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## Mainstream Education for Those Over 65: A Justification

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MAINSTREAM EDUCATION FOR THOSE OVER 65

A JUSTIFICATION

by

June Sark Heinrich

A Dissertation Submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School  
of Loyola University of Chicago in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

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## VITA

The author, June Sark Heinrich, is the daughter of Ward T. Sark and Trilba (Wilson) Sark. She was born October 23, 1918, in Detroit, Michigan. She was married to Bernard A. Heinrich in 1957 and has a daughter, Doris Sark Heinrich.

Her elementary and secondary education was obtained primarily in Chicago and Oak Park, Illinois. She graduated from the Oak Park-River Forest High School in June, 1936. She then attended the University of Chicago, from which she received the degree of Bachelor of Arts in June, 1940, and the degree of Master of Arts in June, 1941, both in the Division of the Humanities with a major in English. In August, 1941, she was awarded the University of Chicago teaching certificate for competency in teaching English as a primary field and French as a secondary field. In June, 1974, she received the degree of Master of Education from Loyola University of Chicago. She was awarded a Schmitt Dissertation Fellowship for the 1979-1980 academic year at Loyola University.

She has been a teacher and a school administrator. She taught English at the public junior high school in Iron Mountain, Michigan; she helped organize and was the first director of the Oak Community School and Workshop for the mentally handicapped in Oak Park, Illinois; she directed the church school of the Third Unitarian Church of Chicago; she managed the Indian School sponsored by the Native American Committee in Chicago;

and she has been a lecturer in the Department of Curriculum and Instruction at Loyola University of Chicago.

She has written, edited, and produced many books and audiovisual materials in the field of education. Some of her publications and productions are: Teacher Education Extension Service, a series of books designed for in-service teacher education and subtitled "A Practical Guide to Understanding Issues and Problems in Education" (Science Research Associates, 1965-1967); Black ABCs (Society for Visual Education, 1970); SCORE--Skills and Challenges of Reading (Prentice-Hall Media, 1974); Understanding What We Read (Nystrom, 1979); Fun with Phonics and many other card-reader programs (Audiotronics, 1977-1980). Some of these materials were produced while she was director of product development for Instructional Dynamics Incorporated in Chicago. She is currently the editor of a series of books in an adult basic education reading program (Scott, Foresman and Company, 1981).

She has contributed over the years to several educational magazines and served for many years as managing editor of the professional magazine Educational Screen and Audiovisual Guide.

She is a member of several educational organizations, including the professional fraternity in education, Phi Delta Kappa, having been initiated into the Loyola University chapter in 1977.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

#### THE PROBLEM AND THE PURPOSE

What is the worst discrimination in America? Against blacks? Against Hispanics? Against women? Against gays? No way. The worst discrimination in America is against old people.

--Andrew M. Greeley<sup>1</sup>

Our society notoriously finds little use for the elderly. It defines them as useless, forces them to retire before they have exhausted their capacity for work, and reinforces their sense of superfluity at every opportunity....Nothing short of a complete reordering of work, education, the family--of every important institution--will make old age more bearable.

--Christopher Lasch<sup>2</sup>

I may say that our present system is highly defective in opportunities for directed continuation of education. It is no disparagement of present efforts in "adult education" to say that the continued education of those who have left school should long ago have been made a paramount interest of public education.

--John Dewey<sup>3</sup>

The stereotype of old age as a time of passivity, incapacity, and inactivity is being challenged in the United States. Just by living longer, many people are discovering that aging does not lead to loss of interest in or need for work, love, sex, civic participation, artistic expression, physical activity, and mental activity. Many older people are demanding acceptance into the mainstream of life as individual persons with individual characteristics rather than as stereotyped old people.<sup>4</sup>

I maintain that the mainstream of life includes the mainstream of education and that mainstream education in the United States is not open to most older people. As I shall use the term, mainstream education refers to the education offered in public and private elementary and secondary schools, colleges, and universities as well as in business and industrial training schools; it refers to formal, credential-giving schooling as distinguished from informal or personal education.

It should be noted that the term mainstreaming is commonly associated with the field of special education, where it means integrating children with handicaps into regular classes and schools rather than segregating them in special, separate classes and schools. I am making a case for the mainstreaming of older people into regular classes and schools rather than segregating them in special, separate groups on the basis of age. The term mainstream education, as I use it, refers both to mainstreaming as I have explained it and to the main educational institutions in our society.

Mainstream education is not precisely synonymous with formal education since formal education can be offered in separate, segregated classes and schools rather than in the regular, generally integrated (at least by law) classes and schools of our society. Formal education is usually taken to mean organized, credit-giving instruction in schools or under school jurisdiction as distinguished from informal education, which usually refers to life experiences in general, including noncredit self-instruction and learning in informal groups in various community organizations. It is impossible to draw a sharp line between formal and



informal education since informal, noncredit learning experiences are offered by formal, credential-giving educational institutions and credit is sometimes given by formal educational institutions for informal learning in life. The general distinction between formal and informal education, however, seems clear.

It should also be noted that I am not denying the value of informal education to people of all ages. Most learning in life is informal, personal learning. My subject, however, is formal education, and my contention is that older people should be mainstreamed at all levels of our formal educational structure. I am not denying the need for some separate groups based on handicap or sex or language or age or some other characteristic. I do maintain, however, that any such separate classes or schools must be carefully and continuously justified to make certain that they are not based on prejudice or stereotyping and that they are indeed in the interest of the segregated students. In the field of special education, educators speak of the least restrictive educational environment for the handicapped. I am arguing for the least restrictive educational environment for older people.

I shall use the term older people to refer to those over 65 because 65 has been the age at which people have been expected to, and often have been forced to, retire from work and the mainstream of life. Terms like the aged, the elderly, and senior citizens now have negative connotations for some people. The organization of older people called the Gray Panthers,<sup>5</sup> for example, regards terms like senior citizens as "patronizing attempts to avoid confronting the reality of old age."<sup>6</sup>

The general name of the problem I am concerned with is ageism. "Ageism is any attitude, action, or institutional structure which subordinates a person or group because of age OR any assignment of roles in society on the basis of age. Ageism is usually practiced against older people, but it is also practiced against young people. Ageism can be individual, cultural, or institutional AND it can be intentional or unintentional."<sup>7</sup> The specific problem to be dealt with is the virtual exclusion of older adults, especially those over 65, from mainstream formal education. School in our society is viewed as almost exclusively a learning place for children and youth. An older dictionary's first definition of school is: "An institution for teaching children."<sup>8</sup> A more recent dictionary, reflecting perhaps a somewhat broadening view, gives as the first definition of school: "A place, institution, or building where instruction is given, especially to children."<sup>9</sup> Although school is seen as the place where children learn, learning itself is seen as a lifelong process. Many people support and promote lifelong learning, but they do not see most or even much of this learning as taking place in a formal educational setting. For example, a recent report on lifelong learning by a group of respected educators defines lifelong learning as "any purposeful learning that an individual...engages in throughout the life span."<sup>10</sup> For these educators, lifelong learning is and should be mainly self-directed learning or learning in informal groups in churches and temples, senior citizens' centers, and similar nonschool organizations. If included within school and college programs, older adults, especially those over 65, are to be offered mostly informal, noncredential-giving education. Perhaps partly as a consequence, education for those over 65

tends to be of a passive nature, not requiring hard thought and homework-- a kind of high-class entertainment suitable for passing the time until death. Although the doors of formal, credential-giving education are not completely closed to those over 65<sup>11</sup> who are highly motivated, educators and people generally, including probably most older people themselves, do not see formal education as a right of older people; nor do they see formal education of older people as a major responsibility of schools and colleges.

I maintain that a concept of formal education that excludes older people may have seemed justifiable in 1900 when Americans over 65 numbered 3 million, or just 4 percent of the population,<sup>12</sup> but that so narrow a concept of education seems inadequate and unjust today when those over 65 number over 24 million and constitute 11 percent of the population.<sup>13</sup> "Every day, more than 1,000 people in the United States reach age 65. By the year 2000, according to most projections, there will be at least 30 million....And by 2025...they will number 45 million."<sup>14</sup> Less conservative predictors maintain that our society will age even more rapidly so that by 2025, there will be 72 million people over 65.<sup>15</sup>

Despite the rapidly growing numbers of older people in our society, educators and the public generally show relatively little concern about the education of older people--especially the formal education of older people. Such lack of concern can be observed at both the elementary-secondary level and the college-university level.

The major purpose of elementary and secondary schools, many people would agree, is to give children and young people the basic skills and knowledge they need to become self-fulfilling, contributing members of society as workers and citizens and as parents and family members.<sup>16</sup> It is commonly recognized and deplored that many young people leave school without adequate skills and knowledge, but at least the responsibility of the schools to young people is generally accepted.

If basic skills and knowledge are necessary for young people if they are to live fully in society, then should not a basic education be necessary also for older people? It cannot be argued that all or most older people have had their chance at formal education. Many immigrants have never attended schools in this country. Many people born in this country attended schools for too short a time to learn very much, or attended seriously inadequate schools. Whatever the reasons, 1.4 million Americans, according to the U.S. Census Bureau, are illiterate. They cannot read or write at all. Within the last century, the illiteracy rate for the entire population of the United States has fallen from 20 percent to 1 percent, but the illiteracy rate of those over 65 remains extremely high. At the annual meeting of the National Council on the Aging held in Chicago in September, 1976, Dr. Arthur S. Flemming, chairman of the U.S. Civil Rights Commission, reported that 30 percent of Americans over the age of 65 are illiterate--about 7 million people. Yet only 3 percent, or about 700 thousand, are enrolled in adult education classes of any kind. Dr. Flemming pointed out that less than 1 percent of revenue-sharing funds are used for the education of those over 65.<sup>17</sup>

To the number of total illiterates in our society one must add the rapidly growing numbers of the functionally illiterate. Many young people are leaving school without the basic skills and knowledge they need for successful daily living, including employment. It is estimated that about 23 million Americans over the age of 18 are functionally illiterate.<sup>18</sup>

How have schools served illiterate and poorly educated adults in the past? Public schools in big cities offered many classes for adults, especially immigrants, after World War I, but the adult classes virtually disappeared in the depression years of the 1930s. Education of adults was considered a luxury schools could not afford. In Chicago, for example, Helen Lynch, who took part in the Board of Education's adult program until it ended, said of the program, "I told the superintendent it wasn't right to stop it, but he said that education is for children first."<sup>19</sup>

In 1979 in Chicago, 1,100 adults were reported as being in public schools of some kind. Since the total enrollment of the Chicago public schools was about 490,000, it is obvious that adults constituted an extremely minor part of the school population. In that year, 1979, some 35,000 additional adults were enrolled in an institution called the Chicago Urban Skills Institute (CUSI), a part of the City Colleges of Chicago. Most of these adults were young people who failed to get a good basic education in elementary and secondary schools. According to Oscar E. Shabat, chancellor of the City Colleges of Chicago, "The future is CUSI. Below the college level. Adults. That's where the numbers are. The illiterates. Those who can't functionally read, say, up to the fifth

grade. Those must be a half-million people in Chicago. Latinos heavily, Appalachians, blacks--particularly blacks. That's where it is!"<sup>20</sup>

In New York City also, it is estimated that there are a half-million adult illiterates. Because of the city's fiscal crisis, the Board of Education has sharply curtailed its continuing education programs, leaving literacy education largely to overburdened nongovernmental and volunteer groups.<sup>21</sup>

Throughout the country today, public and private elementary and secondary schools, with few exceptions, assume no or very minor responsibility for the education of adults. It is generally accepted that the major responsibility of schools is to children and young people. Yet the idea that schools should serve older as well as younger people is not without verbal support from the highest level. The national debate over the creation of a Department of Education included this comment by an administration official: "We want to look to the schools as family-service centers, serving the elderly and adults as well as children."<sup>22</sup>

Some may argue that the time is not right for advocating the inclusion of adults in school programs because there are too many school problems and not enough money or ideas for solving them. In one way, however, the time would seem to be precisely right because school enrollments are decreasing<sup>23</sup> and some schools are being closed for lack of children and young people. If there were sufficient support for adult classes, there would now be room for adults in many elementary and secondary schools. In fact, however, as in Chicago, the basic educational

needs of some adults are being met, inadequately and perhaps inappropriately, at the college level. How are colleges accommodating themselves to the needs of older people, especially those over 65?

"U.S. colleges are entering a time of retrenchment and fierce competition. The long-range problem is the declining birthrate of the 1960s. The current problem is money....The annual supply of potential freshmen won't drop in absolute numbers until 1983...."<sup>24</sup> The decreasing enrollments are leading to increasing opportunities for older students.<sup>25</sup> It is estimated that "one-third of all college students are now older than the traditional 18- to 22-year-olds."<sup>26</sup> It is considered noteworthy, however, when those over 65 or 70 pursue diplomas or degrees. Newspapers often print articles about the formal education of older people, thus providing evidence of the novelty and newsworthiness of such educational pursuit in our society.<sup>27</sup> For example, the Chicago Weekly Review reported that "Mrs. Mary McGowan, 79, received her G.E.D.<sup>28</sup> certification along with 100 other adults....She plans to enroll in a college program...this fall."<sup>29</sup> A New York Times article reported that Barry Gersh at the age of 63 entered Harvard University as a freshman. Here is what he said of his choice of Harvard:

I did not want a school that offered the educational equivalent of baby food--mashed, strained, predigested courses specially designed for "mature" students. And I was not interested in a new career, a continuing career, or an augmented career. I wanted to be taught, marked, judged by the same standards applicable to all new college students. I wanted to be bound by the same course requirements and discipline. I chose Harvard. It is nearest to my home in Martha's Vineyard. I bothered the admissions office until they agreed to let me in.<sup>30</sup>

What did Gersh expect to find at Harvard? Although he admitted that he encountered problems as a new student, he waxed eloquent about the rewards:

But, oh, the rewards. Nothing ahead of me except the great intellects to listen to, great books to read, sharp minds to discuss with. So many things I knew vaguely or understood "generally" came into sharp focus. Light filters into great black holes of ignorance. Words, names, concepts take on describable bodies. All while engaged in the one enterprise that offers deep and abiding pleasure and has no age barrier.<sup>31</sup>

No age barrier? The University of Utah was sued for denying admission to 52-year-old Frances Purcie. She charged that openings in the graduate school were reserved for younger students. "A brief cited a ruling by a federal court that discrimination against older people to provide spaces for younger ones violated the Constitution."<sup>32</sup>

An Illinois surgical nurse, Geraldine G. Cannon, argued before the Supreme Court in January, 1979, that she should be permitted to sue Northwestern University and the University of Chicago medical schools for sex discrimination based on age. She maintained that her application was rejected because both universities discourage applicants over 30 and she was 39 when she applied. She argued that "discouraging older applicants is actually a form of discrimination against women because many women interrupt their education to marry and raise children before completing graduate or professional education."<sup>33</sup>

Although reports conflict, some say that "while Allan Bakke's allegation was that he was a victim of 'reverse' discrimination based on race, it seems clear that he was more accurately a victim of age discrimination. He was turned down by twelve medical schools not because he was



white but because he was ten years older than the average medical school freshman."<sup>34</sup> Dr. Charles Lowrey, chairman of the admissions committee that rejected Bakke, was reported as saying that the first reason was age. "He was too old. Although we don't have an age limit, we do, because of the scarcity of physicians, like to get qualified applicants as young as possible to assure maximum duration of practice. We don't use age as a cutout but tend to look a lot harder at anyone past 28 or 30."<sup>35</sup>

Despite a tradition of discrimination based on age, colleges and universities are increasingly admitting older students because they are a source of revenue for deficit-ridden institutions. In some cases, they may even make it possible for institutions to survive. It is reported, for example, that Hofstra University in Hemstead, New York, had an operating deficit of two million dollars but was able to balance its budget in 1976 largely through income from the adult education program.<sup>36</sup> At the University of Miami, Robert Allen, dean of the school of continuing students, has been quoted as saying, "The returning adult students will be critical for the survival of a university like ours."<sup>37</sup> The adult students referred to, however, are mainly between the ages of 25 and 34. Students within this 25-34 range made up 36 percent of all adult students in the United States in 1975--about 3.7 million people. Students over 55 made up 9.5 percent of adult students, or about 1.2 million students.<sup>38</sup>

Although in need of older students to fill emptying coffers and classrooms, colleges and universities are not known for their policy of nondiscrimination based on age. Like most employers in our society, institutions of higher learning have rules that require faculty members

to retire at age 65. When Maggie Kuhn, founder of the Gray Panthers, was in Hawaii in 1977 to teach a course on "Age and Advocacy," the university wanted to cancel the course when it was realized that Kuhn was over 65. She was quoted as saying, "I felt this was terribly unjust and protested on principle. They came around with an escape clause. 'Lecturers can be accepted on a temporary basis if no other person is qualified to teach the course.'" Kuhn added, "As a septuagenarian I'm eminently qualified."<sup>39</sup>

Since mandatory retirement at 65 has now been outlawed,<sup>40</sup> it will be more difficult for most employers to discriminate against older employees. Tenured university professors, however, can still be forced to retire at 65, at least until 1982, and the growing number of young Ph.D.s who are unemployed or unhappily employed outside their fields of specialty suggests that those 65 and over will not have an easy time finding positions in colleges and universities even after 1982.

