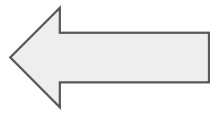


Building a Learning Society

Mitchell Stevens, Stanford University, 16 July 2026

future of work /
technology



learning

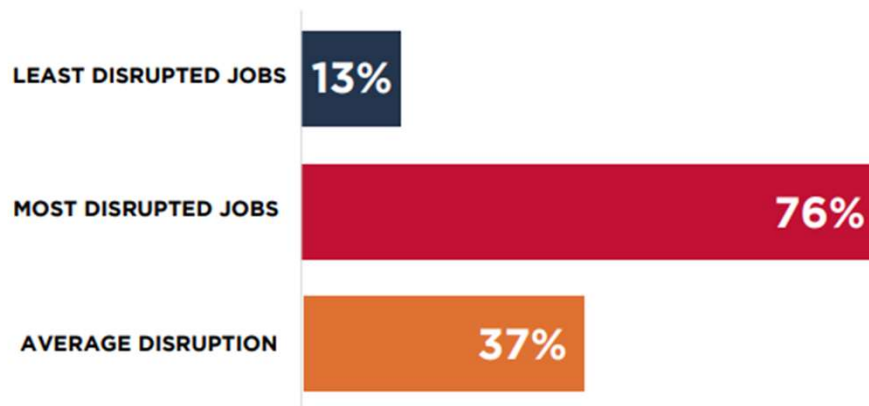


lengthening lives
/ declining fertility

Why we need a new vision for developing human talent

1. rapid changes in technology and work

SINCE 2016, THE TOP 20 REQUESTED SKILLS
FOR A GIVEN OCCUPATION HAVE CHANGED BY:



Source: Burning Glass Institute analysis of Lightcast job postings data.

2. declining fertility + increasing longevity

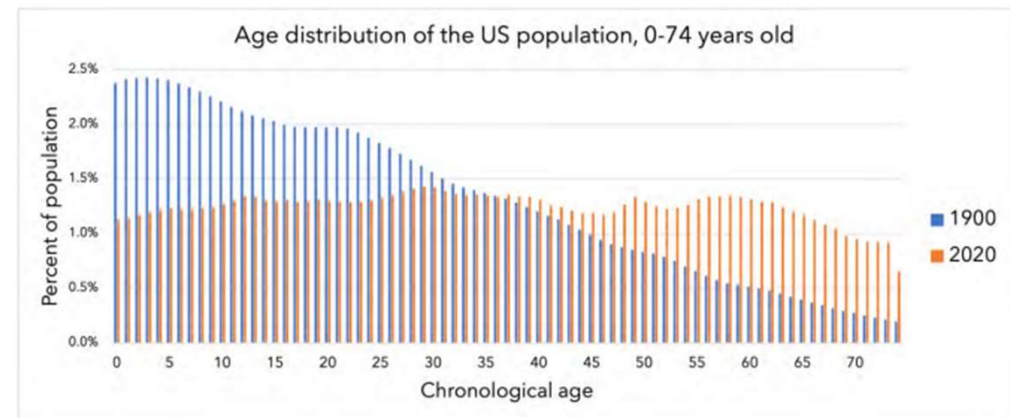


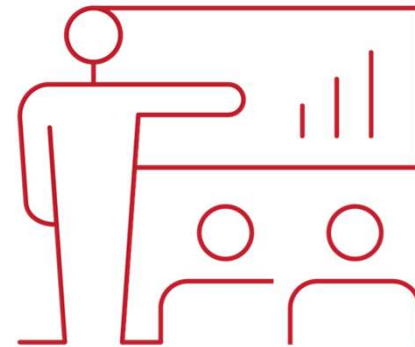
FIGURE 1: Age distribution of the US population, 0-74 years old, in 1900 and 2020. Data from US Census Bureau population counts and estimates; analysis by Sasha Shen Johfre

our inheritance (I)

