

THE DEVELOPMENT OF GENERAL EDUCATION  
IN THE UNITED STATES UNDERGRADUATE  
CURRICULUM, 1850-1982

A Thesis  
Submitted to  
the Faculty of Graduate Studies  
University of Manitoba

In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Master of Education

by  
Robert Edward Spear

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Man is both a structural and  
anti-structural entity, who  
conserves through structure  
and grows through anti-structure.

- R. G. Paulston.

## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to assess how three factors--federal support for higher education, fluctuations in college enrollments, and specified socio-political events--may have influenced the development of general education in the United States undergraduate curriculum from 1850-1982. General education was tentatively described in reference to two broad criteria: that some specific parameters of knowledge or understanding (however defined) be endorsed, and that at least part of the justification used to rationalize those parameters involve some emphasis on communal (as opposed to individual) responsibilities of life. General education was thought to be articulated in the curriculum through core curricula, concentration and distribution requirements, survey courses and interdisciplinary programs.

A generalization about "the" American undergraduate curriculum was suggested, and then made explicit. The land grant university, as influenced by the private institutions, was taken as representative of the "mainstream" of American undergraduate education for the period in question. A survey of selected literature was conducted as a basis for the findings. The objective of this survey was not so much to establish historical fact, as it was to analyze, criticize, and synthesize historical interpretation. Five

historical periods were then rationalized as a means of distinguishing different phases in the development of the curriculum.

The study revealed that few distinct and direct relationships can be posited between the factors examined and the development of general education in the American undergraduate curriculum. Tentative suggestions, however, were possible on the basis of the work done. Some factors cited that could have positively influenced the development of general education in the undergraduate curriculum were: the 1917 request for a 'War Issues' course at Columbia University, the economic and enrollment stagnation of the 1930's, certain pedagogical sentiments congruent with World War II and the 1947 President's Commission on Higher Education. Other factors cited that might be thought to have impeded the development of general education in the undergraduate curriculum included: the Morrill Act of 1862, the various federal involvements in research and development during and after World War II, the launching of Sputnik in 1957 and the college enrollment bulge of the 1960's.

The study suggested that there was a deficiency in the literature regarding the historical causes of general education and that, therefore, more research in the area must be undertaken.

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## CHAPTER I

### RATIONALE

Over the past several years the United States has witnessed an increase of interest on the part of universities in what is commonly referred to as "general education."<sup>1</sup> Articles, periodicals and books dealing with the topic have become more numerous as has the variety of general education projects undertaken. Even more significant is the accelerated interest on the part of funding agencies in the now popular subject. Ernest Boyer and Arthur Levine describe these developments as representative of a third "revival" of the so-called "general education movement." (The other two revivals took place, they say, in 1914-1933, and 1945-1957 respectively.) Boyer and Levine further imply that these revivals germinated during periods in which "the nation's preoccupations seemed more personal and less social"<sup>2</sup> and that the outcome of such germination was an outlook that eventually came to be more receptive to "shared values, shared responsibilities, shared governance, a shared heritage and a shared world vision."<sup>3</sup>

Such an historical proposition is worthy of closer

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1. E. Boyer and A. Levine, A Quest for Common Learning (Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Foundation, 1981).
  2. Ibid., p. 13.
  3. Ibid., p. 17.

examination, especially in reference to the supposedly most recent revival. Of particular interest to curricular historians would be an investigation of the specific factors that might be said to have influenced, or even directly caused, the development of general education in the undergraduate course of study. Most of the literature that deals with general education evades the problem of specific causality and concentrates instead on historical description or general speculation. There is an absence of critical work that attempts to answer, in precise fashion, the question, "What causes revivals of general education in the American undergraduate system?" The rationale for this study therefore is that, in the midst of this suggested third revival, such an investigation should commence.

#### Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is twofold:

- (i) To analyse the various definitions and formats of general education during the period in question;  
and
- (ii) To assess how such factors as federal support of higher education, fluctuations in college enrollments, and specified socio-political events may have influenced the development of general education in the American undergraduate curriculum from 1850-1982.

### Limitations of the Study

In his preface to The Emergence of the American University (1965), Laurence Veysey points out the limitations of American educational histories which are either too broad or too narrow in their orientation. He claims that broad studies tend not to appreciate the plurality of interests to be found within "faculty circles" (i.e., the higher education community taken as a whole), while narrow studies obscure the overarching issues that might be recognized. His solution, therefore, is to contrive an historical orientation which focuses on "middle-range groupings," configurations larger than the individual campus, but narrower than the faculty as a whole.<sup>4</sup>

In the spirit of Veysey, this study will likewise concern itself with a middle-range grouping of a particular type. Specifically, the study will investigate and hypothesize about those institutions which are thought to represent the mainstream of educational developments for the American undergraduate course of study. The theoretical model is the land grant university; one that, perhaps, began as an agricultural college, but later evolved into Clark Kerr's "multiversity."<sup>5</sup> The significance, and utilization in the study, of private institutions, like Harvard

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4. L. R. Veysey, The Emergence of the American University (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1965).

5. C. Kerr, The Uses of the University, 3rd edition (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982).

University, occurs in direct relation to their perceived influence on the mainstream of educational developments. If it can be shown that such institutions did indeed influence the development of undergraduate education, then it is acceptable and, in fact, necessary to include them in the assessment of the middle-range group so targeted.

The first limitation of the study, therefore, should be recognized in the generalization posited. In attempting to describe and hypothesize about the "mainstream" of "the" American undergraduate curriculum, particularly in reference to general education, the study must practically omit an examination of most of the fragments and extensions of the undergraduate curriculum. Neither community colleges, nor many of the more radical experimental colleges, can appropriately be included in this work.

A second limitation of the thesis occurs in the factors selected for their potential influence on the development of general education in the undergraduate curriculum. "Federal support," "college enrollments," and "specified socio-political events" were selected because they were most prominent in the literature. Those factors less prominent, however, were necessarily omitted. The scope of the thesis does not allow, for example, for an examination of the effects that philanthropies, "great" university presidents, or student perceptions might have had on the development of the curriculum. Such fascinating questions as, "How did the so-called knowledge explosion and the rise of academic

departments affect the undergraduate course of study?" likewise cannot be answered comprehensively here. The advantages of clarity and simplicity that arise when considering only several elements must be duly weighed against the disadvantage of a selective analysis.

### Importance of the Study

The importance of the study is twofold. First, it examines and hence reveals some aspects of the nature of general education "revivals" in the American undergraduate curriculum. Second, it assesses, by virtue of the technique made explicit in the methodology, the capability of the selected literature in addressing the questions posed. The cumulative importance of the study then, is that it not only provides a reasonable account of what is thought to have occurred, but also a critique of the historical treatment of the subject to date.

### Methodology

This thesis will examine the theories proposed by a number of historians who have studied the development of general education. The thesis is not, therefore, meant to be a "history" of the development of general education in the curriculum, but rather an examination of various historical treatments of the subject. The objective of the work is not so much to establish historical fact as it is to analyse, criticize, and synthesize historical interpretation. The conclusions that such a study will allow, are not ones

capable of declaring facts, but rather ones that can suggest relationships between factors as transcribed through the eyes of a variety of commentators.

A difficulty, and inherent characteristic, of this technique occurs, of course, in the subjectivity of the sources used. All historical commentators write from particular perspectives which must be taken into consideration. A recognition of the difference in orientation between Clark Kerr and the team of Boyer and Levine, for example, is crucial for an understanding and criticism of their various historical interpretations. It is for this reason that the review of the literature will include, wherever appropriate and possible, background information on the authors and critical reviews of their work. It is suggested that by placing both the writer and their writing in a biographical and critical context, the problems of subjectivity can be kept to a minimum.

### Procedure

The procedure will be to review the literature (Chapter II), define basic terms, justify the historical periods and factors suggested (Chapter III), and then to engage in the analysis. For purposes of manageability, the history of the American undergraduate curriculum from 1850 to 1982 has been divided into five periods as suggested by a synthesis of the literature reviewed. For each of these periods (Chapters IV through VIII) an overview educational history will be

presented as well as sections dealing with each of the three influential factors to be examined. A short summary will then be drawn for each chapter. The findings and conclusions of the study will then be summarized in the ninth chapter, with suggestions for further and extended studies following in the tenth.

## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

This study depends on two types of sources: those that provide a general history of the American undergraduate curriculum, and those that posit specific explanations of why curricular changes occurred as they did, especially with respect to general education. This review, then, will cover these two areas by beginning with the most general and ending with the more specific.

Before commencing with the review proper though, there is an important limitation to the work which should be identified and, for the benefit of future researchers, corrected. There has been no explicit methodological process applied in order to select particular works for the review of the literature. As anyone who has studied general education will know, there are literally hundreds of books and articles on the subject. In order to extract some kind of a reasonable intellectual history from this myriad of sources, a certain degree of hit and miss must be initially tolerated. It is from this hit and miss procedure, and from the recommendations of scholars that the elements of this review eventually took shape. The point is then that this cannot be rightfully called a review of the literature but should actually be titled a review of some relevant literature. The obvious extension of this, of course, is

that the study as a whole cannot rightfully be called "The Development of General Education in the United States Undergraduate Curriculum, 1850 to 1982," but rather should be described as "A Perspective of the Development of General Education in the United States Undergraduate Curriculum (1850-1982) as based on Selected Readings." It is for this reason that the writer highly recommends that future researchers attempting a similar sort of intellectual history devise, and define, some methodological process by which to exploit the literature for their own purposes. If this could be done in a consistent fashion, then there might be enhanced opportunity to increase our systematic understanding of a much explored area.

While it has been indicated that this review represents no explicit methodological attempt to cover the area, it should likewise be mentioned that there were nonetheless some minimal criteria required of the components presented. Ranging from the general to the specific these works were selected either because their mention occurred fairly frequently in the literature (thereby suggesting some consensual significance, at least) or because they dealt specifically with the topic at hand. The general histories (e.g. Rudolph and Veysey) came recommended by the literature, while the specific treatises of Boyer and Levine or Clark Kerr were included because of their direct commentary on the topic at hand. In the absence of any prescribed or pre-ordained historical methodology, then, these procedures

represent a tentative solution to the problem of reference selection.

Two useful, albeit dated, general histories of the American curriculum are Laurence Veysey's The Emergence of the American University (1965), and Frederick Rudolph's The American College and University (1968). They are useful because they provide broad histories of American higher education, from which to assess the more specific histories of general education. Veysey's work, as its title suggests, concerns itself with the emergence of "the" American university and as such posits two periods of development. The first is 1860-1890 when a debate raged about the purpose of the university, and the second is 1890-1910, during which questions of administration become paramount. The outcome of this progression, for Veysey, is that "the" American university emerged, for a time, as a coherent entity which took as its primary function the role of a service institution. The service rendered in 1910, according to Veysey, was not so much to inspire academic excellence as it was to stylize social ambition; that is, to legitimize social "advancement" through a system of degree granting. The university, in his eyes, was an agency for social control but at the same time, and almost by accident, a place where scholarly research eventually flourished. The "bargain" of the situation in 1910, as Veysey saw it, was that professors could ascribe to the service-oriented rhetoric of the Progressive Era, and at the

same time experience an intellectual freedom to do what they wanted. In a larger sense the distinction of purposes for the university was seen as the difference between an oasis and community service institution. Veysey's objective in his work was to show how the American university developed so as to pay homage to both these ideals.

Frederick Rudolph provided a similarly broad historical overview, but extends his coverage past the emergence of the American university to a point after World War II. Like Veysey, he identified a tension between differing purposes of the university with respect to their make up and orientation. Rudolph made a distinction between the old college ideal and the new university idea, implying that the former was humanistic and slightly anti-intellectual, while the latter became more scientific and devoted to true scholarship.\* Like Veysey, but to a greater degree, Rudolph also made explicit the role of electives as transforming the face of American higher education. He declared that

The elective principle was the  
instrument . . . that enabled colleges  
to become universities . . . It  
transformed the English College in

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\*The term can be used very ambiguously. The Oxford dictionary implies that scholarship requires knowledge of the classics while Webster's describes it as "advanced study in a limited field." For the purpose of this study scholarship will adopt the modern connotation and mean advanced study empirical research or intellectual inquiry, into any academic area.

America by grafting upon it German ideals and in the process created the American university.<sup>1</sup>

He also made specific reference to the general education movement by describing it as a counter-revolution to the new university ideal. Presented as "an attempt to capture some of the sense of a continuing intellectual and spiritual heritage that had fallen victim to the elective principle," Rudolph maintains that the general education movement of the 1920's (as initiated at Columbia) "marked a halt in the tendency toward specialization, as well as a new respect for the concept of education as the mark of a gentleman."<sup>2</sup> In attempting to arrive at some generalizable conclusion, toward the end of his book Rudolph posited an "American consensus" whereby although growth in the universities was inevitable after 1920, it would nonetheless be a growth "tempered by a university rationale that would be philosophically characterized by consolidation, accommodation and by a certain regard for the whole man."<sup>3</sup> Although he then went on to discuss aspects of the university through the Depression and the Second World War, one is left with the impression that Rudolph believed in this consensus. While such a position might be somewhat acceptable until

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1. F. Rudolph, The American College and University: A History (New York: Alfred A. Knopf Inc., 1968), p. 305.

2. Ibid., p. 456.

3. Ibid., p. 464.

1957, after that point (i.e., the launching of Sputnik) new descriptions of the university became appropriate.

Beyond these two foundational sources, there exists a contemporary reference worth examining if only by virtue of its high profile. The Carnegie Council on Policy Studies in Higher Education's three volume set on undergraduate education in America--Missions of the College Curriculum by the Carnegie Council (1977), Curriculum by Frederick Rudolph (1977), and the Handbook on Undergraduate Curriculum by Arthur Levine (1978)--is noteworthy firstly because of its sponsor, and secondly because of its apparent popularity as evidenced by the reviews. Change magazine says that Missions, for example, is "must reading for any academic professional worth his or her name," while Choice is quoted: "The rethinking of the concerns for general education in Chapter 8 of Missions are probably the most significant thoughts on this crucial area since the report of the Harvard Committee General Education in a Free Society (1945)."<sup>4</sup> While not all would agree with such recommendations,<sup>5</sup> the apparent acceptance on the part of some scholars, at least, makes an acknowledgement necessary.

Missions of the College Curriculum (1977) is perhaps

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4. C. Kridel, General Education: Practise Without Theory Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association, March, 1980 (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 196361).

5. Ibid.

best remembered by some for its contention that "general education is now a disaster area . . . it has been on the defensive and losing ground for more than 100 years."<sup>6</sup>

Such a judgemental quote is typical of the book because it is organized and designed to offer recommendations for the improvement of the college curriculum. Its usefulness to the present study occurs in an historical outline that describes the general development of the curriculum since the founding of Harvard College. The years 1636 to 1870 are characterized as a time when liberal education dominated the curricular scene. This era is caricatured as the time of the ivory tower. The next period between 1870 to the 1960's is then described as a time when the production of new knowledge, along with the notion of consumer choice, gradually became important. The generalized 'type' for this era is the "public service" institution, a model which suggested that colleges and universities had begun to cater to the social mobility needs of individual students, by emphasizing training for the professions over general education for the average citizen. A final historical period is presented beginning presumably around 1978 in which the utilitarian trend appears to have extended itself creating the "new consumer" who partakes of "an academic shopping centre." While these historical metaphors are not meant to

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6. Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, Missions of the College Curriculum (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1977), p. 11.

be precise, they do nonetheless offer a rough chronological perspective.

A second component of the Missions book which requires acknowledgement are the chapters dealing with external and internal influences on the curriculum. Of particular interest is the fact that both Sputnik (external) and the rise of the departments (internal) are identified as factors that influenced the course of the curriculum.

Apart from the reviews in Change and Choice mentioned previously, there are at least two commentators that suggest Missions leaves much to be desired. Craig Kridel, writing in a paper entitled, "General Education: Practice Without Theory" (1980), complains that the research findings of Missions are based too much on the mere tabulation of a broad historical philosophical understanding of the issues addressed. He warns that such an orientation leads to what he calls "dust bowl empiricism;" a tendency to deduce definite principles from scattered and sometimes inconsequential data.<sup>7</sup> Robert Hassenger, writing in Change (June-July, 1978), manages to give Missions two cheers for attempting to persuade "us" toward general education, but then goes on to proclaim that nothing written to date surpasses Daniel Bell's The Reforming of General Education (1966), Hassenger concludes his review by making explicit his views on the limitations of a study written as Missions was,

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7. Kridel, op. cit.

by a committee.

When it [i.e., a study better than Daniel Bell's] does [appear] it will doubtless be fashioned by another committee of one--a mind in self-agreement rather than a commission in consensus.<sup>8</sup>

What perhaps can be synthesized from both the positive and negative reviews is that Missions is a controversial work that has as its greatest asset the ability to provoke thoughtful questions about the curriculum, and as its greatest liability the tendency to provide premature answers. In reference to this study, then, Missions can be used most effectively in those rare instances when it discusses fact, and least effectively as a critical source of interpretation.

The next volume in the Carnegie series, Frederick Rudolph's Curriculum, provides a more substantial historical survey of the American undergraduate curriculum. Almost in response to the imprecision of his "American consensus" in his previous historical study, Rudolph\* goes on to reassess the twentieth century in a new light. Whereas in his first work the 1920's were characterized as a time that had

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8. Robert Hassenger, "The Liberal Arts as a Disaster Area," review of Missions of the College Curriculum: A Contemporary Review with Suggestions by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, Change, June/July, 1978.

\*Frederick Rudolph received his Ph.D. in history from Yale in 1953. He is presently Mark Hopkins' Professor of History at Williams College. He also chairs the American Civilization Program at the same college. His books include Mark Hopkins and the Log (1956), The American College and University: A History (1962), and Essays on Education in the Early Republic (1965).

reconciled the ideal of the college with the idea of the university, in Curriculum Rudolph suggests that the early twentieth century curriculum was in "disarray" and that educational developments for that century would be made in reference to that fact.<sup>9</sup> General education was seen as but one facet of the myriad of solutions offered. Rudolph's description of general education was that it amounted to an "impossible dream" perpetuated by a minority "establishment" masquerading as the dominant culture.<sup>10</sup>

It is difficult to derive from Curriculum Rudolph's concise interpretation of factors or events. Although the reference quoted at the end of the previous chapter would seem to indicate a fairly straightforward interpretation (and hence, opinion) of general education, Rudolph implies the counterpoint of these thoughts in other parts of his book. As part of the conclusion, in fact, he revitalizes certain aspects of the 'impossible dream' by suggesting that higher education should "stop making technicians and get back to the business of making human beings."<sup>11</sup> There is a certain tension in Curriculum where Rudolph attempts to document faithfully the unfolding of the American system of higher education, while at the same time hinting at his

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9. F. Rudolph, Curriculum: A History of the American Undergraduate Course of Study Since 1636 (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1977), p. 220.

10. Rudolph, op. cit., pp. 237, 261.

11. Rudolph, Curriculum, p. 289.

personal preferences as to how things should have been. In their reviews of the work, Sol Cohen (Change, 1978), and Jurgen Herbst (History of Education Quarterly, 1978) suggest that Rudolph had faint longings for the Yale Report of 1828 and for 'counterrevolutionists' such as James Conant and Robert Hutchins. Such personal indiscretions on the part of the author, though, are balanced, in Cohen's mind at least, by Rudolph's "impressive scholarship, distinction of thought, and uncommon wit."<sup>12</sup>

Although most commentators might agree that evidence of Rudolph's thought and wit in Curriculum is extensive, there is no similar consensus regarding the level of scholarship in the work. Charles Adams, writing in The Chronicle of Higher Education (Feb. 13, 1979), suggests that "the chief merit of Curriculum is the wealth of references to primary resources."<sup>13</sup> Jurgen Herbst, however, describes the book as "a disappointment" partly because, as he says, "the book has been constructed almost exclusively of materials from secondary works." He passes final judgement by describing

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12. Sol Cohen, "Three Centuries of Random Revisions," review of Curriculum: A History of the American Undergraduate Course of Study Since 1636, by Frederick Rudolph, Change, November, 1978, pp. 55-56.
  13. Charles C. Adams, review of Curriculum: A History of the American Undergraduate Course of Study Since 1636, by Frederick Rudolph, The Chronicle of Higher Education, Feb. 13, 1979, p. 27.

it as "not a scholarly study."<sup>14</sup> One can see the difficulty in attempting to assess which reviewer has described the book more accurately. Charles Adams is a professor of English at California State University at Chico and Chairman of the California State University and Colleges task force on general education. Jurgen Herbst, from the Universities of Wisconsin-Madison is presumably an educational historian as evidenced by his article in Perspectives in American History, entitled "The American Revolution and the American University" (1976). In terms of historiography perhaps Adams is the less able to critique. But then again, it may be that Herbst has an axe to grind especially since he refers to his own work in rebuttal to Rudolph's. In any case, the controversy in the reviews about Rudolph's scholarship, and the unanimity that he is at least slightly sentimental about certain curricular ideas provide qualifications for the use of Curriculum with respect to the study at hand.

The third book in the Carnegie series is more a valuable supplement than a primary reference. Arthur Levine's\* Handbook on Undergraduate Curriculum (1978)

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14. Jurgen Herbst, review of Curriculum: A History of the American Undergraduate Course of Study Since 1636 by Frederick Rudolph, The History of Education Quarterly, Winter 1978, pp. 481-3.

\*Arthur Levine is a senior fellow at the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching. His books include Reform of Undergraduate Education (with J. Weingart, 1973) and A Quest for Common Learning (with Ernest Boyer, 1981).

contains a variety of resources applicable to the study undertaken. Most obvious, of course, is the chapter on General Education, which outlines some of the standard types of general education and suggests when and how these types were expressed in actual programs. Also useful are Chapters 12 and 13 which provide an excellent account of curricular highlights from 1900 to 1978 as well as Appendix A entitled, "A Documentary History of the Undergraduate Curriculum: 12 Salient Events."

Most (although not all) of the Handbook is objectively descriptive of historical events. In his review of the work, written in the Journal of Higher Education (1979), Lewis Mayhew makes the following observation:

But this is no mere chronicle. Levine describes in detail the chief unresolved issues, and by implication evaluates the various developments.<sup>15</sup>

Be that as it may, the evaluative nature of the writing is nonetheless kept at a minimum, making the book a reasonable arbitrator of historical interpretation.

The Carnegie series as a whole, then, is useful to the study only in the general sense of being able to provide broad analysis of when and why the events occurred. Prevision of understanding is best pursued through other works.

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15. Louis B. Mayhew, review of Handbook on Undergraduate Curriculum by Arthur Levine, Journal of Higher Education, 1979, 50, (6), pp. 787-788.

In an attempt to approach such precision the writer surveyed certain documents of one particular institution as a means of gaining a clearer understanding of specific educational developments. Charles Eliot's A Turning Point in Higher Education (1969) and the Harvard Committee's General Education in a Free Society (1945) were both examined as primary source statements concerning electives and general education, as they were construed in the context of Harvard University's educational heritage. The implicit assumption made here is that by knowing something of Harvard, one can come to know something of the American educational landscape as a whole. If repetition in the literature constitutes any kind of evidence, then this tacit assumption could probably be raised to a law. Many writers, referring to a variety of historical instances, are blatant in their suggestion that Harvard constitutes a "model" which lesser institutions follow. Daniel Bell, for example, presents just such a view when he justifies the exclusive study of Columbia, Harvard and Chicago in Chapter 2 of his The Reforming of General Education.<sup>16</sup> Frederick Rudolph writes, in reference to the changes of the 1870's, that "everywhere little colleges taking their cue from Harvard, introduced an elective curriculum and waited to become universities."<sup>17</sup> In the context of discussions about

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16. D. Bell, The Reforming of General Education (New York: Columbia University Press, 1966), p. 9.

17. Rudolph, The American College and University, p. 332.

Harvard's most recent educational reforms, modern commentators are fond of reinforcing past perceptions of Harvard's influence, and postulating an extended version for the future. General Education in a Free Society is given particularly influential weight by suggestions that "it had a ripple effect across the country"<sup>18</sup> and that it became "the Bible of general education particularly in smaller colleges and state universities."<sup>19</sup> The transition is made from past to future with comments such as the one from the New York Times (Feb. 26, 1978), which stated:

Like the Red Book General Education in a Free Society a generation ago, the report released this week is likely to have widespread influence throughout American higher education.<sup>20</sup>

or Stephen I. Makler and Robert J. Munnelly's contention that:

If precedent holds, the shock waves will be felt not only throughout higher learning, but in the high school classroom as well.<sup>21</sup>

or finally, Susan Schiefelbein's assertion:

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18. A. Chase, "Skipping Through College," Atlantic, 1978, 242(3), 33-40.
19. Bell, op. cit., p. 39.
20. "Harvard is Debating Curriculum to Replace "General Education," The New York Times, Feb. 26, 1978, pp. 1, 20.
21. S. J. Makler and R. J. Munnelly, "Harvard in the 1980's: A Question of Adaptability," Educational Leadership, 37(4), 1980, 304-306.

If the Harvard reforms are successful they will exert a powerful influence on higher education for the balance of the century.<sup>22</sup>

Perhaps the most telling confirmation about this seemingly universal tacit assumption about the influence of Harvard comes from an article by Barry O'Connell entitled "Where Does Harvard Lead Us?" (Change, Sept. 1978). The article is a biting critique of Harvard's most recent educational reform, and its illustration of the assumption comes not so much in its content as it does in the fact that it was written in the first place. O'Connell manages to convey both his disappointment with the nature of the reforms proposed and his acknowledgement of the influence of the Harvard degree. Presumably O'Connell could not have written such a critique, with such conviction, about an institution that he believed did not matter in the total American scene. The conclusion that one might come to, then, is that although we cannot prove absolutely that Harvard is an appropriate model from which to study American higher education, we can acknowledge that at least many commentators think it so, and write accordingly. For the time being, then, one might be justified in doing the same.

The first document mentioned then--Eliot's A Turning Point in Higher Education (1869)--was significant because it represented the first time that a Harvard President took a foreceful stand in support of electives. In this inaugural address, Eliot sought to transform Harvard from a college

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22. S. Schiefelbein, "Confusion at Harvard: What Makes An "Educated Man"?" Saturday Review, 4(1), 1978, 12-20.

into a university. He proposed to do this by releasing Harvard from the constructions of a classical curriculum and thereby increase the range of subjects that a student could study.

This University recognizes no real antagonism between literature and science, and consents to no such narrow alternatives as mathematics or classics, science or metaphysics. We would have them all, and at their best.<sup>23</sup>

Along with this increased range of subjects to study went a greater choice in selecting the various subjects within that range.

One significance of Eliot's speech for this study is that many historical commentators (Rudolph, and Boyer and Levine) cite 1870 as a year in which they perceive fundamental curricular shifts occurring. The inference is easily made that Eliot's words had something to do with such changes.

The second historical statement to be examined within the context of Harvard is General Education in a Free Society. Not only does this book give an indication of the Harvard situation, but it also suggests general recommendations for the nation as a whole.