Colleges and universities reflect our society's insensitivity to age in other ways. Course catalogs usually contain a notice of nondiscrimination similar to the following from the course schedule of Loyola University of Chicago:

Loyola University of Chicago admits students without regard to their race, color, sex or national or ethnic origin to all the rights, privileges, programs, and activities generally accorded or made available to students at the school. Loyola University does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, sex or national or ethnic origin in administration of its educational policies, admissions policies, scholarship and loan programs, and athletic and other school-administered programs.<sup>41</sup>

It will be noted that there is no mention of nondiscrimination based on age. When Loyola president R.C. Baumhart was queried about the omission,

he referred the inquiry to staff attorney Abigail Byman, who replied in writing:

The form of the Notice of Nondiscriminatory Policy which appears in Loyola University of Chicago publications is based on an Internal Revenue Service ruling. Age nondiscrimination is not included in the IRS requirements for the notice. In addition, the federal laws prohibiting age discrimination by recipients of federal funds, unlike those laws relating to other potential bases of discrimination, particularly race, are not absolute; certain age distinctions may be made and actions may be taken which are based on reasonable factors other than age but may affect certain age groups disproportionately. However, it should be emphasized that Loyola does at present, and in the future will continue to comply with all legal requirements regarding age nondiscrimination.<sup>42</sup>

Although the Age Discrimination Act passed by Congress in 1975<sup>43</sup> does recognize that there are situations in which age may be a valid reason for limiting benefits, these situations should be closely examined to make certain that any limitation is clearly justified. Here is an example of a limitation declared to be illegal: "...it will not be legal to bar scientists above a certain age--say, 70--from qualifying for research grants in the field in which they are qualified."<sup>44</sup> The declared illegality of this denial of benefits suggests that other academic benefits denied to older people in the past may be illegal--for example, admittance to various graduate programs and professional schools, scholarships, fellowships, and assistantships. It would appear wise and just for educational institutions to take every possible step toward eradication of ageism in their policies and programs, especially since their very survival may depend on the enrollment of older students. For example, the 1979-80 edition of the Loyola University of Chicago course schedule referred to earlier includes in the Notice of Nondiscriminatory Policy a statement that is the result of legislation prohibiting discrimination against the

handicapped. The statement reads: "Qualified persons are not subject to discrimination on the basis of handicap."<sup>45</sup> It would seem that the words "or age" could and should be added to this statement even if the law does not specifically require it.

It is apparently commoner, however, for educational organizations to follow a tradition of discrimination based on age. For example, Article II of the constitution of the Philosophy of Education Society explains one of the society's purposes in these words: "to encourage promising young students in the field of philosophy of education."<sup>46</sup> By implication, old students are not to be encouraged.

It would appear that we cannot count on educational philosophers<sup>47</sup> to lead the way to education without age limits. In a meeting of philosophers of education, Gari Lesnoff-Caravaglia summed up the situation in these words:

The dominant view of education by philosophers has been primarily that of determining how young persons should be prepared to meet the challenges of maturity and adulthood. As a result, the focus of attention has been upon young learners. Philosophies of education have been elaborated and studied from a limited perspective--as if learning were a task which concerned only the first third of life....The practical orientation of American educational philosophy, in general, has obsolescence built into its structure....That the emphasis in educational philosophy has been upon young persons is a further manifestation of our lack of concern and interest in persons as they advance beyond middle age....Although there are occasional philosophical statements<sup>48</sup> with respect to the idea that learning continues throughout life, this is not to mean that such education should include the kind of learning that goes on within classrooms. Lifelong learning can and does occur, but life-span education, in a more formal sense, does not occur, and it is just this kind of opportunity to learn that older people need.<sup>49</sup>

It is just this problem that I am concerned with: the virtual exclusion of older people, especially those 65 and older, from the

benefits and credentials of formal education. As I have suggested earlier, the focus on the education of youth may have seemed justifiable when older people made up a very small part of our population but it does not seem justifiable today when older people are becoming our largest minority.<sup>50</sup> As is or should be true in the case of any minority, their full humanity, their capabilities, their needs, and their potential contributions should be recognized. "One of every nine Americans today is 65 years of age or older. The ratio will gradually narrow until by the year 2025 ...nearly one of every four persons will be in that age group."<sup>51</sup> We are facing what George L. Maddox, head of Duke University's Center for the Study of Aging and Human Development, calls "an emerging mismatch between our institutional arrangements in this country and that demographic fact--a mismatch we have not yet begun to come to terms with."<sup>52</sup>

It can no longer be convincingly argued that older people are not able to benefit from challenging formal education. Much of past research on old age was based on the disabled and institutionalized aged, who make up about four percent of those over 65.<sup>53</sup> The data have often supported the traditional view of older people as sickly, senile, and sexless. Today a growing body of research indicates that old age does not necessarily bring about ill health or limit intellectual ability, sexual activity, and ability and need to work. "A long series of recent studies...have demonstrated beyond any question that the most important factors of intelligence continue to increase well into the seventies, and, if certain simple conditions are met, throughout life."<sup>54</sup> These conditions relate to mental stimulation, attitudes, and opportunities. Most older people, recent research suggests, would stay mentally and physically healthier if

they were not forced into retirement and if they could shake off the stereotype of old age as a time of passivity and uselessness. "The brain's aging is exquisitely sensitive to environmental variables. As with the studies on early brain development in infants, psychobiological studies on brain aging stress the importance of stimulation. Those who remain active, curious, and involved during their later years exhibit far fewer behavioral and intellectual abnormalities than those who are socially isolated and mentally inactive."<sup>55</sup>

Like women and blacks before them, the growing minority of older people has been denied formal educational opportunities partly on the basis of mental incompetency. Women and blacks have been accepted into mainstream formal education. It is time for the old to join them. Informal learning and permission to sit in on "regular" classes are not enough. Growing numbers of older people do not want simply to audit life; they want to take it for credit.<sup>56</sup> Research indicates that they have the mental capacity.

Another argument sometimes used to justify the exclusion of older people from formal education is that the main purpose of education is vocational preparation and youth is the proper time to prepare for a vocation. The fact is that today all people are not being and cannot be prepared for jobs in their youth. Many jobs are too complicated, their nature is constantly changing, and their availability is uncertain. Large numbers of middle-aged adults are returning to school for vocational training or retraining.<sup>57</sup> Even those in their 50s, 60s, and 70s are now seeking retraining or new vocational and professional skills. As Dr. James

E. Birren of the University of Southern California says, "The inoculation model of education--as a one-shot deal to prepare one to face life--is obviously no longer appropriate."<sup>58</sup> What appears to be more appropriate today is a swinging door to education through which people can pass many times during their lives to renew and add to knowledge and skills.

Another reason given for excluding older people from formal education is that the young and the old cannot learn well together in the same schools and classes. The growing numbers of older people in regular college classes are challenging the idea that students must be segregated by age in order to learn well. Age-integrated education would appear to serve the interests of both the young and the old. Older people need to know what younger people are thinking. Younger people can learn from older people. For example, younger people can only read about or see and hear at second hand via audiovisual media the history that older people have lived through. The remembrance of the past is needed in classrooms. People of all ages need to think and talk together, not only about the past but about the future.

Now let me summarize what I have been discussing in the first part of this chapter. The problem I am concerned with is the virtual exclusion of those 65 and over from mainstream formal education in this country. As suggested in the statement of the problem, the solution is: Older people should be included in mainstream formal education. I have given some reasons for removing age limits from formal education. Following chapters

will present--clearly<sup>59</sup> and convincingly, I hope--two broad and compelling reasons for including older people within mainstream formal education.

These two reasons are:

(1) The history of schooling in the United States supports universal, age-inclusive education. The trend in American schooling has been toward inclusiveness--toward including all groups: the poor as well as the nonpoor, females as well as males, blacks as well as nonblacks, the handicapped as well as the nonhandicapped, and younger as well as older age groups. I shall argue that many of the reasons given for excluding some of these groups from schooling in the past are the same reasons that are used today to justify the exclusion of older people from schooling. Since these reasons have been rejected in the case of the other groups, it follows, I maintain, that they should be rejected in the case of older people.

(2) The democratic philosophy of the United States supports universal, age-inclusive education. I shall show that the main arguments used to justify formal education of the young apply equally well to the old. The key words in these arguments are: preparation, equal opportunity, justice, and human worth and dignity.

After discussing these two broad reasons for including older people within the fold of mainstream formal education, I shall describe some of the trends toward age-inclusiveness in formal education in this country, and I shall attempt to predict some future consequences of an age-inclusive philosophy of formal education.



To clarify my purpose, I should like now to comment on some possible objections to the focus and scope of my thesis. For example, some may ask why I concern myself primarily with those over 65 years of age. They may ask: Do not many people under 65 need and deserve expanded educational opportunities in our mainstream schools and colleges? Certainly I agree that people of all ages, perhaps almost from cradle to grave, should have the benefits of formal education. In the United States, however, formal education for children, youths, and younger adults is generally accepted and available. It is only when people are regarded as old that formal education for them seems inappropriate to the public generally, including older people, and is not considered a major responsibility of mainstream educational institutions. Since "old" is a relative term, I have arbitrarily taken age 65 as the approximate beginning of old age. Until recently, 65 was the retirement age for most workers, the age when people were expected to retire from the mainstream of life, as I have mentioned earlier. By focussing on the group the most likely to deny themselves and to be denied formal education, I hope to make a case for truly lifelong formal education.

It might also be asked why I am focussing on schooling, or formal education, when most learning is informal and takes place outside schools. I do not deny that most learning--valuable learning--takes place in offices and factories, in libraries and homes, in streets and stores, in churches and temples, and in informal groups and situations of many kinds. For children, television may be their most powerful teacher. Yet the kind of formal learning offered in schools and colleges and the credentials awarded in those institutions rate high in our society. They are often

the key to employment and respect--self-respect and the respect of others. To argue for acceptance of older people into formal mainstream education is to argue for their right to employment and respect. It is to argue for their acceptance into the mainstream of life. It is to argue for their right to be judged as individuals rather than as members of a stereotyped group.

Another question that might be asked about my thesis relates to the needs of older people. Is formal education what those 65 and over need the most? What about decent housing, health care, protection, love? Of course I would agree that older people, like younger people, must have their basic needs satisfied--food, shelter, health care, love, respect. I would also agree that many older people lack the basics required for decent living. Yet for older people as well as for younger people, formal education and employment are of major importance if people are to have power to control their own lives and to improve society in general. A paid job provides the means to satisfy basic needs, including the need for self-respect and the respect of others. Most older people need jobs as much as younger people do if they are to regard themselves as fully human. Formal education is often the passport to employment and self-respect.

Some people may ask whether it would not be more appropriate to stress liberal, nonvocational education for older adults. Although I favor defining education as liberal, nonutilitarian education and calling courses designed to prepare people for jobs and professions as training, in fact that distinction is not generally accepted in the United States.

Therefore, I am not arguing here that such a distinction should be made. My purpose here is to argue that the benefits offered in our schools, colleges, and universities should be available to older people as well as younger people.

Another question that might be asked is: Are you arguing that older people should be given formal education and jobs at the expense of younger people, many of whom lack both formal education and jobs? I am not arguing for preferential treatment of older people. I do accept the need for "affirmative action"<sup>60</sup> in the case of minority groups to compensate to some degree for the injustices of the past. Since older people are a relatively new minority (because until fairly recently people did not live to be very old), perhaps there does not seem to be so great a need for affirmative action as in the case of other minorities. Yet older people have been discriminated against in education, employment, and other ways, and therefore I maintain that there is justification for applying affirmative-action policies to them as well as to other minorities.

If it is argued that older people have already had their chance at formal education, I would point out that many people who came to the United States from other countries did not attend school in this country. Many other people attended school very briefly in their youth or attended inadequate schools. Today thousands of young people leave school without the minimal skills needed to succeed in the field of work and in life generally.<sup>61</sup> They are the older adults of the future for whom the schools must continue to be responsible. Formal education should not be a one-

time lottery: you take your chance and win or lose. Instead, formal education should be an open door to learning, a swinging door through which a person can pass many times in life.

Some may ask whether it is fair to give formal education and jobs to older people when so many younger people lack education and jobs. I shall argue that education plus jobs for older people is a matter of justice. At the same time, I admit the obvious fact that our society has not found a way to provide work for all, and certainly not financially rewarding, personally satisfying work for all.<sup>62</sup> There would seem to be two general solutions to the work problem: (a) Change our society so that jobs are available to all or (b) change our society so that work is not the main road to acceptance and respect. Our society might develop into one that stresses the arts pursued in leisure rather than productive labor pursued in the market place. It should be remembered that the word school originally meant "leisure" in Greek. It seems unlikely, however, that the arts will displace work in our society. The most that can be hoped and argued for, I think, is an increased acceptance of art as respectable work plus an increased number of all kinds of jobs, including artistic jobs, that are subsidized by taxpayers through the government. The current state of the American economy and the conservative government in power (1981) cast dark shadows on such hopes.

Despite the present shortage of jobs, I maintain that older people must be given the same educational and vocational opportunities as younger people if older people are to be accepted as fully human. I shall argue that acceptance of older people into the mainstream of life is a logical

extension of the argument for full acceptance of other groups: women, blacks, European ethnics, Hispanics, and the handicapped. I should like to point out that younger taxpayers stand to gain economically from the education and employment of people over 65. Without such employment, future taxpayers will bear an increasing burden of retirement benefits.

It might be asked: Who specifically is denying formal education to older people? Who are the enemies, so to speak, of schooling for those over 65? It is not easy to identify such enemies by individual names since few would want publicly to oppose education for older people. At elementary and secondary levels, however, one could consider most educational philosophers, school administrators, teachers, parents, and the public generally as enemies because they view and support schooling as primarily for children and young people. At college and university levels, the enemy might be defined as anyone--educator or layperson--who regards chronological age as sufficient or substantial reason for denial of some educational opportunity or benefit to an older adult.

Another possible enemy, ironically, is the adult educator of today. Adult education is a broad field generally separated from mainstream education of youth. It includes people working in many institutions outside formal education. Adult educators sometimes defend this system of informal, voluntary education as being particularly suited to adults.<sup>64</sup> Their position, even their jobs, may seem threatened by a contention that our main educational institutions should assume responsibility for older people as well as younger people. In fact, I see no threat to the multifaceted informal education often regarded as the

province of adult educators. Everyone of every age can profit from a wide variety of informal educational opportunities. As I have explained, I focus on formal education because it is not generally accepted as appropriate for and necessary to older people, especially those over 65, and because it is the key to jobs and respect in our society.

Elitists would also be the enemy of formal education for all those 65 and over. By elitist I mean anyone who regards schooling, at least at higher levels, as only for the intellectually superior, as determined by intelligence and achievement tests. I am arguing that schooling at all levels should be available to older people of all abilities, although they should be expected to meet requirements for diplomas and degrees.

Of course those who oppose formal schooling of any kind for young people would also oppose formal schooling for older people. Ivan Illich, for example, advocates that schools be abolished.<sup>65</sup> He sees our mainstream schools as primarily the educators of consumers--as repressive bureaucracies that enslave students to an economic ideology. Since it does not seem likely, however, that formal education will be abolished and since formal education seems likely to continue to be--or to be regarded as being--the road to jobs and respect, it would seem to be wise to continue to try to improve the schools and it would seem to be just to offer the benefits of schooling to people of all ages.

One final enemy of formal education for older people must be mentioned: many older people themselves. Yes, older people themselves

are the enemy of formal education for themselves if they accept and live within the stereotype of old age as a time of passivity, incapacity, and inactivity.

Other questions readers may have about my purpose will be answered, it is hoped, in the body of this essay. I shall begin with a description of the historical trend toward inclusive education in the United States.

## FOOTNOTES FOR CHAPTER I

<sup>1</sup>Andrew M. Greeley, "Ripping Off the Elderly," Chicago Sun-Times, 16 January 1979, p. 30.

<sup>2</sup>Christopher Lasch, The Culture of Narcissism (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1978), p. 209.

<sup>3</sup>John Dewey, Philosophy of Education (Totowa, New Jersey: Littlefield, Adams and Company, 1975), p. 91.

<sup>4</sup>Many books published in the 1970s challenge the stereotype of old age and express the desire and need of older people to participate fully in life. Here are some of them with titles that suggest their common thesis:

Alex Comfort, A Good Age (New York: Crown Publishers, 1976).  
Wilbur Cross and Carol Florio, You Are Never Too Old to Learn (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1978).

Arthur Geller and Deborah Geller, Living Longer and Loving It (Maplewood, New Jersey: Hammond Incorporated, 1979).

Frances Tenenbaum, Over 55 Is Not Illegal (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1979).

<sup>5</sup>The group was dubbed the Gray Panthers by a New York television producer because of its activist nature, suggestive of the activist nature of the group of young blacks called the Black Panthers. The Gray Panthers maintain that they "are not just another interest group for the elderly" but "are dedicated to improving the quality of life for all people." The full name of the group is Gray Panthers, Age and Youth in Action. Headed by Maggie Kuhn, the group has headquarters at 3700 Chestnut Street, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19104. See Tenenbaum, Over 55, pp. 19-24.

<sup>6</sup>Edward F. Ansello, "How Older People Are Stereotyped," Interracial Books for Children Bulletin 7 (no. 6, 1976):4.

<sup>7</sup>"Aging in the U.S.: Facts and Figures," Interracial Books for Children Bulletin 7 (no. 6, 1976):11

<sup>8</sup>Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, 5th ed. (Springfield, Massachusetts: G. & C. Merriam Company, 1946), p. 889.

<sup>9</sup>Random House Dictionary of the English Language (New York: Random House, 1967), p. 1278.



<sup>10</sup>Norman V. Overly, R. Bruce McQuigg, David L. Silvernail, and Floyd L. Coppedge, A Model for Lifelong Learning, A Report by the Phi Delta Kappa Commission on Lifelong Learning (Bloomington, Indiana: Phi Delta Kappa, 1980), p. 5.

<sup>11</sup>Although there are various opportunities for older people to go to school, my experience in formal education--probably like that of many others--suggests that in general the closing of doors to our mainstream educational institutions is clearly connected with the chronological age of students. By about age 16, a youth is not generally welcome in grade school. By about age 20, he or she is not generally welcome in high school. By age 30, he or she is not generally welcome as a first-year college student, at least not in many small colleges where students live in dormitories on campus. By age 40, a student is often not welcome in graduate school. Defenders of this age-segregated formal education point to the emotional and social needs of students as justification for separate groupings. For example, an educator whose specialty is adult education reacted very negatively to my contention that young and old people can and should be attending the same college classes. He maintained that the young and the old are just too different to be able to learn together successfully in the same classes. A similar argument has been made against the integration of males and females, blacks and whites, and the handicapped and the nonhandicapped in the same schools and classes. See Chapter II for a discussion of the historical trend away from segregated education and toward integrated education in the United States.

<sup>12</sup>Chicago Tribune, Growing Old in America (Chicago: Chicago Tribune, 1978), p. 2.

<sup>13</sup>Statistical Abstract of the United States, 100th ed. (Washington, D.C.: Bureau of the Census, 1979), p. 30. The number of those over 65 is given as 24,054,000, or 11 percent of the population.

The striking growth in the number of older people and the challenge to society are pointed out in the following quotation:

A major event of the 20th century--nationally and internationally--is the emergence of a large and rapidly growing later-life population. I call it "the aging revolution" because it raises profound issues and challenges to our society. One of these is to break away from false images of aging and the aged.

