bourdieu's theoretical construction of "fields of power" allows for a consideration of power as a relational phenomenon in the study. In other words, power is understood as being exercised in a way that simultaneously takes account of the power of other actors and groups. Fields of power also allow for an analysis of power as it is exercised at various levels of organizations and within society.

The study is organized in two phases. First, an account is developed of the historical period in which the University and the Company were created, but especially the period of establishment for the University, 1970 - 75. Conclusions are offered concerning the causal associations between the historical antecedents that gave rise to the two organizations. It is argued that both the University and the Company were established in part to enact the Alberta government's efforts to enhance its powers within the Canadian federation (a process called province-building). The second phase is concerned with a more recent period of three years, 1993 - 95. By this time, province-building was not as significant a concern for policy-makers, and the organizational responses of the University and the Company reflected this shift. A divergence of practice is observed at the University and the Company, with actors at the Company encouraging the development of collectivist values for employees, while at the University no such overt strategy was followed.

The study concludes that a consumerist model of education developed by the University in 1970 - 75 and expanded in 1993 - 95 contributed significantly to the institution's social origin and relative autonomy. The model was used as an ideology in the earlier period and as a strategy in the later one, serving to forestall the institution's closure during both periods of crisis, though leading to ambiguous social outcomes. A consumerist model may on the one hand be progressive in that expanded access to educational opportunities is made possible. On the other hand, the consumerist model will tend increasingly to provide educational services to those social segments that already have access to educational opportunities.

Key words: ORGANIZATION THEORY, OIL ECONOMIES, HIGHER EDUCATION, DISTANCE EDUCATION, FEDERALISM

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## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

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### THE SOCIAL CAREER OF AN ORGANIZATION

Why start a University? This is the question whose response largely takes up the following pages. The question arises from history, in which a University in a region of Canada was slated for closure, with the regional government apparently deciding that the institution was no longer needed. If the planned closure had occurred once, the question of interest here might be, Why close a University? However, the decision to shut down was made twice, on occasions separated by more than two decades.

The institution had not likely “run its course,” having achieved the objectives for its establishment. Universities have historically been established for the long term, both in Europe and North America. The government establishing this particular University certainly understood that tradition, and had no intention of setting up an academic institution that would appear to be transient either in its programs of study or in its institutional life-span. Yet having established it, the decision was made only two years later to close it, and having relented on the first decision to close, the government returned to the same decision some 20 years later. With the risks at stake for funding and taking general responsibility for a University, what is that states - and other actors and groups - have to gain in setting up a new University in the first place? The

tentative answer, to be developed further in the study, is that an educational institution is established as the site for action and debate about power. As a University is established, individuals and groups vie to set it up in ways that will protect or further their respective interests.

Having set that first question about why a university would be set up, along with the reflection of its opposite (that of why a University might be closed), there is a corollary question to be considered as well. This is the question of who runs a University. In the example mentioned, it must be assumed that leading up to each plan for closure there was a sense that the institution had in some way failed. The notion of failure implies that an individual or group is to be held responsible for carrying out some series of actions or for ignoring its duty to carry out some other series of actions.

It might be that the things that the University was doing did not meet the approval of those providing the funds and approval to operate. A direct connection of cause and effect would need to be considered carefully, because it is generally thought that universities should be more or less independent in their policy-making and operations, in accordance with the idea that scholarship should be pursued for its own sake and without unnecessary interference. This does not mean that a University cannot be run from the outside, only that there are likely to be other people who will criticize or actively resist such actions. Resistance will be embarrassing to those doing the remote control work, and so the episode is likely to be temporary. The reluctance of state decision-makers to run a University is suggested in the present case, in which



presumably the government would not close something that it had been running, since doing so would signal its own failure.

If those outside the University are not running it, then those inside must be. Yet University faculty and administrators certainly were not in control as the plan to close their institution was formulated. Furthermore, the issue of control is not a black-and-white one. Students, government, individual, and corporations provide funds to a University and their influence on the institutions operations are likely to be evident at many turns. Those working in the University must therefore acknowledge in their actions the influence of these groups.

As with the tentative answer to the first question, then, it will be argued here that many individuals and groups influenced the operation of the University and that they did so in ways that reflected their interests. University faculty and managers did have a role in reversing the decision to close their institution. Indeed, unless members of the public helped to reverse the decision, which it appears they did not, the University itself was the only group in a position to take the primary role in trying to reverse the plan - although, it should be repeated that the University's tactics and strategies were likely to reflect the interests of many individuals and groups.

The University survived the two early reports of its demise. This study considers how and why it did so by considering the actions of individuals and groups and also the ideas that informed those actions. At about the same time that the first closure plan

was struck, the ideas that were commonly accepted within the region were changing in ways that helped to make the prospect of the University's continuance (with some changes to its operations) look like a good one. Individuals who continued to be in favour of a new University helped the process along, using their influence and social power at key points. In doing so, they forestalled closure. When the ideas within the society changed yet again a couple of decades later, the University became at risk of closure for a second time. This time, people working in the University were able to take a lead influence on the decision to reverse the plan. They did this in part by changing the University to suit the shift in ideas. In part, however, they also influenced the debate within the region about what ideas should prevail.

In the process of considering the "fate" of the University, there will be implications suggested in this study for the rise and career of other organizations, whether educational or non-educational. These implications will be stated within the study by making comparisons with other educational and non-educational organizations.

It will be concluded that when the ideas within a society promote the notion of an autonomous and independent state, institutions as diverse as a university and a gas-pipeline company can emerge to give shape and definition to those ideas. They may do so by their distinctiveness as organizations, by their peculiar characteristics that point to their identity as nationalist projects. By developing a comparative account of the establishment and operations of the University and its proto-nationalistic sister organization, a gas-pipeline company, the study concludes that the two have much in

common: that they reflect in different ways the extensive reach and scope of the modern state.

#### SYSTEMS OF EDUCATIONAL PROVISION AND THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF ALBERTA

To understand the power relations between the state and the development of social and economic institutions that will be described in this study, it is necessary to introduce the particular character of universities as higher-education organizations on the one hand and, on the other, the social attitudes and political beliefs that influenced the development of the University in the region to be studied.

In Chapter 5, the historical process will be described whereby the Alberta state marshalled its constitutional powers to put an ideological stamp on higher education. That this would be possible at all is a question to be considered at the outset. Would there not be inherently understood goals for higher education systems and institutions that would prevent a state from going very far in adapting or changing those goals? The answer to this question should be understood in the context of the malleability of goals for any higher education system. Burton Clark refers to the difficulty that educational analysts and practitioners have in defining the goals of higher education systems:

Goals are so broad and ambiguous that the university or system is left no chance to accomplish the goals - or to fail to accomplish them. There is no way that anyone can assess the degree of goal achievement. No one even knows if any or all the stated goals are accepted by significant groups within the system, and with what priority.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Burton Clark, *The Higher Education System: Academic Organization in Cross-National Perspective* (Berkeley, Cal.: University of California Press, 1983), p. 19.

With amorphous goals for a higher education system,<sup>2</sup> the political and economic attitudes held by regional elites and by the general population will be important for an understanding of how and why a university is established. With political and economic attitudes tending towards the use of market principles for establishing social and economic institutions, segmentation of the higher education system will follow, according to Clark:

Markets . . . are increasingly shaped by state-sanctioned authority and policy. Basic is the controlling of competitive interaction by official segmentation of the primary markets. When a national educational system has different types of secondary schools, some of which block entry to higher education and others lead to different sectors or faculties, it has segmented the consumer and institutional markets. When a state master plan allocates students among universities, four-year colleges, and two-year colleges, it has decisively divided the consumer market and heavily shaped the institutional and labor markets. . . .<sup>3</sup>

Two theoretical contributions that are fundamental to the study in regard to the development of social and economic institutions in Alberta are Fritz Ringer's studies of national systems of education and C.B. Macpherson's political economy of the province. They will be discussed further in subsequent chapters. Both writers study the social

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<sup>2</sup>For a description of the "value background" of higher education and of the character of higher-education institutions from an international perspective, see Ronald Barnett, *The Idea of Higher Education* (Buckingham: The Society for Research into Higher Education and Open University Press, 1990), p. 8. Barnett argues that higher education's value background (the pursuit of truth and objective knowledge, research, a liberal education, and so on) has, during the 1980s, been undermined through attacks on the value background's notions of objective knowledge and academic autonomy. Barnett also makes the critical point that, in common with the broader education system, a higher education system "can be understood as an institution whose functions include its capacity to reproduce its host society, both economically and culturally." The higher education system also has the function of "legitimizing society's cognitive structures" (p. 8). For a discussion of the expectations related to higher education of both policy-makers on the one hand and clients on the other, see Malcolm Tight, "The Ideology of Higher Education," in *A Crisis and Institutional Change*, edited by Oliver Fulton (Buckingham: The Society for Research into Higher Education and Open University Press, 1989), pp. 85-98.

<sup>3</sup>Clark 1983, pp. 169-70.

origins of social institutions in their political economic context. They provide comparative empirical case studies, both across institutions and across regions or nation-states.

The present study takes up two of Ringer's most important concepts by which he accounts for the social origin and relative autonomy of educational institutions. These concepts are *segmentation*, and the *interactivity* of systems of educational provision with their political economies. Segmentation is the coincident appearance in a system of educational provision of a separate track for a specialized, vocational curriculum with the streaming of students from lower socio-economic groups towards these tracks.<sup>4</sup> The particular structure of the University at the time of its establishment was in part a product of segmentation. The debate surrounding the role of universities in the process of segmentation is traced back to the early part of the century in Canada and then forward to the regional debate in the 1960s within Alberta among educational and government elites leading up to the establishment of the University.

Ringer develops his theory of the relative autonomy of educational systems in connection with the rise of national educational systems. His empirical studies examine the political economic context for the emergence of educational ideals in Germany and France, especially in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, a time of public debate about the fate of the classical education in response to emerging technical and vocational educational

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<sup>4</sup>See Fritz Ringer, in Detlef K. Müller, Fritz Ringer, and Brian K. Simon, *The Rise of the Modern Educational System: Structural Change and Social Reproduction, 1870 - 1920* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), p. 7. Segmentation will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 2.

programs. The present study is concerned with the establishment and development of a particular institution within a regional and national system of education. Ringer's theory is relevant partly because of its treatment of the historical development of notions of social status, especially associated with educational change. Ringer argues that educational systems have a role in social reproduction through their inculcation of specific cultural values related to social status, and it is the historical dynamics of this process of inculcation with which he is concerned. Within a historical phase of transition, when new occupational groups are moving towards higher social status, educational systems provide a kind of buffer for these changes, by which older occupational groups maintain their high social status for a period of time, until the educational system becomes only marginally influential in the political economy. Such was the case of the theological schools in late 19<sup>th</sup> century America.

More generally, how does education's function in social reproduction have an impact at the regional level in Canada? At this point, C.B. Macpherson's work becomes relevant. Alberta history has been characterized by the emergence of radical institutions. Macpherson's "small producers thesis" holds that the province's geographical and political isolation has provided a receptive ground for innovations in political and democratic institutions, especially through the creation of regional political movements.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup>See C.B. Macpherson, *Democracy in Alberta: The Theory and Practice of a Quasi-Party System* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1953). The small producers thesis and Macpherson's theory of the Alberta political economy are considered further in Chapter 3.

The University was a radical institution by its mandate and governance structure.<sup>6</sup> Its creation was parallel to the beginnings of these political movements, because of its ideological support for regional development within the mature Canadian political economy.

Macpherson's view of Alberta's social class system was somewhat limited. He coined the term "quasi-party" system to suggest that the province's class system was relatively homogeneous.<sup>7</sup> Other writers have since qualified this proposition and developed his ideas further in the context of the oil era. Macpherson published his major work on Alberta just after the discovery of oil in 1947 and did not foresee the further stratification of Alberta society that would follow, nor the changed relations of the province to other national and international economies, both following from the beginnings of an oil economy. However, Macpherson's conception of the Alberta political and economic "field of power" remains useful. By describing the social origin and autonomy of social institutions in Alberta, Macpherson treated the region as an empirical case which could be compared with other social institutions and other regional political economies.

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<sup>6</sup>For a discussion of the University's mandate and governance structure operating under a consumerist model, see Chapter 6.

<sup>7</sup>The robustness of the small producers thesis was based on the signal influence within Alberta society of a broad base of farmers, small business and manufacturing company owners, who acted to preserve and enhance their interests by appealing to voters' sense of political and economic alienation from central Canada. Macpherson's analysis, as it will be discussed further in Chapter 2, was that the small producers were not only influential but that Alberta society was relatively free of class conflict as a result of their dominance.

## EDUCATIONAL THEORISTS AND THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

By drawing on a historian (Ringer) and a political economist (Macpherson), the study sets its research issues somewhat apart from the more strictly educational concerns of theorists such as Margaret Scotford Archer, Andy Greene, and Martin Trow.<sup>8</sup> For these theorists, state educational systems have their origins in the social interaction that take place within a national culture.<sup>9</sup> The approach, while of theoretical interest here, may be distinguished from the present study by its concern with describing and explaining the origins of educational systems and institutions only. By contrast, the comparative approach taken in this study seeks to explain relations of educational institutions with other non-educational institutions within the same political economy and to analyze the rise and development of both kinds of institutions. A brief review of Archer and related writers is provided here.

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<sup>8</sup>See Andy Greene, *Education and State Formation: The Rise of Education Systems in England, France and the USA* (London: Macmillan, 1990), p. 69. Greene identifies the following four theoretical paradigms for explaining the development of mass schooling: positivist theory (Durkheim to American structural functionalism); Marxist theory emphasizing class cleavages as underlying the development of schooling as a means of proletarianization of labour (as used by Bowles and Gintis, for example, to be discussed in Chapter 2); Weberian theory linking education with the extension of bureaucracy (as expressed by Archer); and Whig explanations focusing on education as a result of gradual democratization within societies.

<sup>9</sup>For an analysis of educational systems using the methods of the ethnographer, see Stephen J. Ball, *Education Reform: A Critical and Post-Structural Approach* (Buckingham: Open University Press, 1994). Ball focuses on texts and discourses, using ethnographic data collected in local settings, to describe what policy-makers say and to locate these speech-acts within "circuits of power":

Discourses are about what can be said, and thought, but also about who can speak, when, where, and with what authority (p. 21).

Ball is concerned particularly with educational discourses related to managerialism, the market, and the creation of a national curriculum. In the creation of a curriculum for music, geography, and history in schools in the U.K. in the 1990s, for example, Ball sees circuits of power that work as follows:

[C]hoice and the market provide a way for the middle classes to reassert their reproduction advantages in education, which had been threatened by the social democratic de-differentiation of schools, the cultural reform of the curriculum (elimination of this cultural arbitrary), and the diversion of resources to those with greatest learning needs and difficulties (p. 123).



Archer is a Weberian<sup>10</sup> who focuses on the actual mechanisms of educational reform in different countries. For her, change in national educational systems, especially during the nineteenth century, occurred following the conflicts between educational interest groups. Studying the social origins of the national educational systems of France, Russia, Denmark, and England, she finds that “assertive groups” may engage in one of two kinds of action: substitution and restriction. Assertive groups using substitution create educational institutions that rival traditional institutions. Assertive groups using restriction try to undermine the monopoly on educational provision by (mainly economic) elites using legislation and regulation and, eventually, by replacing it through state provision.<sup>11</sup>

The conclusions that Archer makes describe complex processes of the interaction of social structure and agency. These conclusions contribute to an understanding of how and why national state systems of education develop as they do. Assertive groups using substitution tend to be an *economic* elite, and the case of England in the nineteenth century provides an example of the emergence of such a group. Assertive groups using restriction tend to have access to the powers of government and reflect the interests of a *political* elite. The structural elaboration of educational institutions following from the

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<sup>10</sup>See Margaret Scotford Archer, *Realist Social Theory: The Morphogenetic Approach* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995) for a full discussion of her theory of the elision of structure and agency. The morphogenetic sequence involves the results of structural conditioning, which give rise to social interaction (results of results), and structural elaboration (results of results of results):

[W]here any form of social elaboration is concerned . . . structure, culture and agency are always involved. The investigative focus may be on one alone, but the investigation cannot fail to introduce the other two (p. 324).

<sup>11</sup>Margaret Scotford Archer, *Social Origins of Education Systems* (London: Sage, 1984).

actions of these groups is to be found in the systematization of education. Archer shows, for example, the different patterns of change to be found in centralized national educational systems on the one hand, as may be found in France, and decentralized systems, such as the one in the U.S., on the other. The legislative “punctuation” required for the centralized system leads to a “stop-go” pattern of change in which “periods of stability (i.e., changelessness) are intermittently interrupted by polity-directed resources.”<sup>12</sup>

Following Archer, Andy Greene is concerned to correct what he sees as a deficiency in Archer’s work, which is the neglect of a theoretical consideration of the role of the state in relation to the development of national educational systems:

State formation refers to the historical process by which the modern state has been constructed. This includes not only the construction of the political and administrative apparatus of government and all government-controlled agencies which constitute the “public” realm but also the formation of ideologies and collective beliefs which legitimate state power and underpin concepts of nationhood and national “character.”<sup>13</sup>

Greene is concerned to show how the dynamics of state formation are related to the origins of national systems of schooling. He argues, for example, that national educational systems were established first, and most decisively, in those countries in which the process of state formation was most intense.<sup>14</sup> France from its revolution and

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<sup>12</sup>Archer 1984, p. 172.

<sup>13</sup>Greene 1990, p. 77.

<sup>14</sup>Greene 1990, p. 310.

the U.S. from its struggle for national independence provide examples of intensive state formation.

For his part, Martin Trow is interested as well in the international comparative dimension of educational systems. Comparing the Swedish and American contexts, he suggests that American higher education has developed historically as a system with a mix of private and public funding, representing a diverse range of institutional types and characters. Out of this diversity he describes the common structural elements that distinguish it from the Swedish and western European models. These elements include the following: attitudes towards education (“education for its own sake” in the U.S.); general education as part of the curriculum (while in Europe this is part of the high school experience); electives, modular courses, and the unit credit as “academic currency”; a lay governing board; greater relative powers, in the U.S. as compared to Europe, for university presidents; and so on.<sup>15</sup>

The present study shares the concerns of Archer, Greene, and Trow to consider the comparative political and economic influences on educational systems and these systems’ reciprocal influence on societies. However, the study poses the question of how a particular nationalist state enhances its powers and reach, using the educational system as one of the tools in this struggle.<sup>16</sup> In a sense, the question here is in reverse of Archer’s.

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<sup>15</sup>See Martin Trow and Thorsten Nybom, *University and Society: Essays on the Social Role of Research and Higher Education* (London: Jessica Kingsley, 1991). On Trow’s analysis of the American higher educational system in the wake of the Carnegie Commission on Education, see Martin Trow, ed., *Teachers and Students: Aspects of American Higher Education* (San Francisco: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1973), especially the first two chapters.

<sup>16</sup>See Table 4 in Chapter 2 for a comparative depiction of the research problem.

While Archer wants to disentangle an educational system analytically from its political and economic origins, the present study seeks to return it to the web of power relations from which it emerges, to show that education is yet another expression of the state's ubiquitous reach.

The study claims that the University's establishment and operations may be traced to the aspirations of the state but seeks to show how these aspirations are to be expressed in complex ways in which systems of educational provision are related to other state activities, including those carried out by economic institutions established by the state. In this, the University has much in common with a gas-pipeline company established in the 1950s by the same government. Both organizations were part of a subtle yet effective program of meeting and challenging the federal government's powers where these powers were constitutionally clearest and of staking Alberta's claims to autonomy in terms of the province's political, economic, and social development.

#### AN OVERVIEW OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN ALBERTA

The higher education system in Alberta is homogenous in its structure. At the "top" of the structure are the four universities, including Athabasca University. The three "conventional" universities are as follows: the University of Alberta, which is the largest and oldest; the University of Calgary, the second in size and age, built in the 1960s; and the University of Lethbridge, built in the 1970s. Alongside these is Athabasca University, the smallest and least conventional of the higher-education institutions. The community college and technical schools, which are also part of the higher-education

system, have a historical and function connection to Athabasca University that will be discussed in Chapter 6. These institutions provide students with the opportunity to study in professional, vocational, and technical areas, while allowing also for transfer to university programs.

An analysis of systems of higher education must return frequently to the role of government in shaping the character of the system. As Becher and Kogan point out,

[g]overnment, itself, within the wider framework of public policy, makes its own judgments not only about the number of places to be provided in higher education, but also about the capacities, both quantitative and qualitative, of different types of institutions to meet those demands.<sup>17</sup>

Becher and Kogan take a structural approach to higher education, describing a model of how institutions, society, and government interact in creating and developing institutions of higher education. They describe the model's functions at the level of the individual, the "basic unit" (for example, a program of study, department, or course team), the institution, and the central authority (government or its delegate). These levels are described in terms of both their normative and operational modes. The normative mode is then classified into intrinsic and extrinsic aspects, providing a 12-cell model. The purpose of the model is to provide a basis for analyzing the workings of a complex, decentralized system. With its integrated set of power relations and allocation of tasks and resources, the model points to the considerable importance of the central

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<sup>17</sup>Tony Becher and Maurice Kogan, *Process and Structure in Higher Education* (London: Routledge, 1980), p. 51.

authority at all levels and in all interactions. Referring to the U.K. system of higher education, Becher and Kogan state that

since 1945, the central authorities mediate social and economic expectations through their allocative decisions, and . . . other levels in the model respond to pressures from the external environment.<sup>18</sup>

In the Alberta context, the role of the government will be considered thematically in the present study, though the government's interventions in the higher educational system will be considered as actions within a field of power that intersects with other fields of power in the regional political economy.

Peter Scott provides a model of higher education that charts the progression from elite- to mass-education systems within a national context.<sup>19</sup> His model is useful for helping to provide an initial, basic depiction for the Alberta context for higher education and the development it had experienced by the time that Athabasca University was planned for establishment. Scott refers to the following stages of development of systems of higher education:

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<sup>18</sup>Becher and Kogan 1980, p. 26.

<sup>19</sup>Peter Scott, *The Meanings of Mass Higher Education* (Buckingham: Society for Research into Higher Education and the Open University Press, 1995). For a discussion of the development of higher education systems with the same focus on the transition from elite to mass education, see also Martin Trow, "Problems in the Transition from Elite to Mass Higher Education," in OECD, *Policies for Higher Education* (Paris: OECD, 1974), pp. 51-101. For his part, Ulrich Teichler describes a staged development of higher education in Western industrial societies that is characterized by calls for rapid expansion and development of the system (1950s and 1960s); a search for new institutional structures and for educational practices, partly with the aim of accommodating increased student numbers (1960s and 1970s); and a passing from "euphoria" to "pessimism" about the anticipated funding, growth, and development of the system, and also about the prospects for higher education systems to act as a "social leveller" (1970s). "Buffer agencies" for higher education systems were typically abolished during this latter period. See Ulrich Teichler, *Changing Patterns of the Higher Education System: The Experience of Three Decades* (London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 1988), pp. 19-23.

*University-dominated systems* are characterized by the relegation of other institutions to the technical education or secondary sectors.

*Dual systems* deal with other institutions as part of the higher education system but the emphasis is still on a hierarchy of academic authority and status, with the universities maintained as the pre-eminent institutions.

*Binary systems* are characterized by two parallel systems, with traditional universities on the one hand and “alternative” institutions on the other. Scott points out that although this stage may initially employ the principle of complementarity between the two sectors, the drift will be towards competition between the two.

*Unified systems* are comprehensive systems of higher education in which both traditional universities and other institutions are embraced, but differences of reputation and status among institution types remain.

*Stratified systems* are developed as missions of institutions become differentiated, which occur as a result of either political action or changes in the educational market.<sup>20</sup>

Scott goes on to plot the national educational systems for several countries, with years in which significant change attended further differentiation of the system.<sup>21</sup> As Scott points out, qualifications of such a depiction are needed, to indicate that the model is intended to provide an analytical guide to developments and that nuances in the

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<sup>20</sup>Scott 1995, p. 37.

<sup>21</sup>Scott 1995, p. 38.

development of the system cannot be shown. As well, in some instances, the model cannot show the simultaneous development of more than one aspect of the system. For example, the development of the binary system with regard to universities may continue to develop in later stages, with bifurcation occurring as the traditional universities continue to diverge in structure and practice from their alternative counterparts.

In Alberta, the key dates to be considered for the charting of such a development of the higher education system are as follows.<sup>22</sup> The University of Alberta was the only university in Alberta from its inception in 1906 until the creation in 1965 of the University of Calgary. At about this time, the transition may be observed from a *university-dominated system* to a *dual system*, at which time the technical schools were planned for development in the province's two major cities and articulation between the universities and the other institutions began. In 1972, with the creation of Athabasca University, the era of an "alternative university" and the resulting *binary system* begins, as will be discussed in detail in subsequent chapters. Then, in February 1974 the provincial government proposed legislation that would have seen the Department of Advanced Education and Manpower "have the lead role in planning and coordinating an adult education system."<sup>23</sup> This meant that advanced education would have a manpower

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<sup>22</sup>Note that these events and dates are intended to help provide an introduction to the Alberta context and will be revisited in subsequent chapters of the thesis for further discussion.

<sup>23</sup>Ian Winchester, "Government Power and University Principles: An Analysis of the Battle for Academic Freedom in Alberta," in *The Independence of the University and the Funding of the State: Essays on Academic Freedom in Canada*, edited by Ian Winchester, pp. 41-59 (Toronto: OISE Press, 1984), p. 46.



planning role. The proposed *Adult Education Act* was intended, in effect, to remove the autonomy of the higher educational institutions, including the universities. After vehement opposition by the universities, the draft legislation was withdrawn in January 1976. From this point, however, the universities in the province were to be seen much more than they had been as part of a *unified system*, with the dismantling of the “buffer agency” of the Universities Commission occurring at about the same time. Finally, a *stratified system* becomes identifiable in 1994, with the provincial government’s increased use of differentiated mandates for institutions of higher education, including universities. Athabasca University’s mandate, for example, becomes more specifically focused on degree completion with the community colleges and on the application of learning technology.<sup>24</sup>

#### THE ARGUMENT

This study describes and analyzes the social process by which Athabasca University, a Canadian institution specializing in distance education, was established during the years 1970 - 75 and by which it developed in the years 1993 - 95. It considers how an educational institution is formed and how it persists, seeking to clarify the practical and theoretical nature of the tension between the type of *social origin* and the degree of *relative autonomy* of educational institutions. The University was established within a regional political economy by a process of “accommodation” to the material economy. During each of the two periods of the University’s history studied here, government officials

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<sup>24</sup>Document U6.

decided to close the institution. It will be shown that the University itself had a role in reversing that decision on both occasions.

The study will conclude that:

- Common political, social, and historical elements in the social origin of the University and the Company may be identified.
- The University and the Company were influenced significantly during two historical periods by shifts in state priorities.
- The two organizations displayed differing preferences for change strategy following from this shift in state priorities.
- The consumerist model of education developed at the University had important ideological and strategic aspects, especially in connection with the University's social origin and relative autonomy.

An analysis of the University's social origin must be based on an examination of the political economy of the region. Alberta is one of the 10 provinces in Canada, having joined the federal union in 1905. With a population of about 2.75 million, it is the third largest of the English-speaking provinces in Canada, after Ontario and British Columbia.

It will be argued that Athabasca University contributed to the political and economic process of building a kind of Alberta nationalism during the first period of 1970 - 75. State priorities in the province were changing to reflect the massive increases in revenues represented by the rapid development of the oil and gas industry. Before 1970, social, political, and economic priorities related to the allocation of resource rents within the domestic economy. Education had been one of the beneficiaries of state spending

in the “allocation state,”<sup>25</sup> which had begun in 1947 with the discovery of oil. However, this changed in the period of 1970 - 75, with a dramatic decrease in the proportion of state funds directed to education and a threat to close the University. There was a shift to a “production state.” In the production state, the new priority was to develop the domestic economy by means of “forward linkages,” such as adding value to petroleum products through the construction of refineries. At the same time, the era of “province-building” began in Alberta. Province-building was the predominant industrial strategy in the transition towards the production state. By province-building, the provincial government sought political and economic means by which the political and economic powers of the province could be strengthened, especially in relation to the powers of the federal government. The province-building strategy was supported by the ideology of provincial “proto-nationalism.”<sup>26</sup>

During the first period of interest to the study, 1970 - 75, revenue to the provincial government tripled, and expenditures more than doubled. Revenue to the province during the period rose from \$908 million to \$2.9 billion. The annual operating expenditures of the province rose during the same period from approximately \$813

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<sup>25</sup>The *allocation state* is a national government whose economic priorities are directed primarily towards the use of state revenues for domestic purposes. Relatively low taxation levels of the domestic economy and a political responsiveness towards domestic demands characterize the allocation state. The *production state*, on the other hand, taxes the domestic economy at a relatively higher level and directs its political and economic efforts towards the maximization of the revenues accruing from exports. Luciani's conception of allocation and production states is discussed in more detail later in this chapter.

<sup>26</sup>As will be discussed, Alberta does not constitute a nation, either constitutionally or culturally. The term *proto-nationalism* is used to denote the nationalist tendencies of a provincial government. The Alberta state sought many of the same political and economic goals of a fully developed nationalism and associated itself with a nationalist ideology. However, this ideology was modified from a fully nationalist ideology, as may be used to describe Quebec nationalism, for example; hence the term proto-nationalism.

million in 1970 to \$1.7 billion in 1975 as oil revenues increased following the OPEC oil crisis of 1973. Annual surpluses increased from approximately \$95 million to more than \$1 billion during the period, largely as a consequence of an increase in natural resource royalties payable to the province.<sup>27</sup>

In the later period of interest to this study of 1993 - 95, the annual revenue to the provincial government increased slightly from \$13.224 billion to \$13.427 billion. Annual operating expenditures during these years dropped from \$15.9 billion to \$12.7 billion as the province reduced its expenditures on domestic services. The annual deficit, in contrast with the surpluses of the 1970s, was \$3.7 billion in 1993. By 1995 a surplus was recorded of \$733 million.<sup>28</sup>

The University was established just as the process of change in the state's priorities began. Faced with the government decision to close the fledgling institution, the University responded by creating a consumerist model of education<sup>29</sup> by which it would have a particular role within the new "production state." This role, which was to fashion the "student as consumer," influenced the character of education within the political economy. An institution based on a consumerist educational model helped to create a

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<sup>27</sup>*Public Accounts of the Province of Alberta for the Year Ended March 31, 1970* (Edmonton, Alberta: Queen's Printer, 1970), p. 11, and *Public Accounts 1975-76, Volume 1* (Edmonton, Alberta: Province of Alberta, Provincial Auditor, 1976), p. 7.

<sup>28</sup>*Public Accounts, 1992-93, Volume 1, Consolidated Financial Statements of the Province of Alberta* (Edmonton: Alberta Treasury, 1993), p. 4, and *Public Accounts 1994-95, Volume 2, Financial Statements of the General Revenue Fund, Revolving Funds and Regulated Funds*, (Edmonton, Alberta: Alberta Treasury, 1995), p. 4.

<sup>29</sup>The structures and features of the consumerist model of education will be discussed in detail in Chapter 6.

view of education as serving the priorities of the state. This means that the “production” state was to be developed in part by the creation of a “production University.”

The principle of responding directly to market demand for courses was set early on in the University’s history. The mandate given the University by the provincial government to experiment with new “delivery methods” was modified to emphasize as well the principle of “open education,” by which any citizen could enroll in any course offered, in contrast with the more restrictive admissions policies of other universities in Canada.<sup>30</sup>

The interactions by individuals and groups in negotiating the consumerist model for higher education is examined through a review of historical materials and through carrying out interviews with individuals associated with the University’s establishment. The study considers the interactions of actors, the social structures within which a system of educational provision operates, and the historical processes through which change occurs.

Nationalist states may garner political support through the development of higher education in three ways. First, elites use the forum of ideas represented by institutions of higher learning as a site in which the “differences” of a particular nationalism may be articulated. If the project of nationalism is to persist, its supporting ideas must have a

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<sup>30</sup>All other universities in Canada, for example, require applicants to degree programs to have completed high school and to have achieved a minimum grade-point average.

relatively permanent location for their development.<sup>31</sup> This kind of support for nationalism is not discussed at length in this study. The notion of a “hot house” for nationalist ideas was not as important for the establishment of the University in this case. Alberta proto-nationalism does not carry the cultural identity that, for example, Quebec nationalism does, an identity that finds expression in university scholarship and teaching. Second, educational institutions may create a clientele committed to supporting the nationalist state. In establishing higher educational institutions that expand educational opportunities and create jobs, states may instill political support in those who teach and learn in those institutions. Third, and most importantly in the instance of the University, higher education is a public project whose expansion may give concrete substance to the predicted benefits of ideologies of nationalism. If the public project of higher education supports in broad terms the independence and autonomy of the state, broader political support beyond that given by teachers and students is possible. A view of the world may be instilled beyond the institution’s walls if a special role for education is created, a role that involves not only the broad aims of education but the narrower aims of the state. These narrower economic aims will be supported by the public if they are seen to be materially beneficial, thereby allowing education to provide indirect political support for

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<sup>31</sup>In *The Age of Revolution*, Hobsbawm states that nationalist movements have been characterized by “the educational progress of large numbers of ‘new men’ into areas hitherto occupied by a small elite. The progress of schools and universities measures . . . nationalism and especially universities become its most conspicuous champions” (pp. 133-35). The case of Canadian nationalism provides an example in this regard. Following the publication of T.H.B. Symons’ *To Know Ourselves: The Report of the Commission on Canadian Studies* (Ottawa: Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada, 1975), the federal department of the Secretary of State began funding “Canadian Studies” programs in universities across Canada in an effort to foster scholarship related to the Canadian collective identity.

the nationalist state. Province-building required showcases that would demonstrate the success of provincial economic development and the promise of further steps in the same direction. An analysis of the trajectory of a resource-based company that had a more direct function in extending province-building provides a comparative means of assessing higher education's role in supporting the ideologies of nationalism.

Just as the relative funding for education decreased dramatically in the 1970s, so, in the period of 1993 - 95, a decision was made again to close the University. In this later period, the internationalization of markets for the province's natural resources led the state to withdraw direct financial support from its province-building initiatives. An intensification of market influences took place, by which exports, rather than domestic political and economic influences, would "drive" the economy. To stave off closure, the University had in the earlier period adapted its educational model to find a place among province-building initiatives. Specifically, it had adopted a consumerist model of education. In the later period, the institution adopted a strategy of "technical change."<sup>32</sup> This strategy involved the continued centralization of operations, further development

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<sup>32</sup>The consumerist model had an ideological function, because it helped accomplish the transition from allocation to production and was also to provide a showcase for the strategy of province-building. However, the model was also a strategy, because it was used to forestall the exercise of power. Similarly, the technical change program was a strategy, intended to avoid the actions of government to close the institution. The strategy was also ideological, relying on accounts of organizational change that appealed to technocratic impulses. In the study, the distinction between the two is one of emphasis or relative degree. It is argued that the consumerist model of 1970 - 75 was *primarily* ideological and acted secondarily as a strategy. The technical change in 1993 - 95 was *primarily* a strategy, but it held ideological overtones, which, as it will be shown, were implicit or unstated.

of the core-periphery pattern of operations,<sup>33</sup> and curricular specialization. A prominent outcome of this strategy was the development of graduate programs, which had been expressly disallowed in the legislation of establishment.<sup>34</sup> The specialized curriculum and restricted admissions policies of the graduate programs represented a partial repudiation of the earlier adoption of “open education.” Yet in launching the graduate programs the University demonstrated its relative autonomy within the political economy, since such programs had been expressly proscribed in the 1970s legislation creating the University. The institution also demonstrated its relative autonomy in engaging in a technical change strategy that was different in kind from selected comparable systems of educational provision to be considered. Again, the comparative examination of a regionally based large company in the petroleum industry is used to sharpen the analysis of this phenomenon.

Table 1 summarizes the argument by reference to the research issues of the social origin and relative autonomy of the University, which are discussed further in the next section. In the table, the historical phase (either 1970 - 75 or 1993 - 95) is followed in turn by the research issue (social origin or relative autonomy), the relevant explanatory

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<sup>33</sup>The core-periphery pattern of organizational restructuring appears as employees are increasingly segregated into two groups: one consisting of permanent, full-time (mainly male) employees at “the core” and a larger group of temporary, part-time (mainly female) workers. For a discussion of the relationship of education and training to the core-periphery structure, see Keith Forrester and Kevin Ward, eds., *Unemployment, Education and Training: Case Studies from North America and Europe* (Sacramento, Cal.: Caddo Gap Press, Inc., 1991), p. 295.

<sup>34</sup>See Order in Council 1206/70, reprinted in Hughes 1980. The government’s intention of creating the University was to reduce the pressures of rapidly increasing enrollments. At the same time, as Byrne (1989, p. 20) points out, the government wished to avoid the costs of a new research university, complete with graduate programs.



factor to be discussed in the thesis, and the specific structural feature of the organization that was observed in connection with the relevant factor.

HISTORICAL PHASE	RESEARCH ISSUE	EXPLANATORY FACTOR	STRUCTURAL FEATURE OF THE ORGANIZATION
1970 - 75	Social origin of the University	Ideological contribution to production state	Consumerist model
1970 - 75	Social origin of the University	Proto-nationalism and province-building	Innovative structure ("radical" social institution)
1970 - 75	Relative autonomy of the University	Open educational admissions	Consumerist model
1993 - 95	Relative autonomy of the University	Expansion of consumerist model	Graduate programs
1993 - 95	Relative autonomy of the University	Independent strategy of technical change	Centralization, core-periphery, curricular specialization

■ *Table 1: Summary of the Argument*

As will be discussed in the next chapter, the research issues of social origin and relative autonomy are significant themes in the historical sociology of the emergence of social and economic institutions. They are problematics of educational institutions (such as the University) or systems of educational provision (for example, a nation's elementary schools or a company's training programs for workers). The explanatory factors are identified as relevant and significant to the respective research issues. They provide a departing point for explicating the research issues. The structural features of the organization refer to the University's actual constitution and operations. Within a historical phase, then, a structural feature of the organization may be analyzed to reveal a

possible causal link to a research issue, which is itself of direct relevance to the political economy. The first and third rows of the table may be used as an example of the relationship among the four columns. The question in row 1 is why Athabasca University was established in 1970 - 75 using the particular organizational form of a consumer model of education. The study argues that model was an outcome in part of a shift in state priorities, from allocation to production. Moving to row 3, it is proposed that the consumerist model was an outcome as well of a strategy of providing educational admission to all applicants 18 years or older who resided in Canada. However, in this case the consumerist model had relevance to the question of the University's relative autonomy. The new institution demonstrated its autonomy by using the consumerist model to expand educational access in a way that the production state did not necessarily intend.

In both periods, the study considers the function of the University within the political economy. On the one hand, the University's adaptations in first establishing the consumerist model of education and second in extending that model were means by which the state's priorities were enacted. On the other hand, however, the system of educational provision's capacity to "act back" on the political economy was demonstrated in the increased access to education represented by the consumerist model and by the relative autonomy of the institution in extending that model in a period of crisis. The state's priorities were to develop educational institutions, like other institutions, in a manner that contributed to the ideologies of, in the earlier period,

production, and in the later period, regulation, as discussed later in the chapter. The state's acceptance of the educational institution's autonomy was exchanged for the ideological contribution of the consumerist model.

As suggested in Table 1, the study is divided into two parts or phases. These phases provide the historical structure for a consideration of the research issues of social origin and relative autonomy.

In the first phase, a historical account is provided of the political-economic context within which the idea of educational reform developed in the region is studied. This is the period of 1970 - 75. In this period, it will be argued that there were important similarities between the University and the Company in terms of their social function and their social origin. It will be shown that the operation of the University provided political and social support for the ideology of proto-nationalism. To this end, causal relationships will be shown among the historical processes that gave rise to the University and comparative observations made on the social origin of the Company. It should be noted that the comparative observations in Chapter 5 are between the University and the Company as two *organizations*, one of which represents a dedicated system of educational provision. On the question of the relative autonomy of the University, this is explored in Chapter 6 through an examination of historical materials and by reference to an interview with the founding president of the University, T.C. Byrne.

The second phase of the study, 1993 - 95, concerns a recent period of three years, during which significant change took place in the two organizations. Chapter 7 is dedicated to a discussion of this phase in detail. Here, the Company's educational activities are compared with those at the University in an analysis of *systems of educational provision*.<sup>35</sup>

In both phases, evidence is adduced to describe and assess both the fields of power in which individuals and groups operated and the dispositions of actors within the field. The description will include reference to the process by which individuals and groups changed their locations within organizational and other social structures, which themselves were being transformed in the course of historical processes.

The first phase of the research, concerned with the years 1970 - 75, allows for a consideration of research issue 1 (social origin), to be discussed further below. For this research issue, it is argued that actors and groups were able to ensure the University's survival in a period of crisis. They did this by developing the consumerist model of education which carried with it ideological appeal for policy-makers and other influential actors. Both the first period and the second (1993 - 95) allow for a consideration of research issue 2 (relative autonomy), which also is discussed below, in which the degree of autonomy of the University is argued to be relative in degree to the institution's function within the regional political economy.

As will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 4 on methodology, the two historical periods are associated with different methodological emphases, with the first phase focusing on secondary historical materials and the second phase on primary materials. The distinction made here between primary and secondary sources applies as well between the two levels of analysis - comparing processes of change at the social and organizational levels. The political-economy approach of phase 1 emphasizes secondary historical materials. There is a shift to a set of microcomparisons at the organizational level in phase 2, and there is a corresponding emphasis on primary materials for this phase. However, these are only shifts of emphasis in the methodological approach, not a change of method. Reference to only one kind of evidence is not associated with either phase. For example, observations on the actual organizational structure of the University in 1970 - 75 are included; similarly, broad social comparisons drawn from historical materials are made in phase 2.

Having provided this statement of the structure and argument of the thesis, a summary of the research issues is now provided.

#### SUMMARY OF THE RESEARCH ISSUES

The study observes political and economic factors relevant to the process of the University's establishment and development at more than one level of society and organization. By viewing the problem at more than one level, the research assumes the

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<sup>35</sup>As will be noted again in Chapter 4, the use of the term *system of educational provision* instead of *educational system* allows for comparisons regarding the educational function between the University and other organizations whose primary activity is not education but which carry out educational activities as a secondary function.

relational nature of power.<sup>36</sup> At one level, the regional political economy is described with reference to the national political economy and, by extension, other “oil economies.” At another level, the contributions of key individuals, such as T.C. Byrne, the founding president of the University, are considered as well. Byrne's contribution is viewed with reference not only to the formal organizational role in which he found himself but also the personal views by which that role was constructed, both at the time of involvement and more recently. Ideology is given life in a society by the unnumbered actions and interactions of people and groups and in this sense is not a wholly abstracted concept. The discussion of Byrne's contribution is intended to illustrate the importance of the actions of individuals to the historical processes described here.

The period of establishment for the University, during the years of 1970 - 75, is important for analytical purposes, because during this period there was a possibility for a significant shift in the organization's mandate. Since the University was to have an innovative role within the regional society - focusing on distance and open learning - there was a debate concerning how, and even if, the new organization would be established. In 1970, the University was set up by legislative order in council.<sup>37</sup> By 1971, the possibility emerges of closing the institution before it begins operations. Competing groups could *contest* the mandate and governing structure of the institution during this period or by having the institution disestablished. In 1972, a pilot project is set up which

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<sup>36</sup>A relational view of power is one that seeks to analyze the proportional influence of actors and groups and attempts to describe the shifts, increasing or decreasing, in this proportional influence. The discussion of Bourdieu's paradigm of the field of power in Chapter 2 will develop further the concept of relational power.

<sup>37</sup>See the chronology provided at the beginning of Chapter 5 for a summary description of these events.

will illustrate various possibilities for the University's future. The first phase of the study is concerned with describing the social and organizational stakes for individuals and groups and what strategies were taken up to vie for these stakes.

The second period of 1993 - 95 was another significant period of transition for the organization. During this period, as in the first, a decision was made by a newly elected government to close the University. A redefinition of the University's role was devised during both eras. In each case, this new role appealed to government decision makers and led them to change their decision. As a result, the "rules of the game" changed for the institution and its employees. The means by which individuals and groups accomplished this reversal is related to the power that educational institutions exercise, relatively independently of their role in supporting the material economy. A related issue, then, to the first issue of *social origin* is *relative autonomy*.<sup>38</sup> The study seeks to clarify the process of both how an educational institution is formed and how it persists.

The social origin of a large pipeline company based in the same region is considered comparatively. The pipeline company is more directly connected to the economic priorities of the state than an educational institution is, because it operates to gather natural gas from throughout the province for delivery to export markets.<sup>39</sup> The pipeline

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<sup>38</sup>The University's autonomy is relative to other organizations and institutions, following from its constitution by actors and individuals who exercise power in different ways and at different times. The interdependence of individuals is described in Norbert Elias, *The Society of Individuals* (Cambridge: Basil Blackwell, 1991):

[T]he action of many separate individuals, particularly in a society as complex as our own, must incessantly link together to form long chains of actions if the actions of each individual are to fulfill their purposes (p. 16).

<sup>39</sup>The company will be considered as both an institution created in a parallel fashion to the University for the purposes of province-building but also as a site in which educational activities (through training programs for employees) took place, a distinction to be clarified later in the chapter.



company was established a decade and a half before the University, but during the period of 1970 - 75, it had a similar function within the regional political economy. Like the University, the Company received legislative and fiscal support in recognition of its contributions to the priorities of the production state. The comparative aspect of the research design has two purposes.

First, the relative importance of the University *as a system of educational provision*<sup>40</sup> may be considered through the comparative observations of the Company's establishment. It will be shown that another organization in an industry unrelated to education was established by a process similar to that of the University.<sup>41</sup> As a result, the question of the relative autonomy of the University can begin to be addressed, since the processes used to create and develop each organization may be assessed against the other. The social trajectory of the Company, in its direct tracking of state priorities to develop the oil and gas industry, may be used as a reference point for a consideration of the social trajectory of the University.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>40</sup>The term *system of educational provision* is used to refer to the University as an institution, and not in the sense of a national or regional set of related institutions (an educational system), with which Ringer is concerned. The usage here is more generic and is intended to allow for analytical comparisons with other, non-institutional, systems, including, for example, the training department of the pipeline company mentioned.

<sup>41</sup>In Chapter 5, it will be shown that during the 1970s the elites in Alberta intended to build an industrialized equivalent to the one in central Canada. The Alberta government would seek greater control over its regional economic development. One way to do this was to create Primus Corporation. Another means would be through exerting its influence on the provincial educational system.

<sup>42</sup>Chapter 4 will discuss in detail the logic of the comparative method being used. A "like" comparison is indeed being used here, but the basis for the selection is not the *institutional type* (by which another university, for example, might have been chosen) but the political economic *function*.

Second, the Company has a training department, as do almost all medium- and large-sized organizations in North America. In the second phase dealing with the years 1993 - 95, comparisons *between systems of educational provision* will be made, that is, between the University and the Company's training activities. It will be suggested that a *cultural change strategy* at the Company was used during this period. A cultural change strategy may be regarded as a plan for transition that is characterized by managerial efforts to influence individuals' assumptions and values within the workplace. A cultural strategy seeks to change the individual's relationship (or view of that relationship) to the following:

- him or herself
- his/her role and status within the organization
- others in the organization (for example, to members of a team)
- the political economy.

The cultural strategy acts directly on the values, goals, and orientations of individuals and groups, while having implications for organizational operations and processes.

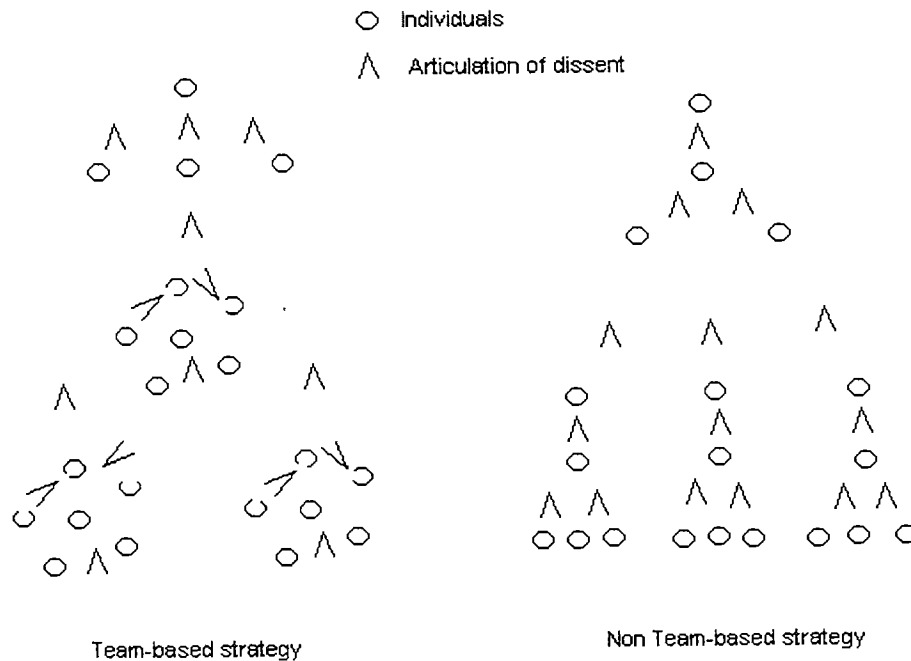
A *technical change strategy*, with which the cultural strategy may be contrasted, is to be defined here as a plan that is concerned with the technical and organizational context and environment. It focuses on such aspects of the organization as the following:

- technology implementation
- the relative centralization of operations
- the maximizing of work flows and interdepartmental coordination.

The technical change strategy acts directly on the organization and technology, but it has implications for individual and group values, goals, and orientations (in the vein of the cultural strategy). Both strategies, then, may change the assumptions and values of individuals in the workplace, since over a period of months and years such operational factors as the relative centralization of activities will influence individuals' view of their status in the workplace.

The cultural change strategy was used in the Company to unify disparate forces that were in tension: the limits of technicization (the degree to which technological change could not address fundamental conflicts between, for example, worker safety and cost cutting), the loss of managerial control, and the loss of individual commitment following from a strategy of quickly reducing the size of the workforce. The cultural strategy as it was applied within the Company had the potential for bureaucratizing or containing discontent. It is argued here that a team-based, or collectivist organizational environment, is one in which dissent is dissipated at a low level within the hierarchy. Educational activities were identified by managers as contributing to the development of this new culture, as will be discussed in Chapter 7. Figure 1 depicts the containment or dissipation of dissent made possible by a team-based strategy. The non-team-based

structure allows for conflict to flow up the hierarchy more quickly.



■ *Figure 1: Articulation of Dissent Under Two Organizational Change Strategies*<sup>43</sup>

In the team-based strategy, a managerial hierarchy still exists, as illustrated in the three senior managers reporting to the individual at the top of the figure. However, unlike the case in the non team-based strategy, conflict may be exhausted through interactions within the team. The team-based strategy emphasizes mutual responsibility for work carried out at the same level of the organization, which implies assessing blame at the same level.

<sup>43</sup>See Emile Durkheim, *The Division of Labor in Society*, translated by George Simpson (New York: The Free Press, 1933). As an alteration to the previous division of labour, the team-based strategy is presented here in the sense of Durkheim's notion of the division of labour as a *dévolement*: "[O]pponents are not obliged to fight to a finish, but can exist one beside the other" (p. 270). However, the strategy was imposed in this case, and for Durkheim, "the division of labor produces solidarity only if it is spontaneous and in proportion as it is spontaneous" (p. 377).

The University's response to the changing political economy was different, involving a technical strategy for change in which operations became increasingly centralized, instead of decentralized.<sup>44</sup> Furthermore, cultural values were not explicitly discussed.

However, as the University changed its methods of structuring and delivering educational activities, an inherent change in cultural values was evident. Through an accelerated application of educational technology and the first offerings in its history of graduate programs of study, the principle of equality of educational opportunity, which informed the University's early development, would be redefined as symbolism. The ideal of distance education as a progressive initiative remained for some staff members in 1993 - 95, some of whom had been employed with the University since 1975 or earlier. The University had been established at a time of great aspirations by educators, including those in Alberta. Experimental universities were being established in which equality of educational opportunity for citizens was discussed as a guiding design principle; new or reformed teaching methods were to be encouraged to achieve this aim. In the U.S., in Canada, and in the U.K., institutions were established in the wake of this enthusiasm. The University considered in this study is a variant within this trend. The principle of

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<sup>44</sup>Centralization was not an inevitable response to the changing political economy, although it may be an expected outcome of it. See Stephen Marglin, "What Do Bosses Do? The Origins and Functions of Hierarchy in Capitalist Production," in *The Review of Radical Political Economics* 5, no. 2: 60-112. Marglin argues that the social relations of a given historical period produce the technical methods characterizing the production process, and not the reverse. "The steam mill didn't give us the capitalist," he writes, "the capitalist gave us the steam mill" (104).

Organizations in the 1990s that have embarked on cultural change strategies tend to call for decentralization as part of the team-based approach. See Nigel Gilbert, Roger Burrows, and Anna Pollert, *Fordism and Flexibility: Divisions and Change* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1992). It will be argued in this study that the company's cultural strategy had

increasing access for lower social classes became a *symbol* during this period for offering graduate and other specialized programs for which a demand is demonstrated to exist but whose function is unlikely to be progressive in the sense considered by educational historians. A symbol was required to allow for the debate within the organization during 1993 - 95 to be focused on the proposition that access to educational opportunity, rather than response to a market demand, was the rationale for pursuing the new programs.

To explain this latter point concerning progressive properties of educational systems, Ringer defines three statistical properties of educational systems:

*inclusiveness*, measured in enrolments per age group, *progressiveness*, the degree to which students are recruited from the lower middle and lower classes, and *segmentation*, the subdivision of educational systems into parallel schools or programmes that differ both in their curriculum and in the social origin of their students.<sup>45</sup>

The remainder of this chapter discusses the research issues in more detail.

#### RESEARCH ISSUE 1: ORIGINS OF SYSTEMS OF EDUCATIONAL PROVISION

The first issue concerns the antecedents of systems of educational provision within a capitalist democracy. It asks the question, *Why did a system of educational provision (the University) emerge in the form it did at a given time and place?*

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ambiguous outcomes, with a degree of centralization settling over the programs of operation, including educational programs.

<sup>45</sup>Ringer 1987, p. 53.

The research issue of social origin is concerned with how the construction of the notion of educational reform was contested during a period in which the role of the state was changing and therefore the function of education within the society was being reconsidered. The legislation to create the University was passed in 1970, but an election which coincided with a deeper change in the role of the state, occurred in 1971. The University was formally established, but not yet operating, in the last days of a state whose priority was allocation. With the new state, the priority was production, and the new University sought to position itself between the oil industry and the rest of the economy in a way that would allow for its survival. As will be shown later in the study, the pilot project for the new University during 1970 - 75 had the objective of showing *that a market existed for the educational services that the University would provide*. This objective was accomplished in the development of a model of education in which the student chose courses and programs much as a shopper in a grocery store would.

The social origin of the University is parallel to the rise of other institutions and firms within the regional political economy that had a role in contributing to the development of an oil economy. Comparative analysis with the Company allows consideration of the means by which resource rents payable to the state within the regional economy were captured and consolidated. The Company represented the creation of a private monopoly for the transmission of a natural resource. It was a component of the political and economic strategy by which natural resources remained under the control of the provincial government. This effort was part of the

provincial government's strategy of *province-building*. Province-building was a means by which the provincial government sought to enhance its political and economic power within the Canadian federation.

The concept of province-building was introduced and developed by John Richards and Larry Pratt.<sup>46</sup> Richards and Pratt describe the techniques of province-building as primarily industrial, involving the creation of government agencies, Crown corporation, regulatory bodies, and so on. This study seeks to account in part for educational activities within the strategy. Province-building will be explained and discussed further for its significance for this study in Chapters 3 and 5.

While the Company allowed for the capture of rents, the University helped to accommodate relations between the provincial "state" and the "domestic market," as discussed by Luciani (see below). The domestic market is described here as a society in which demands for education were identified and served by institutions such as the University.

Luciani<sup>47</sup> categorizes the rentier oil-producing state in terms of its reliance on revenue from exports. He suggests that rather than just considering the degree to which oil provides revenues for a state, an analysis of the rentier state in oil-producing

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<sup>46</sup>John Richards and Larry Pratt, *Prairie Capitalism: Power and Influence in the New West* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Limited, 1979).