The initial objective of the Committee on the Objectives of General Education in a Free Society was to inquire into

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23. C. Eliot, A Turning Point in Higher Education (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1969).

the problem of general education for post-war America. Of secondary concern was the development of a general education proposal for Harvard itself. The one chapter that deals with the Harvard proposal specifically, therefore, is impressively surrounded by five other chapters that deal with the theoretical and historical underpinnings of almost the entire American educational system. The authors went to great lengths to legitimize or rationalize general education by discussing it in the larger context of history and philosophy. They identified their main problem as one that tried to reconcile the social antinomies of "heritage" and "change"<sup>24</sup>, while at the same time they acknowledged the paradox that students themselves were "both united and divided; united, as heirs of a common past and agents in a joint future; divided, as varying in gifts, interests, and hopes."<sup>25</sup> They concluded that both "general" and "specialized" education were important,<sup>26</sup> and that in fact their successful implementation epitomized perfect education for democracy.<sup>27</sup> The elaborate and stylistic arguments assembled to support such a position are, in themselves, worthy of deeper consideration. For the purpose of this study, however, it is enough to understand generally the

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24. Harvard Committee, General Education in a Free Society (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1964), p. 93.

25. Ibid., p. 103.

26. Ibid., p. 54.

27. Ibid., p. 93.

position advocated.

What is perhaps more specifically relevant to the study at hand are the indications given by the authors of why they thought the world--and the curriculum--had changed. They described, for example, the ninety-fold increase in the high school population from 1870-1940 as being "a convulsion as powerful as an earthquake."<sup>28</sup> They also make reference to the expansion of knowledge, and the increased complexity of society as being important factors that influenced the shape of the curriculum. Perhaps more significantly for their era they pointed to the now familiar shift of the United States from an agrarian to an industrial nation as being fundamentally important.<sup>29</sup> Although these broad references give some indication of the evolution of education as they perceived it, they do not, of course, provide an explicit historical analysis. The key value of General Education in A Free Society lies not so much in its historical interpretation, then, but rather in the fact that it is a significant primary document central to the study undertaken.

Beyond these two historical statements of the Harvard experience, a third source was surveyed in order to provide a background concerning the institution's latest efforts at educational reform. Phyllis Keller's\* Getting at the Core

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28. Ibid., p. 8.

29. Ibid., p. 15.

\*Phyllis Keller is Associate Dean for Academic Planning and

(1982) documents Harvard's most recent attempts to re-institute a general education program through the vehicle of a core curriculum. Of particular importance to this study, the Keller book includes a short but essentially complete historical chapter, as well as providing two significant observations. The first of these is that the post-war baby boom increased the number of college-aged students in the 1960's. This resulted in a greater population of potential college entrants, thereby allowing some institutions to rationalize more rigorous admissions requirements. What this in turn created--according to Keller--was a gradual, perhaps in some cases even an unconscious shift, on the part of the universities, away from undergraduate responsibilities to a greater emphasis on graduate and research work.<sup>30</sup> The implication was that a curricular shift eventually occurred, moving from the general to the specialized.

The second significant observation had to do with change agents within the university. Whereas some historical commentators, such as Veysey, have posited the idea of "great university presidents" (e.g. Eliot, Hutchins) as being significantly instrumental in change, Keller takes

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\*a member of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences at Harvard. She is author of States of Belonging: German-American Intellectuals and the First World War.

30. P. Keller, Getting at the Core (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982), p. 21.

great pains to point out that the political process of a modern university precludes much chance of such individual heroism. Dean Rosovsky, the principal instrument of the Harvard reforms, is typified not as a visionary leader who carves out reform by the brilliance of his rhetoric, but rather as a wise facilitator who guides an endless series of committees through an excruciatingly long process of consensus. The message of the modern university, from Keller's perspective, seems to be that change occurs cautiously, slowly, and with much intermediate dilution. This is a noteworthy historical interpretation.

In an attempt to set a critical context for Keller's work, it should be recognized that she writes from a particular vested interest. Since she participated on the Task Force on the Core Curriculum in 1975 (planning the core) and sat on the "central committee" in 1977 (implementing the core), it might reasonably be concluded that she had more than just a passing curiosity for the project. It is also significant to note that she characterizes the student reform movement of the 1960's as affecting a certain state of "demoralization and confusion" on the part of the faculty which in turn prompted "startling concessions" made in an atmosphere marked by physical threat, fear and guilt."<sup>31</sup> Both her involvement with the core curriculum project, then, and her particular interpretation of the student activism

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31. Keller, op. cit., p. 32.

days suggest qualifications that have to be made of Dr. Keller's work.

The Harvard experience, as outlined by the three references mentioned, provides a good case study from which to get the perspective of a single institution. As suggested earlier, the debates, proposals and changes in which Harvard became involved can apparently be said to be reflected in many of the other institutes of higher education throughout the American nation.

The next two selections have a slightly more theoretical orientation and deal more specifically with the overall topic at hand. Daniel Bell's\* The Reforming of General Education (1966), and Gerald Grant and David Riesman's The Perpetual Dream (1978), are helpful sources because they offer both historical frameworks for the development of undergraduate education, and hypotheses about why the curriculum changed as it did.

A simplified description of The Reforming of General Education would render it as merely a proposal for general

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\*Daniel Bell is a prominent sociologist who has taught at both Columbia University and Harvard. His works include Marxian Socialism in the United States, The End of Ideology, The Coming of Post-Industrial Society, and The Cultural Contradictions of Capitalism. He is, or has been, editor for The New American Right, The Radical Right and Toward the Year 2000. He is a Fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences. In 1966, The Reforming of General Education was awarded the Borden Medal of the American Council on Education as the best book on higher education in the previous three years.

education at Columbia College. But in the same way that General Education in a Free Society is not just a proposal about Harvard, so too does Bell's book transcend the bounds of Columbia College. One of the most immediate practical advantages of Bell's book to this study is that it outlines a comparison of general education programs as they have occurred at Columbia, Harvard, and the university of Chicago. This comparative history is helpful because it puts the various projects and experiments of these institutes in relation to one another. It is also helpful because it complements the theoretical premises advanced concerning the nature of curricular change.

In a chapter entitled "Social Change," Bell surveys the rise of federal influence, the "knowledge revolution," and the increase of technical-professional occupations as being significant factors in post World War II United States. His contention is that a "national society" emerged,<sup>32</sup> a society increasingly regulated by the federal government, a society that must be responsive to the exponential growth of knowledge, and a society dominated more and more by technical-professionals. His most engaging suggestion, of course, is that the United States of 1966 was slowly shaping up to be a "post-industrial society" whereby the importance of cultivating human capital became more important than procurement and use of financial capital. This is a

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32. Bell, op. cit., p. 70.

significant statement because it echoes Clark Kerr's contention that the "knowledge industry" of 1950 onward was as important to this era as was the automobile to the first part of the twentieth century, and as was the railroad to the last part of the nineteenth century.<sup>33</sup>

The importance of these trends with regard to the college curriculum is that they help to explain why there was a shift of interest away from undergraduate general education to graduate and specialized education. Clearly what is suggested is that the knowledge explosion, coupled with increased federal research aid during and after World War II, created a greater emphasis on technical-professionalism which in turn caused universities to shift their focus, as Bell maintains, from "scholarship" to "research."<sup>34</sup> (In this context Bell uses the word scholarship to connote a traditional excellence in the humanities.) The net result was that undergraduate colleges became unimportant, in the eyes of some students and administrators, because they increasingly became regarded as "way stations" to be tolerated as a means for entering graduate school.<sup>35</sup>

Such an expansive historical analysis is matched by rather extensive propositions concerning a theory of

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33. C. Kerr, The Uses of the University, 3rd ed. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982), p. 88.

34. Bell, op. cit., p. 100.

35. Ibid., p. 103.

knowledge. Although not directly related to the study at hand, Bell's epistemological orientation provides obvious indicators of his curricular suggestions that follow. He suggests that knowledge exists in three parts, and as such, requires three different kinds of acquisition skills in order to be fully explored. Mathematics and science, he maintains, require "sequential" thinking (logical, step-by-step reasoning), while the social sciences demand an intellectual orientation that can appreciate "linkages," the fact that particular studies (e.g. economics) must be understood in context to other, perhaps larger, studies (e.g. politics). The humanities, Bell claims, must be understood in terms of "concentric" awareness, that is, an awareness fine-tuned to different levels of meaning evolving around the same concept.<sup>36</sup> What follows from this, predictably, is the suggestion that all undergraduates should be exposed to these various kinds of thinking--"modes of thought"--through the vehicle of a well articulated "general education" program. This program, Bell suggests, consists of three aspects (methodological consciousness, historical consciousness, and individual self-consciousness) which must be artfully integrated in order for the student to come to understand the "grounds of knowledge;" not what one knows, but how one knows. This understanding, it should be noted, must be facilitated according to a specific

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36. Bell, op. cit., p. 177.

sequence; students must understand the conceptual grounds for an area before they are permitted to engage in interdisciplinary analysis. General education for Bell, then, is not just a loose set of distribution requirements but rather an organically bound theory that aims to engender in students a synoptic understanding of their modern world.

The significance of these theoretical premises to our study is that they have become implemented, albeit in distorted form, in many of the general education proposals that occur.

The critical context to be made explicit in Bell's case is that he operates with a sociological, as opposed to purely historical, orientation. By studying curriculum in reference to a broad realm of social forces and philosophical presuppositions Bell attempts a comprehensive treatment of the subject. Some reviewers, however, have difficulty with the approach.

Professor Bell aims primarily at revising Columbia's famous 'Contemporary Civilization' and 'Humanities' courses but--like many before him who have tried to revise curricula--he soon finds himself in the boondoggles of the new high school programs, graduate studies from linguistics to biophysics, something he calls the 'tension between technocratic and apocalyptic modes' and good old epistemology itself. These subjects are, of course, in some way relevant to college offerings, but the presumed expertise is unconvincing.<sup>37</sup>

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37. P. Q. Beeching, rev. of The Reforming of General Education by Daniel Bell, Library Journal, 91:2483, May 15, 1966.

The caveat to be made, then, of a sociological orientation like Bell's, is that while expansive and intellectually engaging, its utility in terms of strict historical interpretation requires considerable qualification.

Gerald Grant and David Riesman's The Perpetual Dream (1978) is similarly sociological in its treatment of curricular change. The authors\* have examined the area of "educational reform" and have constructed a typology to describe distinctions between the kinds of reforms that they perceived. "Telic" reforms, as they describe them, are reforms which set out to change the very ends of the undergraduate curriculum, while "popular" reforms are described as those changes which seek to alter the process by which the unchallenged end of higher education is transmitted through the institution. Within the telic reforms, four types are identified: neo-classical, communal-expressive, aesthetic-expressive, and activist-radical. Examples of colleges attached to these labels are St. Johns at Annapolis, Kresge College at Santa Cruz, Black Mountain, and Antioch

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\*Gerald Grant has been a research fellow in the Department of Sociology in the Center for Behaviour Sciences at Harvard, an assistant professor of education at Syracuse University and a member of the Department of Sociology at Syracuse University.

David Riesman has been Henry Ford II Professor of Social Sciences at Harvard University as well as a member of the Carnegie Commission on Higher Education. His books include The Academic Revolution (with Christopher Jencks, 1968) and Academic Transformation (with Verne A. Stadtman (eds.), 1973).

respectively.

The "types" refer to different philosophical and pedagogical orientations, so whereas Kresge College might employ encounter groups in order to provide a humanistic environment, Antioch on the other hand, would use work experience as a method of implementing its philosophy of the all-around practical man. Of the relic reforms only the "neo-classical" is directly relevant to this study because it reflects a basic agreement with some of the tenets of general education. With respect to popular reforms, Grant and Riesman look, for example, to the cluster college concept at Santa Cruz, and the operation of New College in Florida.

The significance of this typology for the study at hand is that Grant and Riesman posit the notion that telic reforms began to occur in the 1930's, while popular reforms emerged in the 1960's. They suggest, moreover, that these telic reforms occurred in opposition to what they called the "university college model."<sup>38</sup> Presumably what they want to illustrate by such a phrase is the same kind of distinction that Frederick Rudolph made when discussing the collegiate ideal as opposed to the university ideal. Whereas a college could be described as a place for pre-professional general learning, the university was recognized as a place that

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38. G. Grant and D. Riesman, The Perpetual Dream (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), p. 17.

promoted specialized training.<sup>39</sup> The outcome of the university, as opposed to collegiate, experience according to at least one undergraduate at Yale in 1923 was that:

Instead of being a person . . . I  
am now merely a suit of clothes pinned  
together by four or five seat numbers.<sup>40</sup>

When Grant and Riesman refer to the university college model then, they are probably trying to identify those institutions that put a greater premium on professional, service-oriented training than they did on the intellectual and aesthetic or moral cultivation of the individual. The opposition that the telic reforms were seen to represent was an opposition against this new, and presumably limited, idea of the university.

As far as a sociological perspective is concerned, Grant and Riesman differ from Bell in that they attempt to be more empirical than philosophically speculative. After conducting a multitude of on-campus interviews and observations the authors are in a good position to document how they believe the curriculum changed. It is for this reason that while Daniel Bell can be appreciated for his expansive thinking and truly creative insights, Grant and Riesman might be better appreciated for the firm empirical foundation they employ from which to hypothesize about the development of

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39. Rudolph, The American College and University, pp. 351, 355-6, 441.

40. Ibid., p. 449.

curricular history.

The final two references of this review offer what may be considered primary sources on the topic of the historical interpretation of the development of general education. Although not dealt with directly, Clark Kerr's The Uses of the University, implies that general education died for the most part after 1862, to be replaced by the evolution of the "multiversity." Boyer and Levine's A Quest for Common Learning prefers to adopt a different orientation and suggests rather that general education has witnessed a series of revivals, the most recent one being apparent now. These two primary sources, then, examined in tandem provide the most specific basis for this study.

In The Uses of the University, Clark Kerr\* suggests that there are two important historic periods of transition for the American university. He names the first as the period after the Civil War with the land grants movement, and the second as the 1960's. He mentions that there were "minor efforts at change aimed mostly at a return to general education"<sup>41</sup> in between these periods. Both transition points, Kerr claims, had two things in common: a spurt of

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\*Clark Kerr is President Emeritus of the University of California and Chairman of the Carnegie Commission and the Carnegie Council on Higher Education. His works include Unions, Management, and the Public, Labor and the Management of Industrial Society, Marshall, Marx and Modern Times.

41. Kerr, op. cit., p. 163.

growth in enrollments, and new surges forward in those national efforts in which higher education could participate. With respect to national efforts, Kerr typifies the first period as one in which the country was interested in expanded settlement, and the second as one in which the country was shocked about Sputnik and consequently was keen to increase the study of science and technology. A second intention of the latter era was to provide for more equality of opportunity for low-income groups, minorities, and women. Here, then, is an explicit historical model.

In addition to this basic historical framework, Kerr offers some specific explanations of why curricular change occurred as it did. What should be initially recognized, however, is that Kerr considered the emergence of his "multiversity" to have occurred not because of some "reasoned choice among elegant alternatives" but rather as a result of what he called an "historical imperative."<sup>42</sup> To Kerr it seemed inevitable that the multiversity would emerge simply because of the historical facts that were unfolding; he cites the Morrill Act of 1862 and federal support of scientific research during World War II as being two "great impacts" that molded the contemporary American multiversity. He, like Daniel Bell, especially singled out the federal grant system, and the projects and institutes created from it, for special examination. The final analysis, from both

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42. Kerr, op. cit., pp. 6, 87.

Kerr's and Bell's points of view, is that the contemporary American university was significantly influenced by these federal grants.

Perhaps the most significant background information that might establish a critical context for Kerr's work is the fact that when he delivered the Godkin Lectures (from which the book is derived) in 1963, he did so as the president of the University of California. Presumably the administrator of such a large educational institution would have a decidedly different perspective on curricular change or the role of the university than would an educational historian. Practicality, one might assume, probably held sway over idealism. Clark Kerr, in writing of the historical evolution and role of the university could have, in one sense, been searching for a way to make his university "work," to have it explainable, within a modern context. D. J. Boorstin wrote in his 1963 review of the book,

President Kerr's concluding survey on 'The Future of the City of Intellect' offers a vivid, unsentimental, but inspiring vision of the place of the American multiversity in American society of the later 20th century . . . 43

"Unsentimental but inspiring" perhaps typifies best Kerr's orientation. He rejected the idealistic configuration of the collegiate institution of the past, and replaced it instead with something he considered more palatable, his

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43. D. J. Boorstin, rev. of *The Uses of the University* by Clark Kerr, Book Week, p. 1, No. 3, 1963.

"multiversity." His analysis of historical events then, is one which tended to emphasize the importance of factors leading to his perspective of a university, while at the same time de-emphasizing the significance of other curricular occurrences which might suggest an alternative to his descriptions. The qualification that should be made of Kerr then is that he should be read in reference to other, broader, works.

Clark Kerr's The Uses of the University, as suggested, offers one-half of an analysis for the period in question. The second half is provided by A Quest for Common Learning. Whereas Kerr was desirous to demonstrate that the evolution of the multiversity was an historical imperative, Boyer and Levine\* were concerned with emphasizing the significance of what they saw as periodic revivals of the general education movement. The first, they say, occurred from about 1914 to 1933, and the second from 1945 to 1957. They then go on to suggest that a third revival is presently underway. What is immediately interesting about the Boyer/Levine framework is the historical referent points that they use to mark off their periods of decline and revival. The re-emergence of

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\*Ernest Boyer was formerly U.S. Commissioner of Education and is currently President of the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching.

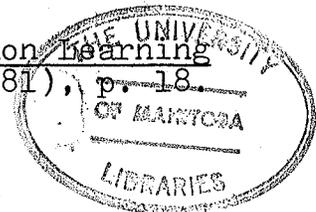
Arthur Levine is a Senior Fellow at the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching. He is the author of Handbook on Undergraduate Curriculum (1978).

general education, they say, occurred in conjunction with World War I and lasted until the effects of the Depression became significant in 1933. The second revival emerged again in relation to World War II and then diminished, they say, with the demonstration of Sputnik. They imply that the third revival occurring since 1978 has emerged as a latent response to a social narcissism propagated, in part, by Vietnam and Watergate, and they do not speculate when it will end.

Another interesting aspect of the Boyer/Levine thesis is the reason they give for these periodic revivals of the general education ideal. They put forth a Lockean-like view of social pendulum whereby a constant tension is waged between the rights and freedoms of the individual, and the responsibilities and concessions required by community. They suggest that at precisely the time when a society expresses itself through ultra-individualism the seeds for a revitalized general education movement begin to take root.<sup>44</sup> In reference to their historical framework, for example, they cite the 1920's and 1950's as times when citizens were particularly self-centered, and hence propose that these periods caused general education to surface once again. It is almost a pendulum effect being suggested whereby when society swings too far in one direction (i.e., individualism),

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44. E. L. Boyer and A. Levine, A Quest for Common Learning (Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Foundation, 1981), p. 18.



the weight of the other pole (i.e., generalism) becomes somehow stronger and eventually reinstates itself. While such analogies may be somewhat entertaining, they tend not to afford specific understanding of the causes of curricular change.

In criticism of their thesis, it should be understood that, in A Quest for Common Learning, Boyer and Levine are more interested in presenting a contemporary proposal for general education than they are in doing justice to curricular history. The historical coverage is scant; those events that are mentioned are presented more to justify the central thesis, than to provide a fair contextual introduction. While the book might turn out to be popular as a general conversation piece, the writer would contend that it has little claim to being a serious curricular analysis.

The review of the literature thus presented offers a progression from general curricular history to specific historical interpretation. Along the way, there have been various historical frameworks proposed, as well as several suggestions regarding causal elements. The literature is roughly agreed upon what occurred in the development of the American undergraduate curriculum, but less so about why. It is not as though there are contentious battles fought over what caused what, but rather that most analyses refrain from discussing causal issues either in depth, or at all. One is left, in the literature, with many compatible

variations of what transpired in the development of the curriculum but not much sense of the reasons for particular occurrences; and with specific respect to general education more information is provided about why it ceased to exist, than about its apparent revivals.

CHAPTER III  
DEFINITIONS OF TERMS

College and University

There is an important distinction to be recognized between the American connotations of "college" and "university" even though in general usage the terms are often employed ambiguously. For the purpose of this study college is a single institution, usually small, that typically concerns itself with teaching pre-professional foundations knowledge. The university, on the other hand, is a conglomerate of various investigative interests and therefore usually becomes quite large (e.g. 20,000-40,000 students). The collegiate ideal, historically, was one that cherished the inculcation of good character over brilliance in research. James A. Garfield specified this preference when he suggested that "the ideal college is Mark Hopkins on one end of a log and a student on the other."<sup>1</sup> Presumably, what Garfield meant by this was that the epitome of college education was to have to wrestle these important problems with compassionate, yet unrelenting masters. The "important problems" of course were primarily moral and philosophical in nature, making the typical college curriculum somewhat standardized in its emphasis on the humanities. In

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1. F. Rudolph, The American College and University (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1968), p. 243.

opposition to all this some would say that the idea of the university emerged with the advent of Charles Eliot's electives at Harvard in 1869. The essential distinction that occurred was that whereas the "college" was to be devoted to the teaching of foundational philosophical problems, the university would concern itself with the training and educating of practical men of affairs. Scholarship, along the lines of the German research model, had gained its own right in America. In the educational development of the nation, most commentators assess American higher education as evolving from the ideal of the college to the ideal of the university.

The uses of the terms "college" and "university" in this study should be understood in light of this distinction. The one exception--an important one--occurs in the use of the phrase "college enrollments." The intended meaning here is the attendance of students at most mainstream institutions of higher education. Inevitably, what the numbers will include are students attending universities as well as colleges. The statistics presented that identify how many people were attending institutions of higher education go by various titles. "College enrollments" is the conventional term most frequently used.

#### General Education

It is not within the scope of this thesis to advance an absolute and philosophically rigorous definition of general education. The possibility of producing such a definition

is in any case highly doubtful. General education, as has often been said, means what whoever is describing it wants it to mean. In a sense this thesis has as its purpose to describe the definitions of general education, by showing how they existed in actual programs. Keeping this in mind, it is nonetheless useful to have a general reference point to begin with before engaging in the historical survey.

Boyer and Levine illustrate well the first problem encountered in defining the term by cataloguing a variety of different usages.<sup>2</sup> They have A. S. Packard, a Bowdoin College professor who they say popularized the term, define general education as "a prerequisite to specialized study." They then have Alexander Meiklejohn describe it as an antidote to specialization. This is compared with John Dewey's interpretation that general education is "an integrative experience underlying the unity of knowledge," and A. Lawrence Lowell's description of its being "a number of general courses in wholly unrelated areas." To make matters even more confusing, the 1947 Presidential Commission on Higher Education defined general education as education for public participation, while John Stuart Mill said it was education for a satisfying private life. With all these various definitions it is not difficult to see why some people regard the term as totally ambiguous.

Part of the confusion about defining general education

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2. E. Boyer and L. Levine, A Quest for Common Learning (Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Foundation, 1981), p. 2.

occurs because there are a number of different aspects, or components, of the term which are conceivably open to various descriptions. Some people, for example, tend to describe general education in terms of content, saying that the study of particular kinds, or areas of knowledge amounts to a general education. Daniel Bell, by suggesting that students be exposed to sequential, linkage and concentric "modes of thinking," indirectly advocates particular kinds of content. Other people, when describing general education, do so in terms of the process that is supposed to take place. Stuart Marsee, of El Camino College,<sup>3</sup> is only one of many who hold that general education can be described as education which requires a student to "think critically." Critical thinking, then, becomes a process description for the term, while alternatively such phrases as "to develop skills for life-long decision making,"<sup>4</sup> emphasize more the objectives/outcome definitions. There are, then, at least three different aspects that could conceivably be used to describe general education--content, process, and outcomes--which would seem to make an understanding of it all that more

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3. S. E. Marsee, "General Education! Not Again?" unpublished paper, El Camino College, 1979 (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. EA 164041).
  4. T. J. Kelly, "Restructuring the Academic Program: A Systems Approach to Educational Reform at Miami-Dade Community College." Florida: Miami-Dade Community College, April 1981 (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 211138), p. 3.

difficult.

The third major confusion that arises when attempting to define general education, is the question of its association with the term "liberal" education. As stated earlier, it is not within the scope of this thesis to advance a philosophically rigorous definition of general education, nor is it possible to argue a viable distinction between it and liberal education. One can only point out, in passing, an obvious problem, that many people consider liberal and general education to be the same,<sup>5</sup> and for good reason. Of the three aspects used previously to describe general education--specified content, critical thinking and skills for lifelong decision making--all three have been identically used to describe liberal education.<sup>6</sup> The result is that, in many ways, when people refer to general and liberal education, they are often meaning to refer to the same thing. While some would argue that although these similarities between the terms do exist, distinctions can nonetheless be made. Although this is, in itself, an interesting proposition, the scope of this thesis, again, limits its investigation.

Bearing all of the above difficulties in mind, there is still the possibility of extracting a minimal sense of

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5. R. Berrettini and H. Flexner, "General Education: Concept and Practise." Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Association for the Study of Higher Education, Washington, D.C., March 3-4, 1981 (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 203817).
  6. Re Specified Content, see P. L. Dressel, "Liberal

what general education means. This can be done by suggesting only two broad criteria which encompass most descriptions of general education. The first is that some specific parameters of knowledge or understanding (however defined) must be endorsed, and the second that at least part of the justification used to rationalize those parameters involve some emphasis on communal (as opposed to individualized) responsibilities of life.<sup>7</sup> Daniel Bell, then, outlines parameters of understanding when he would have students exposed to various "modes of thought."

General Education in a Free Society likewise stresses the communal aspects of "heritage," as well as the collective responsibilities of democracy, in its rationale.

Perhaps one final way to understand general education, theoretically, is to consider how some authors refer to it in historical context. Donald R. Matthews describes the "general education movement" as a "reaction to

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Education: Developing the Characteristics of a Liberally Educated Person," Liberal Education, Fall, 1979, 65, 313-322.

RE: Critical thinking, see Bowman, Leonard, Camp et al., "Five Colleges Look at General Education," 1979 (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 168434).

Re: Lifelong decision making, see G. Riley, "Goals of a Liberal Education: Making the Actual and the Ideal Meet," Liberal Education, Winter, 1979, 65, 434-444.

7. See especially, E. Boyer and A. Levine, "A Quest for Common Learning," Change, 1981, 13, 28-35.

specialization."<sup>8</sup> While such an observation is undoubtedly made according to a predetermined idea of general education, it should nonetheless be recognized that general education as a "movement" did emerge in partial opposition to another movement, namely the rise of specialized intellectual inquiry. Insofar as the emergence of specialized intellectual inquiry, expressed in its varying forms from about 1850 onwards, was a tangible thing, so too it follows that the opposition to this tangible thing, general education, also existed in actuality. This is why whereas specialization is acknowledged to mean a depth of understanding, general education--as cast in opposition--is often described in terms of "breadth."<sup>9</sup>

Having dispensed with some broad theoretical assumptions about the definition of general education, what is perhaps more useful, in terms of this study, is to describe general education in terms of the variety of ways by which it is translated into actual curricular structures. Daniel Cobb has said that general education is the "curricular instrumentality" that serves to achieve the goals of a liberal education.<sup>10</sup> While restrictions do not

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8. D. R. Matthews, "Perspective: General Education at the Community College, 1952-1978," Graduate Paper Seminar, University of Florida, 1979 (ERIC Reproduction Service No. ED 178127).
  9. A. Levine, Handbook on Undergraduate Curriculum (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1978), p. 3.
  10. W. D. Cobb, "General Education: The Prior Agenda," Liberal Education, 1980, 66, 365-376.

allow us to venture into the realm of the goals of a liberal education, we can nonetheless gain a clearer understanding of general education by considering, for a moment, some of these "curricular instrumentalities" to which Cobb refers.

