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Christopher Jencks
David Riesman

THE
ACADEMIC
REVOLUTION

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**Christopher Jencks
David Riesman**

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Introduction to the Transaction Edition

The Academic Revolution was published in the spring of 1968, when revolutions of every kind were in the air. In Prague, the Dubcek government was trying to move from Stalinism to democracy. In Paris, obstreperous students had brought the city's normal business to a halt and come close to toppling the government. In Vietnam, Communist insurgents had fought the United States to a standstill. In America, antiwar protests and urban riots had so weakened Lyndon Johnson that he decided not to seek reelection. On American college campuses students were demonstrating against the war, demanding remedies for racial inequality, and seeking a role in college decision-making. But the "academic revolution" in our title (which we had selected in the early 1960s, before American students started talking about revolution) referred not to what students were doing, but to a longer, slower, and more sedate change in the character of America's academic institutions, which derived from the growing influence of professional scholars.

Before the Civil War, American colleges employed few scholars and attracted few students. By the end of the nineteenth century, that had begun to change. American scholars had organized themselves into professional disciplines, set up specialized publications, and established doctoral programs to train their successors. By the mid-twentieth century, legislators, philanthropists, trustees, and administrators had come to believe that a reputable college or university had to employ reputable scholars. Moreover, a scholar's reputation now depended largely on what other scholars thought about his (or by then sometimes her) published work. But scholars also burnished their reputations by associating with other distinguished scholars, so an institution that wanted to hire top scholars had to offer them substantial leeway in choosing their colleagues and deciding what to teach. The result, we argued, was a major shift in power. College trustees and administrators still exercised formal control over their institutions, but their choices were now constrained by their

belief that success would be measured by the ability to attract a distinguished faculty.

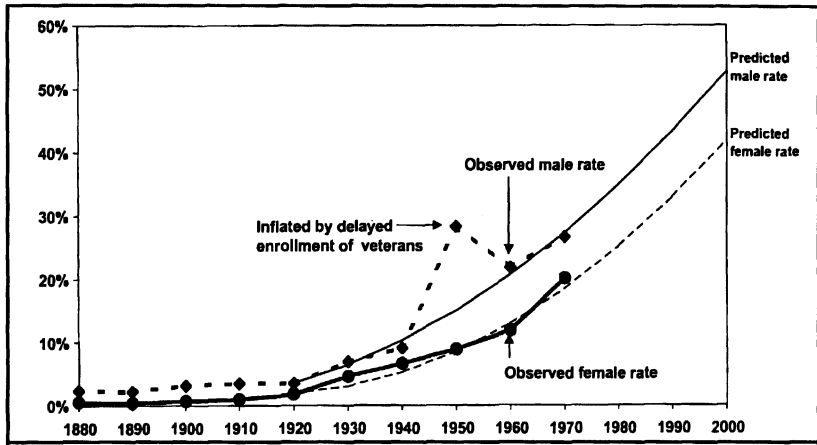
This change had transformed the character of most American colleges, most of which had been founded for non-academic reasons. Some had been established to perpetuate a particular religious belief. Others were nonsectarian ventures, meant to teach young people the social and vocational skills they needed for advancement. Many had been established to put some small town on the map by allowing nearby students to acquire these skills without straying too far from home or exposing themselves to the temptations of a big campus. But once such colleges began hiring scholars trained in major universities, their character began to change. Church-related colleges acquired more faculty members with unorthodox views, who began exposing the faithful to unsettling ideas. Agricultural colleges told farm boys to take liberal arts courses with no obvious practical payoff. Small-town colleges hired teachers who introduced their students to cosmopolitan ideas and sometimes encouraged students to head for the big city after they graduated. Instead of just protecting the parochial interests of their early supporters, colleges became vehicles for disseminating a secular national culture that the college's original patrons would have rejected.

These changes transformed hundreds of small, sleepy, impoverished nineteenth-century colleges into larger, more affluent, and more cosmopolitan institutions. College attendance, which had stagnated or fallen during much of the nineteenth century, rose rapidly from 1920 to 1970. Figure 1 (see page xi) shows the fraction of young people graduating from four-year colleges between 1880 and 1970. Graduation rates edged up very slowly until 1920, but after that growth accelerated. If we set aside the spike in 1950 (which reflects the fact that the class of 1950 included a lot of older veterans), the trend from 1920 to 1970 was a fairly smooth upward curve for both men and women.¹

The Academic Revolution argued that the rise of the academic profession played an important role in expanding demand for higher education. Without the professionalization of academic life, colleges could not have played as large a role in providing the young with specialized job skills. Nor could colleges have done as much as they did to provide firms with managers who shared a common culture. A national economy needs entrepreneurs and managers who have a fair amount in common. Without a common culture, they cannot anticipate one

another's reactions or develop the kind of trust that makes cooperation possible. Once colleges began hiring faculty who shared a common academic culture and began exposing the young to it, their graduates were better situated to become the nucleus of such a managerial class.

Figure 1
Trends in College Graduation from 1880 to 1970,
With Predicted Rates through 2000



Source: US Department of Education, *Digest of Education Statistics, 1998*, Tables 39 and 171. "Observed" data compare the number of first degrees awarded in a given year to the population aged 5 to 17 ten years earlier. Predicted rates are based on regressing the data points for 1920 through 1970 on Year and Year², except that the regression for males excludes the 1950 data point.

Looking back, this account of America's educational history still seems to me convincing. But while I think my co-author, David Riesman, and I had a plausible story about the past, I also think we overestimated the extent to which past trends would continue in the future. Much has happened since 1968 that we did not anticipate. Analyzing these developments would take another book. We cannot write that book, but I do want to highlight two developments that we did not foresee. First, while the academic profession continues to dominate America's leading research universities, its grip on teaching institutions is being challenged in ways that we did not anticipate. Second, while college enrollment continues to grow, it has not grown as much as we expected.

Many Americans use the term "profession" to describe any occupation that requires expertise, but it also has a narrower

and more precise meaning. Unlike most occupations, professions aspire to be self-regulating guilds. Members of a profession decide who can practice it, and they try to set standards governing practitioners' behavior. By such measures America's major research universities are almost completely professionalized. Tenured jobs in such universities almost always require a Ph.D., which only scholars can confer. Pay and promotion depends on publishing books or articles that other scholars judge significant. And when professors in these universities win the esteem of their colleagues, administrators usually treat them with respect, let them teach more or less what they want, and places few limits on their research agenda. Scholars' professional autonomy is limited only if they have a need for external funding, which is often controlled by non-professionals.

But the main mission of most American colleges and universities is not research but teaching. Teaching institutions usually want their faculty to be up on new developments in their discipline, so they usually insist that their permanent faculty have Ph.D.s. This rule is supposed to ensure that faculty members can read their colleagues' work. Many teaching institutions expect junior faculty to publish something before they earn tenure. But teaching institutions know that their survival depends on attracting students, not research grants. A few teaching institutions have brand names so prestigious that customers will keep coming even if they do not enjoy the experience—but that is unusual. So instead of giving students what grownups think the students need, most teaching institutions are under considerable pressure to give students what they want.

Successful college teaching requires not only knowledge, but considerable skill at communicating with late adolescents. Neither a Ph.D. nor a publication record provides much evidence of such skill. And college teachers do not have reliable ways of assessing one another's classroom competence. Scholars spend endless hours reading and critiquing one another's work. College teachers hardly ever visit one another's classrooms, and when they do, they rarely say anything critical. As a result, college teaching has never been professionalized in the way research has.

A generation ago teaching colleges dealt with their inability to assess teachers' classroom competence by giving students a wide choice of teachers. Departments tried to find popular teachers to staff required courses. Then they let stu-

dents decide what other courses to take. Students, therefore, seldom had to take a course from anyone with a bad reputation. The main drawback of this arrangement was that colleges had to support a number of teachers who did little for the institution.

Over the course of the past generation corporate management practices have exerted more influence on many professions. Physicians are more likely to work for health maintenance organizations that hold them accountable for controlling costs and keeping the time spent with any given patient to a minimum. Attorneys are more likely to work for large firms that want every minute billed to some client and reserve big bonuses for those who bring in big corporate clients. Market rhetoric and logic has also become more common in higher education, where administrators have learned to talk about funding streams, profit centers, marketing, and cost containment.

Once an institution begins to think this way, evaluating faculty performance is fairly simple. When the institution reviews faculty members, it need only look at how many students a faculty member's courses attract and how the students who take these courses evaluate them. Instead of worrying about whether a teacher is giving students what they will need in the long run, the college has only to ask whether the students are satisfied today. If the faculty maximize enrollments by inflating their grades or dumbing down their reading lists, that is not seen as a problem. If students prefer teachers who offer simple answers to teachers who offer difficult answers, then that is what teachers should learn to provide. This approach is obviously at odds with the idea that a profession should protect its clients from themselves by giving them what they need, not what they want. But since there are no professional standards for determining which teachers are meeting students' long-term needs, resisting the corporate alternative is difficult.

I have no idea whether this corporate model will transform teaching colleges in the same way that the academic profession transformed them a century ago. My experience since writing *The Academic Revolution* has all been in research universities, where the academic profession still reigns almost unchallenged. But less august institutions may now be moving in a somewhat different direction.

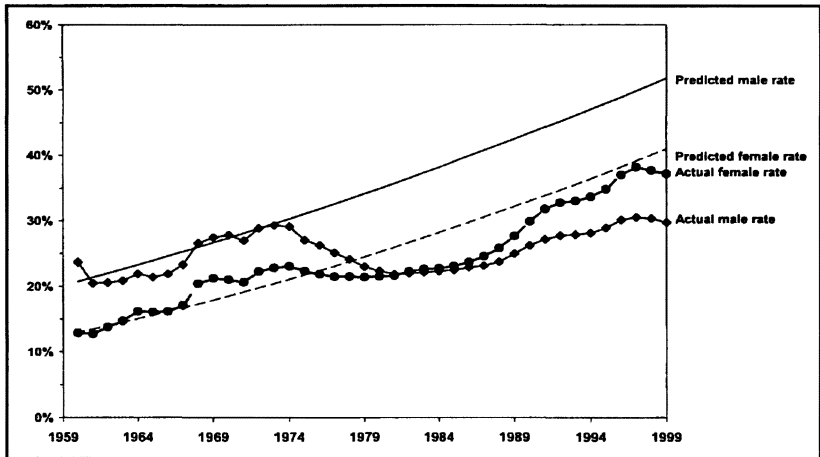
Demand for higher education has also turned out to be weaker than I expected in the late 1960s. Figure 1 showed that the percentage of Americans finishing college rose at

an accelerating rate between 1920 and 1970. This pattern was new, but it seemed consistent with what we had seen earlier at the elementary and secondary level. By 1900, well over half the population was completing eight years of school.² By 1950, more than half was completing high school.³ Based on the growth in college graduation rates, we expected that about half of all young people would be completing college by the end of the century. Figure 1 shows, for example, that if the trends that prevailed between 1920 and 1970 had continued for the next thirty years, roughly half of all men and two-fifths of all women would have earned a bachelor's degree by 2000.

Figure 2 shows what actually happened. Among women, the actual and predicted rates for 1999 were fairly close (thirty-eight vs. forty-one percent). Among men, however, the actual rate was less than three-fifths of the predicted rate (thirty vs. fifty-two percent). No one has proposed a compelling explanation for this shortfall. The main candidates involve changes in the labor market, tuition, and family structure, and the abolition of draft deferments. All these factors are relevant, but none is sufficient.

Male graduation rates fell sharply after 1974. At the time,

Figure 2
Predicted versus Actual Rates of College Graduation: 1960-1997



Source: US Department of Education, *Digest of Education Statistics*, 1999 edition (Tables 15 and 249) and 1994 edition (Table 15). Estimates compare the number of bachelor's degrees awarded in a given year to the population aged 22-24 in the same year. The predicted values are from Figure 1.

Richard Freeman attributed this decline to the falling monetary value of a B.A.⁴ But while the labor market payoff to college graduation surely has some influence on prospective students' behavior, the economic value of a B.A. had recovered by 1990. Indeed, the wage differential between male high school and college graduates with about five years of experience, which had fallen from forty percent in 1969-71 to thirty-three percent in the late 1970s, had risen to fifty-seven percent by 1984 and remained at that level for the next decade. Trends among workers with ten years of experience were even more dramatic.⁵ Nonetheless, the fraction of young men earning college degrees was lower in the early 1990s than in the early 1970s. Something besides monetary returns must have been at work here.

One reason graduation rates lagged in the 1980s is that tuition rose faster than parents' ability to pay. Raising public tuition by \$1000 (in today's dollars) lowers enrollment rates by about six percentage points, which probably lowers the graduation rate by about three points. Real tuition increased by about \$2000 between 1980 and 1994, so we might expect graduation rates to have ended up about six points below their predicted level.⁶ In fact, the 1994 male graduation rate was nineteen points below the predicted level. While tuition increases may well explain why the percentage of women completing college was a bit lower than one might have expected, it cannot explain why men are now less likely to graduate than women. Men are, after all, still more likely than women to be a family's sole breadwinner. And men who complete college still earn more on average than women, making it easier for the men to repay college loans.⁷

When the male graduation rates fell in the 1970s, I argued that the change was probably a byproduct of ending college draft deferments. Whatever the monetary value of school, dropping out was a lot less attractive when the result could be a one-way ticket Vietnam. But if this argument were correct, we would also expect to find see a bigger increase in college entrance rates among men than women after the Vietnam War escalated in 1965. In fact, men's share of first-time college enrollments hardly changed between 1964 and 1969, and after 1969 it began to fall.⁸ Nor were male graduation rates above their long-term trend during the early 1970s.