...The United States population over 65 is one of the largest in the world--24 million--and it is growing, not only in absolute numbers but also in proportion to the general population. Since women tend to outlive men, women dominate this population, especially the oldest portion of it. They tend to be both widows and poor.

In addition to those over 65, there are 20 million Americans aged 55 to 65 who have immediate concerns about later life. All together, this is quite an audience--44 million...

This population is overwhelmingly a healthy one, despite the image of old age as a time of mental and physical enfeeblement. The retiree at age 65, if a man, has an average life expectancy of 14 years. If a woman, it's 18 years. A lot can be done in such a period of time. Within a span of 14 to 18 years, a child will complete most if not almost all of its public-school education, go through puberty, and start preparing for a career.--Kenneth K. Goldstein, Paul A. Salisbury, and W. Phillips Davison, eds., Aging: Research and Perspective, Columbia Journalism Monograph no. 3 (New York: Graduate School of Journalism of Columbia University, 1979), p. 1.

<sup>14</sup>Chicago Tribune, Growing Old, p. 2.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid.

<sup>16</sup>In 1918, the National Education Association's Commission on the Reorganization of Secondary Schools issued a report titled "Cardinal Principles of Secondary Education" that gave the main objectives of education as: 1. Health. 2. Command of fundamental processes. 3. Worthy home membership. 4. Vocation. 5. Citizenship. 6. Worthy use of leisure. 7. Ethical character. --National Education Association, Commission on the Reorganization of Secondary Schools, Cardinal Principles of Secondary Education, Bureau of Education, Bulletin 1918, no. 35 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1918).

In recent years, the stress in education has been on the second principle: command of fundamental processes. Commonly referred to as basic skills, these skills usually include skills in reading, writing, mathematics, and--to a lesser extent--speaking. The stress on teaching these skills is justified in many educational texts. Here are two examples:

"In our technological civilization, an individual's ability to participate in the activities of society depends on mastery of these fundamental processes. The level of verbal and mathematical literacy required is one that will enable individuals to apply and utilize these basic skills in the varied functions of life. With few exceptions, those who are deficient in basic skills will be severely limited in their ability to function effectively in our society."--John I. Goodlad, What Schools Are For (Bloomington, Indiana: Phi Delta Kappa Educational Foundation, 1979), p. 47.

"Basic skills are important in the school program in a democracy. The individual's ability to direct his own search for information through reading, his ability to manage his own economic problems, and his effectiveness in communicating with others are dependent upon proficiency

in applying the basic skills. They are indispensable in a nation of free people only if the people are able to apply these skills. Modern education is concerned with skill mastery and skill application."--Albert H. Shuster and Milton E. Ploghoft, The Emerging Elementary Curriculum, 2nd ed. (Columbus, Ohio: Charles E. Merrill Publishing Company, 1970), p. 88.

17."Act to Guard Rights of Elderly, U.S. Aide Asks," Chicago Sun-Times, 29 September 1976, p. 56.

18."Some 23 million Americans over the age of 18 are functionally illiterate, with computation and communication skills below the 5th grade level. Of the 700,000 who drop out of school each year, 90 percent suffer from reading disability."--Lawrence Galton, "A Computer War Against Illiteracy," Parade, 11 February 1979, p. 27.

19."Mike Royko, "City's Puerto Ricans: Only a Language Apart," Chicago Sun-Times, 16 April 1978, p. 2.

20."City Colleges' Shabat Responds to His Critics," Chicago Sun-Times, 4 May 1979, p. 7.

21."Nancy Rubin, "What New York City Does About Illiteracy," New York Times, 30 April 1978, education sec., p. 23.

22."The Ace Up Carter's Sleeve," Chicago Daily News, 14-15 January 1978, p. 6.

23."Continuing a decade of decline, the number of children of elementary school age is expected to drop another 4% in the early Eighties and then to begin to increase. By 1990 there should be approximately as many children between the ages of 5 and 13 as there were in 1960. Racial minority representation in this group will be 17.7% in 1990, compared to an expected racial minority representation of 14.8% in the total population.

"The number of young people of high school age is expected to decline about 19% during the 1980s. Racial minority representation in the 14- to 17-year-old group will probably increase to 19.4% in 1990. The representation of Hispanics in both the younger and older age groups is expected to grow more rapidly than either the black or white populations." --Raymond F. Reisleiter, "An Education Agenda for the Eighties," Phi Delta Kappan 62 (no. 6, February 1981), pp. 413-14.

24."Private Colleges Racing Against Bleak Future," Chicago Sun-Times, 10 September 1978, p. 92.

<sup>25</sup>It should be pointed out that as of 1981, the new administration under the leadership of President Reagan is proposing serious cuts in federal aid to education that, if made, may lead to decreased college enrollments and cuts in educational benefits at all levels to people of all ages, including older people. As a sign perhaps of the future, three state universities in Illinois, described as underfunded but overpopulated, announced in February, 1981, that they were cutting off freshman admissions, although they denied that the cuts were directly related to budget cuts.--Chicago Tribune, "3 State Schools Cut Off Admissions," 25 February 1981, sec. 1, p. 3.

It seems likely that decreased federal support of education will result in reduced educational benefits to all age groups, especially at a time when college costs are the "highest in history."--Chicago Sun-Times, "College Costs Are Soaring," 25 February 1981, p. 22.

<sup>26</sup>Ronald Gross, "Are You 'On the Grow'?", Learning Times 1 (no. 1, 1979), p. 1.

<sup>27</sup>A recent news article reported that Florida State University had awarded an earned doctoral degree to 92-year-old Virgil Conner. The rarity of Conner's educational accomplishment is suggested by the following comment by Dr. William Roger of the university's history department: "There is no way to really verify it, but it is highly likely that Mr. Conner is the oldest person in the world to have earned a doctoral degree."--American Association of Retired Persons News Bulletin 22 (no. 2, February 1981), p. 1.

<sup>28</sup>The initials G.E.D. stand for "General Educational Development." The G.E.D. examination is a high-school equivalency examination people may take in order to get high-school equivalency certification.

<sup>29</sup>"Learning Is Ageless," Chicago Weekly Review, 28 July 1979, p.6.

<sup>30</sup>"A Freshman with Seniority," New York Times, 11 September 1977, education sec., p. 1.

<sup>31</sup>Ibid., p. 6.

<sup>32</sup>"Rising Median Age Is Affecting Education at All Levels," New York Times, 8 January 1978, education sec., p. 10.

<sup>33</sup>"She Has Day in Court in Med School Case," Chicago Sun-Times, 10 January 1979, p. 26.

<sup>34</sup>Bill Raspberry, "Court Emerges Smelling Like Roses," Chicago Sun-Times, 4 July 1978, p. 20.

<sup>35</sup>"Why Allan Bakke Was Turned Down," Chicago Sun-Times, 24 September 1978, p. 3.

<sup>36</sup>"An Adult Invasion Filling Colleges' Student Gap," Wall Street Journal, 24 January 1977, p. 1.

<sup>37</sup>Ibid.

<sup>38</sup>Ibid.

<sup>39</sup>Goldberg, "Over 60," p. 18.

<sup>40</sup>"On January 1, 1979, the age at which an employee may be forced to retire was raised from 65 to 70. The new law is an amendment to the Age Discrimination in Employment Act (ADEA). It now prohibits employment discrimination against individuals between the ages of 40 and 70. It does not require persons to work until they are 70 nor does it change the age eligibility for collecting social security or other retirement benefits.

"The law affects most people in private employment and most state and local government employees. There are certain exceptions: the law does not apply to employees of a firm with twenty or fewer workers; it does not affect tenured college professors unless they are covered by a state law--this exemption will expire in 1982--and certain executives may be retired if their retirement benefits total \$27,000 a year, exclusive of social security.

"The new law also banishes mandatory retirement at any age for most federal employees. Exemptions include law-enforcement officers, CIA officials, air-traffic controllers, and fire fighters."--Frances Tenenbaum, Over 55, pp. 100-101.

<sup>41</sup>Schedule of Courses, 1978-79, Loyola University of Chicago.

<sup>42</sup>From a letter dated July 12, 1979, addressed to June Sark Heinrich and signed by Abigail Byman, Staff Attorney (Office of the General Counsel, Loyola University of Chicago).

<sup>43</sup>The Age Discrimination Act of 1975 was aimed at preventing discrimination based on age in federal programs but--in 1979--was just beginning to be enforced, according to a report by Donald Reilly, Deputy Director for the National Council on the Aging, at a conference on "Education and Information Needs of an Aging America" held at the Chicago Public Library Cultural Center, November 5-6, 1979, and sponsored by the Chicago Public Library and Chicago City-Wide College.

<sup>44</sup>"U.S. Proposes Rules to Stamp Out Age Discrimination," Chicago Sun-Times, 1 December 1978, p. 22.

<sup>45</sup>Schedule of Courses, 1979-80, Loyola University of Chicago.

<sup>46</sup>Constitution and By-Laws of the Philosophy of Education Society, Article II (6), as printed in Philosophy of Education 1979, Proceedings of the Thirty-fifth Annual Meeting of the Philosophy of Education Society (Normal, Illinois: Philosophy of Education Society, 1980), p. 339.

<sup>47</sup>Although philosophers, including educational philosophers, are perhaps not to be blamed any more than others for their lack of vision, this seems a good place to share one of my favorite quotations from Karl R. Popper:

In my opinion, the greatest scandal of philosophy is that, while all around us the world of nature perishes--and not the world of nature alone--philosophers continue to talk, sometimes cleverly and sometimes not, about the question of whether this world exists. They get involved in scholasticism, in linguistic puzzles such as, for example, whether or not there are differences between "being" and "existing."

Under these circumstances, there is a need to apologize for being a philosopher...What is my excuse? My excuse is this. We all have our philosophies, whether or not we are aware of this fact, and our philosophies **are** not worth very much. But the impact of our philosophies upon our actions and our lives is often devastating. This makes it necessary to try to improve our philosophies by criticism. This is the only apology for the continued existence of philosophy which I am able to offer.--Karl R. Popper, Objective Knowledge (Oxford: Clarendon Press, Oxford University Press, 1979), pp. 32-33.

<sup>48</sup>For example, "Dewey argued for an education that was truly lifelong: 'Education must be reconceived, not as merely a preparation for maturity (whence our absurd idea that it should stop after adolescence) but as a continuous growth of the mind and a continuous illumination of life. In a sense, the school can give us only the instrumentalities of mental growth; the rest depends upon an absorption and interpretation of experience. Real education comes after we leave school and there is no reason why it should stop before death.'"--John L. Elias and Sharan Merriam, Philosophical Foundations of Adult Education (Huntington, New York: Robert E. Krieger Publishing Company, 1980), p. 55.

Although John Dewey was concerned primarily in his writings with the formal education of youth, one can find evidence that he felt that "public education" should include adults as well as children and youth. For example, he wrote: "...I may say that our present system is highly defective in opportunities for directed continuation of education. It is no disparagement of present efforts in 'adult education' to say that

the continued education of those who have left school should long ago have been made a paramount interest of public education."--Dewey, Philosophy of Education, p. 91.

<sup>49</sup>Gari Lesnoff-Caravaglia, "Ageism and the Youth Cult: Educational Dilemma," 1977 Proceedings of the Midwest Philosophy of Education Society (Detroit, Michigan: 1978), p. 19.

<sup>50</sup>The word "minority," as commonly used today, refers to "a group differing...from the majority of a population, especially when the difference is obvious and causes or is likely to cause members to be treated unfairly."--Random House Dictionary of the English Language (New York: Random House, 1967), p. 913.

Women are often referred to as a minority group, not because they are a minority numerically but because they are an easily identifiable group of people who have been treated unfairly in many ways throughout history. Older people, especially those over 65, constitute a minority in terms of numbers, identifiable differences, and unfair treatment.

<sup>51</sup>Chicago Tribune, Growing Old, p. 1.

<sup>52</sup>"Growing Old--A New Age Dawns," Chicago Sun-Times, 2 October 1977, p. 1.

<sup>53</sup>Comfort, Good Age, p. 86.

<sup>54</sup>Jerome Ellison, Life's Second Half (Old Greenwich, Connecticut: Devin-Adair Company, 1978), p. 17.

<sup>55</sup>Richard M. Restak, "Brain Potentials: Signaling Our Inner Thoughts," Psychology Today (March 1979): 52.

<sup>56</sup>Dr. Margaret Huych, Associate Professor of Psychology, Illinois Institute of Technology, used words similar to these in an address at a workshop sponsored by the Education Network for Older Adults, March 27, 1979, at Loyola University of Chicago.

<sup>57</sup>"The life cycle that involved starting school at age 6, spending 12 to 16 years getting a formal education, and working at a lifetime job until you retired at age 65, has changed drastically in the past several years. 'Lifetime jobs are now rarities. As technology creates more and more specialized occupations and obliterates old crafts, people change careers three, four, or even more times. Women combining career motherhood with career something else creates [sic] a whole new set of transitions,' reports the College Board in a recent study that examines the forces behind the huge and growing adult learning population. 'Already there are 5 million part-time adult learners and present trends suggest that in the very near future the number of adult part-time students



will exceed the number of traditional students on American campuses,' said George H. Hanford, president of the College Board, a New York-based nonprofit educational association."--Chicago Tribune, "Adult Classes Becoming Necessity," 4 January 1981, sec. 15, p. 1.

<sup>58</sup>Michael Briley, "They're Going Back to School," Dynamic Years (July-August 1978): 15.

<sup>59</sup>I share Karl Popper's view of the writing style appropriate for intellectual discussion. He writes, "In my view, aiming at simplicity and lucidity is a moral duty of all intellectuals: lack of clarity is a sin, and pretentiousness is a crime. (Brevity is also important, in view of the publication explosion, but it is of lesser urgency, and it sometimes is incompatible with clarity.)"--Popper, Objective Knowledge, p. 44.

<sup>60</sup>"Affirmative action, as a phrase, was conceived during the Eisenhower Administration. Former Nixon Treasury Secretary, George Schultz...recalls that it was being used in the 1955 White House Conference on Equal Job Opportunity. Evidence that this phrase was bubbling up through the bureaucracy was its first official use, six weeks into the Kennedy Administration, in Executive Order 10925 (March 1961): 'The contractor will take affirmative action to ensure that applicants are employed, and that employees are treated, during employment, without regard to their race, creed, color, or national origin.' These actions came to mean providing remedial education or compensatory training, making certain that testing did not incorporate forms of discrimination, and aggressive recruiting--in other words, sincerely trying to find, and hire or admit qualified blacks.

"Goals are numerical targets, set to put a specific criterion before a school or employer or union, which can be achieved through 'affirmative action' on agreed 'timetables.'"--William Safire, Safire's Political Dictionary (New York: Random House, 1978), p. 588.

<sup>61</sup>"Some 23 million Americans over the age of 18 are functionally illiterate, with computation and communication skills below the 5th grade level. Of the 700,000 who drop out of school each year, 90 percent suffer from reading disability."--Galton, "Computer War Against Illiteracy," p. 27.

<sup>62</sup>It should be noted that not everyone over 65 wishes to work at a paid job. In our society, some jobs provide little satisfaction and perhaps so much physical and mental stress that it is to be expected that those holding such jobs would welcome retirement. In addition, some people have interests they wish to pursue in retirement, and no doubt some just enjoy doing nothing in particular.

The opposite point of view, however, is commonly expressed. For example, referring to those who have recently retired, Lou Cottin writes: "The designation of our status will be 'retiree' for about six



months; at most for a year. After that, the dignity and honor which our work gave us disappear. We're 'senior citizens,' or 'golden-agers,' or 'older Americans,' or 'old biddies,' or 'old coots.' We're the 'somebodies who once worked here.' That's logical. Our youth-oriented country puts a premium on the work ethic. The longer we are out of work, the fewer our opportunities to get back into the work force, the further we are away from what is euphemistically called the 'mainstream of life.' Working, we were somebody. Retired, we became nobody."--Lou Cottin, Elders in Rebellion (Garden City, New York: Anchor Press/Doubleday, 1979), pp. 8-9.

The ideal would seem to be freedom of choice so that those who wish to work may do so and those who wish to retire may do so with adequate continuing income.

<sup>63</sup>"If present population trends continue and the Social Security law is not changed by 1995, there will be only two working adults in the United States to support each older person, says economist Peter Drucker.

"Drucker says that will be an intolerable burden. He says the ratio is already down to 3 to 1. It was 11 to 1 when the Social Security Act was passed in 1935. Further, the April issue of American Demographics predicts the 1980 census will show that senior citizens already are on the verge of outnumbering teen-agers.

"A lot of other economists, businessmen, and politicians are starting to worry about how many more retirees American workers under 65 can afford to support."--"Social Security May Become Intolerable," Chicago Tribune, 6 April 1980, sec. 5, p. 7.

<sup>64</sup>"That a humanistic orientation is particularly suited to the education of adults has been espoused by Malcolm Knowles. Considered to be one of the most influential adult educators in the United States, Malcolm Knowles has attempted to translate humanistic goals into a theoretical framework for adult education. Calling for a technology for teaching adults which is distinguishable from teaching children, Knowles proposes using the word andragogy to characterize the education of adults. Knowles feels that andragogy, the art and science of helping adults learn, can be contrasted to pedagogy, the education of children....Knowles notes that as persons mature their self concepts move from being dependent personalities towards being self-directed human beings. Learning which is most meaningful capitalizes upon the self-directed autonomous nature of adults. Assuming that adults are self-directed has implications for educational practice. The learning climate must be supportive, cooperative, informal and in general, cause adults to feel accepted and respected. Because adults are self-directed they are capable of and do determine their own educational needs. Self-diagnosis of learning needs and self-evaluation of the learning which has taken place are important components of adult educational practice based upon the self-concept assumption of andragogy."--Elias and Merriam, Philosophical Foundations, pp. 131-32.

<sup>65</sup>"The most drastic recent proposal for education, and one with a growing number of adherents, is that schools be abolished. The

popularity of this idea owes much to an eloquent and incisive book, De-Schooling Society by Ivan Illich. In it Illich confronts the full spectrum of the modern crisis in values by rejecting the basic tenets of progressive liberalism. He dismisses what he calls the 'myth of consumption' as a cruel and illusory ideology foisted upon the populace by a manipulative bureaucratic system. He treats welfare and service institutions as part of the problem, not as part of the solution. He rejects the belief that education constitutes the great equalizer and the path to personal liberation. Schools, says Illich, simply must be eliminated." --Samuel Bowles and Herbert Gintis, Schooling in Capitalist America (New York: Basic Books, 1976), p. 256.