The Carnegie Foundation's Handbook on Undergraduate Curriculum provides a good outline of the various curricular expressions of general education. Using this as a guide, then, the following terms are worth exploring:

#### Core Curricula

Specifying a core curriculum is regarded as one way to achieve a general education. What it means is that students are required to take a designated number of "general education" courses in order to graduate. This could involve taking specified courses as only one element of the university program--as suggested in the 1945 Harvard proposal--or, in more extreme cases, taking an entirely prescribed four year course of study as exists at St. Johns College in Annapolis. In both cases, the point is that actual prescribed courses have to be taken in order to complete one's education.

#### Distribution Requirement

The distribution requirement is regarded as another, slightly less authoritarian, way to achieve a general education. Its premise is that it cannot prescribe the actual courses that must be taken, but rather only the

kinds of areas that should be covered. Instead of requiring a student to take a specific course, "Introduction to Physical Science 101," for example, the distribution requirement will prescribe that a student must take at least one science course out of a choice of (usually) many. The objective of the distribution system is to ensure that the students attain some "breadth" in their studies, but the qualification is that there should be some degree of choice within the parameters of the breadth intended. Most colleges in the United States that have general education programs, employ some form of the distribution requirement.<sup>11</sup>

#### Survey Course

A survey course is often just one component of a general education program. Survey courses can be the core curriculum, or they can be part of the distribution requirement demanded of a general education. The idea of a survey course--as the name implies--is to provide a broad overview of usually a fairly broad topic. The classic example of a survey course is Columbia College's Contemporary Civilization section which began in 1919. It is significant to note that survey courses were not meant as introductions to particular fields, but rather as courses that provided a contextual awareness for just about any study that would follow.

#### Interdisciplinary Course

Similar to the survey course, the interdisciplinary course can also be described as a component of a general

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11. Lévine, op. cit., p. 11.

education program. The essential feature of an interdisciplinary course is that it brings together the understandings of several different areas. Daniel Bell's "third-tier" courses were meant to be interdisciplinary as is the "capstone" course (often called senior seminars) of many contemporary general education programs. A significant aspect of the interdisciplinary course is that it is meant to occur relatively late in the student's program.

Although there are other components used to facilitate a general education program, the essential distinction to make initially is whether a core curriculum, or distribution requirement, is advocated. The various kinds of courses--survey, interdisciplinary, senior seminar--are then understood within whichever option is selected.

Having taken both theoretical and practical considerations into account, then, it would appear that a broad definition of general education can be looked at from three perspectives. Firstly, general education means what whoever is describing it wants it to mean. Secondly, its minimal conditions are that parameters of knowledge or understanding be endorsed, and that part of the justification for such endorsement entail some form of reference to the communal responsibilities of life. Thirdly, the general education movement occurred historically in opposition to specialized intellectual inquiry, and expressed itself in the curriculum in terms of either a core curriculum, or prescribed distribution requirement. While

such a definition is only moderately useful, it at least provides an initial referent point from which to begin.

### Rationale for the Historical Framework

For purposes of manageability the era under consideration (1850-1980) has been divided into five historical periods. These are:

- 1850-1914: The Emergence of the Modern American University
- 1914-1930: First String General Education; Survey Courses and Distribution Requirements
- 1930-1958: Second String General Education; A Variety of Dynamic Experiments
- 1958-1978: The Ascendancy of the Graduate School
- 1978-1980: General Education Reconsidered.

In a study such as this, it became important to justify these particular periods in reference to the literature, for although manageability is one reason for their utilization, there are also certain thematic distinctions implied from such divisions. What is therefore proposed is that the five transition years (1850, 1914, 1930, 1958, and 1978) will be rationalized in order to justify the suggested "periods" that they bracket. What must be shown is that each of these years does mark a bona fide transition, and that it is one of such significance to carry the period on to the next transition point.

Before looking at these individual dates, though, there is an important qualification to be made. Historical "periods," one can assume, are usually suggested in order

to highlight an emphasis on one or more particular characteristics. While this is intended to be helpful from the point of view of understanding, it should be noted that no "pure" periods are being suggested here. When it is stated, for example, that 1850-1914 saw a rise in the use of electives, this does not mean that electives were in exclusive, or even dominant, use for the entirety of that period. It simply highlights that is considered, by the literature, to be a significant trend.

With respect to individual transition dates, then, the objective of singling out 1850 is to name a point when the idea of electives in the curriculum became popular. As with all these examples, the practice of naming an individual year is not meant to suggest that it, in isolation, marked the transition point, but rather that it was more or less centrally located in a transition period that could conceivably span a decade or so. The 1850 date, for example, is taken as a halfway point between 1828, when Yale gave its famous defence of the classical curriculum,<sup>12</sup> and 1869 when Charles Eliot argued for the continued and greater use of electives in the Harvard curriculum.<sup>13</sup>

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12. Ibid., pp. 544-556.

13. C. W. Eliot, A Turning Point in Higher Education (Cambridge: Harvard Press, 1969).

Somewhere between those two dates, a transition occurred which made the classical curriculum less popular generally, and the idea of electives more popular.

There is a second compelling reason why 1850 can be argued as a significant date. It was this year that Brown University underwent considerable curricular reorganization and, under President Francis Wayland, came to endorse, among other innovations, a greater number of free electives. This is fairly significant because it represents the first of a series of attempted reforms that sought to change the American university from the British-classical model of a community of scholars, to the German-research model of specialized and intensive study.<sup>14</sup> Even though the Brown reforms turned out to be failures, this date has been selected as appropriate because it nonetheless provides a good rough indication of when perceptions were changing.

The purpose in naming 1914 as a transition date, is to signify some point when the elective idea became less dominant, and proposals for "general education" (survey courses, specifically) came to the fore. Like the previous example, there is a considerable range from which this date could be selected and so therefore some reasonable argument must be made to justify 1914 as the choice. Mention should perhaps first be made of Frederick Rudolph's thesis that

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14. F. Rudolph, Curriculum, A History of the American Undergraduate Course of Study Since 1636 (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1977), pp. 109-115.

the twentieth century was comprised of "remedies" (presumably for the excess of electives) in its curricular history. This would indicate that Rudolph would name 1900 as the approximate year when a transition could be identified. The transition that he would want to identify is one that saw the importance of trying to "mesh the liberal arts tradition with German professionalism without danger to either."<sup>15</sup>

A second important date that occurs before 1914, is 1909, when A. Lawrence Lowell at Harvard back-tracks to some degree from Eliot's stand, and advocates "concentrations" as an attempt to ensure that a student study at least one area in relative depth.<sup>16</sup> Lowell, as it turns out, did not approve of the idea of electives because he saw them as allowing students to circumvent important studies.<sup>17</sup> The significance of 1909, at any rate, was that it truly marked a swing away from the carte blanche elective system.

Keeping in mind these previous indications, the year 1914 is still retained as a representative date, partly to pay due homage to the Boyer/Levine thesis, and partly because the period to which it is supposed to be an introduction does not get really underway, according to the

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15. Ibid., p. 204.

16. Rudolph (1977), op. cit., p. 229.

17. Ibid., p. 227.

literature, until after that time. Boyer and Levine hold that their first "general education revival" occurred at "about the time of World War I."<sup>18</sup> They then cite Alexander Meiklejohn's survey course at Amherst College in 1914 as indicative of the beginning of the new trend. Daniel Bell then documents John Erskine's General Honors course in 1917, and finally Columbia's famous Contemporary Civilization course in 1919.<sup>19</sup> Since the thematic message of the second period is one of attempting a fusion between the liberal and the German, or one of the "revitalization" (as described by Boyer and Levine) of general education by way of the survey course, it is therefore posited that 1914 provides as reasonable a date as any to be representative of such a shift.

The objective of naming 1930 as a transition date is to signify a shift in approach regarding general education programs. Whereas the second period might be typified thematically as the rise of general education by way of the survey course, this third period seeks to illustrate a different and varied attempt to express general education within the curriculum. Of the five dates selected as transition points, this one is the most vulnerable to criticism.

There are three main reasons why 1930 has been

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18. Boyer and Levine, op. cit., p. 9.

19. D. Bell, The Reforming of General Education (New York: Anchor Editions, Doubleday & Co., 1968), pp. 13-15.

selected as a reasonably representative date. The first is to pay homage to the Grant/Riesman thesis; the second is to acknowledge developments at the University of Chicago; and the third to acknowledge the effects of the Depression. Regarding the first, Grant and Riesman have suggested that the 1930's were the time when "telic" reforms began to occur. Here they would like to imply these these reforms arose in opposition to the "university college" model, which, as discussed, means an opposition to the modern, and relatively impersonal institutions that seemed to be emerging. From the point of view of this study what is important is that 1930 is identified as a point where significant curricular change was thought to occur.

The most visible of these curricular changes occurred at the University of Chicago. In 1929 when Robert Hutchins made his inaugural address, he declared that general education, and the college, were ends in themselves.<sup>20</sup> These words were later to be manifested in actual proposals that would change significantly the structure of the Chicago undergraduate program. The Chicago Plan, as it was to unfold in 1937, would be representative of the kinds of curricular changes that went well beyond the survey courses of the previous model.

The third rationale for selecting 1930 as a significant date has to do with an acknowledgement of the effect of the

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20. Ibid., p. 29.

Depression. Boyer and Levine, in their historical framework, suggest that the Depression "hastened the decline" of interest in general education because college enrollment dropped so drastically.<sup>21</sup> Frederick Rudolph notes, however, that of those students who did stay, the courses they selected tended to be of a more generalized nature than they had been taking previously.<sup>22</sup> Although it would appear that, in one sense, these authors disagree about the exact effect of the Depression, they both agree that the Depression had some sort of influence on the curriculum. It is for this reason, then, and for the Grant/Riesman thesis, as well as the Hutchins previews, that 1930 is selected as a significant date that marks a new phase of the general education movement.

The fourth transition date is not difficult to justify because of the unanimity in the literature. Most authors cite the launching of Sputnik in 1957 as a very important influence in the shaping of the curriculum for the years to follow. Frederick Rudolph, for example, tells us that "Russia's successful launching of its Sputnik in 1957 not only accelerated interest in science and support for curricular reform in the high schools and colleges, but also led to the National Defense Education Act of 1958, which

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21. Boyer and Levine, op. cit., p. 13.

22. Rudolph (1977), op. cit., p. 248.

provided government funds for the support of foreign language study and of area studies as well.<sup>23</sup> Boyer and Levine write, as well, that:

The 1957 Soviet space satellite was viewed as a Russian triumph over the technological and educational capacity of America. The response was a wave of academic specialization in the schools, with an emphasis on science, foreign languages, and programs for the gifted.<sup>24</sup>

The most compelling justification for advancing 1958 as a transition date, then, is that the Sputnik satellite had been launched just one year previously.

There are a number of other curricular-specific reasons why this date was selected. The objective, after all, of suggesting a specific year is to represent a shift away from general education experiments and one towards the major/elective system. Both Columbia College and the College at the University of Chicago provide good examples of this trend. In 1954 Columbia required that its students take a "major" or "concentration" in one department, and in 1959 it abandoned the second year Contemporary Civilization requirement.<sup>25</sup> Meanwhile in 1957-58 the College at the University of Chicago underwent reorganization that, again, resulted in the requirement that students major in one of four divisions.<sup>26</sup> All three

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23. Ibid., p. 265.

24. Boyer and Levine, op. cit., p. 15.

25. Bell, op. cit., pp. 201-202.

26. Ibid., p. 194.

of these events, then, are situated relatively close to 1958, and are therefore meant to support its validity as a transition point. What should be expected to follow is a period whereby the idea of "general education" becomes less popular and the rise of "majors" and greater elective choice becomes evident. The 1960's satisfy these descriptions quite well.

The last transition point suggested is 1978, when it is proposed that the idea of general education, once again, resurfaces. The primary source for such a notion is Boyer and Levine who declare that a national debate, an outpouring of books and articles, and a rash of curricular experiments all centering on general education, are typical indicators that the revival is on in earnest.<sup>27</sup> They also cite, as do others, the importance of the recent Harvard proposals (for a core curriculum) as being indicative of efforts towards major curricular reform. Although it is probably too early to tell, the 1978 date is nonetheless retained as a suggested transition point as supported by Boyer and Levine, and by the Harvard (and Princeton) proposals. The suggestion, for the time being, is that the period to follow represents a time when a greater number and variety of general education proposals came to the fore.

The five transition points suggested then are, 1850, 1914, 1930, 1958, and 1978. Each of these points is

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27. Boyer and Levine, op. cit., pp. 5-6, 9.

supposed to be representative of a significant curricular shift in the period to follow. For 1850 the shift is one away from the classical curriculum toward free electives. The date of 1914 is supposed to represent a swing back to general education proposals that occur mostly in the form of survey courses. The 1930 transition point acknowledges the Depression and the Riesman/Grant thesis by suggesting a new phase of general education proposals. The next shift occurs in 1958--one year after Sputnik--when majors and electives become increasingly popular. The last transition is suggested by 1978, which Boyer and Levine describe as the beginning of a third revival for general education. With the understanding that these single dates are representative transition points, a rationale for the historical framework is now complete.

#### Clarification of Specific Factors to be Considered

This thesis limits itself to an examination of only three factors as they are thought to have influenced the development of the undergraduate curriculum. The factors considered are: federal support of higher education, the effect of fluctuations in college enrollments, and specified socio-political events. There are other factors worthy of consideration (the effect of university presidents on the curriculum, for example), but the scope of the work intended does not allow for their inclusion.

The rationale for selecting these factors is that they tend to be continuously mentioned in the literature. In as

much as the literature identifies causal elements in the development of the curriculum, these are the elements most frequently described. Before proceeding into the analysis proper, it is appropriate that the meanings of these terms first be clarified.

The phrase "federal support of higher education" means those legal enactments, or direct funds, originating from the federal government that are provided in order to stimulate certain aspects of the college or university operation. These supports include grants or enactments that have the effect of assisting either a course of study that emphasizes a major/elective arrangement, or one that advocates a strong general education component. The objective of considering such a factor is to attempt to find a definite relationship between "federal support" and the development of the undergraduate curriculum. Of particular interest, of course, is how federal support affects the development of general education in the curriculum.

College enrollments, as mentioned earlier, refer to attendance figures for students attending the mainstream of higher education institutions in the United States. Although the cultural and ethnic make-up of these populations are, of course, significant, the real intention here is to attempt to assess the effect of quantity (as opposed to quality, or consistency) of students on the development of the curriculum. While one would like to postulate, and in a sense cannot escape from postulating, on the effects

of different demographic profiles on the development of the curriculum, the limits of this thesis demand that such speculations be kept to a minimum. The objective, for this study, is to inquire into the effect of the fluctuations of student populations as related (if related) to the development of general education within the undergraduate curriculum.

Socio-political events are those events, again recurring in the literature, which are thought, by some, to have had some specific effect on the development of the undergraduate course of study. This thesis will examine the following specified socio-political events:

World War I

The Great Depression

World War II

The Launching of Sputnik

Watergate and Vietnam.

It should be noted that the exclusion of the Civil War from this list does not indicate that the writer has assessed it as an inconsequential event, but rather that it will be covered by way of a different heading. The most tangible educational event congruent with the Civil War was the Morrill Act of 1862. The connection, then, between the Civil War, the Morrill Act, and curricular development will be drawn beneath the heading of federal support of higher education.

Beyond this qualification, the objective of considering the socio-political events so named is to attempt to find

and test their relationship to general education in the curriculum. Although there are other events worthy of consideration (e.g., the effect of the progressive era), the limits of the thesis preclude their examination.

## CHAPTER IV

### 1850-1914: THE EMERGENCE OF THE MODERN AMERICAN UNIVERSITY

#### Overview History

The main contention expressed by many educational historians who have commented on this period, is that the modern American university "emerged" as a result of its release of the classical curriculum and its purported orientation toward the practical needs of an expanding American society. Within this context, then, the six events presented are offered as a backdrop with which to consider the effects of federal aid, college enrollments, and specified socio-political events as they relate to the development of the curriculum. This entire historical period might be appreciated as a foil from which the second chronological phase might be expected to compare against.

In 1850 the President of Brown University, Francis Wayland, introduced (among other measures) the increased use of electives into the university curriculum.<sup>1</sup> Such a move is generally thought to have represented yet another attempt to transport the ideal of the German university into the American campus. This ideal was first advocated by George Ticknor at Harvard (1820's) and later by Henry Tappan at the

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1. A. Levine, Handbook on Undergraduate Curriculum (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1978), p. 504.

University of Michigan (1852-1863).<sup>2</sup> What was being implied by such manoeuvres, was that the American university should abandon its exclusive emphasis on a limited classical curriculum, and move instead to a greater degree of flexibility and extension in its curriculum. Although, as Frederick Rudolph tells us,<sup>3</sup> these innovations were somewhat premature, they nonetheless signalled the way for similar developments that were to follow.

The most significant socio-political event to erupt during this era was, of course, the Civil War. The metamorphosis that this conflict effected on the nation was such that one historical commentator claimed:

It was as though the old America had been melted down in a fiery crucible and recast in a new, uncertain shape.<sup>4</sup>

The most important educational consequence of the Civil War, in turn, was the Morrill Act of 1862. This was a federal act which authorized the sale of federal lands for the purpose of supporting state colleges of which

The leading object shall be, without excluding other scientific or

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2. F. Rudolph, Curriculum, A History of the American Course of Study Since 1636 (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1977), pp. 113-114.
  3. Rudolph, op. cit., p. 115.
  4. F. Freidel and H. N. Drewry, America: A Modern History of the United States (Lexington, Mass.: D. C. Heath and Company, 1970), p. 310.

classical studies, to teach such branches of learning as are related to agriculture and the mechanic arts.<sup>5</sup>

The importance of the land-grant movement that resulted from this Act is that it facilitated the needs of the nation at that time. Clark Kerr maintains that the land-grant movement reflected the "rapid industrial and agricultural development of the United States," and that it was also "responsive to a growing democratic, even egalitarian and populist, trend in the nation."<sup>6</sup> What presumably was being required of the university by an emerging modern American society, was training in the multiplicity of technical and professional skills required of a modern citizen. The Morrill Act, by allowing for the greatly expanded proliferation of colleges and universities, was a legislative action designed to meet that need.

One of the first large universities to owe part of its existence to the Morrill Act was Cornell which was founded in 1868. Frederick Rudolph calls Cornell the first American university because it found a way to fuse liberal and practical education together in a manner that was perfectly appropriate to the American nation of the time.<sup>7</sup> Its benefactor, Ezra Cornell, was devoted to a "democratic and investigative approach to knowledge;" "any person, any

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5. Rudolph, op. cit., p. 117.

6. C. Kerr, The Uses of the University, 3rd ed. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982), pp. 46-47.

7. Rudolph, op. cit., p. 118.

study," came to be the phrase most representative of his intentions. Andrew D. White, the university's first president, sought to use his experiences at Yale, in Europe, and with Henry Tappan to create the ideal American university.<sup>8</sup> By Rudolph's account he was completely successful.

The key descriptor of the Cornell program was variety. There were nine departments of instruction which yielded professional programs, as well as five different ways to take a general course of study.<sup>9</sup> Theology was dropped altogether, prompting smaller colleges to label the university as "godless."<sup>10</sup> Physical education became a requirement while military training, although remaining in the program, was not made compulsory. The most predominant element though was "special" - professional--education, which President White stipulated could not be "subordinated by any other."<sup>11</sup> Frederick Rudolph illustrates that such a philosophy met with some measure of public approval, by quoting from the Independent:

Cornell University strikes down at a single blow that tyranny of "classical studies," which American colleges inherited from the Old English universities, and which they inherited from an age of monks, priests and

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8. Ibid., pp. 118.

9. Ibid., pp. 118-119.

10. Ibid., p. 121.

11. Ibid., p. 118.

bigots--an age scornful of science.<sup>12</sup>

Rudolph then goes on to describe Cornell as the first new university since Harvard "to succeed in becoming a model for other institutions,"<sup>13</sup> and to explain specifically the consequence of Cornell on the American undergraduate curriculum.

White's success at Cornell University moved the definition of the American university away from the dominant research interest that characterized the universities of Germany toward an emphasis on service to the material and moral aspirations of the middle class. This was an emphasis that the situation of higher education in the United States required and that also explained Cornell's great popularity. Before identifying Cornell with research and scholarship, White identified it with an educational philosophy that helped poor but energetic young men and women to get rich.<sup>14</sup>

The next important event which contributed to the development of the undergraduate curriculum, was President Charles Eliot's inaugural address, entitled A Turning Point in Higher Education. This well-known speech, just one year after Cornell opened, was given in 1869 at Harvard University. The most significant aspect of the speech is the fact that Eliot echoes the ideals of Ticknor, Wayland, and Tappan, by advocating the free use of electives as well

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12. Ibid., p. 126.

13. Ibid., pp. 127-128.

14. Ibid., p. 137.

as an expanded and invigorating examination of knowledge.

This university recognizes no real antagonism between literature and science, and consents to no such narrow alternatives as mathematics or classics, science or metaphysics. We would then have them all, and at their best.<sup>15</sup>

If one accepts Rudolph's view that "everywhere little colleges taking their cue from Harvard, introduced an elective curriculum and waited to become universities,"<sup>16</sup> then one can appreciate the importance of such declarations.

The move towards greater use of electives, as expressed by Eliot, presumably represented his desire to foster in students a more acute sense of scholarship. Eliot did not believe that there was much point in forcing students to take specified courses; he wanted instead a more flexible system which would cater to their enthusiasms and therefore yield diligent study of high calibre. In this way Eliot acknowledged "the individual traits of different minds,"<sup>17</sup> and at the same time rejected the old "discipline of mental faculties" psychology that dominated the classical curriculum. Such a stance is fairly significant because it represents a fundamental shift in curricular thinking that was occurring during this period. Previous to Eliot, White

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15. C. Eliot, A Turning Point in Higher Education (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1969), p. 1.

16. F. Rudolph, The American College and University (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1968), p. 332.

17. Eliot, op. cit., p. 9.

at Cornell made similar remarks about the disciplinary faculty psychology:

Discipline comes by studies which are loved, not by studies which are loathed. There is no discipline to be obtained in droning over studies. Vigorous, energetic study, prompted by enthusiasm or a high sense of the value of the subject, is the only kind of study not positively hurtful to mental power.<sup>18</sup>

Frederick Rudolph also tells us that the increased use of partial and parallel programs in the colleges represented their attempt to understand "how to move away from the psychology of individual interests."<sup>19</sup> Eliot's and White's endorsement of electives, as well as Harvard and Yale's increased use of partial and parallel programs taken collectively represent well the trend to do justice to what Eliot called "the natural bent and peculiar quality of every boy's mind."<sup>20</sup>

The founding of Johns Hopkins University in 1876, is significant because it came to be the "first great American university dedicated to advanced learning and the production of scholars."<sup>21</sup> Whereas other colleges were predominantly engaged in undergraduate and master's work, the trustees who created Johns Hopkins decided that an emphasis on

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18. Rudolph (1977), op. cit., p. 120.

19. Ibid., p. 113.

20. Eliot, "The New Education, Its Organization," Atlantic Monthly, 1869, 23, 218.

21. Rudolph (1977), op. cit., p. 130.

scholarship and scientific research would be paramount. Although they still maintained an undergraduate program, their main concern was the course of study that led to a Ph.D. The model that President Daniel Coit Gilman tried to emulate was, of course, that of the German research university.

Frederick Rudolph, in Curriculum, makes much of the fact that although Johns Hopkins was a "success," it was nonetheless "out of touch with the basic directions of American society."<sup>22</sup> Rudolph seemed to think that the United States was not yet ready for an institute which offered exclusively pure and esoteric scholarship without attention to the practical needs of an emerging industrial nation. He seemed to typify Cornell as being more representative of the American university because it did a better job of fusing together the theoretical with the practical. Rudolph concludes this analysis by suggesting that part of the reason for Johns Hopkins' decline after the 1890's was because "scholarship and research could not easily be made the dominant purpose of an American university."<sup>23</sup> Although Rudolph's point should be well taken, there is some ambiguity about how a university can be both a success and "out of touch" at the same time. Perhaps our understanding can be made clearer by remembering

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22. Ibid., p. 129.

23. Ibid., p. 131.

that Johns Hopkins was but one of an increasing number educational institutions. Its temporary "success," then, can probably be attributed by its relative individuality. The suggestion that the university did not "fit into" the current American society is perhaps justified, but one would do well to remember that it came to be a model for projects to follow. As Rudolph says, Clark University, Catholic University, and Bryn Mawr, would not have developed as they did had it not been for Johns Hopkins.<sup>24</sup> The final analysis of Johns Hopkins then might be that although it was quite innovative (and therefore slightly ahead of its time), it nonetheless provided a tangible model for a university that American society could eventually come to accept.

The last in the series of events that typifies this historical period is the "Wisconsin Idea" advocated in 1904 by Charles Van Hise. Simply put, the Wisconsin Idea was a plan whereby the University of Wisconsin would seek actively to assist both the state government and the public through consultant service for the former and programs of extension and correspondence education for the latter. In regard to the first objective, University of Wisconsin professors would readily give assistance to government commissions either by sitting on their committees, or by providing them with the most recent research in their areas

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24. Ibid., p. 129.

of inquiry. With respect to the second objective, the University of Wisconsin advanced one step beyond Cornell's policy of "any student, any study" to one of "anybody-anything-anywhere . . ." <sup>25</sup> The correspondence and extension courses of the University of Wisconsin were quite substantial, and surpassed anything that state universities had offered in the past. The cumulative significance of the "Wisconsin Idea" was that it illustrated the idea of public service in the university, to such an obvious degree.

The backdrop progression of the Brown University electives to the Wisconsin Idea, should show that the American university was undergoing a particular kind of transition. The change was one that reflected a gradual rejection of the classical curriculum--and faculty psychology along with it--while at the same time, advocating a greater understanding of individual abilities, and providing a more flexible curriculum with which to allow such abilities to flourish. The metamorphosis is often described as one that carried the university from being an exclusive institution reserved for an elite class, to one that became a practical institution dedicated to the advancement of knowledge for the practical betterment of society.

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25. Levine, op. cit., p. 589.

## Factors for Consideration

### Federal Support of Universities

The most obvious area of federal support for higher education in the period between 1850-1914, was the land grant movement initiated during the Civil War. When Abraham Lincoln signed the Morrill Act in 1862 he initiated what Clark Kerr describes as one of the two most significant forces to have molded the American university system.<sup>26</sup> The Morrill Act, it will be remembered, allowed the individual states to sell off certain federal lands in order to raise funds for the support of colleges offering instruction in "Agriculture and mechanic arts without excluding other scientific and classical studies and including military tactics."<sup>27</sup> It was this Act, in conjunction with the philanthropy of men like Ezra Cornell that caused a proliferation of great colleges and universities.<sup>28</sup> What is important from the point of view of this study is why the land grant movement came into being, and what it specifically implied for the curriculum.

Clark Kerr, as already mentioned, points to the United States' rapid industrial and agricultural development as being the paramount cause of the land grant movement.

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26. Kerr, op. cit., p. 46.

27. Levine, op. cit., p. 505.

28. Rudolph (1977), op. cit., p. 116.

Presumably, what is suggested is that the nation was becoming "conscious of itself,"<sup>29</sup> as a maturing modern state, and hence required institutions that would better fulfill its process of self-actualization. The precise institution required for such a task was not one that reverted back to the stagnant classicism of the colonial curriculum, but rather one that fused together German intellectualism and American populism to create a uniquely American university.<sup>30</sup> This university must, at once, be both theoretical and practical. Lincoln Steffen, writing in reference to the University of Wisconsin (1909), describes the professors coming "into the classrooms of Madison, like the Short Horns, with 'dung on their boots,' the dung of the farm, of commerce and of politics."<sup>31</sup> This is perhaps a close approximation of the kind of educational atmosphere that the land grants movement was supposed to entice. This is a far cry from the elitism of earlier colleges.