<sup>47</sup>Giacomo Luciani, "Allocation vs. Production States: A Theoretical Framework," in Hazem Beblawi and Giacomo Luciani, eds., *The Rentier State*, Vol. II of "Nation, State and Integration in the Arab World" (London: Croom Helm, 1987).



countries should look more specifically at whether or not the revenues are mainly produced from exports, as opposed to revenues flowing mainly from taxes on domestic economic activity. Luciani is concerned with the relative importance of exports to an oil-producing country. This distinction will determine whether or not the state will expend its financial resources in consolidating the domestic economy. Luciani uses the terms *allocation state* and *production state* to refer respectively to two kinds of oil-producing states:

A rentier or exoteric state will inevitably end up performing the role of *allocating* the income that it receives from the rest of the world. It is free to do so in a variety of ways; among the various purposes for which money is spent, the strengthening of the domestic economy may be included but not necessarily so. Even if this happens to be one of the goals of the state, as long as the domestic economy is not tapped to raise further income through domestic taxation, the strengthening of the domestic economy is not reflected in the income of the state, and is therefore not a precondition for the existence and expansion of the state (*italics added*).<sup>48</sup>

Luciani points out that the distinction being made refers not to whether a state allocates revenues to its domestic economy but to the *relationship* of the state to the domestic economy:

Clearly, all states aim at performing an allocative function, because in a sense this is what politics is about; and all states perform some allocative function. However, for those that depend on income from abroad, allocation is the only relationship that they need to have with their domestic economy; all others ride their domestic economies.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>48</sup>Luciani, p. 69.

<sup>49</sup>Luciani, p. 70.

The production state is one that “rides” its domestic economy by using industrial capacity to increase the level of exports. The relationship of the production state to its domestic economy is one that is concerned with developing domestic industry for the purpose of exports and taxing this industry at relatively higher levels than the allocation state.<sup>50</sup>

If a state receives more than 40 per cent of its revenues from foreign sources - and assuming that it spends most of this as a percentage of GDP rather than siphoning it to a dictatorial head of state, for example - Luciani refers to it as an allocation state. Using this definition, the province of Alberta functioned in the manner of an allocation state since the discovery of oil in 1947. This is illustrated in the percentage of receipts constituted by “minerals” (all non-renewable resources) within the province. This rose from 7.9 per cent in 1946 to 51.7 per cent in 1956.<sup>51</sup> It remained roughly between 40 and 50 per cent since that time, dropping to about 20 per cent in the early 1990s.

The initial establishment of the University in 1970 (which was to be followed by a pilot project by which the abandoned concept of a university could be revived) occurred while the province was fulfilling the role of allocation state under an ideology of

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<sup>50</sup>The allocation state can thus be seen to invest in the domestic economy in the expectation of being able to tax it at a later stage. The state emerged historically from the power to tax, and not the reverse, according to Schumpeter. See Joseph A. Schumpeter, “The Crisis of the Tax State,” in *The Economics and Sociology of Capitalism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991). The tax state arose out of feudalism as a function of financial need, without which “the creation of the modern state would have been absent” (p. 108). Schumpeter points to taxation as the means by which the power of the state was shored up at critical points in history:

Taxes not only helped to create the state. They helped to form it. The tax system was the organ the development of which entailed the other organs. Tax bill in hand, the state penetrated the private economies and won increasing dominion over them (p. 108).

individualism that mitigated against redistribution of income or wealth within the society. Education and health were two areas in which exceptions were to be made, since the government of the 1950s and 1960s shared some of the populist principles of the socialist government in Saskatchewan, the province bordering Alberta to the east.<sup>52</sup> Education and health were “allocations” that were justified under the state priorities of allocation. The revenues from natural resources under these priorities were allocated for activities for which a public benefit was identified. However, as shown in Table 2, *the portion of total expenditures by Alberta that was allocated to education fell from 33.4 per cent in 1971 to 17.2 per cent in 1975.*<sup>53</sup> The Progressive Conservative government elected in 1971 shifted spending from the areas of education and health to corporate subsidies and support for industry. During these years, 1970 - 75, the University’s status and mandate changed in response to the shift from allocation to production.

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<sup>51</sup>Ed Shaffer, “The Political Economy of Oil in Alberta,” in *Essays on the Political Economy of Alberta*, edited by David Leadbeater (Toronto: New Hogtown Press, 1984), p. 184.

<sup>52</sup>See Chapter 8 in Alvin Finkel, *The Social Credit Phenomenon in Alberta* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1989) for a discussion about the “debate about populism.” Finkel argues that the populism of the early Social Credit party in Alberta (until 1940) shared “programmatic and rhetorical similarities with the CCF [the socialist provincial government of Saskatchewan]” (p. 211), but that thereafter the Social Credit became more authoritarian and dogmatic as a consequence of its relatively weaker local provincial organization.

<sup>53</sup>These figures point to a significant change in proportional spending, not absolute spending. It was pointed out in previously that during 1970 - 75, annual operating expenditures by the provincial government more than doubled. Annual surpluses increased from approximately \$95 million to more than \$1 billion during the period, largely as a consequence of an increase in natural resource royalties payable to the province.

In the later period of interest to this study of 1993 - 95, the annual revenue to the provincial government increased slightly from \$13.224 billion to \$13.427 billion. Annual operating expenditures during these years dropped from \$15.9 billion to \$12.7 billion as the province reduced its expenditures on domestic services. The annual deficit, in contrast with the surpluses of the 1970s, was \$3.7 billion in 1993. By 1995 a surplus was recorded of \$733 million.

YEAR	INDUSTRY AND MANPOWER <sup>54</sup>	EDUCATION <sup>55</sup>
1971	0.7	33.4
1975	2.3	17.2

- *Table 2: Percentage of Total Alberta Expenditures for Industry and Manpower and Education, 1971 and 1975<sup>56</sup>*

In the period of 1993 - 95, the provincial government, in retreat from directly supporting province-building initiatives, sought to use regulation (legislation, technical regulation, boards of review, royalty structures, and so on) to maintain indirect control as part of a continued effort to extend provincial power. This period is called here the “regulation state.” A summary of the transition from the allocation state to the production and regulation states in Alberta and the respective government administrations is shown in Table 3.

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<sup>54</sup>In 1971, includes expenditures of the Department of Industry and Tourism and the Labour Department; in 1975, includes the expenditures of both the Department of Industry and Commerce and the Department of Manpower and Labour.

<sup>55</sup>In 1971, includes the expenditures of the Department of Education; in 1975, includes the expenditures of the Department of Advanced Education.

<sup>56</sup>Adapted from Shaffer 1984, p. 184.

PERIOD	GOVERNMENT ADMINISTRATION	ROLE OF STATE
1947 - 70	Social Credit	Allocation
1971 - 1992	Progressive Conservative	Production
1993 - present	Progressive Conservative	Regulation

■ *Table 3: Shift of State Priorities in Alberta, 1947 - present*

The drop in the proportion of state spending on education is critical for the argument presented, because it provides a particular focus on the question of the social origin of the University. If relative spending on education had been maintained or increased, the new institution could have been viewed as an enhancement to the existing higher educational system in the province. It could have been viewed, that is, as fulfilling the allocation function of the state, spending, perhaps lavishly, in ways that met the demands of the domestic market. However, the drop in proportional spending on education suggests another account. This is that the new University provided a model of how new technologies and methods of education could reduce the costs of education (a model that could be adopted at other educational institutions), while also providing an example of how the higher educational curriculum could be more easily directed towards areas of priority for the state, such as technical and vocational training. The

University's continued existence was accomplished through the creation of this new educational model. In this way, the University supported the political, economic, and social aspirations reflected in the ideology of province-building.

The production state represented a plan to diversify the economy through industrialization, primarily through the forward linkages (adding value to the primary resource) of petroleum refining and processing. Refineries were built, for example, in an effort to "sow the oil" (use oil revenues to create new sources of economic activity) and export value-added products. The Company was intended to be part of this strategy, with its concentration on producing plastics and other petroleum-based synthetic materials. Writing in the 1980s Shaffer stated that

The industrialization drive, if successful, will come about not in the way suggested by the staple theory, that is, by the "automatic" linkages of the market mechanism. It will come about despite the presence of "foreign factors". . . . It will come about because "socialization" of the economic rents opens the possibility for a new, indigenous industrial class to arise through the use of the state mechanism and it is this possibility that is consistent with Lenin's view that the export of capital gives rise to new capitalist classes.<sup>57</sup>

When Shaffer refers to "industrialization" and "socialization of the economic rents" he is describing the process that Luciani would associate with a "production state." These are the techniques used to create a production state. The new capitalist classes that Shaffer refers to are those white-collar workers who acquire economic benefits in a production state. He notes that the "market mechanism" would not function

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<sup>57</sup>Shaffer, p. 186.

automatically to create an economic environment that would favour the “new capitalist classes.” Instead, “socialization” of the economic rents by the creation of institutions to support industrialization would accomplish the objective.

Without the transition from allocation to production (that is, if the province had continued to function as an allocation state), the University’s establishment would have been different in two ways. First, instead of the focus on sociotechnical methods (for example, the application of technology to learning and an exclusive emphasis on distance education) there would have been demands for a larger number of “traditional” places in higher education. The organizers of the University’s pilot project during 1970 - 75 had to travel the province in order to document the “market demand” for distance education, suggesting that the demand was not immediately apparent. There was no significant professional lobby or demand for innovative delivery methods among academic staff. Presumably, the University under the allocation state would have been less likely to seek such delivery methods as part of its mandate. Second, the consumerist model, to be described in Chapter 6, would probably not have been adopted under an allocation state. The consumerist model assumed a demand for “more education” but responded in a fashion that regulated or narrowed the policy options for the University. A unicameral governance model,<sup>58</sup> innovative delivery methods, and an early emphasis on vocationalism in the curricular plan were part of the process of constructing a consumerist model of education that would find a place in the production state.

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<sup>58</sup>See the next section of this chapter for a discussion of the term *unicameral governance*.

## RESEARCH ISSUE 2: RELATIVE AUTONOMY OF SYSTEMS OF EDUCATIONAL PROVISION

As discussed in the previous section, the social origin of the University may be explained in part as a product of a process of transition in the political economy of the region. Systems of educational provision respond to the demands of the material economy.<sup>59</sup> The second research issue implies a qualification of the premise of functionalism. It asks, *What escapes the power of the state to limit the relative autonomy of systems of educational provision?* The origins and development of the University must be explained in part by reference to the limits within which individuals and groups were able to act in pursuit of specific strategies. These strategies, in turn, must be accounted for in the context of political and social factors.<sup>60</sup>

The relative autonomy of the University within the provincial educational system<sup>61</sup> is limited by the fact that as a university, its formal structure tends to allow for proportionally more influence by the state than is possible at other universities and that expression or presentation of the interests of faculty, staff, and students is curtailed more than it is at other universities in Canada..

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<sup>59</sup>See Becher and Kogan 1980, *op. cit.*, p. 26.

<sup>60</sup>See Norbert Elias, *What Is Sociology?*, translated by Stephen Mennell and Grace Mirissey with a Foreword by Reinhard Bendix (London: Hutchinson, 1970), p. 15. The conception of "figuration of interdependent individuals" as developed by Elias is relevant here. The independence of actors and groups in establishing the University that is referred to here is *relative*. The consumerist model of education ensured that the new University would have a functional "space" within which such "independence" could be demonstrated. However, as noted previously, if the University had been established under different social conditions, that is, if the figuration of actors/groups and their interests had been different, the relative freedom to act in support of the University might have been more limited than it was.



The extent of the University's formal autonomy is in some ways unique and in some ways similar to other universities in Canada. First, the University is similar in most of its basic academic structures and practices. It awards degrees to students who complete a set group of courses. It is organized in a way that reflects the academic disciplines that form streams of study within the degree programs. It seeks to combine the pursuit of knowledge through research and the dissemination of knowledge through teaching. Its uniqueness is based, first, on its dedication to nontraditional delivery methods: distance delivery, whether by correspondence, computer, television, or radio. Indeed, its routine use of such terms as *delivery methods* is characteristic of its particular mandate and style of operations. Second, however, the University has no senate, a situation that is unusual in Canada.<sup>62</sup> The legislation by which the University was created allowed for only a *unicameral* system of governance. The new university was given a centralized governance structure so that the mandate for innovative delivery would be maintained. With no senate, the powers of the governing board are not balanced directly by interests as defined by faculty, staff, and students. The governing board, made up mainly of members of the public appointed by government, has ultimate powers of budget and of academic planning, although some of the latter powers are routinely

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<sup>61</sup>As David M. Cameron points out, the Canadian federal system reveals a "remarkable respect for institutional autonomy." See David M. Cameron, "Higher Education in Federal Systems: Canada," in *Higher Education in Federal Systems: Proceedings of an International Colloquium Held at Queen's University, May 1991* (Kingston, Ontario: Queen's University 1992), p. 52.

<sup>62</sup>Universities in Canada generally have a senate made up mainly of academic staff. The senate has significant power to make decisions about academic matters. At the University of Alberta, the body with senate powers is the General Faculties Council. A notable exception to the existence of a senate is the University of Toronto, whose unicameral governing structure will be discussed further in Chapter 7.

delegated to management and to academic staff. During the period of 1993 - 95, the centralized governance structure was crucial in allowing for rapid changes in operations, in particular, the establishment of the graduate programs.

The University is self-governing in that the provincial government does not develop specific policy for the institution. However, through the Department of Advanced Education and Career Development (DAECD)<sup>63</sup> the government does develop policy for a provincially integrated higher educational system, which includes the University. The DAECD has the power to recommend and oversee the opening and closing of provincial institutions of higher education.<sup>64</sup> The DAECD provides direct and indirect funding to the province's universities, community and regional colleges, technical institutes, and vocational schools. This funding is provided by an appropriation from the provincial legislative assembly, after its approval by the cabinet, to each institution each year. Policy concerning the scope and nature of academic programs is vetted and approved by a central staff of the DAECD, which is headed by a minister and senior deputies. The policy and funding process thus have an influence on what the University does or is allowed to do. In broad terms the province has the power to see that the

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<sup>63</sup>Until the 1960s, a "buffer agency" was characteristic of all provincial higher education systems except Newfoundland (Cameron 1992, p. 52). The buffer agency planned and recommended funding for the universities in each province. As in other matters of provincial activity, Alberta was the first out of the gate in dismantling its buffer agency, the Universities Commission, in the early 1970s. Since then, almost all the other provinces have followed suit, preferring to vest powers of planning and funding of the system to a department of the provincial government. See Cameron 1992 for a discussion of other similarities among provincial systems of higher education in Canada.

<sup>64</sup>During the budget reduction process on which the province embarked in 1993, it was widely believed that the government had decided to close the University. That point was never denied or affirmed by the provincial government. However, those applying in the search for a new University president two years later were offered a letter from the government assuring the candidate that the government would *not* close the University.

mandate of the University is fulfilled in a way that satisfies the economic and political goals of the province within the Canadian federation.

Within the priorities of the DAECD, the universities are linked with the other post-secondary educational institutions, oriented towards offering vocational, technical, and career programs. (A separate provincial government department is responsible for funding and operating the elementary and high school - kindergarten to Grade 12 - educational system.) In effect, the DAECD has a role in monitoring the development of the workforce so that its skills and knowledge are oriented to the requirements of an economy whose primary industry is the extraction and upgrading of natural resources. Since the 1940s, the makeup of the workforce has been determined in significant part by the nature of the oil and gas industry. The proportion of agricultural workers has decreased markedly in Alberta, especially in comparison to the proportion found in the two neighbouring prairie provinces. Shaffer points out that between 1941 and 1971, the proportion of agricultural workers in Alberta decreased from 49 per cent to 13 per cent. By comparison, in Saskatchewan and Manitoba the rate dropped only to about 20 per cent.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>65</sup>Shaffer, p. 174.

International comparisons suggest that the influence of states on the social functions of educational systems is not likely to be a direct one.<sup>66</sup> Pierre Bourdieu argues that the relative autonomy of an educational system is only “apparent,” so as to ensure that the system continues to accomplish its function of carrying out social reproduction. If educational systems were “actually” autonomous, social reproduction in the form of inculcating attitudes and values that are consonant with the reproduction of power relations might be hampered.<sup>67</sup> Considering the schooling system in England, Simon states

The English experience . . . tends to the conclusion that education has a large degree of autonomy from the economic base. The forces involved in restructuring and systematization are political and social rather than economic.<sup>68</sup>

The new University was touted as a means by which “vocation and liberal education” would become indistinguishable,<sup>69</sup> suggesting a key role for business leaders and advocates. Yet a key informant states that as founding president of a University

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<sup>66</sup>There are some direct influences, but these are likely to be exercised occasionally, as is the case of legislation for creating an institution or amending mandates. See Simon (1994), p. 29, who argues that there is also an indirect influence of economic structures on educational institutions. For Bowles and Gintis (1976), the stratification of social class is reflected in the stratification of schools, colleges, and universities, whereby the educational system tends to “produce” compliant industrial workers.

<sup>67</sup>Pierre Bourdieu and Jean-Claude Passeron, *Reproduction* (London: Sage, 1977), p. 194. Also see Martin Trow, “Defining the Issues in University-Government Relations: An International Perspective,” in *Studies in Higher Education* 8 (1983), no. 2: 115-28. For Trow, a significant support for university autonomy resides in the faculty:

[T]he chief protection of the autonomy of the universities lies in the expertise of their staffs; where scholars and scientists are recognised authorities on their own subjects no one else, inside government or out, can tell them with greater intellectual authority what to teach or how, or how to conduct research and on what problems (p. 122).

<sup>68</sup>Brian Simon, *The State and Educational Change* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1994), p. 44. A contrasting view is that of Louis Althusser, whose *Essays on Ideology* (London: Verso, 1984) states that the school has replaced the church as the dominant “ideological state apparatus” (p. 17).

concerned with the application of technocratic principles in commercializing education, he had no significant contact, not even informal or personal, with business elites.<sup>70</sup>

Systems of educational provision are partly determined by their function within the economy and partly act as autonomous social institutions that themselves influence the economy.<sup>71</sup> This set of relationship is discussed by Ringer and will be one of the themes in Chapter 3. Ringer argues that in exercising an integrating function within the political economy, individuals and groups within an educational system tend to act in the absence of direct constraints or prescription.<sup>72</sup> In his study of French educational system in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Ringer observes comparatively that a “mandarin culture” emerged during the same period in Germany, consisting of professors, but also of civil servants, lawyers, doctors, secondary teachers, and Protestant pastors. The mandarin culture functioned as a status elite rather than as an economic class. As a status elite, this group did not exercise direct control over the development of the German economy. Instead, it exercised influence and maintained its high social position through its development of a culture by

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<sup>69</sup>L.J. Hughes, *The First Athabasca University* (Edmonton: Athabasca University, 1980), p. 76.

<sup>70</sup>Interview with TB, 6 July 1996.

<sup>71</sup>See Ralph Miliband, *The State in Capitalist Society: The Analysis of the Western System of Power* (London: Quartet Books, 1969), p. 227:

Both in the appointment of their teachers and in the content of their teaching, universities in the countries of advanced capitalism do retain a very wide degree of formal and actual autonomy - very often an all but absolute autonomy. But that autonomy all the same is exercised within a particular economic, social and political context which deeply affects the universities. . . . [B]oth university authorities and teachers endorse the context, are *part* of it, and exercise their autonomy in ways which are congruent with that context. . . . (p. 227).

<sup>72</sup>Fritz Ringer, *Fields of Knowledge: French Academic Culture in Comparative Perspective, 1890-1920* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), p. 5.

which economic class stratification was maintained. As regards educational systems, a central element in this status elite's ideology was *Bildung*, or "cultivation."<sup>73</sup> The ultimate goal of education was for the student to develop so that he or she could experience fully the aesthetic and moral ideals expressed in society's canons. French "positivism," on the other hand, presented the educational goal of interaction with a text, instead of with the "great minds" that produced them.<sup>74</sup>

In both societies, Ringer points to the importance of a national culture<sup>75</sup> as a formative influence on the respective theories of education (and the practices) that characterized the development not only of the educational systems in the two countries but their political and economic fate as well. To repeat: in the German educational system, the student's interaction with "great minds" was mediated by literary and scientific texts, while in France the text was to be read largely in isolation from the

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<sup>73</sup>See Norbert Elias, *The Civilizing Process: State Formation and Civilization*, translated by Edmund Jephcott with some notes and revisions by the author (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1982). The German educational sensibility of deferring to the great texts/minds of the society was a characteristic of a more general social sensibility, which developed from a structure of social order different from that of England or France. Elias notes that in Prussia/Germany of the Middle Ages,

the army led by the nobility, by privileged classes, was, like the powerful police force, of the utmost significance for the social personality structure of its people. This structure of the monopoly of physical force did not, however, compel individual people to adopt the same kind of self-control as in England. It did not force individuals to become integrated in relations of "teamwork" based on a high degree of individual self-control and self-attunement to others; instead, it habituated the individual from childhood on to a very much higher extent to a strict order of superiority and inferiority, an order of obedience and command on many levels (p. 317).

<sup>74</sup>Ringer states that, "At some level . . . French reformist social science bracketed the hermeneutic distance between particular readers and particular texts" (p. 315).

<sup>75</sup>The term used by Ringer here is *habitus*, following the usage of Pierre Bourdieu. The term *culture* may be an adequate translation, as suggested by R. Jenkins, *Lads, Citizens and Ordinary Kids* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1983), p. 7. Jenkins substitutes the term *culture* for the term *habitus* in his study of Irish youth, while retaining Bourdieu's theoretical concerns for fields of power and the uses of cultural capital. The same approach is taken here, while recognizing that *habitus* will emphasize the inculcated *subject*, while *culture* is more often taken to refer to the *object* of "durably installed training."

biography of the author. The reasons for this difference had to do with the historical and cultural background to the educational systems. Ringer uses as documents the testimony of French academics before the Ribot Commission of 1899 on educational change.<sup>76</sup> The French academics, when compared with German academics, were more likely to refer to the political dimension of their proposed changes:

They wrote as if more fully aware than their German counterparts that they were participating in a political confrontation, which was a species of class conflict as well. This was probably true in part because they had experienced the direct impact of changing parliamentary majorities upon educational policy. The political system in which they participated trained them, as well as their audiences, to see educational alternatives as political ones; they were almost forced to state their positions accordingly.<sup>77</sup>

The national culture, which Ringer describes, instilled a disposition towards certain possible alternatives for reforming educational systems and away from others. Certain policy options become appear more attractive to actors and groups. It is in this social context that the relative autonomy of a system of educational provision is exercised. The fact that actors at the University were not directly influenced by those advocating a particular social role for the institution (and in particular towards the consumerist model and an emphasis on vocational curricula), as Byrne suggests, leads to the supposition that the figuration of actors and their preferences is a useful exploratory model.

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<sup>76</sup>The Ribot Commission inquired into possible changes in the national educational system in France, an initiative that was given impetus by the industrial transformation of Europe at the end of the nineteenth century. The parallel commission in Canada was, as noted earlier, the Royal Commission on Industrial Training and Technical Education of 1913.

<sup>77</sup>Ringer 1992, pp. 159-60.

## CONCLUSION

The study will argue that the University was established within more than one field of power and that these fields of power within the regional political economy are useful conceptually for an analysis of social and economic institutions that have their origins in that political economy. The higher educational field of power will be examined to reveal the state policy that gave rise to Athabasca University. However, the study will go beyond this to examine the relations of the University to other organizations and institutions within the same regional political economy. In considering these fields of power, Athabasca University and Primus (the pipeline company), will be argued to be parallel in their role as tools of the state in enhancing provincial power within the Canadian federation. The organizations enacted, in some ways in concert, the aspirations of a province-building state. As these aspirations waned, so did the possible prospects for the two organizations.

The shifts in the cultural market that have accompanied the process of historical change described in this chapter will be considered throughout the study as a means of exploring the application of Pierre Bourdieu's theory of cultural capital. Such a shift, along with the implications for education that such a shift represents, is introduced by way of theory in Chapter 2 and is developed further in Chapter 6, in which the consumerist model of education is considered in detail.

The political economic changes in Alberta during the periods of 1970 - 75 and 1993 - 95 were significant for systems of educational provision because they



signalled a re-valuing of educational activities within the cultural market. In the earlier period, the state's priorities turned *from* the allocation of tax resources to the domestic economy *to* the productional capabilities of the domestic economy for the purpose of expanded exports. Educational activities - including most conspicuously the granting of educational credentials, such as university degrees - became harder to obtain. This is because the expansion of educational institutions was being temporarily curtailed. At the same time, the jobs and other economic or cultural benefits that educational activities were able to secure for their holders became scarcer, as a result of the relatively higher level of educational attainment of the population. The "inflation" that occurred in the cultural market meant that degrees were harder to obtain but at the same time were becoming less valuable to those who obtained them. The consumerist model of education was developed in response to this change in the value of cultural capital.

It will be argued that the main accommodation carried out by the University during the period of 1993 - 95 was to reinforce its identity, established already in 1970 - 75, as a consumerist system of educational provision. In such a system, the student exercised the prerogatives of a shopper, choosing which courses to pursue and when. An open admissions policy provided for anyone 18 years of age or older to register in a course or program. The creation of new graduate and other specialized programs extended the choices open to the student/consumer, in areas that had not been widely served by other Canadian educational institutions. The result of this further development of the

consumerist model was, as in 1970 - 75, to purchase organizational survival.

During both periods, the “inflationary” trend in the value of university degrees occurred, but the shift towards regarding these degrees as items for consumption took hold more fully for citizens and the demand for educational activities remained strong. The long-term result of this trend towards education as an item for consumption may, in fact, have a cultural effect that is unintended by the state. Educational activities that are seen as having intrinsic worth to the individual may take on increased value in the cultural market than those that have status only as they are seen to contribute in a direct or indirect way to the operation of the economic and administrative systems.

Looking forward to the chapters following, the contributions of previous studies by theorists of education to the research issues are discussed in Chapter 2. The relations of education and power are the focus for this chapter, which outlines Bourdieu’s paradigm of the field of power, as well as the empirical work on education that has been done by Bowles and Gintis, Collins, and Ringer.

Chapter 3 turns to the national context for educational systems and provides a historical background for the functional role for education in the province of Alberta’s political economy, informed by C.B. Macpherson’s political economy of the province.

Chapter 4 discusses the research plan that was used for exploring the research issues, describing the methods for gathering data. The logic of comparison that is used in the study is covered in relation to the disciplinary contributions of historical

sociologists, including most notably Theda Skocpol. Table 5 in that chapter summarizes the empirical and methodological focus for Chapters 5 through 7.

Chapter 5 develops a political economy approach to the question of the social origin of the University, drawing on Mayer Zald's framework for accounting for a political economy. Chapter 6 deals with the research issue of social origin as well as that of relative autonomy by turning to a detailed discussion of the adoption and development of the consumerist model for the University in 1970 - 75, arguing that the consumerist model both purchased the organization's survival and demonstrated its capacity to act, if only in a limited way, as an autonomous institution.

Chapter 7 compares in detail the University and the Company as two systems of educational provision. The focus is on the organizational response of the two systems within the regional political economy during a period of social, economic, and political change. As noted previously, the two systems of educational provision adopted different organizational strategies during the period of 1993 - 95, with the University following a course of technical change and the Company embarking on a strategy of cultural change.

Chapter 8 is a summary chapter which includes a set of conclusions and sensitizing topics.

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## CHAPTER 2: EDUCATION AND POWER

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### INTRODUCTION

This chapter discusses how education supports or modifies social processes of change and the ways that it is influenced by these processes. To begin with, the primary theoretical questions called up by a consideration of the sociogenesis and development of an educational institution are considered. The broader theoretical concerns of power and culture are discussed, as well as the ways that Bourdieu's habitus allows for a consideration at once of both power and culture in a given historical era. This is followed by a discussion of basic concepts of social structure, which, by way of introduction, will be of relevance to the rest of the chapter. These structures are capitalism, the state, social class, and the market.

The model of relational power, as developed by Pierre Bourdieu, is then introduced and its significance to the research issues described. Finally, three theoretical approaches to the development of systems of educational provision - those of Bowles and Gintis, Collins, and Ringer, but with subsidiary references as well to Durkheim and Foucault - are then discussed, along with an introduction that distinguishes the approach taken in

this study from these three orientations.

#### POWER, CULTURE, AND HABITUS

Social order and social conflict are meta-concerns of the social sciences. Integration theories of society see social structures as constituting a functionally integrated system, which operates by means of self-balancing patterns and processes. Coercion theories characterize social structure as operating by means of a process of change, which arises from the use of violence or threatened violence, along with repressive forms of restraint and regulation. For Dahrendorf, the two types of social theories should be complementary and not antipathetic:

There are sociological problems for the explanation of which the integration theory of society provides adequate assumptions; there are other problems which can be explained only in terms of the coercion theory of society; there are, finally, problems for which both theories appear adequate. For sociological analysis, society is Janus-headed, and its two faces are equivalent aspects of the same reality.<sup>78</sup>

Writing in 1959, during a period when the work of Talcott Parsons was still central to American sociological research agendas, Dahrendorf noted that integration theories of society were, at the time, dominating sociological thinking. He advocated in contrast an approach that recognized the “dialectics of stability and change, integration and conflict, function and motive force, consensus and coercion.”<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>78</sup>Ralf Dahrendorf, *Class and Class Conflict in Industrial Society* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1959), p. 159.

<sup>79</sup>Dahrendorf 1959, p. 163.

Such an approach to theories of society reflects a multi-dimensional view of power. A social theory that represents the consideration of both integration and conflict must show the variable uses of power by individuals and groups and must also be capable of demonstrating the structuring and structured nature of power. Such a view of power was reflected in Lukes' conception of "three-dimensional view of power."<sup>80</sup> Lukes advanced the three-dimensional view as a critique of what he called the one- and two-dimensional views of power. A one-dimensional view focuses primarily on the behaviour of political actors in making decisions on key issues, in which conflict and interests are overt.<sup>81</sup> The two-dimensional view provides a limited critique of the behavioural focus of the one-dimensional view, identifying both decision-making and *non*-decision-making as being relevant to the exercise of power, as well as *potential* issues (to be added to the ones actually articulated in political participation) and the possibility of covert conflict.<sup>82</sup>

The three-dimensional view of power proposed by Lukes critiques the behavioural focus of the other two view by focusing on the following:

- (a) decision-making and control over political agenda (not necessarily through decisions)
- (b) issues and potential issues

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<sup>80</sup>Steven Lukes, *Power: A Radical View* (London: Macmillan, 1974).

<sup>81</sup>For Lukes, the following work provides an exemplar of the one-dimensional view of power: Robert Dahl, *Who Governs? Democracy and Power in an American City* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1961).

<sup>82</sup>Lukes cites the following as a study representative of the two-dimensional view of power: Peter Bachrach and Morton S. Baratz, *Power and Poverty: Theory and Practice* (New York: University Press, 1970).

(c) observable (overt or covert) and latent conflict

(d) subjective and real interests<sup>83</sup>

Lukes' conception of power identifies clearly the structural aspect of power. Power may be analyzed with reference to social and economic structures, as well as in connection to the actions of individuals in making decisions. As well, the "real interests" of actors that Lukes identifies as being crucial to the exercise of power has implications for both those exercising power and those being acted upon. The real interests of those exercising power may be latent, that is, identifiable even though invisible to those being acted upon. As well, for those being acted upon, *their* real interests may be assessed even though they are not articulated in political discourse. For Lukes, "the identification of [the interests of excluded groups] ultimately always rests on empirically supportable and refutable hypotheses."<sup>84</sup>

The shifts in the exercise of power that Dahrendorf described as a dialectic between certain poles (integration and conflict, consensus and coercion, and so on) are described by Norbert Elias, using the analogy of a game to elucidate his conception of power. The game provides the model of the interdependent nature of society:

We depend on others; others depend on us. In so far as we are more dependent on others than they are on us, more directed by others than they are by us, they have power over us, whether we have become dependent on them by their use of naked

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<sup>83</sup>Lukes 1974, p. 25.

<sup>84</sup>Lukes 1974, p. 25.

force or by our need to be loved, our need for money, healing, status, a career, or simply for excitement.<sup>85</sup>

Elias uses the term *figurations*<sup>86</sup> to illustrate the interdependence of individuals and groups in a society. These figurations, including the cultural patterns that characterize their combination and recombination, provide the empirical subject for the social scientist. The three-dimensional power conceived of by Lukes, with its depiction of *potential* issues and *latent* conflict, may be combined with the figurations of Elias to form a sophisticated model for a consideration of the problem in the present study. The social origins of institutions is assessed as a shifting interplay of interests and actions. The relative autonomy of these institutions is a significant issue as well because the power exercised by one interdependent actor will, by definition, affect the power exercised by another. Elias notes that using the game model,

the concept of “power ratios” is replaced . . . by the term “relative strength of the powers” . . . . [A] player’s playing “strength” varies in relation to his opponent’s. The same goes for power. . . .

In this model as well, the cultural dispositions of actors is an important subject of inquiry, because these dispositions can help to explain the social structures observed. In turn, social structures influence dispositions. In the interplay of these two phenomena -

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<sup>85</sup>Norbert Elias, *What Is Sociology?*, translated by Stephen Mennell and Grace Morrissey, with a Foreword by Reinhard Bendix (London: Hutchinson, 1978), p. 93. See Chapter 3 of Elias for a discussion of game models and their relation to studies of social power.

<sup>86</sup>See Elias 1978, p. 15, for a detailed description of the concept of figuration, including a much-reproduced graphical depiction:



the subjective actor and objective social structure - Bourdieu, like Elias, finds sport and “the game” to be useful analogies:

Produced by experience of the game, and therefore of the objective structures within which it is played out, the “feel for the game” is what gives the game a subjective sense - a meaning and a *raison d'être*, but also a direction, an orientation, an impending outcome, for those who take part and therefore acknowledge what is at stake. . . . And it also gives the game an objective sense, because the sense of the probable outcome that is given by practical mastery of the specific regularities that constitute the economy of a field is the basis of “sensible” practices, linked intelligibly to the conditions of their enactment, and also among themselves, and therefore immediately filled with sense and rationality for every individual who has the feel for the game (hence the effect of consensual validation which is the basis of collective belief in the game and its fetishes).<sup>87</sup>

Bourdieu’s game analogy is used to describe what he has called *habitus*, which is “a realistic relation to what is possible, founded on and therefore limited by power.”<sup>88</sup>

Habitus is used to denote the relations between cultural practices and the exercise of power. Cultural practices constitute the mode in which power is exercised. An example from the Algerian Kabyle culture of the associations between the cycle of weaving and the cycle of human life can be considered. Bourdieu argues that there are psychological correspondences among the three cycles noted below:

loom → weaving

field → corn

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[P]eople . . . are directed towards and linked up with each other in the most diverse ways. These people make up webs of interdependence or figurations of many kinds, characterized by power balances of many sorts, such as families, schools, towns, social strata, or states. Every one of these people is, as it is often put in a reifying manner, an ego or self. Among these people belongs also oneself.

<sup>87</sup>Pierre Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice*, translated by Richard Nice (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990), p. 66.

<sup>88</sup>Bourdieu 1990, p. 65.

woman → child

The psychological correspondences of these three cycles arise from a practical understanding of what Bourdieu calls the mythico-ritual system. The “generative principle” (habitus) that provides a unity to these three cycles is not conscious. If it were, suggests Bourdieu, the practices would be

stripped of everything that defines them distinctively as practices, that is, the uncertainty and “fuzziness” resulting from the fact that they . . . vary according to the logic of the situation.<sup>89</sup>

Of particular interest with this example in terms of power is the one Bourdieu makes in passing in connection with the woman-child cycle and the others. The relative power of women within the society is suggested by the associations between the cycle of child-bearing and those of weaving and harvesting. This is the nexus in which Bourdieu can point to the exercise of power within and through cultural practices, for the associations among the three cycles represent

the product of a dangerous uniting of contraries which is torn from it by a violent cutting.<sup>90</sup>

Violence against women can be seen in the association of cultural practices one with another. Cultural practices, considered in the manner of habitus, are of central concern

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<sup>89</sup>Bourdieu, 1990, p. 12.

<sup>90</sup>Bourdieu 1990, p. 12.

to analyses of power, since they represent the “prescriptions and proscriptions” by which social action is made possible. Habitus allows for power and culture to be considered at once in the form of social practices.

#### SOCIAL STRUCTURES AND THE PROCESS OF EDUCATION

As argued above, social structures are considered in the study to be interrelated with the actions of individuals and groups.<sup>91</sup> The social structures that are particularly relevant to the study of educational processes include capitalism, the state, social class, and the market. These social structures find an important place in the study’s main argument that systems of educational provision, while retaining a degree of autonomy within the bounds of their function within capitalism, have an important role in furthering the aspirations of nationalist states. The relations among these social structures are discussed here as an introduction to the further consideration of the development of educational processes and institutions in the rest of the chapter.

The development of *capitalism* within Western democracies is central to an understanding of the emergence of state power, the conflicts of social class within the state’s territory, and the economic relations of individuals within a market. For Marx, capitalism is an economic system that follows from the fundamental social and economic relations between capital and wage-labour, each of which finds its real economic interests

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<sup>91</sup>See Anthony Giddens, *New Rules of Sociological Method: A Positive Critique of Interpretative Sociologies* (London: Hutchinson, 1986). “Structuration” refers to the interrelations of action and structure:

The characteristic error of the philosophy of action is to treat the problem of “production” only, thus not developing any concept of structural analysis at all; the limitation of both structuralism and functionalism, on the other hand, is to regard “reproduction” as a mechanical outcome, rather than as an active constituting process, accomplished by, and consisting in, the doings of active subjects (p. 121).

reflected in a social class. Miliband describes the centrality of the relationship between the “ruling class” and the “working class” this way:

The economic and political life of capitalist societies is *primarily* determined by the relationship, born of the capitalist mode of production, between these two classes - the class which on the one hand owns and controls, and the working class on the other. Here are still the social forces whose confrontation most powerfully shapes the social climate and the political system of advanced capitalism. In fact, the political process in these societies is mainly *about* the confrontation of these forces, and is intended to sanction the terms of the relationship between them.<sup>92</sup>

The economic and political life of Western capitalist democracies reflects the conflict inherent in the two sets of interests represented by capital and wage-labour in social institutions and processes including education. Miliband argues that schooling, for example, contributes to the legitimation of the social order by confirming for children, through cultural means, the class to which they belong. This is carried out at the levels of curtailing further educational opportunities, instilling middle-class values, and inculcating a particular ideological and political view of the world.<sup>93</sup> The process by which the domination described by Miliband takes place is characterized by Bourdieu as the exchange of “cultural capital,” which is a species homologous with “material capital.” Bourdieu states that the field of power, which will be discussed in more detail later in this chapter, is

a gaming space in which those agents and institutions possessing enough specific capital (economic or cultural capital in particular) to be able to occupy the dominant

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<sup>92</sup>Ralph Miliband, *The State in Capitalist Society* (London: Quartet Books, 1969), p. 17.

<sup>93</sup>Miliband 1969, pp. 215-17.

positions within their respective fields confront each other using strategies aimed at preserving or transforming these relations of power.<sup>94</sup>

The relations of the market thus have an added dimension in Bourdieu's paradigm, creating a rich set of relations of power, in which the state's influence is extended well beyond the roles of "revenue collector and recruiting sergeant."

For Marx, the "illusory forms" of conflict (resulting from a struggle for political representation, for democracy and so on) within the *state* hide the real struggles of *social class*. The state represents a broad arena of social conflict, formed out of

the real and individual and collective interests, and at the same time as an illusory community, always based, however, on the real ties existing in every family conglomeration and tribal conglomeration - such as flesh and blood, language, division of labour on a larger scale, and other interests. . . .<sup>95</sup>

Social class thus represents real interests, with membership following from whether or not individuals have ownership of the means of production. The struggle between classes is inherent in capitalism, and it is to be expected that power will be exercised by the state in maintaining the basic relations of capitalism.

The state has a monopoly on the legitimate use of violence, as Weber argues:

[F]orce is certainly not the normal or the only means of the state - nobody says that - but force is a means specific to the state. . . . Specifically, at the present time, the right to use physical force is ascribed to other institutions or to individuals only to

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<sup>94</sup>Pierre Bourdieu, *The State Nobility: Elite Schools in the Field of Power*, translated by Laetitia C. Clough (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996), pp. 264-65.

<sup>95</sup>Karl Marx, "From *The German Ideology*," in *Karl Marx: A Reader*, edited by Jon Elster (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), p. 179.

the extent to which the state permits it. The state is considered the sole source of the “right” to use violence.<sup>96</sup>

The actual use of violence by the state is a last resort in most instances. Its actions in establishing or disestablishing institutions may be viewed as a “first resort.” The state has the power to devise priorities of economic and political development by its involvement in the political economy at this level of institutional influence, even if, as is the case in educational institutions, the relative autonomy of particular institutions is maintained at a high level. The rise of the nation-state is a phenomenon particular to the last few centuries in Western development and will be discussed further in Chapter 3, especially in connection with the nation-state’s interest in education.

Bourdieu’s conception of the state is based, not only on the monopoly of physical violence, but on that of symbolic violence<sup>97</sup> as well, which is associated, in turn, with educational processes:

The educational institution . . . makes a critical contribution to the state’s monopoly on legitimate symbolic violence, particularly through its power to *nominate*. Granting an academic title is in fact a legitimate juridical act of categorization, through which the undoubtedly most determinant *attribute of one’s social identity* is conferred (along with the occupation that this attribute largely determines) (italics in original).<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>96</sup>Max Weber, *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, translated, edited and with an introduction by H.H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills (New York: Oxford University Press, 1958), p. 78.

<sup>97</sup>Bourdieu’s concept of symbolic violence will be discussed in Chapter 7. It refers to the coercional “effect” of pedagogical action.

<sup>98</sup>Bourdieu 1996, p. 117.

The simultaneous mention of the educational institution and the state in this quotation is a result of more than simple topicality. For Bourdieu, educational institutions are the central mechanism by which domination is maintained in a society.<sup>99</sup>

The social structure of *the market* is characterized by the transformation of social relationships into exchange-values. Marx's development of the concept of the market rests on the emergence of the bourgeoisie within capitalism as replacing the previously relatively autonomous local communities through the process of the division of labour. In the process, it "sweeps away the particular cultural myths and traditions . . . [and] brings the whole of mankind, for the first time in history within the purview of a single social order."<sup>100</sup> This is accomplished through the action of the market, because it is the market that transforms personal ties into exchange-values, these being required to bridge the economic and social disjuncture between capital and wage-labour. Educational institutions and systems of educational provision may be expected to reveal the influence, of not only conflict among classes concerning what kind of educational processes should be used, who should be educated, and how knowledge should be organized, but also the use of exchange-values for determining the interactions between the student and the institution. Consumerist values within society are reflected in educational institutions, since in the larger society as well as in educational institutions, the interactions of individuals with the state (the sponsor of larger educational

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<sup>99</sup>A summary of this argument is provided by Loic J.D. Wacquant in Bourdieu 1996, pp. ix-xix.

<sup>100</sup>Anthony Giddens, *Capitalism and Modern Social Theory: An Analysis of the Writings of Marx, Durkheim and Max Weber* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), p. 64.

institutions) can be seen in the actions of the state to mediate and regulate the relations of capitalism.

#### THE RELATIONS OF EDUCATION TO SOCIAL CHANGE

As has been suggested in this chapter so far, education is a contested area of social relations. Actors within and around a system of educational provision engage in a continuous process of acting and speaking to legitimize the content of educational activities, how they are transmitted or carried out, and who participates. Individuals and groups interact to enhance and extend their interests, primarily reflected in their association with a particular social class. They interact within the bounds of the social structures represented by educational institutions, and these social structures are continuously reproduced by such interactions.

The structures *outside* the bounds of educational institutions, such as occupational groups and governments, influence the actions of individuals and groups in ways that can be examined by reference to historical processes. Educational change strategies are produced and influenced by individuals and groups changing their locations within structures that are themselves being transformed in the course of historical processes. This conception of the historical processes within which systems of educational provision change is reflected in Durkheim's view:

[E]ducational transformations are always the result and the symptom of the social transformations in terms of which they are to be explained. In order for a people to feel at any particular moment in time the need to change its educational system, it is necessary that new ideas and needs have emerged for which the former system is no longer adequate. These needs and ideas themselves are not born of



nothing; if they are suddenly to come to the forefront of consciousness after having been ignored for centuries, it is necessary that in the intervening period there has been a change and that it is this change of which they are an expression.<sup>101</sup>

Education, in Durkheim's conception, is an important area of inquiry for those interested in accounting for the development of capitalist democracies because educational reform and capitalist development affect one another. Changes in the practices by which individuals deliver educational activities reflect economic and social transformations; similarly, social change will be informed in part by the knowledge and attitudes that are imparted through educational activities.

Educational activities may in this sense be considered a distinctive strand of the exercise of power within and through organizations, especially if more formal educational activities are considered, those educational activities that take place at agreed upon times and places. Schools, universities, and colleges provide formalized educational activities, as do firms. Medium- and large-sized firms tend to establish educational activities as a separate area of endeavour through the use of training departments and the deployment of educational specialists. It is formal educational activities that tend to invite sociologists' interest because of the archival sources that can provide the basis for inquiries into the development of an educational system over a period of decades or even centuries and permit as well the comparison of different national systems of education.

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<sup>101</sup>Emile Durkheim, *The Evolution of Educational Thought: Lectures on the Formation and Development of Secondary Education in France* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1977), translated by Peter Collins, pp. 166-67.

Foucault's study of the rise of the prison in Western society pays special attention to the particular organization of space and time that contributed to "school discipline." In the Jesuit colleges of 18<sup>th</sup> century France, the organization of space in the classroom had been guided by the idea of opposing "camps" of students ready to indulge in intellectual jousting. This slowly gave way to a new organization of space, characterized by

. . . rows or ranks of pupils in the class, corridors, courtyards; rank attributed to each pupil at the end of each task and each examination; the rank he obtains from week to week, month to month, year to year; an alignment of age groups, one after another; a succession of subjects taught and questions treated, according to an order of increasing difficulty. . . . The organization of a serial space was one of the great technical mutations of elementary education. . . . By assigning individual places it made possible the supervision of each individual and the simultaneous work of all.<sup>102</sup>

The organization of time underwent a comparable transformation. During the same century, Foucault notes that

the disciplines, which analyse space, break up and rearrange activities, must also be understood as machinery for adding up and capitalizing time.<sup>103</sup>

Foucault uses the Gobelins schools (which provided training to children who were to become tapestry makers) as an example of this process of organizing time for pedagogical purposes. Various methods of "isolating" periods of practice and training

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<sup>102</sup>Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, translated from the French by Alan Sheridan (New York: Vintage Books, 1995), p. 147.

<sup>103</sup>Foucault 1995, p. 157.

ensured that a certain rhythm or pace of learning was inculcated during sessions at school.<sup>104</sup>

Foucault's concern is the historical development of the state's power, first over territory (sovereignty), then over the individuals living within that territory. The latter form of power, the problematic, that is, of establishing control of the body of the individual, is the more urgent one for the modern government. The state's techniques and tactics (policies) constitute a set of practices "which has as its target the population and as its essential mechanism the apparatuses of security."<sup>105</sup> The types and uses of such apparatuses require comparative historical research.<sup>106</sup>

The use of education for the purpose of maintaining or enhancing sovereignty is suggested in this study in the contribution that the University made to the strategy of province-building. However, the empirical focus is - as noted previously to distinguish the study from Ringer's comparative national systems of education - less on an educational system and the daily pedagogical and cultural practices that characterize such a system than on the contribution that a single institution or type of institution may make to the support of dominant ideologies.

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<sup>104</sup>Foucault 1995, pp. 157-58.

<sup>105</sup>Michel Foucault, "Governmentality," in *The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality*, edited by Graham Burchell et al. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991).

<sup>106</sup>An empirical study of interest here is A. Kornhauser, *Mental Health of the Industrial Worker* (New York: Wiley, 1965). Kornhauser provides evidence that personality change in the direction of accepting repetitive work activities and lower pay accompanies long-term work in low-qualification jobs, suggesting that if education, like other organizational activities and institutions, is increasingly organized according to sociotechnical methods of delivery, the result may be a

RELATIONAL POWER AND BOURDIEU'S *HABITUS* AND *FIELD*

Systems of educational provision are regarded in this study as broadly reinforcing the political and economic power of the state, while demonstrating a degree of autonomy within the bounds of their social function. The empirical demonstration of how and why such domination occurs can show the process by which the maintenance and extension of power takes place.

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, Pierre Bourdieu's conceptions of "habitus" and "fields of power" are relevant for the research, representing a view of power in which individuals and groups seek to position themselves, and their interests, in a way that will maximize their interests, while revealing as well the assumptions and values by which this positioning takes place and which are, in turn, reproduced. Bourdieu's theoretical approach avoids the "false choice" of objectivism and subjectivism. Likewise, this study takes up a theoretical middle ground, examining the interactions of actors, the social structures within which a system of educational provision operates, and the historical processes within which and by which change occurs.

The field of power has been described as circumscribing the range of possible positions and also the values which predominate. Bourdieu compares the fields of sporting games to social fields, suggesting that the "feel for the game" of the sporting

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general decline in intellectual vibrance in a polity, with individuals resorting to "fixes" for problems, rather than well-considered responses.

field provides a likeness for the social field. The social field of power is the “objectified history” to which actors bring their “incorporated history”:<sup>107</sup>

[I]n the social fields, which are the products of a long, slow process of autonomization, and are therefore, so to speak, games “in themselves,” and not “for themselves,” one does not embark on the game by a conscious act, one is born into the game, with the game; and the relation of investment, *illusio*, investment, is made more total and unconditional by the fact that it is unaware of what it is.<sup>108</sup>

To return to habitus, what is being considered here is the “durable, transposable training”<sup>109</sup> by which cultural theory and practices, including theories and practices of education, are formed. For Bourdieu, education is the cultural equivalent of the transmission of “genetic capital in the biological order.”<sup>110</sup> Habitus represents the preconscious acquisitions by which actors structure their views of the world and may include patterns of bodily presentation, of organizing physical and social space, and of regarding the passage of time. Habitus is not an unchanging phenomenon, in that it may have a different relation to cultural phenomena in different fields of power, but the emphasis is on its unconscious existence in actors’ behavioral repertoire. Bourdieu’s theoretical framework is one in which the exercise of power in social relations - in *particular the protection and extension of interests in the reform of education* - may be viewed as an expression of habitus. Change strategies are mobilized in relation to the interests of

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<sup>107</sup>See Bourdieu 1990, p. 66.

<sup>108</sup>Bourdieu 1990, p. 67.

<sup>109</sup>Bourdieu and Passeron 1977, p. 196.

<sup>110</sup>Bourdieu and Passeron 1977, p. 32.

individuals and groups. Culture, or habitus, informs those strategies and is the “medium” in which strategies are carried out in a given field of power<sup>111</sup>

Ringer describes three strategies by which accounts of power relations may be developed by researchers.<sup>112</sup> An account based on *tradition* will seek to rely on actors’ tendency to use the practices of the past as a means of justifying the practices of the present. An account based on *rationality* will be concerned with explicating the reasons that individuals use as a justification for their actions. An account based on *ideology* will examine the means by which assumptions about material interests are used to justify action. Ringer states that sociological accounts of educational or other social systems rarely focus on only one of the three means. He states that it is necessary to consider all three when studying empirical cases. A combined approach is concerned with the interplay of tradition, rationality, and ideology as actors within a social system position and reposition their interests and intentions. Following Bourdieu, Ringer prescribes a relational view of power in which the *field*

at a given time and place is made up of agents taking up various intellectual positions. Yet the field is not an aggregate of isolated elements; it is a configuration or a network of relationships. The elements in the field are not only related to each

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<sup>111</sup>See Bourdieu (1990) for a description of the meeting of habitus and field in the devising of strategies:

A particularly clear example of practical sense as a proleptic adjustment to the demands of a field is what is called, in the language of sport, a “feel for the game.” This phrase (like “investment sense,” the art of “anticipating” events, etc.) gives a fairly accurate idea of the almost miraculous encounter between the *habitus* and a field, between incorporated history and an objectified history, which makes possible the near-perfect anticipation of the future inscribed in all the concrete configurations on the pitch or board (p. 66).

<sup>112</sup>Fritz Ringer, *Fields of Knowledge: French Academic Culture in Comparative Perspective, 1890-1920* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

other in determinate ways; each also has a specific “weight” or authority, so that the field is a distribution of power as well.<sup>113</sup>

Bourdieu’s paradigm establishes the actor as having the capability of influencing social structure. Actions are not fully determined by structure. There is a relationship to be described of actor and structure, without methodological recourse to the subjectivity of the actor, as reflected in ethnomethodological approaches. The actor in Bourdieu’s paradigm has an objective position in the field of power, which may be described and analyzed by reference to the positions of other actors:

Habitus is a set of *dispositions* which incline agents to act and react in certain ways. The dispositions generate practices, perceptions and attitudes which are “regular” without being consciously governed by any “rule.”<sup>114</sup>

The process of the University’s social origin described in this study is considered as an interplay of interests and intentions, in which the position of one group was articulated by reference to the position of another.

The establishment of the University was not inevitable. The formal rationale on which the University was established involved an analysis of whether the province was in need of another university to serve an expected increase in the population. This rationale was necessary, but not sufficient, for the establishment of the University. Actors and groups positioned their interests, through language, in ways that would

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<sup>113</sup>Ringer 1992, p. 15.

<sup>114</sup>Thompson, *Language and Power*, p. 12, quoted in Pierre Bourdieu, *The Rules of Art: Genesis and Structure of the Literary Field*, translated by Susan Emanuel (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996).

either, to borrow Bourdieu's terms with reference to "doxa,"<sup>115</sup> extend the demand for a "new" university or consolidate the heterodox demand for a more orthodox approach to higher education. What finally emerged reflected the outcome of the "bargaining" among individuals and groups concerning their interests. That positioning involved responses to the ideological and historical character of the university in western society and the part played by the regional political economy within Canada's constitutional provisions for provincial political and economic development.

Bourdieu calls for the examination of particular empirical cases in considering the tendencies of actors to devise strategy:

It is necessary to abandon all theories which explicitly or implicitly treat practice as a mechanical reaction, directly determined by the antecedent conditions and entirely reducible to the mechanical functioning of pre-established assemblies, "models" or "roles" . . . .<sup>116</sup>

Practices are significant for their contribution to the strategies devised by individuals and groups in an effort to extend and protect interests. However, practices and strategies must both be considered within the processes of change in a historical period and political economy. The historical, political, and economic era for the region and time period considered in this study will be discussed in Chapter 3.

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<sup>115</sup>Doxa are those cultural objects that remain unexamined until they are called up in debates over whether they continue to serve a cultural purpose. These debates are carried on between those who want to enshrine and reaffirm the relations of the cultural objects, a position called orthodoxy, and those who want to establish an alternative set of relations, a position called heterodoxy.

<sup>116</sup>Bourdieu and Passeron, p. 73.



## CRITIQUES OF BOURDIEU

Criticisms of Bourdieu have tended to focus on the “open-endedness” of his methods.<sup>117</sup> Apparently unwilling to ally himself with Marxist or leftist political allegiances, Bourdieu prefers to call for alternative ways of viewing political problems. Harker et al. tend to view this criticism positively, seeing in Bourdieu’s work a commitment to independent scholarship.

Second, there is the criticism of tautology and functionalism, in which, according to Harker et al., a “hermetically sealed world” is created:

Capital is something that is struggled for - what is capital? Capital is that which people value and (therefore) struggle for. What is strategy and struggle about? It is the activity that people engage in, in order to gain the necessary volumes of capital to achieve their aims.<sup>118</sup>

The latter criticism must be considered as significant because of its connection to the first criticism, which suggests that Bourdieu’s accounts - except perhaps as they have found influence and been developed by other educational historians such as Fritz Ringer and Randall Collins - do not attempt to provide an account of how significant social change takes place historically.<sup>119</sup> According to Harker et al., “Bourdieu’s account is limited to attempts at assessing how short-term alterations take place in human

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<sup>117</sup>A summary of such criticisms may be found in Harker et al. (1990).

<sup>118</sup>David Harker and Chris Wilkes, eds., *An Introduction to the Work of Pierre Bourdieu: The Practice of Theory* (London: Macmillan, 1990), p. 215.

