Check for
updates

Undergraduate Education and the Maturation of Students

Craig Evan Klafter

The real purpose of undergraduate education is the maturation of students rather than the transfer of knowledge. Knowledge transfer does occur, but it is a consequence of the maturation process. Maturation leads students to the true goal of undergraduate education—independent learning.

The maturation that the earliest universities and colleges concerned themselves with was cognitive, intellectual, and social maturation. The oldest form of undergraduate education in Western civilization (with parallels in Islamic, Indian, and Chinese civilizations) is a liberal arts education,[1] which has proven over more than a millennium to be the most effective means of cognitive maturation: cultivating and perfecting human cognitive abilities and capacities to recognize, comprehend, and explain understandings; to realize that there may be multiple perspectives; and to recognize the merit of opposing views. A liberal arts education enables those who possess it to further their own knowledge.[2]

A liberal arts education was considered to be preparatory for the serious study of theology, philosophy, law, and medicine through which students would acquire intellectual maturity—the capacity to tolerate uncertainty; to withhold assent; to withstand contradiction; to know the limits of one's knowledge; to have rational control of one's beliefs, values, and inferences; and to face and

[1]Bradley J. Cook and Fathi H. Malkawi, eds., *Classical Foundations of Islamic Educational Thought: A Compendium of Parallel English-Arabic Texts* (Provo, UT: Brigham Young University Press, 2011): Nogendra Nath Mazumder, *A History of Education in Ancient India* (London: Andesite Press, 2015); Thomas H. C. Lee, *Education in Traditional China: A History* (Leiden & Boston: Brill, 2000).

[2]John Burnet, ed., *Aristotle on Education* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1903); Cicero, *De Inventione*. Book 1, Section 35; David L. Wagner, *The Seven Liberal Arts in the Middle Ages* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1983).

Craig Evan Klafter is Rector Emeritus, American University in Myanmar; ceklafter@gmail.com.

fairly address ideas, beliefs, and viewpoints. This was in stark contrast to the intellectually immature who became uncomfortable when their religious views and subjective certainties were questioned. In time, the range of disciplines one could engage after completing a liberal arts education were expanded, but all were expected to promote intellectual maturity.[3]

Universities and colleges also promoted social maturity—how a person relates to friends, family, co-workers, and society. Medieval European universities and colleges had rigorously enforced codes of behavior and dress designed to influence how students lived their lives in and out of universities. To this end, faculty members mentored students both intellectually and socially, organized sporting competitions were introduced to develop teamwork, and students were expected to attend the university or college church and undertake charitable work that those churches organized. Graduates of medieval European universities were expected to be of significant consequence for the benefit of church and state, and thus to be able to function well in society.[4]

Remnants of these traditions survive today in some European universities. At Oxford University, for example, constituent college codes are not restricted to the College or the College's activities but can be applied whenever and wherever a student's behavior "threatens to bring the College into disrepute among reasonable people."[5] Academic dress is required to be worn at formal university functions and when sitting for examinations, and students are expected to dress for dinner, all to instill a sense of belonging and decorum. Faculty members have offices intermixed with student residences and dine collectively with students as a means of fulfilling their social mentoring responsibilities. There is an extensive system of sporting competition (club, intercollegiate, and inter-university), and most students avail themselves. Also, most constituent colleges have chapels that organize community service activities.

The idea of a liberal arts education and the disciplines it prepared one to study, with their focus on cognitive and educational maturation, were transplanted to the United States during its colonial period (1607-1765) and continued largely unchanged until the mid-twentieth century. However, beginning in the mid-nineteenth century, some universities adopted the

---

[3]Hastings Rashdall, *The Universities of Europe in the Middle Ages* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1895), Vol. II, Part 1, 230.

[4]Robert S. Rait, *Life in the Medieval University* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1931). There were lapses of student behavior, but they were usually corrected by university administrators, the Church, or family. Charles Homer Haskins, *The Rise of Universities* (New York: Henry Holt & Co., 1923), 79-80.