So what was going on? Demand for secondary education has also weakened since the 1960s. If we set aside students who drop out of high school but later take an "equivalency"

exam, the high school graduation rate peaked in the late 1960s, when it was seventy-six percent. Since 1970, high school graduation rates have slowly but steadily declined, reaching sixty-nine percent in the late 1990s.⁹ This gradual decline is partly traceable to increased immigration: second-generation Latinos have unusually low high school completion rates.¹⁰ In addition, rising rates of imprisonment presumably lower the fraction of teenagers who can earn regular diplomas.

Taken together, falling rates of high school graduation and surprisingly low increases in college graduation suggest that America's romance with formal education may be entering middle age. No divorce is imminent, but the uncritical enthusiasm that marked the first two-thirds of the twentieth century appears to have become less common. Cross-national comparisons support this conclusion. By 1996, seventeen-year-olds in Japan, Germany, France, the Low Countries, and Scandinavia were all more likely than their counterparts in the United States to be in school. Among eighteen to twenty-one-year-olds, where the United States used to enjoy a huge lead over the rest of the world, enrollment is now higher in both Canada and France. Almost all other rich English-speaking countries, including Great Britain and Ireland, have more or less caught up with the United States.¹¹

Faith in formal education may have eroded faster here than in other rich countries because faith in all forms of social engineering has faded more in the United States than in most other rich countries. Americans still believe in material and scientific progress, but our public rhetoric and voting behavior suggest a growing skepticism about other forms of progress. Conservatives, who have always been pessimistic about social progress because they see social problems as an inescapable byproduct of human frailty, have grown more numerous. Many liberals still see government as a machine for ameliorating social problems, but as the public has grown more skeptical about government, liberal politicians have grown increasingly cautious and liberal activists have become demoralized. The net result is, I think, that fewer Americans accept the Jeffersonian view that diffusing knowledge leads to the spread of liberty, equality, justice, and contentment.

When Riesman and I were writing *The Academic Revolution*, we saw the influence of the academic profession on undergraduate education as a mixed blessing. Like almost all col-

lege professors, we believed that students usually benefit from coming to grips with unfamiliar ideas. But we were ambivalent about academicians' claim that undergraduate teachers should be chosen for their expertise in the subjects they taught, with little attention given to their skill in communicating it. We felt that the organization of academic life encouraged the notion that undergraduate instruction should serve as an introduction to some academic discipline—a first step on the long road to making students more like their professors. Our doubts about these matters persist. But watching developments since then, I have become equally skeptical about the notion that teachers should simply give students whatever interests them. We need a viable alternative to treating undergraduates as future Ph.D.s—but treating students as paying customers who by definition are always right is not the answer.

Looking back at what we wrote in 1968, anomalies and errors are easy to spot. Some of these anomalies involve diction. We wrote about college “girls” rather than “women,” because that was the prevailing usage at the time. We also talked about college faculty members as “men,” even when we were discussing colleges where women constituted a significant fraction of the faculty. Such usage was not meant to be patronizing—but it was.

We also wrote about “Negro” colleges, even though the campaign to replace “Negro” with “black” had already begun. This was not an easy choice, because we actually preferred the linguistic symmetry of “black” with “white.” But because the shift from “Negro” to “black” was associated with the “Black Power” movement, the word “black” had not yet been widely accepted by the black community, so we stuck with “Negro.” We also made a lot of judgments about the quality of black colleges that few white writers would have been rash enough to make at the time, and which even we probably would not have committed to print two years later. We hoped that recording these judgments would encourage a more open debate about the future of these beleaguered colleges, but all they really did was provoke a wave of anger akin to what the Moynihan Report had provoked two years earlier.

We also made numerous recommendations for organizational and curricular change that now sound quite far-fetched. Readers may be tempted to dismiss these recommendations as the dewy-eyed byproduct of 1960s radicalism, but that would misread our motives. Neither David Riesman nor I was ever a 1960s radical. We were already too old, too

contrary-minded, and too ambivalent about almost everything to swim comfortably in that sea. Readers who want an ad hominem explanation for our prejudices would do better to bear in mind that neither Riesman nor I hold a Ph.D., and that we both saw ourselves as generalists trying to make sense of the big picture. Our book illustrates the costs as well as the benefits of that approach. In particular, it shows that like the professional scholars we criticized, we favored forms of undergraduate education that we thought likely to work well for people like ourselves. How well these forms of education would work for others remains an open question.

Christopher Jencks
April 2, 2001

Notes

¹Despite the GI Bill, it is not entirely clear that men who finished high school during the late 1930s or early 1940s were more likely to attend college than one would have expected based on the pre-1940 trend (see Table III in chapter III of this volume, for example).

²US Bureau of the Census, *United States Census of Population: 1960. Subject Reports. Educational Attainment*. Final Report PC(2)-5B. Government Printing Office, 1963, Table 1 shows that among 65 to 74 year olds born in the United States, 57 percent of men and 65 percent of women said they had completed at least eight years of school. The figures are inflated by the fact that the less educated die younger and by the fact that the bulk of this cohort reached eighth grade just after the turn of the century, but the fraction completing elementary school must still have exceeded 50 percent.

³National Center for Education Statistics, *Digest of Education Statistics, 1999*, Government Printing Office, 2000, Table 104.

⁴Richard Freeman, *The Overeducated American*, New York: Academic Press, 1976.

⁵David Card and Thomas Lemieux, "Can Falling Supply Explain the Rising Return to College for Younger Men: A Cohort Based Analysis," Cambridge: National Bureau of Economic Research, Working Paper 7655, April 2000, Appendix Table 1. (<http://www.nber.org/papers/w7655>).

⁶This estimate is extrapolated from Thomas Kane, *The Price of Admission*, Washington: Brookings, 1999, Tables 3-1 and 4-6. Kane (pp114-15) also summarizes other research suggesting that a \$1000 increase in tuition lowers enrollment by 6 percentage points.

⁷US Bureau of the Census, "Money Income in the United States: 1998," *Current Population Reports*, P60-206. Washington: Government Printing Office, 1999, Table 9.

⁸*Digest of Education Statistics, 1999*, Table 184.

⁹*Digest of Education Statistics, 1999*, Table 104. Preliminary estimates for 1999 show that the rate climbed for the first time in a decade, reaching 70.6 percent.

¹⁰Min Zhou, "Progress, Decline, Stagnation? The New Second Generation Comes of Age," in Roger Waldinger, ed. *Strangers at the Gates*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001, Figure 8.5.

¹¹*Digest of Education Statistics, 1999*, Table 398.

Introduction

This book attempts a sociological and historical analysis of American higher education. It begins with a general theory about the development of American society and American colleges, then moves on to discuss different species of colleges and their relationships to the various special interest groups that founded them. Not only does it try to describe the past and future of these relationships—it also tries to evaluate them. A book of such ambitious scope plainly cannot hope to be an unqualified success.

As sociology it must inevitably be superficial at many points. There are more than 2,000 institutions of higher education in America, more than 400,000 teachers and administrators, more than 6,000,000 students. We have visited only about 150 of the 2,000 colleges, and in some cases have spent less than a day on a campus. We have talked or corresponded with several thousand professors, but that is only a beginning. Among students the problem is even more acute, for while we have talked with a great many over the years, the turnover is enormous and yesterday's impressions are often out of date. Our sampling has, moreover, been biased, and our ability to learn what we wanted to know about either institutions or individuals has been limited. We have therefore had to rely heavily on "secondary" sources. We have read student newspapers, magazines, catalogues, curricular proposals, and revolutionary manifestos from many colleges we could not visit, as well as from those we could. We have talked with knowledgeable observers in government, the foundations, journalism, business, the professions, and of course academic life itself. We have also read a modest fraction of the books and articles on higher education.

When we began studying higher education more than a decade ago, the number of scholars in the field was small enough so that we could know almost all of them personally and keep up a correspondence with them. Today this is no longer possible. Even keeping up with published reports is a full-time occupation, especially if one defines "the problem" to include not only higher education but its relationship to American society. Given the scope of the questions we have sought to examine and these limitations in our attempts to answer them, our argument cannot be as fully documented or quanti-

fied as we would like. Much of our discussion is speculative and impressionistic simply because there is no alternative.

As history, too, our work is subject to methodological criticism. Indeed, it is not history at all as a professional historian usually defines that term. We have done no original research on the documents that record the evolution of higher education. We have read only a small fraction of the institutional histories and biographies that serve as secondary sources in this field. Our interpretations rest on a small sample of these chronicles and on the general histories done by traditional historians. The reasons for this are well stated by Laurence Veysey in his brilliant book on the development of the American university in the late nineteenth century:

The development of an institutional framework presents peculiar problems to the historian who would seek to account for it. It is often easy to make general statements about the causes for a pattern of institutional arrangements and relationships; yet nothing can be more baffling than the effort to relate these assumed causes to the abundant documentary evidence which is available to illustrate the change. Perhaps this is why we have had a number of suggestive general essays about the American academic revolution of the late nineteenth century, essays based upon relatively little specific investigation, whereas, on the other hand, local histories of individual campuses, which have more often relied upon archival files, curiously shy away from the larger issues of interpretation. The tendency to chronicle, at least, is understandable enough in view of the actual contents of most presidential correspondence. For one may read these letters endlessly without coming across explicit explanations for the relevant events. Indeed one may find the date on which such and such a department was established at such and such a university; one may even uncover a spirited debate over the details of certain of the new arrangements. But exceedingly little direct evidence may be found on decisions involving the basic shape of the rapidly emerging academic structure. The most fundamental assumptions were not being articulated by those who were acting upon them. Many of these assumptions would appear in print only tardily—perhaps a decade after they had become embedded in the institutional pattern—and then would be stated by embittered critics.

One would like to know the reasons for such phenomena as increasing presidential authority, bureaucratic procedures of many sorts, the new functions of the deanship, the appearance

of the academic department with its recognized chairman, and the creation of a calculated scale of faculty rank. These questions were almost always evaded by the participants themselves. Thus President Angell, commenting on the transformation of the University of Michigan during his day, much too casually remarked: "Our rather multifarious usages . . . have grown up without much system under peculiar exigencies." Here was a form of organization which came into being without deliberate debate on the part of its creators and yet displayed such great uniformities that it could not be termed a response to varying local desires or needs. What one sees as one looks at the leading campuses toward the end of the nineteenth century is a complicated but rather standard series of relationships springing to life before one's eyes—yet practically everyone at the time taking the fundamental choices for granted. The lack of self-consciousness that was displayed over the new organization as it came into being points directly toward a predominance of latent elements, rather than manifest intentions, in bringing it about. *One is led, therefore, to reason backward from the evidence of how the academic system functioned toward the causes for its appearance.*¹

What Veysey found after exhaustive study of late nineteenth-century academic life confirmed our own conclusions, based on more superficial inquiries into many other periods and problems, about the limits of documentary research. Like him we have therefore had to look at what happened and have then tried to reason backward to find out why it happened.

This kind of functional analysis is full of pitfalls. If one focuses on men's unconscious, undebated assumptions about themselves and their institutions rather than on the controversies that they themselves thought important enough to write about, there is very little documentary evidence against which to check one's intuition. Under these circumstances some would argue that it would be wiser to say nothing about motives and intentions, simply concentrating on the events and their consequences. At times we have followed this course. But we have not usually been so cautious. The reader should therefore be forewarned that we are prone to assume—or at least to let the reader assume—that because a given arrangement had a given result, those who instituted the arrangement somehow intended that result or were served by it. This was by no means generally true. American

¹ Veysey, pp. 267–68. Italics added. Full citations for all books and documents mentioned in footnotes will be found in the list of references beginning on page 545. Where more than one work by a given author is listed, we have used the initial words of the title to indicate which is being referred to.

educators have seldom been able to give coherent explanations for what they were doing. Even when they did have a consistent theory, it often had little or no relationship to the actual results of their actions. We will try to make this clear in specific cases, but in some instances we may well fail.

Some readers frown on this kind of inquiry, preferring less ambitious but more fully documented analyses. We feel, however, that responsible scholarship must invent methods and data appropriate to the important problems of the day. To reverse this process, choosing one's problems to fit the methods and data that happen to be most satisfactory, strikes us as an invitation to triviality and ultimately as an abdication of social and personal responsibility. The problem to which we have addressed ourselves is the relationship between higher education and American society. Many facets of this relationship can be studied with considerable methodological rigor. The results may even be scientific, in the sense that another investigator can repeat the inquiry with reasonable assurance of getting similar results. But even when the data look "hard," as in the case of the relationship of social mobility to higher education, their meaning is almost always ambiguous, subject to interpretations that vary according to more or less speculative theories about the character of both higher education and society as a whole. When one turns from specific facets of the problem to its over-all shape—trying, for example, to see how students' desire for social mobility fits together with educators' desire to build colleges—nobody can do more than speculate. Ultimately this requires a general theory, and we have tried to move in this direction. We have not, however, been able to develop one that even begins to contain all the complexities of the symbiosis between American colleges and American society. Our description will therefore often transcend and sometimes contradict our generalizations.