<sup>119</sup>Bourdieu’s *The Rules of Art: Genesis and Structure of the Literary Field*, published in 1996 in English, represents a movement in the direction of historical studies of sociogenesis and development of fields of power.

affairs.”<sup>120</sup> The kind of broad historical comparisons carried out by Skocpol show a possible development of Bourdieu’s theory, and in a way that allows for a form of empirical testing.<sup>121</sup>

These criticisms point to the general theoretical orientation of Bourdieu, which is concerned with the uses of power as they actually may be observed in systems of educational provision. Actors are not fully autonomous within the field of power of the system of educational provision; neither are they fully subject to the influence of the social structures within and outside the system of educational provision. The power exercised by actors and groups is relational to other actors and groups in the field of power and is expressed within relationships among individuals and groups.

#### THE DOMINATION THESIS AND ITS VARIATIONS

Bowles and Gintis<sup>122</sup> have discussed the tendency characteristic of capitalist development for elites to take control of education at decisive moments in educational reform. Education becomes a kind of manufacturing system whose product is the workers for the material economy. In the case of school reform, for example, they show that board membership tended to change at key points to reflect the interests of elites.

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<sup>120</sup>Harker et al., p. 217.

<sup>121</sup>See Theda Skocpol, *States and Social Revolutions: A Comparative Analysis of France, Russia, and China* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979). A fourth criticism made by Harker et al. (1990) is that Bourdieu’s arguments point to a rhetorical position he seems to hold, which is that sociology provides a meta-theory under which philosophy, and all other sciences, operate as fields of knowledge. Sociology becomes the field of power in such a paradigm. This criticism is based on the inference that such a paradigm is important to Bourdieu’s program. He has not directly described such a paradigm and the criticism is one that should properly be applied to his ongoing work.

<sup>122</sup>Samuel Bowles and Herbert Gintis, *Schooling in Capitalist America: Educational Reform and the Contradictions of Economic Life* (New York: Basic Books, 1976).

They quote Nearing's study to show that in Boston in 1916, the representation of workers on boards of education was less than 1.5 per cent of the total, with "businessmen," "professionals," and "foremen" constituting the remainder.<sup>123</sup> This role for elites in their relation to educational systems is regarded by Bowles and Gintis as characteristic of capitalist development. Managers, professionals, and business owners seek to reproduce the stratification of the economic system within the system of educational provision.

Since the publication of their *Schooling in Capitalist America*, Bowles and Gintis have been noted to have overlooked the actual curriculum of schooling, preferring to settle on a *correspondence* between the structures of the industrial workplace and those of educational systems.<sup>124</sup> Their thesis neglects to account for the actual curriculum, either explicit or implicit, of an educational system.<sup>125</sup> Theirs is a neo-Marxist interpretation in which the history of educational reform is shaped by dominant elites at critical points, with the main social function of education being to create a compliant labour force.

The domination thesis developed by Bowles and Gintis argument remains influential. It is valuable for its reliance on empirical cases and for its critical consideration of the function of education within society. In Chapter 5, the domination thesis is used to

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<sup>123</sup>Bowles and Gintis, p. 190.

<sup>124</sup>See, for example, Michael W. Apple, "Education, Culture and Class Power," *Educational Theory* 42 (Spring 1992): 127-45. Apple states that for Bowles and Gintis, the "hidden curriculum was everything" and that this overemphasis is reflected in their avoidance of the formal corpus of school knowledge.

<sup>125</sup>See Apple 1992.

consider the relationship between the rise of the community college in North America and the particular character of Athabasca University. The community college's emphasis on vocational tracking was evident in the plans for the new University.

The general approach of Bowles and Gintis, if not the fully developed thesis, is shared by other theorists reconsidering the social functions of education. For example, Collins<sup>126</sup> shares the "domination thesis" developed by Bowles and Gintis while seeking to account as well for the actual curricula of educational systems in history. He incorporates a Weberian perspective on the development of social systems.<sup>127</sup> (The influence of Weber is present in Fritz Ringer's work as well.<sup>128</sup>) For Weber, social status is considered an important variable in the development of social systems. However, Ringer argues that educational systems reflect changes in social class much more quickly than they do changes in social status; as a result, they continue to reproduce the structures of social status even after these structures have become disassociated from those of social class. Educational systems must be regarded with an eye to the "presence of the past." Historical notions of social status may persist within educational systems, allowing for them to "act back" upon the social hierarchy.

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<sup>126</sup>Randall Collins, "Some Comparative Principles of Educational Stratification," *Harvard Educational Review* 47, no. 1 (February 1977): 1-27.

<sup>127</sup>Collins, p. 9.

<sup>128</sup>See Fritz Ringer, *Fields of Knowledge: French Academic Culture in Comparative Perspective, 1890 - 1920* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992). Ringer points to a "status elite" in 19<sup>th</sup>-century Germany whose ideological influence on the educational system was revealed in *Bildung*.

For Collins, educational activities have historically emerged as a means by which the material economy may be developed. Biological individuals interacting with nature and through technology are provided through education with the means by which nature will be exploited. They do so in ways that are variable in time and space and in different cultural environments. Collins is concerned to show, for example, why a given historical era is characterized by a concern for the use of education in assigning individuals to bureaucratic structures and the use, in turn, of bureaucracies to suppress dissent. Taking up Bowles and Gintis' thesis regarding the function of education in ensuring labour discipline, Collins concludes that an association between *business* elites and the uses of education for domination should be qualified, noting that compulsory schooling did not appear in Britain until *after* industrialization. Collins concludes that

bureaucratic states impose compulsory education on populations which are seen as potential threats to state control, and that those economic classes which are influential in the state will help define the nature of the "threat."<sup>129</sup>

Collins, like Bowles and Gintis, holds that education has a role in class domination but departs from their approach to explore the actions of individuals and groups in creating a particular kind of system of educational provision. He uses comparative historical evidence to show that educational stratification proceeds by means of changes in "supply and demand" for educational activities within a "cultural market."

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<sup>129</sup>Collins, p. 21.

The concept of a cultural market has been explored by Bourdieu, Ringer, and Collins.<sup>130</sup> It is a paradigm in which Bourdieu's "field of power" may be described in terms of actual social institutions and actors. The field of power posits the relational nature of power in a given social system, while the cultural market is used to describe the actual exchanges and interactions that occur as an expression of power relations.

Using the cultural market, Collins points to historical instances in which the curriculum associated with an educational change was less important than the bureaucratic function that the new system created. The Tokugawa regime in Japan in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, for example, was a military coalition ruled by a regional aristocracy. The aristocracy's substantive powers were curtailed in part by education in a curriculum emphasizing largely cultural knowledge: "literacy, the Confucian classics, etiquette, and a highly stylized military art." The school during this period

operated as a control device both by keeping the warrior class under custody for a considerable portion of their lives while drilling them in formalities, and by preparing them for the bureaucratic routine that made up the substance of government.<sup>131</sup>

The view expressed here is of education as a set of disciplinary practices reflects that of Foucault's description of the Gobelins school, cited earlier in the chapter. For Collins, however, disciplinary practices constitute a particular historical type of

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<sup>130</sup>See, respectively, Pierre Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, translated by Richard Nice (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977); Randall Collins, "Some Comparative Principles of Educational Stratification," *Harvard Educational Review* 47, no. 1 (February 1977): 1-27; and Detlef K. Müller, Fritz Ringer, and Brian Simon, *The Rise of the Modern Educational System: Structural Change and Social Reproduction, 1870 - 1920* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987).

<sup>131</sup>Collins, p. 15.

education. In this case, routines and drills were used to maintain a bureaucracy. A secondary purpose was political: to provide distraction for a potentially dangerous social group. While Foucault points to educational practices as a particular type of practice among other coercional practices, Collins describes them as one possibility among several by which education serves the material economy. In developing the model of a cultural market, Collins draws on Bourdieu's conception of educational activities as providing a means of exploring the relations between culture and power. Education is a form of cultural expression, but it also legitimates power.

From Bowles and Gintis to Collins, a shift in the view of education's domination function occurs. For Bowles and Gintis, educational change reflects changes in the economic and class order, with the social structures of the material economy providing a kind of mirror for those of the school and university. With Collins' approach, domination is still to be considered as a function of education. However, with a shift from a Marxian to a Weberian view of economic development, the metaphor of a marketplace is used to describe education's role as a mode of cultural exchange. In this marketplace, the interactions of educational change and social change may be described as the exchange of cultural "currency" for educational "goods." Bourdieu's conception of "cultural capital" (those dispositions of actors that constitute the habitus) stands as the "currency" in this model.

Like Collins, Ringer has used a model of education functioning within a cultural market in an effort to explore the social causes of changes in educational systems.

Ringer has used the term “segmentation” in analyzing educational systems. Segmentation is a statistical method of comparatively analyzing national educational systems by analyzing the participation rates of different social classes in different educational tracks. It refers to a particular convergence in educational change. This convergence began in the mid-nineteenth century in western European educational systems. From that time, the classical education has become one of two tracks, the other being the occupational or vocational track. It is not simply vertical tracking that makes for a segmented educational system, but the coincident streaming by social status:

Curricular differentiation alone does not constitute segmentation; clear social differences must be involved as well. What matters is the *conjunction* between social and curricular differences with socially hierarchical meanings, which in turn will define the social status of graduates. It is only through the wedding of traditional cultural models to social distinctions that educational systems have come to play so powerful a role in social reproduction.<sup>132</sup>

The significant variation on the approach of Bowles and Gintis, is that Ringer views change in educational systems as being significant in terms of their social effects as well as in terms of the economic causes to which the changes might be attributed. The domination thesis of Bowles and Gintis is recast in Ringer’s analysis. Ringer specifies the ways in which educational systems are influenced within their political and economic environments while still retaining a degree of relative autonomy demonstrated by the influence educational systems have on those environments.

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<sup>132</sup>Fritz Ringer, in Detlef K. Müller, Fritz Ringer, and Brian K. Simon, *The Rise of the Modern Educational System: Structural Change and Social Reproduction, 1870 - 1920* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), p. 7.



Ringer's work represents a sort of reversal of Bowles and Gintis. He argues, for example, that in nineteenth-century France it is possible to consider not only the social and economic stratification of educational systems, for which Bowles and Gintis argue, but an "educationalization" of occupational structures.<sup>133</sup> Compared to Collins, Ringer has more intensively examined the historical interactions between national educational systems and their correspondent material economies. Collins' approach adduces historical evidence relating to several centuries and widely disparate cultures, seeking "general outlines of the main types of education and of the social processes that condition their existence as institutions."<sup>134</sup> Ringer, on the other hand, is concerned to examine the historical processes related to two or three national educational systems over a period of several decades.

The University is relevant to Ringer's approach because of the explicit discussion of the issue of educational tracking (the streaming of students into vocational and, in this case, "liberal" educational streams) that took place during the period of the establishment of the institution. Those advocating the permanent establishment of the University stated that a debate about such tracking was unnecessary, that the promise of the future of education lay in avoiding such distinctions. It will be suggested that the issues of social origin and relative autonomy provide a means of accounting for the

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<sup>133</sup>Ringer (1987), p. 7.

<sup>134</sup>Collins, pp. 4-5. Collins compares, for example, the Greco-Roman craftsman of circa 190 B.C. with the English apprentice of the nineteenth century.

formulation of such a strategy and, in the latter period of 1993 - 95, for its eventual abandonment.

Bowles and Gintis, Collins, and Ringer have studied the social origin of *national* systems of education. Bowles and Gintis examined a particular nation-state's educational system during a specific historical era to account for the system's establishment and development. For Collins and Ringer, the comparative method is used to establish a set of conclusions concerning similarities and differences among two or more national systems. Finally, the present study focuses on the social origin of a single institution within a province of a nation-state, seeking to account for the institution's establishment and persistence. It describes the historical trajectory of that institution by comparison with the trajectory of a company that has particular significance within the explicit political and economic strategies of the state.

Because of this difference in approach from the latter three, the methodology also varies. As discussed in Chapter 4, the evidence gathered in this study includes the use of historical documents in the manner of the latter three approaches, particularly in developing the argument that nationalism can have a role in the development of higher educational institutions. This method is supplemented by the use of primary documents and interviews which are used to establish micro-comparisons between the University and comparable systems of educational provision. While statistical analyses seeking to describe the process of segmentation in detail have been used in the national context with which Ringer has been concerned, the evidence provided here combines the

secondary historical accounts of the political economic development of the region, interviews with actors in various organizations, and the discussion and interpretation of relevant theory. Table 4 summarizes the theory, empirical subject, historical period, and data characterizing the respective approaches of Bowles and Gintis, Collins, Ringer, and the present study.

WORK	THEORETICAL FOCUS	EMPIRICAL SUBJECT	HISTORICAL PERIOD EXAMINED	TYPE OF DATA USED
Bowles and Gintis	Domination thesis	National educational system	Several decades	Archives, secondary sources, and statistical analysis
Collins	Cultural market	Comparative national educational systems	Centuries	Archives and secondary sources
Ringer	Field of power	Comparative national educational systems	Several decades	Archives, secondary sources, and statistical analysis
Present study	Field of power	Single educational institution with comparisons to another system of educational provision	Two periods of a few years each	Archives, secondary sources, and interviews

■ *Table 4: Comparison of Empirical Approaches to the Study of Educational Systems*

The following chapter considers the relation of education to the development of the

state in Alberta.

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## CHAPTER 3: THE NATION-STATE, EDUCATION, AND ALBERTA PROVINCE-BUILDING

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### INSTILLING POLITICAL LOYALTY THROUGH EDUCATION

Chapter 1 provided an outline of the argument that the University may be viewed as contributing to the political and economic process of building a kind of Alberta nationalism. In order for the social origin of the University to be viewed in this way, the province's tendency to operate as a "state within a state" will be examined historically in this chapter, drawing upon C.B. Macpherson's theory of the role of small producers in modifying social institutions. The creation of the University as a "radical" educational institution was a parallel development to the creation of "radical" political movements in the province. The University participated in the ideological discourse of nationalism through its development of the consumerist model for education, which was "different" from other university models in Canada and therefore able to be associated with the "difference" of Alberta nationalism.<sup>135</sup> Macpherson's study is important comparatively

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<sup>135</sup>The "difference" of the new University was expressed by T.C. Byrne, who had a significant influence on the creation of the institution. Byrne stated that the University, while having some affinities in operational aspects to the Open University of the U.K., was not modelled or patterned on that organization. Instead, Athabasca University was an "Alberta solution for Alberta problems" ("Interview with T.C. Byrne," 1996). The University remains the only university in Canada dedicated (that is, operationally devoted) to distance education.

in showing how a regional politiceconomy came to develop a particular kind of political institution and was as a consequence more likely than another region to develop a particular kind of educational system.

The emergence of the nation-state during the last four centuries represents a break with the medieval conception of the monarch's ownership of governmental and judicial institutions. The modern nation-state divides inherited prerogatives from authority held by government.<sup>136</sup> Because wealth continues to provide individuals in the nation-state with social status, influence, and power, the political process is characterized by conflicts concerning how the "national product" will be distributed and what policies will be used to administer that distribution.<sup>137</sup>

Education's relation to the rise of the nation-state has been most significant at the primarily level - stated in terms of the rights of citizens to the basic skills of reading, writing, and mathematical computation. Bendix accounts for the widespread development of national educational systems by noting the broad appeal of basic education:

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<sup>136</sup>See Reinhard Bendix, *Nation-Building and Citizenship* (Berkeley, Cal.: University of California Press, 1977), p. 128. The break between governmental authority and inherited privilege is not complete, as Bendix notes: "Access to important political and administrative posts in the governments of nation-states can be facilitated by wealth and high social position through their effect on social contacts and educational opportunities." As mentioned in Chapter 2, for Bourdieu educational institutions are the central mechanism of the state by which domination of certain social groups is maintained. See Pierre Bourdieu, *The State Nobility: Elite Schools in the Field of Power*, translated by Laetitia C. Clough (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996). See also Ralph Miliband, *The State in Capitalist Society* (London: Quartet Books, 1969): "Educational qualifications are obviously not enough to reach the top layers of management and may still, quite often, be unnecessary. But the trend is clearly towards the professionalisation of business, at least in the sense that getting a start in this particular race increasingly requires the kind of formal educational qualifications which are to be obtained in universities or equivalent institutions" (p. 38).

<sup>137</sup>Bendix, p. 129.

[Elementary education] is sustained by conservatives who fear the people's inherent unruliness which must be curbed by instruction in the fundamentals of religion and thus instill loyalty to king and country. Liberals argue that the nation-state demands a citizenry educated by organs of the state. And populist spokesmen claim that the masses of the people who help to create the wealth of the country should share in the amenities of civilization.<sup>138</sup>

The demand for elementary education within a nation is made urgent for the state by its potential for instilling political loyalty. Gellner characterizes such loyalty as following from the linguistic medium in which basic skills are taught, arguing that it is the language of a clerk that determines his or her mobility or non-mobility in providing service to another government:

The conditions in which nationalism becomes the natural form of political loyalty can be summed up in two propositions: (1) Every man a clerk. (Universal literacy recognised as a valid norm.) (2) Clerks are not horizontally mobile, they cannot normally move from one language-area to another; jobs are generally specific to clerks who are produced by some particular educational machine, using some one particular medium of expression.<sup>139</sup>

The possibility of education instilling political loyalty in ways other than the use of a common language is opened by Gellner's axiom. Gellner is concerned with education as a means of transmitting knowledge and skills, referring to what prospective clerks may learn in an educational system that will allow them to carry out clerical duties. This is the curricular function of education. Education normally also has the effect of supporting the exercise of power, as discussed in Chapter 2. Bourdieu, as noted previously, characterizes systems of educational provision as providing the cultural medium for such

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<sup>138</sup>Bendix, p. 111.

<sup>139</sup>Ernest Gellner, *Thought and Change* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1965), p. 160.

exercise. It is argued here that in establishing a system of educational provision that is intended to contribute to a preferred political ideology, the state may instill loyalty in the following groups: those demanding access to educational activities, those working in and administering the system, and those who are in sympathy with the ideology and who are in consequence likely to vote for political parties associated with that ideology through their advocacy for such public projects.

#### MACPHERSON AND THE SMALL PRODUCERS THESIS

Canada became a nation-state in 1867, when Ontario, Quebec, Nova Scotia, and New Brunswick were united as provinces within a federal state, under the terms of the amended British North America Act. Provincial powers were considerable at the time of Confederation and were augmented in subsequent decades by acts of the Judicial Committee of the British Privy Council.<sup>140</sup> The political process in the Canadian nation-state has been characterized by important conflicts concerning whether provincial or federal power should prevail in economic matters. An analysis of the political economy of Canada must consider the accommodation of the provincial and federal states, in the evolution of the relative powers of groups within the society. In Alberta, both the federal and provincial governments have significant legislative powers regarding education.

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<sup>140</sup>Richard J. Van Loon and Michael S. Whittington, *The Canadian Political System: Environment, Structure, and Process*, Third Edition, Revised (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson, Ltd., 1984), p. 246.



Alberta is one of 10 provinces in Canada; it joined the federal union, begun in 1867, in 1905. In the first period of interest to this study, the population was about 1.5 million.<sup>141</sup> During the second period of 1993 - 95, the population was about 2.75 million, making it the third largest of the English-speaking provinces in Canada, after Ontario and British Columbia. C.B. Macpherson's study of Alberta's political economy analyzed the phenomenon of the Alberta Social Credit. This was a populist political party that emerged quickly and dramatically in a sparsely populated hinterland region, forming a government in 1935, with ideological roots in middle-class England. For Macpherson, the Alberta of the first four decades of this century reflected the frustrations and aspirations of a relatively homogeneous population:

So much of the theory and practice of the Alberta movements has been consciously or unconsciously a result of the unusual nature of the Alberta economy that some account of the latter must be given. Two features of it are particularly important for their political implications: its subordination to the outside economy, and its predominantly small-propertied basis.<sup>142</sup>

These two "unusual" features of Alberta followed from its status as a frontier region that was a provider of agricultural produce and natural resources for the central metropolitan Canadian (mainly Ontario) region and, simultaneously, a market for central Canadian manufactured goods. By maintaining this relationship, the centre's industrial

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<sup>141</sup>See *Alberta Population* (Edmonton: Provincial Planning Branch, Department of Municipal Affairs, 1970), p. 4. Between 1961 and 1969, the population increased from 1.3 million to 1.5 million. The relative shift in the population from rural to urban, which began after World War II, was evident during this period, with the rural population dropping from 419,365 (31.4%) to 391,221 (25.4%) and the urban population increasing from 914,548 (68.6%) to 1,146,629 (74.6%).

<sup>142</sup>C.B. Macpherson, *Democracy in Alberta: The Theory and Practice of a Quasi-Party System* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1953), p. 6.

development was encouraged, with business development in the region tending to provide services to farmers. Macpherson argued that Alberta was distinctive within Canada in its combination of economic aspirations and political alienation within the Canadian nation-state. The critical factor for spurring the population to support radical economic proposals as an antidote to this alienation was the influence of the small producer:

The outstanding features of the class composition of Alberta, as compared with the more industrial provinces, are (1) that independent commodity producers (farmers and farmers' sons working on the family farm, and those in other occupations working on their own account) have been from 1921 until 1941 about 48 per cent of the whole gainfully occupied population while in Ontario they have been from 20 to 25 per cent, and in Canada about 30 per cent; (2) in Alberta the industrial wage and salary earners (that is, other than on farms) have been 41 per cent of the whole, in Ontario about 70 per cent, in Canada about 60 per cent.<sup>143</sup>

Geographically, politically, and economically isolated from centres of economic and political power, this class of propertied small producers sought to consolidate its economic position through the political system of the provincial government. It developed "business government" and "delegate democracy," two concepts discussed further below, as two routes to accomplishing this consolidation:

Business government and delegate accountability were conceived primarily as means of strengthening the position of the farmers in the monopolistic competitive order, with only an ill-defined ultimate view to transcending it.<sup>144</sup>

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<sup>143</sup>Macpherson, p. 16.

<sup>144</sup>Macpherson, p. 232.

Macpherson's study is significant for its conclusion that the Social Credit was one of a series of radical<sup>145</sup> political movements in Alberta that was shaped by the region's political and economic subordination to a mature capitalist economy. The party represented one of a series of expressions of a province of small producers (the farmers, small manufacturers, and merchants who made up the majority of the population), whose concern was to consolidate and protect their political and economic prerogatives. For Macpherson, the development of Alberta politics was an exercise in seeking to slip out from under the compromises and accommodations of the party system or to do away with it altogether:

What is to be analysed, then, is a series of experiments in control of representative government by popular movements, without a party system; experiments not in direct democracy (which term is better confined to a system of direct popular legislation, whether by a town meeting or by the initiative and referendum) but in delegate democracy.<sup>146</sup>

"Delegate democracy" arose out of the emergence of the United Farmers of Alberta (UFA) party in the early 1900s, a period in which political competition among parties was subsumed in what Macpherson describes functionally as a one-party system. Political representatives engaged in a process of representing constituents' views, not primarily *in* the provincial political arena to which they were elected, but *to* the federal

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<sup>145</sup>Two actions by the Social Credit government that attracted international attention were the legislation to allow for censorship, the "Accurate News and Information Bill" of 1937 (never assented to by the lieutenant governor), and the unilateral decision in April of 1936 to repay provincial debt to eastern banks at only half the agreed-upon interest rate. Initiatives to licence banks and to issue social credit scrip were tried, but halted by the federal government.

<sup>146</sup>Macpherson, p. 5. The economy in the early 1930s were doubly trying for Alberta and the other prairie provinces, Saskatchewan and Manitoba. The economic collapse of 1929 had been followed by a period of several years of severe drought on the prairies, which devastated the rural areas of these provinces, which depended on rain for the production of grain crops, particularly wheat.

arena, in an effort to achieve a shift in power to the provincial government, at the cost of federal power.

Political representation in a delegate democracy entailed the delegation of authority by the population to elected members. The political delegate was fully accountable to those who elected him and was expected to vote consistently in a way that would substantively, and not symbolically, represent their interests. By attendance at local meetings and participation in a process of establishing a consensus on issues, the delegate was directed to vote in the legislature in a way that would all times register his constituency's "will." According to Macpherson, this eventually created tensions within the UFA movement, since delegate democracy in practice proved unpredictable in terms of political outcomes. In this sense, the movement sought not to give voice to popular political will but to manage it. Unintended consequences of the party's actions were recognized, and the government reverted to the more conventional relation of an autonomous cabinet composed of elected representatives who seek a mandate at election time:

In the early 1930's, when popular sovereignty would have produced a direct attack on vested property rights, the divergence between business government and delegate democracy became acute, and delegate democracy succumbed.<sup>147</sup>

The UFA movement was succeeded by the Social Credit Party in 1935. Arising from an appeal to small producers first in England and then in Alberta, the Social Credit

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<sup>147</sup>Macpherson, p. 232.

doctrine described a coherent and homogeneous society in which economic cause and effect could be discerned and defined. Major Douglas, the founder of the Social Credit movement in England, held that a broad general will was thwarted by hidden economic (principally banking) interests:

Like Rousseau and the nineteenth-century *petite-bourgeois* social thinkers, Douglas attributed to undifferentiated humanity a virtually unanimous real will for certain broad objectives. For Douglas . . . the objectives were individual freedom, plenty, and economic security. If the people were ever consulted about these ultimate objectives they would be nearly unanimous on them, although they might be divided on the means to be adopted. The distinction between objectives (or “policy”) and methods became a shibboleth of Social Credit theory.<sup>148</sup>

The delegate democracy of the UFA gave way to Social Credit’s “business government,” the conception that the prime function of government was to purchase and maintain basic services. This concept was transformed in later years to portray not the image of the citizen as shareholder and the government as board of directors, but of a consumer and retail seller:

The Social Crediters, too, conceived democracy in the image of a business system, but, more up to date than the UFA, their image was that of a giant corporation, in which the shareholders are atomized, their voices reduced to proxies, and their effective rights reduced to the one right of receiving a dividend. . . . In the later stages of Social Credit thinking, even the model of the business corporation was discarded as savouring too much of majority rule, only to be replaced by another commercial image, the relation of seller and buyer in the retail market - an even more fragmented relation than that of directors and shareholders.<sup>149</sup>

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<sup>148</sup>Macpherson, p. 126.

<sup>149</sup>Macpherson, p. 233.

Table 5 shows the changes of administration during the first decades of this century in Alberta, together with the ideological shifts in the views of democratic institutions that were associated with each change of government.

PERIOD	GOVERNMENT ADMINISTRATION	IDEOLOGICAL ROLE OF DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS (ROLE OF STATE) <sup>150</sup>
1900 - 1934	United Farmers of Alberta	Delegate democracy
1935 - 1946	Social Credit	Business government
1947 <sup>151</sup> - 1970	Social Credit <sup>152</sup>	Consumer democracy (Allocation state)
1971 - 1992	Progressive Conservative <sup>153</sup>	Consumer democracy (Production state)
1993 - present	Progressive Conservative	Consumer democracy (Regulation state)

■ *Table 5: Ideological Role for Democratic Institutions in Alberta, 1900 - present*

By the late 1940s, the state could be regarded in Alberta, according to Macpherson, as characteristic of a “consumer’s democracy,” although the term *consumer* was not used by Macpherson. The stage of what is here called a “consumer’s democracy” was characterized by the primacy of “the relation of seller and buyer in the retail market - an

<sup>150</sup>The priorities of the state are shown in parentheses for the periods following the discovery of significant oil and gas reserves. See Table 3 in Chapter 1.

<sup>151</sup>Year of the discovery of significant oil and gas reserves at Leduc.

<sup>152</sup>The University is established by order in council by the Social Credit Government in 1970. See the chronology at the beginning of Chapter 5.

<sup>153</sup>As it begins its mandate, the Progressive Conservative government considers closing the University, but by 1975 approves a new mandate and governance structure for the institution. See the chronology at the beginning of Chapter 5.

even more fragmented relation than that of directors and shareholders.”<sup>154</sup> This is the stage that saw the establishment of the University and the Company, with the establishment of the Company in 1954 and the establishment of the University 16 years later, at the point of the end of the Social Credit’s period of governance and the beginning of the Progressive Conservative government.

The legislation creating the University was passed at a time when democratic institutions had been shaped in response to the notion that citizens had the right as consumers to “purchase” those government services that they wanted. Providing services in this way was never widely put into practice, except in symbolic ways. For example, in contrast with other provinces the Alberta government charged premiums for public medical care services, although these were not true premiums since the medical care plan was not self-funding. In other words, Macpherson’s characterization of the consumer democracy is less an accurate description of reality than an ideological frame within which political support could be garnered. The University’s consumerist model of education, in which government provided financial support to the institution, with the citizen having access, without geographical or academic impediment, to the courses offered, provided symbolic support for the ideology of a consumer democracy.

#### THE UNIVERSITY AND RADICALISM

Macpherson describes Alberta during the first four decades of the century as a society in which small producers maintained their economic and political prerogatives by

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<sup>154</sup>Macpherson, p. 233.

a subtle process of recasting political and democratic institutions. His study was first published in 1953, only six years after the discovery of oil that transformed the province's economy. Macpherson's thesis remains influential, even as applied to a region that is now more prosperous and less culturally isolated from the rest of Canada: that a regional political economy could develop within a mature capitalist economy with the capability of protecting and extending its interests, defining those interests through a process of significantly adapting social institutions.

Critics of Macpherson's analysis have focused on his tendency to view Alberta as a one-class society, as reflected in three criticisms. First, such an approach neglects the expressions of working class dissent that were evident early in the century such as the coal miners' strikes in the 1930s.<sup>155</sup> Second, while the importance of central Canadian capital remains until this day an important formative influence on the economic development of the province, there were strong business and entrepreneurial roots and a regional accumulation of capital in the province dating from the first discovery of oil in 1914.<sup>156</sup> Third, the support of Albertans living in the cities was significant, suggesting that Macpherson exaggerated somewhat the influence of farmers in bringing the Social Credit to power.<sup>157</sup>

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<sup>155</sup>See Richards and Pratt, p. 151, for a discussion of this criticism.

<sup>156</sup>Richards and Pratt, p. 152.

<sup>157</sup>See Alvin Finkel, *The Social Credit Phenomenon in Alberta* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1989), p. 8.



These criticisms point to Macpherson's tendency to see Alberta society as being more socially unified than may be justified by the evidence. Accepting these criticisms as valid requires a revision of the "cause" in Macpherson's theory, but not the "effect." Though the social class structure in the province was not as homogeneous as a single-class analysis requires,<sup>158</sup> the influence of social groups as described by Macpherson in seeking significant change to social institutions has not been seriously questioned. Macpherson described the economic and political aspirations of a region functioning within a mature capitalist economy as having significant influence in recasting social institutions. The provincial state could use education to entrench its political and economic aspirations. There were parallel political and economic events, reflected in the rise of successive populist political movements in the province, that suggest that the state was disposed to do so, as summarized in Table 5 above.

The newfound wealth produced by oil revenues was highly influential in the three decades of province-building leading to the establishment of the University, to be discussed in Chapter 5. Province-building recognizes the pattern of social stratification in Alberta, something that critics have noted was lacking in Macpherson's analysis, by pointing to the importance of a rising white-collar bourgeoisie in providing ideological support for the actions of the state to develop proto-nationalist institutions. By contrast, Bourdieu's paradigm of a field of power conceptualizes the way in which individuals and

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<sup>158</sup>Macpherson's analysis of the class composition of Alberta society is provided in Macpherson 1953, pp. 10 - 20. The "outstanding features" of this analysis were quoted earlier in this chapter. Macpherson states that from 1921 until 1941, approximately 48 per cent of the population fell under the category of "small producers" (Macpherson 1953, p. 16).

groups representing class interests in the political economy may compete for resources, power, and interests in a relational way, that is, taking into account the actions and interests of other individuals and groups in the field. These interests may be economic, but the relation of an educational institution to the economic base is likely to be indirect. Social and political forces are more directly influential than economic ones in providing the state with the cultural resources by which it may create a new institution or adapt an existing institution. The creation or development of a particular kind of educational institution is likely to be influenced ideologically - in the present case, by reference to notions of the production state and the consumer democracy as well as economic incentives. The University was fitted with an unusual unicameral governance structure and with limited, targeted financial resources by which it was to develop an educational model that reflected the ideology of the state. It succeeded in developing that model only with the support of the cultural resources of the production state and the consumer democracy.

The social origin of the University illustrates how education supports the aspirations of a state, in this case a provincial government seeking to enhance its powers within Confederation. The University, like the UFA and Social Credit governments themselves, began as a radical experiment. It was created in order to offer programs of interdisciplinary study exclusively, in juxtaposition with the disciplinary organization of other university faculties in Canada. It used such technologies as radio, television, and computers to allow students in various geographical locations to study without

visiting the campus. And it attempted to create a more intimate setting for study, using small-group tutorials.

Like the UFA and Social Credit, the University became a rather conservative social institution within a relatively short period of time. By 1993 - 95, the province-building strategy was not a priority for the Alberta government, and the University again became a candidate for closure. The earlier period's ideals of broad access of citizens to undergraduate degrees gave way in this period to curricular specialization, characterized especially by graduate programs for which broad access of citizens becomes merely symbolic.

The study aims to show how a specific system of educational provision was an outcome of indirect political and economic influences. Individuals and groups shaped the trajectory of the system, while protecting and extending their interests. However, the educational institution was capable of "acting back" on the political economy within and by which it emerged. As a result, it reproduced the social structures of the cultural market.

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## CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

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### OUTLINE OF THE RESEARCH DESIGN

The study is organized in two phases, within which the research issues of social origin and relative autonomy are examined.

First, a historical account is given of the political-economic context within which the idea of educational reform developed in the region studied, during the years 1970 - 75. This is to establish similarities between the University and the Company in terms of their social function, and to show that the operation of the University provided political and social support for the ideology of a proto-nationalism. Causal relationships will be shown among the historical processes that gave rise to the University and comparative observations made on the social origin of the Company. The comparative observations in Chapter 5 are between the University and the Company as two *organizations*, one of which represents a dedicated system of educational provision. The question of the relative autonomy of the University is explored in Chapter 6 through secondary historical sources and an interview with the founding president of the University.

The second phase of the study is concerned with a recent period of three years, 1993 - 95, during which significant change took place in the two organizations. In this

phase, discussed in Chapter 7, the Company's educational activities are compared with those at the University in an effort to analyze two *systems of educational provision*.<sup>159</sup>

The work in both phases considers evidence that may be used in describing and assessing both the field of power in which individuals and groups operated and the dispositions of actors within the field. An empirical case (the University), with relevant comparisons to other cases (including especially the Company), is used to describe and analyze the process by which individuals and groups changed their locations within organizational and other social structures, which themselves were being transformed in the course of historical processes.

The first phase of the research, concerned with the years 1970 - 75, allows for a consideration of research issue 1 (social origin), in which it is argued that actors and groups were able to ensure the University's survival in a period of crisis by developing the consumerist model of education which carried with it ideological appeal for decision makers and other influential actors. Both the first period and the second (1993 - 95) allow for a consideration of research issue 2 (relative autonomy), in which the degree of autonomy of the University is shown to be related to the institution's function within the regional political economy.

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<sup>159</sup>As noted in Chapter 1, the use of the term *system of educational provision* instead of *educational system* allows for comparisons regarding the educational function between the University and other organizations whose primary activity is not education but which carry out educational activities as a secondary function.

The two historical periods are associated with different methodological emphases, with the first phase focusing on secondary historical materials and the second phase on primary materials. This distinction between primary and secondary sources applies as well between the two levels of analysis - comparing processes of change at the social and organizational levels. The political-economy approach of phase 1 (with an emphasis on secondary historical materials) shifts to a set of microcomparisons at the organizational level in phase 2 (and a corresponding emphasis on primary materials). These are *shifts of emphasis*, and not exclusive concerns, in the methodological approach. Reference to one particular kind of evidence is not associated with either phase. As a result, phase 1 includes observations on the actual organizational structure of the University in 1970 - 75 and broad social comparisons are made in phase 2. Table 6 shows a summary of the methodological approach for each phase.

CHAPTER	HISTORICAL PERIOD	ASPECT OF POLITICAL ECONOMY	RESEARCH ISSUE	BASIS OF COMPARATIVE OBSERVATION	MAIN TYPE OF EVIDENCE USED
5	Phase 1 (1970 - 75)	External	Social origin	University and Company as Organizations	Secondary documents
6	Phase 1 (1970 - 75)	External/ Internal	Social origin/ Relative autonomy	University as a System of Educational Provision	Primary and secondary documents and interviews
7	Phase 2 (1993 - 95)	Internal	Relative autonomy	University and Company as Systems of Educational Provision	Primary and secondary documents and interviews

■ *Table 6: Empirical and Methodological Focus for Chapters 5 - 7*<sup>160</sup>

Chapter 5 is concerned mainly with historical processes. Secondary historical sources, including archival materials, are used to describe the particular characteristics of the Alberta regional context as well as the national and international context within which the region developed economically and politically, arguing that the province functioned under the ideology of a proto-nationalism for which education provided political and social support. The chapter examines the *external political economy* as it relates

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<sup>160</sup>The cells in the table do not state the focus of the chapter in exclusive terms. For example, Chapter 5 includes references to interviews, though the table mentions only secondary documents. Such references will be subsidiary to the main part of the chapter, which develops the historical context for the external political economy for the University, with comparisons to the Company as appropriate.

to the social origin of the University. These secondary sources in these chapters are supported by an interview carried out by the researcher with the founding president of the University, a key informant. As discussed in this chapter, the interview was used to guide the researcher in returning to the secondary historical sources in a dialectic process of tacking between one key individual's personal insights and the conclusions and hypotheses contained in the historical literature. The chapter shows the historical processes within which the University originated during 1970 - 75. The cultural dispositions of actors are described with reference to the power structures that developed within historical processes. The cultural development in the region was shaped by political and economic alienation within the Canadian federation, and actors defined their interests in relation to this sense of alienation.

Chapters 6 and 7 report primary evidence based on an examination of the University's period of transformation in 1970 - 75 and 1993 - 95. In the latter part of Chapter 6 and in Chapter 7, the focus is on the *internal political economy* of the University. In both chapters, the research issue of the relative autonomy of the University is considered. Using interviews carried out by the researcher, these chapters are concerned with comparing and contrasting the two chronological eras, arguing that in both periods the University's relative autonomy enabled it to achieve its organizational survival or persistence. The perspective for the latter period changes to the micro-level to provide an interpretation of the organizational persistence of the University, which involves an association of the organizational strategy adopted and the organizational outcome



observed. Interviews are the main source of information for the second period. The intention is to clarify how relative autonomy for the University as a system of educational provision was achieved. The contributions of individuals and groups must be considered as being closer to these processes than secondary sources of evidence.

#### THE RESEARCHER AS PARTICIPANT-OBSERVER

A list of interviews carried out for the study appears in Appendix 3. Two taped interviews were carried out for the University: one with T.C. Byrne and one with an academic staff member. These interviews were used to follow up on observations and tentative conclusions developed through observation at the University. Many of the observations and tentative conclusions related to the period of 1993 - 95 at the University were gathered using the methods of the participant-observer.<sup>161</sup>

Three types of participant observation can be considered: exploratory, blended, and direct participation.<sup>162</sup> The first method of participant-observation, the exploratory, involves the researcher entering a social milieu about which she or he has no advance information, engaging in a kind of preparatory scouting as a basis for further inquiry. The second method, that of blended observation, involves direct observation,

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<sup>161</sup>William F. Whyte's *Street Corner Society* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958) is an often quoted study that based its data-gathering on the method of participant-observation. Originally published in 1943, the book tells the sociological "story" of the gangs operating in a slum in a large eastern U.S. city called "Cornerville." Whyte observed events between groups and group leaders and the members of the larger institutional structures of politics and the criminal "rackets." Whyte spent four years covertly observing and writing about change over time within the gangs. The "insider status" that Whyte achieved was not a superficial one. Though the book was written as a detached sociological observer, the personal attachments that Whyte made within the groups he was observing were maintained for many years after the study was ended. For example, he helped gang members in their work and vocational paths after leaving the gangs.

<sup>162</sup>See Henry L. Manheim, *Sociological Research: Philosophy and Methods* (Homewood, Ill.: Dorsey Press, 1977), p. 238.

interviewing of informants and respondents, document analysis, and direct participation. The third method involves the researcher becoming part of the milieu to be studied, either overtly or covertly.<sup>163</sup>

The present study employed the second of these forms of participant-observation, the blended method. The researcher was known to those in the organization as a researcher, although each conversation held was not prefaced by a statement of the researcher's objectives. The researcher kept a file of notes and papers that documented his meetings and conversations as president of the faculty union. From these, and by recalling critical incidents, he would record observations in a series of working papers. These observations were confirmed as appropriate by informal conversations or inquiries. For example, the question of the closing of the University in 1993 was assumed to be true by the researcher for many months, since his actions as faculty association president were guided in part by it. For the study, the information was confirmed as valid by two informants outside the University and two inside. This process of iteratively bringing forward relevant observations, checking these against the researcher's record, and then confirming through extended inquiry proceeded while the more formal process of interviewing at the Company took place. Observations made at the Company were tentatively applied at the University for confirmation. For example, the "cultural program" of change reported by Company respondents was found *not* to be

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<sup>163</sup>For the advantages and disadvantages of overt and covert participant-observation and the ethical concerns to be considered, see Martin Bulmer, "Ethical Problems in Social Research," in *Social Research Ethics*, edited by Martin Bulmer (London: Macmillan, 1982). Bulmer defines the covert participant-observer as someone who "remains secret and entirely unknown to those with whom he is in contact" (p. 5).

a concern of University staff, though low morale was an issue of concern for staff members at both organizations.

The status of the researcher as a staff member at the University provided opportunities for a close examination of the relational exercise of power and influence within the organization. According to Burgess,

In research involving the use of participant observation it is the researcher who is the main instrument of social investigation. . . . The value of being a participant observer lies in the opportunity that is available to collect rich detailed data based on observations in natural settings. The researcher can, therefore, construct an account of a social situation on the basis of the various accounts that are obtained from informants. . . . Here, it is the researcher's aim to compare these accounts with each other, and with other observations that the researcher has made in the field study.<sup>164</sup>

The observations at close quarters described by Burgess run the risk of becoming personal instead of general. A key disadvantage of participant-observation is the need to adopt a common point of reference between the observer and the observed, a step, when taken, that can distort the researcher's objectivity.<sup>165</sup> The research methodology for the present study called for a recognition that the actions of individuals and groups influenced, and were influenced by, social structures and larger historical transformations. The researcher's subjective situation was part of the historical/institutional context of the University. As an organizational member (a teacher at the University), the perspective on the institutional and social levels of analysis

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<sup>164</sup>Robert G. Burgess, *In the Field: An Introduction to Field Research* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1984), p. 79.

<sup>165</sup>See Manheim 1977, p. 240. Manheim discusses the status of *Verstehen*, or deep understanding, in a research program, suggesting that it is inimical to the value of objectivity. The use of participant-observation should be complemented by other, more detached, methods of observation.

could have become distorted by the common point of reference adopted by the researcher within the University. The methodology allowed for a balance to this possible distortion by examining at a micro-level the *Company's* changing structures as well as the University's. The problem of relative involvement/detachment<sup>166</sup> was mitigated by the researcher's parallel activity of carrying out a formal interviewing program at the Company. The Company provided a situation in which the researcher was "less involved," and this situation allowed the development of concepts and explanations that were also available for application to the University.

The observations at the University therefore represent a rich source of information and insight. Their validity was developed in a continual process of alternating between

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<sup>166</sup>See the chapter on "abstracted empiricism" (pp. 50-75) in C. Wright Mills, *The Sociological Imagination* (London: Oxford University Press, 1970). Mills argues that self-understanding is required for the social scientist, in order to avoid settling into research programs that are merely technical, yielding little insight into real social problems. See also Dennis Smith, *The Rise of Historical Sociology* (Polity Press, 1991), pp. 158-68, who provides a typology of the level of involvement/detachment of 22 prominent historical sociologists, characterizing them according to their roles as "examining magistrate," "scientist," "partisan expert witness," and "advocate." See also Norbert Elias, *Involvement and Detachment*, German editor Michael Schröter, translated by Edmund Jephcott (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1987). Elias identifies the dichotomy and interplay of involvement and detachment as central epistemological problems in the social sciences:

[W]hatever else may have changed since the days of pioneering sociologists, certain basic characteristics of the social sciences have not. For the time being, social scientists are liable to be caught in a dilemma. They work and live in a world in which almost everywhere groups, small and great, including their own groups, are engaged in a struggle for position and often enough for survival, some trying to rise and to better themselves in the teeth of strong opposition, some who have risen before trying to hold on to what they have, and some going down. Under these conditions, the members of such groups can hardly help being deeply affected in their thinking about social events by the constant threats arising from these tensions to their way of life or to their standards of life and perhaps to their life. As members of such groups, scientific specialists engaged in the study of society share with others these vicissitudes. . . . (p. 14).

The research design reflects in part a response to the researcher's status as a staff member at the University. In the beginning stages of the research, he was an editor with some teaching responsibilities, a position held since 1985. In 1994, he was appointed to a tenure-track position as assistant professor. From 1991 to 1993 he served as head of the faculty union, a role that entailed taking public positions on change initiatives at the University and in which he was consulted on these and other related issues by other staff members and by management and executive staff. The Company provided an organizational site in which the researcher's insights could be compared with the reports of organizational actors with whom the researcher could establish a more detached relation than would normally be possible at the University.

structured attention to experience, recourse to written accounts, and confirmation through inquiry. The reliability of the participant-observer's data can be confirmed in part by comparisons with the data gathered at the Company and at the two further organizations examined.

#### SMITH AND LLOYD ON THE HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE ON SOCIAL CHANGE

The organizations studied, and their regional context, are significant because they emerged during a period and in a place in which an important shift in the development of regional capitalism occurred. This shift (from the allocation state to the production state) was described in Chapter 1. The study is of relevance to the analysis of "oil economies" and other economies that rely significantly on the production of natural resources.<sup>167</sup>

The epistemological assumptions made in this study in connection with the problem of the social origin and relative autonomy of the University are to be found in the emerging discipline of historical sociology. By studying the past, historical sociology seeks to account for how societies operate. A number of approaches referred to as

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<sup>167</sup>Luciani points out that oil economies are defined in part by their geophysical characteristics, suggesting that there will be variation among economies relying on natural resources related to proximity to markets, population size, and so on. The case of Scotland is particularly cogent for comparison to Alberta, because of its subordinate role within the United Kingdom. See Richards and Pratt, who argue that

The inability of the Scots to capture the rents from North Sea oil in the highly centralized British unitary state provides fuel for secession, as will Westminster's spending of the rents to delay the process of English secular decline (Richards and Pratt 1978, p. 173).

Alberta proto-nationalism cannot rely on the historical and cultural particularities available to Scotland for the purpose of giving ideological life to a nationalist movement, although Albertans still saw clear to elect a separatist member of the provincial legislative assembly during the 1980s, a unique event in the history of English Canadian provincial legislatures.

belonging to the discipline of either historical sociology or social history have in common the assumption that social change is endemic to the social scientist's fundamental concern. In seeking an integrated account of social change, historical sociology calls for the combined use of the philosophies, theories, and methodologies of sociology, history, and economics. In this section, the main approaches taken by historical sociologists are discussed, by reference to the surveys of the area carried out by Dennis Smith and Christopher Lloyd, along with a statement of the particular approach taken in this study. The discussion of these approaches here are provided by way of introduction to the description of methodology that will follow. In dealing with what may be considered theoretical issues but which are nonetheless closely connected to the logic of the methodology adopted in the study, this section therefore continues the theoretical discussion begun in Chapter 2.

Smith's account of the development of historical sociology as a discipline since World War II<sup>168</sup> takes a sometimes biographical turn, identifying, for example, the implications of being an "insider" or an "outsider" to historical events under consideration, as well as the level of *involvement or detachment*, in the Eliasian sense discussed earlier in this chapter,<sup>169</sup> of the researcher. The other two issues that Smith identifies as being critical to the historical sociological approach of a given writer are the kinds of research activity carried out and the strategies of explanation used.

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<sup>168</sup>See Dennis Smith, *The Rise of Historical Sociology* (Polity Press, 1991).

<sup>169</sup>See Elias 1987.

The *kinds of research activity* noted by Smith are *exploration*, *generalization*, and *theory*. The names of 22 prominent historical sociologists<sup>170</sup> are plotted on a triangle showing their affinity with a particular research focus. Smith states that “the interests of some scholars tend to veer towards one of the three points of the triangle, while still being ‘in touch’ with the . . . other two points.”<sup>171</sup>

In a similar taxonomy, the same 22 names are shown on a figure showing the tendency to use one or more of the following *strategies of explanation*: dominant routes, infrastructural capacities, system contradictions, and competitive selection.<sup>172</sup> These strategies indicate the technique used by the writer to explain the characteristics of a polity in terms of a particular social outcome observed. It should be noted that the writers generally fall between two strategies, rather than being associated with only one. The *dominant route* strategy argues for a particular sequence of steps by which a social outcome develops, suggesting that these tend to characterize the antecedent conditions for that type of outcome. The *infrastructural capacities* explanatory strategy focuses on the productional ability of a society or group to create material surpluses, from which the movement may be initiated from one type of social development to another. The *system contradictions* strategy argues for the “internal logic of empires, nation-states, class

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<sup>170</sup>The list includes, perhaps most prominently, Anthony Giddens, Barrington Moore, Ernest Gellner, E.P. Thompson, Norbert Elias, Reinhard Bendix, and Talcott Parsons.

<sup>171</sup>Smith 1991, p. 166.

<sup>172</sup>Smith 1991, p. 169.

situations, global orders, and other kinds of 'system'" (p. 171). Finally, the *competitive selection* strategy is used to demonstrate the evolutionist nature of social development.

The present study is exploratory in its consideration of a particular kind of institution within a political economy. While seeking to make limited and tentative generalizations and to test selected aspects of theory,<sup>173</sup> the research's main contribution to knowledge is its identification of key sensitizing topics. These topics include the following:

- the relations of power to be observed between social structures on the one hand and educational processes and institutions on the other
- the cultural dispositions of actors and groups involved in the genesis and development of educational institutions
- the "social fate" of educational institutions within their respective political economies.
- the contradictions of a regional political economy as regards the development of educational institutions and processes.

The developmental logic of the nation-state is used as a guide to the development of Alberta society, a society that is subordinate within the Canadian nation-state, but having characteristics of its own that are similar to those of a fully developed nation-state.

Lloyd's discussion of the methodological and philosophical aspects of social historical analysis<sup>174</sup> provides a comprehensive typology of approaches to the area,

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<sup>173</sup>See Chapter 8 for a summary of these generalizations and theoretical conclusions.

<sup>174</sup>Lloyd proposes the term "structural history" as a more useful term to describe the work of social historians, historical sociologists, and others concerned with social history, culture, and change. See Christopher Lloyd, *Explanation in Social History* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986), p. 317.



discussing the scholarly context within which historical sociology has developed. In common among the various approaches is a concern with simultaneously addressing questions of social, political, and economic change. For Lloyd, the independence of social history as an area of study is, in fact, sought based on the delineation the discipline makes from its “institutional parents” of sociology, political history, and economic history.<sup>175</sup>

The possible approaches based on Lloyd’s typology are listed below. The list shows traditions of social change theory,<sup>176</sup> all of which attempt to provide an explanation of *action*, *structure*, and *history*, but in ways that differ in their emphasis or regard for one or more of these three aspects.

- systemic evolutionism
- individualism
- structuralism
- symbolic realism
- relational structurism

The first three above are limited in their use for historical sociology, since they are based on a determinist view, incorporating a cultural, psychological/institutional, or structural approach to assessing the antecedents of social change. These approaches

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<sup>175</sup>Lloyd 1986, p. 5.

<sup>176</sup>See Lloyd 1986, p. 191, for a graphical depiction of the relations among these traditions, along with their respective philosophical foundations, schools of social theory, and theories of social change mechanisms.

view the sources of structural change as existing outside the consciousness of individuals. In addition, these approaches are not based on philosophical foundations of structuralism, by which social structures can be viewed as objective entities that individuals have a role in changing, but within which as well the limits of action are set.

The last two approaches, symbolic realism and relational structuralism, do take up structuralism as a philosophical foundation. However, for symbolic realism Lloyd suggests that

it is easy to go too far in the direction of agency, as I believe [some symbolic realists] have done, because it carries the possibility of the necessary rejection of the independent reality of society; then the only option left is a methodological individualism on the basis of phenomenology. How to save both methodological *structuralism* and *agency* is the problem.<sup>177</sup>

The relational-structuralist approach, which characterizes the assumptions taken in the present study, is based on the following principles.<sup>178</sup>

First, the approach is characterized by the concept of *realism* as regards the nature of social structure. This means that social structures are taken to be relatively autonomous from the actions of individuals, although collective action remains capable of affecting and changing those structures. Such an approach distinguishes itself from some Marxist analyses in which social structure functions independently of agency.

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<sup>177</sup>Lloyd 1986, p. 277.

<sup>178</sup>Adapted from Lloyd 1986, pp. 280-84.

Second, a *social-levels model* of society is used, by which is meant that actions, structure, and history are assessed in terms of change for the individual, the institution, and the political economy - an “infrastructure/superstructure/consciousness model or something similar.”<sup>179</sup> The relational nature of power is reflected in this characteristic, which the educational historians Ringer and Collins, to be discussed further in this chapter, affirm. As Lloyd notes, “[t]he specification of the levels, their degree of abstraction, and their interrelationships are all serious problems.”<sup>180</sup>

Third, human *agency* is seen as expressive of rationality, reflexivity, and freedom of choice. While the actor is constrained by her or his historical situation and the social structural rules that “govern” behaviour, relatively autonomous activity is possible. As a consequence, the approach has in common with more hermeneutical approaches (such as that of the symbolic realists) a concern with actors’ accounts. These accounts, however, are to be assessed in the context of the particular historical processes within which action is made possible.

Fourth, *social class* is used as a means of establishing causal relationships in history and of explaining an individual’s identification of interests. This is what Lloyd calls the “external” and “internal” relations of social class.<sup>181</sup> Social class is important for

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<sup>179</sup>Lloyd 1986, p. 281.

<sup>180</sup>Lloyd 1986, p. 281.

<sup>181</sup>Lloyd 1986, p. 282.

explaining not only why social structures change, but also for interpreting the actions of individuals.

Fifth, *ideology* is regarded as an important factor in social change. Ideology is considered in the senses of both a system of ideas and false consciousness. This means that a critique of ideology in historical sociological accounts can show how “ideas, action, and society . . . can be seriously out of phase, leading to social conflict, a failure of social reproduction, and ultimately to social disintegration and transformation.”<sup>182</sup>

Sixth, and closely related to the fifth, *unintended consequences* are considered by relational structuralists to be a possible outcome of social change. The figurations of history by definition are characterized by the interdependent actions of individuals, and in such a situation the final outcome of actions can be unknown to actors. As a consequence, historical accounts in this approach may describe outcomes that were not desired or preferred by powerful individuals and groups.

Seventh, and finally, is the fundamental notion of society as a *historical structure*. Change is part of the social condition, and history provides a means of describing the structure of a changing society. The three “moments of historical experience and the historical process” are:

1. Given circumstances, which are enabling and disabling of action
2. Conscious action that is historically significant

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<sup>182</sup>Lloyd 1986, pp. 282-83.

3. The intended and unintended consequences of action, which turn into objective and seemingly unalterable conditions of action and thought<sup>183</sup>

It is worth noting that although Lloyd's view is that the maintenance of the primacy of structurism and agency and the establishment of causal explanations are important aspects of the historical sociologist's work, he nonetheless points to the importance of a critical philosophy as something that historical sociologists should be dealing with more explicitly in their work. A critical philosophy provides the researcher with a framework within which the meaning of social change can be interpreted. He refers to Jürgen Habermas as a leading proponent of the need for the social scientist to employ a hermeneutical method of interpreting social meaning.<sup>184</sup>

#### SKOCPOL'S TYPOLOGY OF METHODS IN HISTORICAL SOCIOLOGY

Turning from the question of the usefulness of a historical perspective and the kind of knowledge produced by historical sociology, the study's methodology is now considered. The methodology used here is comparative, involving the analysis of primary and secondary documents, supplemented by interviews with actors within various organizations. It considers various historical antecedents of a social outcome to determine which of these antecedents caused the outcome. Skocpol identifies three

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<sup>183</sup>Lloyd 1986, p. 283.