## CHAPTER II

### THE HISTORICAL TREND TOWARD INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN THE UNITED STATES

The study of history should...develop recognition of the continuity of human experience.

--Robert E. Potter<sup>1</sup>

Knowledge of the past is the key to understanding the present.

--John Dewey<sup>2</sup>

In the same way that a static and stratified society is alien to the American tradition, the idea of a rigid, closed school system and curriculum is also alien to the American educational experience.

--Gerald L. Gutek<sup>3</sup>

In the course of their historical development, schools in the United States have become progressively more inclusive. Step by step, American educational institutions have opened their doors to the poor as well as the prosperous, to females as well as males, to racial and ethnic minorities as well as the white majority, and to the handicapped as well as the nonhandicapped. The trend in American education has been toward all-inclusive, universal education.

It was explained in Chapter I, however, that formal education is generally viewed as primarily or solely for children and young people. Their attendance in school has been made compulsory as a way of helping insure that all children receive the education thought necessary for the public welfare in a democracy. Thus the term universal education usually

refers to the education of all children and youth. I am arguing that the term universal education should be expanded to include older people, including those over 65. I am not maintaining that adults should be compelled to attend school. Perhaps compulsory attendance is no longer a desirable or realistic goal for young people.<sup>4</sup> That is a thesis for another time. My argument here is that formal education at all levels should be made as available to adults, including older adults, as to children and young people. I am arguing that at least at the college level, and perhaps also at the secondary level, younger and older people should attend the same classes. I am arguing that all educational institutions, including elementary schools, should assume responsibility for the education of adults as well as children and youth. I am arguing that educators, public officials, and the public generally should begin to look at and support the concept of formal education as a lifelong experience.

The specific argument of this chapter is that universal age-inclusive education is in accord with the historical development of education in the United States. The trend has been toward including within formal education any group the public was convinced needed and justly deserved such education: the poor, females, blacks, the handicapped. I am arguing that it is now time for formal education to fully embrace all adults, including a fairly new and rapidly growing group: people 65 and over. For those who view older people as a group very different from other groups excluded from schooling in the past, it will be shown that many of the reasons given to exclude other groups in the past are now used to exclude older people from schooling. Since the reasons were finally

rejected in the case of other groups, it might be expected, I shall argue, that the same reasons will be rejected in the case of older people. As background for a consideration of these reasons, a brief review of the history of American education is necessary.

The history of education in the United States "begins with the efforts of the English colonials to recreate in the New World the school system they had known before."<sup>5</sup> This Old-World system stressed Greek and Latin languages, classical learning, and religion. In New England, this classical-religious education was given in European-style Latin grammar schools and in universities. The students were almost exclusively well-to-do males. At the elementary level, however, concern for religious conformity led the early Americans to found vernacular schools that provided literacy instruction (so that Protestants could read the Bible) and instruction in religious doctrine for poor children, both boys and girls. Thus in colonial New England, more than 200 years ago, there was the beginning of the trend toward inclusive education, at least at the elementary level. It would be in New England that the early ideal of inclusive education--the common school--would develop.

Unlike the New England colonies, the Middle Atlantic colonies were made up of a multitude of religious and language groups and could not agree as to which religion should control the schools. Although universal elementary schooling failed to develop in these Middle colonies, well-to-do males were able to find classical education or vocational training in private schools. Some church schools taught basic literacy to the poor, both males and females. On plantations in the South, education was mainly

by tutors and for the well-to-do. Blacks were excluded from education, formal and informal, except in rare cases.

In the Revolutionary Period, Benjamin Franklin, Thomas Jefferson, and other founding fathers stressed the importance of education as preparation for citizenship. Since the responsibilities of citizenship were viewed as almost solely those of white males, it was proposed that formal education be primarily for them and, at higher levels, only for the most talented of them. As a self-educated person himself, Franklin was a strong advocate of informal learning and self-education, especially of a practical and scientific nature. He did suggest a plan for formal education: he proposed an English grammar school with a broad curriculum to replace the European-style Latin grammar school. Although the English grammar school never developed fully, its proposal represented a trend away from exclusive, aristocratic education for the wealthy and toward inclusive, practical education for everyone.

Jefferson's educational plan, presented to the Virginia legislature as a "Bill for the More General Diffusion of Knowledge," proposed three years of publicly financed education in Virginia for all white children, boys and girls. Parents could keep their children in school for an additional six years by paying tuition. Scholarships were to be provided for poor but talented students. Education was to be a sifting process, providing for the selection of the most able white males to be educated at the highest level for leadership roles in the United States.

The trend toward inclusive education became strong and clear in the age of the common school. People like Horace Mann and Henry Barnard

argued for, and succeeded in getting, legislation that established a system of compulsory, tax-supported elementary education for children. By the time of the Civil War, publicly-supported common schools were established in most states of the union. The word common referred to a common meeting and learning place for all white children, rich and poor, male and female, talented and untalented. In common schools they were to come together to share a common heritage: the American democratic ideal. Still excluded from this ideal were black children, seriously handicapped children, and many age groups: children considered too young or too old for elementary schooling and all adults.

The trend toward inclusive education continued with the development of the comprehensive high school out of the exclusive Latin grammar school. The public high school was firmly established in the latter half of the 19th century. Thus another group, teen-age youth, was brought into the fold of formal education. The development of the kindergarten extended school education downward to still another age group.

In the 19th and 20th centuries, higher education also moved from exclusiveness to inclusiveness with the establishment of land-grant colleges and universities, junior colleges, community colleges, vocational curriculums, and federal assistance programs to encourage the education of the poor and minority groups. The arrival of thousands of immigrants in the early 20th century led to adult classes in elementary schools where adults could study English and other subjects and could become "Americanized."

Black children and adults were excluded from most formal schooling until after the Civil War and the abolition of slavery, when segregated schools and colleges developed. The 1954 decision of the United States Supreme Court in Brown vs. the Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas outlawed segregated schools. From that time until the present, the struggle has continued for integrated common schools for white and black children and youth.

Formal education of the physically and mentally handicapped was given federal support as early as 1864, when the Gallaudet College for the deaf was founded. Wide-spread support for private and public education of the handicapped, however, did not occur until the late 1950s, when laws were passed to encourage education of the handicapped, culminating in a 1975 law insuring "every handicapped child, regardless of handicapping condition,...the right to a publicly supported, appropriate education."<sup>6</sup> Furthermore, the law specified that "handicapped children must be educated to the greatest extent possible with children who are not handicapped,"--that is, in the "least restrictive environment."<sup>7</sup>

Thus from colonial days to the present, schooling in the United States of America has developed from largely exclusive institutions for white, well-to-do male youth to largely inclusive institutions for rich and poor; males and females; whites, blacks, and those of all ethnic groups; those of all mental abilities, including the mentally retarded; the physically and emotionally handicapped; and many chronological age groups from very young children to adults. It should be noted that compulsory attendance laws have contributed to inclusive schooling; children



up to a certain age are required to attend school.<sup>8</sup> It should also be noted that the trend toward inclusive schooling has been a trend toward integrated schooling--education in common classrooms of students of both sexes, of all races and economic levels, and of all mental and physical abilities. It would seem logical to assume that the democratic trend toward integration and inclusiveness in schooling would continue and that schools would assume responsibility for the relatively new and growing minority of older people.

To answer the argument that might be made that older people, people over 65, constitute a group very different from other groups progressively incorporated into formal schooling in the past, I shall now show that many of the reasons given for excluding groups from schooling in the past are the same reasons that are used, explicitly and implicitly, to exclude those over 65 today. Since these reasons were found unacceptable for excluding other groups, I shall argue that they are equally unacceptable for excluding those over 65 from formal education.

(1) "They are mentally inferior." Perhaps the main argument used to justify exclusion of any group from formal education, especially rigorous intellectual education at levels beyond basic literacy, is that the group is mentally inferior. Females, for example, have been considered mentally inferior from early times. In ancient Greece, "girl children from the moment of their birth were regarded and treated as inferior to boys."<sup>9</sup> An Anglican writer of the 17th century described females as "intrinsically inferior in excellence, imbecile by sex and nature, weak

in body, inconstant in mind, and infirm in character." Only in "spiritual capacity" did he find women "equal to their lords."<sup>10</sup>

The view of women as mentally inferior was carried to the New World, where, "though female education was not disregarded among the colonies since the women had of necessity to be prepared for the search for grace, it was restricted. When education was available, girls as well as boys were taught to read, write, and do basic arithmetic, but the education of girls ended at a much lower level than that of boys. The decision to limit female education was reinforced by the widespread belief that female capacities were limited."<sup>11</sup> Even the most liberal founding fathers viewed females as mental inferiors. Physician Benjamin Rush wrote a treatise on female education in which "he urged women to concentrate on learning useful things....He saw no need for higher learning.... Even Thomas Jefferson held that girls were unfit in brains and character for serious study."<sup>12</sup> Throughout the colonies there was "the generally accepted belief that the capacities of a girl could never equal those of her brothers. A girl was not expected to go beyond reading, writing, and arithmetic. There was no sense in bothering her head with Greek and Latin, for she would never be able to undertake the advanced liberal education for which these were the foundation."<sup>13</sup>

Like females, older people have been traditionally regarded "as definitively inferior beings."<sup>14</sup> Both females and older people have been stereotyped as passive mental inferiors whose place is at home out of the mainstream of school, office, and factory. Women are breaking out of the stereotype of mental inferiority and are increasingly joining the mainstream in all areas of life. Older people too, now that their numbers

are growing so precipitously, are beginning to claim their right to mainstream schooling and jobs. Today some still doubt the mental capacity and educability of females,<sup>15</sup> but many--including the old--appear to doubt the learning capacity and other capacities of older people, especially those over 65.<sup>16</sup> Intentionally or unintentionally, they ignore the evidence "that the average person does not need to expect a 'typical deterioration' in his [or her] mental abilities as he [or she] ages. The expectation is that, given good health and freedom from cerebral vascular disease and senile dementia, individuals can expect competence to remain at a high level beyond the age of 80."<sup>17</sup> This conclusion is based on studies made by Dr. James E. Birren, executive director of the Andrus Gerontology Center at the University of California at Los Angeles.

Like the female, the black person has been stereotyped in history as mentally inferior and incapable of academic learning, especially at higher levels. "It was generally granted by the 18th century that he was human, but in a damaged and much inferior sort of way."<sup>18</sup> Slavery in this country was justified in part by the "natural inferiority" of black people. The great liberal Thomas Jefferson, although troubled by slavery, still advanced "as a suspicion only, that the blacks, whether originally a distinct race or made distinct by time and circumstances, are inferior to the whites in the endowments of both body and mind."<sup>19</sup> As for the benefits of educating a black person, a Southern gentleman asked, "Would you do a benefit to the horse or the ox by giving him a cultivated understanding, a fine feeling?"<sup>20</sup> The gentleman was apparently suggesting that an educated black, assuming the black capable of education, would be unfitted for his or her job as a field worker. A similar contention has

been made about women, who, it was said, would be made unfitted by education for kitchen work and child rearing. As potential Bible readers and mothers of men, white females were at least permitted basic literacy and often some artistic education. In Southern slave states, it was a crime to teach blacks to read and write. It has been estimated that half a million "little black heathen" were prevented by law from even reading the Christian Bible.<sup>21</sup> The traditional picture of the dull-witted black is not very different from the traditional picture of the dull-witted old man or old woman of any color.

Even assuming what I maintain has been proved false--that blacks, women, and old people are mental inferiors<sup>22</sup>--there still would be no justification for excluding them from education since Americans have generally accepted that high academic ability is not necessary in order to benefit from formal mainstream education. The mentally handicapped have won their place in mainstream education. Old people of all abilities can also claim their place in the mainstream.

(2) "They do not need formal education." Another reason for excluding groups of people from schooling has already been hinted at: the inappropriateness of education to one's station or role in life. It has been said about the poor, females, blacks, the mentally and physically handicapped, the very young, and the very old: they do not need formal education; it is inappropriate to their time of life or role in life.

A 17th-century writer said of the education of girls, "Let them learne plaine workes of all kinds....Instead of Song and Musicke, let them learne Cookerie and Laundrie."<sup>23</sup> This writer would even deny women

small artistic achievements. They needed only to learn how to care for a house, a husband, and children. To save their souls, they needed to learn to read a little, at least in Protestant America where Bible reading was considered necessary. Formal education beyond the basics, however, was considered inappropriate to the female role in life.

Education was also considered inappropriate and unnecessary for black slaves. As the Southerner quoted earlier asked, what need would field workers have for education? It was even considered dangerous to give blacks--and women--too much education. The fear of rebellion of slaves was understandably great. Perhaps the fear of rebelling females was equally great although not as fully recognized. Who would cultivate the fields and do the cooking and washing and care for the children if blacks and women were educated beyond their appropriate stations?

Education was once considered unnecessary and inappropriate for the mentally and physically handicapped also, who, it was thought, could never join the mainstream of life. Some have considered formal education inappropriate too for very young children since early childhood, they maintain, is a time for play, not education. Likewise, those over 65 have often been considered beyond the need of formal education; old age, at least for the well-to-do, has also been considered a time for play. Perhaps many would agree that the old should continue learning informally through reading, watching television, and taking part in groups at churches, temples, and senior citizens' centers. Since older people have a very limited future, some might ask, why should they engage in formal education demanding rigor and leading to diplomas or degrees or jobs?

In fact, one out of four persons aged 65 today can expect to live into his or her 80s. I maintain that even an 80- or 90-year-old must have the opportunity to plan for a future goal. Few would deny a terminally ill young person the right and encouragement to finish work, or even start work, for a diploma or degree. Why should one deny a 90-year-old the same right and encouragement?

(3) "They should have a separate, specialized education." The right of minority groups to education has often been granted by justifying and offering to them a special kind of education in separate schools or departments or classrooms away from the educational mainstream. In colonial America, the children of the poor sometimes attended church-sponsored charity schools to learn to read, write, and figure a little while the sons of the well-to-do had tutors and attended classical schools and universities. Colonial girls sometimes attended "dame schools" and female seminaries to get an education considered suitable for females. Later, women's colleges developed in an attempt to give women higher education equal to that offered men. Although women's colleges still exist, of course, and are strongly defended by some as a way of giving women truly equal opportunity, the trend has clearly been toward coeducation of boys and girls, women and men. Women's colleges today reflect the trend since they often have close links with nearby coeducational or men's colleges.

After the Civil War, blacks were educated in largely segregated schools until 1954, when the Supreme Court outlawed separate schooling. Since that time, in theory at least, blacks and white have been educated

together although, in fact, segregated schools have continued in part because of residential segregation.

Separate schools and classes for the handicapped were justified for many years as necessary to give such students an appropriate education. While recognizing the need of some students for separate education, recent legislation has now firmly established the right of every handicapped student to be placed in the least restrictive environment. In other words, if at all possible, he or she is to be taught in a regular, mainstream classroom along with nonhandicapped students.

People over 65, if offered any formal education, have often been offered special, separate programs and places for "seniors." I recognize the need of some older people (as well as some women and racial minorities) for separate learning groups in which they can gain the self-confidence and basic skills denied them by past treatment. I maintain, however, that the trend should be in the direction of mainstream schooling for older people in integrated groups. The argument that all or most women, blacks, and the handicapped should have special, separate schooling has been demolished in the course of history. It can be expected that the argument that all or even most people over 65 need special, separate education will also be seen as false.

(4) "They are unpleasant, even frightening, to look at and be with." This argument for excluding groups from mainstream education may not often be openly expressed, but it certainly exists in the case of the severely handicapped, both physically and mentally. Perhaps since so many people have been maimed in wars, we have felt guilty about excluding

them from mainstream life, and thus today there appears to be an increasing acceptance of wheelchairs, for example, in restaurants and classrooms. Extremely disfiguring handicaps are still not easily accepted, perhaps reminding people too much of the cruelty humankind is capable of or the heavy hand of luck in life.

Older people are often grouped with the handicapped. Governmental regulations and departments refer to the "elderly and handicapped" as though the two groups were interchangeable. For example, what is reportedly the nation's largest office on aging is officially named the Chicago Mayor's Office for Senior Citizens and Handicapped. Some older people do belong to the group of the handicapped, but not all or even most older people are properly described as handicapped, except in the sense that women, blacks, and other minority groups are handicapped in society by attitudes and treatment. Grouping older people and handicapped people together is an injustice to both groups, reinforcing the stereotype that older people are handicapped and suggesting that the handicapped of all chronological ages fit the stereotype of old age.

Like the handicapped with whom they are often grouped, older people are also objected to sometimes because of their appearance and habits. Perhaps younger people are uneasy about being reminded that they are aging and will be old people some day. In a society that values youthful appearance so highly, it is perhaps frightening to look at bent backs, arthritic hands, and wrinkled faces. On the other hand, many older people today do not fit even physically the stereotype of ugly old age.



In any case, older people as well as handicapped people of any age cannot justly be denied the right to mainstream education and life on the basis of physical appearance.

To summarize, I have shown that some of the primary reasons used to exclude groups from mainstream education in the past apply equally well to older people. These reasons are: (1) They are mentally inferior. (2) They do not need education. (3) They need special, separate education. (4) They are unpleasant to look at and be with. Since other groups once objected to for these reasons have now been granted access to mainstream education, I maintain that older people too should be granted mainstream educational opportunities. Educational theorists should think, talk, and write about education without age limits; educational practitioners should do education without age limits.

Despite the acceptance of other groups into formal education, some may protest, older people cannot be included in the same way because the philosophical assumptions behind formal education in this country apply solely or primarily to children and youth. In the next chapter, I shall show that these philosophical assumptions apply to older people as well as to children and youth.

## FOOTNOTES FOR CHAPTER II

<sup>1</sup>Robert E. Potter, The Stream of American Education (New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold Company, 1967), p. 3.

<sup>2</sup>John Dewey, Democracy and Education (New York: The Free Press, 1966), p. 214.

<sup>3</sup>Gerald Lee Gutek, An Historical Introduction to American Education (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Company, 1970), p. 6.

<sup>4</sup>For example, Ivan Illich writes, "...forcing all children to climb an open-ended education ladder cannot enhance equality but must favor the individual who starts out earlier, healthier, or better prepared;...enforced instruction deadens for most people the will for independent learning;...knowledge treated as a commodity, delivered in packages, and accepted as private property once it is acquired must always be scarce. People have suddenly become aware that public education by means of compulsory schooling has lost its social, its pedagogical, and its economic legitimacy."--Ivan Illich, Toward a History of Needs (New York: Bantam Books, 1978), p. 81.