Our work is an attempt to generalize and speculate on the basis of many kinds of evidence. The quality of this evidence is limited by the fact that educational institutions, like other small businesses, keep poorer records than large corporations; also, educational statistics are probably even less reliable than economic and demographic statistics. Even so, a good many of our generalizations and speculations could have been more rigorously tested if we had had more time, money, and skilled help. Where we could find data already available we tried to take them into account. But this is an area where academic self-consciousness still often takes the place of institutional research. Where we have found no data, we have had to consult our own experience and that of other informed observers. These observers, like ourselves, were often relying on impressions.

The reader will also be aware of the fact that we have commit-

ments, prejudices, and blind spots. This book is primarily descriptive and is not a polemic on behalf of any given program or policy. The reader who expects a clear-cut evaluation of present or prospective programs is therefore likely to be disappointed. Nonetheless, we have not tried to ignore the major controversies of the day, such as the role of students in university governance, the effects of research on undergraduate teaching, and so forth. We have tried not to let our views on these subjects distort our perspective in that portion of the book—the great bulk of it—that is essentially descriptive. The reader will have to judge for himself whether we have succeeded in this, but he should be cautioned against judging too hastily. Our prejudices are many, but they are often contradictory. The result is that we are ambivalent or uncertain about many issues. This affects our choice of words and tone and leads to a good deal of irony. Many readers may find this puzzling or irritating and want to “know where we stand” and whether to rally round our banner or attack us for our sins. At times, when we argue a position explicitly, this reaction will be both possible and sensible. But those who jump to conclusions about our basic views on the basis of a phrase or sentence are likely to find that a few pages later we are making light of these very views.

The reader may also find a word about our plan of work helpful. This book is the first of two joint efforts on higher education in America. The second will be published under the title *The Academic Enterprise* and discusses what might be called the ecology of higher education in two states: Massachusetts and California. It also includes ethnographic studies of five colleges in these states. Three of these (on Boston College, the University of Massachusetts at Amherst, and San Francisco State College) have already been published.² Two others (studies of the evolution of Harvard and of the University of Massachusetts at Boston) have not. Profiles of two “experimental” colleges—New College in Florida and Shimer College in Illinois—will also appear in this volume.

In this first volume, however, we have not gone into much detail about specific colleges. The first chapter outlines a general hypothesis about the evolution of higher education in America and the nature of what we have called “the academic revolution.” (The term is not, of course, original. We do not, however, know anyone who has used it in anything like the same sense that we do: to describe the rise to power of the academic profession.) Subsequent chapters examine the relationship of higher education to particular interest groups or subcultures within American society. We have tried to say something about the relationship between most of these interest groups and the over-all system of higher education. At the same time we have also

² See Jencks and Riesman, “The Viability.”

discussed the evolution of the colleges especially founded to serve each group. In some chapters we emphasize the first approach, in some the second, in some both. Specifically, our first two chapters, which deal with generational conflict and social mobility, say relatively little about special-purpose colleges. Our next chapters, on occupational interests as manifested in professional schools and on class interests as manifested in public and private colleges, focus on particular species of institutions and try to chart the impact of the academic revolution on them. The chapters on geographic interest groups and sex groups strike a middle ground, mingling both perspectives. The chapters on sectarian and ethnic colleges again focus mainly on institutions that serve a specific group rather than on the relationship between each group and the larger system. Chapter XI takes up two kinds of colleges that have to some extent resisted the academic revolution: the community colleges and what are commonly called experimental colleges. We end with a discussion of the graduate schools, which now shape undergraduate education, and some of the possibilities for improvement there.

This book is the product of a collaboration going back to 1959. Its first fruits were published as "The Viability of the American College" in 1962. The collaboration continued, with frequent interruptions, over the following five years. Over this time our views about higher education have changed, and almost every chapter of this book has been rewritten a number of times to reflect these changes. Even now the reader will detect inconsistencies in both tone and substance.

Since the authors were in the same city for only two months between 1960 and 1967, a division of labor was essential. The organization, quantitative investigation, and writing were done mainly by Jencks. The college visiting and interviewing were done mainly by Riesman. Reading and reflection were divided and at times duplicated. As in any good collaboration, the ultimate product is very much a joint effort. In many cases we ourselves would be hard pressed to say which of us first chose a particular phrase or first elaborated a particular line of thought.

Yet even this puts matters too simply, for in addition to the work of the coauthors, this book is in good part the product of many cooperative colleagues who spent endless hours talking with us, writing to us, reading and criticizing earlier drafts of the manuscript, and turning out manuscripts of their own from which we have learned much. We have tried to acknowledge these unseen collaborators below, but here we wish to apologize to those who have been inadvertently omitted and to thank them all collectively.

We are indebted to Frank Bowles of the Ford Foundation, Richard Storr of the University of Chicago, and Laurence Veysey of the Uni-

versity of California at Santa Cruz for critical comments on an earlier draft of Chapter I. Parts of this chapter will also be published this year in Alvin Eurich's collection of essays, *Campus 1980*.

An earlier draft of Chapter II benefited from critical readings by Frank Bowles, Bruce Eckland of the University of North Carolina, Joseph Gusfield of the University of Illinois, Clark Kerr of the University of California, Michael Maccoby of Cuernavaca, Mexico, and John Finley Scott of the University of Washington. Portions of this chapter appeared in slightly different form in the *Teachers College Record*, Autumn 1967.

Earlier drafts of Chapter III, which is part of a larger investigation of the effects of schooling on social mobility and equality being conducted by the first author, were critically read by Alexander Astin of the American Council on Education, C. Arnold Anderson of the University of Chicago, Samuel Bowles, André Danière, Humphrey Doermann and William Spady of Harvard University, Bruce Eckland, Abbott L. Ferriss of the Russell Sage Foundation, John Folger of the Commission on Human Resources, Seymour Harris of the University of California at San Diego, Robert Hassenger of the University of Notre Dame, Charles Nam of Florida State University, Charles Silberman of *Fortune* magazine, Frederick Rudolph of Williams College, Sydney Spivak of Princeton University, Arthur Waskow of the Institute for Policy Studies, and Finis Welch of Southern Methodist University. Portions of this chapter appeared in somewhat different form in *The Public Interest* (Winter 1968) and *The Harvard Educational Review* (Spring 1968).

An earlier draft of Chapter IV was read by Frank Bowles, Daniel Calhoun of the University of California at Davis, Lawrence Cremin of Teachers College, Columbia University, John Gustad of Ohio State University, Robert Kroepsch of the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education, Martin Lichterman of the New England Board of Higher Education, George W. Pierson of Yale University, and John and Ruth Useem of Michigan State University, all of whom offered critical comments.

Kenneth Feigenbaum of the Antioch Putney Graduate School, Charles Rosenberg of the University of Pennsylvania, Laurence Veysey, and Dael Wolfe of the American Association for the Advancement of Science made helpful criticisms of Chapter V. Part of this chapter appeared in *Tri-Quarterly* (Winter 1968).

Gary Becker of Columbia University, André Danière, Humphrey Doermann, and Frederick Rudolph offered critical comments on an earlier version of Chapter VI.

An earlier draft of Chapter VIII was critically read by James Luther Adams of the Harvard Divinity School, Larry Bothell of the Episcopal

Theological School, Daniel Calhoun, J. Edward Dirks of the Yale Divinity School, Charles Glock of the University of California at Berkeley, John Gustad, Philip Hammond of the University of Wisconsin, W. J. Kilgore of Baylor University, and Martin Marty of *Christian Century*.

On Chapter IX we are indebted to Sister Marie Augusta Neal, S.N.D., of Emmanuel College, Father Carroll Bourg, S.J., at the Office of Social Research of the Jesuits' Maryland Province, Sister Ritamary Bradley of St. Ambrose College, Frank Buckley of Assumption College, Daniel Callahan of *Commonweal* magazine, Sally Cassidy of Wayne State University's Monteith College, John Donovan of Boston College, Father Joseph Fichter, S.J., of the Harvard Divinity School, Father Andrew Greeley of the National Opinion Research Center, Robert Hassenger, Timothy J. Healey, S.J., of Fordham University, Everett C. Hughes of Brandeis University, Ralph Lane of the University of San Francisco, John Lukacs of Chestnut Hill College, John Noonan, Jr., of the University of Notre Dame, Michael Novak of Stanford University, Michael True of Assumption College, Edward Wakin of Fordham University, and Sister Mary William, I.H.M., of Immaculate Heart College for critical comments on earlier drafts. Portions of this chapter appeared in the Winter 1966 and Spring 1967 issues of *The Public Interest*, and a number of correspondents made comments on these articles which we tried to take account of in revising the chapter for this book.

Richard Balzer of VISTA, Howard Boozer of the North Carolina State Board of Education, Ernst Borinski of Tougaloo College, Lewis Dexter of Belmont, Massachusetts, John Ehle of Winston-Salem, North Carolina, Leonard Fein of Massachusetts Institute of Technology, John Hope Franklin of the University of Chicago, Richard Frost of the U. S. Office of Economic Opportunity, David Fowler of the Carnegie Institute of Technology, Herbert Gans of the Center for Urban Education, Eli Ginsberg of Columbia University, Bernard Harleston of Tufts University, Watts Hill of the North Carolina State Board of Education, Wesley Hotchkiss of the United Church Board of Homeland Missions, Richard Hunt of Harvard University, Bruce Jackson of the University of Buffalo, Esther Jackson of Shaw University, Clifton Johnson and Lewis Jones of Fisk University, James Laue of the U. S. Community Relations Service, Michael Maccoby, Thomas Pettigrew of Harvard University, Richard Plaut of the National Scholarship Service and Fund for Negro Students, Harold Pfautz of Brown University, Richard Robbins of the University of Massachusetts at Boston, Hans Rosenhaupt of the Woodrow Wilson National Fellowship Foundation, Sydney Spivak, Tyson Tildon of Brandeis University, Kenneth Tollett of Texas Southern, Marvin

Wachman of Lincoln University, Arthur Waskow, and Samuel Wiggins of George Peabody College provided critical comments on an earlier draft of Chapter X. It should not need to be said that they are in no way responsible for what we say in this chapter, but apparently this does need to be said for other critics have asked us not to use their names lest they be tainted by any association with us. An earlier version of this chapter was published in the *Harvard Educational Review* (Winter 1967). We have made a few minor revisions on the basis of published criticisms of that article, particularly those by Stephen Wright of the United Negro College Fund, Benjamin Mays of Morehouse College, Hugh Gloster of Hampton Institute, Albert Dent of Dillard University, Paul Garver of Southern University, William Brazziel of Virginia State College, and Julian Stanley of the University of Wisconsin. These were published in the *Harvard Educational Review*, 37 (Summer 1967), 451-76.³

It must also be said that one of the hazards of extensive correspondence and discussion, especially when spread over many years, is unconscious plagiarism. A phrase or idea, hardly noticed when first encountered, often comes back "spontaneously" years later and is thought to be original. If we have borrowed in this way from anyone without giving him credit, we apologize, and add in extenuation only that we have no objection to those who do the same with our own work. This is particularly likely to have happened with regard to work published before we began this manuscript. We read and partially assimilated a great many books on higher education before deciding to do one of our own, and our citations tend to reflect our more recent reading better than that done earlier. Nor can citations readily indicate the extent of our debt to men with whom we have had personal contact over long periods, or to lecture courses regularly attended. (The second author is especially indebted in this respect to Daniel Calhoun, whose course on the history of American education he audited at Harvard several years ago, and to Everett Hughes, whose lectures at Chicago he found formative at an earlier point.)

Finally, we must pay tribute to the generous financial assistance and remarkable patience of the Carnegie Corporation of New York, which was a model disinterested patron during the years we were at work on this book, and to the Samuel Rubin Foundation, which helped support Jencks during 1966 and 1967 at the Institute for Policy Studies. The substance of our work and our judgments are, of course, solely our own responsibility.

³ The reader interested in this controversy should also look at the Summer 1967 issue of the *Journal of Negro Education*, devoted to "The Higher Education of Negro Americans: Prospects and Programs." Many of these articles are critical of ours, but they were published too late for us to deal specifically with them.



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I. The Academic Revolution in Perspective

Traditional Colleges and Their Clients

During the seventeenth, eighteenth, and early nineteenth centuries, American colleges were conceived and operated as pillars of the locally established church, political order, and social conventions. These local arrangements were relatively stable, widely accepted as legitimate, and comparatively well integrated with one another. Yet while the pre-Jacksonian college was almost always a pillar of the establishment, it was by no means a very important pillar. An American "college" was in some respects more like today's secondary schools than today's universities. It did not employ a faculty of scholars. Indeed, only one or two pre-Jacksonian college teachers exercised any significant influence on the intellectual currents of their time. An always upright and usually erudite clergyman served as president. He then hired a few other men (usually young bachelors and often themselves aspiring clergymen) to assist in the teaching. There were only a few professorships in specialized subjects. In most cases everyone taught almost everything, usually at a fairly elementary level.

Nor did these colleges have much impact on the character of the rising generation. Only a minority of those who controlled the established institutions of pre-Jacksonian America sent their children to college, and an even smaller minority had itself been to a college. Even those who attended seldom seem to have regarded the experience as decisive for their later development, at least judging by the relative scarcity of references to colleges in the literature of the time. Unlike leading continental universities, American colleges offered little professional training in fields like medicine, law, or theology. The liberal arts courses were probably in closer touch with the Enlightenment than their nineteenth-century successors would be with the spirit of their time, but they seldom seem to have played a major role in shaping the minds of America's leading thinkers.