<sup>184</sup>See Lloyd 1986, pp. 85-95. Also see Christopher Lloyd, *The Structures of History* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1993), in which he goes further to argue for what he calls a transformative science of society: "[S]cience and hermeneutics are not the opposites they were once thought to be although there is still a distinction between them. There is an important hermeneutical element in all science, just as there should also be an element of scientific enquiry in the hermeneutical study of texts, art forms, and social practices" (p. 197).

research strategies in historical sociology. The strategies are quite distinct in terms of the nature of the conclusions that may be drawn from empirical and historical data.

The first strategy involves applying a general model to history. The model to be applied is characteristically large in scale, providing a framework for understanding the broad trends of history. As Skocpol points out, “a practitioner of this approach is chiefly interested in demonstrating and elaborating the inner logic of a general theoretical model.”<sup>185</sup> The Parsonian structural functionalist approach lends itself perhaps especially well to this research strategy. A shortcoming of the strategy identified by Skocpol is that it must depend on the plausibility of a taken-for-granted model, which is often characterized by a high order of abstraction and complexity. Such models maintain an analytical “distance” from empirical problems that can prevent the meaningful formation and resolution of research questions. As well, the application of such models may appear arbitrary, because it is difficult to predict whether another researcher would apply the model in the same way to the same historical situation.

The second strategy, that employed by what Skocpol calls interpretive historical sociologists, seeks to devise a meaningful interpretation of history. “Meaningful” interpretations depend upon both the “culturally embedded intentions of individual or group actors in the given historical settings under investigation” and the significance for the audience of the issues addressed. The audience is “always larger than specialized

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<sup>185</sup>Theda Skocpol, “Emerging Agendas and Recurrent Strategies in Historical Sociology,” in *Vision and Method in Historical Sociology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), p. 365.

academic audiences,” as Skocpol notes.<sup>186</sup> Such studies can be rich in detail and eloquently written, providing a dramatic context that may be missing from the other two strategies. Single cases or comparative studies may be developed using the interpretive approach. The approach may also be used in combination with the other two research strategies. The drawback of the approach that Skocpol identifies is that “interpretive sociologists can almost always be faulted for their insouciance about establishing *valid* explanatory arguments”<sup>187</sup> (a failing that is avoided in the third approach). Because the interpretive approach will always yield what is essentially an account that brings into focus a particular set of historical relations, the generalizability of the account will remain unknown.

The third strategy, situated midway in the “generalizability focus” of the other two approaches, is that of analytic historical sociology. This strategy seeks causal relationships between historical antecedents and social outcomes in a formal manner. In this methodology, elaborated first by J.S. Mill, empirical cases are discussed inductively to determine like antecedents or outcomes.<sup>188</sup> An account of *agreement* is one in which an antecedent is found to be common among more than one of those cases and is also associated with a common outcome; the antecedent may be identified as possibly causing

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<sup>186</sup>Skocpol, p. 368.

<sup>187</sup>Skocpol, p. 372.

<sup>188</sup>David Jary and Julia Jary, *The Harper Collins Dictionary of Sociology* (New York: HarperCollins, 1991), p. 71.

the outcome.<sup>189</sup> An account of *difference*<sup>190</sup> is one in which an unlike antecedent is found among empirical cases and is also found to be associated with an unlike outcome; the unlike antecedent may be identified as possibly having caused the unlike outcome. The assumption is that the unlike antecedent by its difference from other antecedents may logically be paired with an outcome that is similarly distinguished by its difference. Finally, an account of *concomitant variations*<sup>191</sup> identifies an antecedent which varies in magnitude over a number of cases. The magnitude of this antecedent is associated with the magnitude of an outcome; the antecedent may be identified as the possible cause of the outcome.

Skocpol suggests that the methods are not equivalent in terms of their analytical usefulness:

Taken alone, [the method of difference] is more powerful for establishing valid causal associations than the method of agreement used alone. Sometimes, however, it is possible to combine the two methods by using several positive cases along with suitable negative cases as contrasts.<sup>192</sup>

Analytic historical sociological studies are characterized by broad comparisons and so they must make use of secondary sources of data. In this study, for example, the work of Jamie Swift is consulted for a historical account of the national development of

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<sup>189</sup>John Stuart Mill, *A System of Logic Ratiocinative and Inductive, Being a Connected View of the Principles of Evidence and the Methods of Scientific Investigation*, Books 1-3 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1974), p. 388.

<sup>190</sup>Mill, p. 391.

<sup>191</sup>Mill, p. 398.

<sup>192</sup>Skocpol, pp. 378-79.



vocational training; Richards and Pratt are reviewed for the political economic concept of province-building. For Skocpol, the assessment of each secondary historical source must be carried out as part of the study, though primary data may be used to investigate particular aspects of the problem at hand. Summarizing the preference for analytic historical sociological accounts, Skocpol states that

[a]nalytic sociology can avoid the extremes of particularizing versus universalizing that limit the usefulness and appeal of the other two approaches.<sup>193</sup>

This form of historical sociology represents an approach to data gathering, analysis, and theorizing that is concerned to avoid the arbitrary introduction of ahistorical theoretical social models. The analytic research strategy within historical sociology can be combined with careful use of both theoretical discussion and imaginative interpretation of meanings.

The methodology in the present study follows the method of difference for developing the main argument, which is constituted by phases 1 and 2. In these phases it is argued that the two *organizations* may be regarded in important historical and analytical senses as being similar. The organizations arose out of a common political-economic environment and had common functions within that political economy, both contributing to the ideology of proto-nationalism through their role in the strategy of province-building. The University differs from other comparable educational institutions in Canada by the radical characteristics of its mandate and teaching methods,

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<sup>193</sup>Skocpol, p. 384.

especially as these may be observed in the plans for the new institution that were drawn up in the period of 1970 - 75. The proto-nationalism to be shown here by reference to Macpherson's and Richards and Pratt's political-economic accounts of the region may be regarded as the *unlike antecedent* which is associated with an *unlike outcome*, that is, the social origin of the University. Alberta had particular characteristics as a political economy that created a favourable environment for the process of the social origin of the University.<sup>194</sup> Linking these characteristics with the University's social origin is accomplished by the method of difference.

A subsidiary argument is pursued by comparing the University with the Company as two educational systems and identifying the change strategy adopted by each in the period of 1993 - 95: for the University a technical change strategy, for the Company, a cultural change strategy. These strategy choices are associated with different social outcomes.

The study relies on the method of agreement for providing points and counterpoints related to the main argument. Systems of educational provision beyond the original two are considered comparatively in relation to the question of how systems of educational provision maintain their relative autonomy. Another further, comparative system of educational provision is considered from a different Canadian region to consider

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<sup>194</sup>The sociogenetic antecedent of the University's establishment is described in the study, but a relationship of cause and effect is avoided. See Norbert Elias, *What Is Sociology?*, translated by Stephen Mennell and Grace Morrissey, with a Foreword by Reinhard Bendix (London: Hutchinson, 1978), p. 161. Elias notes that

a retrospective developmental investigation can often demonstrate with a high degree of certainty *that a figuration had to arise out of a certain earlier figuration or even out of a particular type of sequential series of figurations, but does not assert that the earlier figurations had necessarily to change into the later ones* (italics in the original).

whether the regional aspect of the University's development may be confirmed as important, at least for these cases. Similarly, another Alberta company in the same industry as the case company is also considered, to provide a comparison with the case company's cultural strategy of change. Secondary sources supplemented by interviews at these two sites provide evidence to support the main argument concerning the link between proto-nationalism and the social origin of radical educational systems. Table 7 summarizes the applications of the comparative method to the various historical outcomes considered in the study.

SOCIAL OUTCOME	COMPARATIVE METHOD	TYPE OF ANTECEDENT	ANTECEDENT
Social origin: University and Company	Difference	Unlike <sup>195</sup>	Proto-nationalism
(Maintenance of) relative autonomy: University and a further comparative company system of educational provision	Agreement	Like	Technical change strategy
(Reduction of) relative autonomy: Company system of educational provision and a further comparative university system	Agreement	Like	Cultural change strategy

- *Table 7: Summary of the Application of the Comparative Method in the Study*

#### DATA-GATHERING STRATEGY FOR THE INTERVIEWS

In this section, the design and implementation of the interview program are discussed. Interviews were carried out with *special respondents* and *key informants*. Key informants provided information concerning the research objectives that was directed towards research strategy and access to respondents. Special respondents provided their knowledge and insights that were directed towards elucidating the researcher's understanding about the community in which the organizational actors worked or lived. The special respondents in typical instances pointed the way to interviews with key informants, as well as to primary sources of information.

The data was gathered in a process of tacking between primary and secondary sources. A review of relevant secondary literature was begun in 1992. The critical theoretical basis for the approach to be taken to developing the topic, which is discussed in the previous three chapters, was identified at that point. The topic and research site were identified in general terms in 1993. From that point, primary and secondary documents from and about the case organizations were gathered. Lists of these documents are provided in Appendix 1.

The first of the interviews was carried out in May 1994. That summer and autumn, interviews with five key informants were carried out at the Company, at three sites. Formal permission for access to gather data was requested for both the Company and the University in late 1994. Permission was granted through the Ethical Review Committee at the University. At the Company, the request was made on several occasions verbally and was formally conveyed in a letter dated 21 March 1996. Another letter was sent in the summer of 1996. Formal permission was not granted, although the researcher was allowed to continue gathering data over a period of more than two years at five Company sites in the province. The researcher's interpretation of this anomaly is that managers and decision-makers within the Company wanted to reserve the right to refuse to acknowledge any conclusions following from the study, while regarding the researcher's status as a community member and educator who should be allowed to ask

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<sup>195</sup>As noted in the discussion, the unlike antecedent is identified for each of the University and the company separately. The method of difference is used to induct each organization into the study and is not used to compare one with the other.

questions about the operations of the Company. The Company's public affairs office, in a fashion similar to most large organizations, seeks to inform the public about what it is the Company does and why. In the case of publicly traded companies, as this one is, there is a real interest in persuasively informing the public, especially potential investors, of the value of the Company's activities.

As a result of the problem of gaining formal access, the identity of the Company has been disguised and is sometimes referred to in the study as Primus Corporation. Interviews were carried out based on the principle of fully informing the informant or respondent about the purposes of the researcher and then using the interviews to provide direction to secondary data. For example, a key informant might be asked about a critical incident. The informant would discuss the incident, and the interviewer would make a note of both the perspective taken by the informant as well as any references made to secondary documents available in the public domain that could be gathered. During the same interview, a special respondent might be identified for interviewing by the informant. An informant or respondent might also offer primary documents for the researcher's use in connection to the incident discussed.

A total of 29 interviews were carried out with key informants and special respondents at the Company and the University, during a period of approximately two years: May 1994 - July 1996. Some further interviews were carried out in the following months in order to provide for the further comparisons with two organizations parallel to the case organizations. All of the interviews were semi-structured. A list of

topics was drafted by the interviewer following lines of conceptual development that were relevant at that stage of the research. The stages of research and the approximate chronological points at which they were taken up, as reflected in a series of working papers prepared, were as follows:

- May 1994: Organizational context for the development and delivery of educational activities at the Company and at the University is developed, with the intention of formulating the research question.
- September 1994: Interactions between informal (training) and formal (higher education) systems of teaching and learning are considered, with the purpose of devising an analytical model to guide the research.
- January 1995: The discursive and strategic use of educational activities by the Company and the University is considered, with the objective of beginning to draft a comparative account of the two case organizations.
- August 1995: Consolidation of theoretical and methodological issues for the research is continued, with the intention of making empirical comparisons based on a set of theoretical assumptions.
- November 1995: The development of a political-economy model as it could be applied to the two case organizations is developed, including an ideological framework within which systems of educational provision operate.
- February 1996: Further consideration is given to the ideological nature of systems of educational provision.
- March 1996: A comparative analysis of the case organizations as (educational) social systems is drafted.
- October 1996: Comparisons with two organizations parallel to the case organizations are considered.

Interviews were intended to allow the researcher to gather information and insights that could not be obtained through other means: literature review, secondary data,

or triangulation of evidence. As a result, interviews were generally focused on the informants' and respondents' opinions and insights as they applied to their own roles in the organization.

For each interview, 12 to 15 questions were drafted to correspond to the topics pertinent to that stage of the research, along with one or two possible probe questions to be used for following up subtopics of particular interest to the interviewer. Probes were also used in those instances in which a respondent's comments seemed particularly significant to the respondent.<sup>196</sup>

As mentioned, formal access to the Company was never granted, although respondents were made aware verbally of the researcher's research purposes and the stated intention to use the interviews as part of the research process. At the University, the agreement of the Ethical Review Committee was obtained for the purposes of audiotaping in connection with the research. A tape recorder was used for only two respondents, both in conjunction with the University. Telephone interviews do not allow the interviewer to observe some aspects of non-verbal communication. In all but two of the telephone interviews conducted by telephone, the respondent was interviewed as well in person on another occasion.

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<sup>196</sup>Indicators for such a perception included the following:

- an increased or decreased volume of vocal delivery
- an increase in the intensity of the tone of vocal delivery
- a pause of three or more seconds before a response was begun
- a verbal or non-verbal expression of frustration, surprise, or reticence



The ethical principles used to guide the interviewing process were as follows:

- Notes were made during and after interviews to allow for verification of respondent's words. In two instances, audiotapes were used to supplement the interviewer's notes.
- Participation was voluntary on the part of informants and respondents and was preceded by the interviewer's explicit verbal description of the purpose of the interview and the nature of the research.
- The respondent's protection from harm was established by the anonymity of the respondent. Identities in the study are coded, except in the case of one of the University respondents (T.C. Byrne), who agreed to be identified and whose role would have in any case been identifiable.
- The results of the research will be shared with respondents and with the organizations, if requested.

#### INHIBITORS AND FACILITATORS FOR THE INTERVIEWS

Gorden<sup>197</sup> has identified a set of "inhibitors and facilitators" that forms a framework within which interviewers may seek to increase the likelihood that the data they gather will contribute to an accomplishment of their research aims. Inhibitors and facilitators are listed in Appendix 2, along with a comment for each concerning the relevance of the particular inhibitor or facilitator for the present research and a response that is intended to provide a tactic for ensuring the acknowledgement of that inhibitor or facilitator throughout the interviewing process.

#### INTERVIEW DOCUMENTATION

The schedule provided in Appendix 3 is divided into those interviews that were conducted by telephone and those carried out in person. Each entry states the date, the

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<sup>197</sup>Raymond Gorden, *Interviewing: Strategy, Techniques, and Tactics*, Fourth edition, (Chicago: The Dorsey Press, 1987).

type of interview (key informant or specialrespondent), approximate length in minutes or hours of the interview, whether it was taped (only taped interviews are so noted), and a summary of the topics covered. The information found in Appendix 3 has been transcribed and summarized from the researcher's written notes made during the interviews.

#### THE POLITICAL ECONOMY STRATEGY

The methodology for this study was introduced in this chapter by dealing first with the epistemological issues that give rise to a particular method of identifying, gathering, and analyzing historical materials. The next chapter discusses the external environment for the University for the period of 1970 - 75. The methodological strategy for "mapping" this environment was devised by Mayer Zald. In his introduction to his historical sociological account of the social trajectory of the YMCA, Zald outlines the political economy model as a means of parsimoniously staking the critical aspects of organizational change processes. Thus, the early section of Chapter 5 is contiguous with the present chapter, in the same way that the beginning of the present chapter continued the discussion of theory provided in Chapter 2.

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## CHAPTER 5: THE EXTERNAL POLITICAL ECONOMY AND THE SOCIAL ORIGIN OF THE UNIVERSITY

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### CHRONOLOGY

- 1970 - The Social Credit government of Alberta passes Order in Council 1206/70 on 25 June to create Athabasca University. The University is to be a residential, undergraduate institution located in the city of St. Albert. T.C. Byrne, the deputy minister of education, is among those appointed to the governing board.
- 1971 - Byrne retires from the civil service and is appointed president of the University on 1 May. Planning is based on a document entitled, *Athabasca University - Academic Concept*. On 30 August, a new Progressive Conservative government is elected. The Capital Development Committee of the new government orders planning for the new institution to stop.
- 1972 - Order in Council 1986/72, passed on 20 December, rescinds previous Orders in Council relative to Athabasca University and provides for the operation of the institution for five years as a pilot project.
- 1973 - The pilot project begins, based on the planning document entitled, *Athabasca University - An Experiment in Practical Planning*.
- 1974 - Hundreds of students, eventually reaching a total of 725, enroll in the pilot project and complete courses as they are produced by the pilot project staff.
- 1975 - The Minister of Advanced Education writes on 3 November to inform the University that the pilot project will be established as a permanent provincial University. Orders in Council 434/78 and 435/78 to finalize this decision are not actually passed until 1978. Byrne retires from the University on 1 October 1976.

## INTRODUCTION

This chapter describes the political and economic shifts that were to pave the way for shifts in cultural capital during the period of 1970 - 75. It is argued in this chapter that an educational institution could, under the former allocation state, situate itself within the political economy by reference to its capability of providing educational services and benefits to the domestic economy. However, in the production state, such a capability would need to be changed so that it offered not only services to the domestic economy but also support for the export economy. The usefulness of the consumerist model in education became evident as the need for the fledgling new university in the province was questioned.

Before turning to a historical analysis of the shift from allocation to production, the work of Mayer Zald is considered. Zald's political economy strategy for considering an organization's status will be described. It should be noted as well that Zald's analysis has included the concept of "displaced objectives" within the process of organizational change, a concept that will be useful in Chapter 6, which describes the efforts of individuals and groups to find a new role for the University within changed political and economic circumstances.

## A POLITICAL ECONOMY STRATEGY FOR ANALYSIS

This chapter discusses the political economy from which the University emerged historically, arguing that it shares with the Company a common set of formative

influences. These influences arise on the one hand from the constitutional conflict that is characteristic of Canadian federalism and on the other from the values held by regional elites. These elites, made up of owners and managers of regionally based companies in the oil and petrochemical sector, were concerned to develop a regional industrial base, adapting social institutions to pursue their interests.

Mayer Zald has suggested that a political economy approach to organizations is efficient and illuminating in examining the process of change in an organization. In his study of the emergence of the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) in the U.S.,<sup>198</sup> Zald suggests that Philip Selznick's notion of the total organization as the appropriate focus of study for organizational change may be applicable to many organizations. Selznick and his followers, including Charles Perrow, have emphasized power, dominating elites, and group conflict in their study of organizational change:

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<sup>198</sup>See Mayer N. Zald, *Organizational Change: The Political Economy of the YMCA* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1970). Zald argues that the organizational career of the YMCA was characterized by the displacement of objectives. As social and economic circumstances changed, and along with it the fortunes of the YMCA, the formal mission of the organization was reinterpreted by individuals and groups to ensure the survival of the organization. An organization that began with the goal of providing a safe and wholesome refuge for the working poor men in the city's core became an organization providing recreational facilities for commuting middle-class urban workers. A similar displacement of objectives will be described in Chapter 6, in which T.C. Byrne's founding presidency represented the intention of "finding a need" for the University, whose survival was threatened only a couple of years after its establishment.

[B]ecause their concern is with both the internal and external dependencies of an organization, they often focus on income sources, production, and the internal competitive processes determining the allocation of resources within organizations.<sup>199</sup>

Zald's is a two-fold strategy, in which the polity and the economy of an organization are considered in turn with the objective of developing an account of organizational change and development. On the polity, Zald identifies the following analytic components as being among the most important:

- (1) the amount and distribution of power, in which the basic distinctions are discussed of centralization-decentralization and federated-corporate organizational structures;
- (2) the processes of demand aggregation, in which the supporting sentiments and opinion that underlie the mobilization of power are considered;
- (3) organizational constitutions, whether formal or informal, which are the sets of organizational norms that "limit, constrain, and guide the actual system of power, as well as the economy's operation";
- (4) transfer of power, which includes not only shifts of power within the organization but also succession processes and changes in the perspectives of elites;
- (5) external political linkages, which may include interorganizational exchanges (such as referrals) and the forging of alliances.<sup>200</sup>

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<sup>199</sup>Zald 1970, p. 17. See also Burton R. Clark, *Adult Education in Transition: A Study of Institutional Security* (Berkeley: University of California, 1968). Clark also follows Selznick in emphasizing "organizational action as a way of understanding processes of institutional change" (p. 43). Clark discusses the marginality of adult education in California by several factors including the following: its weak constitutional and legal status, its secondary status in administrative workloads, the absence of a separate physical plant and facilities, its subjection to the pressures of economy-minded interest groups, and so on. Clark's approach looks for pressure on organization from the external environment and is especially concerned with organizational adaptations as responses to environmental pressures.

<sup>200</sup>Zald, p. 234.

On the economy of an organization, Zald proposes the consideration of both the internal and external systems of the production and exchange of goods and services. The effect of these systems on the polity structures is then assessed.

The internal economy of organization concerns itself with the allocation of resources with the goal of satisfying the organizational stakeholders. The internal economy must take into account the following:

- (1) the division of labour, technologies, and interunit relationships, which should consider the degree of specialization and differentiation that exists within the organization for the pursuit of organizational goals;
- (2) mechanisms for resource allocations, which is accomplished in the organization through budgeting and accounting procedures and which may be examined by the researcher with reference to the structural mechanisms for reaching decisions, the history and development of the accounting and allocating rules, or the consequences of different allocational procedures;
- (3) incentive allocations, which is a category of resource allocations but which focuses on the rewards needed to motivate individuals for the performance of roles.<sup>201</sup>

For the external economy and its relation to the internal economy and polity of the organization, Zald notes that organizations of all types must address the supply-demand equation.<sup>202</sup>

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<sup>201</sup>Zald, p. 239.

<sup>202</sup>Zald, p. 329. He cites a social movement such as one that favours euthanasia to provide an example of an organization with a "fixed demand level."

It will be argued that the political economy within which and by which the University was established can be described by reference to the pursuit of the broad economic and political goals of government and business elites in Alberta. These goals were fulfilled in a period of economic growth within the province. They supported an ideology that offered white-collar jobs in a new industrial economy separated politically and geographically from central Canada. The political separatism was expressed ideologically as a proto-nationalism. The University, along with other organizations that emerged in the same period, including the Company, were intended to contribute to an “Alberta first” policy.<sup>203</sup> Pratt points to the following techniques that were used to develop this policy:

restricting the power and bargaining rights of labour; ensuring “fair market value” for oil and gas producers; diverting a share of rising resource revenues into capital funds for economic diversification; processing of more resources in Alberta; securing local control over western transportation routes; offsetting the costs of geography by holding down provincial gas prices; establishing a tax incentive system favorable to small businesses; and maintaining a business climate favorable to new foreign investment while insisting on various forms of “participation” by Alberta businesses and investors in the ownership and control of major projects.<sup>204</sup>

The institutions and organizations established or purchased to contribute to this program included Primus, Pacific Western Airlines, Alberta energy company, a provincial share of Syncrude Canada Ltd., and the Alberta Petroleum Marketing Commission. Of special note is the Heritage Trust Fund, established in 1976, which was created to set

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<sup>203</sup>See Larry Pratt, “The Political Economy of Province-Building,” in *Essays on the Political Economy of Alberta*, edited by David Leadbeater (Toronto: New Hogtown Press, 1984), p. 209.

<sup>204</sup>Pratt 1984, pp. 208-09.



aside oil and gas royalties that were surplus to the provincial government's annual budget. In a period of only 10 years from the Fund's establishment in the early 1970s, several billion dollars were accumulated, which were to be invested in such areas as medical research. The sum effect of these initiatives was to exercise the capacity of the province to develop as a "state within a state." The era in which the University was established was characterized by political and economic activity within a constitutionally defined area in which the development of capitalism within the province could be consolidated and built up independently.

The *external* political economic environment within which the University was established is discussed in this chapter and in part of the next chapter. In the external environment, the establishment of the University and other institutions and organizations consolidated the power of regional elites. The *internal* political economic environment will be considered in the latter part of Chapter 6 and in Chapter 7.

#### PROVINCE-BUILDING WITHIN THE CANADIAN FEDERATION

The University arose out of a period in the history of the province of Alberta in which the regional interests of a rising bourgeoisie meshed with the economic aspirations of the broader public. This convergence of interests has been called province-building,<sup>205</sup> and it has been characterized by the following principles:

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<sup>205</sup>John Richards and Larry Pratt, *Prairie Capitalism: Power and Influence in the New West* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Limited, 1979), p. 4.

- development of secondary industries for the upgrading of natural resources within the province,
- an attempt to clarify and entrench the constitutionality of the provincial ownership of the resources,
- and the decentralization to the province from the federal government of decisions regarding economic policy as these decisions affect resource development.

The linkage is quite clear between the strategy of province-building and the establishment of the Company. The Company represented an opportunity to strengthen provincial influence over the price of natural gas for export, thereby extending the exploitation of the resource. The linkage between province-building and the establishment of the University will be developed later in the chapter in the context of Gellner's theory of the sociology of nationalism.

In the Canadian federal system of government, the Constitution provides for a division of powers between the federal government and the governments of the 10 provinces. The federal government on the one hand and the provincial governments on the other are not actually levels of government but orders of government. Each order of government has its own areas of exclusive jurisdiction. The federal parliament does not have hierarchical authority over the provincial legislatures. The history of the evolution of the Canadian Constitution since confederation in 1867 has been characterized by the devolution of legislative powers to the provincial governments, at the cost of federal power. A key legal principle in directing the course of emerging federal-provincial

relations is that the federal government has the predominant power to tax, while the provincial governments hold significant powers of spending. The federal government has sought to redress the resulting imbalance by exercising the influence that flows from its powers of taxation to encourage provinces to establish and maintain programs - health care and education, for example - whose standards are comparable across the country.<sup>206</sup> Swift provides the example of the means by which the Canadian government “purchased seats” during the 1960s and 1970s in the area of training and development programs, “under which the [federal government] provided funds according to the number of places offered in the provincial education and training programs of the new community colleges.”<sup>207</sup>

Of particular interest here are the areas of responsibility between the two orders of government as they affect *natural resources*, since this is the industry focus of the one Company, and *education*, the sector in which the other operates. The provinces have full title to all lands, mines, minerals, and royalties within their boundaries. The ownership of resources became significant in the “era of oil,” the period beginning with the OPEC crisis in 1973 and lasting until the early 1980s:

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<sup>206</sup>Richard J. Van Loon and Michael S. Whittington (*The Canadian Political System: Environment, Structure, and Process*, Third Edition, Revised, (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson, Ltd., 1984), p. 267.

<sup>207</sup>Jamie Swift, *Wheel of Fortune: Work and Life in the Age of Falling Expectations* (Toronto: Between the Lines, 1995), p. 107.

[C]ontrol over Crown land and therefore over non-renewable natural resources has proven to be one of the major sources of provincial power since World War II.<sup>208</sup>

In the same way, the provincial governments have exclusive jurisdiction in the area of education, with the exception of the federal responsibility to protect religious and linguistic minorities in the system of educational provision. Both the Company and the University emerged from a period in Alberta history during which the province sought to strengthen its economic and political powers through, among other means, developing its control and influence in the areas of resource exploitation and education. Part of the process of developing this control and influence can be accounted for in terms of the training and education of the workforce.

#### EDUCATIONAL TRACKING AND THE CREATION OF AN INDUSTRIAL WORKFORCE

The University's mandate at the time of establishment was to provide new means by which traditional degree programs could be delivered to students in a way that contributed to the region's need for a labour pool with particular characteristics. It is appropriate here to describe the process of public debate in which a particular construction and use of the concept of educational reform, as reflected in the new University, found expression long before the actual establishment of the institution. The beginning of this process was 1913, when the Royal Commission on Industrial Training

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<sup>208</sup>Van Loon and Whittington, p. 245.

and Technical Education was struck.<sup>209</sup> In presentations to the Commission, both educators and industrialists pointed to the need for an alignment between the requirements of the workplace and the structures of the formal education system.

The argument that the primary activity of the schools should be to prepare students for the world of work, made most notably by the Canadian Manufacturers' Association in its representations to the Commission in 1913, were used again in the 1960s by advocates of new community colleges to support a move towards a similar stratification within the higher system of educational provision. Dennison and Gallagher note that equality of educational opportunity was a discursive theme of the 1960s as Canadian community colleges were being established. The two factors that provided the direct impetus for government decision-makers in allocating funds for the new institutions were increased student demand and technological change:

First and most urgent was the project of demand for post-secondary education by a rapidly increasing segment of the eighteen to twenty-four age cohort. . . . [T]he political consequences of inaction seemed to dominate and the imprecise phrase "democratization of higher education" entered the rhetoric of the period. A second factor . . . was the impact of scientific and technological change which accompanied the end of the Second World War. Constant reference was made to the economic consequences of sustaining a Canadian workforce without the skills necessary for the demands of that age. . . . If new cadres of skilled and semi-skilled manpower

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<sup>209</sup> *Royal Commission on Industrial Training and Technical Education* (Ottawa: Government of Canada, 1913).

were to be produced quickly, the situation was perceived to be in the development of technical and vocational programming in post-secondary institutions.<sup>210</sup>

In both historical periods, the argument was made that the primary focus of education was to prepare students to enter the world of work equipped with skills and knowledge that would correspond as closely as possible to the requirements of the jobs that they would eventually take up. The debate between proponents of a liberal education on the one hand and a technical or vocational education on the other concerns the degree to which the system of educational provision should be integrated with the structures and needs of industry. This debate may be traced historically to the development of the conception of the division of labour that is characteristic of industrial capitalism. As such, the debate is some two centuries old, with the publication date of 1886 for the *The Wealth of Nations*, in which Adam Smith argued that the comparative advantage of a nation's economy depended in part on the aptitudes and skills of its citizens, and that education should be funded partly from the public purse.<sup>211</sup>

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<sup>210</sup>John D. Dennison and Paul Gallagher, *Canada's Community Colleges: A Critical Analysis* (University of British Columbia Press, 1986), p. 12. The authors recount Alberta's seminal role in the Canadian community-college movement. A member of the local chamber of commerce in Lethbridge urged that a consultant be appointed by the Alberta government to study province's needs for college education, and S.V. Martorana of Washington State College was commissioned. Martorana's recommendations drew significantly on the Washington state community college model, and Canada's first public, two-year community college was established in Lethbridge in 1957.

<sup>211</sup>See Adam Smith, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*, edited by Edwin Cannan (New York: The Modern Library, 1937):

The education of the common people requires, perhaps, in a civilized and commercial society, the attention of the public more than that of people of some rank and fortune. . . . But though the common people cannot, in any civilized society, be so well instructed as people of some rank and fortune, the most essential parts of education, however, to read, write, and account, can be acquired at so early a period of life, that the great part of even those who are to be bred to the lowest occupations, have time to acquire them before they can be employed in those occupations. The public can facilitate this acquisition by establishing in every parish or district a little school . . . (p. 734)

The work of Bowles and Gintis, introduced in Chapter 2, is considered here again for its utility in showing the influence of the material economy on the structures of educational systems. Bowles and Gintis analyzed the history of school reform in the U.S. to show that education within capitalism is structured in a parallel fashion with the structures of work.<sup>212</sup> Education therefore has a role in reproducing class structures in society inasmuch as it reflects, in its legitimization and implementation practices, the stratification of capitalist industry. Stratification occurred within the schooling system through the development of an "objective, meritocratic" system of status. A vocational track was established on the one hand to condition students for adherence to rules. A track represented by the emergence of the community college system functioned to condition students for self-motivation and independence in the workplace - mainly in the roles of mid-level managers. Elite universities traditionally provided the supply of top-level managers by inculcating internalized values and norms for the sustaining of social institutions and capital accumulation.

Bowles and Gintis' argument is underpinned by the notion that capitalism is progressive but only in half measure, a notion borrowed from Marx. As a result, economic history, they suggest, is essentially progressive, in that the relative participation by the lower classes in such social activities as education tend to increase, although at a low rate. There is, however, invariably a reactionary element inherent in each

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<sup>212</sup>Samuel Bowles and Herbert Gintis, *Schooling in Capitalist America: Educational Reform and the Contradictions of Economic Life* (New York: Basic Books, 1976).

progressive era of educational reform. Bowles and Gintis point out that in the late 1800s and early 1900s, when John Dewey's proposals for universal education were being debated, the shift began in which centralization and specialization of school administration took hold. Bowles and Gintis provide statistical evidence to show that this shift, financed in major proportions by such corporate interests as the Carnegie Foundation, represented a displacement of small business owners and wage-earners to be replaced by big business and professionals on local school boards.<sup>213</sup> At the same time, the principle of equality was displaced by the vocational tracks established within traditional high schools.

Bowles and Gintis suggest that this process of social stratification within the school system occurred in response to the decline of the family as an effective socializing unit for the educating individuals to participate in industrial capitalism. With the capitalist interests wresting control of the training system in industry through Taylorist management practices - which tended to reduce the power of workers to decide who is trained, how, and to what extent - schooling became more integrated into the streaming system by which industry is to be staffed.<sup>214</sup>

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<sup>213</sup>Bowles and Gintis, p. 190.

<sup>214</sup>A public example of the transition of the guild system of training exists in the Empire State Building in the U.S., completed in 1935, whose plaques in the main foyer were placed in honour of the tradespeople and labourers whose efforts made the construction possible. It is difficult to imagine such a gesture being installed in a contemporary modern building. Similarly, at the Royal Pavilion in Brighton, U.K., which was constructed over a period of several decades in the nineteenth century, the murals include visual representation of the Freemason movement, whose members were thereby publicly acknowledged for the craft skills that made the Pavilion's construction possible. The foyer of the Aston University main building features similar icons.



Jamie Swift has pointed to what became known in Canada as the “High School Debate” of 1901 as the focal point for the expression of views on the matter of educational tracking. The debate took place among Queen’s University faculty in Kingston, Ontario, where changes to the high school system were being contemplated. The reformers at the time were represented by those who argued that a resistance to a curriculum based on specialization was at bottom a resistance to modern science. They were concerned to ensure that the schooling system would efficiently prepare students to take their place in industry, both as managers “skilled in the design and management of factory systems and machines” and as workers “steeped with a sense of duty and work-discipline.”<sup>215</sup>

Swift uses the statements of representatives of the Canadian Manufacturers’ Association at the time (as quoted in the Report of the Royal Commission on Industrial Training and Technical Education) to show that the reformers’ opinions, displayed at Queen’s University, were buoyed by the sentiment of industrial leaders. While previously, “experienced operatives personally passed on craft skills such as printing and cabinet making,” owners of the rapidly expanding factory system in the early 1900s advocated a state-supported training system that would provide personnel to manage and tend the factories.<sup>216</sup> The Royal Commission was to endorse the owners’ approach,

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<sup>215</sup>Swift, p. 73.

<sup>216</sup>Swift, p. 72.

calling for schooling to focus on “pre- vocational work, manual training, drawing, and (for girls) domestic and household science”:

[The Report was] forthright in its assessment of how the growing centralization of good production was affecting workers. Specialization and the organization of workers in factories had led to a situation, the commissioners stated, in which the “workman” occupied “only the place of a skilled attendant upon a machine. . . .”<sup>217</sup>

Swift states that the debate continues:

*Today’s High School Debate* (one that’s spilled over into primary schools and universities) is again centred on whether students should take a wide-ranging menu of liberal arts courses or focus more narrowly on studies that will prepare them for the specific demands of a highly competitive job market. Do schools have a social responsibility? Or should they concentrate on the supply side of the labour market equation? How do education and training fit into a split-level society in which some jobs require sophisticated skills and others demand few skills at all?<sup>218</sup>

The University provides a means to consider the process by which a shift can be observed in the terms of the debate. The point of interdiscursivity<sup>219</sup> between industrial training and the higher education system was the rise of the community college in North America. Bowles and Gintis argue that the expansion of community colleges in the U.S. led university programs to become more specialized in their curriculum. “Competing” for students who could choose an alternative in higher education encouraged the

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<sup>217</sup>Swift, p. 76.

<sup>218</sup>Swift, p. 71.

<sup>219</sup>*Interdiscursivity* refers to a discourse type that draws upon one or more other discourse types. See Norman Fairclough, *Language and Power* (London: Longman, 1989), p. 149. What is being considered here is the discourse about the proposed need for university reform which drew on the discourse about the proposed need for more emphasis on skill acquisition in technical training programs. The community college invoked both discourses in its focus on a career orientation for students.

universities to alter their curricula in the direction of the community colleges' career orientation. The origin of community colleges is described by Bowles and Gintis as a process in which one of the results was that university education in the U.S. was to become more specialized in terms of its career orientation.

The Carnegie Commission on Higher Education that gave rise to the dramatic expansion of community colleges in the U.S. had a parallel development in Canada. In both countries, community colleges were established to provide educational programs that focused on the identified human resource needs of particular occupations and industries (graphic art, journalism, and hotel management, to mention a few). In Canada, the programs that appeared in the 1960s and 1970s were generally two years in length, and the annual tuition was gradually increased to a level of approximately 75% of the tuition at a university in the same province. Bowles and Gintis point out that the increase in tuition in the U.S. was especially important in its effect of influencing the universities to begin to compare their programs to those of the colleges in terms of the relevance of the completed program to the student's prospects for getting a job after graduation.<sup>220</sup>

The idea of a university adopting vocationalism as a primary area of focus was not new in 1970. It arose out of labour market debates whose function, as argued by Bowles and Gintis, was to stratify both the educational system and the workplace. When the University was created, the stated strategy developed by the administrators and planners

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<sup>220</sup>Bowles and Gintis, p. 213.

within the new institution was to eliminate the distinction between vocationalism and the liberal education. In practice, the function of such a strategy was to carve a new educational track for Alberta university students.

#### EDUCATION AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF AN INDUSTRIAL INFRASTRUCTURE IN

#### ALBERTA

T.C. Byrne had been deputy minister of education in Alberta from 1966 to 1971. The separation of formal education from business interests had been maintained to that point. Byrne states that he was not lobbied in his tenure and he did not carry on professional or personal relations with corporate executives and owners.<sup>221</sup> The Company and the University, while having ties in their political-economic functions, were separate operationally. Yet the goal of developing a “managerial class” is evident from Byrne’s earlier writings:

[I]f Canada is to have a managerial class that is as well educated as that of [the] United States, there will have to be a change in view on the part of university administrators as to who should attend university. Part of the answer for an expansion of post-high school education lies in the development of the junior or community college.<sup>222</sup>

Byrne wrote that restructuring the educational system would indirectly affect the economy of the region and of the nation:

The need clearly defined is for a more highly educated and competent group of workers in Canada if our standard of living is to compare to that of the United

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<sup>221</sup>“Interview with T.C. Byrne,” 1996.

<sup>222</sup>T.C. Byrne, “Influence of Automation on Education,” 1966, in *Occasional Speeches and Writings*, Vols. 1 and 2 (Edmonton: Athabasca University, 1971), p. 218.

States. Certainly if we are to deal with pockets of poverty that exist in Canada then an increase of the gross national product seems imperative.<sup>223</sup>

Byrne was taking up the theme of the Royal Commission, whose recommendations and approach were discussed in the previous section. The Commission heard testimony from educational, business, and social groups across Canada, including participants from Alberta. Dr. Henry Marshall Tory, the president of the University of Alberta, had noted in his testimony to the Commission there existed

a great gap in our educational system between the point where the Public School leaves the boy who is quitting it, and where the University takes up the more advanced technical work on its scientific side.<sup>224</sup>

Tory favoured the development of a regionally managed educational system that had the financial support of the federal government, especially in connection to technical training that would respond to growing labour markets.

Between the Commission's publication in 1913 and Byrne's tenure as deputy minister of education, the educational system in Alberta grew dramatically. After the discovery of oil in 1947, it became clear that the province had the money to finance an educational system that would reflect the province's economic priorities. In 1966, Byrne expressed the view of educational reform in the terms left off by the Royal Commission. He called for the use of an industrial model of research in education, in which experiments and development projects would predominate. The objective of such

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<sup>223</sup> Byrne 1971, p. 182.

<sup>224</sup> *Royal Commission on Industrial Training and Technical Education* (Ottawa: Government of Canada, 1913), p. 2307.

research would be to adapt the methods of education to the changing needs of society, especially those of industry. According to Byrne, a development institute outside of the traditional universities was needed that would provide alternatives to the traditional development and delivery of university courses and programs.<sup>225</sup> A key guiding principle by which the institution that would be established - under his presidency, as it turned out - would be that of the interchangeability of vocation and education. Educational reform in this view would seek to merge the demands of the world of work, for which the student would prepare in his or her studies, and the traditions of the liberal education.

Such an approach was presented in the planning documents for the new University. The plans specified that an important theme of the distinctiveness of the new university would be that, "Education for the future makes no distinctions between liberal and vocational."<sup>226</sup> Although the planners were using the language of educational reform that was fashionable at the time, the conception of twinning a liberal education and vocationalism had first been explicitly stated in Canada more than half a century earlier.

#### THE COMPANY AND THE STRENGTHENING OF A REGIONAL POLITICAL ECONOMY

The University emerged as an organization that would support the development of the regional economy. However, it would operate separately and in different ways from companies such as Primus Corporation whose role was more directly connected to the

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<sup>225</sup>Byrne 1971, p. 200.

<sup>226</sup>L.J. Hughes, *The First Athabasca University* (Edmonton: Athabasca University, 1980), p. 76.

material economy. The Company's overt purpose was the avoidance of foreign control<sup>227</sup> of gas exports. As Richards and Pratt point out, the government of 1954 ensured that Primus would be "expressly forbidden to enter into arrangements with gas exporters that could give the latter indirect control of the Company."<sup>228</sup> Instead, the Company would be confined exclusively to the business of gathering and transmitting gas. It would not have the full monopoly power of a public utility but neither would it have the freedom of operation and ownership of a private corporation. The initial sales of the shares in the Company show that the gathering and sale of natural gas from the province was to be carried out by a monopoly of private interests, including some of the world's largest petroleum producers.<sup>229</sup>

The provincial government reinforced this monopoly by creating a regulatory institution that functions to this day to mediate the operations of gas producers and buyers. The Alberta Energy and Utilities Board (formerly the Alberta Energy Resources Conservation Board) regulates shipments of natural gas. The Board's existence represents an attempt by government to maintain the public's fiduciary interest in natural resources. It is intended to reflect the fact that natural resources are finite; in the case of

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<sup>227</sup>Foreign control refers to powers outside the geographic region of the province, but mainly eastern Canadian interests. See Larry Pratt, "The Political Economy of Province-Building," in *Essays on the Political Economy of Alberta*, edited by David Leadbeater (Toronto: New Hogtown Press, 1984), p. 206: "[Alberta elites] view the West as an exploited dependency of central Canada: confederation and its political and economic arrangements are perceived to be the instruments of Ontario and Quebec interests."

<sup>228</sup>Richards and Pratt, p. 201.

<sup>229</sup>"Submission to the Royal Commission on Energy," including the *Act to create Provincial Pipe Company*.

natural gas, proven reserves in Alberta are projected to last for less than two decades.<sup>230</sup> Whether the Board is politically free to carry out its mandate is sometimes questioned. In 1994, one former oil company executive was appointed as board chair, raising concerns that the public interest in conservation might be outweighed by the corporate interest in increased production.<sup>231</sup>

Shaffer suggests that the Board by its implicitly political nature cannot fulfill its mandate. He points out that while the relative share of the province's gross domestic product accounted for by corporate profits has increased from 15.2 per cent in 1971 to 22.6 per cent in 1979, the proportion accounted for by wages and salaries, farm income, and small business income have all dropped. This raises the question for Shaffer of how the public interest is defined. He makes the observation that if a definition of the public interest were carried out openly and comprehensively, the model of nationalization might emerge.<sup>232</sup> He points out that this is unlikely to happen:

Given their ideological outlook and their present alliance with the oil companies, the local bourgeoisie are not willing to nationalize the industry. They are also unwilling to establish a planning agency that would expend the funds in a rational manner. They would prefer to have full flexibility to make deals with individual corporations for joint ventures.<sup>233</sup>

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<sup>230</sup>"Primus Gas Shipments Maintain Record Pace," *Oil and Gas Journal*, v. 90 (January 27, 1992), p. 26.

<sup>231</sup>"Green Group Fears Amoco Executive Will Become Regulatory Board Boss," *Edmonton Journal*, 19 August 1994

<sup>232</sup>The "Conclusion" of this study provides a discussion of Habermas's critique of the "one-sided rationalization" that characterizes processes of assessing social and economic needs in capitalist societies. Using Habermas's diagnostic method, a definition of the public interest would first require an analysis of which individuals and groups have access to the debate and what the conditions are for their participation.

<sup>233</sup>Shaffer, p. 190.



For his part, Pratt ascribes to the Board the following functions: providing a buffer between the Alberta cabinet and the oil and gas industries thereby providing a space in which difficult issues can be resolved in the shelter of a regulatory tribunal, that of a “cartel secretariat” by which the output and allocation of production may be determined by the industry, and a forum within which grievances between independent and integrated producers may be resolved legally.<sup>234</sup>

The motivations for the provincial government to establish a corporation like Primus to ensure that state influence could be exercised through the Alberta Energy and Utilities Board have to do with the dynamic nature of the supply of the economic resource under consideration and the massive investment required to exploit that resource. The construction and maintenance of the industrial infrastructure and the expertise and labour capital that would allow for the resource’s exploitation have historically been primed economically by the provincial government. The Company represented an example of the means by which the technological and material infrastructure, including the accumulation of capital, was built up shortly after the initial discovery of the vast reserves of oil and gas in the region. As we have already seen, *the University represented an example of the means by which the expertise and labour capital were developed that were required for the regional accumulation of capital.*

The development of capitalism within the province depended on the state to mediate, coordinate, and regulate revenues. The University represented an institutional

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<sup>234</sup>Shaffer, p. 198.

lever by which government could retain influence on the nature and makeup of the province's workforce. The account of the University's social origin within the political economy may be developed further by showing not only the economic function of educational institutions but their political function as well. For this, Gellner's theory of nationalism is revisited.

#### IDEOLOGY AND NATIONALISM

For Gouldner, ideology is expressed according to both the public project with which it becomes popularly associated and its intellectual underpinning.<sup>235</sup> An ideology does not operate only on the basis of ideas. It must be associated with a concrete program of publicly visible "works." In this section, the ideologies of province-building and proto-nationalism are considered for their influence on the establishment and mandate of the University, with comparisons to the Company's establishment. Education is discussed as an important means by which the two components of ideology - the dialectic between ideology and technology, in Gouldner's terms - became interrelated, especially during a period of political and economic transition.

Oil and gas have been Alberta's primary staple export since the discovery of a major oilfield in the province in 1947. As Shaffer states, the reliance on this staple has led to growth in the province's economy but at a developmental price.<sup>236</sup> The province relies on the staple for continued growth and historically has not developed the local industries

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<sup>235</sup>Alvin Gouldner, *The Dialectic of Ideology and Technology: The Origins, Grammar, and Future of Ideology* (London: The Macmillan Press, Ltd., 1976).

needed to diversify the economy and thereby develop significant economic capacity independent of the staple. The province is therefore vulnerable to fluctuations in demand and supply, and this vulnerability reduces the province's bargaining power with the multinationals involved in the staple's exploitation.<sup>237</sup>

In the early stage of the development of the oil economy, the province established basic control over the economic and administrative levers that would be used to avoid the eventual economic decline that would result from depleting oil and gas reserves. These actions were in response to a perceived encroachment of federal powers. The exploitation of oil in Alberta promoted regional political alienation, which encouraged the development of a proto-nationalistic stance by the province in its dealings with the federal government operating on at least two fronts.

First, it consolidated the reach of the provincial state in coordinating the economic and political interests throughout its territory. Until the discovery of oil, economic producers were mainly farmers, miners, and small-business owners. The advent of the oil economy provided a powerful incentive for the coordination of economic interests for the purpose of financing the infrastructure for exploiting the resource. Following this would be the development of an ideological framework within which capital could be accumulated and oil revenues collected and allocated. The interests of the small producers would therefore stand in opposition to federal interests that would seek a

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<sup>236</sup>Shaffer, p. 175.

<sup>237</sup>Shaffer, p. 176.

portion of those revenues. The export of the resource is to be considered here, because most of the oil is exported from the province, either to central Canadian industries or to the U.S.

Second, an oil economy is centred on the geophysical characteristics of the sedimentary basin from which the oil is extracted. While the sedimentary basin from which Alberta oil flows is not confined to Alberta's borders, it is mainly to be found there. Some portions extend to Saskatchewan, which has led to cooperation between the two provinces in some economic enterprises, most notably the Husky Oil Upgrader located in Lloydminster, which straddles the Alberta-Saskatchewan border.

The sources of alienation that arise from the Alberta economy are therefore related to the tendencies of any oil economy both to encourage a significant political coordinating effect and to lend itself to the exploitation of the resource within a politically demarcated area. The province of Alberta until the era of oil had seen the political cooperation of farmers in seeking better prices for wheat. With the advent of the oil economy, that cooperation underwent a transition in which farmers continued to seek the entrenchment of their economic prerogatives as small producers but in which those prerogatives were also identified with the aspirations of a rising white-collar middle class.<sup>238</sup> This middle class had less of a preference for exporting oil to central Canadian

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<sup>238</sup>Pratt suggests that the election of the Progressive Conservatives in 1971 represented the following:

industry unless the price received was the same or close to the world price for oil. Thus the beginnings of the federal-provincial conflict over the price of Alberta oil and over the powers of taxation on the resource.<sup>239</sup>

For Gellner, nationalism appears and flourishes at those stages in the development of a political association in which the benefits of modernization are felt to be unfairly distributed:

[N]ationalism is a phenomenon connected not so much with industrialization or modernisation as such, but with its uneven diffusion. The uneven impact of this wave generates a sharp social stratification which, unlike the stratifications of past societies, is a) unhallowed by custom . . . b) is not well protected by various social mechanisms . . . and which c) is remediable, and is seen to be remediable, by “national” secession.<sup>240</sup>

For the Alberta of the 1950s and 1960s, the development of the oil and gas industry was regarded by regional elites as benefitting central (mainly Ontario) consumers with

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an inevitable, though much delayed, response of the electoral system (delayed, in part, by Social Credit's careful gerrymandering and the deliberate underrepresentation of the cities in the legislature) to post-war population growth, urbanization, and secularization. . . . Ironically, Social Credit's resource management policies and its discretionary spending of oil and gas rents in such areas as secondary and post-secondary education and the growth of urban municipalities helped to undermine the party's own social and political base: the rural, small town *petite bourgeoisie* described in Macpherson's *Democracy in Alberta* (Pratt 1984, p. 203).

<sup>239</sup>See Robert R. Gilsdorf, “Western Alienation, Political Alienation, and the Federal System: Subjective Perceptions,” in *Social and Politics in Alberta: Research Papers*, edited by Carlo Caldarola (Toronto: Methuen, 1979). The conflict between the Alberta government and the federal government was expressed during this period by a broad section of Alberta society, as shown in a comprehensive survey with respondents with varying occupational status, education level, and place of residence within the province. The survey was published in 1979 but refers to data gathered in 1971. The survey found the following:

Albertans were decidedly anti-federal government. . . . In our 1971 survey, 37 percent of the respondents affirmed that the provincial government had the most impact on their personal lives while 46 percent said it was the federal government, with the rest choosing the local government or some combination. At the same time, when asked to express their view as to which of the two levels of government, the federal or the provincial, was too powerful, 29 percent felt the federal government was too powerful, compared to 14 percent who felt it was too weak and 20 percent who felt that it was neither too powerful or too weak (the rest, 38 percent, felt unable or were unwilling to take a stand on this) (p. 182).

<sup>240</sup>Ernest Gellner, *Thought and Change* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1965).

both low prices for the non-renewable resource and with the opportunity to industrialize further by upgrading the oil and gas drawn from the west. For the Social Credit government of Alberta of the 1950s, the expression of a nascent nationalism was to seek to exert more control over the export of natural gas supplies. Primus Corporation was set up in 1954 by the government, led by the premier, Ernest Manning. The Company would serve a public purpose but would be essentially a private company, for reasons that Richards and Pratt examine:

Was Manning's aversion to public ownership based on specific representations from the oil and gas industries? There is no direct evidence of this, but it is worth noting that at least one major U.S.-controlled gas producer, Gulf, later threatened to cancel its marketing contracts with Trans-Canada [Pipelines] if the federal government's crown equity in the pipeline was used to control it: Gulf had a long-standing international policy of refusing co-operation with any government which participated directly in oil and gas developments.<sup>241</sup>

The government of the time created a company that was neither public nor insulated from the influence of the state. This was done by ensuring that the buyers of the commodity could not gain control over the Company:

Two types of common stock, Classes A and B, were authorized: non-voting Class A shares numbering up to eight million; and voting Class B shares totalling 2002 and divided among four groups - the gas producers, gas exporters, Alberta's gas utilities, and the Alberta government (holding two shares and the right to nominate two of the company's board of directors). The voting shares were divided and appointments to the board so defined under the legislation that no single group would be able to gain hegemony; above all, it would be virtually impossible for the company to pass into the hands of external interests such as Trans-Canada. *Manning's refusal to make [Primus] a crown corporation was, in retrospect, a crucial decision. He*

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<sup>241</sup>Richards and Pratt, p. 167.

*thereby made possible the eventual emergence of one of contemporary western Canada's largest and fastest-growing empires of indigenous private capital (italics added).*<sup>242</sup>

Primus is one of only a few Alberta-based corporations large enough to compete on a national and international scale. Richards and Pratt refer to this group of companies as part of the “arriviste bourgeoisie,” which, along with “well educated and upwardly mobile professionals . . . [and the] state-administrative elite” guide the economic direction of the province.<sup>243</sup> The province of Alberta has used companies such as Primus and the Alberta Energy Company “for the purposes of regional empire-building.”<sup>244</sup> Richards and Pratt compare the province-building efforts of Alberta to the “nation-building” of the first government of the Canadian federation:

There are parallels between John A. Macdonald's National Policy and the emerging Alberta industrial strategy . . . : oil replaces wheat; pipelines replace railroads, Provincial Pipe replaces the CPR [Canadian Pacific Railway]. The Alberta government hopes, with its petroleum rents and via linkages from the oil and gas industry, that it can engender substantial industrial development.<sup>245</sup>

What was emerging during the 1970s was a government set of priorities that saw the essential threat to the rising professional class (which constituted its regional elites) to be not the American ownership of the means of production but the central Canadian claim on the economic development of the resource.

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<sup>242</sup>Richards and Pratt, p. 167.

<sup>243</sup>Richards and Pratt, p. 167.

<sup>244</sup>Richards and Pratt, p. 237.

<sup>245</sup>Richards and Pratt, pp. 317-18.

## THE EMERGENCE OF A PROTO-NATIONALISM

Unlike in the case of Quebec nationalism, “Alberta nationalism” did not have as a “national” characteristic a difference in language and thereby of culture. While Quebeckers could refer to their “way of life” as a means of distinguishing their national culture from central Canadian values, Albertans could not. Holding the same largely Protestant, English-speaking values as those of central Canada, some other means of expressing their discontent was required. Without such a distinction, the popular sentiment needed to hold aloft the aspirations of Alberta elites could not find expression.

According to Gellner, in such a situation, in which there was no ethnic, racial, or cultural barrier between the developed metropolis and the hinterland, the working class in the hinterland cannot be wholly excluded from the advantages gained from the same class working in the more privileged region. Similarly, the well-educated group in the disadvantaged region, “though discontented, will remain within the larger society, either awaiting the moment when the high tide of prosperity reaches it as well, or anticipating events by large-scale migration.”<sup>246</sup> “Awaiting prosperity” or “anticipating by migration” are two options available to the well-educated living in a hinterland region. Elites can remain in the hinterland or move to the metropolis.

The elites in Alberta chose a third option to the two provided by Gellner. They chose to build an industrialized equivalent to the one in central Canada through an

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<sup>246</sup>Gellner, p. 167.



alliance of government and industry. This is the attempt to pass from the allocation state to the production state (as described by Luciani and discussed in Chapter 1). Since the oil and gas industry was largely American-owned, and therefore indifferent to the question of to which order of government its primary allegiances would vest, the Alberta government sought to have greater control over its economic development. One way to do this was to create Primus Corporation. Another means would be through exerting influence on its educational system.