Another example: A professor of history at Northeastern Illinois University in Chicago asks whether compulsory education is always wise and suggests that "apprenticeships, combined work-study programs and expanding part-time job opportunities should be considered as alternatives to compulsory schooling for 16-year-olds and older."--June Sochen, "Is Compulsory Education Always Wise?", Chicago Sun-Times, 25 July 1980, p. 41.

<sup>5</sup>Gutek, American Education, p. 9.

<sup>6</sup>Susan E. Hasazi, Paul D. Rice, and Robert York, Mainstreaming: Merging Regular and Special Education (Bloomington, Indiana: Phi Delta Kappa Educational Foundation, 1979), p. 17.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., p. 20.

<sup>8</sup>"The last state to enact compulsory attendance legislation was Mississippi, in 1918. By 1945, thirty-six states had raised to sixteen the age at which students were permitted to leave school; three states permitted students to leave school at fourteen and six required them to remain until eighteen. The child labor laws reinforced the compulsory attendance laws. The strictness of enforcement of attendance laws has varied, but in most states some form of attendance officer, usually designated by some more euphemistic title than 'truant officer,'

is responsible for enforcement."--Potter, Stream of American Education, p. 388.

<sup>9</sup>Vern L. Bullough, The Subordinate Sex: A History of Attitudes Toward Women (Urbana, Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 1973), p. 52.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., p. 203.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., p. 297.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., p. 308.

<sup>13</sup>Roger Thompson, Women in Stuart England and America: A Comparative Study (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1974), p. 217.

<sup>14</sup>Simone De Beauvoir, The Coming of Age (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1972), p. 462.

<sup>15</sup>For an example, see Joan Beck's column headed "Is coercion required for the equality of women?" in which she reports: "Because females are genetically inferior, current efforts by women to win an equal place in society are hopelessly doomed. And until we give up trying to 'achieve the unachievable' by education, social pressures, and equal opportunity regulations, our society will become increasingly more coercive. That's the gist of a venomous attack on women in the current issue of the respected magazine Commentary...by Michael Levin, a professor of philosophy at City College of New York."--Joan Beck, "Is coercion required for the equality of women?", Chicago Tribune, 8 December 1980, sec. 5, p. 2.

<sup>16</sup>"Myths concerning older people abound. 'People cannot learn after the age of fifty.' 'Old people shouldn't be trying to hold down jobs.' 'Sex? It's nonexistent in the older years.' Swaddled in the binding myths, many older people try to conform to the image portrayed in the popular literature. They join a Golden Age Club and spend a half day a week playing dominoes. They invest in a bigger television set and move their lives from inside their being to the projection of dots on the screen before them. And in bed they make truth of folk lore. Kisses are plastic touches on mouth or cheek; no fires are permitted to light or burn."--Bert Kruger Smith, Aging in America (Boston: Beacon Press, 1973), p. 22.

<sup>17</sup>Avis D. Carlson, In the Fullness of Time: The Pleasures and Inconveniences of Growing Old (Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1977), p. 65.

<sup>18</sup>Herbert Aptheker, Afro-American History: The Modern Era (New York: The Citadel Press, 1971), p. 30.

<sup>19</sup>George Ducas with Charles Van Doren, Great Documents in Black American History (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1970), p. 21.

<sup>20</sup>William Jay, Miscellaneous Writings on Slavery (Freeport, New York: Books for Libraries, 1853, reprinted 1970), p. 509.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid., p. 647.

<sup>22</sup>The mental inferiority attributed to women and older people has been referred to in notes 15 and 16. As for blacks, they continue to be the center of controversies regarding their genetic inferiority to whites in intelligence. A recent "public controversy began when A.R. Jensen, in a long paper in the Harvard Educational Review, persuasively juxtaposed data on the heritability of IQ and the observed differences between groups. Jensen suggested that current large-scale educational attempts to raise the IQs of lower-class children, white and black, were failing because of the high heritability of IQ. In a series of papers and rebuttals to criticism in the same journal and elsewhere, Jensen put forth the hypothesis that social class and racial differences in mean IQ were due largely to differences in the gene distributions of these populations. At least, he said, the genetic differences hypothesis was not less likely, and probably more likely, than a simple environmental hypothesis to explain the mean difference of 15 IQ points between blacks and whites and the even larger average IQ differences between professionals and manual laborers within the white population."--Sandra Scarr-Salapatek, "Unknowns in the IQ Equation" in The IQ Controversy, N. J. Block and Gerald Dworkin, eds. (New York: Pantheon Books, 1976), p. 114.

<sup>23</sup>Thompson, Women in Stuart England and America, p. 217.

## CHAPTER III

### AN ANALYSIS OF PHILOSOPHICAL ASSUMPTIONS BEHIND FORMAL EDUCATION IN THE UNITED STATES

...the educative process is a continuous process of growth.... This conception contrasts sharply with other ideas....The first contrast is with the idea that education is a process of preparation or getting ready.

--John Dewey<sup>1</sup>

...two of the American ideals which go back to colonial days... are the concepts of individual worth and universal educational opportunity.

--Robert E. Potter<sup>2</sup>

[Our] entire system of primary, secondary, and higher education, with all its shortcomings, has contributed to continuing unrest about human equality and justice.

--John I. Goodlad<sup>3</sup>

In accord with the democratic ideals of the United States, all public schools and many other schools have become increasingly inclusive institutions in the course of history. This trend toward including all groups of people within the fold of formal education was described in the preceding chapter. It was pointed out that formal educational opportunities were at first accorded only to well-to-do males but that step by step over the years they were extended to other groups: the poor, females, blacks and those of other ethnic backgrounds, the handicapped, the very young, and young and middle-aged adults. Schooling for all--universal education--has been the boast and to a considerable degree the reality in our society. The term universal education, it is true, has usually

referred to compulsory elementary and secondary education of youth. I am arguing that at all levels schools should be as accessible to older people as to children and youth. Stated simply in logical form, my argument is as follows:

In a democratic society like the United States, the benefits of schooling should be offered to all groups of human beings.

Older people are a group of human beings.

Therefore, the benefits of schooling should be offered to older people.

Stated negatively, the argument is:

In a democratic society like the United States, the benefits of schooling should not be denied to any group of human beings.

Older people are a group of human beings.

Therefore, the benefits of schooling should not be denied to older people.

Some may immediately object to my first premise in both syllogisms. It is unacceptable, they may say, because the benefits of schooling are not, and should not be, offered to all groups of human beings of all chronological ages but only to groups of young human beings. These critics may accuse me of committing the fallacy of division in my argument--that is, of attempting "to argue from the premise that something is true of some whole...considered collectively to the conclusion that the same is true of the parts of that whole."<sup>4</sup> I assume that such an accusation is weakened if it can be shown that the parts under consideration are similar and thus that any statement about the whole would likely apply to all the parts. Specifically, I tried to show in the preceding chapter that the relatively new group of older people is excluded from formal education, especially at elementary and secondary levels, for the same reasons other

groups were once excluded from formal schooling. The other groups, it will be recalled, include the poor, females, blacks and other ethnic groups, and the handicapped. All of these groups have now been taken into the fold of public formal education at all levels and much of nonpublic formal education. I argued that logically it could be expected that the group of older people, including those over 65, would also be taken into the fold of formal education at all levels. If it is asked why this group of older people was not included in formal education in the past, the answer is that this group did not exist in large numbers until fairly recently. If it is asked why this group of older people is not included at all levels of formal education at present, the answer is that schools change slowly and thus find themselves today out of synchronization in many ways with the educational needs of an aging population.

Many critics may object to the comparison of other groups (the poor, females, blacks, the handicapped) to the growing group of older people on the basis that education, almost by definition and certainly by common practice, refers only or mainly to children and youth. I do not deny that education in the past and present has commonly meant education of the young, but the philosophical assumptions behind formal education of the young, I shall argue in this chapter, point to the need today for a new view of formal education as lifelong. The first philosophical assumption to be considered is this: School education is preparation for life.

#### Education as Preparation for Life

According to a dictionary definition, education is "preparing oneself or others intellectually for mature life."<sup>5</sup> I should like to look

at that definition closely since education as preparation for life is so widely accepted.

"Preparing" means "making ready." For what? For "mature life." The dictionary definition seems to imply that maturity is a goal one reaches at the end of schooling, perhaps at age 16 or 18 or 22. Thus, school education is viewed as a means to an end. When the end, mature life, is arrived at, education, it would appear, is over. People commonly refer to school education in this way: "My education is over. I'm working now." Or: "I finished my education long ago. I'm married now." Or: "I'm glad I'm through with my education. I'm anxious to start living." The implication is that the speaker is beyond formal education because he or she is in, or about to enter, "mature life" for which education has presumably been the preparation. The use of the word "commencement" for the educational ceremony of granting diplomas or conferring degrees also suggests that schooling is commonly regarded as preparation for the commencement of mature life.

The word "mature," however, is used in another way in everyday language. One might say of a seven-year-old, "She has a mature sense of humor." Or one might say of a seventy-year-old, "He does not have a mature sense of humor." The seventy-year-old might also be said to have "a mature understanding of economics" while the seven-year-old does not have "a mature understanding of economics." The word "mature" in this sense is not necessarily tied to a chronological age but rather to a stage of development. "Mature" means "well developed." There may be the suggestion that maturity in people, unlike ripeness in fruit, is never



completely attained. Furthermore, "maturity" may suggest--not a single stage or state--but multiple states. At a given time, a person may be described as mature in some ways and immature in others. This concept of multiple maturities is in contrast to the linear view of maturity as a particular state or time of life when one is full of education and ripe for living.

If maturity is viewed as relative and continuing, then perhaps "maturing" is a more descriptive word. A person can be said to be continuously maturing, or developing, from birth to death, incorporating at any given moment multiple kinds and degrees of maturity, or multiple maturities. Immaturity can be viewed--not as a void to be filled up with education--but, in the words of John Dewey, as "a positive force or ability--the power to grow."<sup>6</sup>

This view of immaturity as the continuing ability to grow together with the view of maturity as multiple and relative states within a continuously maturing person appears to be in conflict with the dictionary definition of education as intellectual preparation for mature life. This definition suggests that "mature life" is a specific stage in life for which education prepares one. By implication, immaturity is the time before mature life, when one has a lack that education can fill to make one ready for mature life.

It might be argued that the dictionary definition does not necessarily imply that education is total preparation for mature life but perhaps only some minimal preparation. It might also be argued that mature

life, as referred to in the definition, need not necessarily be viewed as an absolute state one arrives at all at once at the end of education but rather as a general time of life when one gets a job, assumes civic responsibilities, and leads an independent life with some minimal degree of success. The current concern in education about the attainment of basic competencies by students reflects this view of education as at least minimal preparation for ordinary life activities.

The view of education as preparation for successful living is reflected also in the advice parents, educators, and people generally often give young people: "Stay in school. It will pay off." Yet there is evidence that formal education does not always pay off. An on-going study of vocational programs in this country by the National Institute of Education, ordered by the United States Congress in 1976, is reported as finding no "compelling evidence supporting the labor-market benefits of high-school vocational education."<sup>7</sup> The growing numbers of unemployed black youth and underemployed Ph.D.s add to the evidence that formal education does not always assure jobs or job success. Common sense and research studies<sup>8</sup> suggest many other factors that influence one's success in life: heredity, sex, race, education and social and economic position of parents, economic conditions in the nation, and just plain luck. Despite the complex of factors influencing jobs and life success, many Americans, perhaps most, keep their faith in formal education as preparation for jobs and successful living.

The concept of education as preparation for life has often been referred to by American educators of the past and present. For example,

in 1918, curriculum expert Franklin Bobbitt maintained that:

Human life, however varied, consists in the performance of specific activities. Education that prepares for life is one that prepares definitely and adequately for these specific activities.<sup>9</sup>

More recently, in an article published in November, 1979, Geneva Gay, associate professor of education at Purdue University, maintained:

Practical preparation for life is as much a concern of curriculum designers in 1979 as it was for Bobbitt in 1918. It is the capstone of instructional programs deriving from performance-based education and minimum competency testing.<sup>10</sup>

This common view of education as preparation for life may be considered in conflict with the view of lifelong education if one includes formal education within the fold of lifelong education. Preparation is for a future, presumably a rather long future. Therefore education as life preparation would appear to be primarily for children and young people. They have a future; old people do not.

Or do they? Do 65-year-olds have a future in this world? Certainly they do today. Increasing numbers of them will live in good health for at least another 20 years. Many of them may need educational preparation for new jobs. Those many thousands who lack functional literacy will surely need education as preparation for future living as citizens and workers. It seems clear to me that the concept of education as preparation for future life can apply to older people as well as to children and younger people. The only strong argument for denying preparatory formal education to older people would seem to be that their future is shorter than that of youth. They will have a shorter time in which to contribute to life and to enjoy life. It would appear equally unjust, however, to deny formal education to a young person with only a

few years to live because of an incurable disease and to an old person with only a few years to live because of age. (The concept of justice and human dignity in education as well as the concept of equal opportunity will be discussed in following pages.)

Although it is possible to consider the concept of education as preparation for life as applicable to older people as well as younger people, some argue that the concept of education as preparation for life, although widely supported, is faulty. They argue that regarding education as preparation wrongly separates it from life; children being "prepared" are removed from life. Jonathan Kozol, a frequent critic of American education, has pointed out that "reaching 6...brings a sort of moratorium on life--a preparation for it rather than a portion of it." "The problem is," he has written, "school is divorced from the real world. We now spend almost one-third of our lives in preparation....We make children humans in training."<sup>11</sup> About the other end of life it might be said that reaching 65 also brings a sort of moratorium. We make older people humans beyond training.

Philosopher-educator John Dewey is perhaps the most famous American critic of education as preparation for life. In Democracy and Education he wrote:

What is to be prepared for is, of course, the responsibilities and privileges of adult life. Children are not regarded as social members in full and regular standing. They are looked upon as candidates; they are placed on the waiting list. The conception is only carried a little farther when the life of adults is considered as not having meaning on its own account, but as a preparatory probation for "another life."<sup>12</sup>

Instead of education as preparation, Dewey viewed education as growth leading to more growth: a process, not an end. He defined education as

"a continuous process of growth, having as its aim at every stage an added capacity of growth."<sup>13</sup> Although he saw education as much broader than schooling, he did view--and discuss--schooling as a part of the education of young people. Since there were not great numbers of people over 65 when he wrote Democracy and Education, first copyrighted in 1916, perhaps he did not feel the need to deal with the subject of schooling for older people. In a later book--Problems of Men, copyrighted in 1946 and republished as Philosophy of Education, he wrote:

I may say that our present system is highly defective in opportunities for directed continuation of education. It is no disparagement of present efforts in "adult education" to say that the continued education of those who have left school should long ago have been made a paramount interest of public education.<sup>14</sup>

Although it is not clear that "public education" means "public schooling," it is clear that Dewey's concept of education as continuous growth rather than as preparation for future life applies to people of all chronological ages.

Many other educators have objected to the view of education as practical preparation for life, particularly for work, for a different reason: they see education as an end in itself rather than as a means to some utilitarian end such as employment. Jacques Maritain, for example, has spoken eloquently for "liberal education for all."<sup>15</sup> He does accept as a secondary aim of education "preparation for life in society and good citizenship,"<sup>16</sup> but he views much of modern schooling as fragmented and aimless, confusing means and ends. He regards the primary aim of education as "helping minds to become articulate, free, and autonomous."<sup>17</sup> He has written:

Education directed toward wisdom, centered on the humanities, aiming to develop in people the capacity to think correctly and to enjoy truth and beauty, is education for freedom, or liberal education. Whatever his particular vocation may be and whatever special training his vocation may require, every human being is entitled to receive such a properly human and humanistic education.<sup>18</sup>

Presumably "every human being" could include anyone 65 or over.

My purpose in these chapters is not to argue for a nonutilitarian view of education (although it seems to me the proper view). My argument is rather that both the common view of education as preparation for life and the view of education as growth or as an end in itself justify the formal education of older people. Older people need preparatory training--for high school or college, for jobs, for citizenship, for family living, for leisure time. Older people need to keep growing intellectually. However one views education--as a means or as an end, it should be made fully and equally available to older people as well as to younger people.

It should be remembered that in the United States, formal education of youth with compulsory school attendance developed at a time of large-scale industrialization, urbanization, and immigration. It was a time when there were many young people and few old people, certainly very few in their 60s, 70s, and 80s as compared to today. Formal education of youth with compulsory school attendance, it was said, was necessary for the welfare of the state--to "serve as a security against crime, misery, loss of property, and disregard for law and order."<sup>19</sup> Today, when faith in the social benefits of education is not so great and when the numbers of old people are increasing rapidly as the numbers of young people decrease in the United States, it would seem possible for formal education

to become universal in the sense of being fully open to older as well as younger people. Compulsion is surely not appropriate for older people (and not even for younger people, according to some social critics<sup>20</sup>), but mainstream formal education without compulsion, it is my contention, is appropriate for older people, including those over 65. It is not only appropriate but necessary according to a second major philosophical assumption underlying education in the United States: Everyone should have an equal opportunity to be educated. It is this equal-opportunity assumption that I wish to consider next.

### Equal Opportunity to Education

As expressed by historian R. Freeman Butts and Lawrence A. Cremin:

The ideal of equal opportunity for education open to all has led to the development of a single and common public system of education, extending downward to the earliest age levels and upward to include secondary and higher education. This ideal of a single-track system of public education, open free to everyone to climb as far as his talents will take him, has been in sharp contrast to the dual systems of Europe in which elementary education has traditionally been designed for the lower classes and secondary and higher education has been limited to the upper classes. Again the common needs of good citizenship have led to compulsory attendance requirements on the grounds that the general welfare of society and of the individual himself cannot be left to the whims of the illiterate and the uneducated. Free schooling is not distinctively American, but the ideal of equal opportunity from the lowest to the highest levels of education has nowhere else been so explicitly stated or so effectively achieved. (Underlining added.)<sup>21</sup>

What is meant by "equal opportunity"? Herbert J. Gans defines it as "the right of every person to get ahead without hindrance by reason of race, sex, age, and parental social position."<sup>22</sup> Applying that definition to education, one might say that equal opportunity is the right of every person to get educated without hindrance by reason of race, sex, age, and parental social position. Is it proper to substitute "to get educated"

for "to get ahead"? Are they the same, or closely linked--or even loosely linked? As I pointed out earlier in this chapter, throughout American history many people have thought that education and getting ahead are closely linked. "If there's a single message passed down from each generation of American parents to their children, it is a two-word line: Better yourself. And if there's a temple of self-betterment in each town, it is the local school. We have worshipped there for some time."<sup>23</sup>

Horace Mann, one of the founders of free and universal education for youth in the United States, clearly viewed education as a way for everyone to get ahead. He wrote in 1848, "Education, then, beyond all other devices of human origin, is the great equalizer of the conditions of men--the balance wheel of the social machinery....It does better than to disarm the poor of their hostility toward the rich; it prevents being poor."<sup>24</sup> It would seem clear that Mann saw education not only as the way to get ahead but as the way to achieve economic success equal to that of every educated person, at least in the sense that the educated would join the ranks of the nonpoor if not the rich.