Beyond the Morrill Act of 1862, there were three other minor acts worth mentioning as also representative of federal support for the universities. The Second Morrill Act of 1890 added to the original Act by offering federal grants to support college instruction in specific subject

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29. Levine, op. cit., p. 591.

30. Kerr, op. cit., p. 48.

31. Levine, op. cit., p. 591.

areas. The Hatch Act of 1887 allowed for the establishment of Agricultural Experiment Stations, and the Smith-Lever Act of 1914 created the Agricultural Extension Service. Coupled with the Morrill Act of 1862, these three pieces of legislation seem to point to a new kind of relationship emerging between the university and the state, whereby the state demonstrates its first awareness of the true service potential of the "ivory tower."

#### College Enrollments

Frederick Rudolph tells us that the colleges of the 1850-1870's were "plagued by unpopularity and uncertainty of purpose," and hence their enrollments were low. The main reason for this, according to Rudolph, was that college was not a requirement for participation in the professions, nor did it respond, yet, to the needs of an emerging commercial-industrial society.<sup>32</sup> The whole situation was thought to change, though, with the appearance of men like Cornell, White, Gilman, and Eliot, described by Rudolph as "men for whom the word large connoted an expansiveness, a sense of the whole, an imagination capable of encompassing the entire educational landscape."<sup>33</sup> With the founding of Cornell and Johns Hopkins, and Harvard's public endorsement of electives, the scene was set for a redefined American university ready and willing to accept the masses.

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32. Rudolph (1977), op. cit., pp. 99-100.

33. Ibid., p. 99.

Clark Kerr describes the 1870's as one of two "great" periods of academic change where "a spurt of growth in enrollments" occurred.<sup>34</sup> There are two ways in which this statement can be misinterpreted and hence lead to a misunderstanding of the relationship between college enrollments and the curriculum. The first of these has to do with the definition of a "spurt," and the second with an understanding of cause and effect between student population and the college program. With respect to the first it should be recognized that there was a considerable increase in enrollments from 1870 to 1880. Frederick Rudolph relates that in 1870 there were 52,286 students between the ages of eighteen and twenty-one who attended college. This amounted to 1.7 per cent of all the eighteen to twenty-one year olds in the country. In 1880 the number increased to 115,817, making the percentage 2.7.<sup>35</sup> What is crucial to understand is that while the population of enrollments did increase substantially--allowing Dr. Kerr to proclaim his "spurt"--the percentage of eighteen to twenty-one year olds attending college did not increase to the same extent. This is because, as Rudolph quotes from the work of Edward Hitchcock, the country's population had been increasing at twice the rate of college going.<sup>36</sup> The net effect was that while twice as many people did indeed

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34. Kerr, op. cit., p. 163.

35. Rudolph (1977), op. cit., p. 152.

36. Ibid., p. 101.

enroll in college from 1870-1880, there were more than twice as many people who could have enrolled. This is why Rudolph describes the colleges of the time as experiencing a sense of "swimming against the tide" with respect to population. It should also force us to qualify Dr. Kerr's "spurt" by acknowledging that although the numbers did increase, the percentage of college attenders in relation to the potential number of college attenders did not increase equally. Whereas Kerr, in one sense, is justified in describing the shift from 1870-1880 as a "spurt," so, too, in another way, is Frederick Rudolph justified in typifying the enrollment trends from 1870-1900 as a steady rise.<sup>37</sup>

The second point in need of clarification has to do with cause and effect between college enrollments and the curriculum. The inference might easily be made that because of increased enrollments, the colleges were forced to offer a wider variety of services, and hence electives came into being. According to the literature such an inference would be wrong. Although Kerr is somewhat ambiguous in his designation of cause, he does acknowledge the land grant movement and the efforts of Eliot, White and Gilman before mentioning the increase of enrollments. Rudolph, on the other hand, is more precise when he suggests that electives "underwrote enrollment growth."<sup>38</sup> That is, the system of electives was one of the reasons for the

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37. Ibid., p. 152.

38. Ibid., p. 211.

university to become popular, and hence populated. Gerald Grant and David Riesman lend some credence to this view by suggesting that at the time of enrollment stagnation (1850), some universities offered electives as a way to "beat out their competitors" and gain more students.<sup>39</sup> In both Rudolph's and the Grant/Riesman analysis, then, the point is advanced that the installation of electives preceded enrollment growth, and not visa versa.

The significance of such a position is that it places a good deal of responsibility for curriculum reform during the 1870's on the shoulders of White, Gilman, and Eliot. If one were asked to suggest a "cause" for the curricular shifts of the 1870's, these names would certainly have to be mentioned. To be more precise, though, they themselves could not rightfully be described as initiators of something totally innovative, but rather should be understood as expeditors of an idea whose time has come.

A developing rationale for the college made its appearance, not by some magic wand's stroke, but because it could not longer be delayed. Ezra Cornell, Andrew Dixon White, Daniel Coit Gilman, and Charles William Eliot were not magicians; they were magnificent organizers.<sup>40</sup>

### Socio-Political Events

There are no specified socio-political events that

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39. G. Grant and D. Riesman, The Perpetual Dream (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), p. 366.

40. Rudolph (1977), op. cit., p. 99.

have been selected for this period. The literature does make general reference to the notion of an emerging commercial-industrial nation, as well as to the Civil War of 1860-65. The first reference is, of course, significant because, as Kerr argues, it indirectly changed the shape of the American undergraduate curriculum. The second reference to the Civil War is mentioned primarily as it relates to the Morrill Act of 1862. Aside from these two considerations, there are no explicit references in the literature which suggest a direct relationship between a socio-political event and the curriculum.

### Summary

The objective in classifying 1850-1914 as an historical "period" was to try and isolate the major features of a curricular shift that occurred during those times. Using the examples of Brown University through to the "Wisconsin Idea," the shift that becomes evident is one away from the classical curriculum to a course of study considerably more flexible and serving a broader spectrum of people. Contained within that change also goes a de-emphasis of faculty psychology to be replaced by a greater understanding of individual differences. The net result is that whereas Yale might have been considered the most appropriate representative model of the essence of the American university prior to 1850, Cornell might hold reasonable claim to such a description after 1868.

With respect to factors to be considered in reference to curricular change, it should immediately be recognized

that the Morrill Act of 1862, was extremely important. It can justifiably be said that the land grant movement, as initiated by the Morrill Act, was one of the major defining factors of the modern American university. It, and the model of the German research university were, according to Kerr, the two historical strands which were woven together to form the conventional notion of what an American university should be.<sup>41</sup>

In regard to the increase of college enrollments, it was recognized that they were the effect, not the cause, of the elective curriculum. No specified socio-political event (aside from the indirect reference to the Civil War) was singled out as explicitly important.

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41. Kerr, op. cit., p. 15.

## CHAPTER V

### 1914-1930: FIRST STRING GENERAL EDUCATION; SURVEY COURSES AND DISTRIBUTION REQUIREMENTS

The objective of this chapter is to illustrate that the years 1914-1930 contained within them significant general education projects that took the form of either concentration/distribution arrangements or, more predominantly, survey courses. The purpose of arranging these years into a "period" is firstly to contrast them with the previous era of program flexibility, and secondly to distinguish them from future years that will embody a different kind of curricular change. The years 1914-1930 have been selected in diference to both the Boyer/Levine thesis, and that of Gerald Grant and David Riesman. Boyer and Levine claim that the first "revival" of general education occurred about the time of World War I, and ended with the effects of the Depression.<sup>1</sup> Gerald Grant and David Riesman provide strong support to the notion that 1930 marks a good closing date of one era, by suggesting the emergence of their "telic" reforms after that time.<sup>2</sup>

It should be mentioned that since this is a thesis on the general education movement, the coverage of material

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1. E. Boyer and A. Levine, A Quest for Common Learning (Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Foundation, 1981), pp. 9-11.
  2. G. Grant and D. Riesman, The Perpetual Dream (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), p. 17.

will be limited to significant general education proposals only. There were a number of general education proposals, and indeed other curricular changes, attempted at this time but not all of these can be covered, or even mentioned. The objective here is to sketch some significant examples of general education in the curriculum, rather than to try and typify the curriculum as some sort of generalizable totality. Frederick Rudolph, indeed, provides an ample warning about the folly of attempting the latter.

By 1900 the lack of articulation between a late-blooming high school system and an ancient but collapsing college course of study was so great that only arrogance or innocence would have permitted discussion of the college curriculum. Since then much discussion has required a playful imagination and a respect for qualified generalization.<sup>3</sup>

The qualification to be made, then, is one that acknowledges that "general education" will not be discussed, per se, but rather that examples of concentration/distribution arrangements and survey courses will be presented as representative of the kinds of ways in which general education was actually expressed.

### Overview History

Five significant events or programs will be presented in order to illustrate some of the kinds of general education projects of the time. These events are significant

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3. F. Rudolph, Curriculum, A History of the American Undergraduate Course of Study Since 1636 (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1977), p. 165.

because, as apparent from the literature, they provided models for other colleges to follow. This effectively means that while only five specific items will be discussed, the reader can reasonably extrapolate from these a certain extension of the ideas presented into other colleges.

The first seed of significant curricular change was planted in 1909, before the start of the period suggested. It was at this time that A. Lawrence Lowell took over the presidency of Harvard from Charles Eliot, and by doing so managed to reverse many of Eliot's innovations. Of particular concern to Lowell was the misuse of the elective system; he believed that it provided too many easy alternatives to scholarly study.<sup>4</sup> It is for this reason, primarily, that Lowell initiated a series of curricular reforms, one of which was that students be required to "concentrate," or "major" in a particular area of study.<sup>5</sup> This idea of concentrations had its predecessors in Yale (1901), Cornell (1905), and Wesleyan in Connecticut (1908).<sup>6</sup> Its significance is that along with the notion of concentration, there often also went the idea of distribution requirements. The premise emerges that in order to be an "educated person," or at least a

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4. Rudolph, op. cit., p. 227.

5. P. Keller, Getting at the Core (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982), p. 9.

6. Rudolph, op. cit., pp. 228-229.

college graduate of the early twentieth century, one must obtain a depth of understanding of one particular area, as well as have been exposed to a specified breadth (distribution) of particular kinds of knowledge.

This being the case, "breadth without superficiality, and thoroughness without cramping rigidity"<sup>7</sup> became the ultimate objective of a well-planned college program. Of the two of these, the latter, to many, became the more important.

Critics of the Lowell plan for concentration and distribution did not appreciate his attempts to foster "intellectual and social cohesion,"<sup>8</sup> through the manipulation of the curriculum. Phyllis Keller quotes Eliot himself as saying "that after devoting his life to turning Harvard from a college into a university, Lowell was devoting his to turning it from a university back into a college."<sup>9</sup> Clark Kerr, in The Uses of the University, has developed a fascinating analogy with which to distinguish between Eliot, Lowell (and James Conant) in this regard. Kerr suggests that there are three models that the university can utilize, which can be said to take their theoretical origins from ancient Greece. He suggests that the German research university has its roots in Pythagoras,

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7. Ibid., p. 230.

8. Grant and Riesman, op. cit., p. 366.

9. Keller, op. cit., p. 9.

that the British "community of scholars" takes its cue from Plato, and that the American public service institution (the synthesis) can best be typified by the Sophists. He then suggests that a university should strive to be as British for its undergraduates, as German for its graduates, and as American as possible for the public at large. Using this analogy, he suggests that Eliot was Pythagorean in his educational outlook, Lowell was Platonic, and James Conant (Harvard President in 1945, and initiator of General Education in a Free Society) was Sophistic.<sup>10</sup> Although Eliot (and perhaps, Kerr) did not necessarily approve of Lowell's efforts to "concentrate" the curriculum, there were others who saw a compelling reason for endorsing his program.

Samuel Eliot Morison said of Lowell:

He proposed to put back into the academic basket some of the things that had fallen through the mesh during the process of expansion. Of these the most important was education.<sup>11</sup>

Alfred North Whitehead, writing in retrospect, observed that

Eliot opened the whole field of study for choice, and left it open for quite a while. Finally, in due season, came Lowell, to give it some coordination. He came after about the right interval.

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10. C. Kerr, The Uses of the University, 3rd edition (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1982), p. 18.

11. Rudolph, op. cit., p. 229.

What he did was very daring and difficult.<sup>12</sup>

The significance of the Lowell reforms--which included, in addition to concentration and distribution, comprehensive examinations, a tutorial system, and honors degrees--was that they signalled the shift away from free electives towards some form of structure. In Harvard's case (and that of many other colleges that followed suit) the answer was depth of study plus breadth of understanding. In a series of specific programs it was thought that the best way to ensure the latter was through the vehicle of the survey course.

It would be historically concise to be able to say that the "first" survey course occurred in 1914 under the direction of Alexander Meiklejohn at Amherst College. Unfortunately, in the history of the curriculum, particular types of courses do not just appear immediately on the scene, but rather evolve from ideas of previous courses. It is for this reason then that one cannot say Meiklejohn's "Social and Economic Institutions" was the first survey course, but rather would have to refer to Reed College and the University of Rochester in 1911 and acknowledge that their orientation courses were similar "in spirit" to the idea of Amherst's 1914 course.<sup>13</sup>

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12. L. Price, Dialogues of Alfred North Whitehead (Boston: Little, Brown, 1945), p. 110.

13. Rudolph, op. cit., p. 237.

Having recognized this, it now becomes necessary to describe what this "first" survey course entailed. Boyer and Levine explain that it was an attempt to put the ideas of John Dewey into practice. They said that Dewey, as early as 1902, advocated the equivalence of a survey course as a way for students to gain an "orientation" in an increasingly confusing society.<sup>14</sup> Arthur Levine quotes from Thomas (1962) to describe the survey course as

. . . designed to serve as an introduction to the arts and sciences; to provide students with the facts of the human situation, and a 'showing of intellectual method;' and to offer instruction in ethics, logic, history, economics, law, and government.<sup>15</sup>

Frederick Rudolph describes it simply enough by calling it "an introduction to 'humanistic sciences'."<sup>16</sup> Beyond such definitions, though, what is important to understand is that these courses were considered (and classified) as somehow fulfilling the objective of a "general education."

Frederick Rudolph says that the idea of general education was to try to retrieve that function of the curriculum which concerned itself with the "cultivation and transmission of the intellectual and philosophical inheritance of the Western world as an instrument of man's understanding of himself."<sup>17</sup> Presumably the survey course--with

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14. Boyer and Levine, op. cit., p. 9.

15. A. Levine, Handbook on Undergraduate Curriculum (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1978), p. 6.

16. Rudolph, op. cit., p. 237.

17. Ibid., pp. 237-238.

Amherst's being a significant example--was the vehicle which could convey such an objective.

A second notable "introduction to the humanities" course that took on the characteristics of a survey, was the General Honors course set up at Columbia College in 1917.<sup>18</sup> John Erskine, its initiator, set out to operate a course which would read and examine one classic per week. The purpose of doing so was to introduce students to the "great traditions" of the Western world. It is significant to note that this course was conceived, in part, as a foil to the professional orientation that was seen to dominate the curriculum. The objective, it would appear, was to balance professionalism with humanism in order to produce that ideal of the liberal culture, the all-round man.<sup>19</sup> This theme was to be played out in multiple variations in the proposals that follow.

The third, and possibly most famous, survey course to evolve in the American undergraduate curriculum was the "Contemporary Civilization" course offered at Columbia College. Daniel Bell related the origin of this course by explaining that during the First World War the government asked Columbia College to prepare a course entitled "War Issues" for its Student Army Training Corps which were situated on many American campuses. Frederick Woodbridge, the dean of the Graduate Faculties at Columbia, complied

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18. D. Bell, The Reforming of General Education (New York: Anchor Books, 1968), p. 13.

19. Rudolph, op. cit., p. 239.

and had his syllabus approved by Washington. At about the same time that the "War Issues" course got underway, though, other Columbia faculty members made it their business to construct a course on "Peace Issues." Eventually the intentions of both these courses were fused together to form, in 1917, a course entitled "Contemporary Civilization," which became required for all freshmen.<sup>20</sup>

Some of the elements leading up to the emergence of this course included, firstly, the War, secondly, the abandonment of the pure classics (Greek and Latin) as requirements for a B.A., and thirdly--and perhaps most importantly--Columbia's growing stand against professionalism that eventually manifested itself in the post-war years. The course that had its humble beginnings in 1917 grew, in only two years, to be of such significance for the program that Justus Buchler, in his essay entitled "Reconstruction in the Liberal Arts," names 1919 as the year that marked the birth of a new Columbia College.<sup>21</sup> Daniel Bell describes, as he saw them, the nature of the innovations so heralded:

. . . the new Columbia College was dedicated firmly to the tradition of the liberal arts rather than to professionalism; (that) it sought for social diversity in its student body; and (that) unlike some later schools, it was committed to no doctrinal philosophy of education other than exposing the student to major

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20. Bell, *op. cit.*, pp. 14-15.

21. *Ibid.*, p. 21.

intellectual ideas and expanding his imagination.<sup>22</sup>

What is interesting about the evolution of the survey course, as derived from Columbia, is that it was an idea that caught on. Frederick Rudolph tells us that following the war, the popularity for such courses emerged to become a kind of movement, resulting in the implantation of similar courses in many institutions. By 1926, Rudolph relates, for example, that over 100 courses of what he called "a general orientation nature" could be identified.<sup>23</sup> Daniel Bell, by quoting from the Carman Committee Report of 1946 suggests to what extent the idea of the course lingered on through the years.

The introduction of orientation courses in Columbia College, with the establishment in 1919 of the course in Contemporary Civilization, was the beginning of a quiet and gradual revolution in undergraduate instruction throughout the United States. Although a number of colleges are still weighing the idea of requiring introductory courses so planned as to acquaint the student with the framework of Western culture, yet the dissemination of the idea has been very wide, and its use as a basic formula by many of our most important colleges and universities in the present re-examination of curricula is evidence of the depth to which it has influenced higher education in this country . . .<sup>24</sup>

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22. Ibid.

23. Rudolph, op. cit., p. 238.

24. Bell, op. cit., p. 12.

The last significance of the Contemporary Civilization course is that it previews the era to come. Contemporary Civilization was a required course that later would be complemented by requirements of the "Humanities" and "the Sciences" in the 1930's. Required courses are but a short step away from the advocacy of a required core curriculum. The justification of a core curriculum usually rests on a premise which proclaims, in effect, that there are certain minimums of intellectual and spiritual tradition which people must experience and understand if they are to be called educated. Although such sentiments are typified in the rationale for many of the survey courses, they are typified even more by proposals that advocate not just a single course, but a series of courses as being essential to a program. Such proposals are among the educational developments that occur during the next era.

The final curricular event worthy of note, in reference to general education, was Alexander Meiklejohn's Experimental College at the University of Wisconsin. In 1925 Glenn Frank, the President of the University of Wisconsin, invited Alexander Meiklejohn to his faculty and asked him to sit on a committee to review the educational program of the university.<sup>25</sup> The result of that appointment, two years later, was the founding of a college in Wisconsin that proved to be the object of much controversy.

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25. Levine, op. cit.

Alexander Meiklejohn wanted to create a true community of inquiry and so proposed and operated his two-year "Experimental College" with the intent of giving students "a sense of the unity of knowledge and experience."<sup>26</sup> The first year used ancient Athens as its primary reference point (reading Plato and Pericles), while the second attempted to translate the lessons of Greece to contemporary America. There were no courses as such, but rather "divisions based on different phases of culture."<sup>27</sup> As Rudolph describes it, the objective of the program was "to take young men on a trip of self-discovery. The mystery and delight of being human was its informing and organizing idea."<sup>28</sup> The type of instruction that followed from such intentions, was considerably different from what had traditionally been practised. Instead of going to classes, students attended informal lectures, individual tutorials, and small group instruction. The content of all three of these episodes was not predetermined, but emerged as a result of the needs of the various constituent groups. There was a great emphasis on student writing; participants were required to do many papers as well as keep a diary containing their reactions to the readings. The final grade came at the end of the second year, as the result of

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26. Levine, op. cit., p. 345.

27. Ibid.

28. Rudolph, op. cit., p. 277.

an accumulation of projects and reports. Rudolph provides, as he saw it, a precise description for the experiment viewed in its totality: "It was out of this world."<sup>29</sup>

The Experimental College lasted for five years before "the depression and a coalition of politicians, faculty, and fraternities"<sup>30</sup> caused its closure. Frederick Rudolph described the college as "a disaster for the curriculum," because "Meiklejohn ventured too far beyond the imagination of his constituency."<sup>31</sup> Be that as it may, Meiklejohn nonetheless provided a good example of a transition between periods whereby in the old, "general education" was attempted mostly through survey courses and distribution requirements, and in the new, there was a more dynamic effort to express "general education" in a variety of untested ways.

### Factors for Consideration

#### Federal Support of Universities

The federal government was not a primary influence on the undergraduate curriculum from 1914-1930. The most dominant power nationally was the business community,<sup>32</sup> and the most influential force with respect to the universities directly was the philanthropic foundations,

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29. Ibid.

30. Levine, op. cit., p. 347.

31. Rudolph, op. cit., p. 277.

32. Bell, op. cit., pp. 71-72.

and the university associations themselves.

As an illustration of this second point, Frederick Rudolph<sup>33</sup> outlines the difficulties that the U.S. Bureau of Education had in defining a college from 1870-1911. The problem became so difficult, and so politically explosive, that after 1911 the federal government refrained from attempting a classification system again. The task was then shifted to the Association of American Universities who, in turn, sought direction from the philanthropic foundations.

As it turned out, the foundations had already engaged themselves in the business of classifying colleges (for the purposes of financial grants) in competition with the Bureau of Education's system. One of the most important concepts to arise out of these individual endeavours was the "Carnegie Unit" established in 1906. To be regarded as a college, according to this system, the institution had to require for admission fourteen units of high school work. One "unit" amounted to five recitations per week for a year in one subject. In addition to explicit admission standards, the effect of the Carnegie system was to require of colleges an acknowledgement of the traditions of liberal learning as well as commitment to a heightened sense of importance for intellectual values. The culmination of various standardization procedures being attempted among

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33. Rudolph, op. cit., p.2220-227.

various foundations occurred in 1919 when the National Conference Committee and the American Council on Education provided an explicit definition of an American college. Its description included requirements for graduation, staff quotas and professor-student ratios, as well as stipulations about annual operating incomes and the minimum size of the library. Its most important effect, though, was to acknowledge the academic department as an organizing principle and thereby prepare the way for eventual specialization. What is significant, from the point of view of the study, then, is the power and effect that these foundations and associations (as opposed to the federal government) had on the development of the curriculum.

There is, of course, one area in which the federal government can be said to have been involved with the colleges and universities of the day; that is, in connection with the war effort. There were actually two ways in which the war influenced the curriculum; one, as might be expected, was the implementation of the Reserve Officer Training Corp (ROTC) in 1920;<sup>34</sup> and the other, as perhaps an unintended consequence, with the rise of the survey course movement. In regard to the latter, it has been shown how Washington's request for a Students Army Training Corps Course on "war issues" provided the incentive for the eventual emergence of Columbia's Contemporary Civilization

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34. Levine, op. cit., p. 509.

course. As Daniel Bell quotes from Justus Buchler:

The men in Washington whose responsibility it was to conduct American policy in World War II could hardly have contemplated a new departure in higher education. Yet they had a direct connection with it.<sup>35</sup>

What is also interesting, and significant for our study, is the distinction that Bell makes between the Contemporary Civilization course, and John Erskine's previous "General Honors" program. In the latter the intent was to critique the Western world, while the former, as Bell says, was "an open and frank acknowledgment of the direct responsibility of the College to the state's democratic needs of society."<sup>36</sup>

This is an important distinction because Bell suggests that it can be applied to a comparison of the upcoming General Education proposals at Chicago and Harvard, whereby Chicago maintains the intent to "critique" and Harvard desires to rearticulate, once again, the meaning of democracy.

In summary, then, it should be recognized that, with the exception of certain influences occurring in connection with the war effort, the federal government was not a dominant influence on the universities from 1914 to 1930. It is almost as though the government, and business, did not yet fully appreciate the malleability of the modern university and instead preferred to regard it in its

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35. Bell, op. cit., p. 15.

36. Ibid.

classical form of the sole arbitrator of abstract truth. Even such apparently utilitarian projects as the work-study college at Antioch were still rationalized, according to Rudolph, in terms of lofty ideals that implied "education" more than specialized training.

The extramural phase of the Antioch experience, which had students working for 175 employers in twelve states in 1930, may have been vocational and self-supporting in result, but in purpose President Morgan thought of the off-campus experiences as bringing students face to face with "practical realities in all their stubborn complexity" and as contributing to the education of the whole man and whole woman.<sup>37</sup>

Perhaps one reason why such an idealistic orientation still held currency, was because the notion of old style scholarship (i.e., scholarship measured in terms of ability in the humanities) still held sway over the benefits of practical research. Daniel Bell suggests that before World War II, the repute of a school was based on its contribution to the humanities and therefore colleges with a few brilliant philosophers or classicists hold their own in the competitive ranking of institutions.<sup>38</sup> If such an analysis is fair, one can see at least one source of ambiguity about the role of higher education at the time. One should also anticipate the consequences of that dilemma as they would show themselves during the Second World War.

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37. Rudolph, op. cit., p. 242.

38. Bell, op. cit., p. 100.

### College Enrollments

The most significant aspect of college enrollments during this period was that they increased considerably, and beyond the proportion of that might be expected of the age group. Daniel Bell tells us that between 1900 and 1940 the population of 18-21 year olds increased fourfold, but their enrollment in colleges increased sixfold.<sup>39</sup> Phyllis Keller, extends the time frame slightly by relating that from 1900 to 1955 "college enrollments grew more than ten times faster than the college age population."<sup>40</sup> In both cases we can be assured that college enrollments between 1914-1930 must have increased substantially. The question might well be asked, why?

Phyllis Keller provides a clue when she describes the early 1900's as "the Great Curriculum Compromise of the early twentieth century."<sup>41</sup> The classical curriculum had been put to rest, and now what was offered to the American student was not the curriculum, but rather a series of wider choices within a loosely defined model of a university. Although the spirit of liberal education and standardization was revived through the survey courses, and the manipulations of the foundations, the identify of the American university had changed sufficiently so as to make it accessible to a greater number and broader variety of

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39. Ibid., p. 88.

40. Keller, op. cit., p. 20.

41. Ibid., p. 11.

people. Whereas it has been previously argued that an enrollment "spurt" did not initiate the curricular reforms of 1850, here it might be suggested that the effect of pure numbers, and diversity of constituents, are beginning to be a shaping force. Because populism and egalitarianism have actually found their way into the universities, the potential now existed in earnest for college enrollments to shape the development of the universities.

#### Socio-Political Events

The two significant events selected from the literature are World War I, and the Great Depression. Since the first was discussed under the auspices of "federal influence," the second will be considered here.