Gellner points out that education is crucial in the development of national movements for its role in upholding the values of the intelligentsia:

Transitional societies are societies which have ceased to be viable, subjectively and objectively: their norms can no longer be effectively internalised, and their external arrangements can no longer be sustained - either through the direct impact of modern institutions, or through the sheer "demonstration effect" of a measurelessly richer and more powerful alien world. Education, in such a context, is in effect the accentuation, acceleration, of this perception, and the equipment of its possessor with a means of more clearly conceiving, and working towards, an alternative.<sup>247</sup>

Alberta was a "transitional society" in the 1960s and 1970s, having experienced the evolution of its composition as an essentially rural society before World War II to a predominantly urban society by 1980. As discussed in Chapter 1, the transition from an allocation state to a production state was a priority for governing and business elites. Educational reform would help governing and business elites to accomplish this

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<sup>247</sup>Gellner, p. 170.

transition and to create the popular sentiment that would support their aspirations and objectives.

#### CONCLUSION

A shift in cultural capital during the period of 1970 - 75 followed from an adapted social and economic role for Athabasca University. Educational institutions could, under the former allocation state, situate themselves within the political economy by reference to their capability to provide educational services and benefits to the domestic economy. With the development of the production state, such a capability would be changed to reflect not only services to the domestic economy but support for that economy's efforts to export. An educational institution within the production state could take the form of the consumerist model.

The University's contribution to the ideology of province-building was based in part on its "radical" mandate and organizational structure. These were discussed in Chapter 3. The mandate for distance education and the unicameral system of governance set the University apart from almost all other Canadian universities, showing that "an Alberta solution" could be formulated for "Alberta problems."<sup>248</sup> More

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<sup>248</sup>This were the terms used to describe Athabasca University by T.C. Byrne, "Interview with T.C. Byrne," 19 July 1996. The proto-nationalistic frame of mind was reflected in the speeches of Peter Lougheed, the charismatic premier of the province, who was elected in 1971 and served throughout the 1970s. Referring to the province's industrial strategy in a speech to the Calgary Chamber of Commerce on 6 September 1974, Premier Lougheed said the following:

The first [objective of the government's development strategy] is to strengthen the control by Albertans over our own future and to reduce the dependency for our continued quality of life on governments, institutions or corporations directed from outside the province. Secondly, to do this as much as possible through the private sector . . . And thirdly, to strengthen competitive free enterprise by Albertans which to us means giving priority to our locally owned businesses. Our basic guidepost [is] to maximize the number of our citizens controlling their own destiny.

significant for ideological support was the potent appeal of a consumerist model of education. The consumerist model, to be discussed in the next chapter, proposed to expand educational opportunity without seriously threatening the economic priorities of the “production state.”

As two organizations reflecting in similar ways the economic and political aspirations of Alberta elites, the mandates of both the University and the Company supported the development of an oil economy. The Company provided economic and political support for proto-nationalism by maintaining a monopoly of private interests; the University supported the ideology of proto-nationalism by its “difference” as an educational institution. Its consumerist model for the development and delivery of formal educational activities also supported the “public project” of proto-nationalism, province-building. This model will be discussed in detail in the following chapter.

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## CHAPTER 6: THE CONSUMERIST MODEL OF EDUCATION

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### INTRODUCTION

This chapter argues that the University's survival in the period of 1970 - 75 may be accounted for in terms of the development of the consumerist model<sup>249</sup> which was to inform its activities over the next 25 years. The chapter thus describes an interplay of ideas that guided the efforts of individuals and groups. To one side of Bourdieu's field of educational power were political and administrative decision-makers whose control over economic capital was considerable but whose influence over cultural capital was not. Within the cultural market, the decision to close the University would have been difficult for the state without the participation of those holding legitimate cultural capital regarding education.

T.C. Byrne's role in this regard is described as critical because he was able to span the legitimate exchange of both economic and cultural capital, having served as a government decision-maker for many years but being willing and able as well to apply his

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<sup>249</sup>The term *consumerist model* suggests a more specific focus on the interaction between Macpherson's "buyer and seller" (see Chapter 1) than does the term *market model* favoured by some theorists. The term is therefore used to distinguish the Athabasca University model within its political economy. It also implies the further modularization of higher educational programs that is represented by the University's degrees and courses. Students at Athabasca can not only transfer their courses to and from the institution (with somewhat more facility than is the case at other North American universities), but they are unhampered by the requirements common at other universities of qualifying for university entrance, taking courses in a prescribed sequence, or finishing their degrees within a set period of time.

respected educational credentials as a teacher and educationist to the founding of the University. As discussed in this chapter, Byrne advocated for the establishment of the institution, oversaw its formal establishment, and then used his influence over economic and cultural capital to see that the institution would be more likely to survive a period of crisis. *Agency* in the form of Byrne's adaptation of the University's role is reflected in the chapter as an influence that was complementary to the ideological influence of the regional political-economic shift from allocation to production.

#### TWO FUNCTIONS OF THE CONSUMERIST MODEL

In the previous chapter, it was argued that nationalism (or its regional variant, which has been called proto-nationalism) legitimized the emergence of the University by appealing to the political and economic goals of certain groups within the regional political economy. The public project to which this process contributed was province-building, in which educational and non-educational institutions were created, of which the University and the Company are cited as examples. The focus of the discussion in the chapter was the University's relations to the external political economy.

This chapter seeks to account for the particular characteristics of the University as a system of educational provision. It considers the University as representing a consumerist model for the development and delivery of educational activities. Table 8 summarizes the differences in mandate and governance structure that accompanied the conclusion of the pilot project and which culminated in the consumerist model which

characterized the University's subsequent development.

ASPECT OF THE EDUCATIONAL MODEL	TO 1971	AFTER 1971
Type of institution	Residential, with a projected initial student body of 5,000 students <sup>250</sup>	Unstated
Location	St. Albert, a city adjacent to Alberta's capital of Edmonton	Unstated
Level of study	Undergraduate	Undergraduate
Areas of study	"Arts, sciences, and education, with particular attention to the application of the humanities and social sciences in related professional fields" <sup>251</sup>	"Arts and sciences leading to an undergraduate degree" <sup>252</sup>
Governing structure	Interim governing authority	Interim governing authority
Capital budget allocation	\$70 million	Unstated
Source of student demand	Inherent in rising university participation rates in Alberta	To be demonstrated by marketing programs to potential adult students and by analysis of emerging demand
Role of "learning system" <sup>253</sup>	Integrated within a plan for academic interdisciplinarity	"Elevated to a position of primacy" <sup>254</sup>
Role of technology	"New procedures in curriculum organization and instruction" are expected to be instituted, if appropriate	Pilot project is intended for the "application of technology and new procedures to improve educational opportunities for adults generally"

■ *Table 8: Summary of Athabasca University's Transition to a Consumerist Model*<sup>255</sup>

<sup>250</sup>Post Secondary Education Until 1972 - Alberta Policy Statement by Honourable Robert Clark, January 1970," reprinted in L.J. Hughes, *The First Athabasca University* (Edmonton: Athabasca University, 1980), p. 64.

<sup>251</sup>Order in Council 1206/70 (25 June 1970), quoted in Hughes 1980, pp. 69-70.

<sup>252</sup>Order in Council 1986/72 (20 December 1972), quoted in Hughes 1980, p. 154.

<sup>253</sup>The term *learning system* was mentioned frequently in the discussions surrounding the establishment of Athabasca University during the years 1970 - 75. It refers to the technology, materials, and people associated with the "delivery" of educational activities. Delivery includes, for example, the printed package of course materials to be mailed to the student, the telephone lines used when students communicate with tutors, and a library that accepts and responds to requests for materials by mail or telephone. As the consumerist model developed, the learning system also came to refer as well to the availability of academic staff to respond at certain times and in certain ways for the purpose of distance education.

<sup>254</sup>Hughes, 1980, p. 50.

The consumerist model is significant for the research issues of the social origin and relative autonomy of the University in two ways.

First, the consumerist model was used by organizational actors to support the re-establishment of the University's viability as an organization during the period of establishment.<sup>256</sup> L.J. Hughes, an administrator at the University during the early years, points to more than one factor that constituted the "threat" to the University's survival:

By late October, 1971, the situation was grim. Physical planning could continue but without reference to the St. Albert site. The architects, engineers, and construction manager had been working for four months without formal contracts, and although the Universities Commission had approved the capital budget for conceptual planning, there was no indication that the funds would actually be forthcoming from the government. . . . There were certainly some members of the [provincial cabinet] hostile to Athabasca University. . . . [T]here was a well-established public impression that Athabasca University was dead. Some members of the Governing Authority were a liability in a political sense. The staff, working without contracts of employment, were dispirited. Most critical of all, however, was the fact that enrolments were falling. Finally, there was no constituency, no body of public opinion, that was prepared to come to Athabasca University's aid.<sup>257</sup>

The case for "saving" the University beginning late in 1971 was made by arguing that university courses could be delivered based on the demand from individuals and groups for those courses. The consumerist model is therefore suggested in the initial sections of

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<sup>255</sup>The aspects of the model *until* 1971 are based in part on Order in Council 1206/70 (25 June 1970). The Progressive Conservative government was elected on 30 August 1971. Shortly after this, the planning for the new university was halted. The model *after* 1971 is reflected in part in Order in Council 1986/72 (20 December 1972). See the chronology at the beginning of Chapter 5 for a summary of the key events from 1970 to 1975.

<sup>256</sup>See the chronology at the beginning of Chapter 5 for a summary outline of the key events of the establishment, temporary disestablishment, and re-establishment of the University.

<sup>257</sup>Hughes 1980, p. 43.



this chapter to be a legitimizing factor in the social origin of the University, extending the argument begun in the last chapter. In legitimizing the University's function by reference to a consumerist model of education, the institution accommodated the economic influences on its operation.

Second, an appeal to consumerist values allowed the University to maintain its relative autonomy, and this role is described in the latter sections of the chapter. The consumerist model was articulated with regard to an emphasis on *innovation* (by which the model would identify and serve its "market"), but also with regard to *access*. The consumerist model could be interpreted by external decision-makers to mean that efficiency and "new ways of doing things in education" would be the distinguishing characteristics of the University. Byrne recounts that he was asked by the Minister of Advanced Education why one of the existing universities in the province could not take up the pilot project. Byrne recalls his response to the question this way:

"Mr. Minister," I replied, "a traditional university would not undertake such a study. It is not, however, a question of capability: it is one of institutional values."<sup>258</sup>

The consumerist model could be interpreted by some staff members and those external decision-maker whose educational values could be described as "liberal" to mean that the aims of the University would be progressive, extending educational opportunities to socio-economic groups that had not previously enjoyed such

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<sup>258</sup>Byrne 1989, p. 50.

opportunities.<sup>259</sup> The consumerist model was critical in ensuring the University's survival and in allowing for its autonomous operation. This chapter seeks to discuss and assess this double function of the consumerist model.

#### CULTURAL MARKETS AND THE DEMAND FOR EDUCATION

The social origin of a consumerist model for the University is considered here as part of the operation of a cultural market for educational activities. The cultural market within which the University emerged allows for the consideration of the "pull" for educational activities, in addition to the "push." The "push" approach was taken by Runté,<sup>260</sup> who proposed that the social origin of Athabasca University could be attributed to ideological factors as reflected in the accommodation of political and educational elites. According to this view, the University was established as a means of allowing for increased educational access to higher education in the absence of an acknowledgement of the structural social and economic barriers to such access that existed in the province. A consumerist model would allow students to decide whether they wish to take a given course or program, thereby making the question of educational equality irrelevant.

The cultural market thesis was first discussed in Chapter 2. Collins identifies three types of education that may be considered historically as sources of educational

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<sup>259</sup>Although as noted earlier, Byrne referred to the goal of reform as "popular" rather than "telic," the models that he and the Governing Authority examined as part of the pilot project represented telic reforms as well. The University of Sussex in the U.K., especially its School of European Studies, provided an influential example for the Governing Authority in its early deliberations, from 1970 to 1973 (Byrne 1989 (pp. 4-5). Along with other models such as the University of California at Santa Cruz and the British Open University, Sussex provided a model of a curricular model of interdisciplinarity and small-group study.

<sup>260</sup>See Robert Runté, *The Open University Concept in Alberta*, unpublished M.Ed. thesis, University of Alberta.

demand.<sup>261</sup> These three types of education are practical skills, status group membership, and bureaucracy. Collins states that practical skills have historically been taught as part of an apprenticeship system, that is, as part of an on-the-job training paradigm. Status-group membership, the second type of education, is the means by which the cultural resources of an elite are transformed into the power relations required to maintain social control. Aesthetic education - the arts and letters - is characteristic of this kind of education. Bureaucratic control through education is the third type of education. For Collins,

bureaucratic states impose compulsory education on populations which are seen as potential threats to state control, and . . . these economic classes which are influential in the state will help define the nature of the "threat."<sup>262</sup>

In any market, the three basic components are currency, supply, and demand. In a cultural market, the "common cultural currency" is reflected in an elite culture, which legitimates a wealthy and powerful group. The supply of cultural goods is represented by the labour of teachers, material goods needed for teaching, and a social structure that allows for leisure time. The demand for cultural goods is constituted by the individuals who have the resources to demand a system of educational provision of a particular kind. Three effects may be considered in the cultural markets thesis: rates of growth, changes in the price and purchasing power of educational credentials, and changes in the structure of educational systems.

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<sup>261</sup>Randall Collins, "Some Comparative Principles of Educational Stratification," *Harvard Educational Review* 47, no. 1 (February 1977): 1-27.

According to Burton Clark,

Choice may be very wide in those systems that permit institutions to compete for students, engaging in claims of “product differentiation” as a way of attracting consumers and thereby building a dependable base of support in a hived-off segment of the market. And, of course, consumerism takes place within as well as among enterprises, as students initially select fields of study and later move around among them. Here again choice can be very wide, even in “state systems,” when students easily transfer from one field to another. Even in the most heavily socialized system of higher education, students have some capacity to vote with their feet, flowing from unattractive to attractive parts, within and among institutions, thereby promoting one component at the expense of another.<sup>263</sup>

A consumerist model for a system of educational provision reflects the preference of students for education as “consumption.” As degrees fail to maintain their “purchasing power” (that is, as “inflation” increases in the cultural market), students may increasingly choose to regard their education as less an investment in economic stability (that is, leading to a job), and more of a leisure or luxury pursuit, one which provides a potentially higher quality of life. The consumerist model as it was developed for the University during 1970 - 75 would suggest an accommodation between the market and the academic oligarchy. Here, students regard their degrees in a context of increased inflation. Degrees buy less but cost more. As a result, academic managers agree, with the consent of academics, to allow for increased access to educational programs. Students receive the “less valuable” degrees for less money. Academics “demand” the acceptance of innovative methods (electronic delivery, distance education, and the like)

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<sup>262</sup>Collins, p. 22.

<sup>263</sup>Burton Clark, *The Higher Education System: Academic Organization in Cross-National Perspective* (Berkeley, Cal.: University of California Press, 1983, pp. 162-63.

in exchange for increased teaching ratios. The cultural markets model as depicted in this study is shown in Figure 2.<sup>264</sup>

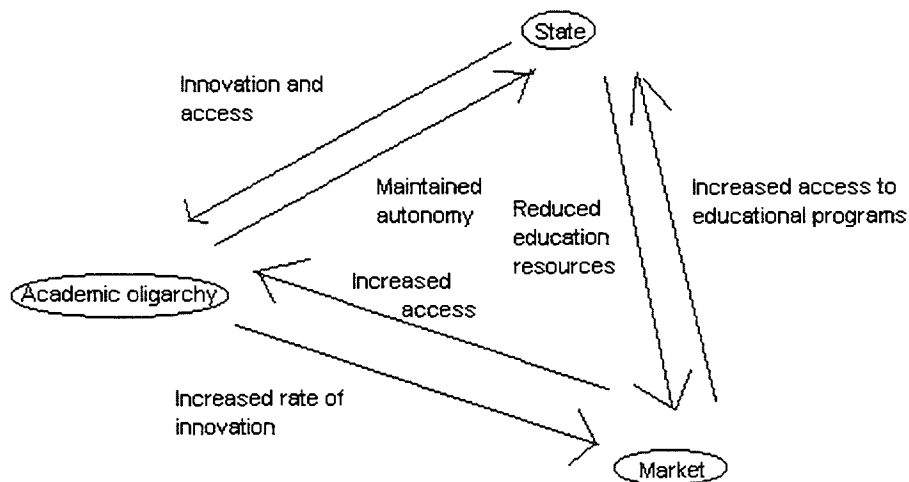


Figure 2: Educational Demands within the Cultural Market

With this description of the interactions of currency, supply, and demand in the cultural market for education, the functions of actors and groups can be considered further. Bourdieu's conception of education as a field of power allows for an account of actors and groups acting relationally as the University emerged. Gellner's argument that elementary education may be seen as enhancing the interests of diverse social strata may be revised to propose that higher education may in a developed society take on the character of a right that individuals in the society claim as a benefit of the proceeds of the national product. Educational attainment within a developed cultural market reaches progressively higher "benchmarks" for individuals. Individuals and groups within the

<sup>264</sup>This figure is based in part on a figure presented by Henry D.R. Miller at the University of Alberta in September 1996. A variation of it appears in his *The Management of Change in Universities* (Buckingham: Open University Press, 1995), p. 71. See an earlier form of the figure in Clark 1983, p. 143.

cultural market make demands of the state that correspond with these higher levels of educational attainment. Systems of educational provision may adapt their ideological function to accommodate these demands.<sup>265</sup>

#### ORIGINS OF THE CONSUMERIST MODEL IN ALBERTA

In the late 1960s, enrolment at Canadian universities was increasing dramatically. In 1960, total full-time enrolment in Canada was approximately 114,000. By 1967, enrolment had more than doubled, to 261,000.<sup>266</sup> That same year, the Social Credit government released a White Paper on Human Resources Development. The White Paper called for the establishment of a fourth university,<sup>267</sup> as well as the allocation of funds for further capital development at the existing universities in the province. Enrolment in Alberta had climbed from 7,000 to 16,500 during the same period. The provincial participation rate (the percentage of the total population attending university) had increased as well, from 5.6 per cent to 11 per cent.

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<sup>265</sup>See Fred Hirsch, *Social Limits to Growth* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1977) for a discussion of the ambiguous effects of the awarding of more educational credentials in response to increasing social demand for them:

[A]n increase in effective demand for superior jobs can be expected to accompany the growth of the material sector, because with material wants better satisfied, people are readier to devote more resources to improving their work situation. The result . . . is likely to be to increase the resources devoted to formal education, but also to reduce the efficacy of a given unit of education in securing access to higher level jobs. When education expands faster than the number of jobs requiring educational credentials, employers intensify the screening process (p. 49).

<sup>266</sup>Hughes 1980, p. 1.

<sup>267</sup>The other three, in descending order of both institutional age and size, are the University of Alberta (established in 1906), University of Calgary (1965), and University of Lethbridge (1967). All three universities are campus-based and employ traditional face-to-face teaching techniques. The Universities of Alberta and Calgary, serving respectively the two major metropolitan areas of Edmonton and Calgary, each have their own faculties of law and medicine, while the University of Lethbridge, smaller and serving the rural population of southern Alberta, does not.

The “difference” of the fourth university was evident early on. A movement by church representatives sought to designate a new university as an interdenominational Christian college or university, modelled on the American four-year religious college. Popular sentiment held that the province’s university’s were in need of reform. The minister of municipal affairs was quoted in Edmonton’s newspaper as saying that, “The trash that has been invading the curriculum in the field of higher education should be done away with.”<sup>268</sup> The provincial government rejected the proposal for a religious university, as announced in a news release of 10 February 1967.<sup>269</sup> The theme of educational reform that was reflected in the religious proposal carried forward into the other iterations of the new university’s model. That the university would be devoted only to undergraduate studies was stated directly in the Order in Council creating the University in 1970, as was the principle that the new institution would be “expected to explore and to institute, if deemed desirable, new procedures in curriculum organization and instruction.”<sup>270</sup>

Runté argues that the consumerist model in which the University would be established represented a compromise between the enlightenment model on the one hand and the human capital and manpower models on the other. A Commission on Educational Planning was established in 1969, largely as a result of T.C. Byrne’s influence. The Commission was to be “future-oriented” in its consideration of emerging

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<sup>268</sup>Hughes 1980, p. 8.

<sup>269</sup>Quoted in Hughes 1980, p. 57.

demands for educational activities in the province.<sup>271</sup> The Commission argued that the functions of higher education should be “development,” “criticism,” “career,” “integration,” and “discovery.”<sup>272</sup> Runté notes that the Athabasca University model reflected the values of educational elites (government administrators, politicians, and educational administrators):

On the one hand, the traditional role of intellectual and social development is maintained in the integration function. The German university model finds expression in the discovery function. The criticism function again reflects the enlightenment model. The career function acknowledges the manpower. And the development function reflects the emergent role of post-secondary institutions as social service centres.<sup>273</sup>

Runté’s thesis recognized a fundamental conflict that is at the heart of the ambivalent establishment of the University. He points out that while the establishment of the Open University in the U.K. was premised on the recognition of the influence of social class on participation in higher education, the establishment of the University was not. The recognition of the interaction of social class with higher education opportunities was not even explicitly stated by the Progressive Conservative government in the political process leading to the establishment of the University:

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<sup>270</sup>Order in Council 1206/70, quoted in Hughes, p. 69.

<sup>271</sup>T.C. Byrne, *Athabasca University: The Evolution of Distance Education* (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 1989), p. 14. The recommendations the Commission made were to include the creation of an Alberta Academy, which was to meet the demand for continuing and adult education. The Alberta Academy was to be housed within Athabasca University.

<sup>272</sup>Runté, pp. 55-58.

<sup>273</sup>Runté, pp. 127-28.



[T]he open university concept seemed incompatible with Progressive Conservative ideology, or even, perhaps, the perceptions of the average Albertan. Whereas the British Open University had been premised on a clear recognition of the disabling effects of the class structure on the attainment of higher education in England, most Albertans are not prepared to acknowledge even the *existence* of a class structure in Alberta, let alone the possibility that anyone has been denied access to higher education as a consequence of the social structure.<sup>274</sup>

For his part, Caldarola suggests that the lack of recognition of class conflicts in Alberta social and political debates may be connected to the metapolitical conflicts in which these local contests were set, which were described in Chapters 3 and 5:

[T]he struggle between the West and the East has taken on such importance in people's minds that class antagonisms within the province are dampened.<sup>275</sup>

Runté also shows that while the University's "openness" was a function of the goals of the educational elite, the "distance education" aspect was a function of the goals of the political elite. Both groups were willing to accept the other's goals in the establishment of the University, though neither would have preferred to regard the other's goals as a priority.<sup>276</sup>

As discussed, the three ideological models for higher education have been the enlightenment, human capital, and manpower models. They are shown in Table 8. For the enlightenment model, as envisioned by Cardinal Newman, the university was established for the pursuit of knowledge as an intrinsically worthwhile activity. The

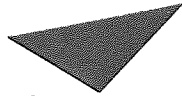
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<sup>274</sup>Runté, pp. 207-08.

<sup>275</sup>Carlo Caldarola, ed., *Society and Politics in Alberta: Research Papers* (Toronto: Methuen, 1979), p. 195.

<sup>276</sup>Runté, p. 214.

enlightenment model thus depicted higher education as a process of *consumption*, one in which it was not necessary or desirable to demonstrate economic returns to society. The human capital model, which took on currency in the 1950s and 1960s in North America, was articulated in another form centuries ago by Bacon, and suggested that education was properly directed to the useful applications and pursuits of society. In this view, higher education could be regarded not as consumption, but as investment. The society that devoted resources to the human development would benefit in the long term from the increased capabilities and overall wellbeing that followed from an educated population. The manpower model was a selective version of the human capital model, in which particular benefits and economic returns were calculated to be weighed against the resources devoted to particular educational programs.



Aston University

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■ *Table 9: Runté's Models of Higher Education*<sup>277</sup>

To these three, Runté adds a fourth, the consumerist model. He uses the consumerist model to account for those course offerings at the University that he designates as non-vocational, non-career, or general interest. He is referring to those course offerings and programs, that is, which would traditionally be regarded as belonging to the enlightenment model: mainly courses in the liberal arts courses, humanities, and social sciences. He then sets up a model in which consumerism is an

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<sup>277</sup>Runté 1981, page 228.

alternative model to the other three, with the University representing some of each of the models in its offerings.

The use of the consumerist model as an alternative or parallel model to the three outlined above escapes the objection raised by the manpower model that the University does in fact offer non-vocational, liberal arts courses in areas such as English and French literature, drama, and so on. The use of the consumerist model should therefore be overlaid, rather than be seen to replace, the other three models as a means of representing a compromise between educational and political elites. While the University offers courses and programs that follow the increasing vocationalization of universities, it offers them on the basis that the consumer-student will decide which of these vocational offerings will be taken up, or if non-vocational courses will be chosen. Thus, the Bachelor of Arts offered by the University is presented both as a degree of interest and use for all citizens, but it is not the only choice of degrees offered at the University and may therefore be regarded as one choice of many for consumers. There are some eight distinct undergraduate degrees with more than 20 different majors or concentrations within them, in addition to university certificates and, more recently, graduate degrees.

Runté does not add the consumerist model to his table, but it may be represented as follows, based on the characteristics of Athabasca University:

*Consumerist*

Needs of society conflated with self-identified needs of students

Cost borne by the student, with some support from society (consumption)  
 Universities regulated by governments but operating in a market  
 Universities part of an integrated higher education system

The University was established as a new university in the context of the historical articulation of all four of these ideological models. As well, Runté suggests that with the rapid expansion of universities in the 1960s and 1970s in Canada, the goal of educational equality was added to the values that the university should hold:

[T]he transformation of universities from elite to mass institutions necessarily extended their role in social mobility and social stratification.<sup>278</sup>

The idea of a new university emerged from a liberal notion that “more education was better.” The educational bureaucracy at the Department of Education expressed the view that by investing in education, the Gross Domestic Product was bound to grow. Such a view was reflected in the expressed views of the University’s first president, T.C. Byrne himself, as mentioned in a previous chapter.<sup>279</sup>

#### BUREAUCRATIC ELITES AND THE EMERGENCE OF THE CONSUMERIST MODEL

The discussion turns now from external influences on the emerging consumerist model of education represented by the University to internal influences. The Order in Council that created the University in 1970 had been given impetus by the increased

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<sup>278</sup>Runté, p. 129.

<sup>279</sup>At least one project in the University’s history was intended to establish a “University of the Unemployed.” For that proposal, economic structural explanations for the position of the unemployed were indeed part of the curriculum. Such models have been proposed by academic staff throughout the history of the University and while reflected in the content of various courses and programs have never been reflected in the actual learning system. Tuition fees, for example, have remained at approximately the same level as those at the other Alberta universities.

demand for university programs within the province, which followed a period of substantial population growth generally. When the demand appeared to have been levelling off in 1972 - and when a new government in the province announced that it would not be bound by the previous government's commitments - the staff at the fledgling university proposed an alternative organizational design to the one that had been contemplated to that point.

The elites in the educational administration of government and of educational institutions had a significant role in the establishment of the University and in fact, in the case of T.C. Byrne and to some extent that of L.C. Downey, moved from the educational administration of government to the educational institution itself. Dr. T.C. Byrne was a deputy minister of education but was also a member of the Universities Commission and the chairman of the policy committee of the Human Resources Research Council (HRRC). Dr. W.H. Worth was commissioner of the Commission on Educational Planning and had been a vice-president of planning and development at the University of Alberta. He would become deputy minister of advanced education and then deputy minister of advanced education and manpower. Dr. L. Downey was director of the HRRC and coordinator of research for the Commission on Educational Planning. These facts add to the complexity of the objectives of the new institution, because it suggests that actors in decision-making positions changed their approach to problems based on their changing priorities as decision-makers. The factors that were internal to the establishment of the University and those that were external

were in some cases tangled. Dr. Downey's research company, for example, provided consulting research to the new university,<sup>280</sup> which had itself been established in response to the recommendations of the HRRC, which he had headed before its demise.

T.C. Byrne was appointed president of the new university in 1971. He had been involved directly in the years leading up to its establishment. Before 1970, Byrne saw the University as a means of breaking away from the cost/bureaucracy associated with the current university system. He saw the new institution as an organizational innovation. He had never been a university teacher but had attended the University of Alberta. He saw the new University as functioning to solve a sociotechnical problem. He had written in 1966:

If we expect research in education to influence practice in a manner similar to industrial research and development, then we will need to emulate industrial research and development procedures. This means the establishment of research and development centres outside the university. . . . Further, we need pilot studies, evaluations and reappraisals; we need plans for implementing change; in short, we need development.<sup>281</sup>

In 1971, the newly elected Progressive Conservative government cut state spending on education, as a percentage of all state spending, from a level to which it would never return.<sup>282</sup> According to Byrne, the newly elected premier of Alberta visited the premier

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<sup>280</sup>See L.W. Downey, "Recruitment and Selection of Staff: A Staffing Plan for the Athabasca University Pilot Project," January 1973.

<sup>281</sup>T.C. Byrne, "Influence of Automation on Education," 1966, in *Occasional Speeches and Writings*, Vols. 1 and 2 (Edmonton: Athabasca University, 1971), p. 200.

<sup>282</sup>Shaffer, p. 185.

of Ontario, who counseled caution with educational research institutes such as his own Ontario Institute for Studies in Education. A comparable institute in Alberta, the Human Resources Research Council, was immediately shut down.<sup>283</sup> An emerging developmental institute, the University, was put on hold. Unlike the case at the Ontario institution, the debate within and without the new University was muted concerning issues of ideological legitimization. As noted previously by Caldarola, class antagonisms are less observable than the east-west tensions. The focus on developing an alternative model of education meant that a pattern of technical change was to characterize the University's history. The University was redefined by the provincial cabinet based on a five-year pilot project that would seek to justify its continued existence on the basis of the existence of a significant student market and also the viability of an alternative model of education. The University was to function as an example of a consumerist approach to education.

Byrne's influence in setting the operational and ideological direction for the University is examined with regard to the following aspects of the University's operations and plans in the period of 1970 - 1975: the emphasis on *undergraduate studies*, the focus on *innovation in instructional delivery*, and the specialization in *professional or applied academic programs*. Together, these emphases shaped the new institution in ways in which the consumerist model could emerge. These three aspects were explicitly referred to in the Order in Council of 1970, written by Byrne himself as deputy minister, and they

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<sup>283</sup>Byrne 1989, p. 45.



continue as part of the University's discourse concerning the mandate of the institution. The addition of "open access" (any resident of Canada 18 years of age or older could enroll in a course or program), which the University adopted at the time of the pilot project, underlined the objective of the University to reach any prospective student who elected to undertake university studies.

These emphases function as contributing aspects of the consumerist model that gave the new institution its organizational shape. The focus on undergraduate teaching meant that large numbers of potential students could be considered. The numbers were large partly because anyone not already holding a graduate degree could be considered as a potential student. Since only a small percentage of the population held graduate degrees, reference could be made to thousands of potential students. The emphasis on innovation served both to describe a means by which this large pool of prospective students could be reached (through telephone, computer, and other technology) and by which the new university could be distinguished from the other three provincial universities already in existence. The focus on professional and applied programs also functioned to distinguish the institution from other universities and sharpened the argument that prospective students would be attracted by the promise of better jobs as a consequence of attending the new university.

Byrne provided continuity from the discussions leading up to the first Order in Council to the early years of the University's operations. His concern was with, as he put it, popular reforms and not telic reforms. Educational reform for Byrne was to be

found in political movements as they were interpreted by an educational bureaucracy.

Byrne is here reflecting, some 20 years later, on the institutional priorities that were to be enacted in the new University:

[The interim governing authority wanted to] provide organizational innovations without challenging the goals of the conventional university. These could restore the intimacy of faculty-student relationships which existed in the smaller universities of the century's earlier decades, or possibly could focus on improvements in teaching, or alter the context within which the disciplines have been organized. But they should not point students in directions not widely approved in Alberta society.<sup>284</sup>

This view of educational reform as it would be reflected in the new University reveals two things. First, it expresses a “backward-looking” ideal of what the University would represent, in that it refers to a period of several decades in the past as an example of what the new University should aim for as regards its size and its milieu. This ideal would also be associated, as will be discussed, with an emphasis on undergraduate education. Second, there is also reference here to the “context within which the disciplines have been arranged.” This was connected to the University’s intended focus on applied and professional programs. A small organization would focus on teaching undergraduates about the application of the humanities and the social sciences to applied problems. Nothing in this expressed view would be incompatible with a consumerist model of university education.

In an interview in 1996, Byrne said that the staff working at the University during the “pilot project” period, beginning in 1972, did not engage in significant debate about the

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<sup>284</sup>Byrne 1989, p. 23.

direction of their efforts. The objective of providing an alternative delivery method for university-level studies was accepted:

For the little group that worked with me, change, any change was good. That was their point of view. They weren't at all perturbed about moving away from what had been.<sup>285</sup>

The "little group" with which Byrne worked included, as of January 1973, L.J. Hughes, secretary to the authority; Arthur Webb, coordinator of buildings; and Larry Ferguson, assistant to the president.<sup>286</sup> Academic staff were added only in small numbers, and their appointments were arranged only on the basis of a part-time consultancy or limited-term contract. By October 1975, the number of staff had grown to 30. The academic staff, given the title of "tutors" at the outset, were devoted mainly to contributing to the development of the first few courses to be offered. The staff during this period did not express radical views of how university education should be reformed, but they seemed interested in trying new methods of educational "delivery" and in experimenting with an interdisciplinary approach to undergraduate university education.<sup>287</sup> The focus of the University was to be on undergraduate studies, whose presentation to students would emphasize a "unity of knowledge" between the sciences and the humanities, between technology and culture, and, as mentioned previously, between the vocational and liberal educational ideals.

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<sup>285</sup>"Interview with T.C. Byrne," 9 July 1996.

<sup>286</sup>Byrne 1989, pp. 63-64.

<sup>287</sup>Byrne 1989, p. 61.

Dr. Joseph Meeker, who developed the trilogy of courses entitled, “The Ancient Roots of the Modern World,” provides a useful example of the educational approach taken by the pilot-project staff. Meeker held a doctorate in comparative literature but had *also* been a forest ranger in the U.S. His last appointment before joining Athabasca University was at the Santa Cruz campus of the University of California,<sup>288</sup> an institution that the early governing authority had visited in contemplating the model for Athabasca University. Byrne concluded that Meeker “was intent on developing civilized men and women who could function as such in a science-based technological society.”<sup>289</sup> Meeker’s interest in ecology, not an unusual passion in the 1970s, had been a theme of the University’s development, even in 1971, when the plan for the University was as a residential institution located in St. Albert, just north of the city of Edmonton.<sup>290</sup> Meeker left the University shortly after the pilot project was completed.

Dr. Lochan Bakshi, a biologist, was appointed in the first few months of the pilot project. The courses to be developed were interdisciplinary, and the one to which Bakshi devoted his efforts, was entitled, “World Ecology.” He worked with Dr. Muriel

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<sup>288</sup>Byrne 1989, p. 61.

<sup>289</sup>Byrne 1989, p. 61.

<sup>290</sup>See Hughes 1980, p. 39, whose view was that the University’s development before the pilot project (1970 - 72) ended in a less desirable form - the distance education model - than had been planned. His view that matters were largely botched by the early staff is reflected in his account of the “ecological posture” of the new institution:

In keeping with Athabasca University’s ecological posture, a group of ecologists was hired to carry out studies on the St. Albert site. As part of the process of compiling an inventory of wildlife on the site, trap cages were triggered and set around the site to capture, unharmed, small animals which could then be counted and released. When these “scientists” left the site, they also left behind some of their triggered traps, which fortunately [were] discovered before any animals wandered in and starved to death (p. 39).

Stringer, another biologist, as well as with two authors contracted from other universities. The professional career of both of these staff members had been varied and, in some ways, adventurous. Bakshi had embarked on his scientific education as a young man by writing a letter of introduction to a prominent American scientist from his native India. After his training in the U.S., he had taught and worked in various places in North America, until he was appointed to Notre Dame University of Nelson, British Columbia,<sup>291</sup> an institution that was closed shortly after he left to join Athabasca. Stringer had completed her doctoral degree at St. Andrews in Scotland as a young woman and had, like Bakshi, worked at various academic and professional jobs in the 1960s until settling into the position at Athabasca University. Both Bakshi and Stringer were disposed to “new ways of doing things,” partly perhaps as a consequence of their past careers, which had been characterized by jobs other than permanent appointments at “traditional” educational institutions. Both were employed at the University into the 1990s, when they opted for retirement or semi-retirement.

The focus on undergraduate studies contributed to the overall goal of popular reform in that it rejected the specialization that characterized graduate research and education at large traditional universities, including the University of Alberta. Byrne expressed support for the government’s insistence that the new University would not for the foreseeable future develop graduate programs. The reasons for this support, according to Byrne, had to do with a desire to compensate for the loss of certain

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<sup>291</sup>Byrne 1989, p. 60.

qualities that had occurred in larger institutions, these qualities presumably having to do with the student-to-faculty interaction:

[The Alberta government] had financially supported the rapid escalation of graduate studies at both the universities of Alberta and Calgary. Having learnt something of the high cost associated with graduate education, they were not prepared to encourage, or even permit, the new university to harbor similar ambitions. Furthermore, many within government looked back to the university of the thirties, almost entirely undergraduate in its offerings. . . . [T]hey were convinced that it had lost some of the qualities of that earlier, much smaller institution. The provisions of the Order in Council reflected the government's desire to see those qualities restored in Alberta's fourth university.<sup>292</sup>

However, what had been "lost" in the growth of the two large universities (the third being the University of Lethbridge, a traditional university also established in the 1970s) could also be considered with regard to the autonomous nature of a large research-intensive institution. The nature of the growth of a research-based university is such that criticism of social, economic, and political structures often become public. Byrne himself suggested that the reason the province's Human Resources Research Council was disestablished shortly after the provincial election of 1972 was that the premier of Ontario had advised the new Alberta premier on the political dangers of research:

[Ontario premier] William Davis had recently encountered public criticism for the institutional existence and behavior of the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, an organization resembling the HRRC in many ways, and he had advised [Alberta premier] Lougheed to be wary of educational research institutions.<sup>293</sup>

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<sup>292</sup>Byrne 1989, p. 20.

<sup>293</sup>Byrne 1989, p. 45.

The Ontario Institute for Studies in Education was the research base during the 1970s of radical educational researchers such as Michael B. Katz.<sup>294</sup> Premier Lougheed did away with the HRRC, allowing the director, L.C. Downey, to complete four years of contract work, including an assessment of the University pilot project of 1972 - 75. If the HRRC was the *research* focus for educational reform or development in Alberta, the new University had a complementary *development* focus. The Ontario Institute for Studies in Education carried both functions. In closing the HRRC, the Alberta government had chosen to allow for the implementation of educational reforms and changes, but not necessarily for the possibility of debates about questions surrounding the legitimization of those changes.

The shift away from research and towards instructional innovation was taken up in the pilot project. The appeal to academic and professional staff who joined the institution during these years was made largely on the basis of the instructional innovation that was to take place.<sup>295</sup> In this emerging University, the student would take the initiative in choosing which courses to take, based on professional and personal "need." The Academic Concept publication<sup>296</sup> listed eight principles upon which the liberal education was to be redefined at the University. Some of these principles were

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<sup>294</sup>Katz edited *School Reform: Past and Present* during this period, a book which provided a historical critique of school reforms in the U.S., suggesting in the introduction that compulsory schooling was at bottom a social response to urban crime, an effort to keep children off the streets during most of the day.

<sup>295</sup>Murray Richmond was an instructional designer whose proposed operational system for the new university was characterized by an emphasis on development and production of courses, which were to be delivered to students remotely. Richmond took an approach that emphasized the design of a "learning system" that would emphasize "learning, rather than teaching."

<sup>296</sup>Hughes 1980, p. 71.

vague or uncontroversial (“Education for the next three decades must be oriented to the future”; “Education must be moral as well as intellectual”). One of them addressed specifically the aspect of instructional innovation at the new University: “Those responsible for the structures and processes of education for the decades ahead should stress learning rather than teaching.” The ones that dealt with the nature of the applied emphasis of the studies to be undertaken at the new University were as follows: “Education for the decades ahead must . . . be problem rather than discipline centred” (p. 74) and “Education for the future makes no distinctions between liberal and vocation” (p. 76).

The kind of specialization that Byrne seemed to want to encourage in studies at the University was expressed in terms of a practical education that enabled individuals to apply what they were learning to the daily focus of their lives, and particularly to the demands of the workplace. Visits by the planners had been made to universities in which a redesign of the disciplines had been attempted, in some cases resulting in interdisciplinary schools, with small-group tutorials - imitating the method typifying Oxford and Cambridge - a characteristic of the new approach.

A focus on instructional innovation which would build on an existing technological infrastructure was to set the direction for the organizational trajectory of innovation. The University would not act as a technological or methodological leader but would exploit those innovations that were felicitously made possible by industry and government. Basic research and questions of legitimacy were to be eschewed in favour of



technical questions and those related to implementation and development. As

Byrne recounted later:

Athabasca University was among the first institutions to move into a medium of communications which grew out of technology and out of the nature of North American and Canadian society. . . . It is the outcome of North American modes of communication.<sup>297</sup>

Byrne did not act alone or advocate the direction for the new University in isolation from other influential actors. As a deputy minister of education at the time of the Order in Council, Byrne discussed the establishment of the University with Preston Manning who, as an executive assistant belonged to a group of younger staff who had contributed to the drafting of the order in Council:

Apart from our ad hoc group, another informal advisory group evolved during the last years of the Social Credit regime. It comprised five young men, all Social Credit party men and recent graduates of the University of Alberta. The press identified them as the Whiz Kids. Two of them served as consultants to the Executive Council, and two more were executive assistants to the premier and to the minister of education. The fifth, who held no official government appointment, was doubtless the most influential of the five. He was Preston Manning, the son of Premier Manning.<sup>298</sup>

Preston Manning is considered here, not because it is to be inferred that his influence on the decision to establish the new University was particularly strong, although Byrne refers to it directly in his book *The Evolution of Distance Education*, but because Manning was involved as well at a critical point in the ensconcement of the

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<sup>297</sup>Interview with T.C. Byrne, 9 July 1996.

<sup>298</sup>Byrne 1989, p. 15.

Company. Preston Manning's father, Ernest Manning, the premier of Alberta between 1943 and 1968, continually referred to the citizens of the province as "shareholders." This nomenclature reflects the shift that Macpherson identifies in the Social Credit party in its transition ideologically to a view of a more atomized role for the citizen.

This language was reflected in the premier's approach to creating the Company, with its protection against monopsony woven into the structure of the representation on the board of directors. Preston Manning, his son, was involved in the original University proposal. His work as a consultant followed his work in government. In the 1970s, after native groups threatened to sue several oil companies and two utility companies for refusing to pay royalties to them for resources drawn from their land, Preston Manning became a consultant for the companies.<sup>299</sup> The companies included Calgary Power and Canadian Utilities, Esso, Gulf, Shell, Syncrude, and Primus.

According to Dobbin, Manning's role involved discrediting the native groups for their insistence that collective rights accrued to them following their identity as first nations. Manning's view, which he articulated in the work done for the companies, including Primus, and in his contribution to the establishment of the University, was that the individual's rights within the society were best served by small organizations when it concerned public services (such as university education) and large monopolies when it concerned the operations of the rentier state (as in the case of resource exploitation).

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<sup>299</sup>Murray Dobbin, *Preston Manning and the Reform Party* (Toronto: Lorimer, 1991), p. 75.

Manning was to go on to have a prominent role in Alberta politics as founder of the national Reform Party, which would espouse similar principles. The University would eventually construe the citizen-student as consumer-student. Educational reform for Manning was constructed through a process of privatization.

Finally, in addition to the influences from other government actors such as Preston Manning, Byrne's position as deputy minister must be considered. In 1971, Byrne was 62 or 63 years of age, which means that he was within a few years of reaching retirement age. This had the effect of reducing the range of his options with regard to a controversial issue such as the establishment of the University. As has been shown, Byrne's views on the need for an institution of the type represented by the planned University had been made known publicly. As Miffen and Miffen point out, however, in the Canadian system of provincial educational departments the deputy minister does not make decisions on policy. As a professional educator (with experience as school teacher, principal, and administrator, as in Byrne's case), the deputy minister therefore experiences a conflict in connection with controversial issues for which she or he has advocated a strong or particular position:

What ways does the deputy minister have open to him to reduce this role conflict, other than resigning his position? He may (a) anticipate the political arguments that the minister will have to overcome in order to promote good policy, and help him counter these arguments; (b) make available to the minister and cabinet more information related to the professional argument for the desired policy, in the hope that this help will counter political expediency; or (c) work directly on the political

factors involved, trying to influence the people concerned and becoming involved in the related bargaining.<sup>300</sup>

By 1970, Byrne had already pursued steps a and b by overseeing the implementation of the policy to establish the new university. In 1971, an election had intervened and a new government and minister had been installed, a government that was unsympathetic to some aspects of the proposal (particularly the political ones involving the location of the university). The proposal was weakened both by the change of government and by Byrne's own status - both politically and personally, given his closeness to retirement - as an outgoing bureaucrat. Byrne did not relinquish his personal stand on the issue, preferring to move to step c, involving himself in the actual "bargaining." "The last step," observe Miffen and Miffen,

is one that can seldom be handled by a deputy minister without endangering his own position, so he must rely on one or both of the other steps. . . . It can be seen that . . . the education system is . . . very vulnerable at the level of the deputy minister.<sup>301</sup>

Byrne was willing to become involved in getting the new university off the ground once reapproval, in the form of a commitment to fund a pilot project, had been secured. In the process, the new residential university, with a focus on undergraduate teaching and instructional innovation, became a new distance-education university. From Byrne's point of view, "nothing was lost" in this transition except the physical location of the

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<sup>300</sup>Frank J. Miffen and Sydney C. Miffen, *The Sociology of Education: Canada and Beyond* (Calgary: Detselig Enterprises Limited, 1982), p. 224.

<sup>301</sup>Miffen and Miffen, p. 224.

university.<sup>302</sup> The location which was decided upon in 1982 - a remote rural town of about 2,000 residents - reinforced the focus on instructional method to the exclusion of debates about ideological legitimization to an extent that was to have a significant influence on the University's history, especially, as discussed here, in times of change or transition. The consumerist model that was used to legitimate the pilot project displaced other debates that might take place about legitimization. A new university was needed, it was argued by internal bureaucratic elites, because there was a demand from prospective students for undergraduate studies in professional and applied academic areas. The demand surveyed by the pilot project was interpreted as a market that could be reached by the application of existing technology.

#### THE PROFESSIONAL AND GOVERNANCE MODEL

Further consideration of the internal influences on the consumerist model of education represented by the University is carried out with reference to the means by which actors viewed their professional and governing activities within the new institution. The professional model in its application at the University has to a large degree been imported from the U.K., because many of the University's approaches to educational tasks were modelled on the example of the Open University. There is a reliance at the University on in-house academic staff, consulting when required with external academic staff, for the ultimate responsibility for the content, the "what," of each course. Part-time tutors rely on the course that has been produced and are

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<sup>302</sup>Interview with T.C. Byrne, 9 July 1996.

encouraged not to change the essential outline of the course. A course team provides input on the “how” of the course, determining everything from the type’s font size and the cover design for print materials to computer hardware specifications for electronically delivered courses. In the actual delivery of the course, more staff, beyond the course team, which disbands after production is complete, will carry out tasks such as negotiating working conditions (for example, hours of work for tutors), purchasing commercial textbooks, mailing materials, processing course registrations, and recording marks.<sup>303</sup>

The only dedicated role for the academic in this model is that of guarding “academic integrity.” All other tasks can be - and in most cases are - carried out by others. Many University activities are contracted to private providers, but the “academic role” has not been contracted out. The explanation for this arises from the nature of the university’s specialization, that of distance education, and the tradition within which it places itself, indirectly in the history of the development of the Open University and in a wider sense within the history of all universities. The organization’s identity as a university might be threatened if the “academic integrity” of its courses and programs were seen to be

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<sup>303</sup>This list of practices, items, routines, and techniques may be compared with that of Michel Foucault’s study of the Gobelins school, described in *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, translated from the French by Alan Sheridan (New York: Vintage Books, 1995), pp. 157-58. The Athabasca student, too, is subject to academic and administrative processes that in their routinization of delivery and routing go beyond those of the “traditional” university experience. For example, a student may take up to 10 courses a year, and *each course* contains a package of pro-formas, which for the 1995-96 academic year numbered 12 (see Document U12). With multiple copies of some forms, such as the examination request form, the total was 21. A table of contents was included for the forms package, listing the following: 3 Examination request forms, 1 Incomplete status request form, 1 Library Information Desk request form, 1 Course registration/Prerequisite form, 1 Extension request form, 1 Withdrawal request form, 1 Transcript request form, 1 Letter of Authority, 1 Letter of permission request form, 1 Student change of information form, 3 Visa/MasterCard charge forms, and 6 Tutor-marked exercise forms.

undermined. The academic staff are in a strategic position to identify “academic integrity” with “professional integrity,” and, in turn, to associate “professional integrity” with the professional model of education.

Although the literature of professional ideologies has often suggested that the emergence and maintenance of a profession has resulted from the professional centralization of power, more recent studies suggest that clients or users of professional services have historically had a significant influence in enhancing professional privilege. The collection of essays edited by Geison<sup>304</sup> reveals that in some cases, such as that of the public lecturer of the nineteenth century, the “clients” seem to have had a signal influence in establishing and defining the characteristics of a profession.<sup>305</sup> The demands within the cultural model for educational activities that preceded the establishment of the University may be considered to have had a formative influence on the professional and governance model at the University.

In the professional model of education, one academic staff member is paired with one course and has ultimate responsibility for determining what is taught in that course. It is true that the distance-education mode of delivery is more transparent than that of the classroom mode, in that what is taught is available for inspection by the public. Anyone can request to review the courses that are offered at the University. As Richard

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<sup>304</sup>Gerald L. Geison, *Professions and Professional Ideologies in America*. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1984).

<sup>305</sup>Some courses that are offered at the University are also available at community colleges. It would seem to be the case that “clients” at the University have a significant role in maintaining the professional identity of academic staff, since by choosing to take a course at the University they are confirming the demand for courses offered at a university.

Marsden, an academic at the University, has noted, for distance education institutions it is in fact the organization that “teaches,” and not the teacher.<sup>306</sup> The influence exerted by many staff members who are not teachers in determining how the student finally experiences the course is significant. The academic who has responsibility for the course content will have no contact at all with many of the hundreds of students who take the course. Registry staff, course materials clerks, and secretaries, to say nothing of the tutors themselves, will have significant contact and influence on the student’s progress through the course. In spite of this “absence of the academic,” the notion is carried from the classroom to the print package that one teacher teaches a group of students and that what is taught is, while subject to some scrutiny, up to the teacher to decide upon. One is reminded of the values held by Major Douglas, the theorist and founder of Social Credit in England, as described by Macpherson:

a) that society was entirely purposive - that all social events were the desired results of assignable wills; b) that there was a natural harmony of individual interests - a nearly unanimous general will for individual freedom, security, leisure, and plenty; c) that these objectives were now technologically attainable; and d) that there could be no valid dispute about the means, because means were a matter of technical knowledge.<sup>307</sup>

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<sup>306</sup>Personal communication.

<sup>307</sup>Macpherson 1953, p. 185.



The technical focus of the institution is made possible in part, then, by supplanting the professional role of the academic, who becomes incidental to the *operations* of the University, but central to its ideologies of legitimization. Decisions may be made that affect the development and delivery of academic programs without the input or even the participation of academic staff. The operations are subject to the decisions of bureaucrats whose expertise is at the centre of operations. The academic staff member's expertise is vested only in the content of the course package.

The educational programs on offer in this professional model are subject to pressure to become more commodified. As courses and programs are offered as "packages," the educational institution is more likely to position students as consumers and to present itself as a producer that is concerned with satisfying the desires of those consumers.<sup>308</sup> If students put consumer pressure on the producer to reduce or at least mediate the academic control in the professoriate, the institution finds itself in the dilemma of responding to consumer demand while attempting to maintain the institution's identity "as a university."

The question of *what* will be taught is thus entwined with the question of who will teach and what constitutes teaching. In traditional universities in North America, graduate students and assistants - the counterparts of tutors at the University - are used extensively for teaching undergraduate students. This arrangement has come about as a

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<sup>308</sup>See Norman Fairclough, *Discourse and Social Change* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1992) for a discussion about the texts and images used in university calendars that tend to commodify programs and courses.

result of both financial and professional factors. Having lower paid staff teach in place of tenured academics is cheaper, but the result is also to influence managers to allow the tenured staff to carry out research. In Collins' cultural market model, this transaction is accounted for as an exchange. If teaching is tacitly downplayed when assessments of performance for academics take place, the arrangement finds a balance of interests, with academic staff trading direct control over teaching for the maintenance of their autonomy as researchers. This was depicted in Figure 2.

The professional model as it was established during 1970 - 75 and the demands of the cultural market at the University were thus in a kind of self-balancing tension. On the one hand, the University could be seen to be captive to the demands of the student marketplace. Without a sufficiently large group of students, the University's survival was apparently at risk. On the other hand, the academic bureaucracy ensured that the appeal to the marketplace would consistently be made on the basis of the University's character "as a university." That identity was associated with a professional model in which, of course, individual academics had a personal stake.

As with managers at the University, the Governing Council presents as its major priority the effects of the external environment on the viability of the organization. When established, the Governing Council at the University represented the only governing council or board of a university in Canada which is not complemented by a senate or general faculties council, on which academic representation is required by statute. This situation has not changed. The Governing Council *delegates* to

Academic Council the power to set policy on academic matters.

The members of the Council were and continue to be appointed by the provincial government to oversee the activities of the University and to set academic and other policy. The language of the Order in Council and of the later *Athabasca University: An Experiment in Practical Planning*<sup>309</sup> made reference to educational innovations, especially the use of computers and other emerging educational technology. A bureaucracy would be needed to plan for, implement, and manage such a system. According to Byrne, the request initially made to hire telephone tutors, part-time staff members who would become a distinctive part of the new University, was made by Byrne's deputy, Larry Ferguson, and not by an academic staff member.<sup>310</sup>

In practice, the Governing Council legitimates the work of management. Constituted mainly by laypeople, the Council is intended to represent the interests of the public. Typically, it serves to affirm the actions of managers. For example, it appoints a committee to examine the annual budget set by the president. Following the deliberations of that committee, which invariably avoid making significant changes to the budgetary directions set by management, the Governing Council normally approves the budget without change.

The Governing Council is publicly neutral in its support for the actions of management. It presents its main concern as remaining responsive and vigilant to the

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<sup>309</sup>Reprinted in Hughes 1980, p. 116.

two sides of the organizational flux referred to, the *demands of students* and the *identity of the organization as a university*. Its actions, however, function to allow the latter to remain as an assumed characteristic of the organization, relying on managers to safeguard it without assistance, and to affirm managers' efforts to enhance the influence of the former.

#### STUDENTS WITHIN THE CONSUMERIST MODEL

The shifts in the educational power structures and transmission systems that were represented by the process described in 1970 - 75 were accomplished by a change in the role and ascribed identity of the student. With this shift, the student would no longer be identified primarily as a citizen in the public sphere, interacting with the state administrative system; he or she would be situated instead in the private sphere interacting with the official economy in the role of consumer. By identifying the student in this way, the new institution legitimated the adapted power structures (as reflected in the professional and governance model) and its transmission systems (expressed in the focus on the application of technology to the problem of reaching students).

The University's model at the time of establishment provided "access" to citizens by virtue of their role as consumers, not by merit of their relative economic disadvantage. Equality of opportunity was to be accomplished by expanding market principles to increasing areas of social life - including education - and by providing a transfer of wealth to those who are seen as disenfranchised. Equality of opportunity was not to be

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<sup>310</sup>Interview with T.C. Byrne, 9 July 1996.

pursued by measures that would encourage political or economic equality but by the expansion of market principles to previously public domains.

In terms of the operation of the University, the emergence of the student as consumer had the advantage of relieving management of the responsibility of responding to those who express dissatisfaction with the educational activities delivered. In this regard, Hirschman's model of "exit, voice, and loyalty" may be considered. Hirschman equates "exit" (ceasing to purchase a product or service) of consumers to economic action, "voice" (the expression of dissatisfaction with a product or service) to political action. If all exiting consumers move to competing companies with a similar level of a decline in quality, a general decline in quality results. On the other hand, if "voice" is excessive, the organization cannot recover from the decline in quality following from the extensive demands on it. Loyalty, on the other hand, "holds exit at bay and activates voice."<sup>311</sup>

In terms of cultural beliefs, the U.S. itself - and Canada, by extension - is populated, according to Hirschman, by people who chose "exit" in deciding to populate the country. In such an environment of cultural beliefs, three responses to dissatisfaction can occur:

- another "internal" exit may be attempted by the individual (for example, the establishment of countercultures).
- blame may be accorded to the individual.