Yet today the connection between schooling and economic success has been questioned, as indicated earlier in this chapter. According to a study by Mary Corcoran and Christopher Jencks, it is "to a large extent the status of the family [that] determines the education of the child, which in turn determines his status."<sup>25</sup> Nonetheless, "it is still true," according to the study, "...that the best indicator of economic success--among men at least--is how much education a man has had."<sup>26</sup> Since this study was limited to men, it does not say anything about the economic



success of educated women. Furthermore, like most studies of the connection between schooling and economic success, it is based on an assumption that all or most schooling is preparation of youth for mature life and the study does not relate specifically to the education or economic life of those over 65. If it is accepted that older people need equal opportunity to jobs, job training, and economic success, then formal preparatory education offered to younger people should also be offered to older people. Schooling then would not be primarily for youth but would be readily and equally available to people of all chronological ages in terms of their interests and needs.

Despite the need of many older people for economic gain and the education that might make it possible, the right of older people to continuing employment and education is just beginning to be recognized. The Age Discrimination Act<sup>27</sup> was passed by the United States Congress in 1975 to allow older people "access to economic opportunity."<sup>28</sup> As was indicated in Chapter I, at least at higher levels of education because of declining youth enrollments, older students are being actively recruited. Yet most educational institutions still omit "age" from their printed statements about equal educational opportunity, as a look at advertisements placed by colleges and universities in a newspaper reveals. Here are two examples:

Elmhurst College...admits qualified students without regard to sex, race, religion, handicap, or national or ethnic origin.<sup>29</sup>

The University of Chicago, in admissions and access to programs, considers students on the basis of individual merit and without regard to race, color, religion, sex, national or ethnic origin, handicap, or other factors irrelevant to fruitful participation in the programs of the University.<sup>30</sup>

It will be noted that specific mention of age is absent from both these statements, as it is from Loyola University's statement discussed in Chapter I.<sup>31</sup> Perhaps some will see in the statement of the University of Chicago an implication that age is one of the "factors irrelevant to fruitful participation in the programs of the University," but since age is not listed along with important factors like race and sex, one might assume that age is not a very important factor.

In contrast to the statements of Elmhurst College and the University of Chicago is the following statement of Saint Xavier College in Chicago:

Saint Xavier College admits qualified students without regard to religion, race, sex, color, handicap, age and national or ethnic origin.<sup>32</sup>

It will be noted that "age" is included among the factors not to be considered in admitting qualified students.

Community colleges in particular are likely to include "age" in their nondiscriminatory statements since they actively recruit older students. For example, Triton College in River Grove, Illinois, prints the following statement in its class schedules:

It is the policy of Triton College not to discriminate on the basis of race, color, creed, national origin, handicap, age, sex, or marital status in admission to and participation in its educational programs, employment policies, or College activities.<sup>33</sup>

Colleges like Saint Xavier and Triton point the way to recognized and advertised equal educational opportunity for everyone of every chronological age.

The word "equal," to be sure, is not easy to define as it relates to educational opportunity. Does it mean, for example, "affirmative

action"--giving advantage to groups greatly discriminated against in the past? Students like Allan Bakke have gone to court to challenge affirmative-action college admission policies.<sup>34</sup> As was pointed out in Chapter I,<sup>35</sup> it has been maintained that Bakke was denied entrance to medical school because of age rather than race. Other students are going to court to challenge directly admission policies that discriminate on the basis of age. It was pointed out in Chapter I, for example, that 52-year-old Frances Purcie sued the University of Utah for denying her admission to graduate school, charging that openings in the school were reserved for younger students.<sup>36</sup>

Thus equal opportunity to education is increasingly being demanded by and for older people. However difficult it may be to define "equal" and however impossible it may be to make educational opportunities genuinely equal, the country's historic commitment to equal educational opportunity would seem to require at least that the doors of formal education at all levels be fully open to members of all groups in our society, including the growing group of those over 65. Furthermore, it would seem that any affirmative-action policies applied to other minority groups should also be applied to older people. Thus, where two candidates are judged about equally qualified for an educational program, the person over 65 would be chosen in the absence of a clearly justifiable reason for choosing a younger person for the program. (See Chapter IV, p. 88.)

The federal government has formally recognized the right of older people to education in the Lifelong Learning Act of 1976, the first federal statute dealing specifically with the education of older people. This enactment of Part B of Title I of the Higher Education Act of 1976

called the Lifelong Learning Act "has two components: (1) a study of how existing federal programs can help produce a coordinated lifelong learning effort and (2) demonstration grants to test lifelong learning delivery systems."<sup>37</sup> Lack of appropriations has rendered the act ineffective, but monies contributed by several educational agencies have made possible a short report, Lifelong Learning and Public Policy, recommending that "future federal policy should have as a priority the availability of learning opportunities for all citizens. Public policy should also emphasize meeting learning needs as well as certification needs, through supporting learning opportunities in a range of formal and nonformal settings (universities, community colleges, public schools, workplaces, community centers, public libraries, museums, public broadcasting) that are attractive to and appropriate for all adults, particularly those with special learning needs."<sup>38</sup> Those with special learning needs, according to the report, are workers, urban youths, women, and older adults.

The federal role in lifelong learning under Title I, Part B, seems likely to be meager under the current (1981) administration. In the words of Washington reporter David G. Savage, President Reagan "is trying to alter drastically the role of the federal government. Education is at the center of the fight."<sup>39</sup> The Reagan administration proposes to cut federal aid to education by 25 percent or more and to abolish the Education Department.<sup>40</sup> It hardly seems likely that lifelong education, which remained unfunded under the Democratic administration of former President Carter, will be funded under a Republican administration committed to substantial cuts in federal educational aid. For possible future implementation, the Lifelong Learning Act of 1976 does offer at least a

statement of federal support for the idea that "American society should have as a goal the availability of appropriate opportunities for lifelong learning for all its citizens without regard to restrictions of previous education or training, sex, age, handicapping condition, social or ethnic background, or economic circumstance Public Law 94-482." <sup>41</sup>

Some may argue that older people have already had their equal opportunity to education in their youth. As was pointed out in Chapter I, many older people in this country had no formal education at all, or very little. The number of total illiterates (especially among the old) and functional illiterates (among younger and older adults) in the United States testifies to lack of adequate educational opportunity in the past. <sup>42</sup> This statement is based on the assumption--a correct one, I tend to believe--that most people can become literate if given adequate schooling. It is based also on the recognition that schooling in the United States has been far from adequate for many people, especially those belonging to economically disadvantaged groups. "The greatest goal of education," according to the concluding statement in a history of American education, "is still to make equal educational opportunity a reality for the disadvantaged youth of both urban and rural areas." <sup>43</sup>

There is a legal precedent for providing educational opportunities for adults who were denied public education as children. In the case of Lebanks vs. Spears, "the court addressed the issue of whether persons harmed by a previous denial of their right to education had a right to compensatory education. The Lebanks court ordered that education and training opportunities be made available to mentally retarded persons

'over twenty-one (21) years of age who were not provided educational services when children.'<sup>44</sup> Although this decision applies to mentally-retarded adults denied education as children, it does suggest that a successful legal case might be made for providing education and training for any adults, including those over 65, who had no education--or very little or very inadequate education--as children and who can be shown to have been harmed by their lack of an equal opportunity to education.

Many people would argue, however, that "education" in "equal opportunity to education" means only preparatory education for future life and that older people have no need for such preparatory education. I attempted to answer that argument in the preceding section on education as preparation for life. I argued that many older people need preparation for work and other life activities as much as do younger people. If it is maintained that education is nonutilitarian--an end in itself--or that it is continuing growth, then there would seem to be no justification for excluding older people from all levels of formal education, unless one denies the worth of older people or their ability to grow intellectually.

To conclude this section, I wish to remind readers that equal educational opportunity is firmly built into the structure of formal education in the United States. Recent legislation requiring mainstreaming of the handicapped<sup>45</sup> is evidence of the active concern for equality of opportunity in education. The only large group still not accorded equal educational opportunity at lower and higher levels of education is the growing group of older people. In formal education, "racism is in retreat; sexism is everywhere on the defensive. But 'ageism' is

still growing."<sup>46</sup> Or at least it is still very much alive. It would seem a matter of justice to extend equal opportunity to all mainstream formal education to older people. That statement introduces another philosophical assumption underlying American education: Everyone should be treated justly and as a person of dignity and worth.

### Justice and Human Dignity

What does it mean to say that equal opportunity to education is a matter of justice? According to a dictionary, "In ordinary usage justice implies...the rendering of what is due."<sup>47</sup> Thus one might say that equal educational opportunity is due--or owed to--a person. Due from, or owed by, whom or what? Society through its institutions--schools in the case of education. In the words of John Rawls, justice is "the first virtue of social institutions."<sup>48</sup>

Since Rawls through his book A Theory of Justice has stimulated much recent thinking about and discussion of the concept of justice, I wish to consider what he says about justice that might relate to the education of older people. Rawls develops a theory of justice in which "all social values--liberty and opportunity, income and wealth, and the bases of self-respect--are to be distributed equally unless an unequal distribution of any, or all, of these values is to everyone's advantage. Injustice, then, is simply inequalities that are not to the benefit of all."<sup>49</sup> For Rawls,

although equality of opportunity means an equal chance to leave the less fortunate behind in the personal quest for influence and social position...resources for education are not to be allotted solely or necessarily mainly according to their return as estimated in productive trained abilities, but also according to their worth in enriching the personal and social life of citizens, including here

the less favored. As a society progresses the latter consideration becomes increasingly more important.<sup>50</sup>

How might these ideas be used to justify equal educational opportunity for older people? The social value of formal education, Rawls would seem to be saying, is to be distributed equally to all, including those over 65, unless an unequal distribution--with little or no formal education for older people, for example--is to the advantage of everyone, including older people. The denial of equal educational opportunity to older people is justified only if the public generally benefits from such denial. Can one argue that denying some 24 million Americans over 65 an equal opportunity to be literate and liberally educated or to be educated for citizenship or to be trained for jobs is to the benefit of all Americans of all ages? Most people would agree, it seems to me, that it is not beneficial to society at large for such a large and growing group of people (those over 65) to be denied, or discouraged from seeking, education at all levels and of all kinds. With regard to vocational education, some may point out that it is unfair to younger people to ask them to support older people capable of employment and desiring the training or retraining that would make employment likely. Furthermore, they may argue, we need the productive contributions of older Americans. Even if one discounts the potential productive contributions of older Americans, Rawls reminds us that we must include among the benefits to society the "enriching [of] the personal and social life of citizens." "As a society progresses," he affirms, "the latter consideration becomes increasingly more important."<sup>51</sup>



Since it may seem that I have chosen among the different theories of justice the only one--that is, the theory of Rawls--that can be used to justify equal educational opportunity for older people, I should like to examine now another theory of justice, that of F. A. von Hayek as expressed in The Constitution of Liberty.<sup>52</sup> "Justice," he maintains, "does require that those conditions of people's lives that are determined by government be provided equally for all."<sup>53</sup> To the extent that government assures education to all, it would seem that older people should have equal access to the benefits of formal education. Von Hayek points out that "equality of those conditions must lead to inequality of results."<sup>54</sup> Inequality of results has been generally accepted in the United States despite Horace Mann's seeming conviction, shared perhaps by others, that somehow education would make it possible for everyone to get ahead more or less equally.<sup>55</sup> "The American version of equal opportunity, to the despair of generations of reformers and critics, has always involved acceptance of a large inequality of results among individuals (in income, status, and the like). The dispute over ways to promote equal opportunity for minorities has not, by and large, basically challenged that prevailing outlook. Minorities see themselves, and are seen by others, as seeking their share of what the system offers, not as rejecting or overhauling the system. This widespread acceptance of unequal results is linked, in turn, to popular beliefs in social mobility, in the chance of individuals to progress in line with their ability and effort."<sup>56</sup>

What seems to be the difference between the theory of Von Hayek and that of Rawls as presented in preceding paragraphs? Von Hayek would

clearly accept as just any degree of inequality resulting from more or less equal opportunity to education. Rawls, on the other hand, would not accept as just any inequalities that were detrimental to society as a whole or that did not help in some measure the most disadvantaged. Thus American efforts to provide minimum competencies for all, compensatory education, head-start education, and preferential treatment of minorities could be justified from a Von Hayek point of view only as efforts to provide equal opportunity to education for all; such efforts could be justified from a Rawls point of view as efforts to help the most disadvantaged and to prevent such inequalities of results that might be considered detrimental to society as a whole.

In any case, I am not arguing that older people should be guaranteed equality of educational results but rather that older people as well as younger people should be given an equal opportunity to education of all kinds, at all levels, and, like the handicapped, in the least restrictive environment--that is, in mainstream institutions and groups rather than in separate, segregated institutions and groups. Both the Rawls theory of justice and the Von Hayek theory would seem to justify extension of equal educational opportunity to older people. In fact, no theory of justice, it seems to me, can deny equal educational opportunity to older people except a theory that incorporates a view of older people as of less value than younger people because of their likely shorter future. Those who espouse such a theory either openly or implicitly would seem to base their argument on instrumental value. I suggest that it is very difficult if not impossible to measure the instrumental value of a person of any age over any period of time. Is the contribution to society

that a person might make between the ages of 65 and 75 always, or even likely to be, less valuable than the contribution of a person between the ages of 20 and 30, or 30 and 40, or 40 and 50? If value is to be measured by contribution to the gross national product, again I ask: Is it easy or even possible to determine whether a younger person makes a greater contribution than an older person, even someone well beyond the age of 65? If it is the number of years ahead of a person that determines her or his potential contribution to society, is it wise to give education and job training to young people ill with some incurable disease that seems certain to cause early death?

Even if one accepts the argument that on the whole older people have less instrumental value than younger people, are people to be valued, like things, by their utility? Are people to be valued as means to ends? I maintain that people are valuable in themselves--as ends, not as means. According to philosopher Immanuel Kant, "we value other people because they are other. The proper, sane, and rational way to view them...is as ends in themselves, not as means to any ends of ours, however exalted."<sup>57</sup> Kant preferred to restrict the use of the word "value" to refer to things since "value" suggests usefulness as a means to an end. Kant saw people--all people of all chronological ages--as having, not usefulness, but something very different: dignity.<sup>58</sup>

Many other philosophers as well as many religious and political leaders have proclaimed the dignity of all human beings of every chronological age. The United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted in 1948, and ensuing covenants on human rights, adopted in 1966,

recognize the dignity and basic rights of all people, including the right to education "directed to the full development of the human personality and the sense of its dignity."<sup>59</sup> In the United States, it has been proclaimed that "the essential nature of all men is the same and...no man has a greater (or lesser) degree of humanity than any other. And this much being granted, it follows that despite any differences in strength or wealth or intellectual acumen, all men have the same human dignity and all possess the same inalienable rights."<sup>60</sup> This statement presumably refers to all women as well as men and to people of all chronological ages. The meaning seems clear: all people have equal dignity and the same basic rights.<sup>61</sup>

If it is argued that in education one must distinguish between instrumental education and intrinsic education and that, without denying an older person's dignity, one can deny him or her instrumental education, such as job training, I would repeat what I have pointed out earlier: in our society a job, or at least an opportunity for employment, seems essential to the dignity of an adult of any chronological age. I would point out further that in our educational system, it is very difficult to separate education that prepares for jobs from education that does not prepare for jobs. As I have suggested earlier, Americans tend to view all education as mainly preparation for work.

To summarize and conclude this chapter, let me quote again the words of historian Robert E. Potter: "Two of the American ideals which go back to colonial days and which have become increasingly important are the concepts of individual worth and universal educational opportunity.

Any educational policy that ignores these ideals is inconsistent with the over-all development of American education and American life in general."<sup>62</sup> How might or should educational policy and practice be changed to make formal education in the United States more consistent with democratic ideals so far as older people are concerned? The next chapter will suggest some answers.

FOOTNOTES FOR CHAPTER III

<sup>1</sup>John Dewey, Democracy and Education (New York: The Free Press, 1966), p. 54.

<sup>2</sup>Robert E. Potter, The Stream of American Education (New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold Company, 1967), p. 5.

<sup>3</sup>John I. Goodlad, What Schools Are For (Bloomington, Indiana: Phi Delta Kappa Educational Foundation, 1979), p. 19.

<sup>4</sup>Encyclopedia of Philosophy, vol. 3 (New York: The Macmillan Company and the Free Press, 1967), s.v. "Fallacies," pp. 172-73.

<sup>5</sup>Random House Dictionary of the English Language, unabridged ed. (New York: Random House, 1967), p. 454.

<sup>6</sup>Dewey, Democracy and Education, p. 42.

<sup>7</sup>Bill Raspberry, "U.S. Vocational Education Flunks," Chicago Tribune, sec. 3, 13 November 1979, p. 4.

<sup>8</sup>For example, the research study reported in Christopher Jencks, et al., Who Gets Ahead? The Determinants of Economic Success in America (New York: Basic Books, 1979). This study is referred to later in this chapter (p. 66).

<sup>9</sup>Franklin Bobbitt, The Curriculum (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1918), p. 42.

<sup>10</sup>Geneva Gay, "The Continuing Quest for Rationality in Curriculum Practice," Educational Leadership 37 (no. 2, November 1979), p. 180.

<sup>11</sup>Carol Kleiman, "Brain Is More Than Ready for School," Chicago Tribune, sec. 2, 4 September 1979, p. 8.

<sup>12</sup>Dewey, Democracy and Education, p. 54.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid.

