



**Higher Education in the UK and the USA since Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan:
Converging Models?**

<http://www.univ-paris3.fr/conf-higher-ed>

Friday 23 March 2012

Maison de la recherche de la Sorbonne Nouvelle - Paris 3, 4, rue des Irlandais, 75005 Paris, France

James CÔTÉ, PhD, Full Professor of Sociology,
University of Western Ontario (London, Ontario), CANADA
cote@uwo.ca

The consumer model of higher education: The 'BA-lite' awarded in the US, UK, and Canada

Abstract:

The results of various studies suggest that the study time necessary to earn a BA has declined over the past few decades to the point where full-time university students need only treat their studies as a part-time commitment, and they can still obtain high grades and graduate. Data obtained and analysed by the author from the National Survey on Student Engagement (NSSE) show that on average Canadian and American students now spend 12-13 hours in out-of-class study and assignment completion, regardless of institutional size. With an additional (maximum) 15 hours of in-class time, the average time spent on 'becoming educated' is less than 30 hours per week, not the 40 hours historically associated with a full-time commitment. These figures correspond with results found in several European countries, most notably the UK. These trends are discussed in terms of the spread of mass higher education encouraged by the neoliberal influence on universities to market themselves as vendors of credentials to student consumers, whose 'satisfaction' trumps educational standards.