The single, most important effect that the Depression seemed to have on the curriculum was that it caused a shift in popularity of the kinds of courses that students took. Boyer and Levine say there was a shift (after 1930) "from general to vocational" education, with increases towards engineering, business administration and commerce.<sup>42</sup> Frederick Rudolph writes, though, that "Collapse of the job market in the 1930's directed students away from specialized education of limited use to courses of a more general nature."<sup>43</sup> He also relates that Yale seniors between 1929 and 1937 registered a significant shift from English to

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42. Boyer and Levine, op. cit., p. 13.

43. Rudolph, op. cit., p. 248.

economics and history in their choice of majors. Although somewhat difficult to synthesize, what can perhaps be inferred from these authors is that students moved from narrow specialization courses to broad, yet practical, courses which they assumed would provide them with a wider range of employment possibilities.

A second significant aspect of these inter-curricular shifts, was the forced rationalization that occurred because of economic retrenchment. Rudolph tells us that

At Ohio State University the Great Depression led in 1932 to the chopping of 337 courses, the bracketing of 69, the consolidation of 33, and a reduction in frequency with which 30 others were offered.<sup>44</sup>

This is interesting because Rudolph refers to the economic retrenchment of the 1970's as playing a similar role in trimming from the curriculum many "frills and fads,"<sup>45</sup> and Boyer and Levine, in 1981, suggest that the same economic retrenchments might yield a reasonable rationale, administratively, for general education.<sup>46</sup> It is on the basis of these comments that one might rightfully conclude that economic events--especially those of the magnitude of a Depression--do, in fact, influence the development of the curriculum.

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44. Ibid.

45. Ibid.

46. Boyer and Levine, op. cit., p. 8.

### Summary

In an effort to counter the excess of electives, two curricular reforms found their way into the undergraduate program. One was the concentration (major) and distribution (breadth) requirements, while the other was the advent of survey courses. Both the "breadth" component, and the survey courses represented, in their own way, elements of what people have called the "general education" movement. This "movement" (to the extent that one can generalize about it) sought, by a variety of means, to rearticulate some of the ideals of liberal education into the emerging curriculum. It is crucial to keep in mind that while the "general education movement" might be said to exist in some highly visible courses or colleges, it nonetheless occupied a minority position with respect to the rest of the curriculum. Although the elective system, per se, was experiencing somewhat of a "counterrevolution" against it during this period, the spirit of individual specialization was sufficiently ingrained so as to ensure its continued survival.

It was found that federal support (or influence) with respect to the curriculum during this period was not immense, but rather that associations and foundations played a significant role. It was also suggested that the relationship between business, government and the universities was such that none of the three parties fully appreciated the consequences of the changing times about

them and therefore had an ambiguous understanding about the type of cooperation that could exist between them.

College enrollments, according to Rudolph, grew steadily and substantially. It was recognized that for the first time the consequence of greatly increased enrollments--pure numbers of students--could potentially have an effect on the development of the curriculum.

The two socio-political events discussed were the First World War and the Depression. Both, it can be said, had some sort of influence on the curriculum.

## CHAPTER VI

### 1930-1958: SECOND STRING GENERAL

#### EDUCATION: A VARIETY OF DYNAMIC EXPERIMENTS

The objective of this chapter is to show that the years 1930-1958 embodied a different kind of approach to general education. The cue for a distinction between these years, and the period previous, comes from Grant and Riesman when they suggest that the 1930's saw the beginning of "telic" reforms.<sup>1</sup> The implication is that while Lowell's concentration and distribution system and the rise of survey courses were indeed significant curricular shifts, they nonetheless operated, according to Grant and Riesman, within the structure of the university college model. The curricular reforms that occurred after 1930, then, are thought to be representative of ideas or movements that went quite beyond the bounds of this model.

Perhaps a more satisfying way to legitimize the characterization of this new period, and at the same time incorporate elements of the Grant/Riesman thesis, is to acknowledge, as Abraham Flexner did in 1930, that the university had been transformed into a public "service

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1. G. Grant and D. Riesman, The Perpetual Dream (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), p. 17.

station."<sup>2</sup> What he meant by this was that the university had acquired a multitude of tasks that caused it to be many things to many different people. Flexner complained that the universities were "secondary schools, research centers, vocational schools, teacher-training schools, 'uplift' agencies, businesses--these and other things simultaneously."<sup>3</sup> The key suggestion here is that in the 1930's Abraham Flexner identified what he considered to be a fundamental change in the shape of the university. This observation parallels Grant and Riesman's in that they too--from a sociological perspective--see the 1930's as a time of structural reorganization.

The most important factor about the universities of this era then, is diversification; they began to serve many masters. Writing about the twentieth century generally, Frederick Rudolph specifies how this came to be, and provides another appropriate warning about the increasing difficulty of generalizing about a curriculum.

In the twentieth century the curriculum fell apart more comfortably than it did in the nineteenth, when great battles were waged and great social and intellectual forces were engaged. The rise of science, the death of Greek, the emergence of the professions, the ascendancy of an ambitious middle class, the resounding victory of intellect over piety--these were events that brought down into a thousand pieces the old college and all the certainties and

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2. A. Flexner, Universities: American, German, English (London: Oxford Press, 1970), p. 45.

3. Kerr, op. cit., p. 5.

practices that had held it together. The death of the classical course of study opened the way to a curriculum burdened with such diversity of purpose, style, and institutional form that the word 'curriculum' became a concept of convenience rather than precision.<sup>4</sup>

The objective of this chapter, with specific respect to general education, is to suggest that a variety of general education proposals occurred within a diverse curriculum. The distinction between this period and the previous one, is that this period embodies a considerably larger range and expression of general education experiments. Whereas Boyer and Levine's first "revival" of general education displayed itself mostly in the form of survey courses, this second "revival" is characterized by a variety of structural and curricular reforms.

One important qualification needs to be made. Although this chapter deals mainly with general education proposals, other curricular changes were nonetheless occurring. It should be remembered that general education proposals made up only a small part of curricular history as it was unfolding during this time. The observations made about various general education programs, therefore, are meant to refer to a component of the American undergraduate curriculum, not its generalized totality.

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4. F. Rudolph, Curriculum, A History of the American Undergraduate Course of Study Since 1636 (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1977), p. 245.

### Overview History

There are numerous examples of fascinating "general education" experiments that occurred during this period. Again, instead of presenting all of them, only seven will be selected as representative of the kinds of proposals that were implemented. It is suggested that the spirit of these major examples were copied or translated throughout a variety of other institutions.

The most comprehensive general education plan ever to be implemented at a major university occurred mainly under the stamp of Robert Maynard Hutchins at Chicago. At his inaugural address in 1929, Hutchins suggested that pursuit of knowledge was an end in itself and did not necessarily have to lead to professionalization.<sup>5</sup> Such sentiments were to be the underlying theme which would eventually cause him to restructure the undergraduate college so as to facilitate a thorough and sound "general education." In 1937, as a result of Hutchins' proposals, the faculty of the University of Chicago voted to adopt a four-year program devoted entirely to general education.<sup>6</sup> By 1942 this plan was fully operational.<sup>7</sup> Daniel Bell, in his The Reforming of General

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5. D. Bell, The Reforming of General Education (New York: Anchor Books, 1968), p. 29.

6. Ibid., p. 27.

7. Ibid., p. 30.

Education,<sup>8</sup> outlines five elements of the "Chicago Plan" as it emerged from 1937-1958. The first was Hutchins desire to "break the lock-step" of the traditional 8-4-4 progression through school to college. What Hutchins wanted to replace this with was a system whereby a student could combine the last two years of high school with the first two years of college in order to receive a good "general education" and hence a B.A. Bell points out that Hutchins' vigorous support for the idea of general education was, in part, predicated on his assumption that less than 20% of the college graduates would continue into post-graduate work. Clearly this assumption has proven to be wrong. The second element of Hutchins' plan was the four year prescribed curriculum. Although at the time this proposal was considered extremely radical, it is interesting to note that just several years after being implemented, small junior colleges were adopting its basic idea in order to try to achieve the measure of "intellectual respectability" that it conferred. The third element of the "Chicago Plan" involved the way in which knowledge was arranged for consumption. Three large areas were suggested as illustrating the "organizing principles" of most formalized thought. These were the humanities, the

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8. See The Idea and Practise of General Education: An Account of the College of the University of Chicago by Present and Former Members of the Faculty (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1950).

See also R. M. Hutchins, The Higher Learning in America (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1936).

social sciences, and the natural sciences (which were, in turn, subdivided into physical and biological sciences). Bell points out, again, that these were not transmitted through survey courses, but rather were meant as actual studies in themselves. They were complemented by a capstone coursecourse entitled Observation, Interpretation and Integration, which was supposed to integrate the integration that had already been going on in the general courses. In 1948 a third course entitled Western Civilization was added to the program. It utilized a chronological/thematic approach to become, essentially, another survey course. Another most interesting element of the Chicago Plan was the installation of a complete college faculty devoted exclusively to the general education program. This was remarkable because the standard responsibility of a professor was to teach at both the graduate and undergraduate levels. General education, in the Chicago Plan, confined itself exclusively to the undergraduate college. The fifth and final element of Hutchins' operation was the establishment of comprehensive examinations at the end of each year. These were supervised by an exterior examining group and, because of the incredible range of information being assessed, were more often than not short answer or multiple choice. This latter factor often proved the focal point of much criticism, according to Bell.

The Chicago Plan, as developed really by Deans

Brumbaugh, Faust, and Ward and the Chicago faculty, but personified in Hutchins, was a comprehensive attempt to provide an education of substance for the undergraduate clientele. It began in 1937 and was phased out in 1958 with the advent of a system of majors and distributions. Its significance lies in the fact that a major university attempted, as Rudolph says, to "create the lycee or gymnasium and give it currency in the United States."<sup>9</sup>

Partially as a consequence of the general education program at Chicago, Lotus Delta Coffman, the president of the University of Minnesota, established a dean's committee on administrative organization in order to investigate potential changes for his own institution.<sup>10</sup> It was thought that high attrition, plus the inability of the university to meet certain students' needs were problems that might be solved by curricular reform. The result, after some revisions, was the establishment of the General College at the University of Minnesota. Established in 1932, it was designed as a two-year, open admission, lower-division, general education college. Arthur Levine writes that it was intended for several groups of students:

. . . those not having time to earn a four-year degree, those wanting a broad general education, those desiring courses not available elsewhere in the university, and those

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9. Rudolph, op. cit., p. 279.

10. A. Levine, op. cit., pp. 353-356.

not meeting the admission requirements of other units of the university.<sup>11</sup>

Rudolph, on the other hand, prefers to emphasize the last characteristic, and hence imply that the college was generally geared toward "losers."<sup>12</sup>

The program for the General College is described by Levine as consisting of "overview courses" designed to capture the interest of the most capable students in the university. "Biology from Ovum to Grave" is cited as an example of one such course. Levine also relates that Malcolm McLean, the director of the General College, "recruited the best teachers in the university to plan the courses and to instruct in the college."<sup>13</sup> In a variation of this description, Frederick Rudolph relates how General College students--whom, he maintained "tested poorly, lacked self-confidence, were badly prepared, or failed elsewhere"--took courses in 1939-40 on such subjects as "current reading, how to study, foods and nutrition, house furnishing, and earth and man."<sup>14</sup> Rudolph also describes the college at Minnesota as "in its own way a magnificent undertaking in general education and an outright rejection of vocationalism," whereas Levine relates that in the

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11. Ibid., p. 354.

12. Rudolph, op. cit., p. 277.

13. Levine, op. cit., p. 354.

14. Rudolph, op. cit., pp. 277-78.

1940's "it enlarged its definition of general education to include occupational programs." What we can perhaps synthesize from these apparently conflicting descriptions is that the General College at the University of Minnesota began with initial intentions concerning a re-articulated general education, and gradually transformed itself to become primarily a utility-based "life skills" type of institution. Levine relates how all the "best teachers" eventually left, while Rudolph passes final judgement by suggesting that the College "probably did not deserve to be known as an intellectual community."<sup>15</sup>

Probably the most amazing experiment in general education occurred in 1937 at St. Johns College in Annapolis. It was there that Scott Buchanan and Stringfellow Barr took over the positions of president and dean respectively, and proceeded to implement a totally prescribed four-year undergraduate curriculum based entirely on the reading of one hundred or so "Great Books." The "Great Books" program, as conceived by Robert Hutchins and Mortimer Adler, was initiated at St. Johns with the conviction that the only way for students to acquire a true liberal education was to read the great works of Western civilization.<sup>15</sup> The range of authors studied included Homer and Sophocles through to Freud and Kafka. According to Gerald Grant and David Riesman, Plato dominated much of

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15. Levine, op. cit., p. 354; Rudolph, op. cit., p. 278.

16. Levine, op. cit., pp. 356-359.

the ethos of St. Johns.<sup>17</sup> The works were studied in rough chronology with little mention made of historical context. In addition to seminars twice a week (two hours) on the "great books," students were required to attend tutorials in mathematics, language and music three to four times weekly. Friday evenings were reserved for formal lectures usually given by outsiders.

Students were evaluated according to their ability to write major essays yearly, complete comprehensive examinations, and illustrate a proficiency in French. The attrition rate was high; only eight of the 20 students of the program's first class completed the program.<sup>18</sup> This, apparently, did little to dampen student enthusiasm for the program; many transfer students were willing to fill the vacancies, even though they would thus be automatically relegated to freshman status.<sup>19</sup>

What is perhaps even more amazing than student expectations, were those required of the staff. All faculty members at St. Johns were expected to be capable of teaching the entire curriculum from the language tutorials to the Summa Theologica.<sup>20</sup> What's more, all staff were considered to be of equal academic standing; they were all

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17. Grant and Riesman, op. cit., p. 42.

18. Ibid., p. 46.

19. Levine, op. cit., p. 358.

20. Grant and Riesman, op. cit., p. 46.

designated "tutors." Salary was primarily dependent on age.

St. John's still exists and has not changed much over the years. One exception occurred in 1962 when preceptorials were added to the curriculum. This became the only elective element of St. John's, whereby students could undertake an in-depth study for nine weeks each year. Another significant date was 1964 when a second college modelled on the Annapolis experience was founded in Santa Fe. Apart from those two events, and a few alterations of the "great books," St. John's has remained remarkably stationary in a world fraught with change.

Frederick Rudolph called St. John's the "ultimate design in general education" as well as possibly "the first, and only intellectual community in the history of American higher education."<sup>21</sup> He also labelled it as "stubbornly reactionary," and not persuasive as a viable alternative to the American college."<sup>22</sup> Gerald Grant and David Riesman describe St. John's as being "the 'pure' experiment that Hutchins had been frustrated from achieving at Chicago,"<sup>23</sup> and argue Rudolph's notion of reactionism saying instead that the college was "a radical neoclassical experiment whose roots lie in classical humanism--above all, in

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21. Rudolph, op. cit., p. 280.

22. Ibid., p. 281.

23. Grant and Riesman, op. cit., p. 47.

Plato's Academy."<sup>24</sup> Perhaps, though, the best sense of what St. John's purports to be can be extracted from Grant and Riesman's conclusion to their chapter written about the college:

St. John's is unique and remarkable. Its community is founded on a radical faith in the ability of liberal education to teach men and women to think for themselves and to become conscious of their social and moral obligations. It has embodied a vision and fostered a dialectic in the culture because it has been there to be criticized. It has kept alive an ideal of the liberal arts and a concern for the wholeness of intellectual experience in a pure form. It has been a kind of conscience of the liberal arts college, a goad to all of higher education, and a declaration about how men should live.<sup>25</sup>

Boyer and Levine, in an attempt to justify their claim of a second "revival" of general education occurring "on the heels" of the Second World War, cite developments from 1939 onwards as indicators leading up to their proposed curricular metamorphosis. The authors of A Quest for Common Learning describe Stanford's Western Civilization course (1939), Denison University's "Problems of Peace and Post-War Reconstruction" (1942), and Wesleyan's freshman general education seminar (post-1942), for example, as being significant "harbingers of revival" for the second wave of interest in general education. They also make

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2 . Ibid., p. 41.

2 . Ibid., p. 76.

reference to a fifteen-year general education research project launched in the 1940's by the American Council on Education, as being equally indicative of what they would like to believe was an important curricular shift.<sup>26</sup>

Although such projects presumably did occur, one must question why other commentators have not given them equal weight in their coverage. A partial answer to this problem is suggested when one remembers from which perspective Boyer and Levine are writing; they want desperately to show that "general education" has reoccurred throughout curricular history. Just as desperately, by the way, as Clark Kerr would like to show that the multiversity is an historical imperative.

Beyond such a speculative transition, there is one event that few authors, if any, would deny as being significant in the history of the undergraduate curriculum. That is, of course, the release of the Harvard Committee's report, in 1945, entitled General Education in a Free Society,<sup>27</sup> and commonly referred to as the "Harvard Redbook." Arthur Levine states that the report contained "a history of education in America, a theory of general education, and a prescription for the teaching of general education in schools, Harvard College, and in the

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26. Boyer and Levine, op. cit., p. 14.

27. Harvard Committee, General Education in a Free Society (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1946).

community."<sup>28</sup> Frederick Rudolph points out that it was imitated to a degree, by Yale in 1946, and by Amherst in 1947.<sup>29</sup> Boyer and Levine, typically enough, refer to it as a "national symbol of renewal," whose plan was "adopted all across the country."<sup>30</sup> What one might at least assume then is that the "Redbook" was a comprehensive review of the American educational system which seemed to be regarded at the time with a certain degree of respect.

The actual proposal, as far as Harvard itself was concerned, was fairly straightforward. The Committee recommended that all students take three lower-level core courses ("Great Texts in Literature," "Western Thought and Institutions," and a choice between foundations in either physical or biological sciences) as well as three upper-level courses from a list provided from the Committee on General Education. All six of these courses were meant to be "general education" courses; that is, they were interdisciplinary in nature, and not meant to be regarded as introductions to the disciplines. The committee also recommended altering the English composition course, so that it would become a requirement tied in directly with the general education program.

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2 . Levine, op. cit., p. 359.

2 . Rudolph, op. cit., p. 259.

. Boyer and Levine, op. cit., p. 14.

What is perhaps more interesting than the specific solutions that the committee proposed, were the original general problems to which they addressed themselves.

Rudolph describes the process as an effort

. . . to confront the social and political forces of mid-century America and to write a prescription for sustaining the liberal tradition with a curriculum that recognized the legitimacy of individual interests and talents while it at the same time established a common bond of general learning.<sup>31</sup>

Phyllis Keller describes the problem more succinctly when she says the solution entails:

. . . how to endow the educational system with some common goal and direction while recognizing the diverse needs, interests, and abilities of individuals in a large, complex and heterogeneous society.<sup>32</sup>

The Harvard Redbook, itself, poses the problem as one of trying to reconcile "heritage" with "change."

The theoretical solution for this problem--over and above the actual proposal for the Harvard curriculum--became "general education."<sup>33</sup> According to Rudolph, the Harvard Committee saw general education as a remedy to class divisiveness, as a thread throughout formal education, and as a common bonding device for high school students

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31. Rudolph, op. cit., p. 258.

32. Keller, Getting at the Core (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982), p. 17.

33. Harvard Committee, op. cit., pp. 42-51.

destined for different futures.<sup>34</sup> According to Boyer and Levine's categories of historical justifications, general education was seen as essential "to train citizens for public responsibility, remind them of their common heritage, promote 'self-realization,' and introduce non-scientists to the world of science," as well as help returning veterans and immigrants integrate themselves into American life.<sup>35</sup> But beyond these standardized rationalizations, there emerged a new emphasis that was specific to this era. Phyllis Keller identifies it exactly when she says that the Harvard Redbook "redefined liberal culture as the heritage of democracy."<sup>36</sup> Rudolph elaborates when he writes that, "in urging a revitalization of general education, Harvard proposed to democratize what had once been the education of a gentleman and an aristocrat and make it the education essential to the responsibilities of every citizen."<sup>37</sup> Boyer and Levine provide the overt rationale for such an emphasis:

Cutting through the familiar rhetoric, a new, more urgent note was sounded: the Western democracies were now engaged in intense conflict with "world communism" rooted in the Soviet Union. This struggle was ideological

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34. Rudolph, op. cit., p. 258.

35. Boyer and Levine, op. cit., p. 15.

36. Keller, op. cit., p. 16.

37. Rudolph, op. cit., p. 259.

and spiritual no less than political and military. If the United States were to prevail, it was essential that the central values of American and Western civilization be reaffirmed. "Education for Democracy" became the rallying cry. The authors of the Harvard 'Redbook' defined their purpose as "a quest for a concept of general education that would have validity for the free society which we cherish."<sup>38</sup>

The actual suggestions that emerged from this rhetoric--the desire that students should learn to think and communicate effectively, make relevant judgements, and be able to discriminate value--are specific enough indicators of what the writers of General Education in a Free Society meant as their pedagogical objectives. The literature suggests that one of the reasons why these objectives were so easily transferred to the domains of other institutions was because the Harvard Report remained generously ambiguous about how to carry out its dictates. "The ideal of commonness must show itself chiefly in a common requirement rather than in a common way of carrying it out,"<sup>39</sup> the report declared. Part of the reason for this flexibility with respect to general education was perhaps Harvard's appreciation for the limitations of the society in which it existed. Frederick Rudolph intoned that this was the era that "general education had to make

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38. Boyer and Levine, op. cit., p. 15.

39. Keller, op. cit., p. 15.

peace with specialization,"<sup>40</sup> to which Phyllis Keller seems to have replied that "unlike Columbia and Chicago," Harvard did find a way to reconcile with modern particularism.<sup>41</sup> Keller would have us believe that this Harvard approach to general education was one of the reasons for its easy acceptance in other institutions.

It may well be that the greater flexibility and pragmatism of Harvard's conception of a "unifying purpose and idea" accounted for the widespread influence of General Education in a Free Society.<sup>42</sup>

Flexible and pragmatic or not, history shows that the original proposal did not last long. Interestingly enough, one of the first places to reject or amend the suggestions of the report was Harvard itself. Arthur Levine indicates that in 1949, "when this Redbook-based program was officially approved," the resulting course of study departed significantly from the original document.

Instead of required courses in introductory humanities and social sciences, students were given several options; and as alternatives to the advanced general education courses, they could substitute several departmental courses.<sup>43</sup>

Keller explains that this process of amendment and substitution continued for some 20 years resulting in a "dramatic

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40. Rudolph, ibid., p. 256.

41. Keller, op. cit., p. 16.

42. Ibid.

43. Levine, op. cit., p. 360.

shift away from a common core of courses taken by all students to a minimally prescribed distribution requirement."<sup>44</sup> Rudolph illustrates the extent of decline when he quotes Riesman as describing Harvard's general education requirements in 1975 as "minimal, not much more than a mild expectation that a student will take several courses outside his own area of specialization."<sup>45</sup> Such a fate would not seem extraordinary to Rudolph for his basic historical analysis is pragmatic; he claims that those features that survived were meant to survive.

Yale in 1828 and Harvard in 1945 did not speak the language of the country which they addressed. They may have been "right," but truth was beyond authority. It was a function of process, investigation, and experience.<sup>46</sup>

Of the various curricular events that have occurred in the development of the American undergraduate curriculum, the releasing of General Education in a Free Society commands a significant prominence in the literature. From this one might conclude then that the report affected, if not real, than at least perceived, consequences during its period of potential influence. In addition to the examples mentioned, Boyer and Levine point out that just two years after its release a White House Commission on Higher Education for Democracy enthusiastically endorsed general

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44. Keller, op. cit., p. 18.

45. Rudolph, op. cit., pp. 260-261.

46. Ibid., p. 261.

education.<sup>47</sup> What they would have us believe is that a bona fide "revival" of general education had sprung up around the Harvard Redbook. What we can perhaps take at a minimum, though, is that the Harvard Report did discuss a topic that was of at least some concern to the mainstream of American higher education.

To follow up this contention, it might now be profitable to take a closer look at the White House report mentioned. In 1947 President Truman charged what was actually called "The President's Commission on Higher Education" with the task of "defining the responsibilities of colleges and universities in American democracy and in international affairs--and, more specifically, with re-examining the objectives, methods, and facilities of higher education in the United States in the light of the social role it has to play."<sup>48</sup> What this effectively meant was not an examination of small curricular questions, but rather an inquiry into the larger problems of how higher education fitted in contextually with an evolving modern society. Part of the motivation to take such a wide-angle look at the question was the government's realization that the post-war world was fundamentally different than that of the pre-war era, and consequently the entire rationale for

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47. Boyer and Levine, op. cit., p. 14.

48. The President's Commission on Higher Education, Higher Education for American Democracy: A Report of the President's Commission on Higher Education (New York: Harper & Row, 1947).

higher education would necessarily have to be re-examined. Part of the "solution" to the problem posed, was to endorse "general education" as an important element of the curriculum which:

. . . should give to the student the values, attitudes, knowledge, and skills that will equip him to live rightly and well in a free society. It should enable him to identify, interpret, select, and build into his own life those components of his cultural heritage that contribute rightly to understanding and appreciation of the world in which he lives. It should therefore embrace ethical values, scientific generalizations, and aesthetic conceptions, as well as an understanding of the purposes and character of the political, economic, and social institutions that men have devised.<sup>49</sup>

Somewhat along the same lines as the Harvard Redbook, the President's Commission also remained fairly ambiguous about how the objectives of general education were to be carried out in actuality. In a statement regarding method, the report cited experimentation and excellent teaching as two aims that could lead to a fulfillment of the general education ideal. The report also refused to adopt any narrow prescription, preferring instead to leave the way open for a variety of interpretations:

The objectives of general education are not to be achieved by prescribing any single pattern of courses for all students. Seeking to gain common goals for all, general education

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49. Ibid.

nonetheless approaches these goals through different avenues of subject matter and experience. These avenues must be as numerous and varied as the wide difference among students.<sup>50</sup>

Perhaps, as Rudolph would imply, general education was so incongruous with the times such ambiguity was necessary to keep if not its substance, then at least its essence alive.

The decline of interest in general education, at any rate, can be evidenced by a number of events. As early as 1949 Jerome Bruner at Harvard began to erode the Redbook's intent by arguing that substitutions should be allowed for the science requirements. Bruner took exception to the "history and philosophy" approach to science and preferred instead to use "general education" time to introduce students to a specific scientific discipline, or to the contemporary methods of science.<sup>51</sup> Such sentiments herealded a progression that was destined to continue until 1954 when Columbia reverted to a major and distribution system, and 1957-58 when the College at the University of Chicago did the same. Although the reasons for such a shift are complex, it might simply be said that a post-war appreciation for the use of universities (particularly in reference to technological research) created an emerging interest in specialization, which in turn shifted the emphasis in

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50. Ibid.

51. Levine, op. cit., p. 361.

higher education from undergraduate to graduate school. This finally caused a reduction of interest, generally, in the undergraduate curriculum and specifically with respect to general education. Whereas before World War II the undergraduate program was still regarded as a unique entity in its own right, after the war the perceptions began to change so that undergraduate work was increasingly considered as a "way station" to be endured in order to get into graduate school. Perhaps the significance of these developments will be better understood and appreciated after considering some specifics of the factors that were operating on the curriculum at the time.

#### Factors for Consideration

##### Federal Support of Higher Education

The most significant instance of federal support (or influence) on the development of the curriculum, for this period, occurred in congruence with World War II. Before this time involvement was limited to primarily agricultural and military matters. (During the Depression the universities played a part in both the Works Project Administration and the National Youth Administration. Later on, in the early 1940's, the universities participated in the Engineering, Science, and Management War Training Program, as well as the National Defense Research Committee.<sup>52</sup>) Towards the middle and the end of the war, though, the

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52. Kerr, op. cit., p. 52.

relationship between government and university began to change drastically in two specific ways.