<sup>14</sup>John Dewey, Philosophy of Education (Totowa, New Jersey: Littlefield, Adams and Company, 1975), p. 91.

<sup>15</sup>Donald and Idella Gallagher, eds., The Education of Man: The Educational Philosophy of Jacques Maritain (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1967), p. 69.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid., p. 63.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid., p. 59.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid., p. 69.

<sup>19</sup>Encyclopedia of Education, vol. 2 (New York: Macmillan Company and the Free Press, 1971), s.v. "Compulsory Attendance," by Peter P. De Boer, p. 377.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid., p. 379. "...there are social critics who question the very notion of compulsory attendance. Some believe that the twentieth-century phenomenon of prolonging the school-leaving age has been a bane rather than a blessing. They argue that the extension of compulsory attendance into the later teen-age years was largely a by-product of the economic depression of the 1930's and the increasing power of labor unions. The results, they say, have brought little benefit to the laboring man, loss to the general public, and damage to the schools (the last the result of the unwise attempt to force inappropriate schooling upon rebellious youth)."

<sup>21</sup>R. Freeman Butts and Lawrence A. Cremin, A History of Education in American Culture (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1953), pp. 564-65.

<sup>22</sup>Herbert J. Gans, More Equality (New York: Pantheon Books, 1973), p. 63.

<sup>23</sup>Ellen Goodman, "'The Great Equalizer' Is Off-Balance," Chicago Sun-Times, 11 September 1979, p. 37.

<sup>24</sup>Michael Katz, ed., School Reform Past and Present (Boston: Little Brown and Company, 1971), p. 141.

<sup>25</sup>Goodman, "'The Great Equalizer'," p. 37.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid.

<sup>27</sup>The Age Discrimination Act of 1975 has as its purpose the prevention of discrimination based on age in federal programs. See Chapter I, footnote 43, p. 31.

<sup>28</sup>William Hines, "U.S. Proposes Rules to Stamp Out Age Discrimination," Chicago Sun-Times, 1 December 1978, p. 22.

<sup>29</sup>Chicago Tribune, 25 November 1979, sec. 6, p. 11.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid., sec. 16, p. 4.

<sup>31</sup>See Chapter I, pp. 12-14.

<sup>32</sup>Chicago Tribune, 25 November 1979, sec. 16, p. 4.

<sup>33</sup>1980 Spring Class Schedule (River Grove, Illinois: Triton College, 1980), p. 3. It is taken for granted in Triton's nondiscriminatory statement that students will be academically qualified. The statement might be reworded to make this requirement clear. Nondiscriminatory statements from other colleges and universities suggest the following wording:

Triton College admits qualified students without regard to race, color, creed, national origin, handicap, age, sex, or marital status.

<sup>34</sup>See Allan P. Sindler, Bakke, DeFunis, and Minority Admissions, The Quest for Equal Opportunity (New York: Longman, 1978) for an analysis of the Bakke case.

<sup>35</sup>See Chapter I, p. 11.

<sup>36</sup>See Chapter I, p. 10.

<sup>37</sup>Richard E. Peterson and Associates, Lifelong Learning in America (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1979), p. 298.

<sup>38</sup>Ibid., p. 303.

<sup>39</sup>David G. Savage, "Washington Gears Up for Historic Battle Over Role of the Federal Government," Phi Delta Kappan 62 (April 1981): 549.



<sup>40</sup>Idem, "Federal Education Aid Uncertain Under Reagan; First Wave of Budget Cuts Hits in September," Phi Delta Kappan 62 (May 1981): 621.

<sup>41</sup>Peterson, Lifelong Learning, p. 298.

<sup>42</sup>See Chapter I, pp. 6-7.

<sup>43</sup>Gerald Lee Gutek, An Historical Introduction to American Education (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Company, 1970), p. 233.

<sup>44</sup>Paul R. Friedman, The Rights of Mentally Retarded Persons (New York: Avon Books, 1976), p. 103.

<sup>45</sup>See Susan E. Hasazi, Paul D. Rice, and Robert York, Main-Streaming: Merging Regular and Special Education (Bloomington, Indiana: Phi Delta Kappa Educational Foundation, 1979).

<sup>46</sup>David Hackett Fischer, Growing Old in America (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977), p. 211.

<sup>47</sup>Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, fifth ed. (Springfield, Massachusetts: G. and C. Merriam Company, 1946), p. 548.

<sup>48</sup>John Rawls, A Theory of Justice (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1971), p. 3.

<sup>49</sup>Ibid., p. 62.

<sup>50</sup>Ibid., pp. 106-7.

<sup>51</sup>Ibid., p. 107.

<sup>52</sup>F. A. von Hayek, The Constitution of Liberty (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1960).

<sup>53</sup>From Chapter 6 of The Constitution of Liberty by F. A. von Hayek as reprinted in Raziell Abelson and Marie-Louise Friquegnon, Ethics for Modern Life (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1975), p. 501.

<sup>54</sup>Ibid.

<sup>55</sup>See p. 66 in this chapter for a quotation giving Horace Mann's view of education. In sharp contrast to Mann's view of education

as promoting the economic advancement of workers are the views of a group of "revisionist" historians, including Michael Katz, Clarence Karier, and others. According to their views, mass education developed in this country--not for the advancement of workers--but rather "for the social control of an increasingly culturally heterogeneous and poverty-stricken urban population."--Samuel Bowles and Herbert Gintis, Schooling in Capitalist America (New York: Basic Books, 1976), p. 231.

<sup>56</sup>Sindler, Bakke, DeFunis, and Minority Admissions, p. 11.

<sup>57</sup>Immanuel Kant's view as paraphrased in Mary Midgley, Beast and Man, The Roots of Human Nature (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1978), p. 354.

<sup>58</sup>Ibid. Also see the discussion of Kant's "categorical imperative" in Karl Jaspers, Kant (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1962), pp. 64-68. Following is a pertinent part of a paragraph about treating people as ends, not means:

The central content of the categorical imperative is: "So act as always to treat man, both in your own person and in that of another, as an end and never solely as a means." For everything in the world, including man, can become a means of action. But every rational being who acts according to the categorical imperative--and the only rational being known to us is man--is also an end in himself.... (p. 65)

Kant's categorical imperative is a universal ethical law or rule that one must do only what one can will that everybody else should do in similar circumstances.

<sup>59</sup>Vernon Van Dyke, Human Rights, the United States, and World Community (London: Oxford University Press, 1970), p. 65.

<sup>60</sup>Charles A. Fecher, Mencken: A Study of His Thought (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1978), p. 174.

<sup>61</sup>Two national groups of older people drafted a Declaration of Aging Rights that reads, in part, as follows:

Humanity's fundamental rights are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. They are rights that belong to all, without regard for race or creed or sex. We declare that all people also inalienably possess these rights without regard to age.

Among the rights listed are "the right to pursue a career or interest without penalty founded on age"; "the right to maintain health and well-being through preventive care and education"; and "the right to live life

fully and with honor--not for their age, but for their humanity."--  
Proposals for a National Policy on Aging (Washington, D.C.: National  
Retired Teachers Association and the American Association of Retired  
Persons, 1971), p. 2.

<sup>62</sup>Potter, Stream of American Education, p. 5.

## CHAPTER IV

### AGE-INCLUSIVE FORMAL EDUCATION

#### PREDICTIONS AND TRENDS

Old age can be a splendid time, as long as one still lives in the world of the mind. Oh, it's grand if you can jog when you're 90, but it's more important to be able to think.

--Carobeth Laird<sup>1</sup>

The community college is an especially good place for mixing the generations. It provides an opportunity for the retired army officer who never studied Plato to sit next to the 17-year-old girl who never heard of Plato. It is one of the very good ways for people of all ages to relate to each other.

--Margaret Mead<sup>2</sup>

Zelda Stanke, a 70-year-old student at the University of Wisconsin at Whitewater, thinks it is good to have the elderly on campus, and she knows that her mother approves. Her mother is a student at the same school.

--Gene I. Maeroff<sup>3</sup>

The purpose of this chapter is to sketch what formal education might be like in an age-inclusive system and to suggest current trends in education that appear to support my vision. What might education be like if older people joined the mainstream in substantial numbers and at all levels? Although I have taken the group of people over 65 years of age as my special concern, my vision would include adults of all chronological ages.

In an age-inclusive system, philosophers, educators, and people generally would cease viewing formal education as preparation of youth and

would view education instead as a lifelong process, with individual persons expected and encouraged to make many entrances into and exits from schooling during their lifetimes. The traditional view of human development would change. This traditional view is symbolized by a curve beginning at birth, sloping up through childhood to a peak at maturity, and then sloping down through old age to death. The new view of human development would be symbolized by an incline, starting at birth and going upward through childhood and adulthood to a peak near death or even at death.<sup>4</sup> This view of over-all development need not be in conflict with the view of multiple maturities suggested in Chapter III, p. 59. A person may be seen as developing intellectually, emotionally, and socially in a general fashion during the course of his or her lifetime and yet at any given moment may be seen as incorporating several kinds and degrees of maturity or immaturity.

In the new system of age-free education, there would be no separation between adult education and regular mainstream education. Informal classes, lectures, and discussions would be open to everyone in churches, temples, libraries, museums, and similar community places. Some special institutions, such as senior citizens' centers and nursery schools for the very young, would continue to exist for those who clearly need separate learning places. Similarly, special classes and schools for the handicapped would continue to exist for those students who have a clear need for segregated learning. In general, however, I envision a future system of education that would follow current requirements regarding the handicapped to educate everyone in the least restrictive environment--that is, in the same educational institutions and classes unless there are clearly

justifiable reasons for separate, segregated education. Thus older and younger people would be mainstreamed into the same educational institutions and, at the secondary and college levels at least, into the same classes.

In my vision of the educational future, all higher-education programs at undergraduate and graduate levels would be open to older as well as younger people, although age--like sex or color or handicap--might influence a decision to admit a student to a particular program, or to exclude the student from a program. For example, a 25-year-old person might still be chosen over a 75-year-old for medical training since the older person might be judged to have insufficient time to benefit from the training and to benefit society. A 75-year-old might be chosen over a 25-year-old for the study of gerontology or history or literature because of the greater depth of understanding the older person might have and the greater contribution he or she might be able to make to society. No student would be admitted to or excluded from any program, however, on the basis of age alone. Students would be judged as individuals rather than as members of any group although affirmative-action policies would continue as long as needed to bring about general equality. Special preparatory or remedial classes would be offered to students on the basis of their needs. Many of the students in these special classes would be members of groups stereotyped and discriminated against in the past in ways that reduced their self-confidence and denied them a good basic education. One of these groups would probably be those over 65.

At the secondary level, regular daytime high-school classes would be open on a credit basis to adults, partly in recognition of the right of older people to equal educational opportunity and partly in order to maintain classes that would not be able to be filled solely by young people because of the declining youth population and an educational policy that would encourage youth to acquire out-of-school experiences. Evening high-school classes would be attended not only by older people but also by many young students who left school to go to work or to travel or to take part in community activities. Classes of mixed ages would be usual during the day and in the evening.

At the elementary level, many schools would become community centers, with children and a large number of adults coming to school at the same time in the morning to get a basic elementary education. Other adults would come in the afternoon or in the evening after work. Although seven-year-olds and seventy-year-olds would probably not learn to read and write in the same classes, children and at least some adults would come together, or work alongside one another, at several times during the schooltime. The community school would be more like a public library, with people of all ages using the resources in a cooperative and self-disciplined fashion. The discipline problems of the present "age ghetto" schooling might disappear, or at least diminish greatly.

Faced with teaching people of many different ages, teachers would develop new attitudes and new methods. The patronizing, condescending attitude of some traditional teachers toward children would disappear. Even at elementary levels, teaching and learning would be more like

teaching and learning in a good graduate-level class of today. All learners would be treated with respect, assignments would be individualized, discussion would be accorded as much time as teacher talk, and great expectations and consequent results would be the order of the day.

In my vision of the future, a federally-financed "Educare"<sup>5</sup> program would assure each American perhaps sixteen years of formal education, to be acquired at various times throughout her or his lifetime. As older people moved into the mainstream of education and life generally, they would increasingly see themselves as fully participating, responsible members of society. Until severe disability or death occurred, they would continue to work and to learn; to go to the various institutions of learning to acquire diplomas, degrees, and vocational training; to take part in informal learning activities of many kinds; to assume civic responsibilities; to enjoy sports and cultural activities--in brief, to live fully. They would not seek benefits based solely on chronological age. They would demand and expect the same benefits, opportunities, and responsibilities offered younger people. Any special help would be based on need arising from poverty, illness, accident, or severe handicap. Since older people have been discriminated against in many ways in the past, there would be a need for "affirmative action" to try to compensate to some degree for previous injustices.<sup>6</sup>

My view of future education is clearly based in large measure on imaginative thinking.<sup>7</sup> In some measure, however, it is based on current trends in educational thinking and practice. For example, today there appears to be new interest in the idea of education as lifelong rather



than as youth preparatory. The choice of my thesis is illustrative of this trend. Another example is the recent addition to the College Board, a nonprofit educational association, of an office of Adult Learning Service "to provide new programs, training, and publications to support the transition of adults to and from education; to assist colleges in strengthening their capabilities in lifelong education; to develop the skills of professionals who serve adults; and assemble and disseminate information about adult learning."<sup>8</sup> The need of professional people for lifespan learning to keep up with new knowledge in their fields has been discussed by adult educator Cyril Houle<sup>9</sup> and others. Further evidence of the concern about continuing education is the addition of a Lifelong Learning Division to a major educational publishing company, Scott, Foresman.<sup>10</sup> The growing interest in lifelong learning is reflected also in recommendations of the United States Department of Health, Education and Welfare, the Carnegie Commission on Higher Education, and other policy-influencing organizations that education be restructured "so that it is a continuous process, experienced during all stages of the life cycle. According to this model, the traditional division of the life cycle into a period of preparation and a period of participation is artificial and no longer suited to the pace of contemporary life."<sup>11</sup>

As the result of the restructuring of education, it is predicted in reports by these organizations that "young people will not be pressured into moving through their educational experiences in a 'lockstep' fashion, forced to make important educational and occupational decisions when they might prefer a period of work or other experience instead. Those who

cannot afford education at an early age might benefit particularly, since it will be acceptable and relatively easy to return to education after several years in the work force or to continue studies on a part-time basis."<sup>12</sup> Also as a result of such restructuring of education, all students will "experience more of their education in age-heterogeneous settings. The isolation of adolescents and young adults in age-homogeneous schools will diminish, and so might the influence of the peer group and the strength of adolescent subcultures."<sup>13</sup>

In this restructured educational system, adult education would not be separated from youth education but would be "but one part of the whole theory and practice of education. That part can be differentiated from the others--infant, child, adolescent, and immediate-postadolescent education--by all the distinctions which have been used to separate andragogy<sup>14</sup> from pedagogy, but learning and teaching seem...to be essentially the same processes however young or old the learners may be."<sup>15</sup>

Theodore H. Hesburgh, Paul A. Miller, and Clifton R. Wharton, Jr., point out in Patterns of Lifelong Learning that "until the 1940s, higher education in the United States was largely for a young elite; from 1945 to 1970, the pattern began to shift toward mass higher learning, although one which was still primarily youth-oriented. In the future, there will be strong moves to universal access to higher education for all adults."<sup>16</sup> The same authors recommend that "each university...continuously renew its commitments as well as identify the resources necessary to meet its responsibility in lifelong learning....Colleges and universities should see to it that students of all ages are able to earn credits toward a

degree in a variety of ways, including regular courses taught in the daytime or evening by regular or adjunct university faculty, examinations taken at various times, successful completion of telecourses, computer-assisted instruction, or independent study programs, correspondence, or other educational programs which an accredited college or university certifies as appropriate for application toward a degree."<sup>17</sup>

At least at higher educational levels, the trend toward lifelong education is not just a prediction or recommendation but a fact. The college crowd is rapidly graying.<sup>18</sup> Spurred by declining youth enrollments and an aging population, many colleges and universities are offering older students a wide variety of enticing educational opportunities: credit and noncredit courses given both on the main campus and in local communities; four-year college programs that offer credit for life experience; courses offered on weekends and during summers; television courses; and external-degree part-time programs.

Here are some specific examples of innovative programs that encourage lifelong learning. The University Without Walls, headquartered in Yellow Springs, Ohio, "is composed of 31 colleges and universities across the United States. Each UWW program of study leading to a bachelor's degree is individually designed by the student with faculty assistance."<sup>19</sup> A project called "Pioneers" at New England College has taken "persons 55 and older out of separate and not always equal educational programs...placing them smack in the middle of the collegiate experience....The project...has 52 senior citizens and 1,200 [younger] students sharing not only lecture halls but dining halls, dormitories,

and the usual panoply of extracurricular activities....According to James Verschueren, director of the Pioneers program, the idea behind the project was to 'show that society does a bad thing by separating people by age and generation.'"<sup>20</sup>

Many institutions now offer weekend college programs for those who are unable to attend classes during the week. An example is the Weekend College of Loyola University of Chicago, where students can take credit courses on Saturdays and Sundays.<sup>21</sup> Instead of bringing students to the campus, other colleges establish credit as well as noncredit classes in local communities. The meeting places are usually schools, libraries, churches, temples, community centers, and similar places, but one innovative program called "Learn & Shop" offers college-credit classes in department stores in shopping malls. According to a newspaper report, "Faced with an 8.5 per cent enrollment drop in the fall of 1978, Indiana-Purdue University officials [set up] college-credit courses in department store employee training rooms at four suburban shopping malls....It worked--so well, in fact, that 41 other states and several Canadian provinces want to do it, too....Learn & Shop's trial run attracted more than 500 students, 78 per cent of them women....Virginia Miller,...a 54-year-old grandmother, [commented], 'I think the proximity was the thing that got me there.'"<sup>22</sup>

Despite these and other programs that encourage lifelong education, it must be recognized that the trend is mainly one at the higher-education level and one for fairly well-off, well-educated people. "It is painfully evident that post-secondary adult education, like the rest of

the college and university enterprise, has done far more for those on top than for those on the bottom. Test runs show that the lowest groups, the truly disadvantaged, have been thinly represented among credit students, whether daytime, evening, summer, television, correspondence, or examination-only; and the noncredit picture is about the same....Adult students are clearly a privileged segment of society."<sup>23</sup>

If a person is over 65 and poor or even middle-class with little financial reserve, he or she will find it difficult, if not impossible, to secure the financial assistance given younger students to pursue college and professional education. "Under present laws," explains Lloyd H. Davis, executive director of the National University Extension Association, "the federal student-aid programs provide almost no assistance to older college-goers, particularly those who have low incomes and have to attend school part-time....The adults who do receive assistance may do so usually for only four years, even though their part-time status often prevents them from finishing their education that quickly. Students who attend school less than half-time are cut off from government assistance altogether. Those inequities...must be eliminated, particularly considering the growing numbers of adults who are filling the nation's colleges and universities."<sup>24</sup>

Despite inequities in their treatment of older people, institutions of higher learning are clearly moving in the direction of age-free education. No such clear trend, however, is observable in secondary and elementary schools. "The schools...are one of the society's largest investments in real estate and facilities, and yet many buildings are

used only a few hours each day, seldom year-round, and almost never on weekends. School...facilities could be developed into community education centers with the entire community and persons of every age encouraged to use them."<sup>25</sup>

One can find encouragement and examples of such community use of schools. "The Florida and Utah legislatures have passed measures encouraging community use of school facilities. In Flint, Michigan, the Mott Foundation has helped to make the school one of the focal points of community activity."<sup>26</sup> Some elementary and secondary schools throughout the country offer evening classes for adults, sometimes in cooperation with community colleges. Occasionally a school opens its regular daytime classes to adults. An example is the Oak Park-River Forest High School in Oak Park, Illinois. Another example is found in Harbor Springs, Michigan, where a senior citizens' center is located in the high school with "no barriers separating old from young" and with "total integration of the mature into the daytime school program."<sup>27</sup> Words supportive of the multi-age community-school idea have come from the federal government, as pointed out in Chapter I, where an administration official under former President Carter was quoted as saying, "We want to look to the schools as family-service centers, serving the elderly and adults as well as children."<sup>28</sup> It is probably true, of course, that under the present more conservative administration of President Reagan (1981), intent upon cutting educational and other costs, such words of encouragement may not be forthcoming.