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<sup>311</sup>Albert O. Hirschman, *Exit, Voice, and Loyalty: Responses to Decline in Firms, Organizations, and States*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1970), p. 78.

- “voice” may be articulated by the individual.<sup>312</sup>

Evidence provided suggests that options 1 and 3 preceded the establishment of the University.

The establishment of the University may be considered an “internal” exit. The University represented an alternative institution in the sense that American universities at the time were considered to be alternative. In Canada, Trent University and Simon Fraser University were seen as alternative universities and models to some extent for the establishment of the University. The University was established during a time when “voice” was enacted by students and prospective students. The early 1970s were characterized by an expressed sentiment that established higher educational institutions were not adequately fulfilling their role. Institutions were seen as elitist and expensive.<sup>313</sup>

While progressive educational elites had in mind a response to this sentiment that would see an entrenchment and expansion of their values, government decision-makers were concerned to fashion a response that would if necessary accept the limited expansion of these values but in the process would establish limits on public expenditure for higher education.

Voice in this instance did result, then, in change to the higher educational system. The change was in response to competing “voices” and was therefore understood by

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<sup>312</sup>Hirschman, pp. 113-14.

<sup>313</sup>See Runté (1980) and Hughes (1980), who both make this observation.

different constituencies in different ways. The University was formed in a way that would function to “cool out” the “voice” option within the society. If students or prospective students expressed dissatisfaction with the traditional educational institutions, they were entitled to seek to pursue their educational objectives at Athabasca University. No students would be turned away when applying to take a course or program.

In redefining the student in this way - in a fashion that sees the prospective student having ultimate power in making educational choices - the role of the student increasingly becomes displaced by the role of consumer. By establishing the University in response to both “exit” and “voice” tendencies of students and the wider public, government elites established a new role for the student as consumer. The student as consumer was more likely as a result to choose “exit” over “voice” in her dissatisfaction with programs and courses offered by Athabasca University, as Hirschman suggests when he refers to the social preferences of the U.S., which is populated, as Canada is, by those who have exited. It is to be expected, then, that a high level of “student turnover,” or non-completion of courses and programs would characterize the University, that is, that “exit” will be a preferred method for expressing dissatisfaction. And in fact, that is what is to be found at the University, with many courses having a completion rate of

approximately only 50 per cent. This means that for every individual who enrolls and completes a course, there is one who “exits.”<sup>314</sup>

## CONCLUSION

This chapter has described an institution whose mandate was contradictory, reflecting the values of two distinct educational ideologies, the manpower ideology and the human capital ideology. Both of these ideologies were reflected in the actual course and program offerings at the University. Existing alongside the articulation of both of these ideologies were the non-vocational courses and programs at the University. These reflected the enlightenment ideology of education, which represents educational activities as consumption. Overlaid on these three ideologies was the consumerist ideology, which allowed the three ideologies - as they were expressed in both the administrative structure, professional and governance model, and funding of the University, as well as its actual course and program offerings - to co-exist. The consumerist model allowed those articulating the manpower ideology, and to some extent those associated with the human capital ideology, to remain satisfied that the “output” orientation of the University was maintained. The consumerist ideology allowed non-vocational course and program offerings to be developed as well. This satisfied those articulating the enlightenment educational ideology that the “input” orientation is acknowledged within the University.

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<sup>314</sup>Dealing with “home-study registrations” (the largest category of registrations at the University) in the 1996-7 academic year (1 April until 30 March), 6,528 (40.6%) registrants failed (which means that they withdrew or in some other way did not meet the academic requirements of the course), while 9,544 (59.4%) passed. The “paced” registrations (involving mainly face-to-face seminars), which constituted 23.2% of total registrations at the University, had a higher pass rate, with 23.2% failing and 76.8% passing (Source: Athabasca University Institutional Studies).



The consumerist ideology was also identified with the “open” nature of the institution, which appealed both to enlightenment and manpower adherents.

From the Order in Council in 1970 to the beginning of the pilot project in 1973, a new residential university became a distance-education university, thereby confirming the focus of the new institution on technical development of instructional methods. This “displacement of objectives,” the details of which were shown in Table 8, occurred through a mutual process of change carried out by two groups: those with influence over economic capital and those with influence over cultural capital. The two groups found the consumerist model to be a means by which their legitimate influence over these species of capital could be maintained within the cultural market.

The development of the University would take place based on a market approach to operations and using existing technological infrastructure. The professional and governance model for the new university supported the consumerist model by subsuming the academic role within a focus on technical innovation and by using the unicameral system of governance to support the actions of management during critical periods of transition.

The beginnings of the pilot project that T.C. Byrne conducted sought to attract as many students as possible for the purpose of demonstrating the demand for educational activities within the cultural market. Innovation from this point on in the University’s history was to be developed in conjunction with the symbolic notion of increasing

access. By accepting any and all adult Canadians to its programs, the University demonstrated its relative autonomy in the period of 1970 - 75 by creating the “cooling out” function described within the regional system of higher education, partly through its capability of offering an “exit” for students.

The consumerist model was ultimately championed by an educational elite whose values reflected a belief that the expansion of educational systems was inherently to be preferred over non-expansion. The cultural market theory would suggest that the interests of more than one group is reflected in the operation of the cultural market. The relative importance of economic and cultural capital within the political economy were similar in terms of their importance for the operation of the cultural market.

The interplay of ideas in this process of developing the consumerist model has been shown to be important in guiding the actions of individuals and groups, but it has been suggested that the actual efforts of individuals were important as well. The field of educational power was populated towards one end with the political and administrative decision-makers whose control over economic capital (the decision on whether to fund and approve the continuation of the University) was strong but whose influence over cultural capital (representing the fate of the University as a cultural institution) was weak. The decision to close the University would have been risky without the participation of those holding legitimate cultural capital regarding education. As a consequence, those planning the 1972 pilot project moved quickly to hire “tutors” as academic staff whose

credibility would enhance the plans for the University.

One of the people at the cultural end of the field of power was Byrne. In fact, his role was unique because he was able to span the legitimate exchange of both economic and cultural capital, having served as a government decision-maker for many years but being willing to apply his educational credentials as a teacher and educationist to the founding of the new institution. It was here that *agency* in the form of Byrne's subtle recasting of the University's role is reflected as an influence contiguous to the influence of ideology within the field of power.

Byrne's actions exemplify the "displacement of objectives" that is shown in Table 8. While in government, he expressed the need for the general reform of universities, using the University of Alberta as an example of "what needed to be changed." Taking up the project of finding a place for the new University in the changing political economy of Alberta, Byrne oversaw the shift of the institution's objectives from those reflecting a smaller and more collegial form of the University of Alberta to a production-oriented consumer model of education.

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## CHAPTER 7: IN A PERIOD OF CHANGE - COMPARING THE SYSTEMS OF EDUCATIONAL PROVISION, 1993 - 95

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### CHRONOLOGY

- 1993 - A Progressive Conservative government under a new leader is elected on 17 February. Plans to close Athabasca University and to amalgamate it with the University of Alberta are made known by October.
- 1994 - On 3 March, the Governing Council declares “financial exigency,” a procedural action that allows it unilaterally to release academic and professional staff from employment. On 16 March, the Minister of Advanced Education writes to the Chair of the Governing Council stating that the University will be given a new mandate. Athabasca University’s first graduate students are admitted in September.
- 1995 - A new president is appointed to the University in March, following the resignation of the previous president in the autumn of 1994.

### INTRODUCTION

This chapter shifts to a closer examination of the University’s social trajectory by comparing the development of the institution during a recent period of time with that of the Company. While previous chapters have been concerned mainly with explaining why the University emerged in the form that it did, this chapter considers the relative autonomy of the University as a system of educational provision. It was argued in

the previous chapter that during the period of 1970 - 75 the University's autonomy was evident in the development of the consumerist model that it represented. That model featured an accommodation or adjustment of a system of educational provision to the requirements of the material economy as well as a means by which the system influenced the political economy through its opening of new educational opportunities for citizens. In this chapter, the research issue of relative autonomy is revisited in two ways.

First, the University adopted a strategy for change that was different from that of Primus. In terms of the operations of the two systems of educational provision, the University engaged in a program of what is called here "technical change," while the Company instituted a program of "cultural change." The Company managers' task of replacing cultural beliefs within the organization was an ambitious undertaking that was borne up by appeals to the need for cooperation and adopting a common view of the world, while the University's management avoided such appeals.

The University's administration would have preferred to carry out a cultural change. However, the holders of cultural capital within the institution accepted a technical change strategy instead. A subsidiary organization would be used to market and deliver the new MBA program. The president, who would leave the University after setting up the organizational unit, ensured that the unit would have an influence on the rest of the University's operations.

Further comparisons will be made with two *other* systems of educational

provision. The further comparisons are to the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (a university system in another English-speaking Canadian province) and to Transcontinental Pipe Line (a company operating in the same industry as Primus). These comparisons underline the degree to which the University's strategy reflected the institution's own history and political economy, rather than reflecting an inevitable adjustment to the economic transition within which it operated. The University's organizational strategy and the organizational outcome were similar during the period of 1993 - 95 to those of Transcontinental. Conversely, the situation at Primus, it will be argued, was similar in important respects to the one at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education.

Second, as in the earlier period of 1970 - 75 the mandate and existence of the University were questioned in 1993 - 95. The University fashioned an organizational response that was followed by a revision of the institution's educational role within the region. This revision was accomplished in part by the establishment of graduate programs, which had been expressly disallowed in the Orders in Council creating the University in the earlier period. The graduate programs represented a shift away from the progressive ideals of the initial conception of the University, tending towards specialization of curriculum and towards increased selectivity among students to be admitted. While the earlier period of 1970 - 75 saw the pairing of enhanced access to educational opportunity with the diffusion of technology, the later period was characterized by a pairing of enhanced access to educational opportunity with

curricular specialization. In the period of 1993 - 95, when financial constraints on the University were increased, the consumerist model was used to develop a strategy that focused on offering courses and programs in those curricular areas in which student demand could be demonstrated. In both periods, the University's relative autonomy was demonstrated in part by the institution's social influence in expanding educational access.

This chapter begins with a discussion of the trend towards internationalization of the operations of the two organizations and the state's concern to maintain support for a maturing infrastructure for the exploitation of natural resources within the region. The chapter then turns to a discussion of specific organizational responses to conflict taken by the University and the Company during the period of change: centralization of operations, development of the core-periphery organizational pattern, and curricular specialization. Centralization and the core-periphery pattern occurred at both organizations, while curricular specialization took hold only in the University.

#### INTERNATIONALIZATION AND THE SYSTEMS OF EDUCATIONAL PROVISION

The external political economy in the period of 1970 - 75 was described in a previous chapter in reference to a shift from allocation to production within the region. The University and the Company functioned to support that shift by contributing to province-building.

The external political economy of the period of 1993 - 95 was characterized by the internationalization of markets.<sup>315</sup> The University and the Company continued to have a role during the period of 1993 - 95 in providing a focal point for province-building. However, in the later period the political goal of increasing the decision-making power of the province faded as revenues from oil and gas decreased, as a result of the decrease in the world price of these commodities.

In response to this decrease in revenues, a much more aggressive attempt took place beginning in 1990 to export gas to the U.S., supported by the implementation of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). NAFTA provided an incentive to the Company to expand its operations as a multinational company, with less direct influence accruing to the provincial government. Exports (that is, gas shipped outside the province of Alberta) accounted, since the beginning of the 1990s, for an increasingly large share of the Company's shipments. In 1991 the total deliveries within the province were about the same as those in 1990; deliveries to British Columbia, the neighbouring province to the west, were down approximately three per cent. However, shipments of gas to eastern Canada (mainly to Ontario, Canada's most populous province) and to the

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<sup>315</sup>For a discussion of the Canadian experience of internationalization in the 1990s, see Daniel Drache and Meric S. Gertler, eds., *The New Era of Global Competition: State Policy and Market Power* (McGill-Queen's University Press, 1991). The contributors to this volume are concerned with finding a new arrangement between state and market that will accommodate the globalization of trade while allowing for the maintenance and development of an autonomous Canadian economy and cultural identity. In his article "Free Trade and Canadian Development," Stephen Clarkson writes that



U.S. were up sharply that year. The shipments increased in total by five per cent to 3.04 trillion cubic feet (tcf), up from 2.9 tcf in 1990.<sup>316</sup> In 1995, exports from the oil and gas sector increased by 5.5 per cent over 1994.<sup>317</sup>

A discussion has been provided of the function of the University and the Company in contributing to the development of a regional capitalism. It was argued that the state had a role in providing the human resources and material infrastructure for the exploitation of natural resources. The private interests represented by the multinational resource corporations accepted the limited influence and control represented by such institutions as a cartel secretariat and public representation on the board of the Company in exchange for the significant financial contributions of the state in establishing the infrastructure for economic development. The increasing reliance on foreign markets for gas exports, as well as the Company's increasing efforts to export its consulting services in the area of pipeline construction and technology, lessened the direct influence of the province on the operations of the Company during the period of change.

The loosening of the direct influence by the state on the Company could be observed in the provincial legislature. In May of 1994, the Company announced at its

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The adjustment problems of middle powers faced by world upheaval do not often provide the stuff of large-scale history. Nor is there anything new in the spectacle of a vulnerable state facing a loss of its sovereignty. But as Europe prepares itself for 1992, the Canadian example could take on considerable relevance. This country has had a long experience in dealing with dependent integration in an external market, with the pressures of cultural assimilation, and with the centrifugal forces of regionalism. Understanding Canada's problems with continentalism may provide some insights into understanding challenges faced by smaller European countries. . . . (p. 122)

<sup>316</sup>"Primus Gas Shipments Maintain," *Oil and Gas Journal*, v. 90 (January 27, 1992), p. 26.

<sup>317</sup>Mairi MacLean, "Alberta Exports Boom," *Edmonton Journal*, 3 August 1996.

annual meeting that it would “focus solely on natural gas services and petrochemicals.”<sup>318</sup> The provincial legislature was at the same time repealing the legislation that had some 40 years earlier provided for the establishment of the Company. The province would no longer have the right to appoint four directors to the Company’s board, a prerogative that had been a key component of Ernest Manning’s original conception for the Company. The Company was as a result of the repeal completely privatized in terms of ownership control, although regulatory control remained in the hands of government.<sup>319</sup>

The decreasing direct influence of the state on the priorities of the Company was set in the context of the volatile nature of the short-term economic value of the resource. The value of the Alberta gas reserves are determined mainly by global marketplace forces. The estimates of reserves of oil and gas in the world vary widely; the estimates are based at least in part on political and economic considerations.<sup>320</sup> The reserves as officially reported fluctuate rapidly. From January 1994 to December 1995, international and domestic demand for natural gas in Canada “soared,” then “waned.”<sup>321</sup>

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<sup>318</sup>Cathryn Motherwell, “Primus Shareholders Back Restructuring,” *Globe and Mail*, 7 May 1994, p. B20.

<sup>319</sup>An “annual rate case” would be held to assess the suitability of toll rates; previously hearings had been held into the company’s toll rates only in the event of a dispute or complaint.

<sup>320</sup>See “Oil and Gas Estimates Plummet,” *Science* 245, no. 4924 (22 September 1989): 1330. The American Secretary of the Interior Donald Hodel was informed by his U.S. Geological Survey that the estimate of the oil and gas remaining to be discovered in the U.S. would be reduced by 40 per cent. The change was attributed in part to a rise in prices that had encouraged oil and gas companies to test more rigorously through exploration the previous estimate.

<sup>321</sup>“Gas Deliveries Soar to a Record 3.8 tcf,” *Edmonton Journal*, 21 January 1994 and “Natural Gas Need Waning,” *Edmonton Journal*, 6 December 1995.

Rate hearings provided an opportunity for producers and pipeline companies to argue that the rates charged to their customers should be increased based on the supply of and demand for the product. As pipeline capacity increases, natural gas becomes more plentiful and the price drops. Similarly, exploring for and documenting reserves of natural gas leads to downward pressure on prices. In either case, producers of the commodity ask for a reduction in the toll rate charged by the Company to transmit the gas to market. The regulatory process for the Company involved justifying the toll rates based on capital investment, in a fashion similar to that used with public or private utility companies in Canada.

Set against the volatility of the real price of oil and gas is the high capital cost of building the industrial infrastructure to explore for, extract, process, and transport the resource. The building and maintenance of natural gas pipelines is a large-scale operation. With thousands of kilometres of pipeline, monitoring of the integrity of the line is a primary function of the Company. Technical problems and their solutions are constantly under consideration within the Company.<sup>322</sup> The Company was concerned during 1993 - 95 to influence the establishment of gas-producing regions in the Middle East and Latin America by selling its consulting expertise in pipeline construction. In the same way that an increasing reliance on exports reduced the direct influence of the

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<sup>322</sup>See R.P. Boivin, P.C. Cavanaugh, and R.G. Clarke, "Directional Drilling Solves Unstable Slope Along Canadian Pipeline," *Oil and Gas Journal*, v. 91 (September 6, 1993), p. 64. The company develops expertise in selected areas of the industry and provides consulting services internationally through a wholly owned company established for that purpose. As mentioned in a previous chapter, "directional drilling" is an example of a solution to the problem of unstable slopes in a remote area of northeastern Alberta. With this process, pipe is "pulled through" the unstable area, rather than buried. This project alone, accounting for only a few hundred feet of pipe, cost the company \$CA5.5 million.

state on the Company, so did the export of consulting expertise. As this expertise became a commodity for international sale, the political connection it has to the regional economy was reduced.

With the establishment and maturing of the infrastructure required for the ongoing exploitation of the natural resource, problems emerged for the accommodation of the state and corporate sectors. Ideological support for such an accommodation was in an earlier era based in significant part on the economic interests of a rising middle class. With declining economic prospects for this class of workers and managers, those who make up what Galbraith calls the “technostructure,”<sup>323</sup> a means must be found by which continued state support for the development of the infrastructure may be justified in terms other than the promise of an expanding economy and the job places to be filled within them. The number of individuals required to manage and tend the continuous process industries and their spinoff economic initiatives decreased in relation to the rate of growth of economic output. The oil and gas sector required fewer people to manage and tend larger enterprises. The development of the “human capital” required for the economy and political development of capitalism within Alberta represented a need for fewer people, but with more specialized skills and knowledge. The system of educational

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<sup>323</sup>See John Kenneth Galbraith, “The Technostructure,” in *The New Industrial State* (New York: Signet Books, 1968), p. 73:

The real accomplishment of modern science and technology consists in taking ordinary men, informing them narrowly and deeply and then, through appropriate organization, arranging to have their knowledge combined with that of other specialized but equally ordinary men. This dispenses with the need for genius. The resulting performance, though less inspiring, is far more predictable.

provision responded to this in the nature and scope of their offerings and their methods of delivery.

Educational activities in both organizations were expanding quickly until 1993. With a decline in overall resource revenue in the province, the state maintained its opposition to encroachments of the federal government in areas of provincial jurisdiction, including education and resource ownership. However, with the federal government providing reduced levels of funds for these and other areas, the two educational systems responded to provincial government demands for “belt-tightening” by orienting their activities in a way that would be responsive to fluctuations in market demand. With fewer people required for the domestic economy, education provided a means of reducing the number of people in the workforce, cooling out demand for more educational opportunities, and regulating the demand for economic advancement.<sup>324</sup>

At the University, internationalization increased in influence, as it did at the Company, with the MBA, Master of Distance Education, and other programs intended for domestic and international delivery. The growth of registrations and new courses and programs continued at a rate similar to that previously, but with a reduction of 10 per cent of staff and of 31 per cent in the operating grant from government.<sup>325</sup> The changes to the learning model that resulted from this initiative went beyond an enhancement by electronic means of the programs offered to the same students. By the

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<sup>324</sup>These three processes are discussed in Chapter 6 as choices available to actors for “exit,” “voice,” and “loyalty.”

<sup>325</sup>Document U5, page 19.

time such new degree programs as the two master's degrees were implemented, the importance of the national and international student - in contrast to an emphasis on the Alberta student - was manifest in the University's policy to offer courses to foreign nationals living outside Canada.<sup>326</sup>

In both systems of educational provision, a shift occurred in the social importance of responding to the particular geographical and social characteristics of the region. The University was initially to reflect a North American emphasis on the intensive use of the telephone and other technologies in education and on the desirability of merging industrial and educational practices. The social origin of the University reflected, according to T.C. Byrne, an Alberta solution for Alberta problems, and a counterpart to it does not exist in Canada. In establishing and operating a university that was seen as regionally distinct, decision makers appealed to those in favour of the reform of educational practices. During the period of change at the University, a technical strategy was implemented with the intention of consolidating the student's role as consumer. This consolidation may be considered in the eventual tendency to regard any student, including those outside the regional geographical area, as potential consumers.

The Company was originally to have a role in allowing for the orderly exploitation of a natural resource in a way that would ensure that private capital would be accumulated regionally, thereby strengthening the political and economic power of regional elites.

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<sup>326</sup>See *Athabasca University Calendar, 1996-97*, p. 102.

During the period of 1993 - 95, a cultural strategy was intended to accompany a transition to a focus on the priorities of the export market.

#### DIVERGING CHANGE STRATEGIES IN THE TWO SYSTEMS OF EDUCATIONAL PROVISION

At the University, the period of change began with the election of another Progressive Conservative government. The premier elected for the first time to the position, his predecessor having served for two terms, committed during the election to reduce provincial expenditures which had been financed in part by debt since the mid-1980s. The in-coming government had campaigned on promises to reduce the "size" of government by reducing expenditures on virtually all government activities, including education. Following the election, educational organizations were directed to restructure their activities and bureaucracies in order to increase "accessibility" while reducing costs per student. As well, bureaucrats and politicians examined means by which reduced expenditures might be reduced. One of the means settled upon by the minister was to reduce the grants to all universities and colleges.

The University was initially considered a candidate for simple closure. As the faculty association president beginning in the autumn of 1992, throughout 1993, and into the first months of 1994, the researcher was made aware of this plan through informal and formal means that have been described earlier.<sup>327</sup> The University's president seemed interested in pursuing a cultural change strategy, imposing a new minimum teaching

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<sup>327</sup>Two former Athabasca University administrative staff members who had gone into other senior positions within the postsecondary system confirmed the government's intention. As noted in a footnote in Chapter 1, those applying for the presidency of the University in 1995 were assured in writing that the University would *not* close.

load,<sup>328</sup> for example, as one of the responses to the impending closure and mentioning in public and private meetings that a “new model” of university education was emerging internationally and that it was in the University’s interest to adapt to that new model. However, as a result of the resistance of faculty and other staff, a technical strategy emerged as the primary focus for change during the period of 1993 - 95.

The Governing Council passed, on the recommendation of the president of the University, a resolution on 3 March 1994 that declared “financial exigency.” This was announced at the same time that the University announced that its operating budget had been cut by 31 per cent. The declaration meant that faculty could now be released from employment based on a year’s notice and the payment of severance. The provision of the faculty’s *Terms and Conditions* allowed for such a declaration, as did other contracts with faculty associations in Canadian universities. Faculty members argued publicly (through media interviews and at Governing Council and Academic Council meetings) that the declaration had been introduced unilaterally without appropriate discussion and that it had occluded a discussion about administrative and other changes that should also be considered as responses to the budget cut.

A “career transition program” was announced immediately after the declaration of financial exigency. This program allowed for the voluntary resignation of faculty, professional, and support staff, with a guaranteed severance payment. The faculty

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<sup>328</sup>As will be noted later in the chapter, the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education phased in a similar measure of increasing teaching responsibilities with a corresponding decrease in research responsibilities. This change was part of what will be called a quasi-cultural strategy.



association opposed the program because it had been put into place outside of the negotiating process. Several staff members from the three categories of employment took up the offer. The management of the University also announced three initiatives as its response to the budget cut: the intention to increase the institution's annual number of graduates, the implementation of information technology for the purpose of allowing for expanded electronic access to the University, and an emphasis on collaborative programs that would increase the cooperative offering of University programs through the province's community colleges and technical institutions. These program initiatives were to be accomplished through a technical change strategy characterized by centralization of operations, by a continued reliance on the core-periphery pattern in the appointment of teaching staff, and by a tendency to specialize its academic programs. The president resigned in the autumn of 1994, having established the subsidiary organization for the MBA, which would grow quickly, admitting some 400 students from across Canada in its first three years of operation.

At the Company the change strategy may be considered in relation to the appointment of a new chief executive. Shortly after his appointment, the top executive expressed the impetus for initiating the change process at the Company in terms of using decentralization to help the Company focus more on customer satisfaction and to reduce costs. The chief executive stated at the outset that "[w]e're adopting the principle that all costs and services should be situated within the businesses they serve."<sup>329</sup> While

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<sup>329</sup>Harvey Enchin, "Primus Plans Major Decentralization," *Globe and Mail*, 3 December 1991, p. B1.

decentralization is one means of ensuring that services at the Company will be delivered in a fashion acceptable to customers, announcing and beginning the process of decentralizing the Company also served, according to a management consultant at the time, to mollify the Company's lenders. The Company had acquired a large plastics manufacturer at the same time that prices for petrochemicals fell significantly. According to the expert, "part of the [banks'] security is from having [the chief executive] there."<sup>330</sup> The chief executive had earned a reputation as an effective executive in a 30-year career at Dupont, and the signal that he was to engage in a cost-cutting campaign at the Company was enough to forestall a "write-down" of the Company's assets.

Appendix 4 summarizes the formal strategy regarding training adopted by the Company during the period of change. The amount of detail at the level of daily activities that is reflected in this plan suggests that an instrumental approach (one focused on using a technology or method to address a problem) to educational activities was adopted. In contrast with the cultural strategy laid over these rigid procedures (described in a later section in this chapter), the plan represents instrumental solutions (setting up performance measures, writing detailed reports of activities, and so on) to what are practical problems for employees in transition, such as becoming familiar with the routines and values of a new business unit. The cultural strategy is therefore to function as a means of expressing the practical problems to which the change process

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<sup>330</sup>Enchin.

gives rise, while avoiding the debate that might be associated with a substantive consideration of such problems. The strategy is cultural because it asks employees to adjust or reconsider their attitudes and values in an effort to “live with” the conflicts arising out of the change process.

The strategy adopted at the Company was not the only kind of cultural strategy possible. Rose describes the development of educational activities in utility companies in the U.S. that encouraged employees to learn about the local political economy and to use this knowledge to contribute to the rapid expansion of utility services. Trained employees could better understand the Company’s strategies for building the provision of utilities into the social fabric of the political economy by “domesticating” electric power and gas.<sup>331</sup> The Primus strategy was more insular in that it did not encourage staff members to assess the regional political economy and the Company’s role within it. Instead, the focus was on interactions between market and bureaucracy, with an emphasis on customer satisfaction and service.

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<sup>331</sup>See Mark H. Rose, *Cities of Light and Heat: Domesticating Gas and Electricity in Urban America*. (University Park, Penn.: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1995). In his study of the diffusion of electrical and gas services in urban Denver and Kansas City from the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Rose argues that training within the respective utility companies had an influence in allowing employees to see the “purpose” of the work they did. This was an important factor contributing to the “domestication” of power and gas in urban America. In 1910, Kansas City Power & Light provided comprehensive educational activities that covered the technical, practical, and social settings of the company’s work:

Not that formal courses of instruction had made the difference between success and failure for complex gas and electric firms operating in turbulent urban markets. Rather, education . . . was one of several important facets of operations aimed at encouraging closer coordination between huge investments, immense technical systems, and booming, diversifying, and decentralizing American cities (pp. 153-55).

## CENTRALIZATION AT THE UNIVERSITY

The formal reporting lines at the University changed in 1995 with a new president appointed that year. The stated intention of the reorganization was to “flatten” the organizational structure.<sup>332</sup> The revised formal reporting line at the University began with the president, who reported directly to Governing Council. Two vice-presidents, reduced from three in 1995, reported to the president: one responsible for finance and administrative services, the other titled Vice-President Academic. The vice-president academic oversaw the work of the 12 academic centres, replacing three faculties and a Centre for Distance Education. The chairs of the academic centres had the work that was previously carried out by the deans of the faculties. Each chair represented her or his respective group of academics, averaging half a dozen in number. Total academic and professional staff numbered 110 in 1995. Tutors, academic experts, and learning facilitators (all instructional support staff) reported to academics, as previously.

The ambiguity of the academic chairs’ position was suggested in two ways. First, the supervisory aspect of the position extended to carrying out annual assessments of academic staff. However, chairs did not request and were not asked to take a role in any formal supervisory roles arising out of the *Terms and Conditions* (the employment contract between the Governing Council and the Faculty Association).<sup>333</sup> Second, the relatively

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<sup>332</sup>Document U1, 1994-95.

<sup>333</sup>Document U8.

large number of new chairs was not reflected in the public statements regarding the “flattening” process, as in the following statement from the 1994-95 Annual Report:

To “flatten” the organizational structure, streamline operations, and reduce administrative costs, 11 senior management positions were eliminated. These changes, together with other cost-saving measures, allowed the university to redirect \$800,000 annually to teaching and innovation. Similarly, Faculties were replaced by Academic Centres to increase effectiveness and improve accountability.<sup>334</sup>

The senior management positions mentioned included one vice-president and three associate vice-presidents. In some cases, an eliminated senior management position was replaced by a more junior management position. This occurred with the University Librarian, for example, who was replaced by a director of library services, and with the eliminated associate vice-president of university services whose responsibilities were reflected in the responsibilities of the coordinator of budget planning and staff records, a new management position. When the 12 academic chairs were added, the number of managers would actually have been higher than before the changes were made.

At the University, certain formal organizational characteristics have remained constant throughout the middle period of the institution’s existence and through to the period of change. These constants included a central facility in Athabasca, which housed the equipment and staff devoted to printing, production, and distribution, as well as the core academic staff and administration. There were three learning centres that were established early in the institution’s history, located in Calgary, Edmonton, and Fort

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<sup>334</sup>Document U1, 1994-95.

McMurray. These had subordinate status to the central office. The learning centres provided a physical presence in urban locations and points at which students may inquire or collect course materials. They also had limited space for classroom seminars. The seminars were the only aspect of the learning centres' operations that may be regarded as a gesture towards real decentralization of operations. In 1994-95, such seminars attracted 22 per cent of the University's registrations - 3,438 out of a total of 15,815.<sup>335</sup>

The University was by the terms of its establishment always considered part of the higher educational *system* in a way that the larger universities, with their far greater financial resources and the relative autonomy they enjoyed, were not.<sup>336</sup> During the period of change, the openness with which the University was intended to function within an integrated system, was intensified. As an example, the University's collaboration for the purpose of system-wide integration became an express part of the University's mandate, as it had become for other institutions within the higher educational system. In 1994, two letters from the Minister of Advanced Education stated the increased importance that the Minister was placing on collaboration of this kind when considering the performance of the institution. The Minister stated that:

It is true that I have required broad changes from Athabasca University in order to bring the institution more into line with the current economic realities. These

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<sup>335</sup>Document U2, 1995-96 (includes figures from 1994-95).

<sup>336</sup>Athabasca University has fewer influential alumni, less significance in relation to the local economy, and a smaller share of external research funding than do the other Alberta universities.

changes included a significant reduction in the grant cost of the institution and a rapid improvement in the program completion rate.<sup>337</sup>

The University endeavoured to allow for students to enter and exit its system easily, with credit for courses taken elsewhere “received” and “granted” with dispatch.

The centralization of the University’s operations may be examined with regard to more than the formal organizational reporting lines. Until the period of change, the method of delivery at the University was relatively unified, with the print home-study package of materials forming the centre of almost all course delivery strategies. With the launch of the MBA and Master of Distance Education, electronic communication became a tacitly accepted, but not officially approved, mode of transmission. Management strategy was increasingly reflected in an avoidance of policy in connection with “how” educational activities were to be carried out. For example, the software package that was central to the delivery strategy for the new MBA program had attracted, by October 1996, approximately 500 student, faculty, and staff users. However, a memo was sent that month to the president from a senior executive asking that the software be approved as an item fully supported and approved by the University.<sup>338</sup> It had not been formally approved, although funds in the amount of at

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<sup>337</sup>Document U9.

<sup>338</sup>E-mail communication of 1 October 1996.

least \$20,000 had already been spent for the purchase of the software, with more spent on using and applying the software.<sup>339</sup>

The increasing use of electronic communication in the delivery of courses and programs had the function of centralizing operations, since it tended to create common work practices and to foster a reliance on institutional resources. The University had until the period of change mainly relied on its one-to-one telephone tutorial for providing the opportunity for interaction between student and instructor. This mode of interaction was used in order to allow for the geographical dispersion of students, who could be living as far as 3,000 kilometres away from the University. Communication had taken place in a unilinear fashion between student and instructor; similarly, tutors were relatively isolated from one another and from the central organization. Interactions had therefore been in the form of learning episodes or incidents, with opportunities for less formal interaction events limited.

By incorporating technology such as videoconferencing and computer conferencing, the opportunities for informal interactions among students, between students and

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<sup>339</sup>The openness of the transmission process extends as well to the actual technology adopted. In this, we may reconsider T.C. Byrne's comment about using the telephone system, which already existed as part of the industrial infrastructure within North America. He stated that this was part of the mandate of the University - provide Alberta solutions for Alberta problems - and that avoiding the development of non-industrial solutions would be inappropriate for the new University (Interview with TB, 9 July 1996). Furthermore, the range of delivery modes that emerged during the period of change numbered 9 at the end of 1995, up from only three (home study, teleconference, and seminar) that had existed five years earlier (Document U1). Some of these "modes" are additional components, such as a module to be completed using a computer, and which do not change the essential method of transmission. However, the means by which they are listed prominently and offered as options and choices to students, suggests that the management strategy for marketing University courses involves adopting relatively fewer preferences for modes of transmission. A mode that adds a consumer choice to students - and especially if it seems likely to attract students - is welcome



instructors, and among instructors, increased. With development begun in 1993, by 1996 the electronic Bachelor of Commerce, for example, allowed for students and instructors in 16 courses to communicate by e-mail, in computer-mediated conferences (similar to Internet “newsgroup” discussions, with “threading” of members’ contributions to the discussions), and by telephone.<sup>340</sup>

The electronic courses were offered to students as an alternative to the “print package and telephone tutorial,” with no incentives or disincentives (such as decreased or increased fees) for the electronic option. Courses were offered in face-to-face classes, via television broadcast, by home-study (involving a print package and telephone tutorial), and increasingly by computer-mediated communication or videoconference.

#### DECENTRALIZATION AT THE COMPANY

The business process reengineering at the Company during 1993 - 95 was presented by management as a means by which the Company would contribute to making the western Canada sedimentary basin, the main region in which it operates, the “supply basin of choice” for North American consumers of natural gas.<sup>341</sup> For the Company, the purpose of restructuring was regarded by management as contributing to reductions in the cost of natural gas as a commodity in the American and Canadian marketplaces.

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<sup>340</sup>Document U6.

<sup>341</sup>Document C1, 1993.

The impetus for cost-cutting at the Company during the period of 1993 - 95 was ambiguous - following from both a management desire to move operations closer to customers and a corporate intention to respond to the lending market's worries. Similarly, the actual decentralization was a bidirectional process. Even as it was announced in 1991, the chief executive pointed to the centralization of decision-making and the allocation of resources that were to be implemented along with the operational decentralization and a reduction in staff numbers. He referred to a corporate strategy committee, made up of 10 top managers, which would monitor the Company's decision making:

Every decision we make will be vetted by that group. That will ensure that whenever we're making a critical decision . . . the interests of our customers are loudly heard at the top level.<sup>342</sup>

The resulting business process re-engineering (BPR) program was intended to reduce costs mainly by operating with fewer staff. This BPR program was cultural, calling for teamwork, flexibility, and cross-functional work.<sup>343</sup> During the period of change, increased expenditure on educational activities was first proposed as a solution to the problem of competitiveness in a continuous process, global, resource-based industry. A goal of 1 per cent of the operating budget was to be spent on training of staff each year.<sup>344</sup> Spending more on training was then displaced by an expressed intention to

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<sup>342</sup>Enchin 1991.

<sup>343</sup>Document C22.

<sup>344</sup>Interview with GR, 26 May 1994.

emphasize training activities for staff while reducing cost through decentralization efforts.<sup>345</sup> The definition of training and educational activities was changed to include socialization events within the organization. Training and education could and should occur at all times, not simply when formal instruction was being provided.<sup>346</sup>

Like other organizations operating in a continuous process industry, the Company is reaching a limit in its deployment of technology for monitoring and attending its operations. This limit may be considered in the events following an accident that occurred in 1992 and was subsequently investigated by a government-appointed commission. The accident underlined the fact that technological adjustments and training investments do not provide protection against catastrophic losses.<sup>347</sup> An explosion and fire occurred at a pipeline interchange owned and operated by the Company. The fire caused damage to an area with a circumference of 250 metres and destroyed the dwelling of a local resident, although no one was injured or killed as a result. The inquiry following the incident came to the conclusion that “more attention” should be given to:

- weld inspection
- total design of hot-tap installations
- the coordination of response to emergencies

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<sup>345</sup>Document C25.

<sup>346</sup>*Edmonton Journal*, “Alberta Needs ‘Learning Culture’ to Compete.”

<sup>347</sup>*Primus Pipeline Failure: Rocky River Interchange* (Calgary: Energy Resources Conservation Board, 1992).

- isolation of the interchange.

The four areas requiring attention could be addressed through more training, and in fact the third point helped encourage the development of the “mock disaster” program, which was initiated shortly after the accident. The mock disaster was a role-playing drama in which Company employees “responded” to a staged accident with the cooperation of civic agencies. The report also made reference to “human frailties”<sup>348</sup> with regard to welding procedures. This suggested that training and educational activities, even if found to be requiring “more attention,” would in the end give way to a tendency to blame workers when losses are incurred. Behavioral training programs would be expected to be considered a corrective to “human frailties” and also as a means of publicly (for the purpose of investigations of the kind following the accident, for example) demonstrating a commitment to the use of training to improve the Company’s safety record.

Four corporate initiatives that were connected to the restructuring of the Company’s operations may be considered with regard to the planning and implementation of training programs during the period of change. These initiatives formed part of the Company’s “business transformation” project.

First to be noted are the “development dialogues” that were used in part for the purpose of identifying training needs. The express purpose of the dialogues was to

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<sup>348</sup>*Primus Pipeline Failure: Rocky River Interchange*, p. 22.

identify career-planning issues for both employee and organization. Over a six-month period in 1994, for example, the Technical Training department completed development dialogues with the 16 staff members within that department. These were carried out between supervisor and staff member. The supervisor would have a similar dialogue with her or his own superior, although these were somewhat less structured and formalized sessions.<sup>349</sup> During the dialogues, the “fit” between the Company’s need for specified skills and the staff member’s competencies and developmental plans was assessed. Staff expressed the feeling that the purpose of the meetings was to decide who would be laid off.<sup>350</sup>

Second, the Human Resources Business Process Simplification (HRBPS) Program was intended to reduce duplication of parallel programs in the area of employee development.<sup>351</sup> One of the outcomes of this initiative was to change the model of the human resources department to that of a consulting firm. There would be an overall reduction in staffing in the department, and it was assumed that part of the work previously done by in-house staff would be contracted out.<sup>352</sup>

Third, the Gemini Consulting Company carried out a third-party review of the Company’s overall operations, with the intention of identifying areas of overlap and

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<sup>349</sup>Interview with HJA, 15 June 1994

<sup>350</sup>Interview with GR, 26 May 1994 and with HJA, 15 June 1994. In the case of both informants, this turned out to be an accurate prediction, with one leaving in 1995, the other in 1996.

<sup>351</sup>See Appendix 3 for a detailed description of the HRBPS Program.

<sup>352</sup>Interview with GR, 26 May 1994.

redundancy. One device used in this review was the development dialogue, discussed previously. Some staff members expressed the belief that the plan was a precursor to widespread layoffs.<sup>353</sup>

Fourth, the Mahler consultants offered the “Leadership Program” to managers and executives in the Company. This program<sup>354</sup> was intended to help managers and executives to develop the skills used to deal with the change brought about by re-engineering.<sup>355</sup>

Decentralization efforts at the Company occurred in two waves, the first in 1991<sup>356</sup> and the second in 1994 with the installation of a new chief executive officer.<sup>357</sup> The decentralization of the training function was, according to explicit management strategy, intended to allow for the emergence of training needs from the field, and not from a centralized training bureaucracy. This restructuring would follow from the management strategy of decentralization, with the purposes of moving decision-making further down the organizational hierarchy and reducing costs. As the chief executive at the Company explained it at the outset:

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<sup>353</sup>Interview with GR, 26 May 1994.

<sup>354</sup>Document C33.

<sup>355</sup>The SAP, an electronic management information system, was also implemented during the period of 1993 - 95 (Documents C3 [4,3] and C32). This was carried out in conjunction with the “business transformation” project.

<sup>356</sup>“Primus Plans Major Decentralization,” *Globe and Mail*, 3 December 1991, p. B1.

<sup>357</sup>“Primus Shareholders Back Restructuring,” *Globe and Mail*, 7 May 1994, p. B20.

[Decentralization] will lead to a much leaner organizational structure and much greater delegation of decision making into lower levels of the organization. Any company that has done this has experienced significant and continuing gains in cost effectiveness.<sup>358</sup>

Centralized *delivery* methods of the kind used at the University have not been characteristic at the Company. For example, the “mock disaster” training program was planned and implemented within a particular geographic area.<sup>359</sup> The technical training courses offered in 1994, some 1500 in number, represented offerings in all of the province’s maintenance areas. Individual courses were offered in more than one location. For example, the “Magnetic Bearings Levels 1 and 2” training courses were offered at four of the maintenance areas in the province.<sup>360</sup> The delivery process has historically been decentralized, and there is no evidence to suggest that there was a shift in this regard during the period of change.

Face-to-face seminars continued to be the preferred method of delivery at the Company. Off-site offerings of the Interpersonal Skills Development course were typical for managers, with the presentation of the course having been scheduled regularly for delivery at the Banff Centre, a resort and retreat centre for continuing education

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<sup>358</sup>Enchin 1991. As noted later in this chapter, the decentralization was carried out in conjunction with the establishment of a 10-member corporate strategy committee, suggesting that, at least symbolically, the organizational structure would entail more scrutiny of lower level decisions.

<sup>359</sup>Interview with DR, 3 June 1994.

<sup>360</sup>Document C14.

located in the Canadian Rockies. When the Company wanted to train students in community relations, it called on Boston College to send instructors to Calgary.<sup>361</sup>

In terms of the *development* of educational activities, a mix of contracted and internally developed educational activities has been characteristic of the system of educational provision since the beginning of the Company's operations.<sup>362</sup> The "To-Be" document of 1994 stated that an important part of the process for planning, developing, and delivering educational programs was to be the "make or buy" decision. Here, the decision was made as to whether a course would be developed in-house, purchased for in-house offering, or contracted to an external provider, either on-site or off-site. In almost all cases, a decision was made not to develop in-house.<sup>363</sup>

Employees working in their geographical areas would now propose to their managers possible areas in which educational activities would be appropriate. Managers would scrutinize these proposals and then either allocate funds for such activities or decline to allocate funds. Under this strategy, the professionalization of the planners and instructors within the training department would change in two ways. First, more responsibility would be given to non-training employees to identify priorities for training.

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<sup>361</sup>Document C3 (4,1, p. 5).

<sup>362</sup>That diverse methods of transmission are increasingly used in both organizations suggests that there is a convergence of practice between formal educational systems and other less formal educational systems. The use of e-mail and other electronic communication systems is a possible means by which information investment is increased in both organizations. Terms used to refer to such systems, such as "grapevine" at the University and "rumour mill" at the company, indicate that there is acknowledgement by both management and staff that information investment, as conceived of by Greif (1994), has increased.

<sup>363</sup>Interview with SG, 16 June 1994.



Second, training staff would be physically relocated to field locations, mainly rural locations in the 12 maintenance areas, thereby reducing the opportunity for daily interactions of a professional nature.

The decentralization of the training function was graphically depicted in a document prepared in 1994 by a committee of 14 supervisors and professionals from the human resources area.<sup>364</sup> It is a flowchart that depicts more than 50 stages through which an educational proposal should pass. Plans were affected by “influencers” (such as the budget and management) and were to be scrutinized by a process leading to a decision to “make or buy” a training course or component. Employees then completed a training course, and the performance of both the student and the course were then evaluated. The flowchart was elaborately annotated with steps and sub-steps.<sup>365</sup> The “influencers” remain at the beginning of the flowchart’s path - and these did not change. Senior management under the new structure allocated funds based on “business, strategic, technical opportunities and objectives.”

The move to decentralize was generally not welcomed by staff. Many believed that the process was designed ultimately to reduce the number of staff. The training department staff expressed concern that educational activities would be difficult to deliver using the new model of decentralization. One respondent, a manager,

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<sup>364</sup>Document C30.

<sup>365</sup>The complexity of the process was reflected in the fact that although the document describing it extends horizontally across two full pages, the text is too small to read at the lower sub-levels.

commented that she was attempting to “centralize in the midst of decentralization.”<sup>366</sup> She seemed somewhat emotional about this point. With the initial request made by the interviewer for access to the Company for formal interviews, this respondent expressed the view that such interviews, along with further discussion, could be timely since ideas for improving the current decentralization of training could emerge. However, eventually this idea was rejected by more senior staff.

At the Company, the demand for curriculum development was previously based on training and instructional staff engaging in a rolling process of identifying needs. Proposals were made by training staff to management for funding particular proposals. A base budget for the training areas were dedicated for the purpose of ongoing development of curricula, some of which represented training courses that were mandatory for staff, such as the Increasing Human Effectiveness course. During the change period, the process remained similar. However, more power shifted to management decision makers because a dedicated budget for training staff no longer existed.<sup>367</sup> Any training programs that were proposed would require curriculum-specific funding.

At the Company, the explicit management strategy has been to move from a cultural belief system of low information investment to one of high information investment.

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<sup>366</sup>Interview with CS, 3 November 1995.

<sup>367</sup>See Enchin 1991 for references to the centralized decision-making process that was established in association with the decentralization campaign.

Greif has developed the concept of “information investment” to describe the approach taken by societies to the communication patterns characteristic of their social and economic systems.<sup>368</sup> High information investment is characteristic of collectivistic societies. Individuals “invest” a proportionally large amount of time and resources in socializing individuals through such means as inter-generational teaching, gossip, and so on. Low information investment is characteristic of individualistic societies. In such societies, social institutions such as the courts are used to regulate individuals’ behaviour. To the degree to which management advocates teamwork, information investment may be increased. The Mahler leadership program, implemented during the period of change, was a four-week educational program that covered skills in such stated areas as personal development, coaching and leadership skills, leadership behaviours and team effectiveness, and effective control and continuous learning.<sup>369</sup> High-information investment would have the effect of allowing for the dispersion of conflict at lower levels of the organization. Teams provide the site for the expression of grievances concerning working conditions and interpersonal conflict. The hierarchy of the organization remains intact, though with a reduced number of managers at middle levels, but this hierarchy is left to devote most of its efforts to deploying resources based on its assessment of the proposals received from teams.

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<sup>368</sup>Avner Greif, “Cultural Beliefs and the Organization of Society: A Historical and Theoretical Reflection on Collectivist and Individualist Societies,” *Journal of Political Economy* 102, no. 5 (October 1994): 912-50.

<sup>369</sup>Document C34.

## ADJUSTING THE COMPANY'S INTERNAL LABOUR MARKET THROUGH BEHAVIOURAL TRAINING

Both systems of educational provision had a function during the period of 1993 - 95 in supporting the transition to a period of decreased state influence and control over social institutions. This function can be considered in the emphasis on behavioural training that was characteristic of the Company's educational programs. Behavioural training was used by the Company to regulate the internal labour market by reducing the likelihood of staff turnover.

Training is one of 11 instruments cited by Doeringer and Piore that may be used to adjust to a changing *external* labour market.<sup>370</sup> Training is one of the "less constrained" instruments of *internal* labour market adjustment, the others being changing hiring standards or screening or recruitment procedures; subcontracting; allowing job vacancies; and authorizing overtime. The "highly constrained" instruments are not as easily implemented by management as the less constrained. They include changing the

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<sup>370</sup>See Michael Burawoy, *Manufacturing Consent: Changes in the Labor Process Under Monopoly Capitalism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979). The function of *both* internal and external labour markets is, as Burawoy puts it, the allocation of individuals to places:

Any particular labor market defines a) a population of places (occupations), b) a population of individuals (workers) and c) a set of transformation rules that map the one onto the other. . . . The difference between internal and external labor markets is based on the degree of delimitation of the population of workers, on the one hand, and of the corresponding population of jobs, on the other. In addition, the transformation rules may differ as between markets (96).

Also see Peter B. Doeringer and Michael J. Piore, *Internal Labor Markets and Manpower Analysis: With a New Introduction* (Armonk, N.Y.: M.E. Sharpe, 1985). Doeringer and Piore have proposed that internal labour markets emerge in competitive markets in which three factors are present: enterprise-specific skills, on-the-job training, and custom (39). Internal labour markets function to allocate labour. Doeringer and Piore propose that internal labour markets, including the rules that function to constitute them, emerge as a result of the accommodation of the interests of employer and worker. For employers, internal labour markets are a means of increasing allocative efficiency, in that they reduce the costs of recruitment, screening, and training. For workers, internal labour markets provide a means by which bureaucratic rules may be used to enhance and preserve interests; for example, the system of promoting workers within the enterprise will entail incentives for the promoted employee.

compensation or job structure, using internal allocative structures, and using written managerial procedures.

Three kinds of worker attributes may be developed within the enterprise as part of the effort to use training as an instrument for adjusting to changes in the external labour market: (1) basic skills; (2) speed and precision in job performance; and (3) behavioral traits. The focus for training during 1993 - 95 at the Company was on the category of "behavioral traits," for the reasons discussed following.

Training in the *basic skills*, which include literacy, numeracy, and so on, are not directly relevant in most organizations in Alberta including the Company. Universal and compulsory primary schooling combined with a virtually universal access to secondary education means that the Company can require all applicants to have a high school diploma, ensuring that basic skills are not a significant focus of training and education activities in the Company. While it is true that historically enterprises have used a high school diploma as a screening device for recruiting to manufacturing jobs, this technique is no longer used since it does not sufficiently reduce the potential labour force for recruiting purposes.

With regard to *speed and precision* in job performance, these cannot be developed in a general way by an employer because doing so would disrupt the security of the internal labour market for the employer. As a result of such training, employees would be in a position to take a job at another Company and the relative advantage of training

employees would thereby be lost. This constraint is lessened somewhat by the fact that the “ports of entry” to the Company were closed - fewer hirings were taking place. As Braverman points out, the types of skills that characterize a modern manufacturing firm are not enterprise-specific.<sup>371</sup> At the Company, one response to this problem was to rely on training that was concerned with operating or maintaining equipment of a particular manufacturer. This provided speed and precision training of a proprietary kind.

We may consider an illustration of the kind of proprietary training referred to here. In 1994, the department planned for the delivery of 93 different technical courses.<sup>372</sup> The number of courses was divided roughly equally into the Company’s three functional areas of compression, measurement, and automation. These courses were to be offered in the various “maintenance areas” or geographical regions of the province by field staff. As a result, the list represented the actual delivery of over 1,000 courses. The Technical Training department would provide “training for the trainers” centrally.

The breakdown between those that were deemed proprietary and those that were deemed non-proprietary was calculated by the researcher by determining whether a proprietary name was part of the formal title of the course. Following are three examples of “proprietary” courses and three examples of “non-proprietary” courses.

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<sup>371</sup>Harry Braverman, *Labor and Monopoly Capital: The Degradation of Work in the Twentieth Century*. (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1974).

<sup>372</sup>Document C13.

The three examples for each classification provided were taken, respectively, from the three functional areas of compression, measurement, and automation.

*Deemed Proprietary:*

Cooper Rolls Gas Generator - Phase III  
Barton Scanner  
Paradyne DSU Modems

*Deemed Non-Proprietary:*

Basic Alignment  
Offline Sales  
Pneumatic Controls

Using this method, it was determined that for the 93 courses offered the breakdown between the proprietary-based training and the non-proprietary based training was as follows:

42 Proprietary  
51 Non-Proprietary

Braverman points out that the enterprise-specific skills that characterize the processes of manufacturing operations are decreasing. The training function in the Company serves to develop the internal labour market in a way that tended to keep the entry and exit ports closed or relatively closed. Employees were trained to operate and maintain a particular brand of equipment or machinery, not a class or category of machinery. While other enterprises may use equipment by the same manufacturer, the likelihood that the employee would move to a job elsewhere that required the use of the same proprietary equipment is low.

This leaves the category of *behavioral traits* as the area in which the

Company adjusted to the external labour market during a period in which ports of entry were closed. In this regard, we may consider the development and delivery of the Company's Increasing Human Effectiveness and Interpersonal Skills Development courses. Increasing Human Effectiveness was an internally offered course of two days' duration available to all staff. The course was intended to develop employees skills in communication in the workplace. The course included videos and materials developed by a private Company in the U.S. Interpersonal Skills Development was a program offered over five days at a private management retreat centre, more selectively offered, involving conflict resolution skills and strategies.

Both the courses included materials that covered learning objectives and content that was similar to those available at the University. Increasing Human Effectiveness (IHE) was similar in objectives and content to Communications 377 (Communication and Problem Solving in Groups).<sup>373</sup> IHE's objectives are as follows:

- Overcoming self-imposed limitations and realizing more of your potential.
- Building new, positive habit patterns.
- Approaching life on an "I want to" instead of an "I have to" basis.
- Satisfying and achieving personal, business, and family goals.
- Communicating effectively and improving relationships.
- Increasing self-confidence and overcoming fear of failure.
- Handling stress and pressure more effectively.

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<sup>373</sup>Document U11.



The outline for COMM 377 at the University was as follows:

COMM 377 is designed to help students improve their effectiveness in solving problems when working in groups of three or more people, skills that students can apply in their day-to-day work settings. This course is practical in orientation; it teaches students how to make meetings more effective and how to evaluate meetings and their own behaviour in them.

Outline:

- Unit 1 Introduction
- Unit 2 Preparatory Work
- Unit 3 What Makes Meetings Go Wrong
- Unit 4 Managing the Interpersonal Process
- Unit 5 Why Have Meetings
- Unit 6 Planning a Meeting
- Unit 7 Decision-making Styles
- Unit 8 Problem-solving Concepts and Procedures
- Unit 9 Can Meetings Be Made More Effective?
- Unit 10 Creativity
- Unit 11 Conflict and Conflict Resolution
- Unit 12 Leadership

The University courses were widely advertised and available, even to students who wished to take them while continuing to work. The courses were also available for

delivery as in-house courses and have been offered this way in the past. In spite of this wide availability, the Company made an explicit decision to develop and offer such courses in-house rather than to cooperate with public institutions. In fact, the Company has speculative plans to establish its own "Primus University," which would represent an attempt to integrate the various learning activities the Company delivers.<sup>374</sup> Similar initiatives have been established at Motorola, McDonald's, and other corporations.

The proprietary nature of the development and delivery of both courses at the Company contributed to the internal labour market by requiring that employees acquire their skills training in the context of the enterprise and not in the context of an external labour market. The courses as offered in the Company would have little currency in the external labour market. Thus, the behavioral traits that were intended to follow from the demonstration of the skills and knowledge that were the outcomes of the course were displaced by "synthetic" enterprise-specific skills. Behaviour and knowledge were identified and restated as a set of learning objectives and educational outcomes. These were transformed in the training and educational process at the Company into skills, but a particular kind of skills. They were skills that do not accrue to the student. Instead they remained part of the ownership of the Company, since no accreditation was awarded that would be recognized elsewhere. In fact, as mentioned, in the case of the

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<sup>374</sup>Interview with CS, 3 November 1995.

Interpersonal Skills Development, employees were encouraged not to reveal to anyone that they actually took the course.<sup>375</sup>

What is the University's role, if any, in the maintenance of internal labour markets? On the face of it, the University could have a role in providing workers and managers with an opportunity for challenge and accomplishment, through educational programs, without considering the option of moving to another firm. Beyond reducing the likelihood that employees would leave, such programs could also have the effect of reducing the desire for promotion within the Company by the challenge and accomplishment entailed by a course.