[5]See, for example, Balliol College: Non-Academic Disciplinary Procedure, 2.4 c), https://weblearn.ox.ac.uk/access/content/group/balliol/Balliol%20College%20Handbook/Non%20Academic%20Disciplinary%20Procedure.pdf

Humboldtian model of higher education, which favored intensive research and a "well-rounded education" allowing students considerable choice. By the mid-twentieth century, the Humboldtian model became dominant and typically took the form of distribution requirements. In theory, a well-rounded education was supposed to be needed to expand the presence of scientific subjects in undergraduate education. In reality, distribution requirements were often favored because they ensured that a wide range of academic departments had enough students to teach. The idea that undergraduate education should promote cognitive maturation lost favor as the Humboldtian model took hold on most American universities and colleges.[6]

The theory that post-liberal arts education should instill intellectual maturity was also eroded as a result of the Humboldtian model of higher education. Its focus on student choice made designing an overall curriculum with overarching developmental goals difficult.

Another factor contributing to the decline in focus on intellectual maturation was the abandonment of neutrality as a professorial value. Socratic schools, at the root of Western higher education, encouraged teachers to be neutral so they could effectively lead student inquiry without having students mimic their views.[7] The Socratic approach was transplanted into American higher education during the eighteenth century and continues today in many American law schools. However, it was replaced in non-law courses by the "priesthood professor" during the first half of the twentieth century. Edward Shils wrote that in the 1930s the American professorate was comparable to a "priesthood rather uneven in their merits, but uniform in their bearing; they never referred to anything personal."[8] These priesthood professors generally were not public figures, did not give media interviews, and did not advise governments. Although the method of instruction had changed, the perceived neutrality of professors remained.

It was during the 1960s that neutrality was abandoned as a professorial value. Government research funding to support the Cold War, the civil rights movement, the counterculture movement, and opposition to the Vietnam War all contributed to the politicization of the American professoriate. The

[6]Louis Menand, Paul Reitter, Chad Wellmon, *The Rise of the Research University: A Sourcebook* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2017).

[7]Ethan M. Fishman, "Counteracting Misconceptions about the Socratic Method," *College Teaching* 33, no. 4 (1985): 185-188; M. Neenan, "Using Socratic questioning in coaching," *Journal of Rational-Emotive & Cognitive-Behavior Therapy* 27, no. 4 (2009): 249–264.

[8]Quoted in John R. Thelin, *A History of American Higher Education*, Second Edition (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2011), 222.

priesthood professoriate gave way to the politically-engaged and activist professoriate. Professors shared their political views and theories in class and in "teach-ins," wrote op-ed pieces, gave media interviews, engaged in protests, and advised governments. Whereas professorial neutrality forced students to assess different theories and views, professorial partiality led many students to simply accept the theories and views of their professors.[9]

Most American universities and colleges have also drifted away from responsibility for social maturation. Codes of student conduct are usually regarded as a means of establishing expectations of students in a particular institution rather than of how they should generally lead their lives. Faculty members at most institutions no longer have responsibility for promoting social maturity. Of course, some universities and colleges have a few faculty members living in residence halls, but the ratio of resident faculty to students reveals that resident faculty cannot effectively serve as mentors of students. Collective faculty-student dining is infrequent. The percentage of undergraduates who engage in team sports is modest. Community service remains popular on many campuses, but it is usually student rather than university organized.

The failure of American higher education to focus on the maturation of students has increasingly become a problem because of changes in American parenting theories and practices that have left many students cognitively, intellectually, and socially immature when entering universities and colleges. The Baby Boomer generation, born between 1946 and 1964, was the first generation to be shaped by Benjamin Spock's *The Common Sense Book of Baby and Child Care* (1946). It became one of the best-selling books of the twentieth century, and persuaded tens of millions of American parents to ignore experts and engage in permissive parenting. Its first line reads, "Trust yourself. You know more than you think you do." Critics assailed it for producing children used to having their desires instantly gratified.

Spock's influence continued and became more pronounced on Generation X (1965 to 1981), which was also called the latchkey generation due to reduced adult supervision during childhood resulting from an abnormally high divorce rate and the desire of (and often the need for) mothers to work.[10] Generation X was also the generation of MTV, video games, and SONY's Walkman, which many busy parents used as a substitute for

---

[9]Marshall Sahlins, "Teach-Ins Helped Galvanize Student Activism in the 1960s. They Can Do So Again Today," *Nation*, April 6, 2017; Helen Lefkowitz Horowitz, "The 1960s and the Transformation of Campus Cultures," *History of Education Quarterly* 26, no. 1 (Spring, 1986): 1-38.