Instead of the expansion of elementary and secondary schools into community centers, however, what actually appears to be happening in this country is the incorporation of the community-school idea in the community college. Community colleges--Triton College in River Grove, Illinois, for example--offer a wide variety of educational and cultural programs and activities for people of all ages, including older adults.<sup>29</sup> Such community colleges may even serve as literacy centers, offering instruction to the functionally illiterate and foreign-born. They may arrange for classes in local communities away from the main campus. They may provide bus service to the main campus.

In summary, let me repeat that there is a clear trend toward expanding educational opportunities at the college level to well-off, well-educated adults. These expanding educational opportunities are justifiable historically and philosophically. That is my thesis, and one of its purposes is to encourage further expansion of such opportunities and the elimination of inequities based on age. As for older people who are poor and ill educated, they seem likely to stay that way despite my thesis--unless some great changes take place in our national priorities.

Since under the present (1981) conservative administration and policies in this country, it seems unlikely that there will be any great changes in priorities that would result in financial support of expanded educational opportunities for less-well-off older people at the present time, is there nothing that can be done to encourage and prepare for a possible restructuring of education in the future? Although my purpose is not to detail specific measures for eliminating age discrimination in

formal education but rather to show that the elimination of such discrimination is justified historically and philosophically, still I cannot resist suggesting some obvious steps that might be taken immediately at the higher-education level. For example, more colleges and universities might add "age" to their nondiscriminatory statements, thus publicizing their intent not to discriminate on the basis of chronological age. Where they exist, age-discriminatory features could be eliminated from college and university employment policies, student admittance policies, scholarship and fellowship opportunities, and student activities. Adult education could be brought into the mainstream of the curriculum. The department of education could become a department of lifelong education. Colleges and universities could aim to turn out teachers, administrators, philosophers, makers of public policy, and citizens who would understand the need for lifelong education and who would support, promote, and do it. It has been said that "the creation of a system of lifelong learning is at least as much a problem of philosophy and direction as it is of financing."<sup>30</sup>

At the elementary and secondary levels, teachers and administrators might try harder to help young students understand that formal and informal education is a lifelong endeavor and that education is never "over with." More schools, both public and private, might be able to attract parents and other adults to school during the day and in the evening to learn the basic skills and subjects children are supposed to be learning as well as other skills and subjects. For the reasons cited earlier, many adults--particularly many older adults--need a basic education as much as children do.



Finally, educators at all levels and in all kinds of institutions might discourage the false view that most older people are mentally and physically incapacitated "senior citizens" who need special treatment, special segregated learning centers, special segregated living communities, and lives generally outside the mainstream--away from employment, responsibilities, and the personal satisfactions of accomplishment. It will be difficult, however, to change the stereotype of old age. Many older people themselves seem to have accepted the stereotype and have withdrawn from mainstream life, perhaps permitting their mental, physical, and creative capacities to decline from lack of use. The fact that old age has become a commercial market--with its own best-selling books, television programs, services, and products--has not helped much to change the stereotype, in my opinion, and perhaps has reinforced it. John L. McKnight, associate director of the Center for Urban Affairs and professor of communication studies at Northwestern University, deplors the "power of the oldhood industry and its public policies."<sup>31</sup> He insists that "our national policy [toward older people] is anti-caring, anti-family, anti-old."<sup>32</sup> He calls for "a genuinely anti-age policy. Age-oriented service industries break families, neighborhoods, communities, and decimate the caring capacities of human beings."<sup>33</sup> I might add that in my opinion age-oriented, age-discriminatory education underestimates the lifelong learning capacities of human beings and denies older people their dignity and society their potential contributions.

#### FOOTNOTES FOR CHAPTER IV

<sup>1</sup>Rita Rooney, "Carobeth Laird: An Old Woman Dreams--and Writes Books," Parade Magazine, 30 July 1978, p. 6.

<sup>2</sup>Gene I. Maeroff, "Rising Median Age Is Affecting Education at All Levels," New York Times, 8 January 1978, education sec., p. 10.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

<sup>4</sup>This new view of human development is reflected in the title of a book by Elisabeth Kübler-Ross: Death: The Final Stage of Growth (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1975).

<sup>5</sup>"In September 1974, Albert Shanker, president of the American Federation of Teachers (AFT), used the occasion of his address to the National Press Club to suggest ways in which the U. S. might move into the area of lifelong education...he did call for opportunities for lifelong education in the form of worker sabbaticals. The kernel of this plan is to guarantee to every worker within American society the right to a sabbatical approximately every seven years to continue formal education or training...Beyond the sabbatical model, Shanker also envisioned a more expanded program similar to Medicare, which he dubbed Educare. In Shanker's words, such a program would say to all individuals, 'You have a right, at the time when you feel that you want to improve yourself, to return to school to improve your mind as you improve your health when you go to medical institutions.'"--Norman V. Overly, R. Bruce McQuigg, David L. Silvermail, and Floyd L. Coppedge, A Model for Lifelong Learning (Bloomington, Indiana: Phi Delta Kappa, 1980), p. 18.

<sup>6</sup>See the reference to "affirmative action" in Chapter I, p. 21, including Footnote 60 at the end of that chapter.

<sup>7</sup>Others have described similar views of education in the future. Following are two examples:

A future of change demands lifelong education. Opportunities for learning must be available at any time in a student's life when problems arise for which there are no immediate solutions. The idea of an education completed at any given age or within any finite period is obsolete for the world into which we are moving. Education for the future must be lifelong....There is

an intriguing corollary of the move toward lifelong education. If learning opportunities are going to be available lifelong, there is no longer an important reason for completing any part of education during any particular time period. Nor is there need to require mature young people to attend school for any given number of hours or to complete any given curriculum."--Arthur W. Combs, "What the Future Demands of Education," Phi Delta Kappan 62 (no. 5, 1981): 370.

The most comprehensive effort to build a model for lifelong learning has been undertaken by Harold G. Shane (in The Educational Significance of the Future, Bloomington, Indiana: Phi Delta Kappa, 1973). ...He... sets forth a model for changing the infrastructure of public education which he calls the Seamless Curriculum. ...The traditional graded structure would be abandoned "in favor of a smoothly flowing, seamless curriculum," consisting of two major components: (1) a formal educational structure for ages two through the remainder of life; and (2) a "real world" paracurriculum with special significance for secondary and postsecondary educational institutions. The paracurriculum is conceived to be any out-of-school experiences that add to or strengthen one's ability to cope intellectually as well as generally in society.--Norman V. Overly, ed., Lifelong Learning, A Human Agenda (Alexandria, Virginia: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 1979), pp. 178-79.

<sup>8</sup>Carole Carmichael, "Adult Classes Becoming Necessity," Chicago Tribune, 4 January 1981, sec. 15, p. 1.

<sup>9</sup>Cyril O. Houle, Continuing Learning in the Professions (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1980).

<sup>10</sup>Added in 1979, the Lifelong Learning Division of Scott, Foresman published a 1980-81 catalog.

<sup>11</sup>Ann Parker Parelius and Robert J. Parelius, The Sociology of Education (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1978), p. 373.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., p. 375.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid.

<sup>14</sup>"Andragogy" is the education of adults. For an explanation of distinctions between andragogy and pedagogy (education of children), see Malcolm S. Knowles, The Modern Practice of Adult Education: Andragogy Versus Pedagogy (New York: Association Press, 1974).

<sup>15</sup>Cyril O. Houle, The Design of Education (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1972), p. 243.

<sup>16</sup>Theodore M. Hesburgh, Paul A. Miller, and Clifton R. Wharton, Jr., Patterns of Lifelong Learning (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1973), p. 20.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid., p. 24.

<sup>18</sup>See Ruth Weinstock, The Graying of the Campus (New York: Educational Facilities Laboratories, 1978) for detailed information about the growing number of adults on college campuses and the many types of programs offered to attract older adults.

<sup>19</sup>Michael Briley, "They're Going Back to School," Dynamic Years (July-August 1978): 16.

<sup>20</sup>Carol Oppenheim, "Class Act for Young and Old," Chicago Tribune, 3 May 1979, Tempo section, p. 1.

<sup>21</sup>Weekend College Office, Loyola University of Chicago, 820 North Michigan Avenue, Chicago, Illinois 60611, is the source of information about the Loyola Weekend College program.

<sup>22</sup>"Learn 'n' Shop in Indiana Mall," Chicago Sun-Times, 16 September 1979, p. 34.

<sup>23</sup>Fred Harvey Harrington, The Future of Adult Education (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1977), p. 157.

<sup>24</sup>Anne C. Roark, "Adults and Part-time Students Left Out of U.S. Aid Plans, So Far," The Chronicle of Higher Education, 26 February 1979, p. 11.

<sup>25</sup>Hesburgh, Miller, and Wharton, Patterns of Lifelong Learning, p. 17.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid. For information about the community schools of Flint, Michigan, see W. Fred Totten, The Power of Community Education (Midland, Michigan: Pendell Publishing Company, 1970).

<sup>27</sup>Diane K. Gentry, "The Elders of Harbor Springs High," Modern Maturity (April-May 1981): 31.

<sup>28</sup>"The Ace Up Carter's Sleeve," Chicago Daily News, 14-15 January 1978, p. 6.

<sup>29</sup>Catalogs describing programs and activities aimed at older adults are available from Triton College, 2000 Fifth Avenue, River Grove, Illinois 60171. Many other colleges, of course, offer programs for older adults.

<sup>30</sup>Wilbur Cross and Carol Florio, You Are Never Too Old to Learn (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1978), p. 98.

<sup>31</sup>John L. McKnight, "Making Age a Profitable Problem," Chicago Tribune, 23 July 1979, section 4, p. 3.

<sup>32</sup>Ibid.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid.

## CHAPTER V

### SUMMARY, COMMENT, AND CONCLUSION

A woman of seventy-four came to Dr. Martin A. Berezin's office recently and said, "I would like to be psychoanalyzed."

He looked at her thoughtfully, as though to ask why anyone over seventy would start psychoanalysis.

She said, in explanation to his unasked question, "Doctor, all I have left is my future."

--Lucy Freeman<sup>1</sup>

Civilization gets its basic energy not from its resources, but from its hopes. The tragedy of life is not death, but what we let die inside us while we live.

--Norman Cousins<sup>2</sup>

In "The Leaden-Eyed," the poet Vachel Lindsay maintained that the crime of life was not to die, but to grow dull and to "die like sheep." There are no dull, dying sheep in continuing education. Our lifelong learners are adding a new dimension to the four freedoms--the freedom to learn, at any age or stage of life, and to enjoy a continuing effort at self-fulfillment. Long may they learn.

--Raymond Baumhart<sup>3</sup>

I have attempted, in preceding chapters, to justify the inclusion of those over the age of 65 in regular, mainstream formal education by arguing that both the historical development of schooling in the United States and the democratic philosophy of its people are on the side of inclusive rather than exclusive education. The historic trend toward inclusive education reflects, of course, the country's democratic philosophy. History and philosophy are inseparable.

To summarize: historically, American schools--originally for well-to-do males only--have progressively opened their doors to other

groups, including the poor, females, blacks and other ethnic groups, and the handicapped. The trend has been not only toward inclusiveness but also toward integrated inclusiveness--that is, toward including members of all groups in the same schools and classrooms. The doctrine of "separate but equal" has been rejected by the highest court of the land.<sup>4</sup>

None of the groups mentioned has been taken into the fold of mainstream, integrated education without a hard and continuing struggle. In the case of each group, however, the struggle has resulted, over long periods of time,<sup>5</sup> in recognition of the right of members of the group to equal opportunity to formal education. The democratic philosophy upon which the United States was built leads to inclusive institutions. A part of the dictionary definition of the word democratic is "not snobbish or socially exclusive."<sup>6</sup> Key concepts in the country's democratic philosophy are universal human dignity, equal opportunity, and justice for all.

I have pointed out that the one major group that has not been taken into the fold of formal education at all levels is the majority group of adults, including the rapidly growing numbers of older adults. Despite widespread approval of the idea of lifelong education, formal education has remained almost exclusively a preparatory place for youth. I have argued that the time has come to change formal education at all levels to make it truly lifelong.

I have described recent trends toward expansion of formal educational opportunities for older people in higher education, thanks largely to the declining youth population. I have envisioned a future of education without age limits, acknowledging a lack of strong trends in that

direction at levels below the college level. I have pointed to the serious educational problems and related problems of the elderly poor in our society.

I have pointed out the growing burden younger people must bear if older people--the poor and the well off--continue to be maintained as a nonworking group. Yet recent extension of the retirement age creates another problem: delayed promotions or even lack of jobs for some younger people. Intergenerational conflicts over jobs, tax money, and educational opportunities seem inevitable--unless people of all ages can accept older people as full participants in work, education, and life generally. Any special benefits, I have argued, should be based not on age but on need arising from poverty, illness, handicap, or discrimination in the past.

Many people, including older people, may not agree that age is an accidental characteristic like skin color or sex and that older people should be treated like younger people. Old age, they may say, is a time of increasing incapacities, a time for withdrawal from mainstream responsibilities and opportunities leading up to the ultimate withdrawal, death itself. This is a point of view that was dominant in the past, but--as I have indicated--it is based on a stereotype that many older people do not fit today.

Some who agree that older people can and should stay actively involved in mainstream life may argue that to live fully one need not pursue formal studies. They may point out that some older people take



advantage of informal learning opportunities: reading, educational television, lectures, museums, etc. Others will point out, as I have done earlier, that formal education is not the only or even the primary need of older people (or younger people). Food and housing, medical care, and most of all love are needed by everyone. Some, like myself, would add work and the arts to that list of minimum requirements for living fully.

Although I would certainly agree that formal education is not the only or the main road to the full life, in our society--as I have pointed out--formal education is a main road to jobs, acceptance, and respect (both self-respect and the respect of others). If older people are to be accepted as fully responsible, participating members of society, they must be able to travel the road of formal education alongside younger people, if they choose to do so. They must have equal opportunity to formal education at all levels to the end of their lives. That is my thesis.

In conclusion, I should like to make it clear that I do not expect formal education to change rapidly from preparatory education of youth to lifelong education. Perhaps it never will happen in American society since education as an end in itself seems not to be accepted by most people and since the value of school education to employment and economic success is being questioned. Perhaps in our media-dominated, computerized, pleasure-seeking society, reading, writing, and thinking--the mainstays of formal education--are on their way out, except for an esoteric few.

I choose to hope, however, that there are many younger and older Americans who value and actively support demanding, disciplined, sustained, mind-stretching, goal-directed formal education, despite the inadequacies of present schooling so frequently and properly deplored. I choose to hope that their efforts and mine will direct education toward equal opportunity,<sup>7</sup> freedom of choice, and just treatment for learners of every chronological age. "Human societies," it has been said, "have never shown consistent allegiance to liberty and justice. But humankind keeps dreaming of societies that will be faithful to these ideals."<sup>8</sup>

FOOTNOTES FOR CHAPTER V

<sup>1</sup>Lucy Freeman, The Sorrow and The Fury: Overcoming Hurt and Loss from Childhood to Old Age (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1978), p. 116.

<sup>2</sup>Norman Cousins, Foreword to Most of All, They Taught Me Happiness, by Robert Muller (Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company, 1978), pp. 12-13.

<sup>3</sup>Raymond Baumhart, S.J., "President's Message," Loyola Today (Fall 1977), p. 3.

<sup>4</sup>The doctrine of "separate but equal" was rejected in the 1954 decision by the United States Supreme Court in the case of Brown vs. the Board of Education of Topeka. The Supreme Court overthrew the 1896 Plessy vs. Ferguson decision that had upheld the maintenance of separate schools for white and black children.

<sup>5</sup>For example, it took 89 years from the Declaration of Independence in 1776 to the abolition of slavery in 1865 and another 89 years until blacks were granted equal integrated education in the 1954 Supreme Court decision referred to in footnote 4 above. Equal, integrated education for women and the handicapped likewise did not come about until after almost 200 years of struggle.

<sup>6</sup>Webster's Collegiate Dictionary (Springfield, Massachusetts: G. & C. Merriam Company, 1946), p. 268.

<sup>7</sup>It is often argued that "equal opportunity" or "equal education" does not mean the same opportunity or education. It makes sense to me to say that education should be based on individual needs and choices and thus will be different for different persons. Any differences in educational opportunities and treatment, however, must be looked at carefully to make sure they are not based on stereotypical thinking or prejudice rather than on concern for individualized education. The ideal should be flexible, individualized education within common classrooms and curriculums. Or so I am arguing.

<sup>8</sup>John W. Gardner, Morale (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1978), p. 33.

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