With the wisdom of hindsight it is tempting to conclude that these colleges influenced neither the intellectual nor the social history of their era. Indeed, it could be argued that America overinvested in higher education during the pre-Jacksonian years. Perhaps the resources devoted to colleges might have been better allocated to

libraries, scientific societies, or primary schooling. But like other more recent victims of colonialism, Americans during these years were eager to have the outward trappings of equality with the mother country, even if these trappings were neither relevant to the American setting nor notably productive in the mother country itself. Many argued that America should go its own way and that social priorities and institutional arrangements had to vary from one country to another. But in America as in Africa today, collegiate promoters could and did charge such critics with selling their country short and perpetuating subordination to Europe. England had a few colleges, so America had more.

By the second quarter of the nineteenth century the character of American society had begun to undergo a radical transformation. The break with England, the formation of a national government, the disestablishment of state churches, and the opening of lands across the Appalachians had all gradually undermined the established institutions and traditions of colonial society. The election of Andrew Jackson has usually been taken as the symbol of this change, even though there had already been a steady progression away from the old order during the fifty years between the Declaration of Independence and Jackson's triumph. The eclipse of established colonial hierarchies after 1828 created a vacuum which almost everyone was eager to fill, but nobody succeeded. The rest of the nineteenth century therefore saw a continuous struggle for power and legitimacy between the many subcultures that flourished in the rapidly growing nation.

Once it became clear that no single group of men had the power to shape society as a whole, many preferred to strike out on their own rather than try to climb the long ladder into existing institutions. Religious dissenters found less and less reason to try to reform the churches within which they had been raised; it was often easier to set up a new church with a new dogma. Rebels against local mores had equally little reason to struggle against them; it was easier to move west where neither law nor entrenched social custom hemmed one in. Entrepreneurs who didn't like the way the family business was run were similarly inclined to go into business for themselves, and they usually had as good a chance of staying afloat as their more venerable competitors. The same pattern was reflected in higher education: the dissidents who disliked Harvard, Yale, or William and Mary did not in most cases try to transform them, as English dissidents did Oxford and Cambridge during this same era. Instead, they set up their own competitive colleges to serve new purposes, many of which had not previously been regarded as appropriate for a college.

Nineteenth-century Americans grouped themselves by occupation,

social class, religion, sex, locality, and ethnic background, among other things. As the century wore on almost all these groups felt impelled to set up their own colleges, both to perpetuate their distinctive subculture and to give it legitimacy in the larger society. By 1900 there were special colleges for Baptists and Catholics, for men and women, for whites and blacks, for rich and not-so-rich, for North and South, for small town and big city, for adolescents and adults, for engineers and teachers. We will call these institutions "special-interest" colleges, and will distinguish them from eighteenth-century colleges which served a relatively unified establishment. In many cases a special-interest college served several subcultures simultaneously, blending feminism with the values of the East Coast elite, for example, or mixing Methodism with Texas chauvinism. The number of permutations was almost infinite, and in due course many of them were tried.

In describing this process we do not want to overstress the element of rationality. The entrepreneurs who set up these colleges seldom did anything like market research before opening their doors, and most were ready to redefine or blur their initial aims if this was necessary for survival. Hundreds of colleges owed their existence to the energy and dedication of a single man who felt the call to found a college and was able to rally a few supporters for his cause. (In this they resembled Protestant religious sects, from which they often sprang.) College-founding and college-building were outlets for a variety of talents and dreams that could not be accommodated within either small business or the normal activities of the churches, and they attracted many men with unrealistic ideas about the demand for their services. Yet the influence of such personal factors inevitably diminished over a period of time. Some ill-conceived colleges were stillborn, and others died with their founders.¹ Those that survived and flourished did so less because of their founders' magnetic charm or personal commitment than because they appealed to enduring hopes and passions within American society. Many colleges were founded in improbable places, but all things being equal such colleges were less likely to survive than those that identified with a geographic area at once college-oriented and in some measure self-contained and self-conscious. Similarly, many colleges were founded for religious and pedagogical reasons which are now obscure or forgotten, but most of them quickly dropped these commitments and learned to base their public appeal on the customs, concerns, or practical needs of one or more fairly well-established subcultures. In the evolution of colleges as of species, then, order and apparent rationality emerged

¹ On this process see Tewksbury; his figures indicate that about 800 colleges were probably founded before the Civil War, and that only 180 of these survived into the twentieth century.

through natural selection and adaptation over time rather than from the initial mutations, many of which were freakish and almost random.

The founders of nineteenth-century colleges typically had several contradictory aims. On the one hand, few spokesmen for these subcultures really imagined that their followers would soon become a numerical majority in America, or even be able to impose their vision on a majority. This being so, they felt obliged to seek some kind of accommodation with mainstream America, whatever that might be. At the same time they also wanted to redirect this stream into new channels. They were, in short, both diplomats and dreamers, concerned with getting on in this generation as well as with laying the foundations for a larger empire in the next.

Thus the pioneers frequently spoke of creating a "Western" culture, which would stand in opposition to the "decadent" East, and the founders of Western colleges sometimes pandered to these prejudices, at least in their propaganda. But the rare pioneer who sent his son to college wanted him to be able to meet Eastern as well as Western standards, or at least to be able to deal with the more Easternized leaders of Western society. Similarly, the Catholic religious orders that founded colleges wanted to create a culture that would be at once literate, respectable, and faithful. In this way they hoped to create a Catholic counter-elite comparable to the Anglo-Saxon upper-middle class. At the same time they frequently wanted to give their alumni the skills and manners they needed to get on in what was still a predominantly Protestant society. The farmers who supported the land-grant colleges were in an analogous dilemma. They wanted to provide their sons with an alternative to the apparently useless classical instruction given at established colleges, but they nevertheless wanted their children to hold their own in conversation with lawyers, bankers, and other big shots educated at traditional institutions. Similar ambiguities recurred in every special-interest college, for no subculture was ever quite sure whether it wanted its children to stay entirely within the parents' world or make the compromises needed to get on in the larger American society.

On the whole, however, the special-interest colleges were bastions of separatism rather than of social integration. The roots of this separatism are not hard to find. Most nineteenth-century colleges got their money from the particular constituency they served. Church colleges got their money from the church itself, from wealthy philanthropists of the same faith, and from tuition charges which were met by parents and students of that faith. Local colleges got their money from local boosters eager to make a quick profit on land or to develop business opportunities in their town, from taxpayers in the geographic jurisdiction from which they drew their students,

and from local students' fees. Women's colleges and Negro colleges, it is true, often depended on philanthropic support from outsiders. Yet even these colleges usually covered most of their costs from tuition and fees, and this made them more inward than outward looking. This pattern was somewhat less marked among vocationally or occupationally oriented colleges. Teachers colleges, for example, were largely supported by taxes on non-teachers, and agricultural colleges relied heavily on taxes paid by city dwellers. In general, however, money was available to special-interest colleges primarily for purposes defined by the subculture to which they catered. The colleges, as we shall see, often redefined these purposes to suit their own internal needs, but they experienced relatively little outside pressure to do so. (The situation was very different at the universities, as we shall also see.)

The choice of college trustees tended to follow the same pattern as financial support. The college whose special mission was defined by geography or religion usually drew all its trustees from within its particular parish, at least initially. The vocational colleges presented a more mixed picture, as did the women's colleges and the Negro colleges. Yet even when whites founded a missionary college for Negroes, or men agreed to serve on the board of a women's college out of noblesse oblige, guilt, or self-importance, or when an engineering school brought lawyers onto the board in order to exploit their special skills and create the appearance of diversity, this usually had only limited direct effect on the character of undergraduate life and learning.

The trustees' most important job was to choose a president, and the most important difference between one board and another was perhaps the criteria they used in making this choice. A sectarian college with a board made up exclusively of Baptists or Catholics was likely to choose a Baptist or Catholic president. A geographically based board composed entirely of Californians or Pennsylvanians, or even one composed entirely of San Franciscans or Philadelphians, was less likely to feel that it could choose only a native of its own area, though of course he would have to make it his own once chosen. An engineering school, on the other hand, even if it had lawyers and businessmen on its board, was unlikely to choose anyone who lacked scientific credentials to run the college. Similarly, boards dominated by whites eventually came to feel they had to find a Negro to administer a college for Negro students, and boards dominated by men sometimes felt that they had to find a woman to preside over a women's college.

Today, as we will argue in more detail later, the pattern of finance, the character of the board, and the choice of a chief

executive probably have less effect on the character of undergraduate education than the sources of faculty and students. But in the nineteenth-century colleges we have been discussing, the donors, trustees, and presidents were probably more decisive. This was an era when self-confident trustees tended to intervene in college affairs far more often and more disastrously than is usual today—perhaps partly because there were fewer financial and architectural decisions with which the president could divert them, but also because they were more righteous and sure of themselves. Nineteenth-century college presidents also tended to be far more domineering than they are today, carrying the business of the college around in their brief cases or even in their heads, entrusting very little to committees of faculty members or lower level bureaucrats, and imposing their personal stamp on the entire college. Most of all, it was a time when financial solvency was so precarious that colleges responded to even the smallest external pressures and had only the most limited ability to reshape the priorities established by their supporters.

In part, of course, this was because the faculty was still quite unprofessionalized. Relatively few instructors in the colleges we are describing had had any sort of advanced training beyond the B.A. Indeed, no such training was available in America except to some small extent in theology. A few instructors had studied in Europe, but this too remained exceptional until the last quarter of the century, and was hardly general even then. The faculty were in many cases drawn from the same subculture as the rest of the college. Church colleges tended to hire members of their own faith, professional schools hired members of the profession, upper-class colleges often hired independently wealthy faculty, and even colleges for women and for Negroes often came to depend mainly on women and Negroes to teach. The local colleges were more likely to bring in outsiders, but these men then tended to take on the protective coloration of their new environment. The college instructor was, moreover, very much at the beck and call of the president and trustees. Tenure seldom existed, and faculty seem to have felt obliged to move on whenever they got into difficulty with their college or its public, rather than staying to fight. The vision of a college professor as an independent expert with a mission transcending the college where he happened to teach was almost unknown.²

The final but perhaps most important element that requires brief mention is the students themselves. Chapter II will argue in more

² On the status of faculty in the pre-Civil War college see Hofstadter and Metzger, pp. 229–38. These authors make clear that even in that era there was a gradual improvement in the status and influence of faculty on policy-making at the better colleges.

detail that students today are less dependent on adults and less influenced by them than they were in the nineteenth or even the early twentieth century. But there has always been such a thing as student culture; it has always had a significant effect on the individual students who came to a given college; and it has always been to some extent shaped by the mix of student types at that college. This being so, the recruitment patterns of special-interest colleges meant that the colleges tended to re-enforce their students' sense of separatism rather than drawing them into a larger social and cultural milieu.³ It is true that some rural and small-town students went away to a college where they met big-city boys; that some Westerners went "back East" to college and discovered a more ordered and polished social style; and that some poor boys worked their way into and through colleges where most of their classmates came from prosperous and cultured backgrounds. It sometimes even happened that Negroes broke out of their segregated world into an integrated college, or that evangelical Protestants ended up at a secular college where their faith was continually under fire. Still, reading college histories we have the impression that such mixing was less often consciously encouraged then than now, and that it was more difficult both financially and culturally. Thus, while nineteenth-century America was an enormously heterogeneous and fluid world, with people moving from region to region, class to class, religion to religion, and farm to city, this heterogeneity was only partly reflected in the colleges of the time. Indeed, colleges often seem to have been founded and maintained primarily as a reaction against the very fluidity of society and the rapid pace of change, as part of a vain struggle to maintain the old standards and the old ways.

Still, the special-interest colleges we have been describing were probably no more important or effective as bulwarks of traditional values than were their colonial predecessors. Colleges probably played a far smaller role in nineteenth-century America and did far less to define people's attitudes toward themselves or one another than nineteenth-century churches did. Earning a B.A. was of limited value for getting ahead on the job, and spending four years on a college campus was of even less value in understanding nineteenth-century culture. Despite the multiplication of colleges during these years, enrollment remained extremely low, almost all colleges remained finan-

³ We use the term "recruitment" with some hesitation here and throughout this book to describe a process that might better be called enlistment. Undergraduates at nineteenth-century colleges were almost entirely self-selected, with almost no systematic recruitment and little screening of applicants. This is still true in most colleges today. Even in colleges where systematic recruitment and selection now exist, the character of the student body is still in good part determined by who wants the college, not by whom the college wants.

cially marginal, and the majority eventually went under. Taken as a group the nineteenth-century colleges portrayed in institutional histories strike us as depressing and sterile places.