[10]Ana Swanson, "144 years of marriage and divorce in the United States, in one chart," *Washington Post*, June 23, 2015.

supervision. Generation X students were characterized as self-absorbed, unfocused, and poorly socialized.[11]

In 2000, Neil Howe and William Strauss published *Millennials Rising: The Next Great Generation* in which they coined the term "millennials" to describe American children born between 1982 and 2000.[12] They asserted that the millennial generation possessed a more positive, group-oriented, can-do ethos than their predecessor generation and were destined to be a great generation to rival the World War II generation. Three years later, Howe and Strauss published *Millennials Go to College* in which they optimistically asserted that American millennials like to work in teams, are risking less and planning more, and find money and class to be more divisive than race. Howe and Strauss advocated that universities and colleges change to recruit and teach millennials successfully.[13]

Howe and Strauss, however, were neither qualified nor experienced enough to undertake their research and their work was not subjected to peer-review prior to publication.[14] Suitably educated and experienced scholars eventually tested their theories. They found the work deeply flawed. Thomas C. Reeves and Eunjung Oh of the University of Georgia found: "The bottom line on generational differences is that educational technology researchers should treat this variable as failing to meet the rigor of definition and measurement required for robust individual differences variables. The gross generalizations based on weak survey research and the speculations of profit-oriented consultants should be treated with extreme caution in a research and development context."[15] Jean M. Twenge, W. Keith Campbell, and Elise C. Freeman of San Diego State University and the University of Georgia, conducted three extensive studies of millennial students and found, contrary to the claims of Howe and Strauss, substantial evidence in support of describing them as having "less community feeling, including less intrinsic, more extrinsic, and more narcissistic goals" than

---

[11]David M. Gross and Sophfronia Scott, "Living: Proceeding With Caution," *Time*, July 16, 1990.

[12]Neil Howe, William Strauss, *Millennials Rising: The Next Great Generation* (New York: Vintage, 2000).

[13]Neil Howe, William Strauss, *Millennials Go to College* (Great Falls, Virginia: Life Course Associates, 2003).

[14]Neil Howe holds BA in English Literature from the University of California at Berkeley, an MA in Economics and MPhil in History, both from Yale. Since graduating, he has worked in Washington, DC as a public policy consultant. William Strauss earned BA, JD, and MPP all from Harvard. After graduating, he worked in Washington, DC as a policy aid to the Presidential Clemency Board, an employee of the U.S. Department of Energy, a committee staffer for Senator Charles Percy, and as chief counsel and staff director of the Subcommittee on Energy, Nuclear Proliferation, and Government Processes.

[15]Thomas C. Reeves and Eunjung Oh, "Generational Differences" in J. Michael Spector, M. David Merrill, Jeroen van Merriënboer, and Marcy P. Driscoll, eds., *Handbook of Research on Educational Communications and Technology*, Third Edition (New York: Taylor & Francis, 2008), 295.

their predecessor generations. [16] In spite of these revelations, the theories of Howe and Strauss have spread into American universities and colleges, and have become the basis for the work of many enrollment consultants. [17] Moreover, the falsely optimistic description of millennials offered by Howe and Strauss masked very serious problems affecting some of the members of that generation and a trend in American society that began with the Baby Boomer generation.

In 2003, Robert Shaw, M.D., published *The Epidemic: The Rot of American Culture, Absentee and Permissive Parenting, and the Resultant Plague of Joyless, Selfish Children*. [18] Shaw was an internationally renowned child and family psychiatrist with a distinguished career in academia and a practice in New York and California. He blamed faddish child-rearing practices, both neglectful and overindulgent, originating in the Baby Boomer generation for the many "sullen, unfriendly, distant, preoccupied and even unpleasant" children he saw in restaurants, stores, and through his practice. He noted that they "whine, nag, throw tantrums, and demand constant attention from their parents who are spread too thin to spend enough time with them." He explained that the parents often used video games as a form of baby-sitting. Shaw argued that the numbers of such children had risen to crisis levels. [19]