The possibility of university courses on their own providing increased job satisfaction is actually quite remote, according to the findings of Berg.<sup>376</sup> Berg finds in a survey of white-collar workers in the financial industry that educational achievement is inversely related to productivity, turnover, and absenteeism:

A search of the considerable literature on productivity, absenteeism, and turnover has yielded little concrete evidence of a positive relationship between workers' educational achievements and their performance records in many work settings in the private sector.<sup>377</sup>

Berg points out that increasing education levels are associated with increasing job expectations. Therefore, unless promotions to higher-skilled work occurred, workers

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<sup>375</sup>Interview with HJA, 15 June 1994.

<sup>376</sup>Ivar Berg, *Education and Jobs: The Great Training Robbery* (New York: Praeger), 1970.

<sup>377</sup>Berg, p. 104.

with increased education would become *less* satisfied with their work; lower productivity and a higher rate of turnover and absenteeism would follow.

#### THE CORE-PERIPHERY PATTERN IN BOTH SYSTEMS OF EDUCATIONAL PROVISION

While previously a core bureaucracy of training and development practitioners guided the development of educational opportunities for employees at the Company, the plan during the period of 1993 - 95 was to devolve educational professionals to the field level and to allocate resources from a central pool.<sup>378</sup> This was part of the process of reducing the staff complement at the Company by approximately 20 per cent from a total of some 2,000. Appendix 4 describes the formal strategy for this reduction. A core-periphery pattern emerged that separated the means of educational activities from the ends for those activities. The educational professional was given autonomy over the technical aspects of educational activities (when they would be delivered, the choice of delivery medium, and so on), but not over the goals or objectives to which those technical aspects were directed.

In response to both changing global trade patterns and new work processes that have been implemented in firms over the past 10 years, core-periphery-redundancy streams have been established at many organizations. Workplace education has been part of the new work processes that have characterized organizations in the 1990s. Forrester et al. point out that the changes in the division of labour that have seen the development of a centre-periphery structure of work have led to an emphasis on the

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<sup>378</sup>Documents C15, C16, and C19.

“flexibility of the workforce,” which in turn has been seen as a call for more training and development activities for workers.<sup>379</sup> As employee redundancies in production and service firms have been declared, the now-smaller group of workers is required to learn a wider range of skills. At the core of such firms, a permanent, full-time group of employees assigns, delegates, and devolves tasks to employees at the periphery. Educational activities in the workplace are seen as a means of dealing with the gap between the available number of workers and the range of tasks to be carried out.

Forrester et al. point out that “the threat of unemployment is a major incentive to workers to participate in non-mandatory education.”<sup>380</sup> They cite Murray, who suggests that at both the core and the periphery, flexibility is established as a requirement of working:

The flexibility required by new working methods is produced at the core by stability and at the periphery by instability.<sup>381</sup>

The flexibility that is an aim of the training and development activities in the workplace is regarded by Atkinson and Meager<sup>382</sup> as an *ideal type*. Three sorts of economic flexibility appear in this ideal type:

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<sup>379</sup>Keith Forrester and Kevin Ward, eds., *Unemployment, Education and Training: Case Studies from North America and Europe* (Sacramento, Cal.: Caddo Gap Press, Inc., 1991), p. 295.

<sup>380</sup>Forrester et al., p. 295.

<sup>381</sup>Murray, quoted in Forrester et al., p. 295.

<sup>382</sup>Quoted in Nigel Gilbert et al., *Fordism and Flexibility: Divisions and Change* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1992), p. 4.

- *numerical flexibility* - the ability to change the size of the workforce quickly and easily.
- *functional flexibility* - the ease with which workers may and can be redeployed.
- *financial and pay flexibility* - the capability to facilitate the first two points above.

Training and development activities may contribute to all three of these aspects of economic flexibility but in different ways.

In terms of *numerical flexibility*, the increases and decreases in the size of the workforce are not simply changes in the overall size of the workforce in a particular firm or industry. The centre/periphery structure allows for a shifting proportion of one group in relation to the other. Overall size of the workforce may remain the same. As the size of the core group decreases, the size of the periphery group will likely increase. Training has a function in this aspect of flexibility in that it is offered in the workplace to core, periphery, and redundant staff. Training schemes aimed at redundant staff, of the kind found at the Company, are particular to the North American context:

[W]hen there was a proliferation of Employee Development schemes in the USA in the late 1970s and early 1980s, there was implicit acknowledgement . . . that these schemes should involve *both* active employees *and* displaced workers. . . . By contrast, we have not found any examples in our empirical research in the UK of systematic schemes aimed at redundant or unemployed workers.<sup>383</sup>

At the Company, those moving from core to redundant are involved not only as recipients of training and development courses but are encouraged to become providers

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<sup>383</sup>Forrester et al., p. 296.

as well.<sup>384</sup> Instances of redundancy are presented as instances of moves from the core to the periphery. One of the purposes of training would thus be to allow staff in the periphery to move to the core.

For *functional flexibility*, the redeployment of staff, especially those in the core, is accomplished by two means. One is job enlargement by which an employee is simply given more duties. The other is task reassignment by which an employee loses one job and is given another. Educational activities function in both of these instances to offer something to the employee in exchange for acceptance of the change in the job. In other instances, as noted above, training is offered partly in exchange for redundancy. For the employee, training in exchange for enlargement or reassignment may be regarded as desirable by the employee partly because it is an alternative to redundancy and partly because it is seen as a means of strengthening her or his status in the job market.

For *financial and pay flexibility*, the core, periphery, and redundancy streams - and the relative desirability for most employees which declines in the order listed - provide a means by which financial and pay flexibility may be implemented. In the core, training may be used as an incentive. For training completed, the costs of the training may be reimbursed to the employee; or the employee may be eligible for bonus pay after completing certain courses. In the periphery, financial flexibility is reflected in the pay

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<sup>384</sup>HJA, himself an exiting employee, spent the last several months of his tenure at the company counselling other employees who were leaving. Interview with HJA, 15 June 1994, and Motherwell 1995.

structures, which are established by tying pay directly to tasks accomplished. This may be formalized in the awarding of separate contracts for tasks. Similarly, educational activities that are directly related to the completion of certain tasks may be provided or paid for by the employer for periphery employees. Educational activities in the workplace are thus a critical component of the emphasis on the “flexible firm” and by implication the “flexible worker.”

The Company used training as an explicit aspect of its strategy in developing the core-periphery structure. Four individuals are considered here for their experience in taking up “exit training,” or training for redundancy. The discussion here suggests that the use of training for exit purposes has an ambivalent function for employees, based partly on the gender of the employees. Two of the individuals, Grant and Harry, were interviewed by the researcher. Accounts of the experiences of the other two, Gail and Ann, were reported in respective newspaper articles, which formed the basis for the discussion here.

In the case of both of the women who left, funds were provided by the Company to start a small business in collaboration with their husbands. The women seemed to make the decision based on a family commitment. Gail took the maximum entrepreneurial funding provided by the Company of \$25,000 and, with her husband, started a tire



shop.<sup>385</sup> For Ann, the process was similar, with the funding provided by the Company used to begin a small business, in this case a travel company.<sup>386</sup>

On the other hand, in 1996 Grant left his home and family, which would join him later after the house was sold, and moved to another province, taking a pay cut in the process. In contrast with the two women, he seemed to see his decision as a personal one. He did not associate the decision with involving his family in a possible small business or consulting firm.

Harry seemed to see his decision in a similar light, expressing his exit as something affecting only his career and his life-fate: "What's interesting is that as secure as I feel about the decision, I still have got a certain amount of apprehension about the future."<sup>387</sup> Harry was considering completing graduate studies with the objective of starting a consulting company. He felt that a graduate degree would provide the educational qualification he needed to match the 17 years of experience he had with the Company. He had never completed an undergraduate degree but wanted to begin a graduate degree directly.<sup>388</sup> He would also spend a period of time counselling other staff at the Company who were leaving. The counselling work was for Harry a move to the periphery from which he intended to move to another periphery position, that of consultant.

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<sup>385</sup> Mel Duvall, "Severance Paved Way to Tire Business," *Edmonton Journal*, 15 August 1995.

<sup>386</sup> Cathryn Motherwell, "It's Tough Deciding Who Stays and Who Goes," *Globe and Mail*, 21 March 1995.

<sup>387</sup> Motherwell.

<sup>388</sup> Interview with HJA, 30 May 1994.

Grant, on the other hand, had only worked at the Company for five years. The uncertainty of working in the training area during the period of 1993 - 95 caused him anxiety and frustration, to the point that he was willing to take a cut in pay and a move to another city, simply to find another place to work. He left without any severance, though he felt he was entitled to it.<sup>389</sup> The formal strategy of reducing staff coupled with the abrupt and often unexplained changes in daily work practices had become, for him, unnerving. Towards the end of his employment at the Company, he said he felt as if he were working in a "cult."<sup>390</sup>

The entrepreneurial funding or educational grant required that the employee make a commitment to a new career path or lifestyle, and for many employees this was not an attractive option. The experience of the four exiting employees considered here suggests that employee preference for training will reflect their personal plans and such characteristics as gender and social class. It is not clear that employees see more education as being important to their finding another position outside the Company.

What of the University's role in developing the core-periphery structures at organizations? The University's students include both those who are in paid work and those who are not. For those in paid work, courses taken may be sponsored by the employer or they may not. The University's role in fostering the flexible firm and worker is thus ambivalent. On the one hand, it is not structured to respond immediately

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<sup>389</sup>Interview with GR, 8 June 1996.

<sup>390</sup>Interview with GR, 8 June 1996.

to the demands of employers for “workplace learning”; on the other hand, its high-volume orientation to development and production (see Chapter 6) tends to encourage the response to large groups of students. The University changed its structures in order to meet the demand by all three of the sources of demand: non-workplace education, sponsored workplace education, and unsponsored workplace education. The Company’s students are mainly involved in sponsored workplace education. This is education that is offered to core staff. Redundant staff may engage in nonsponsored workplace education in the sense that they take courses that are not prescribed or required by the Company but which may be part of the employee’s pathway to redundancy and thus may be reimbursed nonetheless.

#### ACCESSIBILITY AND THE INTENSIFICATION OF SPECIALIZATION AT THE UNIVERSITY

The University’s unicameral governance system has been noted to be unusual in Canada. The system vests in the Governing Council all ultimate authority for approving both operational and academic decisions. The University’s governance and professional model has been described as defining the academic staff member’s role as valorizing the academic function in the contexts of both internal and external debates about the status of the organization “as a university.” With the provincial government’s shift towards “accessibility” of educational institutions, the University’s structures allowed for a relatively quick response to new questions about the existence of the institution. This response contributed, in turn, to organizational survival during two periods of crisis.

The provincial government since 1993 released policy principles to guide the

restructuring of higher education. These principles were that

- accessibility of the higher system of education must be increased in order to allow for more participation of adults in education
- collaboration of public and private educational organizations was needed in order to reduce cost, increase the “flexibility” of educational programs, and ensure that programs were responsive to expressed employer and employee need
- a process of differentiation and specialization should occur in the higher educational system in conjunction with the move towards collaboration among educational institutions so that a more diverse range of educational choices were provided to students with fewer areas of program overlap among institutions
- to facilitate the above principles a process of reducing funds in the system would take place, with some of the reductions made available again in competitions among educational organizations.<sup>391</sup>

In pursuing these objectives, government would not directly control the nature or content of higher education. Instead, it would establish a competitive model in which it was envisaged that educational institutions would become more responsive to demands from employers and employees by “bidding” for funds to offer programs in a particular field. The state does not have to resort to direct control in influencing the governance of institutions of higher education, as an academic at the University noted:

You can retain control in part by the use of regulations and in telling institutions what their parameters and boundaries are. You can do so by the uses of [directed]

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<sup>391</sup>Document U3.

funding. . . . You can have the institution change course and take on other activities that it would not ordinarily do.<sup>392</sup>

The consumerist model encouraged the development of a proposal for an MBA program. Such a program could be established under a cost-recovery guarantee, in which the operations of the program would be fully recovered by tuition and other direct revenues.<sup>393</sup> The president of the University stated that if the MBA program could not be self-supporting it would be wound down. An expenditure of several million dollars was made for the start-up of the program was made, despite significant budget pressures on the institution, brought on in large part by a 31 per cent reduction in the University's operating revenues from government.

Objections by academic staff members to the establishment of the new program were based on the assumption that the consumerist model should apply and that the real problem with the MBA program was that tuition revenues would not likely cover the costs of the program. One academic staff member asked

If we're close to bankruptcy, what is the logic of launching a new program for which there's no evidence we're going to make any money?<sup>394</sup>

This criticism of the establishment of the program was based on the view that the MBA was not an appropriate program for the University to offer, but the appeal to close

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<sup>392</sup>Interview with SJ, 11 December 1995.

<sup>393</sup>Other programs at Athabasca University, and also at other universities in the province, typically recovered 20 per cent of their costs.

<sup>394</sup>*St. Albert Gazette*, "Long-Distance MBA Attacked."

the program was made based on the lack of demand, not on the academic merits of the program.

The Governing Council approved the offering of the MBA, along with a Master of Distance Education degree, both to be offered beginning in September 1994.<sup>395</sup> The MBA represented a specialized approach to curriculum, since the University did not have a traditional academic base for a program of this kind, that is, a faculty or school of business. A new organizational unit, the Centre for Innovative Management, was established which would operate independently of other University activities. It leased space located 140 km away from the central campus in Athabasca and obtained the right to use only those University services that it deemed appropriate. Only two full-time faculty were seconded from the University. The reporting relationship of the Centre was directly to the president of the University, while all other academic programs reported to the vice-president academic. By the end of 1995, the program had enrolled 154 students from across Canada, a level of enrollment that largely allayed the criticism that the program would not attract sufficient registrations to ensure that it supported itself financially.

Without the University's distinctive professional and governance model, the MBA could not conceivably have been established in the way it was. The unicameral system of governance allowed the Governing Council to approve the program, regardless of

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<sup>395</sup>The MDE program was structured in a way more similar to other existing programs at the University. It was housed in the main campus, did not claim to be self-supporting, and drew exclusively on existing University services for its operations.

academic opposition. Although the Academic Council (a sub-committee of Governing Council) approved the program, it had no power to disapprove it. The unusual reporting relationship and organizational structure of the Centre for Innovative Management was established with only a minimal allocation of full-time faculty. As the University experienced an organizational crisis in which its existence was again being threatened, the establishment of the MBA program functioned to demonstrate the system of educational provision's autonomy through a revisiting of the concept of the consumerist model. The principle that had been articulated in 1972 by T.C. Byrne in relation to the pilot project returned. The principle was that the University would serve student demand where it was to be found. For a second time, the Alberta government, in moving to close the University, reversed its direction in response to the system of educational provision's independent actions to develop the consumerist model of education.

#### A PROFESSIONAL AND GOVERNANCE MODEL COMPARABLE TO THE UNIVERSITY

In the previous section, it was argued that the University's particular professional and governance model allowed for the relatively quick establishment of a specialized curriculum and operational model. The distinctive professional and governance model at the University functioned to differentiate the "academic role" so that it was limited to the content of courses and programs, and the unicameral system allowed for an avoidance of significant debates about academic issues surrounding a program.

Until the period of 1993 - 95, the University focused on undergraduate

studies and, as discussed, was established to provide consumerist choices to students. A comparable Ontario system of educational provision was established only five years earlier than the University. The Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE), which focused on educational research projects and on graduate studies in education, was in the process of being merged with the University of Toronto, losing its status as a separate research institute, during the period of 1993 - 95. In September of 1996, OISE was in fact formally merged with the University of Toronto.

The differing historical outcomes associated with the two systems of educational provision followed in part from a different role for academic staff in the change process. This role was changed at OISE during 1993 - 95 in ways that were to influence its basic organizational structure - providing a different outcome than the one at Athabasca University. The change strategy was not fully cultural because an initiative drawing on the various aspects<sup>396</sup> of a cultural strategy were not used. However, the changes that were made to the role of academic staff, which called for a reconsideration of the staff member's relation to the organization, means that the strategy may be considered a quasi-cultural one.

Established in 1965, OISE was the organization that the Alberta government had been warned about at the time that it established the University (see Chapter 6). OISE was a developmental institute in the terms envisioned by T.C. Byrne. It was intended to provide an opportunity for systems of educational provision to emerge that would reflect

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<sup>396</sup>See the summary list of characterizing aspects of technical and cultural change strategies in Chapter 1.



new technologies and, to some extent, industrial research and development practices. Both OISE and the University have been degree-granting institutions, although in the case of OISE the degrees have been exclusively graduate degrees.

Until 1971, the University of Toronto's governing structure included a Board of Governors and an academic senate. Calls for reform of the governing structure, which included the contributions of the University of Toronto Faculty Association, resulted in the passage of legislation by the Ontario government in 1971 to create a unicameral governance structure.<sup>397</sup> This structure provided for 50 members of a Governing Council (the same appellation used at Athabasca): 24 laypeople (eight to be elected by alumni); 12 elected faculty members; eight elected students members; and six administrators, including the president and chancellor.<sup>398</sup> In the view of a historian of the faculty association,

[t]he Governing council . . . was not a unitary body combining a capacity for making intelligent academic decisions with expertise in dealing with financial decisions. It was, rather, a weakened, diluted, cumbersome Board of Governors. But if the Board of Governors had survived, however mutilated, in the new body, the old Senate had disappeared entirely, and Toronto was left the only major university in the English-speaking world in which the faculty had no dominant voice in making purely academic decisions.<sup>399</sup>

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<sup>397</sup>The fact that Athabasca University, also fitted with a unicameral governance system, was that year being established should be considered in the context of the mutual influence of two of Canada's English-speaking provinces. This mutual influence was first discussed in Chapter 6, in which it was noted that the Alberta government had shut down the Human Resources Research Council, at least in part because of the Alberta premier's heeding of the Ontario premier's advice concerning autonomous research institutions such as the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education.

<sup>398</sup>William H. Nelson, *The Search for Faculty Power: The University of Toronto Faculty Association, 1942 - 1992* (Toronto: University of Toronto Faculty Association and the Canadian Scholars' Press, 1993), p. 53.

<sup>399</sup>Nelson 1993, p. 55.

The unicameral governance system at the University of Toronto came to include committees of the Governing Council on which academic staff served. These committees included the Academic Board, the Committee on Academic Policy and Programs, and the Academic Appeals Committee.<sup>400</sup> As at Athabasca University, the governing principle was that academic decisions would be delegated at the discretion of the Governing Council.

While Athabasca University maintained its focus on innovation from the time that it was established, OISE retained more distinctly many of the characteristics usually associated with traditional universities. For example, OISE emphasized the research function for faculty - at least to the extent that such an emphasis would be apparent at most other Canadian universities - while Athabasca consistently downplayed this aspect of its activities.<sup>401</sup> However, without the channels for direct development and experimentation that characterized the University's operations the Institute was subject to debates about its legitimation practices. Indeed, it continually engaged in such debates through the research and graduate teaching in which it specialized as an organization, debates which, as has been noted, the University avoided. Without the full mandate actually to deliver courses and programs in a non-traditional fashion, OISE devoted its resources to research and debate about such issues.

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<sup>400</sup>*Response to Renewal, 1987* (Toronto: University of Toronto, 1988).

<sup>401</sup>The emphasis on teaching rather than research was explicitly stated in each of the four Orders in Council creating and restructuring Athabasca University.

There were two historical points at which the provincial government moved to amalgamate OISE with the University of Toronto, once in 1987 under a Liberal (Peterson) government and again in 1991 under the New Democratic (Rae) government. According to a respondent at OISE, the educational elites that had mobilized opposition to the amalgamation in 1987 (the teachers' unions and the school boards, for example, but also OISE department chairs) did not express publicly their opposition in 1991. For the faculty members' part, according to the respondent, the exclusive access to education research funding that OISE had enjoyed for the first decade or so of its existence had been removed by government, to be replaced by a competitive model for allocating such funds. For faculty, the amalgamation seemed to be viewed as inevitable and not representing a change for their responsibilities as teachers or researchers:

In 1991 and 1992 there was simply no serious objection. There was a lot of personal grumbling, but there was no mass program to attempt to change government's mind.<sup>402</sup>

The respondent also stated that by 1991 the focus of the Institute had already shifted its balance from research to teaching to reflect the arrangements at most other Canadian universities. This arrangement was characterized by a three-part set of responsibilities related to research, teaching, and public service. By 1991, rewards for faculty were based more on teaching than on research than they had been in the past.

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<sup>402</sup>Interview with TA, 7 November 1996.

The change process at OISE, by 1993 - 95, was therefore one in which faculty members were in some respects indifferent to the outcome of change. This is not to underestimate the feelings expressed by faculty contemplating the merger. However, as one faculty member put it, the views expressed that were oppositional to the amalgamation were cast in the context of an overall shrinking of budgets allocated provincially for higher education:

Most people resisted [the amalgamation] at the time. In retrospect, I think many people have realized that OISE under the Conservative government may have been closed were it not for the merger. It was an ironic salvation in many ways.<sup>403</sup>

The reward system at OISE had been altered several years before amalgamation to ensure that teaching was an important basis for staff promotion. A move towards having a more traditional faculty structure within a larger university carried with it less of a threat to academic autonomy, for example, than it might have carried otherwise. OISE's administration, with the tacit approval of faculty, eventually acquiesced in the provincial government's directive to amalgamate with the University of Toronto:

The [Minister of Education] for the Rae government called the director of the Institute and the president of the University of Toronto to his office and indicated to them that he wanted letters from them inviting him to [amalgamate the organizations].<sup>404</sup>

It is true that the financial solvency of OISE was a factor in persuading the administration to accept the directive to amalgamate:

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<sup>403</sup>Interview with PRO.

When the [Minister of Education] spoke to the then-director of the Institute, he simply pointed out flatly that a debt incurred by the University of Toronto was a debt belonging to the University of Toronto, but a debt incurred by the OISE was a debt of the government of Ontario. He was in no position to allow an agency that was directly within his authority to incur such a deficit.<sup>405</sup>

However, faculty members, according to the respondent, did not resist the directive to merge:

When the 1991 threat came, there was really no manifestation of that vigour at all. Maybe people by then were just tired. . . .<sup>406</sup>

The Governing Council at the University of Toronto held the ultimate power to dissolve or otherwise restructure OISE. As a larger institution, the University of Toronto spent more time (a period of years rather than months) in restructuring its operations than was the case at Athabasca University. When the amalgamation came, for example, approximately 100 staff members took early retirement or separation.<sup>407</sup> In terms of numbers of staff, this number would have almost eliminated the faculty complement at Athabasca University.

The professional role of faculty members at OISE had in the years leading up to the period of 1993 - 95 been adapted to resemble more closely the balance of research and teaching at other Canadian universities. It was this “normalizing” of academic roles that

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<sup>404</sup>Interview with TA, 7 November 1996.

<sup>405</sup>Interview with TA, 7 November 1996.

<sup>406</sup>Interview with TA, 7 November 1996.

<sup>407</sup>Interview with ADO.

can be considered to have been important in smoothing the way to amalgamation. One senior administrator, for example, referred to OISE's capability after the amalgamation to rely on the University of Toronto to carry out fundraising more effectively:

The president spends most of his time in government relations and on the fundraising stuff. He will go out with the deans when they're tapping someone for a million bucks. The president will be there, too, entertaining at lunch. There's a major push in that area, and for us that's been wonderful. . . . I went [with another administrator] to meet with someone who was tapping someone for money. I got this whole dossier on the individual: his wife's interests, his interests, where his kids went to school. That's something we were never able to do. It's just fabulous. So now, one of the advantages for us [after amalgamation] is access to this incredible infrastructure.<sup>408</sup>

At Athabasca University, on the other hand, the administration directly resisted such a directive, agreeing to reduce the University's budget dramatically in exchange for the institution's continued existence.<sup>409</sup> Faculty, on the other hand, were ambivalent, with some advocating that a merger with the University of Alberta would have a beneficial effect for faculty and others expressing resistance.<sup>410</sup>

The consumerist model on which the University was based is therefore associated with a historical outcome that differs from that of OISE. The two educational institutions had similar mandates, both calling for educational innovation and

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<sup>408</sup>Interview with ADO.

<sup>409</sup>This view of events has been confirmed by a number of sources, including staff at a faculty association and one informant who was a senior manager within the Department of Advanced Education and Career Development.

<sup>410</sup>As faculty association president at the time, the researcher gathered this perspective in his day-to-day interactions with faculty.

development. Both were independent organizations staffed by academic staff appointed under similar professional contracts. Financial exigency was pressed on both systems of educational provision and in the context of a governance structure in which significant power to make operational changes was held outside the bounds of the influence of academic staff. While Athabasca University's trajectory during 1993 - 95 may be described as "extending innovation," OISE's was characterized by "returning to base."

Athabasca University during the period of 1993 - 95 demonstrated its capability of further strengthening the consumerist model. This model had been established in 1970 - 75 and was described in Chapter 6 as being characterized by the following:

Needs of society conflated with self-identified needs of students  
 Cost borne by the student, with some support from society (consumption)  
 Universities regulated by governments but operating in a market  
 Universities part of an integrated higher education system

These characteristics were discussed in that chapter in terms of the influence of bureaucratic elites in shaping the consumerist model, the distinctive structures of governance as it affected the role of teachers, and the actions made possible for citizens and students "as consumers" within the consumerist model. During 1993 - 95, the University did not reduce the degree to which consumerism characterized its operations and development. In fact, it set up a separate organizational entity to allow for the rapid development of the MBA program. As will be discussed in a subsequent section of this

chapter, the strategic choice made by the University in this regard was similar to the one made by a comparable Alberta company, Transcontinental Pipe Line. Athabasca University came to resemble in more detail the original consumerist model on which it was established.

OISE, on the other hand, became another organizational unit of a large Canadian university, thereby losing a significant degree of relative autonomy. It amalgamated with a larger institution as part of a process of normalizing its activities. The professional change to academic responsibilities (the increased emphasis on rewarding teaching in a manner similar to other universities) functioned to assimilate academic staff to their prospective new home within the University of Toronto. This was a quasi-cultural change for those working in OISE. The change strategy *did not exclude* technical change of the kind carried out at Athabasca University, as an OISE administrator pointed out:

We're hoping that we can make technology and library - knowledge publication, knowledge dissemination, knowledge acquisition- really key within our research activities, in our program activities. We have a fair number of our faculty who are prominent in a major research initiative across Canada, called the Tele-Learning Research Network. We have four or five of the key researchers on that based here. We're actually spending money creating technology labs, and trying to go into growth areas.<sup>411</sup>

However, the amalgamation with the University of Toronto did not depend on this initiative or on initiatives of this kind, and in fact "four or five" researchers is a small percentage of the faculty complement in a unit the size of OISE. Furthermore, this

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<sup>411</sup>Interview with ADO.



direction seems to have emerged most fully after the amalgamation took place, confirming the difference with Athabasca University, in which a similar direction was used to forestall closure.

The quasi-cultural strategy adopted by OISE did not involve questioning the cultural beliefs of organizational members, but it had a significant effect in terms of the possibility for debates about legitimization of educational practices.<sup>412</sup> With a more conventional balance between rewards for research on the one hand and rewards for teaching on the other, the change redirected OISE's trajectory towards that of a traditional university department and away from organizational innovations, such as the ones observed at both Athabasca University and, to be noted, Transcontinental Pipe Line Company.<sup>413</sup>

#### FLEXIBILITY AND THE "DISAPPEARANCE" OF SPECIALIZATION AT THE COMPANY

During the period of change, the expressed management view at the Company of the appropriate content of educational activities shifted to take up the terms of the "flexible worker." The notion of a flexible worker was invoked in discussing the process by which some employees would stay and leave, with the flexible workers staying.

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<sup>412</sup>According to ADO, the fundraising objective of obtaining endowed chairs and support for students, which would now become easier to reach within an amalgamated unit, were an important benefit of the amalgamation. The change in what the endowed chairs and support for students would now be used in aid of, in terms of which academic programs, seemed to be a secondary concern. As noted in the quotation used previously, the move towards the application of technology for the delivery of programs (Tele-learning, technology labs, and so on) would be a likely candidate for the new financial resources.

<sup>413</sup>The change strategies and the associated outcomes in terms of relative autonomy of the system of educational provision for the original two cases as well as two further comparisons are summarized in Table 10, which appears later in the chapter.

Marshall McLuhan associated flexibility in the workplace with the rise of electronic methods of communication. He described modern communications as having a “tribalizing” influence. His observations were part of a commentary on the “corporatization” of society, in which the number of “tribes” is greater than the number of nation-states. In such a society, citizens are sometimes called shareholders<sup>414</sup> and Greif’s “high information investment” is renewed in value.<sup>415</sup> Following this notion of the tribalizing effect of media, McLuhan associated the advent of automation in industry with the “disappearance” of specialized training and education. Specialization “dissolves” as information retrieval allows subjects to be explored in depth. For the student, the interconnections among subjects and disciplines are constantly examined as they are explored in depth with the support of information-retrieval and information-management facilities:

One-room schools, with all subjects being taught to all grades at the same time, simply dissolve when better transportation permits specialized spaces and specialized teaching. At the extreme of speeded-up movement, however, specialism of space and subject disappears once more. With automation, it is not only jobs that disappear, and complex roles that reappear. Centuries of specialist stress in pedagogy and in the arrangement of data now end with the instantaneous retrieval of information made possible by electricity. Automation is information and it not only ends jobs in the world of work, it ends subjects in the world of learning. It does not

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<sup>414</sup>A biographical point to note here is that Ernest Manning, the premier of Alberta between 1943 and 1968 continually referred to the citizens of the province as “shareholders.” This language was reflected in his approach to creating the company, with its protection against monopsony built into the structure of the representation on the board of directors. Preston Manning, his son, was involved in the original Athabasca University proposal and the operations of the company, as mentioned in a previous chapter.

<sup>415</sup>See the discussion of Greif’s “information investment” earlier in this chapter. The term *information investment* is used by Greif to refer to that characteristic of a society’s communication patterns by which individualism may be assessed. High information investment is characteristic of collectivistic societies, low information investment of individualistic societies.

end the world of learning. The future of work consists of learning a living in the automation age.<sup>416</sup>

This “disappearance” of specialization was reflected in the articulations of top management at the Company when they exhorted employees to create a “learning organization.”<sup>417</sup> A consultant working at the Company referred to a change in the way learning should occur, using with the image of “learning to ride a bicycle,” which is an integral, tactile process:

Training as we have known it may no longer be the best means for providing learning opportunities. . . . This is not a program. Being a Learning Organization is understanding that learning is an ongoing process and an integral part of how people function in the company.<sup>418</sup>

“Training as we have known it” was presumably intended by management to become “training as we have *not* known it.” The consultant was articulating the desirability of significant change in the way educational activities were conceived of. The president of a subsidiary of Primus underlined this statement in a significant quotation in which he described a future in which a “new” employee emerges:

When the whole organization is aware of our objectives, disciplined and truly engaged, we can say we are a Learning Organization.<sup>419</sup>

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<sup>416</sup>Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man* (New York: Signet Books, 1964), pp. 300-01.

<sup>417</sup> Document C3 (4, 1, p. 7).

<sup>418</sup>Document C34 (4,1, p. 7).

<sup>419</sup>Document C3 (4, 1, p. 7).

The importance of this quotation will be considered in two ways in this section. First, the quotation prescribes a particular kind of work life. Such a work life calls for a collectivist approach to social and economic relations, and this is at odds with prevailing relations in the social milieu in which the company operated. Second, it makes indirect reference to the changing power relations between speaker (executive) and audience (staff members). The executive is emerging here as a teacher, and the implications of this are considered below to be related to the vestiges of aristocratic prowess that are theorized by Bourdieu and Thorstein Veblen.

First, the type of *work life* that is implied. The vision expressed is one of holism (albeit a “synthetic” variety, since employees continued to have a social life outside the Company) and involvement for workers. McLuhan’s characterization of this kind of “organic learning” in the organization is as a kind of “leisure,” which dovetails with the “bicycling” image above:

As the age of information demands the simultaneous use of all our faculties, we discover that we are most at leisure when we are most intensely involved, very much as with the artists in all ages.<sup>420</sup>

The management of the Company therefore expressed the desirability of a kind of learning in which specialization was de-emphasized in favour of an integral approach. Such an approach required an “information investment” that would move the Company away from individualistic cultural beliefs. The electronic media that provide efficient

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<sup>420</sup>McLuhan 1964, p. 301

access to information have a role in giving rise to cultural beliefs - or at least to their promulgation - that are at odds with the cultural beliefs of the larger society. Or they presage the cultural beliefs that increasingly characterize the larger society.<sup>421</sup> The Company's intended modified cultural belief system was presented in the language of holism and integration, but the enactment of such a system would separate organizational members from the beliefs of the society.

The kind of cultural beliefs that would underlie such a shift would be in contrast to the cultural beliefs of the society, that is, the beliefs that gave rise to the organization and that continue to sustain its operations. The beliefs to which Macpherson referred were of small producers finding a common interest in cooperating towards the goal of modifying democratic processes. In the province-building ideology of Richards and Pratt these beliefs became associated with white-collar workers whose interest was in encouraging domestic economic opportunities, partly through the expansion of educational opportunity. The Company's program for a change in cultural beliefs would subsume the individual's search for common interests under a higher priority of interests, to be defined by the organization.

The contradictions between the prescribed work life described in the quotation above and the dominant cultural beliefs in the society were evidently not clear to managers and executives as they embarked on their cultural change strategy. As the

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<sup>421</sup>This notion of organizational innovation providing the route "from the inside" for shifts in cultural beliefs would be in reverse to the approach taken by Greif (1994), whose argument is that cultural beliefs function as an important sustaining and initiating influence on Western industrial development.

change process was being announced at the Company, the chief executive officer explained to a newspaper reporter that the scope of change at the Company was, in his significant experience and knowledge, unprecedented. The CEO stated, that “this decentralization goes beyond anything [he had] ever participated in my business career prior to this.”<sup>422</sup> The outcome of the change strategy to decentralize and to reduce staff as it was launched was therefore unknown. The incentives for staff to leave, as suggested by the account of the four discussed earlier in this chapter, had an unexpected uptake. The incentives to change career or life paths were regarded ambivalently by actors, although they were accepted by these and other staff. The training network that was envisioned did not establish itself in the period in which it was planned to do.<sup>423</sup> The scope of the change was broad and the influences on the organization were broad, but if the real objective was to reduce costs that objective was reached, with the Company reducing costs and posting a record profit in 1995.<sup>424</sup>

Second, the *power relations* that are implied in the quotation. Bourdieu's notion of symbolic violence may be considered here. For Bourdieu, education functions as a cultural means by which power is legitimated. Systems of educational provision constitute a particularly fruitful area of social research on the workings of power because

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<sup>422</sup>Enchin 1991.

<sup>423</sup>Interview with CS, 22 January 1996.

<sup>424</sup>*Edmonton Journal*, 31 January 1996.

[a]ll pedagogic action . . . is, objectively, symbolic violence insofar as it is the imposition of a cultural arbitrary by an arbitrary power.<sup>425</sup>

The “cultural arbitrary,” in this case the consumerist model of education at the University and the Company’s status as a private monopoly, were created to function within a set of historical conditions, which were described in previous chapters. There are also “transhistorical demands” described by Bourdieu that offer a means of, if not of observing habitus directly, at least regarding it indirectly. Bourdieu describes a French example within education:

[T]o see a mere vestige of the “aristocratic cult of prowess” in the charismatic ideology of “giftedness” and virtuosity so widespread in France, among students and teachers alike, prevents one from seeing that in its academic form this ideology . . . constitutes one of the possible ways . . . of securing recognition of the legitimacy of pedagogic action, in and through pedagogic action itself.<sup>426</sup>

Bourdieu proposes that pedagogic action<sup>427</sup> is itself used to assure pedagogic authority, a tautological process. The particular example he uses is drawn from an expression of habitus that may be traced back several centuries, dealing as it does with aristocratic manners. Bourdieu is drawing here on Veblen’s theory of the leisure class, which was first published in 1899.<sup>428</sup> For Veblen, the predatory culture of medieval

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<sup>425</sup>Pierre Bourdieu and Jean-Claude Passeron, *Reproduction*, translated from the French by Richard Nice (London: Sage, 1977), p. 5. See as well Pierre Bourdieu, *The State Nobility: Elite Schools in the Field of Power*, translated by Laetitia C. Clough (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996).

<sup>426</sup>Bourdieu and Passeron 1977, p. 188.

<sup>427</sup>For Bourdieu, “all pedagogic action . . . is, objectively, symbolic violence insofar as it is the imposition of a cultural arbitrary by an arbitrary power” (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977, p. 5).

<sup>428</sup>Thorstein Veblen, *The Theory of the Leisure Class: An Economic Study of Institutions*, with a foreword by Stuart Chase (New York: The Modern Library, 1934).

feudalism may be observed in modern business institutions and in social conventions. A leisure class emerged historically coincident with the beginning of ownership,<sup>429</sup> and an important means by which the leisure class maintains its dominance is through what Veblen called “conspicuous leisure” and “conspicuous consumption.” These represented the practices of the most wealthy and powerful in society. In order to delineate its social role, the leisure class not only avoided personal involvement in productive activity, but did so as part of a public display whose effect was to assign individuals symbolically to lower ranks of social status and employment. The practices reflected the “modern survivals of prowess,” which Veblen suggested were to be observed most notably in sport and religion.<sup>430</sup>

The “aristocratic cult of prowess” to which Bourdieu refers may be applied to the Company’s use of educational activities in response to the organizational changes that were initiated. The pedagogic authority of managers at the Company was undercut by the dramatic reductions in staff that were to take place. *Educational activities functioned as a primary site for re-establishing that authority as other than directly coercive.* By attempting to shift from a set of cultural beliefs of individualism to those of collectivism, the “feel for the game” (a phrase used by Bourdieu to refer to habitus) was that appealing to the admiration of the group for acts of prowess would be as attractive to group members as appealing to the wisdom and relative autonomy of the collective.

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<sup>429</sup>Veblen 1934, p. 22.



The executive stated in the quotation above that the staff members should look forward to the stage “[w]hen the whole organization is aware of our objectives, disciplined and truly engaged.” This is a call to arms of a sort, a “team-based” approach to leadership. Yet it does not call for the dousing of competing views in the organization or of outside competitors. Instead, it calls for a collective resolve, and in this it is most opposed to the individualistic values that characterize the larger society. For Veblen, the turn to an appeal to collective values while maintaining the “barbarian” vestiges of prowess is contradictory:

The two barbarian traits, ferocity and astuteness, go to make up the predaceous temper or spiritual attitude. They are the expressions of a narrowly self-regarding habit of mind. Both are highly serviceable for individual expediency in a life looking to invidious success. Both also have a high aesthetic value. Both are fostered by the pecuniary culture. But both alike are of no use for the purposes of the collective life.<sup>431</sup>

The cultural strategy adopted by the Company, while calling for collectivist beliefs, was in fact carried out by a small number of individuals. By expressing a “new” set of beliefs that was contradictory of those in the larger society, the focus of debate was shifted from the legitimacy of the staff reductions to the prowess of those who would stay behind. Managers emerged as teachers, providing employees with a guide to the difficulties the organization was to face. Considered in this way, the strategy was pointedly individualistic, while having as its object a set of collectivist beliefs. The

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<sup>430</sup>On the relations among higher education, religion, and sport, Veblen (1934) writes, “The religious zeal which pervades much of the college sporting element is especially prone to express itself in an unquestioning devoutness and a naïve and complacent submission to an inscrutable Providence” (p. 299).

<sup>431</sup>Veblen 1934, p. 275.

strategy appealed finally to the rational beliefs of staff members concerning maximizing individual benefit rather than to cultural norms of a community of interests.

If the phenomenon of the transhistorical expression of prowess existed within the Company, the potential for it to emerge at the University existed as well. The relative autonomy of the University as described in this chapter accounts for the institution's capability of devising a change strategy that avoided a debate regarding legitimization of educational practice. Following in its history as a system of educational provision characterized by development and innovation, the University focused on subtly adapting its mandate and revising its practices.

#### ORGANIZATIONAL TRANSFORMATION AT A COMPANY COMPARABLE TO PRIMUS

The cultural beliefs at the Company were in the period of change intended by managers and executives to shift in the direction of collectivism as regards work processes and a decentralized approach to operations. A comparison with another company in the same sector demonstrates that such a shift was not the only choice for management at the Company. The Transcontinental Pipe Line Company, an organization with a parallel history to that of the Primus in terms of operations, experienced continued growth and stability as it avoided reducing staff dramatically during 1993 - 95. Transcontinental was established at approximately the same time as Primus. Its development, like that of Primus, has been associated as well with the development of the oil industry in Alberta. In 1995, it owned and operated

more than 7,000 miles of pipeline in North America and had a staff of some 4,000 in Canada and the U.S.

Two significant differences to be noted with regard to Primus is that Transcontinental, while having its operations based in Alberta, is not an Alberta-owned company and it did not emerge within the region in the way that the case Company did. It was a publicly held corporation since its inception, then traded on the Toronto Stock Exchange, and was therefore indirectly influenced by the province-building strategy discussed. Its creation was provided for in federal, not provincial, regulation and legislation. It continues to be regulated federally by the National Energy Board. The second difference is that Transcontinental ships liquid oil, not gas. It does not compete directly with the Primus, though it acquired a large natural gas utility in the early 1990s as part of its diversification efforts. However, the influence of internationalization was similar to that observed in the Company, with Transcontinental seeking to export its expertise in the construction and maintenance of pipelines to other countries that were developing their oil and gas industries. Furthermore, with reduced regulation within the province of Alberta, Transcontinental will likely begin to compete with Primus to transmit natural gas within the province.

During 1993 - 95, changes to the way training activities were to be developed and delivered took place at Transcontinental, in association with company-wide changes to organizational structures and practices. Training activities were to be provided from a newly created company, Transcontinental Pipe Line Technology, which would sell

educational products (electronic disks, software, consulting services, and so on) to other companies in the industry, especially those in southern Ontario initially but increasingly to companies abroad, such as Malaysia and Brazil. With the appointment of a new president and CEO in 1991, the focus of the company shifted more explicitly to the international markets, with a management strategy associated with the maturing of the pipeline industry, similar to the one that emerged within Primus. This strategy identified alternative energy sources and competing international producers as posing a competitive challenge to the company. A Continuous Improvement Initiative was incorporated in 1992 with the intention to

clarify customer needs and empower employees to continuously improve the level of service provided, while maximizing efficiency.<sup>432</sup>

Training programs and other proprietary company expertise to be “exported” were a means by which the company’s services and expertise could be made known to prospective joint venture partners, according to one staff member. Referring to the parent company’s relationship to the subsidiary company, he described the message given from the parent company to the newly created subsidiary:

You lose money there, but you open the door. We can move in and recover that money. On the other hand, they don’t fine us for making a profit.<sup>433</sup>

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<sup>432</sup>Transcontinental Pipe Line Company’s Annual Report of 1992, p. 5.

<sup>433</sup>Interview with LW, 6 November 1996.

The training subsidiary was viewed by members of the parent company with some trepidation, according to this respondent, partly because of the developmental funds available to staff.<sup>434</sup> The new company has a relatively larger travel budget, which in some organizations is regarded as a perquisite:

We seem to be isolated from [people in] the rest of the tower. I think that is changing. People understand better what we do. We've also been able to show that we're not a bunch of people who waste their time, that we do produce something, and that we do provide a service, and that there's a value to what we do.<sup>435</sup>

The new training company represented the shift from an engineering organizational culture, in which expertise was shared and developed collegially, to one involving a more direct marketing of that expertise. This shift was reflected in a training session for a group of Korean clients in the summer of 1996.<sup>436</sup> Engineers from the parent company were invited to present training sessions to the clients that were organized by the training company. Engineers resisted the assignment, and in one case the staff member was formally directed to participate.

Staff at the training subsidiary were appointed on a basis that allowed for less security for the employee, with a core-periphery structure apparent. Of a total of 12 employees at the training company, only four were permanent staff drawn both from the

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<sup>434</sup>The respondent in the parent company declined to comment on this directly. He did suggest that he sometimes found it necessary to spend time persuading managers that the in-house design and development of training activities was a worthwhile activity. Interview with MC, 13 November 1996.

<sup>435</sup>Interview with LW, 6 November 1996.

<sup>436</sup>Interview with LW, 6 November 1996.

parent company and from outside.<sup>437</sup> Private contractors were used extensively for the production of multimedia and other computer work.

Change in Transcontinental processes and systems was allowed for in a program of technical, not cultural, change. Absent from communication between management and employees was the imagery of the learning organization or of the need for flexible workers or of disciplined, committed workers. Instead, the training subsidiary was established as a “hothouse” in which organizational innovation would be tested before application in the larger company.

The creation of the training company was similar in important respects to the creation of the organizational unit at the University that began offering the MBA program in 1994, the Centre for Innovative Management. In both instances, an organizational unit was established whose staff members were to be appointed on a different basis than the one characterizing the organization’s traditional practice. The new staff were generally seconded, part-time, contracted, or term. For each of these “hothouses,” the unit was seen as being somewhat privileged by those in the parent organization, though the individual security enjoyed by employees in the new unit was distinctly reduced by the peripheral (as opposed to central) nature of their appointment. The new unit’s creation in both cases was related to a renewed focus within the organization on internationalization and an enhanced marketing program for the services or products offered.

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<sup>437</sup>Interview with LW, 6 November 1996.

In both subsidiary organizations, the explicit strategy was that the unit would be self-supporting financially. However, at both the University and at Transcontinental it was unclear that this would actually happen. The respondent at the subsidiary organization said, "We can take a beating as long as [what we're doing] can be defended strategically."<sup>438</sup>

The technical change strategy at both the University and Transcontinental was carried out by creating a kind of laboratory within which changes in method could be developed and tested. These changes would have the intention of eventually affecting not only the work of the parent organization, but that of the subsidiary organization.

It was argued that Primus reached a limit in its application of technology and that this helped to account for the choice of a cultural strategy. Yet at Transcontinental, the application of technology had reached similar limits, yet it embarked on a pathway of technical change. Eventually, some changes were intended to be applied within the parent organization. A technical strategy of change within a system of educational provision may be regarded as an incremental process of adapting or revising work practices without questioning or redefining the cultural beliefs of individualism that provide the basis for the ideologies of legitimation for educational practices.

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<sup>438</sup>A respondent from the parent company suggested that the performance expectation within the new training company was somewhat stricter, and that unless the unit made a profit it would likely be disestablished (Interview with CM, 13 November 1996).

## CONCLUSION

With a common socio-cultural environment of individualism, the period of 1993 - 95 was characterized at the organizational level by an intended shift using a cultural strategy at the company and a technical strategy at the University. Table 10 summarizes the change strategies used at the University and the company, comparing these with the strategies used at OISE and Transcontinental Pipe.

SYSTEM OF EDUCATIONAL PROVISION	TYPE OF CHANGE STRATEGY	ORGANIZATIONAL OUTCOME
Athabasca University	Technical	Maintained relative autonomy - subsidiary created
Ontario Institute for Studies in Education	Quasi-cultural	Relative autonomy reduced
Primus Training Department	Cultural	Relative autonomy reduced
Transcontinental Pipe Line Training Department	Technical	Maintained relative autonomy - subsidiary created

■ *Table 10: Change Strategies and Outcomes at Four Organizations*

While an individualistic ethos could be encouraged at the University through the increasing attention to the notion of the consumer-student, such a trend at the Company would undermine the corporate strategy of:

- a) more information sharing (information investment). The “People Leadership Program” at the company<sup>439</sup> called for employees to ensure that they “give and receive positive and constructive feedback.”

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<sup>439</sup>Document C34.



- b) self-monitoring by employees.<sup>440</sup> Self-management is parallel to the self-correcting values of collectivism in which one is responsible for one's own behaviour but partly as well for preventing others from transgressing norms. Greif refers to this as

the basic value of mutual responsibility among . . . members of that society. . . . [M]embers . . . share the fundamental duty not only to practice good but also to ensure that others do not practice sin.<sup>441</sup>

- c) semi-autonomous work groups and teams. The "People Leadership Program" at the company called for employees to "[a]ssess 'how' a group is working together and learn to positively influence the process."<sup>442</sup>
- d) increasingly specialized functions throughout the Company. The list of technical training courses to be offered in 1994 contains some 1,500 different courses to be offered.<sup>443</sup>

During the period of change, then, internationalization of the market and a decreased emphasis on the domestic economy were associated with a change strategy that required support from sources other than the domestic economy (previously the rising middle class). This support was sought through the ideological appeal to (a) the consumerist model for the delivery of social and economic goods, and (b) to the historical pattern of the need for regional coordination and control for the optimization of resource rents, especially through the promotion of an export economy.

The call for "more education" for citizens was to be observed in both the University and the Company. During 1970 - 75, the University began advocating the principle of

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<sup>440</sup>See the Self Management by Objectives program at the company, Document C8, back page.

<sup>441</sup>Greif, pp. 922-23.

<sup>442</sup>Document C34.

<sup>443</sup>Document C13.

increased access to educational activities, which was paired with the principle of innovation of development and delivery of courses and programs. During the period of 1993 - 95, it was government that echoed the call for more access, but now redefined it in terms of increasing the number of graduates and course completions. The Company symbolically called for enhanced access to educational activities by defining these activities as a cultural process of social integration but was not directly concerned with access because of its captive market of students.

The University's administration would have preferred to carry out a cultural change but found that this was not possible. The holders of cultural capital within the institution (faculty, students, as well as those commenting from outside the institution and who held such capital) eventually saw the emergence of a technical change strategy as one that would not be inimicable to their interests. The subsidiary organization used to market and deliver the MBA program became a kind of "flagship program" for the University, with increasing numbers of Canadians recognizing the "electronic MBA" and associating it almost exclusively with Athabasca University and the University with the MBA. The outgoing president had set up an organizational unit that would operate separately but could well have an influence, over time, on the rest of the University's operations.

As in 1970 - 75, then, it is argued that in 1993 - 95 the influence of agency and ideology were complementary. The changing ideas within the society created a legitimate space within which the University's president could plan for and carry out

certain actions. These actions were limited in part by his command over cultural capital. As a former university teacher and as the “chief executive officer,” his ability to propose and carry out a limited number of initiatives was assured. However, even within the ideological shift to the regulation state, the cultural market continued to assign to holders of cultural capital the influence to contain the actions of those holding economic capital.

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## CHAPTER 8: SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

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In this chapter, a summary is provided of the main themes developed in the research.

First, a summary of the main conclusions of the thesis is discussed, in which the research issues of social origin and relative autonomy of the systems of educational provision are reviewed. Here, the focus is on recapitulating the following key conclusions of the study:

- the common elements in the social origin of the University and the Company;
- the significance for the organizations of the shift in state priorities from allocation to production and from production to regulation;
- the differing preferences for change strategy taken by the two organizations following from this shift in state priorities; and
- the ideological and strategic aspects of the consumerist model of education in relation to the social origin and relative autonomy of the University.

Second, four sensitizing topics are discussed, two each under the headings of the research issues of social origin and relative autonomy. Throughout the chapter, footnote references are made to secondary sources previously quoted.

### SUMMARY OF CONCLUSIONS

The study has argued that the University was established within more than one field of power. The actors involved in establishing the University had a “feel for

the game” and a “collective belief in the game,”<sup>444</sup> and this was the mode in which the threatened organizational concept of Athabasca University of 1970 was adapted to become a viable concept by 1974. The higher educational field of power shows the policy considerations that gave rise to the establishment of the University within the higher education field of power. A more comprehensive account has shown as well the relations of the University to other organizations and institutions within the same regional political economy. By considering multiple fields of power, the University and Primus may be considered as parallel institutions in their role as tools of the state in enhancing provincial power within federalism.<sup>445</sup>

The establishment of the University and the Company, by this account, had much in common. As two organizations with a distinctive regional flavour, they both represented the aspirations of a province-building state. Through Athabasca University, the state would extend its powers as educator; through Primus, it would protect its interests as an entrepreneur, or seller of a commodity, ensuring that a competitive market of buyers was maintained. As the aspirations of the province-building state ebbed and flowed, so did the potential fortunes of the two organizations.

The earlier period of 1970 - 75 was a much more welcoming era for the two organizations. Direct state support was available in this period, not only in resources of political affirmation and allocations of funds but also in the joining up of these

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<sup>444</sup>Bourdieu 1990, p. 66.

<sup>445</sup>Pratt 1984, p. 209.

organizations to the ideological program of the state. In the period of 1993 - 95, direct financial state support of this kind was not forthcoming since the program of province-building had shifted from an emphasis on establishing and developing proto-nationalistic institutions as a means of building a production state to the methods available to a government adopting the role of the regulation state. Between the periods of 1970 - 75 and 1993 - 95, the *economic* elites of the earlier period had declined in influence as a consequence of the rise of *political* elites. The influence of farmers and small business owners in protecting their economic interests had been subsumed in the rise of a new middle class, a process that had began by 1970, and as described in Chapter 5.<sup>446</sup> This social class vied for its interests through using the powers of the state to enhance its political powers within the province and within the Canadian federation, using both social and economic institutions to do it.<sup>447</sup> In this later period, the University and the Company adopted different change strategies (the technical and the cultural, respectively), suggesting that their autonomy remained considerable and that the state's control over such ventures is far from complete.

The account developed here describes a shift between the University consumerist model's function as an ideology and as a strategy. The consumerist model of education as developed by the University in 1970 - 75 was important for its explicit *ideology*: that

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<sup>446</sup>Richards and Pratt 1979.

<sup>447</sup>Macpherson (1953, p. 232) was concerned to describe this change of elites that occurs with shifts in the priorities of the state, as is clear from his analysis of the transition from "business government" to "delegate democracy" (representing a change from the primacy of economic interests of the state to political interests). See also Greene 1990, p. 69, who summarizes and comments on Archer's conclusion on this.

Albertans would do things “differently” and that this difference was a motivation for political and economic autonomy. The *strategy* of a consumerist model, though reflecting historical episodes of Alberta’s independent course as a state within Canadian federalism (as discussed by Macpherson and evident in more recent incidents such as the proposal of an *Adult Education Act*) remained implicit in the University’s operations. The consumerist model as an ideology reflected the shift of the state’s priorities from allocation to production. It was not at all clear at that early stage of the University’s development how a consumerist model of education would actually work in an experimental university. It would not be until 1993 - 95 that political change - reflected in the shift from the production state to the regulation state - motivated the University to ensconce the consumerist model as an explicit *strategy* through an emphasis on the use of technology and the specialization of curricula, especially by the establishment of graduate programs. The *ideology* of the consumerist model was in this later stage now implicit in the organization’s change process, because province-building was now only an undercurrent of political debate.

During the period of 1993 - 95, the segmentation with which Ringer is concerned<sup>448</sup> becomes part of the state’s repertoire of controlling primary markets, within the higher education field of power, of students and academic staff. In this sense, the renewed mandate given by government to Athabasca University in 1993 - 95 reflected the transformation from a production state to a regulation state, with the changes in social

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<sup>448</sup>Ringer and others 1987, p. 7.

class that would accompany that social transformation.<sup>449</sup> The interests of a “new” elite of professionals and white-collar workers<sup>450</sup> were confirmed in the new University, with its distinctive consumerist model of delivery and the turn towards segmentation of the primary markets of students and academic staff.<sup>451</sup>

Following this recapitulation of the main argument of the thesis, some sensitizing topics following from the research issues of *social origin* and *relative autonomy* of systems of educational provision are listed and discussed.

#### SOCIAL ORIGIN OF SYSTEMS OF EDUCATIONAL PROVISION (RESEARCH ISSUE 1):

##### EXTENDING GELLNER'S AXIOM

A common set of historical factors have been posited for the establishment of both organizations in the study. The common factors are rooted in the political climate with regard to the proto-nationalist movement in Alberta that began shortly after World War II. Richards and Pratt have shown that this movement was championed by a new professional class in the province in the 1970s through the mobilization of popular sentiment in opposition to central Canadian economic and political interests. The means by which this proto-nationalism would be pursued was mainly as follows:

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<sup>449</sup>See again Ringer 1992 for a description of the means by which educational systems tend to change more quickly to reflect social status within a political economy than it does to reflect social class, resulting in a kind of “lag” that reduces the conflict inherent in a society’s political and economic transformation in a given historical era.

<sup>450</sup>See Pratt 1984, p. 203.

<sup>451</sup>Recall Ball 1994, who states that “choice and the market provide a way for the middle classes to reassert their reproduction advantages in education” (p. 123).