The Spread of Meritocratic Institutions

It would take a book considerably longer than this one to describe the changes in American society that led to the establishment of national institutions and of what seems, at least in comparison to earlier times, to be a relatively homogeneous upper-middle class culture. The underlying factors were probably technological, but this should not be interpreted in a narrow sense. Industrial technology (e.g. the assembly line) played some part, forcing many enterprises to reorganize so as to achieve economies of scale. But this was by no means a uniform need or trend. Industrial technology in the narrow sense may have led to the creation of a Ford Motor Company, but it did not account for General Motors and still less for the Bank of America or General Dynamics. These were products of what Kenneth Boulding and others have called the organizational revolution, which enabled a few powerful individuals to exercise effective control over larger and larger numbers of people. This revolution depended on technology (the typewriter, the telephone, later the computer), but in a very different way from the industrial revolution of earlier vintage. There is no clear evidence that the large organizations created in this way were more efficient than the smaller enterprises they usually supplanted, or that they served the public better. All that can be said is that they were not conspicuously less efficient. Probably their spread must be explained in other ways. The agglomeration of power and accommodation of interests within the framework of a single institution inevitably appealed to those in a position to dominate that institution. If such organizations were not egregiously incompetent compared to smaller ones, and if the ideological and legal checks on their growth were weak, they were bound to grow simply because their leaders had more power and resources available than anyone else. The ability of large businesses to retain income and thus free themselves from money-market control has facilitated their ability to grow by their own rather than Wall Street's devising.

There were, of course, many other factors involved in the establishment of overarching national institutions: the closing of the frontier and later the end of migration, the decline of sectarianism and religious fervor, the rise of a national market for both jobs and goods, the emergence of nationwide magazines and more recently radio and television, the growth of the national government as a major force in

people's lives, the unifying effect of foreign wars. These changes were accompanied and intensified by changes in the dominant political ideology of American society, in family structure and child rearing, in the character of relationships between individuals, and in individuals' self-perception. The cumulative effect of these changes appears to have been the destruction of the nineteenth-century Jacksonian world in which every dissident could cut loose from his fellows and go into business for himself. Most of the major conflicts and concords of twentieth-century America were shaped within a complex of large, firmly established, loosely interrelated institutions.

Or so it seems. Actually, it might be somewhat more accurate to say that the old Jacksonian world has been overshadowed rather than destroyed. There is, after all, still an enormous amount of small business in America, both in the narrow economic sense and in the larger social sense. On the other hand, there can be no doubt that the over-all economic picture has been radically altered by the fact that the bulk of the nation's business is now done by big corporations, and that most young people considering business careers now choose to work for these corporations rather than take the risk of striking out on their own. A similar line of argument could be developed in other areas. The dissident clergyman who wants to start his own denomination has clearly not disappeared from American life; on the contrary, the number of small fundamentalist sects seems continually to grow. What *has* happened is that big, affluent, highly organized denominations play a much larger role than they did in the Jacksonian era. Analogous changes have taken place in other areas in American life. Whether this has meant an absolute decline in opportunities for independent entrepreneurship is unclear.⁴

The fact that so much of the old Jacksonian world has survived right down to the present time makes it extremely difficult to date the changes we are describing with any accuracy. Historians are always torn between looking for watersheds and looking for continuities. Laurence Veysey has argued that the coming of the railroad was the most important break between the earlier pluralist and loosely federated America and the later, more centralized, unified, and industrialized one. In some respects the Civil War served as a catalyst for changes that began earlier. It both symbolized and

⁴ The last few decades have seen an absolute decline in the number of self-employed individuals. This includes self-employed businessmen, self-employed professionals, and farmers (see 1960 *Census*, I, 1, table 89, and Blau, p. 478). In many cases, however, this may not reflect an absolute decline in opportunities for self-employment but a relative rise in opportunities for salaried employment. The son of a farmer or small businessman may decline to follow in his father's footsteps even though the farm or business is making a larger profit than it did a generation ago, on the grounds that the increase has been slower than the general increase in salaries.

facilitated a shift of emphasis from the second to the first word in "United States." Yet even today this shift is incomplete, its resolution depending on the nature of the issue, the local as well as the national political climate, and the kinds of deterrents local, state, and federal institutions possess.

Whatever the causes or timing of the change, few would deny that established national institutions play a much larger role today than they did a century ago and that their dominance is likely to increase. The character of American life is in good part determined within such diverse and sporadically conflicting enterprises as the Chase Manhattan Bank and the Treasury Department, the Pentagon and Boeing Aircraft, the Federal Courts and the National Council of Churches, CBS and *The New York Times*, the State Department and the Chamber of Commerce, the Chrysler Corporation and the Ford Foundation, Standard Oil and Sun Oil. It is not determined to anything like the same extent by small businessmen, independent professionals, or eccentric millionaires. This does not, of course, mean that farmers, doctors, or Texas oilmen are without influence. It does mean that they exercise influence through organizations like the Farm Bureau and the American Medical Association, and that they exercise influence mainly on other large institutions rather than directly on other individuals. Big, well-established institutions have in some cases crowded smaller and more marginal competitors entirely off the stage. This is the case, for example, with national news magazines and automobile manufacturers, to take two dissimilar cases. In other enterprises, such as local newspapers and home construction, small entrepreneurs can still break in. In others, such as intellectual quarterlies and fashion design, off-beat individuals can sometimes find a niche. Nevertheless, it seems fair to say that established national institutions set most of the ground rules for both stability and change in contemporary America. (Most, but not all, as Negro rioting and bloody police retaliation have recently been demonstrating.)

The mere existence of well-established institutions does not, however, tell us anything about their management and control. The late C. Wright Mills used to argue that established institutions of this kind were controlled by a small group of men who had been to the same schools, shared the same values, and manipulated the rest of society to suit their own needs. One of the present authors earlier argued the contrary, suggesting that the activities of these institutions are subject to veto by a wide variety of vested interests both within each institution and within the larger society.⁵ Both of us still take this latter

⁵ See Riesman, Denney, and Glazer, *The Lonely Crowd*, chap. 11. For further discussion of the difference between Mills and Riesman, see Riesman's preface to the paperback edition (1961). For a full statement of Mills's position see *The Power Elite*.

view. While initiative often comes from the top, this is by no means always the case—especially if the top is taken to mean boards of trustees and directors as against top administrators and professionals.

There are, of course, variations from one institution to another. Control over organized violence is in fewer hands than control over capital, and control over capital is in fewer hands than control over ideas. The Federal Bureau of Investigation is more centralized than the State Department, but both are more centralized than the Office of Economic Opportunity or the Department of Housing and Urban Development. There are similar variations in the private sector. Texas tycoons exercise more personal control over their empires than the Rockefellers over theirs. Almost any profit-making corporation is more managed from the top down than any church, university, or professional association.

Nonetheless, even the managers of the most centralized organizations, public or private, believe they have little room for maneuver. They feel hemmed in by rivals for power within their organization, by competitive organizations, by their prospective clients, by their lawyers and their boards of directors (or fellow directors), and even by their subordinates. The latter, especially, exercise power in many ways that deserve more attention than they have gotten. Boards of directors sometimes go along with their company president because they have no ready replacement and because they fear he may take another job if he is not given his head. President Kennedy ordered resumption of nuclear testing in 1962 because, among other things, scientists threatened to leave the weapons laboratories if their hardware was not tried out. And, of course, as we shall see in more detail later, university trustees and administrators are constantly readjusting both the means and the ends of higher education so as to attract eminent scholars to their institutions.

We hope this view of America will be reflected in our rhetoric. We have chosen to speak of “established institutions,” not of “the establishment.”⁶ We see established institutions as the framework and battleground within which most changes in the American system are now worked out, but we do not see America as ruled by an interlocking directorate or clique. Established institutions are a mixed bag, and their ascendancy does not fully define either the character of modern American life or the expectations and aspirations of the young

⁶ It is interesting to note that the English originally used the term “establishment” in the way we use the term “established institutions.” It applied to the Church of England and was then extended to include the Civil Service. Only in recent years has it been aimed at individuals rather than institutions, becoming a synonym for something like Mills’s “power elite.” See the essay by Henry Fairlie, in Hugh Thomas, ed. It was, however, in this latter sense that Americans took over the term in the early 1960s.

people who will live and work within them. Yet the hegemony of these institutions does exclude some possibilities and encourage others.

To begin with, the sources of differentiation in American life are changing. The old nineteenth-century divisions between Irish and Yankee, Baptist and Episcopalian, North and South, country and city seem to be losing their significance. Even the struggles between Negroes and whites and between Catholics and non-Catholics, while certainly far from settled, strike us as legacies of a vanishing past rather than as necessary features of the contemporary American system.⁷ This system is increasingly meritocratic, in Michael Young's sense of that term.⁸ It tries to divide people according to competence, interest, and achievement rather than according to origin. (Background and competence are very much related, as poor people's failure to meet "objective" middle-class standards indicates. But the correlation is far from perfect.) While there are still plenty of exceptions to the general meritocratic rule, and plenty of reasons for ambivalence about its increasing acceptance, it seems to us an inevitable feature of highly organized societies with a very specialized division of labor.

The partial triumph of meritocracy brings with it what we will call the national upper-middle class style: cosmopolitan, moderate, universalistic, somewhat legalistic, concerned with equity and fair play, aspiring to neutrality between regions, religions, and ethnic groups. Not everyone who has money, power, or visibility in America subscribes to this set of ideals even in theory, much less in practice. There are many who take a narrower and more overtly self-interested view of the world, especially among those who have only recently climbed to within hailing distance of the top. Nor do these attitudes affect all aspects of life equally: men who think America has dealt unfairly with Negroes may, for example, see no comparable source of regret in America's treatment of the Vietnamese. Nonetheless, we would argue that the ethic we are describing, like the institutions which encourage it, is growing stronger rather than weaker.

The Rise of the University

These changes in the character of American society have inevitably been accompanied by changes in higher education. The most basic

⁷ The fact that racial conflict can in principle be resolved within the present institutional framework does not, of course, mean that it necessarily *will* be resolved, any more than the fact that Soviet-American conflicts can in principle be resolved necessarily means we will avoid nuclear war. Societies can be destroyed by idiocy as well as by "necessary" conflicts.

⁸ See Young, and the discussion in Riesman, "Notes on Meritocracy."

of these changes has been the rise of the university. This has had many consequences. College instructors have become less and less preoccupied with educating young people, more and more preoccupied with educating one another by doing scholarly research which advances their discipline. Undergraduate education has become less and less a terminal enterprise, more and more a preparation for graduate school. The result is that higher education has ceased to be a marginal, backward-looking enterprise shunned by the bulk of the citizenry. Today it is a major growth industry, consuming about 2 per cent of GNP, directly touching the lives of perhaps 4 per cent of the population, and exercising an indirect effect on the whole of society.

The rise of the university has been gradual rather than sudden. The first Ph.D. was awarded in 1861 by Yale. Cornell opened in 1868 with Andrew White as President. Charles Eliot was inaugurated as President of Harvard in 1869. Yet it was not until the 1880s that anything like a modern university really took shape in America. Perhaps the most important breakthroughs were the founding of Johns Hopkins and Clark as primarily graduate universities. Eliot's success in instituting the elective system at Harvard was also important, both in its own right and because it facilitated the assemblage of a more scholarly and specialized faculty. The 1890s saw further progress, with the founding of Chicago, the reform of Columbia, and the tentative acceptance of graduate work as an important activity in the leading state universities. This was also the period when national learned societies and journals were founded and when knowledge was broken up into its present departmental categories ("physics," "biology," "history," "philosophy," and so forth), with the department emerging as the basic unit of academic administration. Medicine and law also became serious subjects of graduate study at this time, with Johns Hopkins leading the way in medicine and Harvard in law.

By World War I two dozen major universities had emerged, and while the number has grown slightly since then, the changes have been slow.⁹ These universities have long been remarkably similar in what they encourage and value.¹⁰ They turn out Ph.D.s who, despite

⁹ If we arbitrarily define a major university as one which turns out more than 1 per cent of the nation's Ph.D.s each year, we find that twenty-two universities met this test in the period 1926-47. By 1962 the number had risen to thirty. (The absolute number of Ph.D.s needed to meet the criterion had quintupled.) Analyzing the problem another way, the dozen largest producers of Ph.D.s accounted for 55 per cent of all Ph.D.s between 1926 and 1947, compared to 36 per cent in 1962. See Carter, ed. *American Universities*, pp. 1263-65.

¹⁰ For evidence on this point see Carter, *An Assessment*. The extraordinarily high degree of consensus about the relative standing of departments in all academic fields suggests that the standards used to evaluate departments must be quite uniform. Rankings over time also show remarkable stability.

conspicuous exceptions, mostly have quite similar ideas about what their discipline covers, how it should be taught, and how its frontiers should be advanced. (This does not mean that there are *no* differences of opinion on these matters within the academic profession. It means only that when contrasted with trustees, administrators, parents, students, or the present authors, the outlook of Ph.D.s in a given discipline seems quite uniform.) These men were not only like-minded at the outset, but they have established machinery for remaining like-minded. National and regional meetings for each academic discipline and subdiscipline are now annual affairs, national journals publish work in every specialized subject, and an informal national system of job placement and replacement has come into existence. The result is that large numbers of Ph.D.s now regard themselves almost as independent professionals like doctors or lawyers, responsible primarily to themselves and their colleagues rather than their employers, and committed to the advancement of knowledge rather than of any particular institution.¹¹ (For this and other reasons elaborated in Chapter V, we see little distinction between graduate doctoral programs in the arts and sciences and other graduate professional programs. When we use terms like "graduate professional schools," we will mean all sorts of graduate schools.)