Generation Z, the most recent generation, has continued the trend begun after World War II. Permissive parenting still dominates in the United States along with overprotectiveness resulting from regular news of pedophiles, school shootings, and child kidnappings. In *The Coddling of the American Mind*, Greg Lukianoff and Jonathan Haidt argue that the combination of permissive and overprotective parenting has resulted in children unable or disinclined to engage with ideas that make them

---

[16] Jean M. Twenge, W. Keith Campbell, and Elise C. Freeman, "Generational Differences in Young Adults' Life Goals, Concern for Others, and Civic Orientation, 1966–2009," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 102, no. 5: 1053.

[17] See, for example, Center for Research on Learning and Teaching, University of Michigan, accessed on July 31, 2019, http://www.crlt.umich.edu/op26; Faculty Development and Instructional Design Center, Northern Illinois University, accessed on July 31, 2019, https://www.niu.edu/facdev/_pdf/guide/students/millennials_our_newest_generation_in_higher_education.pdf; Center for Teaching and Learning, Trinity College, accessed on July 31, 2019. am.pdf; "Meeting the Needs of Millennial Students," In Touch with Student Services, California State University Long Beach (Winter 2008), http://web.csulb.edu/divisions/students2/intouch/archives/2007-08/vol16_no1/01.htm; Andrea Stanton, "An analysis of the marketing tactics used to influence millennial generation students in their decision to attend a two-year or a four-year college," MA Thesis, Rowan University, September 12, 2013.; Jim Fong, "Exposing Generation Z and Millennials in the Enrollment Management Process," UPCEA, November 8, 2018, https://upcea.edu/exposing-generation-z-and-millennials-in-the-enrollment-management-process/.

[18] Robert Shaw, *The Epidemic: The Rot of American Culture, Absentee and Permissive Parenting, and the Resultant Plague of Joyless, Selfish Children* (New York: HarperCollins, 2003).

[19] *Ibid.,* xi.

uncomfortable.[20] The Internet, social media, smart phones, and ever more sophisticated video games have continued to be used as a substitute for parenting. They have also had the effect of shortening attention spans and distorting socialization. Generation Z students have been characterized as more likely, as compared to previous generations, to seek help for mental health problems, to object to terminology, and to prioritize emotions over reason.[21]

There has been much written about the rise in the number of immature students entering American universities and colleges. Jean M. Twenge and Heejung Park found, in reviews of seven national surveys, a decline in adult activities among U.S. adolescents between 1976 and 2016.[22] This was the pool from which American university and college freshman were predominantly chosen. Jane L. Jervis, then Dean of Bowdoin College, wrote in 1990 of the rise in student immaturity on her campus.[23] She opined "students are crying out for parenting and bring a higher level of dependency and immaturity to college than ever before."[24] Linda Bips, a psychologist and assistant professor at Muhlenberg College, wrote that "students now are less mature and often not ready for the responsibility of being in college" and "lack resilience and at the first sign of difficulty are unable to summon strategies to cope."[25] Arthur Levine (former President of Teachers College, Columbia University) and Diane R. Dean (Associate Professor for Higher Education Administration & Policy at Illinois State University) noted that "[t]oday's undergraduates are more immature, dependent, coddled, and entitled."[26] Over the course of my career, I too have seen a rise in the number of immature students including those who believe they are entitled to high grades, who are offended by having to justify their views, who value emotion over logic and evidence, who refuse to admit they are wrong, and who have unreasonable career expectations.

Forbes magazine and the Foundation for Individual Rights in Education (FIRE) have taken different approaches to highlight the rise of immaturity

---

[20]Greg Lukianoff, Jonathan Haidt, *The Coddling of the American Mind* (New York: Penguin Press, 2018).

[21]Sophie Bethune, "Gen Z more likely to report mental health concerns," *Monitor on Psychology* (Washington, DC: American Psychology Association, January 2019), 50: 1.

[22]Jean M. Twenge and Heejung Park, "The Decline in Adult Activities Among U.S. Adolescents, 1976–2016," *Child Development* 90 (2019): 638-654.