The first was an increased utilization of the universities, on the part of the government, for technological and scientific research. Both Clark Kerr and Daniel Bell document quite clearly how the influx of research grants to the university began to change the very scope and nature of its operation. Daniel Bell explains that the Los Alamos laboratory (which produced the atomic bomb) was probably the first model of cooperation that was destined to grow between academia and the state. Writing in 1966, he relates how the Atomic Energy Commission (an outgrowth from Los Alamos) has come to be the single largest patron of the physical sciences. A twelve million dollar electron accelerator was built for Harvard and M.I.T. by the AEC. Along with this machine went a five million dollar annual research budget, funded by the AEC as well. Similarly, a military accelerator was built for Stanford at the staggering cost of \$144 million.<sup>53</sup> This same pattern of incredible federal support for scientific research continued through such agencies as the National Science Foundation, the Air Force, and NASA. By 1960 Clark Kerr estimated that federal support accounted for 75 percent of all university expenditures on research, and 15 percent of

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53. Bell, op. cit., pp. 90-91.

total university budgets.<sup>54</sup> Phyllis Keller, quotes from Kerr to point out that between 1940 and 1960 federal support for higher education (mostly in the form of research grants) multiplied a hundredfold.<sup>55</sup>

The second major curricular development to occur, partially as a result of the war, was the drastic increase in the universities of studies that concentrated on foreign languages and culture. In 1947, the President's Commission on Higher Education proclaimed that "Owing to the inescapable pressure of events, the Nation's traditional isolationism has been displaced by a new sense of responsibility in world affairs."<sup>56</sup> Rudolph tells us that this report, combined with cues from the American Council on Education, the philanthropic foundations, and the Congress created in the universities a broadening of the cultural perspective of the curriculum. Phyllis Keller likewise provides many examples of the post-war proliferation of foreign studies at Harvard. She catalogues a list of whole research institutes that were founded as a part of the trend: Russian Research Centre (1948), Centre for Middle Eastern Studies (1954), the East Asian Research Centre (1957), and the Center for International Affairs

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54. Kerr, op. cit., p. 53.

55. Keller, op. cit., p. 19.

56. President's Commission for Higher Education, op. cit.

(1958).<sup>57</sup> Daniel Bell complements Keller's list by providing much the same sort of description for Columbia University.<sup>58</sup> In all of these cases the point is that considerable intellectual effort (and federal funding) went into the establishment of studies that reflected the United States acknowledgement of its new role in the post-war world.

As a partial consequence of the war, then, the American system of higher education became familiar with a new type of currency between academe and the state, namely the research and development grant. Not only did these grants provide many universities with a good financial footing, they also were instrumental in changing significantly the whole purpose of higher education. Whereas classically the role of higher education was to prepare the just and moral man for society, in the post-war era the emphasis seems to have shifted to one of expanding the knowledge base and training professionals. The research and development grant then, is at least partially responsible for the evolution of the university of this time.

Apart from the research and development phenomenon, the one remaining instance of federal influence in this era occurred with the National Defense Education Act of 1958. This act was established--after the launching of Sputnik in

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57. Keller, op. cit., pp. 20-21.

58. Bell, op. cit., pp. 93-94.

1957--so that government funds could be provided to universities in support of programs that emphasized the sciences and foreign studies. Such an enactment might be thought to be representative of caution and determination on the part of legislators who drafted and passed it. The caution would be in reference to the Sputnik threat, while the determination would be one of gaining a better understanding of a shrinking world.

### College Enrollments

College enrollments more than doubled from one million in 1930 to over 2.6 million in 1958. The greatest increase is thought to have occurred after 1940 when greater numbers of the American population apparently became convinced that education did not necessarily stop at high school.<sup>59</sup> In 1947, the President's Commission on Higher Education claimed that:

the tendency of the American people to seek higher education in ever greater numbers has grown concurrently with an increasingly critical need for such education.<sup>60</sup>

What this conveniently-phrased declaration seems to indicate is a commitment made, if not on the part of Americans in General then at least on behalf of the Commission, to enhance the role of colleges and universities as accreditors of the modern American citizen. It

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59. Carnegie Commission, Missions of the College Curriculum (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1978), p. 46.

60. The President's Commission on Higher Education, Higher Education for American Democracy: A Report of the President's Commission on Higher Education (New York: Harper & Row, 1947).

is perhaps inconsequential or unsolvable whether or not was a "critical need" for increased higher education. What is important is that, for whatever reasons, more and more people saw fit to attend college and university. It is the effect of this influx--this volume and diversity of pure numbers--which is of interest to the study at hand.

One of the significant "spurts" that happened during this era occurred because of the influx of veterans who took advantage of the G.I. Bill of Rights.<sup>61</sup> In 1940 college enrollments were at 1.5 million while in 1947 they jumped up to 2.35 million. Approximately one million of this 1947 census were veterans.<sup>62</sup> Frederick Rudolph tells us that "the impact of the veterans on curricular structure and subject matter was relatively slight," but points out how the influx caused the universities to have their first "large-scale experience with numbers."<sup>63</sup> Interestingly enough, the universities proved capable of absorbing the masses, indicating to Rudolph at least that they could perform the invaluable function of social safety valve by keeping a large number of people off the labor market.

The fear of "what numbers could do to colleges" was articulated through Conant at Harvard and Hutchins at Chicago. Conant, reacting to the G.I. Bill said, "We may

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61. Rudolph, op. cit., p. 282.

62. Levine, op. cit., p. 613.

63. Rudolph, op. cit., p. 283.

find the least capable among the war generation . . . flooding the facilities for advanced education." Robert Hutchins is supposed likewise to have remarked, "Colleges and universities will find themselves converted into educational hobo jungles."<sup>64</sup> Phyllis Keller tells us that a solution eventually applied to deal with such problems was the tightening of admission standards. With a greater pool of applicants to draw upon, the larger universities now found themselves able to be more selective of students.<sup>65</sup> The remainder of those masses clamoring to get into higher education were absorbed by a relatively new phenomenon, the community college.<sup>66</sup>

Beyond foreboding public statements and fluctuations in admission standards, perhaps the real effect of increased college enrollments lay not exclusively in the number of students admitted, but rather in the diversity of background and purpose that they brought with them. Whereas the colonial college might rightfully be typified as having a fairly homogenous student body, the modern university could claim no such easy generalization. The application of the democratic principle to higher education meant the very nature of the enterprise would inevitably

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64. Ibid., pp. 282-283.

65. Keller, op. cit., p. 20.

66. Rudolph, op. cit., p. 284.

change.

In summary, then, college enrollments more than doubled from 1930 to 1958. Before 1940 the high school was still in ascendancy but after that time the college was looked upon as an increasingly essential component of a modern society. After the war the G.I. Bill facilitated veteran education which provided the universities with their first experience in dealing with large numbers of students. Some institutions tightened up their admissions standards while others, like the community college, welcomed students with open arms. The modern educational system was finding a way to meet the needs of an ever-increasing and diverse group of students. Although their adaptability was noteworthy, they had not seen anything yet.

#### Socio-Political Events

There are three selected events that are contained within the years 1930-1958: The Great Depression, World War II, and the launching of Sputnik in 1957. The Great Depression has already been considered in the previous chapter and therefore needs no review save only for our acknowledgement that it was an event that definitely did influence the shaping of the curriculum. As Frederick Rudolph writes, "The Great Depression was an event that imposed on all colleges and universities the necessity of allocating resources, establishing priorities, and developing standards consistent with an evaporating

financial support."<sup>67</sup>

While some aspects of the effect of World War II on the curriculum have already been discussed--namely, the rise of scientific and foreign study institutes--there still remains one other element worthy of mention. Both the Harvard "Redbook" and the President's Commission on Higher Education owe some of their content and tone to the occurrence of that war. Phyllis Keller, for example, tells us that the scholars who wrote General Education in a Free Society "inspired by the patriotism and rededication to democracy stirred by World War II--defined general education as "that part of a student's whole education which looks first of all to his life as a responsible human being and citizen in a democratic society."<sup>68</sup> The President's Commission on Higher Education, likewise, makes specific reference to the War in outlining its recommendations for the curriculum.

(i) With World War II and its conclusion has come a fundamental shift in the orientation of American foreign policy. Owing to the inescapable pressure of events, the Nation's traditional isolationism has been displaced by a new sense of responsibility in world affairs. The need for maintaining our democracy at peace with the rest of the world has compelled our initiative in the formation of the United Nations, and America's role in this and other agencies of international

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67. Ibid., p. 278.

68. Keller, op. cit., p. 14.

cooperation requires of our citizens a knowledge of other peoples--of their political and economic systems, their social and cultural institutions--such as has not hitherto been so urgent.<sup>69</sup>

"Education for democracy" and "education for international awareness" became two catch descriptions of the post-war era. One cannot help but wonder if a World War had not occurred, whether these same sentiments would be so prevalent in the educational rhetoric.

The socio-political event that closes this period is the launching of Sputnik in 1957. Most curriculum historians consider this a fairly significant event because it was seen to demonstrate to the Americans their scientific inadequacies. The response by the Americans was to upgrade considerably their high school programs, especially with respect to the sciences and foreign languages.<sup>70</sup> The colleges quickly followed suit; honors programs, increased budgets, and accelerated programs were all rationalized with Sputnik in mind.<sup>71</sup> What hundreds of speeches and articles on "excellence in education" could not do, a single satellite did; the educational community and the country became mobilized toward a particular end. The National Defense Education Act signed only one year later attests to the degree of its influence.

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69. Levine, op. cit., p. 610.

70. Boyer and Levine, op. cit., p. 15.

71. Grant and Riesman, op. cit., p. 198.

### Summary

The overview history of this era has shown that the general education proposals of the years 1930-1958 differed in kind to those earlier proposals of previous years. This was the era of the big, even bizarre, general education schemes. Ranging from Chicago to Minnesota, St. John's, Harvard, and the President's Commission, one gets the impression these grandiose propositions implied more than just survey courses. Frederick Rudolph, remarks, though, that "where highly publicized general education requirements reshaped the course of study in the 1940's and 1950's, less publicized erosion of those requirements took place in the 1960's and 1970's."<sup>72</sup> As will be seen, the next chapter bears out this point.

The most significant federal "influence" on the curriculum, it was found, occurred in concurrence with World War II. First scientific research, and then foreign study became the currency in which the state and the university would trade in order to foster a mutual relationship. It was an agreement destined to grow and shape the development of the curriculum as it did.

Apart from initiating a significant relationship between academia and government, the war was also responsible for fostering in the curriculum (for a period of time) the ideal of "education for democracy." Those

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72. Rudolph, op. cit., p. 253.

people who advocated general education as a key component in the curriculum did so, in part, by rearticulating the ideal of liberal learning so as to instruct about democracy. To have a liberal education, they could argue, one must come to see the significance of the democratic system. To understand democracy, in turn, required the studying of certain texts<sup>73</sup> and subjects. "General education" could prescribe certain courses and texts therefore, by investigating democracy which, in turn, meant teaching a liberal education. The arguments were, at times, forceful and engaging but, as Rudolph would tend to say, their implementation lay just outside the mainstream of the times.

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73. For a contemporary example see M. J. Adler, The Paideia Proposal, An Educational Manifesto (New York: Macmillan Publishing, 1982), p. 30.

CHAPTER VII  
1958-1978: THE ASCENDANCY OF  
THE GRADUATE SCHOOL

The objective of this chapter is to illustrate how the rise to prominence of the graduate school in American higher education tended to cause a reciprocal decrease of interest (or activity, at least) with respect to the undergraduate course of study. This development, in turn, tended to explain at least some of the reduction of support for the idea of general education. The curricular history of this period, then, is made up primarily of suggestions why general education did not flourish between 1958 and 1970. After 1970 the pendulum appears to swing back again, for "general education" eventually makes its way to the discussion tables again.

Overview History

From 1958-1970 there were two dominating forces that can be said to have some influence on the development of the undergraduate curriculum. The first was a post-Sputnik increase of interest in advanced and specialized study (especially in scientific and foreign research), and the second an apparent demand for "relevant" courses, as prompted during the student activism years. Both these forces tended to devitalize drastically the concern for undergraduate programs designed to provide an element of

"general education."

The effect of Sputnik on the curriculum has already been mentioned in the previous chapter. There is an agreement among historical commentators that the launching of the satellite caused a significant rise of interest on the part of educators and society, with respect to the teaching of science and foreign studies in the schools. Rudolph makes reference to the National Defence Education Act (1958), and the National Science Foundation's support of curricular reform in mathematics and physics, as being caused, in part, by the message of Sputnik.<sup>1</sup> Arthur Levine describes both Oakland University (1959) and New College in Florida (1964) as being "post-Sputnik" institutions that stressed "rigor, hard work, and quality" in their programs. (He also points out that during the late sixties, these strict descriptions would come to be eroded.<sup>2</sup>) In both cases, then, there is an acknowledgement that in the late 1950's and early 1960's, the American educational scene took heed of the Soviet Union's technological superiority. This factor, in itself, might hypothetically have turned the whole nation into scientists if it were not for the second major development that occurred during this

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1. F. Rudolph, Curriculum, A History of the American Undergraduate Course of Study Since 1636 (San Francisco: Jossey-Boss, 1977), p. 265.
  2. A. Levine, Handbook on Undergraduate Curriculum (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1978), pp. 363-370.

period.

The student activist movement of the mid, and late, 1960's was an extremely complex phenomenon.<sup>3</sup> There will be no effort made here to rationalize the movement, but rather just an acknowledgement that it existed and that it had some bearing on the undergraduate curriculum. Arthur Levine suggests that student dissatisfaction with the post-Sputnik mentality centered on their perception that it "emphasized the needs of society but failed to consider the needs of the individual student."<sup>4</sup> Alston Chase, in an article entitled "Skipping Through College" printed in the Atlantic, outlined her interpretation of what it was exactly that the students wanted:

They demanded more participation in college governance. They demanded more relevance--i.e., more political--courses. They demanded more social freedom, better grievance procedures, and a documentation of their "rights and freedoms." They demanded veto power over endowment investment decisions and the abolition of grades and "outmoded" course requirements, including English essay writing, foreign languages, religion courses, comprehensive examinations.<sup>5</sup>

Chase writes that the faculties and administrations eventually gave into these demands because "they were largely sympathetic to the students' political concerns,

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3. See D. Riesman and V. A. Stadtman, Academic Transformation (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1973).

4. Ibid., p. 371.

5. A. Chase, "Skipping Through College, Reflections on the Decline of Liberal Arts Education," Atlantic, 1978, 242(3), 33-40.

and fear ed violence."<sup>6</sup> Phyllis Keller, in a somewhat different tone, describes the Harvard faculty as being "in a state of demoralization and confusion" when they agreed to meet the demands of an Afro-American students' organization. She goes on to say that these startling concessions of faculty authority took place in an atmosphere marked by physical threat, fear, and guilt.<sup>7</sup> Regardless of the method used to obtain concessions, the overall result has been generally agreed upon. Gerald Grant and David Riesman provide an illustration:

The most widespread and significant impact of the educational upheaval of the sixties was to bring about a considerably greater degree of autonomy for students.<sup>8</sup>

Autonomy for the student did not occur just because the students wanted it, but rather because a whole series of social elements came together to make the request appear legitimate. The conscription issue that attached itself to the Vietnam War became a moral issue that called for an individualistic response, while the demographic bulge of the mid-1960's affected a diversification and consumerism such as the universities had never seen before. The student body was far more heterogeneous culturally, intellectually and socially than it had ever been, which prompted a broad spectrum of

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6. Chase, op. cit.,

7. P. Keller, Getting at the Core (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982), p.32.

8. G. Grant and D. Riesman, The Perpetual Dream (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), p.188.

student expectations concerning the role of higher education. The net effect of both the Sputnik situation and the student activism movement, then, was to create a generation of legislators and educators terrified about America's scientific disadvantage, and a generation of students adamant to determine the substance of their own education. Both these conditions did little to nurture new and extended schemes for general education. General education, in fact, was on the decline.

The first indicator of a changing emphasis occurred at the College of the University of Chicago. In 1957-58 the college underwent considerable reorganization as a result of the decision to modify its general education scheme.<sup>9</sup> The objective was to shift from a general education core curriculum program to one that required a major and allowed for some distribution. The result was the formation of a two-year "lower college" which taught essentially "general education," and a two-year "upper college" which was structured to match up with the four divisions of graduate school (social sciences, humanities, biological sciences and physical sciences). The message behind such an organization was to some degree "specialization;" general education was nice and would therefore be retained in the lower college, but it would no longer be the sole component of the undergraduate curriculum. The need for concentration had finally arrived at Chicago.

A second, perhaps minor, illustration of how ideas were changing presented itself at St. John's at Annapolis in

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9. D. Bell, The Reforming of General Education (New York: Anchor Books, 1968), pp. 194-197.

1962. In that year St. Johns--that absolute bastion of a prescribed curriculum--admitted into its program the "preceptorial," a nine-week free study period whereby students could choose their own great books related theme on which to work.<sup>10</sup> One is prompted to imagine that if St. John's had begun to demonstrate even just a little curricular flexibility, then the rest of the nation, in comparison, must have been going wild.

A third example of the failure of the general education idea during these times can be found in reference to the various committees, at Harvard, that tried to revise the spirit of the 1945 Report. In 1964 Paul Doty established a commission with the task of reorganizing general education at Harvard in order to bring it more in line with the original intentions of General Education in a Free Society. After much deliberation, the faculty rejected Doty's proposal, preferring instead to accept a compromise package that was put together one year later by the Ford Commission. In making their choice the faculty voted to reduce the amount of general education required and to increase the amount of student course election within general education.<sup>11</sup>

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10. Levine, op. cit., p. 358.

11. Levine, op. cit., p. 362. See also P. Keller, Getting at the Core (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982), pp. 17-18.

A fourth illustration of the trend away from general education becomes apparent back at the College of the University of Chicago in 1964. Edward Levi, the provost of the university, initiated yet another curricular re-organization. His "Levi Plan" divided the college into five divisions--physical science, biology, social science, humanities and "civilizational" studies (i.e. student elective)--that would offer inter-disciplinary and specialized sequences within each field. All students would be expected to take four core courses (which would constitute their "general education"), and then spend the rest of their time concentrating on the divisional area that they had selected. Daniel Bell suggests that the message to be inferred by this curricular arrangement is one that would have students learn the "structure of inquiry" of a designated subject matter rather than a prescribed content. Bell realizes that these students would not come to understand a spectrum of disciplines, but rather would look to the "meta-meanings" of one specific field in order to derive its operating principles. It was thought that by appreciating the organizing principles of one field, the student would come to appreciate the principles of description, exposition and argument in other subjects as well. This is perhaps a sophisticated way of saying that depth in one area leads to a clearer understanding of the basic structures (though not the substance) of other

areas.<sup>12</sup> At any rate, we see in Bell's description of the evolution of general education at Chicago, a transformation which acknowledges an increasing respect for concentration and yet at the same time still tries to rationalize this concentration within the realm of an organic theory of general education.

Two final indicators for the decline occurred at Columbia and Harvard. In 1970 Columbia College's second year of its Contemporary Civilization course was dropped, and by 1971 Harvard's general education "requirements could easily be transposed into introductory discipline courses. General education between 1958 and 1970 definitely was not the main educational interest of the day.

Almost in defiance of this pervasive trend there occurred two notable exceptions, the first an experimental program, and the second a comprehensive book on the topic of general education. In 1964 Joseph Tussman of the University of California, Berkeley, decided that the experimental college of Alexander Meiklejohn should be rejuvenated.<sup>13</sup> After receiving the go-ahead from Clark Kerr, Tussman set up his college for admittance in 1965. Like Meiklejohn's earlier rendition, the purpose of the program was to study such universal problems as war and peace, freedom and authority, the individual and society,

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12. Bell, op. cit., pp. 196-197.

13. See R. F. Suczek, The Best Laid Plans: A Study of Student Development in an Experimental College Program (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1972), and J. Tussman, Experiment at Berkeley (London: Oxford University Press, 1969).

law and conscience, and acceptance and rebellion. Unlike Meiklejohn's historical approach that contrasted ancient Greece with contemporary America, Tussman preferred a thematic approach that utilized four periods--ancient Greece, 17th century England, the founding of the American constitution, and contemporary America--to provide a greater theoretical breadth with which to assault the questions. There were no courses as such, but rather a series of lectures, seminars and conferences to attend. Also required of students was the keeping of a journal which reflected their reactions to the common list of great books that they were expected to read.

The program had a two-year duration, and was completely prescribed. This was definitely an anomaly in an age that demanded student input into the curriculum, as well as a broad choice of electives. It is for this reason, and others, that Tussman decided to discontinue the program after only four years of operation. Although it had only a short lifespan, Arthur Levine tells us that "very few of the program's faculty or alumni can be located who do not highly praise its idea."<sup>14</sup> Comments such as these are probably the reason why Frederick Rudolph has to concede that although general education programs may never be excessively popular, so too do they never seem to die.<sup>15</sup>

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14. Ibid., p. 376.

15. Rudolph, op. cit., p. 260.

The second apparent anomaly of the times was the releasing, in 1966, of Daniel Bell's The Reforming of General Education. While the mainstream of higher education seemed preoccupied with "relevance" courses, or with graduate school, Bell focused instead on a comprehensive semi-prescribed course of studies for undergraduates. Although his specific proposals (for Columbia College) were not adopted, The Reforming of General Education has come to be regarded as a basic reference for a study of the American curriculum.

With the two exceptions mentioned, the period from 1958 to 1970 was one that placed more emphasis on the individualized study of science, foreign culture, and "relevance" courses (i.e., loosely defined social science courses that dealt with such topics as "The United States' role in Vietnam") than it did on general education. After this period, though, the literature seems to illustrate the beginning of yet another turn-around. It is commonly asserted that the demographic (and economic) boom of the 1960's, was followed by a period of retrenchment in the 1970's. Rudolph points out that just as the Great Depression caused a certain amount of course consolidation in the late 1930's so too "economic retrenchment in the 1970's played a similar salutary role in trimming from the curriculum in many institutions frills and fads that had attached themselves to the course of study in the affluent

1960's."<sup>16</sup> Levine suggests, in a similar vein, that part of the impetus for change in the 1970's was not attributed to idealized educational goals, but rather to bread-and-butter issues such as declining enrollments and reductions of financial support.<sup>17</sup> At any rate, the eventual effect of these conditions was to de-emphasize, once again, the popularity (or perceived feasibility) of electives and to shift attitudes towards curricula that were more consolidated and definable and hence presumably more economically and pedagogically manageable.<sup>18</sup> Frederick Rudolph maintains that by 1976 "concentration was in charge of the curriculum,"<sup>19</sup> while Phyllis Keller, writing about Harvard for the same time period, explained how "there was a growing disposition--often no more than an unfocused yearning--to restore some degree of purpose and coherence to Harvard undergraduate education, to balance liberty with order."<sup>20</sup> That "unfocused yearning" was to become formalized one year later in 1977, when Dean Henry Rosovsky of Harvard presented his report of the core curriculum to faculty and students. The issue of general education was, once

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16. Ibid., p. 248.

17. Levine, op. cit., p. 372.

18. See E. Boyer and A. Levine, A Quest for Common Learning (Washington: Carnegie Foundation, 1971), p. 8.

19. Rudolph, op. cit., p. 248.

20. Keller, op. cit., p. 33.

again, back on the discussion table.

### Factors for Consideration

#### Federal Support of Higher Education

The year 1945 has been identified as the point when government and the state began to forge a new relationship with the university. Beginning with the emphasis on scientific research and extending to a concentration on foreign studies, the post-war years saw the utilization of the research and development grant as the currency that bonded academia and the state together. Daniel Bell claims that one of the most important reasons why the government came to select the universities to do their research (as opposed to private consultant companies) was because of the "dispensability" of the staff. By "dispensability" Bell meant to suggest that the structure of the university--its emphasis on research accomplishment as a measure of achievement and promotion--was such so as to allow university professors the mobility to opt in and out of various projects.<sup>21</sup> Such a proposition is significant for, if valid, it points to some interesting consequences for the delivery of the regular university program.

Related to those consequences were some new developments occurring with respect to federal grants. Whereas

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21. Bell, op. cit., pp. 94-95.

from 1945 to 1958 the majority of federal spending at the universities occurred through Department of Defense and Atomic Energy Commission contracts, after that time studies related to the "life sciences" began to receive a greater share of the pot.<sup>22</sup> The National Institute of Health, for example, received a steady increase of funds from 1947-1959 and because of that managed, from 1959 to 1965, to increase their research grants to universities from 140 million to 538 million. Clark Kerr is able to write in 1963 that federal support for university research concentrated not only in defence and scientific/technological progress, but in the area of health as well. To illustrate he provided the following table which shows the percentage of research funds allocated from federal agencies in 1961.

|                                                                                                                | %  |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----|
| Department of Health, Education and Welfare (37 percent was from the National Institute of Health alone) . . . | 39 |
| Department of Defense . . . . .                                                                                | 32 |
| National Science Foundation . . . . .                                                                          | 11 |
| Atomic Energy Commission . . . . .                                                                             | 8  |
| Department of Agriculture . . . . .                                                                            | 6  |
| National Aeronautics and Space Administration . . . . .                                                        | 3  |
| Other Agencies . . . . .                                                                                       | 1  |

From: C. Kerr, The Uses of the University, 3rd ed. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982), p. 53.

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22. Bell, op. cit., pp. 90-92.

The relationship between government and the universities had become, through research and development grants, quite extensive. The impact that such grants had on the operation of the institution varied with each particular case. Those universities that, for whatever reason, received no federal grants felt, of course, no direct repercussions. Those institutions, alternatively, that received the majority of the funds either had already changed, or were in the process of changing their administrative structure so as to make the securing and researching of such projects an integral part of their operation.

The impact of increased federal research grants on the universities can be appreciated in a number of ways. Daniel Bell made much of the fact that as the structure and apparent purpose of the university changed, so too did the role of the professor:

Forty years ago, a college professor taught his undergraduate classes, instructed a few graduate students, and wrote some books and articles. Today, he will be a teacher, researcher, project director, administrator, and fund raiser. He will have dozens of dissertations to direct, and serve on countless Ph.D. oral examinations. He will write or feel compelled to write articles and research reports, edit compendia and symposia and, with the growing number of professional journals, join more editorial boards and referee more journal papers. He will be on

departmental committees, university committees, professional association committees, attend conferences, local and international; and serve on government commissions, local, state and federal.<sup>23</sup>

David Riesman and Christopher Jencks pick up on an extension of this description when they define as an "Academic Revolution" the phenomenon of modern professors switching allegiances from their colleges and universities to connections in their professional field.<sup>24</sup> Clark Kerr explains that the reason for this shift occurs, more often than not, because financial backing for research comes from federal agencies, and not the university. This creates, as Clark illustrates, some interesting consequences:

. . . some faculty members tend to shift their identification and loyalty from their university to the agency in Washington. Their concern with the general welfare of the university is eroded and they become tenants rather than owners, taking their grants with them as they change their institutional lodgings. The university, as Allen Wallis, president of the University of Rochester, has remarked, becomes to an extent a "hotel." The agency becomes the new alma mater. The research entrepreneur becomes a euphoric schizophrenic.<sup>25</sup>

What is perhaps fundamental to recognize is that while federal research support did indeed alter the role of the

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23. Bell, op. cit., p. 101.