These attitudes were greatly strengthened by World War II and its aftermath. Not only in the Manhattan Project but in other less glamorous ones, academic scientists helped contribute to the war effort, and for this and other reasons a dramatic increase in federal support for academic research ensued. This support soon became available not just in the physical sciences but in the biological and social sciences as well. In recent years Washington has even begun to put small sums into the humanities. Unlike previous support for universities, these federal grants and contracts are for all practical purposes given to individual scholars or groups of scholars rather than to the institution where they happen to work. More often than not, if a man moves to a new institution his federal grants are transferred too. Not only that, but these federal grants are made largely on the basis of individual professional reputation and competence. Federal agencies usually give only minimal consideration to an institution's location, sectarian ties, racial composition, and the like. The result has been further to enhance the status of the academician, who is now a prime fund raiser for his institution. Since the amount of research support has grown much faster than the number of competent researchers,

¹¹ There is considerable literature on this subject, distinguishing between Robert Merton's terms "locals" and "cosmopolitians," or between Everett Hughes's "home guard" and "itinerant" faculty. The best-known study is Caplow and McGee.

talented men have been in very short supply and command rapidly rising salaries. They are also increasingly free to set their own working conditions. The result has been a rapid decline in teaching loads for productive scholars, an increase in the ratio of graduate to undergraduate students at the institutions where scholars are concentrated, the gradual elimination of unscholarly undergraduates from these institutions, and the parallel elimination of unscholarly faculty.

From the very start the professionalization of university professors brought conflict on many fronts. Late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century academic histories report many battles in which the basic question was whether the president and trustees or the faculty would determine the shape of the curriculum, the content of particular courses, or the use of particular books. The professors (for instance Veblen) lost most of the publicized battles, but they won the war. Today faculty control over these matters is rarely challenged, and conflict usually centers on other issues. The faculty, for example, have sought the right to choose their colleagues. While they have not usually won this right in the formal sense of actually making appointments themselves, their recommendations are sought at all reputable colleges and universities, and heeded in nine cases out of ten. Faculty committees are, it is true, sometimes overruled. Occasionally this is because the colleague group has rejected a notably popular teacher whose publications may not meet the standards of the guild as locally defined. Sometimes it is because a capable scholar has aroused the Philistines by, in one epoch, backing oleomargerine over butter, or today North Vietnam over South Vietnam. Public universities are in this respect somewhat more vulnerable than private ones, holding quality constant, because of their dependence on the local legislature; but even elected state university trustees are seldom eager to force issues of academic freedom into the open. As long as faculty members stick to problems defined by their disciplines, they almost never run into public controversy except in the most provincial milieus. And while administrators or trustees sometimes reject faculty recommendations, they almost never foist their own candidates on an unwilling faculty. The faculty has also sought to apply to the selection of undergraduates the same meritocratic standards that have long been used to select graduate students. Here again they have largely won the day, although marginal exceptions (geographic distribution, alumni sons, faculty sons) still stir sporadic controversy. The faculty has also sought some voice in choosing top administrators and in this too it has been increasingly successful. Once chosen, these administrators have broad powers to make policy (in the name and with the consent of the trustees). But even here a *unified* faculty has an informal veto at most universities and colleges.

It is important to be clear what these victories mean. College professors have not for the most part won significant *formal* power, either individually or collectively, over the institutions that employ them. On paper the typical academic senate is still a largely advisory body whose legal jurisdiction is confined to setting the curriculum and awarding degrees. Departments, too, have little *formal* power except sometimes over course offerings and requirements. Budgets and personnel, for example, are in principle subject to "higher" review, and ultimate control mostly remains where it has always been—with the administration, the lay trustees, and in some cases the legislature.

The trustees, however, are seldom what they once were. Most are more permissive than their nineteenth- or early twentieth-century predecessors. They are also more sensitive to individuals and groups unlike themselves. They share the general upper-middle class allergy to "trouble," of whatever sort. If there is strong internal pressure for a given course of action, they are likely to go along. They are also more likely than they once were to delegate authority to the college administration, either *de jure* or *de facto*. In part this is because the complexity of the university has increased, so that lay trustees feel less competent to deal with its affairs on a one-day-a-month basis. In part it is because college presidents are today usually Ph.D.s rather than clergymen, and can therefore claim apparently relevant but esoteric expertise which other board members lack. This gives the president a certain authority *vis à vis* his board which was less common before the professionalization of academic work. The tremendous competition among leading and aspiring institutions means that the decisions on recruitment and promotion of faculty must be made swiftly and would be too much delayed if subjected to detailed board review. (One reason boards spend so much time on buildings and grounds is that trustees feel at home in this area, presidents regard it as useful occupational therapy for them, and decisions can sometimes if not invariably wait. Mistaken judgments about bricks and mortar are also more obvious to the lay trustees than most mistakes in academic policy or personnel, and the sums of money look larger in many cases.) To be sure, there are enormous differences in the degree of self-confidence of trustees. Some still "meddle" regularly in the affairs of "their" colleges and universities, settling issues the faculty considers its own prerogative. Those with access to public or private money also still throw their weight around at times. But the over-all trend seems to us toward moderation and an increasingly ceremonial role for trustees. Beyond ceremony, they can be useful as buffers to cope with legislators, potential donors, and other pressure groups, giving legitimacy to the institution and its activities that would otherwise be hard to achieve.

The transfer of power from boards of directors to professional administrators has not, of course, been confined to higher education. The "managerial revolution," while not so widespread, so complete, or so progressive as some of its prophets have suggested, has taken place in many non-academic enterprises. What is perhaps unusual about the academic world is the extent to which the top management, while nominally acting in the interests of the board, actually represents the interests of "middle management" (i.e. the faculty), both to the board and to the world. Despite some notable exceptions, today's college and university presidents, as already noted, usually start out as members of the academic profession. When they become administrators and have to deal more often with non-academicians, they inevitably become somewhat deprofessionalized. Nonetheless, most university presidents still see their institution primarily as an assemblage of scholars and scientists, each doing his own work in his own way.¹² Most university presidents see their primary responsibility as "making the world safe for academicians," however much the academicians themselves resent the necessary (and unnecessary) compromises made in their behalf. The typical president's greatest ambition for the future is usually to "strengthen" his institution, and operationally this usually turns out to mean assembling scholars of even greater competence and reputation than are now present.

In the course of institution building all administrators find it expedient to pretend that the interests of their institution and of the larger society are identical. Academic administrators are no exception. Many even come to believe their own talk. At that point they may lose sight of some of the distinctive objectives and prejudices of their faculty. More often, however, they compromise in order to fight (or run away) again another day. This usually offends the faculty, which has the luxury of being able to go elsewhere if its insistence on its principles brings reprisal against its institution. In the course of trying to strengthen their faculty, administrators of upwardly mobile institutions also usually offend many of the "weak" faculty currently on the payroll. And in the course of trying to keep the peace among warring departments and contending professors within departments, administrators inevitably offend most professors at one time or another.

Academicians are neither a tolerant nor an easy-going species, and their apparently congenial feelings of irritation and frustration require scapegoats. Administrators serve this purpose and they serve it best

¹² Clark Kerr's much maligned but marvelously perceptive study, *The Uses of the University*, is a good example of this "faculty" view, even though the faculty at Berkeley reacted with horror to the mirror he held up to them.

when their actions can be attributed to non-academic considerations. So they are usually regarded as the enemy. Nonetheless, we would argue that administrators are today more concerned with keeping their faculty happy than with placating any other single group.¹³ They are also, in our experience, far more responsive to students and more concerned with the inadequacies and tragedies of student life than the majority of faculty. We have also found that the administrative actions that offend academic liberals and elicit bitter talk about administrative tyranny are usually disapproved by only a minority of the faculty. This minority then finds it convenient to blame the administration instead of blaming its complacent colleagues for what is done with their tacit consent. Sometimes, indeed, the dissidents blame "the administration" for actions the majority of their colleagues insisted on, forgetting that faculties are themselves diverse and assuming if their colleagues do not agree with them it must be because they were "pressured" or "bought," or "manipulated."¹⁴ In our observation, however, where professional opinion is united, trustees and administrators only rarely override and then seldom for long.

The redistribution of power in the universities has been accompanied—and to some extent caused—by a change in the relationship between the university and other established institutions. The universities, especially their graduate professional schools, have become pacesetters in the promotion of meritocratic values. In Talcott Parsons' terms, they are "universalistic," ignoring "particularistic" and personal qualities in their students and professors.¹⁵ This means that they

¹³ To illustrate: The American Council on Education has for some years sponsored a training program for prospective academic administrators, many of whom are currently professors. In interviewing applicants it proposes various hypothetical problems that might confront the applicant as an administrator and asks how he thinks he would deal with them. One common problem involves a faculty member who is being unreasonable or uncooperative in some way. Most of the prospective administrators respond by saying in effect that they would stand up for their rights and take a tough line. The experienced administrators who are evaluating the applicants are usually said to comment afterward that "that young man obviously doesn't know anything about college faculties"—this despite the fact that he is often a member of such a faculty. The administrators are, we think, usually right. Faculty members have an extraordinarily skewed perception of their own behavior, both individual and collective, and have little sense that their demands are often "impossible."

¹⁴ In a generally liberal academic setting, moreover, faculty members may overlook the significance of a small but vocal group of right wing faculty who are not at all complacent but who tell their right wing political and business cronies that the general run of professors (and students) is even more "subversive" and dangerous than the outsiders realize. Much American anti-intellectualism depends upon the pedantic documentation and conspiratorial interpretations supplied by intellectuals.

¹⁵ For an interesting application of Parsonian categories to the process of education, see Dreeben.

choose professors almost entirely on the basis of their "output" and professional reputation. Students in the graduate professional schools are selected by similar criteria: by their ability to write good examinations and do good academic work. The claims of localism, sectarianism, ethnic prejudice and preference, class background, age, sex, and even occupational plans are largely ignored.¹⁶

The graduate professional schools have in turn been leaders in imposing meritocratic values on the professions themselves. The leading law firms hire men who made the law review at the most competitive law schools, and the leading hospitals offer internships and residencies to doctors who did well or were well recommended by the most competitive medical schools. Most conspicuous of all, colleges and universities scramble to hire Ph.D.s who have done well in the most competitive graduate departments. The result is that many traditional prejudices affecting recruitment have broken down: local boys today enjoy little advantage over outsiders; white Anglo-Saxon Protestants monopolize fewer and fewer occupational slots; and family connections count for less than they used to. Even corporation managers with long traditions of self-interested exclusiveness have in recent years frequently yielded to a broader vision of their enterprise and of America. Big employers today recruit university graduates in an increasingly even-handed way, paying ever less attention to "irrelevant" factors like class background, religion, and ethnicity. This is partly because of competition for skilled specialists, partly because of the stirrings of conscience, partly because they fear adverse publicity. Companies have grown larger, have had to rationalize recruitment policy, and can therefore no longer conceal non-meritocratic discrimination from themselves or (consequently) from the general public. Furthermore, with the growth of democratic ideology and the decline of old-fashioned social snobbery, even college fraternities have become less socially exclusive, as have leading prep schools. This creates cumulative pressures for meritocracy, since even if an employer wanted to discriminate he would have a hard time finding channels that made this easy for him. Legacies of earlier discrimination obviously remain both in recruitment and training—and in judgments about the appropriateness of people for specific

¹⁶ There are some exceptions. Law schools admit brilliant students they expect will do well in law school even if they do not plan to practice law, but medical schools take a narrower view. Graduate departments in the sciences will usually admit a good candidate even though they think he will "sell out" and become a scientist in industry, but they will usually reject even the most brilliant candidate if he does not plan to take a Ph.D. In most graduate admissions committees there is also a residual bias against girls, and in the past few years a bias in favor of Negroes. For historical reasons some institutions show other idiosyncrasies, but these are of marginal importance.

positions. A Negro is not likely soon to become president of General Motors, nor a woman president of Harvard University, but both have been Cabinet members and either might become a vice-president of AT&T.

We do not want to exaggerate the extent of the ties between the modern occupational structure and higher education. The big Wall Street and Washington law firms may hire the top graduates of the top law schools, but there is also another legal world where lawyers trained in night schools pick up not-so-good livings chasing ambulances, writing wills, settling insurance claims, and generally acting as brokers between the uninitiated and various bureaucracies. Similar chasms separate the top doctors who practice in teaching hospitals from others who have no hospital privileges anywhere. There are also colleges where, as Everett Hughes has put it, the faculty not only includes no scholars but includes nobody who has even studied under a scholar. There are still many roads into these lower levels of professional practice, and on some of them academic competence counts for less than persistence and animal cunning. There are also many roads to the top in business, from sales and accounting to engineering and law. Academic competence counts for very little on some of them. The Robert McNamaras who come up through graduate schools of business administration are still nothing like a majority.

Nonetheless, the role of graduate education in job distribution seems to be growing. At the same time, and for related reasons, the values and methods promoted in the graduate professional schools seem to be increasingly accepted in the larger society. This does not mean that the outlook of professional school faculty and the professions themselves are ever likely to be the same. On the contrary, there will always be tension between the "theorists" in the graduate schools and the "practitioners" in the field. By the time the AMA accepts compulsory health insurance, group practice, and other reforms long advocated by large numbers of medical professors, for example, professors of medicine will have shifted their attention to new problems and will be attacking the conservatism of practitioners on new grounds. The same is true in other areas. The striking thing, however, is how often the opinions and practices of the professional schools foreshadow those of the profession as a whole a generation later.