[23]Jane L. Jervis, "A Rise in Immaturity," *Chronicle of Higher Education*, March 14, 1990, https://www.chronicle.com/article/A-Rise-in-Immaturity/68233.

[24]*Ibid*.

[25]Linda Bips, "Students Are Different Now," *New York Times*, October 11, 2010.

[26]Arthur Levine and Diane R. Dean, "5 Ways Today's Students Are Radically Changing Our Colleges," *Trusteeship* 21, no. 6 (November/December 2013).

on American university and college campuses. *Forbes* saw a link between immaturity and protests over frivolous things. Between 2015 and 2017, *Forbes* published lists of campus protests the magazine deemed trifling. Among them were: "Yale Students Protest in Support of Halloween Costume Guidelines," "Siena College Students Protest 'Sexist' Kitchen Renovation Advertisement," and "Oberlin Students Demand Low Grades Be Abolished."[27] FIRE has focused on students so uncomfortable having their ideas challenged that they try to block people of different views from speaking. It maintains a database of disinvitation attempts, which lists 429 attempts at universities and colleges since 1998.[28] FIRE does not report statistics about students disrupting speeches in progress, but it seems likely that they far exceed the number of disinvitation attempts.

Rather than address the problem of immature students, many university and college leaders and administrators today instead advocate catering to and even rewarding them. Of the 429 disinvitation protests since 1998, the protestors were successful 202 times.[29] In nearly all of these cases, few faculty members spoke up for the importance of having the speakers present their ideas to the academic community where they could be scrutinized and, if flawed, exposed.

A variant of this problem occurred at Harvard College in 2019 when some students in Winthrop House, one of Harvard's twelve residential communities, complained about Winthrop House's faculty deans. The students' grievance was that Ronald S. Sullivan Jr., the Jesse Climenko Clinical Professor of Law and Director of the Criminal Justice Institute at Harvard Law School, was representing the Hollywood mogul and alleged sexual abuser Harvey Weinstein. Professor Sullivan's wife, Stephanie Robinson, a Lecturer in Law at Harvard Law School, appears to have been targeted merely because she is married to Professor Sullivan. On May 11, 2019, Rakesh Khurana (Dean of Harvard College) responded to the student complaints by informing Professor Sullivan and Ms. Robinson that their contracts as faculty deans would not be renewed. The reason given was "the climate in Winthrop House." As for Professor Sullivan's representation of Harvey Weinstein, he was exercising his right to academic freedom and ensuring the fulfillment of a Constitutional mandate. The Sixth Amendment to the Constitution of the United States requires "assistance of counsel" for the accused "in all criminal prosecutions." It should have been

---

[27]Karen Agness Lips, "The Ten Most Ridiculous College Protests of 2015," *Forbes*, December 30, 2015; Karen Agness Lips, "The Ten Most Ridiculous College Protests of 2016," *Forbes*, December 30, 2016; Karen Agness Lips, "The Seven Most Ridiculous College Protests of 2017," *Forbes*, December 30, 2017.

[28]"Disinvitation Database," FIRE, accessed on August 3, 2019, https://www.thefire.org/research/disinvitation-database/.

[29]*Ibid*.

easy for Dean Khurana to defend Professor Sullivan's legal representation and use the case to educate and promote the maturation of students, but he caved instead. Moreover, few Harvard faculty members spoke up against his decision.

Some college administrators responsible for promoting teaching excellence or for marketing, acting out of self-interest, have also advocated catering to immature students. American college administrators responsible for helping faculty to be more effective teachers latched on to the work of Howe and Strauss, finding in it justification for their *raison d'etre*—to get faculty members to conform their teaching to the different learning styles of students. Cornell University's Center for Teaching Innovation, for example, published on its website "The Millennial Generation: Understanding and Engaging Today's Learners." The instructions therein mimic Howe and Strauss, explaining that "the Millennials have been hailed as a new 'Great Generation' . . . [T]hey display ambition, confidence, optimism, and a capacity for high-level cooperative work." The page then advocates that faculty members should alter their teaching to accommodate the new learners.[30]

Among its recommendations are:

- Take time to learn about students' values by asking questions and engaging in discussions that may not be part of the planned lecture.
- Share your own values, interests, and experiences as today's students respond to and respect the voice of elders.
- Break up the class time into 20-30-minute segments with activities such as small-group discussions or five-minute reflection papers and quizzes to maintain student focus and assist with processing and assimilation of information.