24. Kerr, op. cit., p. 59.

25. Kerr, op. cit., p. 59.

professor (creating an "academic revolution" if you will) and did indeed significantly increase the quality of graduate education, the overriding consequent effect was, as Harold Onlams concluded in his Brookings study of federal aid to universities, to accelerate the "long-standing depreciation of undergraduate education at large universities."<sup>26</sup> Federal aid for higher education in the form of research and development grants, therefore, might be said to effect general education negatively because its implementation tends to bring about conditions which support an opposite pedagogical extreme.

#### College Enrollments

There are two key elements that the literature bears out with respect to college enrollments. The first is that there was an incredible enrollment surge between 1960 and 1970, and the second is that this surge caused, in part, stiffer admission standards at established institutions as well as a national shift of interest to the American graduate school. A third feature identified as important in this era is that enrollments levelled off or declined throughout the 1970's.

The most obvious reason for an enrollment increase between 1960 and 1970 was the post-war baby boom. Grant and Riesman suggest, for example, that

The post-World War II baby boom added to the growth in the number of high

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26. Kerr, op. cit., p. 64.

school graduates and of those attending college, caused the number of undergraduates to double within the decade--an unprecedented demographic bulge which also, of course, brought about a corresponding tripling of faculty.<sup>27</sup>

Clark Kerr uses the effects of the baby boom to classify the 1960's as one of his "spurts" in college attendance figures.<sup>28</sup> There is little doubt, then, that in the minds of historical commentators, and the statistics on enrollments, that the demographic bulge conceived after the war made its impact on the colleges of the 1960's.

Gerald Grant and David Riesman have estimated that it was not until the late 1950's that colleges could afford to become selective with respect to their admission policies.<sup>29</sup> Phyllis Keller seems to come to the same conclusion in regard to her analysis of Harvard.<sup>30</sup> Presumably, what both sets of authors have discovered, is the beginning of one of the most obvious consequences of increased enrollments.

The close of this era evidenced a significant shift away from the economic and enrollment prosperity of the 1960's. As Rudolph says, "The 1970's marked the end to visions of limitless growth for American colleges and universities, now faced with the day-to-day realities of tight budgets and a ceiling or decline in student

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27. Grant and Riesman, op. cit., p. 191.

28. Kerr, op. cit., p. 163.

29. Grant and Riesman, op. cit., p. 194.

30. Keller, op. cit., p. 20.

policies.<sup>29</sup> Phyllis Keller seems to come to the same conclusion in regard to her analysis of Harvard.<sup>30</sup>

Presumably, what both sets of authors have discovered, is the beginning of one of the most obvious consequences of increased enrollments.

The second consequence is equally as predictable. As more and more students attended colleges and universities, so too did more and more students graduate from those institutions. A greater population of first degree students meant in turn a larger number applying for and entering graduate school. By pure numbers, then, the American graduate school got bigger. By virtue of the large number of research grants that were being allocated to universities, the American graduate school also became quite important. Both these factors, then, were instrumental in shifting the emphasis of American higher education away from undergraduate concerns, and hence away from general education.

The close of this era evidenced a significant shift away from the economic and enrollment prosperity of the 1960's. As Rudolph says, "The 1970's marked the end to visions of limitless growth for American colleges and universities, now faced with the day-to-day realities of tight budgets and a ceiling or decline in student

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29. Grant and Riesman, op. cit., p. 194.

30. Keller, op. cit., p. 20.

enrollments."<sup>31</sup> The importance of such a decline with respect to general education can only be speculative. A survey of the curricular history of this period shows that electives gave way to concentrations which in turn gave way to Rosovsky's 1977 core curriculum proposed at Harvard. From this, one might tentatively suggest that declining enrollments are conducive to general education, but such an hypothesis is premature. It will be sufficient for the time being to acknowledge the retrenchment of the 1970's and to note the concurrent curricular developments that went along with it.

#### Socio-Political Events

The two socio-political events selected for examination during this period are the Vietnam war, and the Watergate scandal. They have been chosen really only in deference to Boyer and Levine who suggest that there is a connection between them and a contemporary "revitalization" of general education. In order to be true to the literature, then, this proposition must be documented.

Arthur Levine, in 1981, wrote an article for Change magazine entitled "Today's College Students: Going First Class on the Titanic."<sup>32</sup> In it, he describes college

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31. Rudolph, op. cit., p. 372.

32. A. Levine, "Today's College Students: Going First Class on the Titanic," Change, 1981, March, 16-23.

students of the 1970's as being "me-centered," politically uninvolved, and cynical about civic life. Making reference to student surveys conducted between 1969-1979, he claims that the two most important social or historical events that students say influenced their thinking were Watergate and Vietnam. The evident implication is that Watergate and Vietnam contributed to the molding of a socially apathetic generation.

The Change article is interesting because it comes to fit in quite well (as would be expected) with Boyer and Levine's A Quest for Common Learning.<sup>33</sup> In the latter work, written in 1981, the authors quote Christopher Lasch as commentating on the contemporary populus:

Americans seem to want to forget not only the sixties, the riots, the new left, the disruptions on college campuses, Vietnam, Watergate, and the Nixon presidency, but the entire past . . .<sup>34</sup>

The significance of this quote (and of Levine's article in Change), is that the authors would use it to support their major premise: that "revivals" of general education are historically begun in times of relative social narcissism.<sup>35</sup> Vietnam and Watergate are important to Boyer and Levine (although they don't say it explicitly) because they helped

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33. E. Boyer and A. Levine, A Quest for Common Learning (Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Foundation, 1981).

34. C. Lasch, The Culture of Narcissism: American Life in an Age of Diminishing Expectations (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1978), pp. 4-5.

35. Ibid., p. 18.

nurture a kind of social isolationism which, in turn, provided a fertile breeding ground for the "revival" of general education. The relative strengths and weaknesses of this proposition will be examined at the conclusion of this study.

### Summary

It has been suggested that the period between 1958-1978 was not noteworthy for a rash of experiments in general education. On the contrary, it would appear that electivism and concentration can lay greater claim to this era. Two forces contributed to this; the emphasis on specialization advanced in the post-Sputnik era, and the demand on the part of students for "relevant" courses during the 1960's. These forces fused together to create concentration in the graduate schools, and elective diversification in the undergraduate curriculum during the student activist years. Neither of these was conducive to general education.

It was recognized that quite beyond Sputnik, the reason for an increased emphasis on specialization and graduate work, was the considerable research funding supplied to the universities by way of government agencies. Note was made that whereas this funding originally (1945) took the form of military grants, this era saw the extension of such support in the "life sciences (e.g. Health and Welfare) studies. A consequence of this increased funding was recognized in the changing role and perceptions of

professors. This "academic revolution" corresponded, in turn, with a very significant development in American higher education: namely, the committed shift towards the graduate school as being the centerpiece of the university. The effect on the undergraduate curriculum of this shift was that it increasingly became perceived and designed as a prerequisite for specialized graduate work. As such, there was little concern for, or development in, programs in general education.

College enrollments were seen to have jumped considerably from 1960 to 1970. This had the effect of creating tougher admissions standards at some large universities, as well as contributing to the growth of the graduate school.

Watergate and Vietnam were presented in deference to the Boyer/Levine thesis as being potentially influential in initiating another general education "revival." The validity of such a notion has not yet been commented on.

The most significant feature of this period between 1958-1978, then, was the ascendancy of graduate education in the American university model. The importance of this ascendancy, with reference to general education, is that it seems the latter tended not to develop significantly in the presence of the former. The period closes with the economic and enrollment retrenchment of the 1970's leading to what Boyer and Levine would like to imagine as the contemporary revival of general education.

## CHAPTER VIII

### 1978-1982: GENERAL EDUCATION RECONSIDERED

The general premise posited for this period is that it represents yet another "revitalization" of interest in general education. Although a particular "kind" of general education cannot, as yet, be identified, the resurgence of the abstract idea is hard to deny. The proposal here is to outline some examples of this "renaissance" as they show themselves in articles and specific projects.

#### Overview History

There are two reasons why it is reasonable to suggest that a resurgence of interest in general education has occurred at least from 1978 onwards. The first is the outpouring of articles and books, and the second is the increase in the number of general education programs. With respect to the first, Boyer and Levine are fond of documenting this ascendancy by relating, among other things, that "between 1970 and 1979, the number of scholarly and professional articles on general education increased by 75 percent, while popular articles on the subject doubled."<sup>1</sup> Craig Kridel, as do many others, concur with the suggestion that the literature has increased significantly.<sup>2</sup>

Beyond the periodical and journal articles, though, it

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1. E. Boyer and A. Levine, A Quest for Common Learning (Washington, D.C., 1981), p. 5.
  2. C. Kridel, "General Education: Practice Without

is perhaps worthwhile to recall that several of the books mentioned in the review of the literature (Chapter II) were published during this period. Of particular note would be the Carnegie Foundation's triad, especially the volume entitled Missions of the College Curriculum (1978). If the nation's educators take heed of Change magazine's claim that Missions is "must reading for any academic professional worth his or her name,"<sup>3</sup> then it might reasonably be said that the Carnegie studies will have had some effect on the current debate regarding general education. A second potentially influential work is Boyer and Levine's A Quest for Common Learning (1981). It is not so much the content of the book that can be imagined as fostering change, but rather the status of the authors that might be the telling factor. Ernest Boyer very recently was the U.S. Commissioner of Education and currently is the President of the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching. Arthur Levine is also a Senior Fellow of the Carnegie Foundation. Clifton Conrad and Jean Wyer in an article entitled "Seven Trends in Liberal Learning," (1982) maintain that one of the major reasons for the current resurgence of interest in general education is the generous support that the government and foundations provide for the operation of general education

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'Theory.'" Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association, March, 1980 (ERIC Reproduction Service Document No. ED 196361).

3. Change, February, 1978.

projects.<sup>4</sup> If this is the case, then it might follow that Boyer and Levine have some potential to be influential in this regard.

Apart from the onslaught of literature produced on this subject, the second reason for affirming the renewed interest of general education occurs because of the number of actual proposals that appeared on the educational landscape. Two articles from Forum document this rise.<sup>5</sup> Writing in 1977 and in 1978 the editors identify a list of colleges that experimented with core curricula, integrated studies, or "general education." The list includes:

Saint Joseph's College, Indiana  
 Los Medanos College, California  
 University of Wisconsin, Green Bay, Wisconsin  
 Morehouse College, Georgia  
 City Colleges of Chicago, Illinois  
 Boston University, Massachusetts  
 Pacific Lutheran University, Washington  
 Brigham Young University, Utah  
 North Texas State University, Texas  
 St. Anselm's College, New Hampshire  
 Bowdoin College, Maine  
 Gustavus Adolphus College, Minnesota  
 Illinois Central College, Illinois.

There is also reference made to some 10 other colleges with

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4. C. F. Conrad and J.C. Wyer, "Seven Trends in Liberal Learning," AGB Reports, Jan./Feb. 1982, 24(1), 10-14.
5. K. Mohrman (ed.), "Core Curriculum," The Forum for Liberal Education (Washington, D.C.: Association of American Colleges, 1977) ERIC Reproduction Service Document No. 165645.
- K. Mohrman (ed.), "New Approaches to General Education." The Forum for Liberal Education (Washington, D.C.: Association of American Colleges, 1978). ERIC Reproduction Service Document No. ED 165660.

projects in the making of which Forum had become aware. As a supplement to these, Boyer and Levine (1981) point out that Stanford University and the University of Massachusetts are currently reintroducing their Western Civilization survey courses, and that Columbia--long a champion of required courses--was in the process of "sprucing up" its survey programs.<sup>6</sup>

Perhaps more important than this panorama of individual projects, though, was the one that originated from America's oldest university. In 1973 Derek Bok, the President of Harvard, appointed Henry Rosovsky as Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences.<sup>7</sup> As a result of that appointment wheels were put in motion that eventually caused the faculty to engage in a comprehensive examination of the undergraduate course of study. In 1975 Rosovsky appointed a series of task forces that were to investigate separate issues of the undergraduate program. Among the areas examined was the topic of general education, or "core curriculum" as it was phrased. The task force dealing with this issue was watched closely because obviously the make-up of the curriculum concerned the vested interest of many. After much deliberation a preliminary report was released to faculty and students in January of 1977. The response on the part of the faculty took the form of more debate,

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6. Boyer and Levine, op. cit., p. 7.

7. P. Keller, Getting at the Core (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982).

and more amendments until finally, in May of 1977, a resolution was passed agreeing in principle to the idea of a core curriculum having as its basis the study of five different areas: (1) Letters and Arts, (2) History, (3) Social and Philosophical Analysis, (4) Mathematics and Science, (5) Foreign Languages and Cultures. Phyllis Keller points out with precision the essence of what she interpreted the faculty had agreed to:

What the faculty approved by a resounding voice vote was not a set of statements describing in detail what every student should know, but a set of general principles committing it to depart from more than a decade of educational laissez-faire by reasserting educational paternalism.<sup>8</sup>

Included in the core program were expository writing and quantitative reasoning requirements. What the net requirements eventually came to be then, were one year's study in four of the five areas mentioned previously, plus the expository writing and quantitative reasoning elements listed above.<sup>9</sup> The "core" was restricted to eight courses, and consequently occupied one-quarter of the student's four year program.

The significance of the Harvard core program, of course, lies in the number of institutions that will try to emulate it. Many of the smaller colleges mentioned previously in

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8. Ibid., p. 79.

9. S. J. Makler and R. J. Munnely, "Harvard in the 1980's: A Question of Adaptability," Educational Leadership, 1980, 37(4), 304-306.

the Forum articles, in fact took their cues from the discussion fermenting at Harvard in 1975-77. What is also interesting about the Harvard proposal (implemented in September 1982) is the kind of general education that it attempts to facilitate. Instead of confining their definition of general education to the teaching of prescribed content, the Harvard faculty sought instead a broader application of the term. They opted to convey to students "the kinds of knowledge that exists in certain important areas, how such knowledge is acquired, how it is used, and what it might mean to them personally."<sup>10</sup> The difference here was that instead of teaching survey courses that would span a general historical heritage, the Harvard system would offer students a variety of more particularized, even specific, subjects (e.g., 'Great Novels in the 19th and Early 20th Centuries') from which they could choose. The selection would not have been wholly arbitrary, however, because the range of choice was limited according to the five study areas mentioned. "Great Novels of the 19th and Early 20th Centuries," therefore, could have been a choice that a student made within the requirement to take at least one course from the "Arts and Literature" section. It was reasoned that exposure to all five study areas (literature and the arts, history, social and philosophical analysis, mathematics and science, and foreign languages and culture)

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10. Keller, op. cit., p. 109.

would allow students to become acquainted with five fundamentally different ways of thinking; critical, historical, analytical, scientific and linguistic. Some commentators, such as Conrad and Wyer,<sup>11</sup> tend to think that this kind of approach is unique to the 1970's and 80's. Such a claim is difficult to make in view of the fact that Daniel Bell suggested the same sort of configuration back in 1966. From the writer's point of view, it does not seem possible to speculate usefully about a new "type" of general education until more study can be made of how the programs turn out in actuality. As any curriculum planner knows, there is a considerable difference between the rhetoric of an idea and its implementation in reality.

With Harvard leading the way, and a host of other institutions following suit, it seems apparent that some kind of resurgence of interest has been stirred in general education. The question to be considered now is, "Why?"

#### Factors for Consideration

##### Federal Support of Higher Education

At this point there is little information in the literature about the potential influence of federal support on the development of general education in the curriculum. One can, at best, cite a few examples of recent developments and then speculate.

Clifton C. Conrad and Jean C. Wyer seem to think that

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11. Conrad and Wyer, op. cit., p. 12.

there has been an increased tendency on the part of government agencies and private foundations, to fund curricular experiments having to do with liberal education. They cite the Fund for the Improvement of Post-Secondary Education and the National Endowment for the Humanities as being noteworthy federal agencies in this regard.<sup>12</sup> According to an article in Forum (1978), it would appear that Gustavus Adolphus College would affirm this claim seeing as it received a five year development grant from the latter.<sup>13</sup>

The problem, of course, in locating a couple of examples of federal support, is to be able to tell when there are sufficient enough of these examples so as to constitute a trend. At the moment, it is impossible to proclaim from the data available that any such trend exists. If it could be shown that the federal government overwhelmingly supports general education, then there would be some basis for identifying it as a significant factor. Since no such data presently exist, one can only speculate that federal support "might be" a factor if it increased.

A second, and more fundamental, problem concerning federal support has to do with causation. Even if it could be shown that a majority of government agencies and private

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12. Ibid., p. 10.

13. Mohrman (ed.), "New Approaches to General Education," Forum, 1978, p. 7.

foundations were supporting general education, the real question would then be, why? Boyer and Levine would probably apply their social pendulum and posit that the time had come. But unless one can come up with something slightly more tangible, the problem of causation with respect to general education will remain unsolved.

### College Enrollments

Again there are few concrete data that illustrate a definitive relationship between enrollments and general education for this period. About all that one can do is identify some relevant conditions and, as before, speculate.

The United States has, from 1978 to the present, undergone economic retrenchment and a concurrent enrollment ceiling or decline. Both these factors have contributed to the "financial woes" that most American institutions are presently experiencing, and both can therefore be thought to affect, in some as yet undefinable way, the development of the curriculum. Possibly the most interesting suggestion about the relationship between declining enrollments (and economic retrenchment) and the rise of general education is that they exist in inverse proportion to one another. As enrollments go up (for whatever reason) more money is made available to the institutions, more staff are hired, a greater breadth of student population must be serviced, and hence a greater variety (and choice) of courses are offered. As enrollments decline, however (again, for whatever reason)

the money becomes tight, "frills" must be abandoned and, most important of all, the institutions must re-examine what it is they are offering to students. It is sometimes thought that in this process of re-examination many university administrators take a second look at general education.<sup>13</sup> A tentative suggestion then, based on the barest of examples, is that the economic retrenchment and enrollment stagnation of the late 1970's and early 1980's may have stimulated some of the debate on the topic of general education.

#### Socio-Political Events

No socio-political events have been selected from the literature as none has been identified as being significant for this period. It is simply too early to evaluate any particular event as being important because the analysis requires a certain degree of retrospection.

#### Summary

The period from 1978 to 1982 has been described as a time of revitalized interest in general education. Evidence of this revitalization is offered in the number of books and articles emerging on the subject, as well as the number of general education projects actually underway. Of the former, the Carnegie triad was cited as being

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13. Conrad and Wyer, op. cit. See also Boyer and Levine, op. cit., p. 8.

noteworthy and of the latter, Harvard's core curriculum is probably the most important.

It is really too early to tell what kind of "revival" is presently occurring with respect to general education. Likewise, there is not much evidence to evaluate the probable causes of this latest resurgence save for certain shifts in federal funding, and declining enrollments. This period, like those previous to it, must now be analyzed in the context of an historical framework. Perhaps then, one can offer some viable suggestions about the causes of the occurrence and disappearance of general education in the undergraduate curriculum.

CHAPTER IX  
SUMMATION, ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this thesis was to analyze how such factors as federal support for higher education, fluctuations college enrollments, and specified socio-political events influenced the rise and fall of general education as it existed in the American undergraduate curriculum from 1850-1980. A range of historical and curricular studies were surveyed as a basis for the study. Five historical periods were then suggested as thematic divisions in which to examine the factors mentioned. The purpose of this chapter is to summarize briefly the findings, analyse them, and draw appropriate conclusions.

Summation

The single most important point to acknowledge is that from roughly 1850 onwards, "general education" was a minor component of the undergraduate curriculum. While this thesis centers on the study of general education, it is crucial to realize that the bulk of curricular developments from that date onward consisted of erratic increases of programs that emphasized the securing of a major with a considerable elective component. The rise and fall of "general education," therefore, must be considered against a

backdrop of emerging specialization.<sup>1</sup>

A second point worthy of note is the difficulty encountered in trying to generalize about "the" American undergraduate curriculum. The practice in this thesis has been to accept tacitly that the land-grant universities represent the "middle-group" mainstream of American higher education. The influence that private institutions (e.g., Harvard) had on these land-grant universities was also taken into consideration.

Bearing these two qualifications in mind the curricular history will now be briefly summarized. From this history it will then be possible to analyse and conclude.

A common, and useful, generalization with which to begin is that before 1850 the classical liberal arts curriculum was dominant in American higher education. What should be pointed out though is that decades before this date, a serious debate had been raging about the validity of such a course of study. Yale's famous defence of the liberal arts in 1828 would probably not have been necessary if it were not for the existence of a formidable critique of such a curriculum. Moreover, before 1850 it was not generally necessary to go to college or university in order to secure a place in the professions.<sup>2</sup>

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1. F. Rudolph, Curriculum, A History of the American Undergraduate Course of Study Since 1636 (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1977), pp. 253, 261.

2. Ibid., p. 100.

"The colleges," as Rudolph wrote, "enrolled all for whom the curriculum was designed and for whom, given the nature of American society, the curriculum made sense."<sup>3</sup> The curriculum made sense to the elites, for it was to them that the colleges were designed to respond.

By 1850 bona fide curricular alternatives begin to appear in opposition to the classical course of study. Francis Wayland at Brown University set the stage for Eliot at Harvard to herald in the age of electives. From 1869 to 1909 the concepts of individualized scholarship and student choice held sway at Harvard. The assumption has been that, to a certain degree, the nation followed suit.

Lawrence Lowell's insistence on "concentrations" at Harvard is generally thought to have signalled a curricular shift towards some form of structure in requirements. This desire for structure apparently became rearticulated in a series of "survey" courses that emerged from 1914-1927. The combination of concentration (and distribution) requirements, along with the rise of survey courses, has prompted commentators such as Boyer and Levine to characterize this period as a "revival" of general education. Apparently the "commonality of experience" that is sought in distribution requirements and survey courses is thought to coincide with the objectives of general education.

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3. Ibid., p. 100.

The Great Depression is then presented as occasioning another curricular shift. Gerald Grant and David Riesman posit the 1930's as marking the beginning of their "telic" reforms. While Grant and Riesman have suggested a variety of these reforms in their typology (e.g. communal-expressive, activist-radical), the ones most relevant in terms of general education are those labelled "neo-classical." The reforms of the University of Chicago in 1942, and the program at St. John's at Annapolis can, in varying degrees, be thought of as such neo-classical expressions. They, along with developments at the University of Minnesota and Harvard, represent what has been suggested as a second "revival" of general education. Whereas distribution requirements and survey courses were thought to characterize initial efforts towards general education, the projects at Chicago, St. John's, Minnesota and Harvard (to name only a few), are now described as a different kind of revival which is characterized by variety.

Central to this second so-called resurgence of general education is the occurrence of World War II. Three results seem to have occurred in respect to higher education as a consequence of the war. The first was the increase of federal support to the universities for scientific (especially military-oriented) research. The second was a similar increase of federal aid for foreign studies, and the third was a desire, on the part of some, for the rearticulation of "liberal education" to mean "education

for democracy." The last desire is illustrated, in part, in the rationale of General Education in a Free Society, as well as by the President's Commission on Higher Education. From 1945 to 1957 the colleges and universities might be thought of as trying to reconcile the liberal education that was perceived as necessary for "education for democracy," with the practical education that was imagined as crucial for the education of a modern American nation. Advocates for "general education" would tend to employ the former for their rationales, while advocates for specialization would tend to emphasize the latter. During this period of curricular history, both proponents had existing models to support.

The launching of Sputnik in 1957 is generally thought of as marking the beginning of another curricular shift towards, firstly, a specified concentration and then secondly, toward greater use of electives. The specified concentration referred to is, of course, the sciences (and then later on the study of foreign cultures), prompted presumably when the nation was shocked into realizing its technological inferiority to the Soviet Union. This concern for specialization in the sciences, and the respectability of specialization in general that it evoked, was a highly significant shift that had important repercussions for the entire system of higher education. What has been suggested is that the increased emphasis on specialized research (and the funding provided for it) caused the graduate school to

become the centerpiece of post-secondary learning. What this, in turn, seems to have effected, according to Phyllis Keller and others, was a consequent shift in the orientation of the undergraduate course of study:

As research and the training of graduate students became the focal activity, the norms of graduate education came to permeate the undergraduate curriculum at many American universities.<sup>4</sup>

This process did not, of course, occur spontaneously in the late 1950's but rather evolved as a result of both the knowledge explosion and the rise of academic departments. The effect in the late 1950's was to legitimize specialization and thereby devitalize most claims about the comparative importance of a general education.

The concentrations of the post-Sputnik era were followed by a period of increase electives in the 1960's. The student activism movements succeeded in challenging the curricular structure of the colleges and universities to such a degree that many core requirements for degrees were dropped. What some commentators now point out, though, in looking back at the 1960's, is that it was the faculty who gained the most because they became excused from having to teach courses outside of their own specialties.<sup>5</sup> Riesman and Jenck's

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4. P. Keller, Getting at the Core (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982), p. 21.

5. B. O'Connell, "Where Does Harvard Lead Us?" Change, September, 1978, pp. 35-40, 61.

"academic revolution" meant, among other things, that university faculty were now enamoured of specialization and pursued it, some would say, at the expense of teaching and the undergraduate curriculum. This loosening of the undergraduate curriculum, then, coupled with the unmistakable shift towards specialized graduate education, characterizes the years 1958-1978 as not being very conducive to general education.

The 1970's are typified, by Boyer and Levine, as comprising a population of self-centered, career-oriented, and cynical college students. Vietnam and Watergate are presented as events that are thought to have contributed to a sense of political non-participation among these people. Whether one would agree with this analysis or not, it must be conceded that the late 1970's saw a significant increase of interest on the subject of general education. It is generally reported that the numbers of books and articles on the topic have increased, as well as actual general education projects. The most significant indication, to many, of the third "revitalization" of general education is Harvard's 1977 core curriculum proposal.

#### Analysis of Factors

The literature reveals that there are many factors that have influenced the development of the curriculum, and hence might be said to have influenced the rise and fall of general education. One line of evidence suggests that the

so-called "knowledge explosion" prompted the emergence of academic departments which, in turn, countered the implementation of general education programs. Another consideration is admission standards and how they could have directly influenced the development of the curriculum. Yet a third question is the role of university presidents in molding the curriculum, while a fourth might enquire into the power of philanthropies in determining the course of study. The point, as evidenced in the literature, is that no single factor can best explain curricular developments, but alternatively that a conglomerate of influences (some known, others only speculative) is needed to provide a reasonable account. With this in mind it becomes almost trite to consider a limited number of factors without trying to place them into context with each other.

The purpose, however, of carrying on with such a practice, as has been done here, is to try to isolate factors--albeit artificially--in order to make their investigation manageable. Although particular "findings" are often the result of such manipulation, the qualifications required of such conclusions should be borne in mind.

#### Federal Support of Universities

The literature has made constant reference to the effect of federal support of universities on the curriculum, and hence it has been selected as one potentially significant factor. By "federal support" is meant those

enactments, financial grants, and recommendations made by the government that directly influence the development of the curriculum. In the historical periods examined there are seven types of involvements of the federal government with the universities. Although all of these had some amount of influence on the curriculum in general, the degree of impact for each has been varied. The seven types of involvement might be described as follows:

1. Agricultural/service
2. General military
3. Scientific/military
4. Scientific/technological
5. Foreign studies
6. Life sciences
7. Official recommendations.