The University College

The rise of the university in the late nineteenth century did not at first have much effect on undergraduate education. The overwhelming

majority of students continued to attend special-interest colleges, and even those who attended the undergraduate college at a university were for the most part terminal students. While a significant proportion eventually did some kind of work beyond the B.A., competition for admission to most graduate professional schools was relatively slight and had little effect on undergraduate life. Similarly, while administrators at special-interest colleges were often impressed by the scholarly achievements of faculty at leading universities, and some made an active effort to acquire a similar faculty at their own institution, their success was for many years limited by the shortage of Ph.D.s, especially "productive" ones. As in the larger society, the groundwork for a system was being laid, and the giant enterprises that would dominate the system were being organized, but the bulk of the nation's business was still being done by independent enterprises of limited means and limited views.

The pace of change accelerated somewhat after World War I, for the 1920s and 1930s were a period of unprecedented growth in enrollment. (It is always easier to redistribute resources and power in periods of growth, because the progressives can be given more without the standpatters appearing to get less.) By the outbreak of World War II the majority of the nation's college students attended institutions staffed by academic professionals—though there were still many enclaves of provincialism, including all but a handful of teachers colleges, Catholic colleges, devout Protestant colleges, and Negro colleges. The professionalization of the faculty reduced the internal homogeneity of many special-purpose colleges. Upper-class colleges took on literary critics with working-class ancestors, Southern colleges hired more historians who had grown up in the North or even in Europe, women's colleges hired male psychologists, and Methodist colleges took on Unitarian philosophers. Such "mismatching" had, of course, sometimes taken place accidentally even in presumptively homogeneous special-interest colleges, but professionalization made it far more common. It also put trustees and parents who opposed heterogeneity very much on the defensive. A New York millionaire might not like the idea of having his son study under a Jewish radical at Yale, but if the boy's teacher had been publicly defined as "one of the leading economists in the country," the millionaire's objections seemed bigoted and irrelevant (which did not, of course, always prevent him from carrying weight, in Montana if not at Yale).

Until the 1950s, most undergraduates seem to have remained relatively unaffected by these changes. The proportion going on to graduate school in the arts and sciences had risen slowly, but the proportion going into law and medicine had fallen correspondingly.

As a result, the over-all proportion of B.A.s earning graduate degrees probably changed relatively little for some decades.¹⁷ In the late 1950s, however, the effects of the academic revolution on undergraduate life began to multiply. Both the absolute number and the proportion of young people applying to college were rising steadily. This gave many colleges a choice between expansion and greater selectivity. The faculty preferred selectivity. This preference proved influential in colleges of all sorts and decisive in private ones.¹⁸ As a result, the leading undergraduate colleges, both public and private, began demanding higher academic aptitude and more proof of academic motivation from their entrants. These students, in turn, found the academic profession and ancillary activities increasingly appealing, while mostly rejecting careers in business and other fields requiring only a B.A.¹⁹ The proportion of undergraduates who wanted to go on to graduate school therefore began to rise rapidly. The same

¹⁷ Statistical measures of these trends over long periods are hard to come by. Until very recently the U. S. Office of Education's statistics lumped graduate students with undergraduates in law, medicine, theology, and some other professions. Figures on graduate enrollment and degrees included only those taking degrees in fields that offered an undergraduate major—mainly the arts and sciences and education. The proportion of undergraduates going on in professional fields like law and medicine has declined since 1900, but this does not show up in USOE's figures on graduate enrollment. Enrollment in the areas USOE traditionally defined as graduate-level have on the other hand, risen much faster than undergraduate enrollment. The result is that USOE data greatly exaggerated the actual change in the ratio of total graduate to total undergraduate enrollment.

The 1960 *Census*, I, 1, table 173, shows that among those completing four years of college the proportion going on to complete a fifth year did not change significantly between 1910 and 1950. Among men who were born between 1885 and 1930, about 40 per cent of those completing four years of higher education went on to complete a fifth. For individuals born after 1930, 1960 Census data are not very useful, since such individuals were still returning to graduate school in significant numbers in 1960. The 1960 Census therefore tells us relatively little about trends in graduate enrollment for men earning B.A.s after about 1950. More recent data collected by others is not strictly speaking comparable.

Karel, tables 1 and 2, shows that if one counts all M.D.s as doctor's degrees the proportion of the population earning such degrees rose from 0.68 per cent in 1901 to 1.11 per cent in 1962, while the proportion earning B.A.s rose from 1.32 per cent to 17.76 per cent. But many 1901 M.D.s were not B.A.s, and counting the pre-Flexner medical school as a graduate institution is as misleading as counting it as an undergraduate institution. Since 1950 the lag in medical school growth has been just about offset by the spurt in Ph.D. enrollment. Throughout this century, though, the most rapid expansion in graduate work has been at the Master's level, where the proportion of the population earning degrees rose from 0.12 in 1901 to 3.86 in 1962.

¹⁸ In individual instances there are often other reasons for selectivity, e.g. the failure of a capital bond issue or the lack of building sites for expansion. In some instances, inertia favors growth; in others, stability.

¹⁹ Among the elite students in the elite universities there has been a general rejection of business careers, even those requiring advanced degrees. A certain proportion of men with Ph.D.s and LL.B.s will nonetheless end up in business, holding insurance against their employers by virtue of their professional training.

pattern was repeated to a lesser extent at less selective colleges.²⁰

Until World War II many if not most undergraduates came to the old special-interest colleges in order to kill time, get away from home, make new friends, enjoy themselves, acquire salable skills, and so forth. Undergraduates with such aims were not by and large very vulnerable to faculty pressures. Most, of course, wanted a diploma, and that meant they had to meet whatever formal requirements the faculty set. But these requirements served mainly to sift and intimidate the less competent students. The abler students could get C's without doing much work, and most capitalized on this opportunity. The spread of graduate study altered these attitudes appreciably. Today a substantial fraction of the undergraduate population wants not only a degree but an undergraduate transcript sufficiently distinguished to ensure entry into a competitive professional school of some sort. Unlike many employers, these schools are generally reluctant to take undergraduates with undistinguished grades.²¹ The faculty can use this fact as a weapon to make undergraduates do far

²⁰ Since the early 1950s the steady growth of graduate work in fields like education, business, engineering, and the arts and sciences has more than offset the continuing lag in first professional degrees like the LL.B. and M.D. A 1963 National Science Foundation survey of 1958 B.A.s found that 58 per cent had done some graduate work. (See Sharpe, "Five Years.") The NSF figures include some students who had not completed a full year of graduate work, and who in theory would not be entitled to report "five or more" years of higher education to the 1970 Census. It is therefore likely that the increase in the proportion of B.A.s entering graduate school was less than the apparent contrast between NSF and earlier Census figures. But probably not much less.

More recent studies by Alexander Astin and his colleagues at the American Council on Education show that since 1958 the proportion of entering freshmen who *plan* to do graduate work has continued to rise. In Astin's sample of 45 four-year colleges the proportion of all freshmen planning to get some sort of graduate degree rose from 49 to 67 per cent between 1961 and 1965. This sample appears to be representative of other four-year colleges, though the percentages would be somewhat lower if junior college entrants were included. A 1965 follow-up of the students entering 246 four-year colleges in 1961 showed that the proportion planning to do graduate work rose from 42 to 70 per cent over the four college years. These plans were admittedly unrealistic in many cases. (Only 60 per cent of this same sample had even earned a B.A. at the time of the follow-up. Many of the non-B.A.s were not even enrolled in college at the time they outlined their plans for graduate study.) Nonetheless it seems fairly clear that graduate plans and enrollment are today rising much faster than college entrance or graduation rates. Although women are generally less likely to go to graduate school than men, the recent increase has been about equal for the two sexes. This suggests that draft deferment is not the primary cause.

²¹ The enormous expansion of institutions seeking to offer graduate instruction has made places available to many who do not have distinguished undergraduate records at distinguished places. Still, the more energetic and competent undergraduate teachers generally want their students to go on to "good" graduate schools and steer them away from the more anemic ones, including the home institution at times. An undergraduate education itself tends to expose its student devotees to the names of luminaries at leading graduate schools, even though many textbooks and readers are produced by men at the less visible places.

more academic work than was common in the traditional terminal colleges. This external threat has been re-enforced in recent years by changes in the mass media's portrait of established national institutions. These institutions are increasingly shown offering prize jobs to men who have intellectual skills. Students are therefore constantly searching themselves for signs of intellectual competence and worrying about signs of stupidity. Many cannot settle for C's, even if the graduate schools would, for they cannot accept the idea that they are only "worth" a C.

The fruition of this change was the birth of what Frank Bowles has called the "university college." In our usage this is a college whose primary purpose is to prepare students for graduate work of some kind—primarily in the arts and sciences but also in professional subjects ranging from law and medicine to business and social work.²² A university college may be part of a university with big graduate schools, such as Yale or Michigan, or it may be geographically isolated and administratively independent, as Amherst, Oberlin, or Vassar is. But even if it is nominally independent, it is a *de facto* prep school for a small number of graduate professional schools, in much the same way that Groton, Andover, and Farmington are prep schools for Ivy League and Seven Sister colleges. Such a university college usually draws most of its students from the top tenth of the national ability distribution. It seldom loses more than a fifth of them during the undergraduate years. (More than a fifth may drop out, but many return and most of the others graduate from other colleges.) It usually sends nearly three-quarters of its men and a third to a half of its women to graduate school. If such a university college is administratively part of a larger institution, it is likely to share its faculty with the graduate school of arts and sciences. But even if it is separate, it is almost certain to draw its faculty from the same manpower pool as the graduate schools of arts and sciences, seeking the same virtues and looking askance at the same presumed vices. The university college is the fruition of the academic revolution at the undergraduate level.

Out of more than 2,000 undergraduate colleges, probably no more than 100 today really fit the above description. Yet these are the most prestigious colleges in the country, to which the ablest and most ambitious students usually gravitate. They also attract the ablest faculty and administrators and the most generous philanthropists. And they provide a model for most of the other 1,900 colleges

²² The term "university college" is used in an entirely different sense in Great Britain and parts of the Commonwealth, to indicate a budding university that has not yet achieved sufficient stability and reputation to deserve complete autonomy, and that awards degrees through another institution.

regard as desirable, even if not immediately accessible. Drawn by emulation on the one side and pushed by accrediting agencies on the other, an increasing number of terminal colleges hire Ph.D.s from the leading graduate schools even though they fear the impact of men who may not be happy or complacent at a terminal college, and who may also make others less happy or complacent. As faculty recruiting becomes more national and less parochial, even colleges that might prefer staff from the old parish are forced to look elsewhere if they are to grow. New and better-trained faculty recruits in turn help propel the institution toward the recruitment of students on the basis of academic ability, with diminished reference to traditional considerations.²³

Virtually all terminal colleges want to hire faculty of the kind now hired by the university colleges. Whether or not these faculty come out of the subculture to which a college has traditionally been tied is secondary. In most cases the terminal colleges also want to recruit students entirely on the basis of academic ability. They would prefer to ignore traditional considerations like geography, religion, ethnicity, and class. Specialization by sex and occupational intention is also somewhat less common among undergraduate colleges than it once was. Even administrators and trustees seem to be more often chosen according to the criteria of achievement, competence, and judgment that prevail in established national institutions, than according to the criteria of the special-interest group that initially founded the particular college.

One way to describe this change is in terms of changing reference groups. Special-interest colleges were established by laymen to serve a particular purpose, and were initially very committed to that purpose. The local college was local first and a college second; the Catholic college was Catholic first and a college second; the Negro college was Negro first and a college second, and so forth. But as time went on these disparate institutions took on lives and purposes of their own. Undergraduates thought of themselves less often as future women, Baptists, or teachers and more often simply as students, having a common interest with students in all sorts of other places called colleges rather than with girls, Baptists, or teachers who were not students. Similar changes have taken place at the faculty level. Even the college president today often thinks of himself less as the president of a college in San Jose, a college catering to the rich, or a college for Irish Catholics than as the president of an academically first-rate, second-rate, or third-rate college. Such a man's reference group is no longer the traditional clientele and patrons of his

²³ For a further description of this process of emulation see Riesman, "The Academic Procession." The major partial exception to this generalization is the two-year college discussed in Chapter XI.

institution or the trustees who still speak for them, but the presidents of other colleges, many of which had historically different origins and aims. The result is convergence of aims, methods, and probably results.

That these developments make both terminal and university colleges more useful to other established national institutions can hardly be doubted. They make higher education look like a fairly effective instrument for meritocratic sorting and grading of the future employees. They probably also help promote and disseminate values and skills useful in the maintenance of established institutions. The university colleges and their emulators usually try, for example, to help their students transcend whatever subculture they are born and raised in, and move them out into a slightly more cosmopolitan world. In part this is a matter of exposing students to heterogeneous classmates—heterogeneous, that is, by traditional demographic criteria, even though often quite homogeneous in terms of academic aptitudes. In part it is a matter of exposing students to professors who know something of a larger world than the one the students have encountered, and who may, if they are wise or charming, lure their students into it. In part it is a matter of giving the students books to read. In part it is simply a matter of giving young people with a yen for mobility the diplomatic passport they need to cross the borders of their racial, religious, economic, sexual, or generational parish.²⁴

These efforts at emancipation are, it is true, necessarily limited in scope. Some colleges manage to bring together students and faculty of diverse class backgrounds, but this diversity almost never extends to class aspirations. Wherever they come from, college students by and large plan to end up in the upper-middle classes if they can, and they meet professors who have succeeded in doing just this.²⁵ Similarly, while some colleges bring together students from different regional backgrounds, few mix them with more than token foreigners, and even fewer create an atmosphere that appreciably curtails nationalistic biases. Then too, while many colleges attract a substantial number of students older than the undergraduate norm, and all employ professors who run the full age range, few are successful in establishing really close cross-generational contacts or in counteracting

²⁴ In Greek, a "diploma" was literally a doubled-over piece of paper and hence a letter of recommendation. A "diplomat" was one who carried a diploma. Today it could well be argued that the diplomats who serve as go-betweens for America's many subcultures and who hold the country together are the diploma holders from these subcultures.