University and college administrators charged with helping faculty to improve their teaching should indeed encourage them to present material in ways that cater to different learning styles. However, irrelevant consideration of values and short attention spans are not learning styles.

Most university and college marketing staff see their principal roles as promoting their institutions to prospective students. Many images on university and college websites today are photographs of students having fun, of the location of the institution, or of students in graduation gowns. Seldom are there images of teaching, learning, and research.

---

[30]"The Millennial Generation: Understanding and Engaging Today's Learners," Center for Teaching Innovation, Cornell University, accessed on July 31, 2019, https://teaching.cornell.edu/resource/millennial-generation-understanding-engaging-todays-learners.

Taglines have also become commonplace. Even the *Chronicle of Higher Education* has mocked them. In 2015, it published a poem comprised of some of the most banal taglines including: "Possible Is Everything," "You Can Do That Here," and "It's Your World."[31] Not only do few of the images and taglines frequently used by universities and colleges have anything to do with the true purpose of the institution, they convey an image of American universities and colleges as places that accommodate immaturity.[32]

One would think that those involved in student affairs at universities and colleges would take responsibility for the social maturation of undergraduate students, but they have strayed from that role over time. The advent of administrators responsible for student affairs came about in the United States in the late nineteenth century with the creation of the Dean of Men and Dean of Women offices. Those administrators lived in dormitories with their students, and their role was to facilitate the social maturation of students, maintain discipline, and ensure propriety of conduct. This changed beginning in 1937 with the publication of *The Student Personnel Point of View* by the American Council on Education's Committee on Problems and Plans in Education, which advocated that student affairs administrators be given more holistic responsibilities for ensuring the emotional, physical, and mental needs of students.[33] The book was revised and updated in 1949. By the 1960s, it led to "the student development movement" through which student affairs administrators assumed responsibility for helping students gain "mastery of their own thoughts," "meaning-making," and "identity."[34] While the Deans of Men and Deans of Women of the past promoted social maturation, today's student affairs administrators focus on

---

[31]Steve Kolowich, "88 College Taglines, Arranged as a Poem," *Chronicle of Higher Education*, August 4, 2015.

[32]The imagery and taglines used on many university and college websites also sometimes lead to buyer's remorse where students do not believe they are getting what they were sold. This is a key contributor to the increasingly high rate of transfers. According to a 2017 report of the U.S. Government Accounting Office, for example, more than a third of university and college students transferred to another institution between 2004 and 2009. See: "Higher Education: Students Need More Information to Help Reduce Challenges in Transferring College Credits," GAO-17-574: Published August 14, 2017. Publicly released Sep 13, 2017.

[33]*The Student Personnel Point of View,* (Washington, D.C.: American Council on Education, 1937).

[34]Florence A. Hamrick, Nancy J. Evans, John H. Schuh, *Foundations of Student Affairs Practice: How Philosophy, Theory, and Research Strengthen Educational Outcomes* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2002); Marcia B. Baxter Magolda, "The Activity of Meaning Making: A Holistic Perspective on College Student Development," *Journal of College Student Development* 50, no. 6 (November/December 2009): 621-639; Vasti Torres, Susan R. Jones, Kristen A. Renn, "Identity Development Theories in Student Affairs: Origins, Current Status, and New Approaches," *Journal of College Student Development* 50, no. 6 (November/December 2009): 577-596.

promoting diversity and social justice.[35] This has left a vacuum on many campuses where few people, if any, assume responsibility for ensuring the social maturity of students.