- development of secondary industries for the upgrading of natural resources within the province,
- an attempt to clarify and entrench the constitutionality of the provincial ownership of the resources,
- and the decentralization to the province from the federal government of decisions regarding social and economic policy.

The creation of the Company in 1954 contributed to all three prongs of this strategy. By creating a gathering mechanism within the province for natural gas stocks, the price and supply of gas could be influenced by the province. In order to mobilize popular sentiment for such a strategy, the role of educational institutions was important since Alberta was in transition from a rural to an urban society. The establishment of the University in 1970 and then its re-establishment in 1972 were in part a contribution to the third of the points listed above. The University and the Company have had a role as well in forming the ideological support required for proto-nationalism, since the ideologies of legitimation for proto-nationalism are based on individualism and enshrining the goals of developing a regional infrastructure for exploiting natural resources.

The thesis extends Gellner's axiom concerning the reinforcement of nationalism through education.<sup>452</sup> In this axiom, the language in which education is transmitted serves to instill political loyalty by reducing the mobility of the individuals who staff bureaucracies. By reference to the example of the University, it is argued that political

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<sup>452</sup>Gellner 1965, p. 160.

loyalty may also be instilled by the creation of a distinctive educational institution, which by its constitution, mandate, and operational model reflects the ideological program of the state.

SOCIAL ORIGIN OF SYSTEMS OF EDUCATIONAL PROVISION (RESEARCH ISSUE 1):

VALIDATION OF THE CULTURAL MARKET THEORY

The thesis validates the cultural market theory as devised by Bourdieu and developed as well by Collins and Ringer. The thesis finds that the “inflation” rate of the purchasing power of higher educational credentials (cost/purchasing power) can help to account for the social origin of educational institutions and relations between social groups involved in developing and delivering educational activities. The shifts in the cultural market and in the value of cultural capital were considered as a means of testing Bourdieu’s theory of cultural capital.<sup>453</sup> The political economic changes in Alberta during the periods of 1970 - 75 and 1993 - 95 (from allocation to production to regulation) were significant for systems of educational provision because they signalled a re-valuing of educational activities as a species of cultural capital.

In the earlier period, the state’s priorities turned from the allocation of tax resources to the domestic economy to the productional capabilities of the domestic economy for the purpose of expanded exports.<sup>454</sup> Educational activities - including most conspicuously the granting of educational credentials, such as university degrees -

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<sup>453</sup>Bourdieu 1996, pp. 264-65.

<sup>454</sup>Luciani 1987, p. 69.

became harder to obtain. This is because the expansion of educational institutions was temporarily curtailed. At the same time, the jobs and other economic or cultural benefits that educational activities were able to secure for their holders became scarcer, as a result of the relatively higher level of educational attainment of the population. The consumerist model of education was developed partly in response to this change in the value of cultural capital, allowing for educational activities to be “produced” on demand and in proportion to this demand. In the later period of 1993 - 95, the consumerist model was consolidated and enhanced by means of the delivery of graduate programs and by the expanded use of electronic technology for the delivery of University programs. This represented a further differentiation and elaboration of the higher education system.

During both periods, the shift towards regarding these degrees as items for consumption took hold more fully for citizens, leading to a continued strong demand for educational activities. The process of establishing, strengthening, and extending a consumerist model of education is suggested to have a progressive potential. Educational activities that are seen as having intrinsic value and worth to the individual may take on increased value in the cultural market than those that have status only as they are seen to support and enhance the operation of the economic and administrative systems.

The influence of groups of key decision-makers was discussed with regard to the University. There, it was suggested that, following Runté, a mutual acceptance of

“innovation” and “equality of opportunity” by the government and educational administrative bureaucracy were important in the establishment of the University. The government valued innovation and accepted the equality of opportunity that was inherent in the new organization. The bureaucracy accepted both innovation and equality of opportunity, although neither of these values were to be fully developed in the operations of the institution.

A corresponding conclusion for the Company can be offered on this same notion of mutual acceptance of goals within a field of power. for the Company. In the years leading up to 1954, government policy-makers seem to have been influenced by the owners of the resource development companies in eschewing public ownership of the new Company. A public-private structure ensured that a monopsony (a monopoly of buyers) would not occur in central Canada. Capitalist interests therefore accepted the Alberta government’s development of proto-nationalism, in part through the creation of the Company.

RELATIVE AUTONOMY OF SYSTEMS OF EDUCATIONAL PROVISION (RESEARCH ISSUE 2):  
MANAGERIAL PROWESS

The pedagogic authority of managers at the Company was not as distinct before the period of 1993 - 95. Managers were less likely to identify themselves as teachers within the organization and to act as such. With the dramatic reductions in staff at the Company, the possibility existed that their organizational authority and power would be undercut. In justifying the staff reductions by reference to external forces

such as internationalization of markets, managers were left to appear as powerless in confronting the change process. Their ability to continue to impose what Bourdieu calls a “cultural arbitrary”<sup>455</sup> was endangered.

Educational activities constituted an important site for re-establishing managerial authority at the Company. By turning from the activities connected to reducing the size of the organization through staff reductions, educational activities offered the opportunity to accomplish two objectives at once. Expressions of dissent would be dissipated in a culture of teams, in which conflict was more likely to be spent at lower levels in the organizational hierarchy - in teams (see Figure 1 in Chapter 1). It was in these teams that learning would take place. Employees would teach one another and themselves in an organization whose values would enshrine the legitimacy of pursuing individual knowledge as a route to individual power and autonomy. In contrast to the staff reductions, which would be viewed by employees as actions parallel to coercion, educational activities provided a common area of organizational effort.

Second, managers emerged as those willing to relinquish power in the new organizational culture. While symbolically ceding the learning organization to the power of employees, managers would teach new values of engagement and self-discipline. Reverting to the cultural norms of the aristocracy, which are essentially barbaric as theorized by Veblen,<sup>456</sup> managerialism in the instance of the Company took up in

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<sup>455</sup>Bourdieu and Passeron 1977, p. 5.

<sup>456</sup>Veblen 1934, p. 22.

discourse the benevolent *wæ* in prescribing change to organizational practices, including educational ones. Cultural strategies of change focusing on collectivist approaches to work practices within systems of educational provision were paradoxically associated with individualist assumptions concerning the diffusion of innovation. The language of the change strategy had as its object a set of collectivist cultural assumptions, but its subject was the handful of individuals calling for fundamental changes in cultural beliefs.

At the University, the change strategy was less ambitious and, perhaps as a result, the influence on the organization was less pronounced. In the period of 1970 - 75, the relative autonomy of the University had been demonstrated in its capability of increasing the opportunities for access to higher education. This capability was bonded organizationally with the mandate to encourage innovation in delivery methods.

#### RELATIVE AUTONOMY OF SYSTEMS OF EDUCATIONAL PROVISION (RESEARCH ISSUE 2): CHANGE STRATEGY PREFERENCE

At the University during the period of 1993 - 95, the outgoing president set up a subsidiary organization for the development and delivery of educational activities that were more directly connected to the operation of the consumerist model. Instead of attempting to change the cultural values of the organization, an administrative unit was established that could well influence the rest of the organization over time. The strategy, which was emergent rather than intended in the University, was called here a technical strategy. The typology of technical and cultural change strategies in systems of educational provision as applied to four cases (see Table 10 in the previous

chapter) suggests that technical strategies are more likely to be associated with maintenance of relative autonomy. Both Athabasca University and the Transcontinental Pipe Line Company tended to avoid discussions of the legitimacy of educational activities, preferring a consideration mainly of technical issues related to the transmission or delivery of educational activities. The study suggests that by limiting change programs to incremental shifts in such areas as centralization/decentralization, core/periphery, and implementation of information technology, systems of educational provision are more likely to maintain or enhance the function within the political economy preferred by the state. As a result, such systems of educational provision are more likely to be able to exercise their relative autonomy as social institutions, but only within the range allotted by the state.

The two cases in which a cultural or quasi-cultural strategy were used, at Primus and at OISE, the outcomes were a loss or reduction of relative autonomy as regards educational activities. The Primus system of educational provision was partially dismantled and became, by the reports of actors, almost inoperative for a period of time, following the company reorganization. Paradoxically, this occurred while an executive expressed the opinion that the Company was on the verge of becoming a “learning organization.” OISE’s changes to the academic role (primarily the reduction in the status of research activities for staff) led to an acceptance of further changes that helped ensure the final transition to “department” from “institute.” The reduction of relative autonomy had been phased in over a period of several years.

It has been suggested that for these four organizations, an association between the antecedent (a particular strategy choice) and outcome (a reduction or maintenance of relative autonomy) is valid. Further cases beyond the four discussed here could be considered to explore whether the association hypothesized here is reliable, between technical change and maintenance of relative autonomy on the one hand and cultural change and reduction in relative autonomy on the other.

The preference for technical strategies of change seen within these systems of educational provision (strategies based on incremental adaptations or revisions of work practices) is associated with organizational stability and, in the instance of Athabasca University, with organizational survival. In expressing such a preference, a system of educational provision will avoid debates concerning the justification for educational practices. It will engage in a consideration of alternative practices for carrying out educational activities. Assumptions about the broadest goals to which the educational activities are directed and the choice of an individualistic or collectivistic orientation will not be generally questioned. Such an avoidance, while contributing to organizational stability and perhaps extending organizational survival, may be expected to limit the substantive choices open to systems of educational provision. While seeking to adapt to changed assumptions about work practices and organizational structures, systems of educational provision may miss opportunities to create a situation in which needs are identified in a free and open manner and in which all those with an interest in the debate find a voice.



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## APPENDIX 1: PRIMARY AND SECONDARY DOCUMENTS

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### COMPANY

A code that appears in the text of the study may be matched with the one that appears at the beginning of an entry in the list below. Unless noted in italics as a publication, a document listed here is a primary document.

C1. *Annual Reports*, 1988 - 1995. Stanley J. Milner Library, Edmonton, Alberta.

C2. *Primus World*. Issues 4 (Winter/Spring 1991) and 6 (Winter/Spring 1992).

C3. *Primus Now*. Personal copies. Volume and issue numbers, and dates listed below.

2, 4. May 1994.

2,5. June 1994.

Special Issue. August 1994.

2, 8. September/October 1994.

2, 9. November 1994.

2, 10. December 1994/January 1995.

3, 2. March 1995.

3, 3. April 1995.

3, 4. May 1995.

3, 5. June 1995.

3, 6. July/August 1995.

3, 7. September 1995.

3, 8. October 1995. [People Leadership supplement]

3, 9. November 1995.

3, 10. December 1995/January 1996.

4, 1. February 1996.

4, 2. March 1996.

4, 3. April 1996. [SAP issue]

4, 4. May 1996.

C4. "Primus Today, Primus Tomorrow," July 1993.

C5. "The 1996-97 National Partners in Education Awards Call for Entries." Includes Primus Corporation Global Best Awards information. "These awards will honour partnerships that are promoting Science Literacy for the World

of Work at the regional, national, and/or international level.”

- C6. “Climate Survey Update,” 1994.
- C7. “Climate Survey II: Key Findings.” January 1995.
- C8. “Climate Survey Update 3.” December 1995.
- C9. “Vision principles.” 1994.
- C10. “Daily Primus Gas Allocation.” 18 October 1994.
- C11. The Alberta Gas Transmission Division. 1986.
- C12. “Learning Resources Department 1995 Training Schedule - 1<sup>st</sup> Quarter.”
- C13. “Learning Resources Department 1994 Training Schedule - Technical Training.”
- C14. “Learning Resources Department 1994 Training Schedule.”
- C15. “Learning & Training Roles & Responsibilities Organizational Guidelines ‘To-Be’ Process Design,” 14 November 1994.
- C16. “HRBPS Learning & Training - Roles and Responsibilities: Presentation to Technical Training,” 22 November 1994.
- C17. “Memo to Learning Resources Team, with attached ‘Learning Resources Customer Service Strategy,’” 24 January 1994.
- C18. “Position Description,” 16 November 1994.
- C19. “Learning & Training ‘To-Be’ Process Design,” 12 July 1994.
- C20. “Core Competency and Resourcing Strategy Update,” 21 September 1994.
- C21. “Project Engineering Accident/Incident Investigation Procedure,” 2 April 1991.
- C22. “Vision Workshops Agenda,” October 1994.
- C23. “Shared Leadership Competency Matrix,” 16 June 1994.
- C24. E-mail communication regarding Primus Learning and Training Network, 11 October 1995.
- C25. “Human Resources Business Process Simplification Implementation Plan,” 5 April

1995.

- C26. News Release: Primus Corporation Reports Third Consecutive Record Quarterly Earnings, 2 May 1995.
- C27. Oversize, colour schematic: "Relocation 'To-Be' Design (Permanent Moves)," 1994.
- C28. Oversize, colour schematic: "People Information 'To-Be' Design," 1994.
- C29. Oversize, colour schematic: "RESUMIX Process," 1994.
- C30. Oversize, colour schematic: "Primus Learning & Training Process - 'To-Be'," 1994.
- C31. "NGTL Performance: The Balanced Scorecard," 4<sup>th</sup> quarter 1995, 1<sup>st</sup> quarter 1996.
- C32. "The SAP Project NGTL and HR Inc.," obtained 22 January 1996.
- C33. "ISD Refresher Presentation," 1994.
- C34. Letter dated 24 April 1995, with attachment of "Introducing 'Increasing Human Effectiveness'" and "People Leadership Presentation."
- C35. "Maintenance Area Employee Climate Survey Tool Kit," November 1995.
- C36. 24 August 1994. E-mail communication in which GR states that he will be addressing my inquiries regarding evaluation systems used for training programs at Primus are organized.
- C37. 31 October 1994. E-mail communication. GR indicated that Technical Training has been "removed" structurally from the Human Resources area but that it has not found a new organizational home; this has led the informant to seek employment elsewhere, an effort that has not resulted in success to date; agreed to try to find a training schedule to send to me.

*ATHABASCA ADVOCATE* ARTICLES AND ADVERTISEMENTS

- article and photo on corporate donation to Athabasca history book project (\$500), 14 December 1993.

- article and photo on corporate donation to Athabasca Dance Society (\$500), 14 December 1993.
- “Thank you” advertisement to 11 local organizations for assistance in carrying out the Emergency Exercise (mock disaster) on 19 May 1994, 31 May 1994.
- Advertisement “There’s something new in the community. Our name,” 7 June 1994.
- Advertisement “This week we’re celebrating what we’ve been practising for forty years,” to note Occupational Health and Safety Week, 19-25 June 1994, 19 June 1994.
- Public notices of “Proposed Pipeline Route” (11 February 1994, 17 May 1994 (Island Lake), 17 May 1994 (Paul Lake), 6 September 1994, 5 October 1994, 11 October 1994, 24 May 1994, 28 June 1994, 5 July 1994, 16 July 1994, 19 July 1994, 30 August 1994, 4 October 1994 (Flat Lake and Big Bend), 1 November 1994, 6 December 1994
- Public Notices of Proposed Pipeline and Meter Station, 12 July 1994 (Dancing Lake and Amber Valley), 13 December 1994
- “Restructuring May Affect Local Primus Employees,” 16 August 1994
- “Primus to Dump Waste Water,” 13 September 1994
- “Primus Waiting for Nod on Major Project,” 18 October 1994
- “Pipe Delivery” (photo and caption), 13 December 1994
- “Corporations Respond to Wilderness Group,” 7 February 1995

*EDMONTON JOURNAL* ARTICLES AND ADVERTISEMENTS

- Public Notice of the 1995/96 Annual Plan Update, 23 January 1993
- “Primus Becomes Global Methanol Player,” 10 December 1993
- “Up with People” (musical theatre sponsored by the corporation” advertisement, 13 June 1993.

- "Primus Plans to Split Into Four Companies by Spring," 8 March 1994
- "Corporate Mergers Usually Disastrous, Says Primus Chairman," 22 March 1994
- "Rare Phenomenon Caused Pipeline Break," 7 April 1994
- "Primus Places Pipe Order," 25 May 1994
- "Primuscor Buys DuPont Arm," 2 July 1994
- "Cuts at Primus May Lead to Big Job Losses," 28 July 1994
- "Green Group Fears Amoco Executive Will Become Regulatory Board Boss," 19 August 1994
- "Gas Reserves Overestimated," NEB Says," 17 January 1995
- "Primus Asks for 11% Increase in Gas Tolls," 13 January 1995
- "Gas Deliveries Soar to a Record 3.8 tcf," 21 January 1994
- "Supply-Demand Balance Sends Gas Prices Down," 1 October 1994
- "Primus Boss Will only Be Paid in Shares," 31 March 1994
- "Primus to Finalize Pipeline Deal with Australia," 1 June 1994
- "Interest Renewed in Northern Gas," 12 August 1994
- "Business award to Primus's CEO," 12 December 1995
- "Children pay for parents' debts" (report of Primus CEO's views on public debt), 17.
- Public notice of Primuscor Chemicals Ltd. and its application for accreditation to the Safety Codes Council on 30 January 1995, 25 February 1995.
- Public Notice of Partial Redemption for Sinking Fund Purposes, 23 August 1994, 25 January 1995
- "Primus Corp. Made Record Profit in 1994," 1 February 1995
- Public Notice of a Public Hearing, 11 February 1995

- “Primus Gas Speeds Up Projects,” 1994
- Public Notice of National Energy Board Hearing, 15 August 1994
- Public Notice of Primus Gas Transmission Ltd. and its application for accreditation to the Safety Codes Council on 20 March 1995, 26 May 1995
- “Primuscor Chemicals Trims Staff,” 28 April 1995
- “Primus Sets Quarterly Earnings Record,” 3 May 1995
- “City Loses 55 Primus Jobs,” 26 May 1995
- “Primus ‘Dead Certain’ of Record Year,” 6 May 1995
- Public Notice of the 1996-97 Annual Plan, 23 June 1995
- “Primus Rate Hearing to Set Precedent,” 9 August 1995
- “Hearings Will Set Price Precedent,” 10 August 1995
- Public Notice of Proposed Pipeline and Meter Station, 12 September 1995 (Hunt Creek and Hunt Creek)
- Public Notice of Invitation to Join Facilities Liaison Committee, 26 October 1995
- Public Notice of Invitation to Join Tolls, Tariff and Procedures (TTP) Committee, 26 October 1995
- “Natural Gas Prices Weak,” 26 October 1995
- “Natural Gas Need Waning,” 6 December 1995
- “Canadian Natural Gas Looks Hot, Says Study,” 19 December 1995
- “Feds Look at Pipeline’s Flow,” 19 December 1995
- “Primus Earnings Up Despite Price Drop,” 21 October 1995
- “Pipeline Probe Costs Group \$1M” (u.d.)
- “Primus Looks to Stay on Top by Doing More with Less,” 29 December 1995

- "Primus Spinoff Firm Runaway Success: Revolve Technologies Forges Global Success Using Former Primus Patents," 26 December 1995
- "Primus Reports Record '95 Profit," 31 January 1996
- "Primus Faces Opposition to Pipeline in Chile," 9 February 1996
- "Gas Toll Hike Viewed as Fair to All," 8 January 1995
- "Oil and Gas Team Has Built Information Pipeline," 19 February 1996
- Advertisement: University of Alberta Faculty of Business announces [CEO] Winner of 1996 Canadian Business Leader Award, 4 March 1996
- "Primus Bids to Expand in South America," 2 March 1996
- "Plants Face Close Scrutiny: But Environmentalists Not Too Worried About Operation," 4 March 1996
- "Trades Rejoice at Primus Decision," 2 March 1996
- "Alberta Needs 'Learning Culture' to Compete, Says Primus Head," 1996.
- "Joffre Contract Let," 4 July 1996
- "Primus Foresees Billion-Dollar Profits by 2,000," 19 April 1996
- "Pipeline Safety Pressure Builds: Prospect of Costly New Facilities Alarms Energy Companies," 23 April 1996
- "Primusgas Buys Redwater Plant," 16 May 1996
- "Primus Cuts to Cost City 40 Jobs," 5 June 1996
- "Primus Buying Two U.S. Styrene Plants," 11 June 1996
- "Primus's Gas Rates Upheld," 15 June 1996
- "Mexico Eyeing Canada's Natural Gas," 15 June 1996
- "Primus Accused of Backing Repression," 15 June 1996
- Advertisement: Occupational Health Nurses needed by Primus Gas Transmission, 15 June 1996 October 1994

- “Primus Corp. Agrees to Alter Route of Chilean Pipeline,” 26 June 1996
- “Primus Loses Bid to Build \$1.3B Plant,” 31 July 1996
- “Primus Deal Expected to Cut Pipeline Costs,” 3 August 1996
- “Fighting Work-Place Fatigue Becoming a Full-Time Job: Primus Corp. Putting Workers on Alert with Help from NASA,” 8 August 1996
- “Bolstering Lives of the Poor Should Be Priority of Business,” by the CEO of Primus Corporation, from remarks made to the business faculty of the University of Alberta on his winning the 1996 Canadian Business Leader Award, 25 August 1996
- “Primus Bids on Argentine Pipeline,” 4 September 1996
- “Primus Buys Plants in Ohio, Pennsylvania,” 2 October 1996
- Advertisement: The University of Calgary announces the appointment of the CEO of Primus Corporation, as Chair of the Board of Governors
- “Producers Suing Pan-Alberta Gas,” 18 October 1996
- “Sell Pan-Canadian, Primus Urged,” 19 October 1996

*EDMONTON SUN* ARTICLES AND ADVERTISEMENTS

- “\$65m Sunk in Pipeline Deal,” 2 November 1994

ADVERTISEMENTS FROM *CAUT BULLETIN* (NEWSPAPER OF THE CANADIAN ASSOCIATION OF UNIVERSITY TEACHERS)

- Advertisement seeking applications for the Primus Chair in Occupational Health, Safety and the Environment, 19 June



1995

*GLOBE AND MAIL* ARTICLES AND ADVERTISEMENTS

- “It’s touch deciding who stays and who goes,” 21 March 1995.
- Advertisement: The Conference Board of Canada’s 1996-97 National Partners in Education Awards, sponsored in part by Primus Corporation, 15 August 1996
- Advertisement: Primuscor Chemicals Ltd. requires chemists and chemical engineers, 12 December 1994
- “Alberta Snags Chemical Plant,” 1 March 1996

*FINANCIAL POST* ARTICLES AND ADVERTISEMENTS

- “Primus Acquires 33% Stake in Altamount Line,” 4 February 1994

UNIVERSITY

A code that appears in the text of the study may be matched with the one that appears at the beginning of an entry in the list below.

- U1. *Calendar*, 1996-97. Athabasca University Library, Athabasca, Alberta.
- U2. *Annual Report*, 1993-94, 1994-95. Athabasca University Library, Athabasca, Alberta.
- U3. Adult Learning Access Through Innovation Draft White Paper: An Agenda for Change, March 1994.
- U4. *Universities Act (Statutes of Alberta)*. Consolidated to January 1, 1994, Volume 17.
- U5. "Hansard Transcript No. 23-2.1. 23<sup>rd</sup> Legislature, Second Session, Designated Supply Subcommittee, Advanced Education and Career Development, Thursday, 10 March 1994, 6:08 p.m.
- U6. Copies of letters from Hon. Jack W. Ady, Minister of Advanced Education and Career Development, to Mr. Dick Aberg, Chairman of the Governing Council of Athabasca University, 2 March 1994 and 16 March 1994.
- U7. Brochure: "Your Invitation to the ViTAL Community," 1995.
- U8. *Terms and Conditions: Athabasca University Governing Council and Athabasca University Faculty Association*, 1992.
- U9. Letter from Hon. Jack W. Ady, Minister of Advanced Education and Career Development, 22 March 1994.
- U10. Course materials for COMM 243.
- U11. Course materials for COMM 377.
- U12. "Forms" package, Athabasca University, 1995 - 1996.

EDMONTON JOURNAL ARTICLES AND ADVERTISEMENTS

- "Management Weakness Documented in Report," 29 October 1995.
- "Athabasca Plan," 2 November 1971.

APPENDIX 1 / PRIMARY AND SECONDARY DOCUMENTS

- “\$50 million Athabasca U Plan Canceled,” 31 May 1972.
- “World Ecology: Newspaper University,” 6 October 1973.

*ST. ALBERT GAZETTE* ARTICLES AND ADVERTISEMENTS

“Long-Distance MBA Class Attacked.”

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## APPENDIX 2:INTERVIEW INHIBITORS AND FACILITATORS<sup>457</sup>

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Inhibitors and facilitators form a framework within which interviewers may seek to increase the likelihood that the data they gather will contribute to their research aims. Inhibitors and facilitators are listed below, along with a comment for each concerning the relevance of the particular inhibitor or facilitator for the present research and a response that is intended to provide a tactic for ensuring the acknowledgement of that inhibitor or facilitator throughout the interviewing process.

The inhibitors and a discussion with regard to their relevance for the interviewing process are listed first.

*Competing time demands:* The inhibitor here may be in terms both of the time the respondent had available to devote to the interview and the corresponding demands created by the number and scope of the questions. If the interview was likely to go beyond an hour, the questions would be covered in two sessions, at the respondent's option, to ensure that the respondent did not feel rushed. As well, at the time of making the appointment for the interview the respondent was asked about the time and length of the interview to ensure that they would be able to respond without competing time demands.

*Ego threat:* Respondents might feel that their professional status and thereby their self-esteem may be diminished if they responded in certain ways. The anonymity and confidentiality of the process was stated. However, the respondent could be reminded of the anonymity and confidentiality of the responses. Some probe questions could be used to deal with responses that might be a signal for ego threat: evasion, emphatic denial, elaborate denial, depersonalization, and minimalization.<sup>458</sup>

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<sup>457</sup>Adapted from Raymond Gorden, *Interviewing: Strategy, Techniques, and Tactics*, Fourth edition, (Chicago: The Dorsey Press, 1987).

<sup>458</sup>Gorden, p. 126.

*Etiquette:* Social status was more or less the same between interviewers and respondents. Male-female etiquette was monitored through probe questions but is not an obvious factor in North American society.

*Trauma:* While the changes going on in the organizations have been significant they would not likely result in the inhibitor considered here.

*Forgetting:* The interview questions in most cases dealt with events that had occurred in the last three years. However, any areas that reveal forgetting could be followed up with document checking. The interviewer occasionally reminded a respondent of facts that were available to both interviewer and respondent.

*Chronological confusion:* Because the interviewer had more recent access to documents, providing facts that were available to both participants was appropriate on occasion.

*Inferential confusion:* It was appropriate to probe inferential confusion and to independently confirm such incongruities through document checking and inquiring with other respondents.

*Unconscious behaviour:* Not likely a problem.

A discussion of the facilitators and their relevance are as listed below.

*Expectation of cooperation:* Could be optimized by nonverbal and verbal messages provided to the respondent indicating that the interviewer was confident and that meaningful and truthful responses would be noted and appreciated.

*Recognition:* The interviewer endeavoured to indicate to the respondent that the respondent had been selected for the reason that she or he had valuable information and insights for the purposes of the research. As well, the importance or value of the research was communicated in the introductory comments.

*Altruistic appeals:* Since most respondents were involved in the provision or take-up of educational activities they could be reminded of the benefit of contributing to the improvement or understanding of such activities.

*Sympathetic understanding:* This was expressed, as appropriate, in the introductory comments, through the lead-up to probe questions, and in the post-interview conversation.

*New experience:* The degree to which the respondent welcomed the experience of being interviewed was considered and, if possible, encouraged. If the respondent seemed to approach the interview as one of a series of intrusions by the organization or as an attempt to “sell courses” (a factor at the Company), the interviewer could dispel the anxieties associated with that assumption. The respondent could be reassured that her or his real views and insights were valuable to the researcher.

*Catharsis:* This was recognized and noted by the interviewer as it occurred and was met with an appropriate expression of recognition and empathy.

*Need for meaning:* The cognitive dissonance experienced by actors in a changing organization may give rise to a desire to talk about those changes. This was encouraged in the framework of the interview guide.

*Extrinsic rewards:* Could not be optimized in this case since participation by respondents was voluntary. In cases in which the interviewer could be of assistance as a staff member from the University, he provided such assistance after the interview. Examples of such assistance would be inquiries for information or for the names and phone numbers of other University staff; such requests are a part of the researcher’s normal role as a staff member at the University.

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## APPENDIX 3: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

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Company interviews were carried out at sites in five Alberta cities or towns. The University interviews were carried out in either Edmonton or Athabasca. The formal role of each of the key informants or respondents is listed below. More information about the interview methodology is provided in Chapter 4.

- DR: a maintenance employee at the Company
- SS: engineer and sales representative for a supplier of equipment to the Company
- HJA: a mid-level manager at one of the Company's subsidiaries
- GR: educational supervisor at the Company
- SG: a mid-level educational manager at the Company
- GJ: senior consultant at a software company and former Company employee
- WM: instrumentation technician at the Company
- MD: a computing services manager at a company that is "parallel" to the case Company
- RR: academic staff member at another Alberta university
- CS: a manager in human resources at the Company
- BR: engineer at the Company
- RL: clerical worker at a corporation that is a client to the Company
- MS: upper-level manager in human resources at the Company
- HJO: educational supervisor at the Company
- SJ: academic staff member at the University
- TB: founding president of the University
- LG: educator at the parallel company
- CM: educational manager at the parallel company
- AT: academic at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE)
- PRO: professor at OISE
- ADO: senior administrator at OISE

## PERSONAL INTERVIEWS

- 3 June 1994. DR. 75 minutes. Key informant. Topics covered: recent "mock disaster" which he coordinated; general structure of training at the Company; three major areas of training at the Company: general, technical, safety; restructuring of Company and the effect of this on his own career (he is seconded from his position as Senior Mechanic to a training position as Project Coordinator); unionization at Company and "family of companies"; various interpersonal skills courses offered at the Company; informed of possible contacts.
- 14 June 1994. SS. 60 minutes. Special respondent. Topics covered: recent oil and gas show at which representatives of the large oil and gas companies in Alberta, including Primus, were represented; gas companies tend to see "technological solutions" and contracting out as an immediate cost reduction technique; role of electronic monitoring equipment in Company's operation; Company's weakness in reducing the time needed to assess a damaged area of a pipeline or an area requiring maintenance; Company's strength in remote monitoring of gas flow, pressure, volume, and so on; SS has been to a plant of one of the Company's subsidiaries.
- 15 June 1994. HJA. 90 minutes. Special respondent. Topics covered: Company's vision statement of Primus Corporation and its effect on staff development; people leadership an important part of HJA's work; four areas of people leadership: shared leadership, employee recognition, career development, performance management teams; production plant's leadership role in people leadership; intrapersonal skills development used for employees at the plant since 1978; brief discussion of my Ph.D. work and my research and professional interest in the Company; re-engineering of the Company started in May 1994 and will continue for one year; size and function of plant; rumour boxes and weekly meetings conducted by HJA in order to deal with staff anxieties about re-engineering; researcher volunteered to attend a weekly meeting (HJA to consider this but indicating positive interest); connections between Gemini consulting initiative, Mahler consultancy, and re-engineering initiative; provided various documents.
- 16 June 1994. GR. 120 minutes. Special respondent. Topics covered: tour of facility; role of secondees from the field in developing technical training programmes; size of operation at this location (250 staff); size and structure of technical training unit (16 staff, structural diagram in notes); structure of "Team for People" (diagram in notes); number of people served by Technical Training per year (1,800 to 2,000); "Up with



People” held once a year in facility’s office auditorium; mutual aid agreements signed between Company and local communities for use in case of disaster such as the “mock disaster” trained for in DR’s location; “job shadowing” by teachers in the two local high schools; provided various documents.

- 16 June 1994. SG. 30 minutes. Key informant. Topics covered: role of ethics in Company training and development programs; SG emphasized that permission not needed for further inquiries for research or professional interest at this time; researcher indicated that at some point a letter to OS would be in order to secure formal permission for inquiries; outlined my four sources of interest in the Company: development of AU courses, collaboration in training programs for AU and Company, research for Ph.D., securing recruits for MBA and Diploma in Organizational Training programs; importance of “learning organization” using the Senge model cited by SG; SG discussed value of better links between higher education sector and business.
- 20 October 1994. GJ. 20 minutes. Key informant. Topics covered: GJ was previously a team leader in the computing area at Company; worked in Edmonton and with consolidation of some of Company’s operations to Calgary; he left the Company, moving first to a managing consulting company and then, a year and half ago, to a software company, where he now works; GJ discussed an incident that occurred just before he left the Company in which a backup computer (backup for the main computer that monitors and controls all pipeline valves and pressure points) malfunctioned after the main computer malfunctioned; this incident represented a crisis for the management of the Company and led to the Company having to provide a special report to the provincial government; the informant did not indicate whether the nature of the crisis involved safety or whether it involved management issues regarding accountability and the management of risk; GJ also discussed the tendency of those who work in a computing area to adopt those products, techniques, and strategies that will improve their marketability in the workforce; one example of how this might work could be considered with regard to a company choosing a new computer; faced with an effective solution that is not well known in the marketplace and a less effective, more efficient solution that is regarded by the industry as a “standard,” the recommendation may well be the latter, in part so that the staff in the technical area can develop their resume in a way that reflects the demands of the labour marketplace.
- 12 November 1994. DR. 10 minutes. Key informant. Topics covered: DR now in Edmonton until Christmas working on a plan related to which services in the

Company will be contracted out; DR is a team leader for the group looking at transportation and mechanics, with five teams in all; the group uses the resources of an American consultant who helps the groups look at "decision risk analysis," where the idea is to have the groups affected understand what will happen when contracting out begins; DR invited me to call him again after Christmas; DR said he would like to take courses at AU in concert with the training in decision risk analysis he is taking; DR taken a two-day course in risk analysis but is planning to take a two-week course in the same area after Christmas; DR is contracted to do this planning work and seems to be in a position where he is separate from the regular Company staff, probably (in my estimate) in preparation for a management position; researcher mentioned the value of informing staff of moves to contract out and the need for a plan in these matters; he agreed and said that the decisions made after such a process were more likely to be accepted or understood by staff.

- 12 December 1994. GR. 3 hours. Special respondent. Topics covered: GR is being seconded to a position as a Human Resources Business Process Simplification (HRBPS) team member for one year; in that position he will be implementing the "To Be" initiative for Learning and Training, a company-wide training plan; various documents; according to GR, Company adds value to the gas being shipped by providing a high level of service to customers and by keeping the price of the final product as low as possible; however, there is a sense in which the Company continues to operate as a monopoly operator, even though it is regulated by the provincial government; if a competing company wishes to use a competing trunk line to ship its gas, it cannot.
- 16 December 1994. WM. 10 minutes. Special respondent. Topics covered: WM feels reorganization will result in more decentralization of staff and operations; in his case, this may mean more maintenance staff living and working in small communities, which he did not want to do; stated that training is available to any employees on request.
- 19 July 1995. GR. 1 hour. Special respondent. Topics covered: Secondment to a position as a learning consultant for a year interrupted by a decision by the Company recently to suspend training for the next nine months; made reference to the process of "on-boarding" as a technique for orienting staff to new procedures; the Company is now establishing a less-visible profile for training than it has been; more contracting out is likely for the training function; Company bought "hundreds" of copies of the *Fifth Discipline* book for distribution to staff.

- 5 January 1996. MD. 30 minutes. Key informant. Topics covered: MD's company is a comparable organization to the case Company in that it is Alberta-based and is in the business of petroleum transmission; it has fewer employees (1,100) but is a large corporation in the same industry; DM stated that his company was not going through "restructuring" because it has always been a regulated utility and therefore is not subject to pressures to change its size in response to significant market changes; however, the company is still carrying on an effort to "internationalize" its operations, mainly through the sale of consulting services; in the area of training, the company has set up a separate company that sells back educational "products" to his company but can also sell these products to other companies; the core-periphery model for educational activities at MD's company is such that there are only a few full-time permanent professional trainers, with virtually all services contracted out; MD used the example of a CD-ROM on the techniques for pressure-testing pipe that could be sold elsewhere after production and delivery within the company.
- 24 January 1996. RR. 60 minutes. Key informant. Topics covered: RR's two theses, the one on the establishment of Athabasca University and the other on the "proletarianization" in the Alberta department of education; RR suggested that the move from the "human capital" model to the "manpower model" has continued; researcher suggested that the "consumerist" model had been laid over the "manpower model" at Athabasca University, which RR agreed to; discussed the purging of the educational progressive elite in Alberta over a period of 20 years, just concluded; RR's interest at the doctoral level was on the mechanism of controlling shifts within the educational bureaucracy; the mechanisms and make-up of policy committees contributed to this process; RR proposed that the "overvocationalism" characteristic of education in Alberta should be replaced by "avocationalism," since with fewer jobs and proportionately more unskilled or semi-skilled work available to graduates, the emphasis should be on developing students' interests and aptitudes outside the workplace; RR recommended a book on "writing and surviving a dissertation."
- 22 January 1996. CS. Special respondent and key informant. 30 minutes. Topics covered: CS now responsible (began new duties in the last two weeks) for learning and training company-wide; researcher explained more about the nature and objectives of my research and presented her with the one-page written "Proposal for a Learning Partnership"; CS made notes based on our conversation which she indicated would be forwarded to the vice-president of Community for consideration; the proposal states that the initial half dozen interviews would be with providers in both the "hard" and "soft" skills training at the Company; when CS asked what the

next stage would be, I indicated that over a period of one year, I wanted eventually to interview 40 staff, 75 per cent of whom would be training "providers" and the remaining to be "recipients"; CS discussed the point that some training providers have full-time jobs in areas other than training and are to be regarded as facilitators; someone may therefore be both provider and recipient; CS suggested that the project may be "timely" in that the "training network" being established "wasn't working"; the plan suggests that reporting will be provided based on findings, with the proviso that confidentiality for respondents must be maintained; CS agreed that a decision would be relayed to me in mid-February.

- 9 July 1996. BT. Special respondent. 2 hours. Taped interview. Topics covered: establishment of University (1970 - 75); role of deputy minister of education; BT offered perspective on recent changes at the University.
- September 1996. PRO. Special respondents. 90 minutes. Taped interview. This represents an interview with a professor and another with a group of three or four professors carried out by Henry D.R. Miller at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education and generously provided for use by the researcher. The anonymity of the professors has been maintained through the use of the initials noted and through the combined use of several professors as one source.
- September 1996. ADO. Special respondents. 60 minutes. Taped interviews. This represents a set of one interview with each of two senior administrative staff carried out by Henry D.R. Miller at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education and generously provided for use by the researcher. The anonymity of the two administrators has been maintained through the use of the initials noted and through the combined use of the two administrators as one source.
- 6 November 1996. LW. Special respondent. 1 hour. Taped interview. Topics covered: strategy for setting up a subsidiary to carry out training and development activities; internationalization and its influence on Company policy with regard to training; change at the subsidiary company; provided one document.
- 13 November 1996. CM. Special respondent. 1 hour. Taped interview. Topics covered: allocation of training development jobs between the parent and subsidiary companies; degree to which subsidiary employees are regarded as privileged by parent company employees; respondent's responsibilities and role at the parent company.

## TELEPHONE INTERVIEWS

- 26 May 1994. GR. Special respondent. 30 minutes. Topics covered: arrangements for visit to Company in June; descriptions of "development dialogues," emergency response training in Athabasca and province-wide; distinctions between training at Primuscor and at the parent Company; Gemini Consulting and the Business Transformation Program; the Human Resources Business Process Simplification Program; "Vis-a-Vis" and "Lotus Notes" use at Primus; "Up with People."
- 26 May 1994. SG. Key informant. 5 minutes. Topics covered: arrangements for visit to plant in June; SG's personal interest in Athabasca's educational programmes.
- 30 May 1994. HJA. Special respondent. 10 minutes. Topics covered: arrangements for visit on 15 June 1994; status of his own educational requirements in wanting to complete his MBA from John F. Kennedy University.
- 2 June 1994. DR. Special respondent. 5 minutes. Topics covered: stated my interest in organizational training issues; expressed my desire to find out more about training in relation to the recent "mock disaster" exercise in Athabasca; mentioned specifically the interesting civic connections that were made for the exercise, as reported in the local newspaper; arrangements made for him to visit me on 3 June 1994 at Athabasca University.
- 12 August 1994. HJA. Special respondent. 20 minutes. Topics covered: his educational needs, as he is considering engaging in an intensive period of study at Athabasca University; indicated the Business Transformation Process may well result in him not having a job; he is considering taking an educational assistance grant and a severance payment in return for resigning from the Company; this was a significant comment since this could be viewed as another use of training by the Company, for the purpose of reducing staff.
- 27 September 1994. GR. Special respondent. 15 minutes. Topics covered: phone numbers of various Company staff; according to RG, "tension" at the Company exists; he was working on a program to help people who are being let go; personal skills for coping with the anxiety of being laid off; asked him about getting access to electronic files; agreed to call him back the next day to arrange electronic access to the "Rumour Mill" electronic area.

- 28 September 1994. GR. Special respondent. 15 minutes. Topics covered: GR had done some preliminary work on developing a computer training package for staff who are being let go; the package was to have displayed the various options involved in the severance package, which include keeping benefits after severance, payment for completing an educational program after severance, and so on.; after two weeks of work on the program, he was informed that an external contractor had been given the job of preparing the program; GR will provide information about possible training sessions that I could attend; one possibility is a session offered directly by his unit on "reading gas printouts"; also provided me with information on accessing the company-sponsored electronic "Rumour Mill."
- 14 October 1994. BR. Special respondent. 15 minutes. Topics covered: material in the article in *Oil and Gas Journal* was first presented at an Off-shore Mechanics Conference in 1992, then developed with changes and updates as a paper for the *Journal*; no direct responses to the article; although a large project (\$5.5 million), the directional drilling solution is not unique to the industry but the particular application was unique to the Company; remedial solutions are industry-communicated and technology sharing occurs internationally, unless there is a possible patent involved in which case proprietary information may be kept secret; "We've been monitoring this site for a number of years. Other remedial action had been taken"; this was the lowest risk solution in terms of the possibility of site failure and that was the way it was sold to management; publishing results in an area is typical of the oil and gas industry, but not a significant part of his job (5 per cent he estimated); there is an ongoing research program at the Company, with a research management committee tracking costs, receiving reports, and circulating information and reports, out of Calgary; training is not involved with BR's job and the construction manager would have been responsible for any unique situation; there wouldn't have been any formal training for construction workers; the innovation for this project is viewed as residing at the engineering level, although BR points out that every construction project requires the input of the construction foreman; the directional-drilling solution may be applied southwest of Edmonton, where the costs may be similar but where there is one pipe versus two; project managers were CR and CP; CP was technical person; technical group in Calgary is seven or eight people; reorganization since the project has resulted in decisions now being made in Calgary, rather than, as was the case for this project, in Edmonton.
- 28 October 1994. DR. Key informant. 5 minutes. Topics covered: Based on a telephone call to the local Primus office, DR now part of a committee working in the

training/development area; will be in Edmonton for three weeks working on training/development matters.

- 4 November 1994. RL. Key informant. 15 minutes. Topics covered: One of LR's duties is to monitor the amount of gas delivered from Amoco Canada to the Primus pipeline. The Company delivers, on average, 7,000 m<sup>3</sup>. The two companies have co-developed a Lotus 1-2-3 spreadsheet package for monitoring the amount delivered. Amoco faxes or sends electronically the daily totals to Primus. The difference between the two companies' methods cannot increase beyond three per cent per day or a formal process is followed for determining the difference. There is a tight connection here in the information transmission system: The companies co-developed the monitoring system and share the responsibility for maintaining it. There are 250 employees at the plant, in a town of 3,000 in Fox Creek. Two other major oil companies in the town. I have copied the process used to record the daily shipments of gas from Amoco to Primus and this is in my files. I also have on file an article from the *Globe and Mail* (15 November 1994) on electronic data interchange (EDI) which is increasingly used by retailers and their suppliers: "In January 1994, 3,200 firms in Canada used EDI to exchange documents with trading partners, up 34.6% from 1990. Firms usually start EDI as a result of a suggestion from a supplier or a customer. The most common documents transmitted are purchase orders and invoice. EDI is also very popular for acknowledgements. The main benefits seen are: better contact with customers, reliability, better service, fewer errors and faster turnaround."
- 24 April 1995 HJO. 10 minutes. Key informant. Topics covered: HJO indicated that I would not be able to attend a session of the Increasing Human Effectiveness course but offered, and subsequently followed up on, to send materials related to the course. Will also send a contact for Edge Technology which produces the course. May be able to attend a session in Washington on the program.
- 10 October 1995. GR. 20 minutes. Special respondent. Topics covered: Told him he would remain anonymous as an informant. Talked about possible interview contacts in October. Felt "lip service" was being paid to training. That those involved in planning and implementing did not have the background and experience in training and educational activities to carry out the changes. "The plan was good, but the implementation was not."
- 3 November 1995. CS. 15 minutes. Special respondent. Topics covered: CS is responsible for a significant "organizational culture" initiative at the Company, which

is to be implemented across all Primus family companies. This represents, as CS pointed out, an effort in which “thousands of people” were involved. I called to request interviews with training recipients and providers, emphasizing that I am not “selling” AU courses but seeking to carry out research activities, with her assistance or support. She indicated that the following were characteristics of organizational climate at the Company currently: high level of activity especially with regard to “changing the organizational culture,” high levels of stress as a consequence of budget reductions, and a feeling that staff were being “surveyed to death.” This last feature was something she was reporting that staff were expressing to her. She suggested I could call back in January or February 1996. Later she suggested that December 1995 might be a slower time and that I could call her then. I confirmed that HJA had sent me some material about Increasing Human Effectiveness. We agreed I would call back. At that point, I provided the example of what I was most interested in. I suggested that the comparison between the University and the Company was interesting in that in response to environmental and internal changes, the University had chosen to centralize its delivery of educational activities, while the Company seemed to be trying to decentralize. This seemed to spark a personal response. She said that the trend was as I had described it but that she was struggling in “her career” to “centralize in the midst of decentralization.” She seemed somewhat emotional about this point, although on the telephone it may be difficult to gauge this without nonverbal cues. I emphasized that I was not hoping to “sell” AU courses; this was a concern since she indicated that someone from the University had been promoting the use of AU courses recently at the Company. She made reference to “Primus University” as the objective of a series of initiatives that would emphasize *in-house* courses and programs that would be intended to create a new organizational culture at the Company.

- 11 December 1995. SJ. 1 hour. Key informant and special respondent. Taped interview. Topics covered: Recalled the beginning of his work at the University (in 1981), when outreach to native groups and prison students was an initiative in which he would be expected to participate as an academic. Discussed “innovation” and “access” as values that are somewhat in conflict. SJ suggested that educational technology is a “symbol” that signals that innovation and access being accomplished. The government has the goal of maintaining control over higher education while reducing expenditures on higher education. In Europe, he noted that economies of scale, following from a high population density, can be achieved in distance education that may not be possible in Canada. Athabasca has the role of being a catalyst for innovation and access in the higher educational system. Other



institutions in the province may be influenced to emulate Athabasca's methods of delivery. Referred to the middle-class desire that parents have for "access" to higher education. Access is linked in the public mind to social and economic equality. However, he suggested that access is not linked to political equality, that political equality is not a goal of government or even of the Alberta public. SJ also drew attention to the contradiction between government's advocacy of the market for some aspects of the operation of institutions but not for others: Student demand is used to justify the existence of some educational programs but not others. "Performance indicators" being established to help government regulate the operation of educational institutions. The performance indicators also function as a means of regulating or controlling the "flatter" organizational characteristic of institutions including Athabasca. Referred to "authoritarian instrumental" values of government with regard to the role of educational institutions.

- 8 June 1996. GR. 10 minutes. Special respondent. Topics covered: Discussed the possibility of being assigned as a team leader in another town; GR was offered, but then had retracted, a severance package; stated that he felt that he was going to leave without severance, but felt he "could have been laid off anyway"; also, "wacky" things going on; compared his recent experience to that reported at TransAlta, similar to being in a cult.
- 7 November 1996. TA. 1 hour. Special respondent. Taped interview. Topics covered: role of the academic at OISE; proposals to amalgamate of 1987 and 1991; TA's current responsibilities and the change in those responsibilities during his 15 years at OISE.

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## APPENDIX 4: THE COMPANY'S TRAINING STRATEGY

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During 1993 - 95, there were some 172 professional staff dedicated to training throughout the Company and its subsidiaries. As the Company carried out its Human Resources Business Process Simplification (HRBPS) activities, the decision was made to disband the training core of staff and to replace it with a structure illustrated below.<sup>459</sup> A learning consultant, who may be a private contractor or an employee of the Company, would work with clients (employees) in a given area and with a functional expert (who is an employee from a business team, on a project basis) to develop learning and training sessions and programs for employees. The learning consultant will be the primary contact for learning and training needs within a business area. One will be employed for every 100 to 150 employees in a given business area. He or she will help identify needs, plan curricula, arrange for the development of the training with contractors, and assess the training programs as they are offered. The functional expert has expertise in a functional area and becomes the "owner" of the courseware that is developed for use with the staff in the area. The client is the "user" of the training courseware and is responsible for assessing the degree to which the training is meeting identified needs.

The learning expert (eight to 16 required for the Company) guides the development, delivery, procurement, and evaluation of learning opportunities and their effectiveness. This role is an overseeing role and is considered to be "generic," providing support across the Company's functional and business areas. The governance area has representation from management and from those involved in planning and implementing the training and learning opportunities. The governance area is an executive council. The provider (an unspecified number of contractors as needed) delivers the training programs and sessions. The principles and practices statement for learning and training in the Company begins with the following: "[The Company] supports Learning & Training to foster the development of employees in their jobs and their career aspirations within the Company. Guided by business plans and available resources (money, time), individuals and their teams/leaders mutually establishing their Learning & Training plans with job duty and performance learning opportunities a

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<sup>459</sup>Documents C15, C16, and C19.

priority.”<sup>460</sup> Furthermore, “[t]he effectiveness of Learning & Training will be measured by the improvement of individual, team and organizational performance.” In the “To-Be” plan for Learning & Training, the effectiveness of the programs and sessions offered to employees is stated in a series of performance measures.

The performance measures are stated for five stages in the Learning & Training Process Description and for three further sub-stages under stage 3. The performance measures are quoted from the Process description for each stage and sub-stage.

1. *Needs Assessment (“Plan it”)*

The performance measures are as follows:

- Each individual, team and organization keeps an up-to-date Learning plan.
- Each individual, team and organization measures that the objectives were met.
- Each individual’s and team’s learning plan add up in the organization’s learning plan.

2. *Identify & Attend Learning (“Do it”)*

The performance measures are as follows:

- Each individual is satisfied with the learning opportunities available.
- Each individual getting the training that they need.

3. *Evaluation (“Prove it”)*

3.1 Learning Product & Process

The performance measures are as follows:

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<sup>460</sup>Document C19.

- All important opinion issues measures
- Reliability and validity of the data
- Timeliness and usefulness of data and reports

### 3.2 Employee Learning

The performance measures are as follows:

- All learning objectives measured
- Validity and reliability of measures
- Records are complete, accurate, timely

### 3.3 Employee Behavior

The performance measures are as follows:

- Reliability and validity of the data
- Percentage of learning/training events covered by the measurement process
- Records are complete, accurate, timely

### 3.4 Business Results

The performance measures are as follows:

- Validity and reliability of data
- Timeliness and visibility of reports
- Percentage of Learning and Training programs covered by the measurement process

4. *The "Maintenance Shop"*

The performance measures are as follows:

- Courseware product changes made by 1 body using audit measures
- Timeliness of changes (i.e., regulatory/mandatory)

5. *The "Make or Buy Shop"*

The performance measures are as follows:

- Flexibility of learning processes to accommodate individual and team needs
- Appropriateness of courses for specific audiences, tied to skills
- Just in time, just enough training
- Effective and efficient use of available resources (i.e., instructors, delivery, methods, facilities, etc.)
- Cost effectiveness of development
- Relevance of content to job performance

The formal strategy for training can be examined further by reference to the employment transition process that was described by the Company's managers.<sup>461</sup> The example that is used to illustrate this process involves "Business Unit X," which for the purposes of the illustration accounts for 1,000 employees. Once the unit settles on the "To Be" organization (reflecting its mission or objectives), all employees would become eligible for the transition components in the "Package." Following this section will be a consideration of four Company staff who were to leave the Company, with references to the up-take of the exiting staff of the programs available to them.

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<sup>461</sup>The material in this section is quoted from document C3 (Special Issue).

*Creative Work Alternatives.* At this point, it was planned that 20 employees will accept "creative work alternatives." These employees would agree to work four-day weeks, with a corresponding decrease in pay. This equals a staff reduction of four employees. The means by which the work week is reduced by employees can include job sharing, part-time employment, reduced work weeks, sabbaticals, and seasonal leaves. The total number of employees working, is now, in effect, 996. This stage of the process reflects the tendency to move towards a core-periphery structure, as discussed previously, since reducing hours and pay is a means by which some employees move from the core to the periphery.

*Selective Voluntary Transition.* At this stage, 100 employees take the severance "package," which is described below. Forty-five others take the retirement option with the agreement of the Company.

Four people who have been employed at the Company for five years or more take educational leave. The business unit pays up to \$5,000 per year for books and tuition, and 50 per cent the employee's salary for a maximum of four years. At the end of the first year these employees can continue their education leave, or accept a severance package. After completing the full four years of education leave, they may apply for jobs at the Company as internal applicants. As of 1995, one of the four employees considered in the next section, had decided to take this option.

Three employees participate in the community service option by going to work for non-profit organizations, such as the Red Cross or United Way. The business unit will pay 50 per cent of the salaries for a maximum of one year. At the end of the year, these employees may apply for positions in the Company as internal applicants.

There are now 844 people working in the unit.

*Redundancy Transition.* At this stage, a three-month "grace period" is established during which 44 staff may look for new jobs inside or outside the Company.

Five of the redundant employees find new positions within the Company. Six have skills that the Company deems necessary but for which positions are not immediately available. These people are put into the redeployment program for an additional three-month transition period. All but one find a new position in the Company. The remaining 33 staff are asked to choose from the various components of the "package" (exiting the Company), leaving the unit with its goal of 800 employees.

*The Package.* The "package" that is available to employees is a set of financial incentives for those employees who are voluntarily or involuntarily terminated. The type and amount of financial incentives offered to an employee depend on his or her length of service, age, and rank. The types of incentives include early retirement benefits, leave of absence, a grant to start an entrepreneurial business, and severance pay. Two of the four exiting employees discussed, both of them women, took this option.

*Possible Training Nodes in the Employment Transition Process.* The employment transition process described has "nodes" at which training could take place.

1. The *education leave* is part of the selective voluntary transition stage. Employees take the initiative in deciding what kind of educational experience they will pursue. One informant was planning to complete the requirements for a master's degree that he started, with the financial support of the Company, several years ago.<sup>462</sup> His goal was to become a management consultant; his stated view was that a master's degree was a qualification he needed in order to pursue that career. The educational leave is thus a form of training, but it differs from the kind of training to be examined in more detail later in two ways. First, it is a developmental activity, in contrast to the skill-based training more common in other areas of the Company. In this sense, the Company has less direct control than it does over training that takes place in other nodes in the employment transition process. Second, its potential use is for the transition of the employee out of the Company. Educational leaves can lead, as in the case of the informant mentioned, to employment outside the Company, although they need not, since those employees who take advantage of the educational leave provision may, after a year, take the "package." If they complete the four years of the full leave, they may apply for jobs as internal applicants within the Company.
2. At the stage of redundancy transition, *finding new positions in another business unit* is a node at which employees would have access to training. The employees who do find positions will be in need of the skills and knowledge that is particular to their new business units, since the principle used for this step of the process is that the position found for the employee must be in another business unit in order for the home business unit to achieve its targeted reductions in employee numbers.

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<sup>462</sup>Interview with HJA, 15 June 1994

3. Also at the stage of redundancy transition, those who find themselves in the process of *redeployment* would also have a need for training. Although these employees have stayed with the Company to this point because their skills and knowledge are deemed useful to the business unit's goals (although not at that time), they are taking on new positions that will require the development of context-specific competencies.
4. Throughout the employment transition process, the following career development courses are available to Canadian employees:
  - Increasing Human Effectiveness - a two-day series on interpersonal skills and self-knowledge
  - Strategic Development for Team Members - a one-day course in which employees create an inventory of their competencies and try to match that inventory to Company objectives
  - Career Transitions - a one-day course addressing the topic of change at the Company, intended to help employees adjust to change.
  - Personal Options - an overview of the options for leaving or staying on at the Company.