²⁵ A small but interesting minority of students, often from the upper social strata, profess aspirations for downward mobility, often identifying with Negroes as the American equivalent of the proletariat and meeting on the way down Negroes and others on the way up. This is not, however, likely to become common.

the mutual chauvinism of young and old vis à vis one another. Nor can any college do much about the parochialism that comes from having lived only in the twentieth century. It is true that the formal curriculum tries to overcome all these limitations, but the number of students who can be significantly affected by books has always been fairly small, especially when the message of the book is re-enforced neither by human contact nor by daily experience.

These almost inescapable limitations are in most cases supplemented by self-imposed ones, often inherited from the special-interest group that founded a particular college. Local colleges, for example, often deliberately exclude students from outside their state or even their city. While some Catholic colleges and universities are deliberately seeking out non-Catholic teachers and ideas in order to become more ecumenical, others still feel they should hire only Catholics and also occasionally screen reading lists with an eye to orthodoxy. Upper-middle class colleges sometimes make no effort to provide scholarships for students from poorer families. White colleges often make life intolerable for black students, and Negro colleges often do likewise for white faculty. Professional schools frequently cling to a narrow view of their students' future responsibilities, and sometimes resist affiliation with a multipurpose university. Single sex colleges, while in many instances considering coeducation, also sometimes cling to their exclusiveness with pride.

Just as some small businesses continue to earn high returns in the interstices of a corporate economy, and local governments take on new responsibilities despite the parallel increase in federal power, so too the old nineteenth-century system of special-purpose colleges endures despite the rise of the national university system and the magnetic appeal of the university college model. Yet while local car dealers may survive and flourish, the future of the automobile industry is determined in Detroit, New York, and Washington. So too in higher education, while the old special-interest colleges and the energies they embody may give the present much of its flavor, they do little to shape the future. The model for the future is the university college, and the result is likely to be a continuing trend toward meritocracy.

II. *The War between the Generations*

Academic Age-grading Yesterday and Today

One way to determine the central purposes of an institution is to ask whether a given function could be eliminated without changing its name. An institution that does not facilitate social mobility, that has no connection with any occupational subculture, and that does nothing to perpetuate localism, sectarianism, sex polarities, or ethnic separatism can still be called a college. But an institution that does not bring together people called teachers with other people called students is not called a college but something else.¹ The confrontation between teachers and students is, in turn, usually a confrontation between those who are in some sense mature and those who are less so. The central purpose of a college can thus be defined as socialization. In nine cases out of ten a college pits the old against the young and becomes both a battlefield and a negotiating table in the ceaseless war between the generations.²

The character of any intergenerational confrontation obviously depends in part on the age of the participants. This is by no means uniform, either from one era to another or from one institution to another. During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries many students presented themselves for admission to college during early adolescence—though Cotton Mather was unusual in graduating from Harvard at fifteen. Other students came to college only in their early twenties, after a local minister had decided that they might be suitable for ordination and had encouraged them to apply. All these applicants were at least semiliterate as a result of instruction by their parents, a local clergyman, a traveling schoolmaster or some other adult, and many had had some years of formal elementary schooling. But very few had had any secondary schooling, formal or informal.

¹ There are a few minor exceptions to this as to all such rules. The medieval term "collegium" was applied to groups of adults who had collegial relationships with one another, and the usage has survived down to the present time in cases such as the "College of Cardinals" and the "College of Physicians and Surgeons."

² Again, there are a few exceptions. Some colleges are strictly technical and have students who are by most standards as mature as their teachers. At the National War College, for example, the students are often older than the instructors.

As the nineteenth century progressed, free public elementary schools became quite widespread, and college applicants increasingly had the benefit of eight years in such institutions. But public high schools remained relatively scarce until the very end of the century, and students who wanted to continue beyond elementary school usually had to enroll away from home. Some enrolled in private academies, but others went directly into the "preparatory departments" of places that called themselves colleges. In some cases these were in fact exclusively preparatory institutions, offering no college-level work whatever. In other cases they offered only introductory college-level work. In still other cases they offered a regular college course, but enrolled the majority of their students in precollege programs.³

Given this mixing of different levels of instruction and different age groups within institutions, the distinction between secondary and college level instruction was extremely hard to draw. Few observers even bothered to try, and many institutions capitalized on the confusion by playing fast and loose with both nomenclature and promises. Places that were in fact academies frequently called themselves colleges, just as places that are colleges today often call themselves universities. Similarly, places that had small collegiate departments often invested a disproportionate amount of their time, energy, and hope in them, at the expense of their larger and more intellectually defensible preparatory departments, just as universities today often sacrifice their undergraduates for the sake of a few mediocre graduate students.

Under these circumstances it is hardly surprising that both academic instruction and social life in most nineteenth-century colleges often resembled a modern boarding school of the "Penny Prep" variety more than a modern university. The nineteenth-century college was in many ways a logical extension of the nineteenth-century family. Colleges tended to be small, financially shaky, and extremely

³ Bowman shows that even at the end of the nineteenth century nearly half the students in land-grant colleges were in preparatory rather than collegiate programs. More generally, a comparison of college with secondary enrollment statistics before 1914 makes clear that most college students could not have completed secondary school. In 1870 the U. S. Office of Education reported 7,064 male high school graduates, while in 1874 it reported 9,593 male B.A.s. In 1890 the high schools gave diplomas to 18,549 men, while in 1894 the colleges reported awarding 17,917 B.A.s to men. In 1914 male college graduates outnumbered 1910 high school graduates two-to-one, but colleges still reported total male enrollment greater than the total number of male high school graduates during the previous four years. This imbalance was not eliminated until after World War I. Pre-1914 enrollment reports should therefore be used very cautiously. See *Historical Statistics*, Series H 330, and 1965 Digest, tables 37 and 53. USOE estimates of B.A.s for these years are presumably inflated by counting M.D.s and LL.B.s as first degrees. Some men took a B.A. first and were thus counted twice, giving a misleadingly high estimate of the proportion of the age grade finishing college.

authoritarian. The life of the mind was not unknown, but neither was it usually central. The curriculum was largely prescribed, and the pedagogy consisted mainly of daily assignments and recitations. Extracurricular life was also closely regulated, and an enormous amount of energy seems to have gone into keeping unruly students from misbehaving. Corporal punishment was common, and the students often responded with violent rioting. While students undoubtedly had great influence on one another both socially and intellectually, their lives were circumscribed and the youth culture had nothing like the autonomy of its modern counterpart.⁴

The spread of free high schools during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries changed all this. The demand for private secondary education had always been modest, and once a free alternative became widely available the academies found themselves on the financial ropes. In the public sector, too, state "universities" and land-grant "colleges" which had mainly been residential secondary schools were forced to seek a new clientele. Yet the free local high school, while it killed the college preparatory departments, also created a substantial cohort of young men and women with twelve years of precollege training, some of whom wanted still more education. The new formula for institutional survival was therefore clear—though not necessarily easy to follow. All over the country institutions discontinued their preparatory departments and tried to become full-fledged colleges. Some failed to do this and went under. Some made it.

While the establishment of free local secondary schools brought a measure of uniformity to collegiate age-grading, the substantive distinction between "secondary" and "higher" education remained ambiguous for a time. By World War I, however, reformers at the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching and in the accrediting agencies had imposed a measure of uniformity in this area as well. Since then this country has been firmly committed to the idea that a place called a college should admit only students with twelve years of preparation.⁵

⁴ It is true that foreign visitors thought American youth in or out of college both unregimented and unruly, but outside of the debating and literary societies they lacked the protective institutions which today force adult manipulators to become more subtle and generally more permissive, in ways *The Lonely Crowd* sought to describe.

⁵ There is, of course, still great variation in how these twelve years are divided. Some communities have elementary and high schools, divided either 8-4 or 6-6. Others have elementary, junior high, and senior high schools, divided either 6-2-4 or 6-3-3, and a few are now moving to a 4-4-4 division. There is also enormous variation in what students actually learn in these twelve years—variation that the present efforts toward national assessment seek to document.

Colleges also adopted a somewhat more uniform approach to graduation requirements during this same period. We do not fully understand how America became committed to a four-year undergraduate curriculum as against the three-year English cycle. Many nineteenth-century colleges had tried other variations, especially in professional schools. By World War I, however, most colleges had come to feel that a B.A. or B.S. should take at least four years.⁶ This did not always mean four years of sequential study in a single subject, or even in a single college. Professional schools of law, for example, usually required three years of study. But they offset this apparent lapse from academic rigor by requiring that their applicants do several years of undergraduate liberal arts work before starting law school. The net result was that it was very difficult to earn any sort of college degree in less than sixteen years after entering first grade. While unusually capable students were sometimes accelerated, this was never systematized.

The cumulative result of these changes was to fix the minimum age for both college entrance and graduation quite rigidly. At the same time, the spread of free local schools and the passage of child labor laws also made the maximum age more uniform. Almost all competent, diligent students began to climb the lower rungs of the educational ladder at the standard pace, for there were fewer plausible way stations and sidings to detain them. As a result, almost everyone who is interested in attending college today finishes high school before he reaches nineteen. Not all these potential collegians go directly to college, however. Many take time out to work, often for several years. Thus while almost all college entrants are at least seventeen, about a third are nineteen or more.⁷ Similarly, while the "normal" pattern of college attendance is an uninterrupted four-year stint, a very substantial proportion of those who enter college take time off at some point, and therefore take five or more years to

⁶ The Associate in Arts degree given by junior colleges after two years has never achieved real status or recognition from either students or adults. It is still seen as a step on the way to the B.A.

⁷ In 1959 the Census Bureau found that 42 per cent of the men and 32 per cent of the women enrolled as freshmen had not graduated from high school the previous year; see Cowhig and Nam, table 3. Nearly half of these apparent delayers may, however, have been part-time students or repeaters who had been in college continuously since high school graduation. Of all high school graduates who did not go directly to college, the National Science Foundation estimated that in the middle 1950s a seventh went later. This meant that only about 20 per cent of all college freshmen delayed entry. The proportion was about 27 per cent for males and 9 per cent for females; see *The Duration*, p. 21. For data on the ages of college freshmen in March 1960, see 1960 *Census*, I, 1, table 168. It should be remembered that the ordinary freshman was six months older at the time of the Census than when he entered.

graduate.⁸ The cumulative result is that while almost all college seniors are at least twenty-one, about half are twenty-three or more.⁹ Whether delays in entrance and graduation are more or less common than a generation or two ago, we do not know.

Aside from the dramatic but transient effects of the GI Bill, the only organized effort to alter the undergraduate age distribution in recent years has been the unsuccessful venture associated with the name of Robert Hutchins.¹⁰ Convinced that the American high school was filled with make-work, Hutchins opened the College of the University of Chicago to able students who had completed only tenth grade. Later the Ford Foundation induced a number of other colleges to try the same experiment. Although careful follow-ups showed that exercising this option had harmed almost none of those who chose it and had benefited many, the pattern never spread. One of the main problems was the lack of cooperation from most high schools. Few high school principals or teachers were ready to believe that their students would be better off in college. Even if they did believe it, they had a selfish interest in holding onto the talented youngsters whom they had counted on to be student council presidents, yearbook editors, and the like during their senior year. In addition, many parents were reluctant to let their children leave home so young. This reluctance was especially strong when the student was headed for the urban wickedness of Chicago. But even when more protective and isolated colleges offered early admission there was no flood of applicants.

It could be argued that Hutchins' mistake was trying to take students after tenth grade instead of ninth. Many school systems divide secondary education into junior and senior high school and carry

⁸ Perhaps a third of those who earn degrees interrupt their course of study in some way, either by dropping out entirely for a time or by enrolling only part time; see Summerskill.

⁹ 1960 *Census*, I, 1, table 168. Data are for March 1960. Compare James Davis, *Great Aspirations*, table 1.1b, which shows that only 30 per cent of those receiving B.A.s in June 1961 were twenty-three or more. The difference may be in part accounted for by the fact that Davis drew his sample exclusively from June B.A.s. About a quarter of all B.A.s are awarded in September and January, and the recipients may be appreciably older than those earning degrees in June. In addition, Davis excluded from his sample some marginal institutions which Census respondents presumably regarded as colleges. The median age at these marginal institutions may have been above average. Then too, not all those who told the Census they were fourth-year college students took degrees that year. This would have been especially true of those enrolled part time. If the part-time students were also older, the median age of those actually taking degrees might be less than that of all seniors, and Davis' sample may be more representative than the Census reports make it seem. For evidence consonant with the Census findings, see Laura Sharpe's study of the Class of 1958, reported in *Two Years*.

¹⁰ The junior college movement might also be thought to fall into this category. For reasons discussed in more detail in Chapter XI, we think it does not.