In 1957, the U.S. Supreme Court rendered one of its most important decisions regarding student maturity and higher education. Paul Sweezy, a Marxist economist, was asked by the University of New Hampshire during the McCarthy era to deliver a series of lectures. New Hampshire's Attorney General was not pleased and subpoenaed Sweezy to answer questions about the substance of his lectures. Sweezy refused and was held in contempt. In *Sweezy v. New Hampshire*, 354 U.S. 234 (1957), the U.S. Supreme Court quashed the conviction. Chief Justice Earl Warren wrote:

> We believe that there unquestionably was an invasion of petitioner's liberties in the areas of academic freedom and political expression—areas in which government should be extremely reticent to tread. The essentiality of freedom in the community of American universities is almost self-evident. No one should underestimate the vital role in a democracy that is played by those who guide and train our youth . . . Scholarship cannot flourish in an atmosphere of suspicion and distrust. Teachers and students must always remain free to inquire, to study and to evaluate, *to gain new maturity* and understanding; otherwise, our civilization will stagnate and die.[36] [emphasis added]

Warren was blunt about how constraints on intellectual leaders, free inquiry, and the opportunity for students to gain maturity threatens the future of our country and society. In *Sweezy v. New Hampshire*, the threat came from a government official. Today, the threat is coming from university and college leaders, administrators, faculty members, and students.

What should be done to restore the promotion of maturation to American undergraduate education? The most important thing is to once again focus on cognitive and educational maturation in developing undergraduate curricula. Here, there is some hope in the form of accreditors and state departments of education, some of which are pushing universities and colleges to include measurable outcomes

---

[35]Marcia B. Baxter Magolda, "Identity and Learning: Student Affairs' Role in Transforming Higher Education," *Journal of College Student Development* 44, no. 2: 231-247 (2003); Sherry K. Watt, "Difficult Dialogues, Privilege and Social Justice: Uses of the Privileged Identity Exploration (PIE) Model in Student Affairs Practice," *The College Student Affairs Journal* 26, no. 2 (Spring, 2007): 114 – 126; Tracy L. Davis, Rachel Wagner, "Increasing Men's Development of Social Justice Attitudes and Actions," *New Directions for Student Services*, no. 110 (Summer, 2005): 29-41; Nadeeka D. Karunaratne,; Lauren Koppel, and Chee Ia Yang, "Navigating a Social Justice Motivation and Praxis as Student Affairs Professionals," *Journal of Critical Scholarship on Higher Education and Student Affairs* 3, no. 1 (2016).

[36]*Sweezy v. New Hampshire,* 334 US 251 (1957).

in curricula. This has led to considerable discussion among academic administrators and faculty members about the skills, attributes, competencies, and capacities that courses are intended to provide. Although most people involved in curricula development today do not think about this in terms of cognitive and educational maturation, that is in effect what they are doing, and their work would be easier if they explicitly think in these terms.

American university and college leaders should stand up for the principles that distinguish American higher education. American universities and colleges have earned the right to invite controversial speakers to lecture on their campuses where ideas, especially objectionable ones, can be debated and scrutinized without fear of retribution. Academic freedom is a right enjoyed by American faculty members, but not universally by faculty members around the world. Academic freedom in the United States not only extends to research, but to the clinical work faculty members choose to do. University and college leaders should be resolute in defending these rights, which are fundamental principles on which American higher education is based.

Faculty members should return to being cognitive, intellectual, and social mentors and role models for students. They should be incentivized to dine occasionally with students to teach them mature behavior and adult conversation. If controversial people are invited to speak on campus, faculty should take the lead in asking challenging questions of the speakers. If students try to bar or disrupt speakers, faculty members should take a stand for civility and free inquiry.

The professional expectation of faculty neutrality in the classroom should be restored. Mandating or implying what ideological or theoretical views students should hold is anathema to education. Students should be introduced, only when consistent with the subject of the course, to competing views and taught how to assess them. Academic freedom does not give faculty members the right to espouse their ideological or theoretical views in classes.

Universities and colleges, higher education leaders, and faculty members and administrators all have an important role to play in supporting the cognitive, intellectual, and social maturation of undergraduate students. By ignoring this responsibility, a climate has been created on many campuses where immaturity is being encouraged and rewarded, where free inquiry is being stifled, and where the academic freedom of faculty is being compromised. Chief Justice Earl Warren's warnings of nearly seventy years ago are just as relevant today. What is at risk is that "our civilization will stagnate and die." The time has come for universities and colleges to reconnect with the principal purpose of undergraduate education—the maturation of students.