The agricultural/service involvement was initiated with the Morrill Act of 1862, and the various agriculturally-oriented enactments that passed after it (Hatch Act, 1887; Smith-Lever Act, 1914).<sup>6</sup> The general significance of the Morrill Act, as typically portrayed, is that it set the precedent of defining the modern American university as an institution devoted to public

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6. C. Kerr, The Uses of the University, 3rd edition (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982), p. 52.

service. Various authors have drawn the distinction between the British, German and American universities as institutions that emphasized culture, scholarship, and service respectively.<sup>7</sup> Many of them characterize the Morrill Act as being the crucial legislation that affected the validity of such a generalization. The significance of the Morrill Act with respect to general education is indirect; by setting the precedent for the kind of institution that the American university would be, it might be said to have inadvertently biased the American educational community against comprehensive general education.

The involvements that the federal government had with the universities in general military matters are confined to such examples as the insistence that colleges keep military companies of students during the civil war, the establishment of the ROTC in 1920, the Washington request for a "War Issues" course as developed at Columbia, the establishment of the Engineering, Science, and Management War Training Program and the National Defence Research Committee in the early 1940's, and the G.I. Bill of Rights passed during the Second World War. With the exception of the Washington request for a "War Issues" course, all of

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7. Kerr, op. cit., p. 18.

Veysey, L. R., The Emergence of the American University (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1965), p. 12.

F. Rudolph, The American College and University (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1968), p. 356.

these are thought to have effected minor changes in the in the curriculum and hence cannot be said to have had much influence on the development of general education. The 'Contemporary Civilization' course established at Columbia can only be regarded as an unintended consequence of the Washington request. It would appear, therefore, that federal influence on higher education with respect to general military matters had little or no direct effect on the development of general education.

The most significant federal involvement with higher education, in terms of this study, occurred with the scientific/military enterprises of the Second World War and the scientific/technological, foreign study, and life sciences involvements continuing from 1945 to the present. The importance of these four types of involvement with respect to general education is measured not in terms of how much they supported the concept, but rather how their implementation had the effect of limiting its popularity. The premise has been advanced that federal involvement in the four areas mentioned helped to facilitate the rise of the graduate school in American higher education, which in turn tended to de-emphasize the role of undergraduate education. This lack of purpose and interest in the undergraduate course of study is then held partially responsible for a consequent lack of wholehearted interest in general education from at least 1945 onwards.

The final type of federal involvement with higher

education has been labelled "official recommendations." The best example of an instance of official recommendation occurred in 1947 with the "President's Commission on Higher Education." As has been shown, one of its suggestions was a renewed commitment to general education. On a superficial level it might be hypothesized then that one specific way that the federal government influenced general education was by way of official recommendations. Unfortunately, there is no way of knowing whether the recommendation itself led to an increase in general education programs, or whether there are other factors that could be considered even more influential. If the writer were to speculate he would choose the latter, and if he were to speculate further he would suggest that official recommendations increase their potential to influence the curriculum in direct proportion to the amount of structural support (i.e., financial aid) that accompanies the recommendations. In reference to the President's Commission of 1947 it would appear that little structural support accompanied the recommendations and so it might, therefore, be tentatively suggested that its true influence on the development of general education was limited.

Within the confines of this study then, there are three essentially indirect ways in which federal support of higher education influenced the development of general education in the curriculum. The Morrill Act of 1862 indirectly and inadvertently biased American higher

education against comprehensive general education, by establishing as a precedent the principle of "service" for the emerging modern American university. The Washington request for a "War Issues" course played a small, indirect part in initiating, for a time, a rash of general education survey courses between 1919 and 1930. After World War II the federal involvement with the universities in such areas as scientific/military, scientific/technological, foreign studies, and life sciences was the partial cause of the ascendancy of the graduate school, which in turn had the effect of devitalizing the undergraduate curriculum, and hence delimiting the interest in, and support of, general education.

The President's Commission on Higher Education (1947) is known to have made recommendations proposing a renewed commitment to general education, but the literature does not conclusively demonstrate whether these recommendations actually caused such a renewed interest.

### College Enrollments

The examination of college enrollments, as derived from the literature, concerns itself only with numbers of students and not with their ethnic or social characteristics. Although the latter can indeed have significant effects on the development of the curriculum,<sup>8</sup> the

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8. Laurence Veysey, for example, provides an interesting speculation when he suggests that one of the reasons for the legitimization of the university degree (and

limitations of the thesis preclude its discussion. Some reference, of course, must necessarily be made with regard to the effect of diversity of student population, but this will be phrased in the most general terms. The purpose of this section is merely to try to assess the relationship between numbers of students enrolled in colleges, and the concurrent curriculum offered in colleges.

One of the most immediate concerns with respect to college enrollments is in trying to discriminate between cause and effect. One must, if possible, decide if an enrollment change was the function of curriculum or if a change in the curriculum was caused by an increase of enrollment. It must be made clear from the beginning, of course, that changes in either enrollment or curriculum did not occur solely in direct response to each other, but were the results of other factors as well.

With these qualifications, three developments with respect to enrollments, and the curriculum, can now be identified. The first is that college enrollments increased substantially from 1850 to 1982. Table 9.1 shows that from a college population of 52,000 in 1870, the figure had risen to over seven million in 1979. Whereas less than one per

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hence, academic boom) of the 1890's, was because newly arrived immigrants regarded it as their "insurance policy against downward mobility."

See L. R. Veysey, The Emergence of the American University (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1965), p. 266.

cent of college-aged population was attending institutions of higher learning in the mid-nineteenth century, now it is claimed that over 50 per cent of 18-24 year olds attend. The claim made by the President's Commission (1947) of the "tendency of the American people to seek higher education in even greater numbers"<sup>9</sup> would appear to be true. What is also apparent, in terms of the curriculum, is that the high school is no longer considered the terminal point for the average citizen's education.

Within this confirmed growth of college enrollments are contained two enrollment "spurts" that must be accounted for. As has been identified, the first occurred in the 1870's and the second in the 1960's. In reference to the problem of cause and effect, it is reasonable to posit that the 1870's enrollment expansion was "caused" by a change in curriculum, whereas part of the change in curriculum of the 1960's was "caused" by an enrollment expansion. Such an assertion requires some clarification.

Clark, Riesman and Rudolph all suggest that the enrollment increase in the 1870's was, in part, a result of a change in the curriculum. Clark and Riesman, as noted, have suggested that enrollment stagnation at the time caused universities and colleges to offer wider services in an attempt to capture their share of the student market.<sup>10</sup> The competition was particularly tight, especially as,

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9. A. Levine, Handbook on Undergraduate Curriculum (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1978), p. 609.

10. G. Clark and D. Riesman, The Perpetual Dream (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), p. 366.

Table 9.1  
College Enrollments (18-21 Year Olds)  
From 1870-1979  
(x 1000)

| Year | 18-21<br>Census | College<br>Enrollments | % Enroll<br>(18-21) | Enroll-<br>ment<br>Growth (%) | National<br>Census | Population<br>Growth<br>(%) |
|------|-----------------|------------------------|---------------------|-------------------------------|--------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1850 |                 |                        |                     |                               | 23,191             |                             |
| 1860 |                 |                        |                     |                               | 31,443             | 35.5                        |
| 1870 | 3,058           | 52                     | 1.7                 |                               | 38,558             | 22.6                        |
| 1880 | 4,259           | 115                    | 2.7                 | 121.0                         | 50,155             | 30.0                        |
| 1890 | 5,200           | 156                    | 3.0                 | 35.0                          | 62,947             | 25.5                        |
| 1900 | 5,925           | 237                    | 4.0                 | 51.9                          | 75,994             | 20.7                        |
| 1910 | 7,208           | 346                    | 4.8                 | 45.9                          | 91,972             | 21.0                        |
| 1920 | 7,185           | 582                    | 8.1                 | 68.2                          | 105,710            | 14.9                        |
| 1930 | 8,639           | 1,054                  | 12.2                | 81.0                          | 122,775            | 16.4                        |
| 1940 | 8,333           | 1,500                  | 18.0                | 42.3                          | 131,669            | 7.2                         |
| 1950 | 8,609           | 2,600                  | 30.2                | 73.3                          | 150,697            | 14.4                        |
| 1960 | (8,625)         | 3,200                  | (37.1)              | 23.0                          | 173,323            | 15.0                        |
| 1970 | 14,791          | 7,100                  | 48.0                | 121.8                         | 203,235            | 17.2                        |
| 1979 |                 |                        | (50.0)              |                               | 220,600            | 8.5                         |

Compiled from:

Frederick Rudolph, Curriculum, A History of the American Undergraduate Course of Study Since 1636 (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1977).

U.S. Bureau of the Census, Historical Statistics of the United States: Colonial Times to 1970 (Part I), Washington, D.C., 1975.

U.S. Bureau of the Census, Statistical Abstract of the United States: 1980, 101st edition (Washington, D.C., 1980).

according to Hitchcock's statistics, the nation's population was growing twice as fast as college enrollments.<sup>11</sup> Part of the attraction that some universities offered to students was the chance for them to choose freely from a wider variety of courses. Frederick Rudolph concludes that it was the existence of these "electives" that was partially responsible for the enrollment growth of the times.<sup>12</sup> What can be concluded, therefore, is that the enrollment growth of the 1870's was a result, not a cause, of the curricular shift to electives.

The popularity of electives from 1870 onwards should reveal something about the state of the American nation. Whereas in colonial times attendance at college was not required of a citizen or a professional, after 1850 this situation seemed to change. Egalitarianism, the "knowledge explosion," and the shift of America from an agrarian to an industrialized nation are all cited as trends that might have been instrumental in causing a greater number of people to attend college. Whether one would like to accept these sweeping theses or not, it is evident that between 1870 and 1960 more and more people saw fit to enroll in institutions of higher learning.

The net effect is that by 1960 the purpose of the

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11. Rudolph (1977), op. cit., p. 101.

12. Ibid., p. 211.

university had been changed from one of educating for an elite few, to one of providing educational services for the many. The second "spurt" of enrollments in the 1960's was not caused by a significant change in the curriculum, nor initially by wider accessibility (for the evolution of an egalitarian university had already guaranteed, to a degree, such accessibility), but rather by the baby boom. The post World War II children had now grown up and were ready for college. Between 1960 and 1970 college enrollments increased from 3.2 million to 7.1 million. One of the effects of this massive influx of such a broad variety of individuals was a diversification of undergraduate courses, and a lessening of core requirements. In this second case, then, it can reasonably be stated that it was the enrollment increases themselves, to an extent, that shaped some of the curricular expressions of the 1960's.

Within the confines of this study, and with respect to the history thus far examined, it would appear that no definite relationship between fluctuations in college enrollments and the development of general education in the curriculum can be suggested. All that can be identified, rather, are two tentative relations. The first is that population stagnation, in some cases, provided an occasion for the possible re-examination and revitalization of general education (1930), while in other instances it prompted an expanding of the curriculum to lure new students (1870). The second is that the population increase in the

colleges caused the diversifying of the curriculum and thereby limited the implementation and acceptance of general education. Both of these, as stated, amount only to historical observations and do little to suggest any useable pattern for the future. It would appear then that the emergence of general education within the undergraduate curriculum is not directly dependent on changes in college enrollments but exists only in some, as yet unspecified, relation to such changes.

#### Socio-Political Events

Six socio-political events were selected from the literature as being potentially influential on the curriculum. These were: World War I, the Great Depression, World War II, the launching of Sputnik, Watergate and Vietnam. All six examples were selected because a number of authors suggested various connections between the events and the development of the curriculum. Unfortunately, in some cases different authors posited different analyses, making a clear understanding of the relationship between the event and the curriculum difficult. A classic example occurs in a consideration of World War II. Whereas Clark Kerr (and Daniel Bell, to an extent) emphasized the research relationship that emerged between academe and the state because of the war, Boyer and Levine prefer to illuminate the sense of moral reconsideration that such an ordeal must have evoked.<sup>13</sup>

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13. E. Boyer and A. Levine, A Quest for Common Learning (Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Foundation, 1981), p. 14.

The objective of Kerr's interpretation, of course, is to show the evolution of the multiversity, while Boyer and Levine, alternatively, are desirous to prove that the Second World War was a stimulus for educational thoughts about community and global responsibility. The point is that for some of the socio-political events selected, variations of interpretations occur in the literature with respect to their potential influence on the curriculum. This makes an assessment of their potential connection to general education in the curriculum very problematic.

There are, however, degrees to which the different events might be assessed as being significantly influential. On the basis of the consensus in the literature, one can be reasonably confident that the launching of Sputnik, for example, did indeed have the effect of rejuvenating in the United States the study of the sciences. One has to be slightly more cautious in extending the effects of that particular situation to suggest something like "the launching of Sputnik created the graduate school which in turn killed general education."

It would appear that of the six events selected, the launching of Sputnik yields the most consistent interpretation as to its effects. The effects of the Great Depression are described variously by Rudolph, and Grant and Riesman; the influence of war on the curriculum, as discussed, is open for interpretation; and the thesis that Watergate and Vietnam might be tangentially related to the

latest revival of general education rests only on the affirmation of Boyer and Levine. Such a situation illustrates two points: that the influence of a socio-political event (i.e., especially something as complex as a world war) on the curriculum is difficult to generalize into one or two "effects;" and more important, that the literature thus far reviewed provides no comprehensive analysis of the relationship between specified socio-political events and the development of general education in the curriculum.

It is for this reason, then, that the writer must concede that within the confines of this study (and excepting some minimal connections that can be made between the launching of Sputnik and the rise of science) no definitive relationship has been found between the socio-political events suggested, and the emergence of general education in the curriculum.

### Conclusions

Within the confines of the factors examined, there are two kinds of findings that this study yields: suggestions as to why general education occurred within the undergraduate curriculum, and suggestions as to why general education did not occur within the undergraduate curriculum. Of these two, the latter makes up the greater part of the study.

Some tentative suggestions of factors that could have influenced the development of general education in the curriculum are as follows:

- (i) The request from Washington in 1917, that Columbia College teach a "War Issues" course played a small part in helping to initiate the 'Contemporary Civilization' course at Columbia which, in turn, played a part in establishing the "survey course" as one method by which to facilitate a general education.
- (ii) The economic and enrollment stagnation of the 1930's may have caused some university administrators to re-examine their course offerings, which may have in turn, prompted some of them to advocate general education programs.
- (iii) There may be a tenuous link between World War II, and the development of general education in the curriculum. The link occurs through various publications (e.g. the Harvard Redbook) suggesting that "education for democracy" entails a certain degree of general education.
- (iv) The 1947 President's Commission on Higher Education may have influenced some university administrations to adopt programs, or elements, of general education.

Boyer and Levine's implication about the connection between Watergate and Vietnam and the development of general education in the undergraduate curriculum cannot, as yet, be included in this list of tentative factors. The writer would contend that there are few specific data in the literature which would substantiate such a general

proposition.<sup>14</sup>

Some suggestions of factors that might have impeded the development of general education in the curriculum are as follows:

- (i) The Morrill Act of 1862 might be thought to have biased the American system of higher education against comprehensive general education by establishing as a precedent the principle of "service" as a primary goal for the American university.
- (ii) The various federal involvements in research and development during and after World War II might be thought of as aiding the ascendancy of the graduate school in American higher education and thereby limiting both undergraduate and general education.
- (iii) The launching of Sputnik in 1957 might be thought of as being tangentially related to a pedagogical movement in the early 1960's which endorsed specialization (especially in the sciences) and therefore tended not to appreciate or support general education.
- (iv) The college enrollment bulge of the 1960's might be thought of as contributing to the increased diversification of the curriculum at that time, and hence a pedagogical extreme at odds with general education.

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14. For a sampling of the kind of treatment that this proposition has received to date see: C. Lasch, The Cult of Narcissism: American Life in an Age of Diminishing Expectations (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1978); A. Levine, "Today's College Students: Going First Class on the Titanic," Change March, 1981.

Within the confines of this study, the findings are rather sparse. One is left with a series of tentative and tenuous suggestions about why general education was, or was not, in vogue during particular historical periods, but with little else. Part of the reason for this deficiency, as already implied, is because only a limited number of factors were selected with which to investigate the history, and because the literature reviewed did not analyse even those few factors comprehensively. In addition to the few findings already suggested, the writer must therefore also conclude that considerably more research must be done in order to find both comprehensive and specific reasons for the development of general education in the American undergraduate curriculum.

CHAPTER X  
SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY  
FOR FURTHER INVESTIGATION

Significance of the Study

The findings of this study are significant only as they relate to a particular frame of reference, and only as they answer a particular kind of question. The frame of reference referred to is the generalization about "the" American university (and hence the American curriculum) that was made explicit at the beginning of the work. The kinds of questions that this thesis addresses are not minutely specific ones (e.g., why did Hutchins' general education scheme fail at Chicago, yet succeed at St. John's), nor grandiose ones such as, "What are the essential elements of human existence and how might these be translated into general education?", but rather they are questions that operate between those two extremes in order to make such kind of enquiry as: "How was the notion of general education (as expressed, for example, by Robert Hutchins or Joseph Tussman) implemented through the mainstream of American higher education?" The utility of this thesis, then, is that it answers a particular kind of question with respect to a particular frame of reference. As such, the study is significant more for historical description, than it is for socio-historical speculation about future trends.

### For Further Investigation

The greatest importance of this study, from the writer's perspective, lies in its ability to furnish a base for extended work. This it has done, for although the study does not answer many questions, it asks a multitude. "Fifty percent of science," said Einstein, "is being able to ask the right sorts of questions." If such a formula is also true for the study of educational foundations, then the thesis has been helpful indeed.

Part of the incentive for the writer to engage in this particular study was for the information that it might yield regarding related work within a Canadian context. At some point the writer would like to enquire into the matter of "general" or "liberal" education in the Canadian undergraduate course of study. The American experience with general education was studied both as a precedent for what might occur in Canada (for American educational "innovations" have a way of seeping north across the border) and for the methodological clues that the research process would divulge.

The literature reviewed for preparation of this thesis has revealed that there are three broad areas of study required in order to address, comprehensively, the question of general or liberal education within the Canadian undergraduate curriculum. Simplistically put, they might be described as historical, theoretical and practical, but an examination of their proposed content reveals that they

contain more than their labels suggest.

Historically, there is possibly a two-phase, four-step progression that might be utilized in order to provide a reasonable historical base to the problem. Step one of the first phase--a survey history of general education in the American undergraduate curriculum--has been completed with this thesis. Its purpose was to provide an outline and a beginning. Step two of phase one would require a comprehensive history of general education in the American undergraduate curriculum. This "comprehensive" history would have to take a closer look at a larger range of factors that may or may not have influenced the development of general education in the curriculum. Among the elements that would have to be examined are: the rise of the academic departments, the effect of philanthropies on universities, the "translation" of the knowledge explosion to the university curriculum, student's reactions to, and influence on general education, university governance and the effect of "great presidents," the effects of ethnic make-up of students on the curriculum, the relation of the role of high schools to the development of colleges and universities, the influence of student activism groups in the 1960's, and the significance of admissions requirements on the curriculum. These, and other factors, would have to be examined and weighed in order to be able to discover why particular general education programs worked, and why others did not. The economic status of the nation would

have to be explicitly considered.

The third step in phase one would have to involve the construction of some sort of historical-analytical typology which could be used to evoke some sort of pattern out of this history. One example might be a typology that suggested a distinction between something called a "trend" and another thing called a "factor." "Trends" could be those large-scale pervading influences that (if demonstrable) affect an entire nation. "Factors," on the other hand, could be posited as those smaller elements that operate either in harmony with, or against, the "trends." The rise of industrialism, the "knowledge explosion," and "creeping egalitarianism," might all be considered as "trends" while such things as federal support for universities, college enrollments, and student reactions might all be considered factors that either operate in conjunction with, or against those trends.

As an aside, of particular interest to the writer is the possibility of how "great men" might fit into this typology. Frederick Rudolph claims, for example, that Cornell, White, Gilman, and Eliot, were not magicians, in reference to the academic surge of the 1870's, but rather were the "organizers" of a "developing rationale that made its appearance because it could no longer be delayed."<sup>1</sup> Laurence Veysey, though, suggests that "until about 1890,

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1. Rudolph, op. cit., p. 99.

academic efforts burgeoned largely in spite of the public, not as the result of popular acclaim."<sup>2</sup> The question to assess here, then, is whether these men could be called "factors" that went against the predominant trend, or whether they were elements of the trend itself. Equally compelling would be to try and assess whether it was the efforts of individual men that might have accounted for certain periodic revivals of general education. If it could be shown that "trends" tended to limit general education, while individuals (e.g. Hutchins) helped facilitate their periodic revival, then it might be suggested that from 1850 onwards general education was an ideal concept that required, among other things, the temporary ignoring (on the part of an individual or institution) of the realities of the social environment in favour of an ideal educational environment. (In one sense, general education attempts to apply a communal, homogeneous and intellectually hierarchical conception of knowledge and man, upon a society that is essentially diversified, heterogeneous and egalitarian. Perhaps only living men can counter such odds.) At any rate, the typology, if it was a good one, might begin to be able to get at these kinds of questions. The crux, of course, would be in being able to justify conclusively that the "trends" and "factors" stood in relation to one another as posited.

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2. L. Veysey, The Emergence of the American University (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1965), p. 16.

A fourth, and related, step in the first phase of the historical inquiry would be to engage in some sort of "historical speculation." What is meant here is speculation about the future in reference to the past. A thorough examination would have to be made of "recent developments" in the field of curriculum in order to try to assess if, and how, frames of reference (models) might have changed. To speculate on the future on the basis of the past requires that one know the precise difference between the two. This is particularly true in the modern world where change appears to occur as rapidly. Historical speculation, then, would have to take cognizance of such factors.

With the first phase being an historical progression that examines the American educational system, the second phase would involve a repetition of the first applied to the Canadian scene. Presumably the lessons learned from the first study would assist in creating a more intelligent assessment of the second.

Another broad area necessary for consideration would be the theoretical premises that underlie general and/or liberal education. The first challenge would be to define the two terms. This could end up being a monumental work in itself. There are, of course, many approaches. The content-analysis method might allow one to "deduce" from the words their meaning. Alternatively, an examination of usage might produce some acceptable distinction between the two terms. In a somewhat related way Boyer and Levine have attempted to

get at the various meanings of "general education" by cataloguing its "purposes" during World War I, World War II, and the present. Whatever the approach, it is inevitable that the study of "general" and "liberal" education requires that some precise definitions of the terms be advanced.

A parallel theoretical study would be the survey of the various philosophical justifications for a core curriculum. Here one would have to refer to the arguments of J. P. White<sup>3</sup> and Hirst and Peters,<sup>4</sup> who state, in various ways, that there are particular kinds of things that have to be taught, with particularly good reasons for doing so. A rebuttal and extension of the argument can be found in Tim Devlin and Mary Warnock's What Must We Teach?<sup>5</sup> Using these as initial sources the investigation could probably carry one from E. F. Schumacher to Alfred North Whitehead. The objective of the investigation, however, would remain constant: What constitutes an essential (perhaps liberal) education?

As a variation or extension of this work it would probably be most advantageous to take a broad look at theories of knowledge. In the history of the curriculum, it

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3. J. P. White, Towards a Compulsory Curriculum (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1973).
  4. P. H. Hirst and R. S. Peters, The Logic of Education (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1970).
  5. T. Devlin and M. Warnock, What Must we Teach? (The Great Debate) (London: Temple Smith, 1977).

is a common practice to proclaim that the "knowledge explosion" led to fragmentation which in turn led to specialization. Since this premise is asserted with such frequency and confidence it would most likely be worthwhile to enquire into what constitutes a "knowledge explosion," and how such an "explosion" occurred. Is it an "innate" function of "knowledge" periodically to multiply rapidly, or is it more our manipulation of data that creates "explosions?" If there was an explosion that "fragmented" knowledge into many subsections, is there the possibility of an implosion that might effectively integrate the fragments back together again? The recent increase of interest on the part of both graduate and undergraduate educators in interdisciplinary studies might be examined in this light. At any rate, all of these questions have a bearing on how institutions of higher education package and present "knowledge" to the common man.

The theoretical considerations are, of course, the most difficult about which to become definitive. Perhaps the greatest value in examining them lies not in the "solutions" that they produce, but rather in the complexity of the question that they force an investigator to acknowledge.

The third broad area to be examined with respect to "general" or "liberal" education in the Canadian undergraduate curriculum, is practical studies. Gresham Riley, in an article entitled "Goals of a Liberal Education: Making the Actual and the Ideal Meet," suggests that:

Recent studies have provided empirical evidence that a liberal arts education, more than any other, produces those qualities of mind and character which are required of responsible citizens in an open, complex, and technological society.<sup>6</sup>

One of the first "practical" studies to undertake, then, is to follow up the claim by reading Riley's references,<sup>7</sup> and engaging in extended studies. If it were possible to interview graduates of St. John's and Joseph Tussman's Experimental College, some worthwhile data might be collected. It might also be beneficial, in this vein, to consider Douglas Heath's longitudinal study of students at Haverford College.<sup>8</sup> The objective here would be to try to get some empirical evidence on the advantages of particular kinds of educational experiences.

A second and related practical study could involve the collection of data on Canadian professors' attitudes about liberal or general education. Prerequisite references would include Vanderman and Lyons,<sup>9</sup> Dressel and Lorimer,<sup>10</sup>

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6. G. Riley, "Goals of a Liberal Education: Making the Actual and the Ideal Meet," Liberal Education, 1979, 65, 434-44.
  7. D. G. Winter, A. J. Stewart and D. C. McClelland, "Grading the Effects of a Liberal Arts Education," Psychology Today (Sept. 1978), 69.
  8. D. Heath, "What the Enduring Effects of Higher Education Tell Us About a Liberal Education," Journal of Higher Education, 1976, 47, pp. 173-190.
  9. A. M. VanderMeer and M. D. Lyons, "Professional Fields and the Liberal Arts: 1958-1978," Educational Record 1979, 60 (2), 197-201.
  10. P. Dressel and M. F. Lorimer, Attitudes of Liberal Arts Faculty Members Toward Liberal and Professional Education (New York: Teachers College, Columbia University, 1960).

Dressel, Mayhew and McGrath,<sup>11</sup> Boyer and Ahlgren,<sup>12</sup> and Flexner and Berrettini.<sup>13</sup> The study proper then would involve conducting a single survey, or series of surveys, on Canadian campuses in order to acquire, empirically, current perceptions on the issue. The results would be expected to provide the researcher with an understanding of how a designated population might respond to suggestions of "liberal education" in the Canadian undergraduate curriculum.

The last "practical" study that could be considered is in the area of implementation. If the objective (after all this research) was to implement general or liberal education in Canada's post-secondary system, then presumably some work would have to be done on how this might actually be achieved. Of the many experimental colleges that the literature has identified, almost all of their experiments have turned out, in practice, to be something quite different from what their inventors had imagined them to be in theory.

11. P. Dressel, L. B. Mayhew and E. J. McGrath, The Liberal Arts as Viewed by Faculty Members in Professional Schools (New York: Teachers College, Columbia University, 1959).
12. C. M. Boyer and A. Ahlgren, "Visual Priorities in Liberal Education, an Empirical Assessment," Journal of Higher Education, 1982, 53, (2), 207-215.
13. R. Berrettini and H. Flexner, General Education: Concept and Practise (Washington, D.C.: Association for the Study of Higher Education, 1981, ERIC Reproduction Services Document No. ED 203 817).

The examination of historical, theoretical and practical considerations with respect to general education, then, should provide, in totality, a substantial base from which to study comprehensively the matter of general or liberal education in the Canadian undergraduate curriculum. (The precise connection between "general" and "liberal" education would have to be made explicit within the course of that examination.) This thesis, as has been stated, provides the first step for that progression.

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