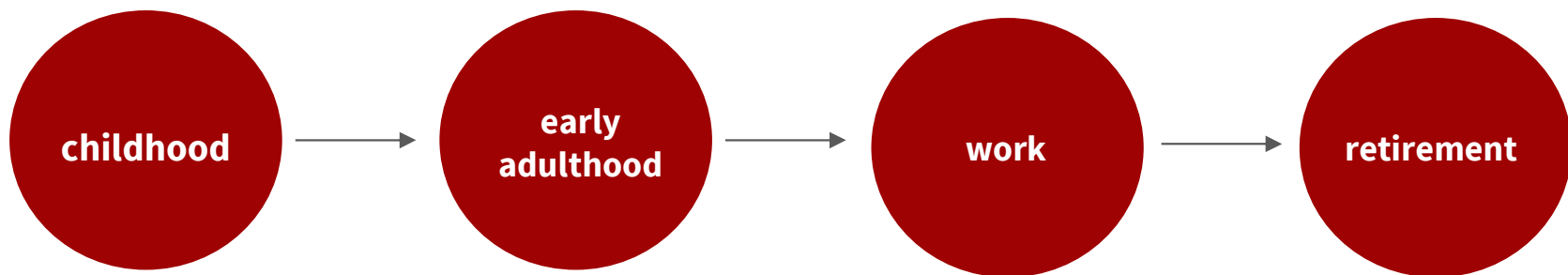
The institutional architecture of schooling that inherit from the twentieth century remains organized on the notion that formal education **trails off with the end of childhood**.

At present, education provision is largely defined by:

- early-childhood education
- k-12
- legacy postsecondary education, aka “college”



our inheritance (II)



school.....work.....leisure

The Futures Project on Education and Learning for Longer Lives



Working Assembly and Peer Review for *Building a Learning Society*

May 1, 2025 | U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation | Washington, DC

in the 20th Century, Americans built a *schooled* society

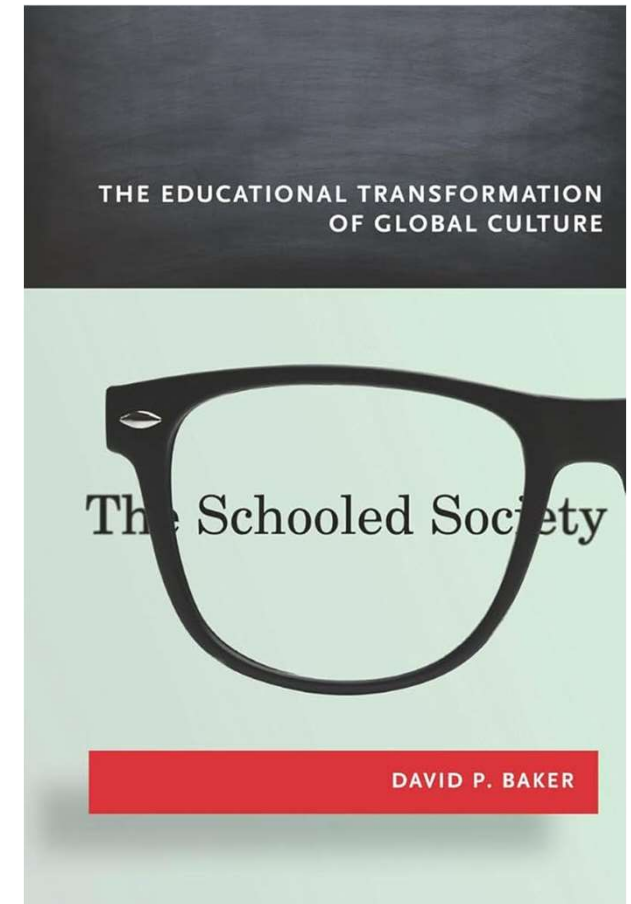
- education occurred in dedicated organizations called schools
- progress was measured by years of schooling and credentials
- employment and social mobility depended on school credentials

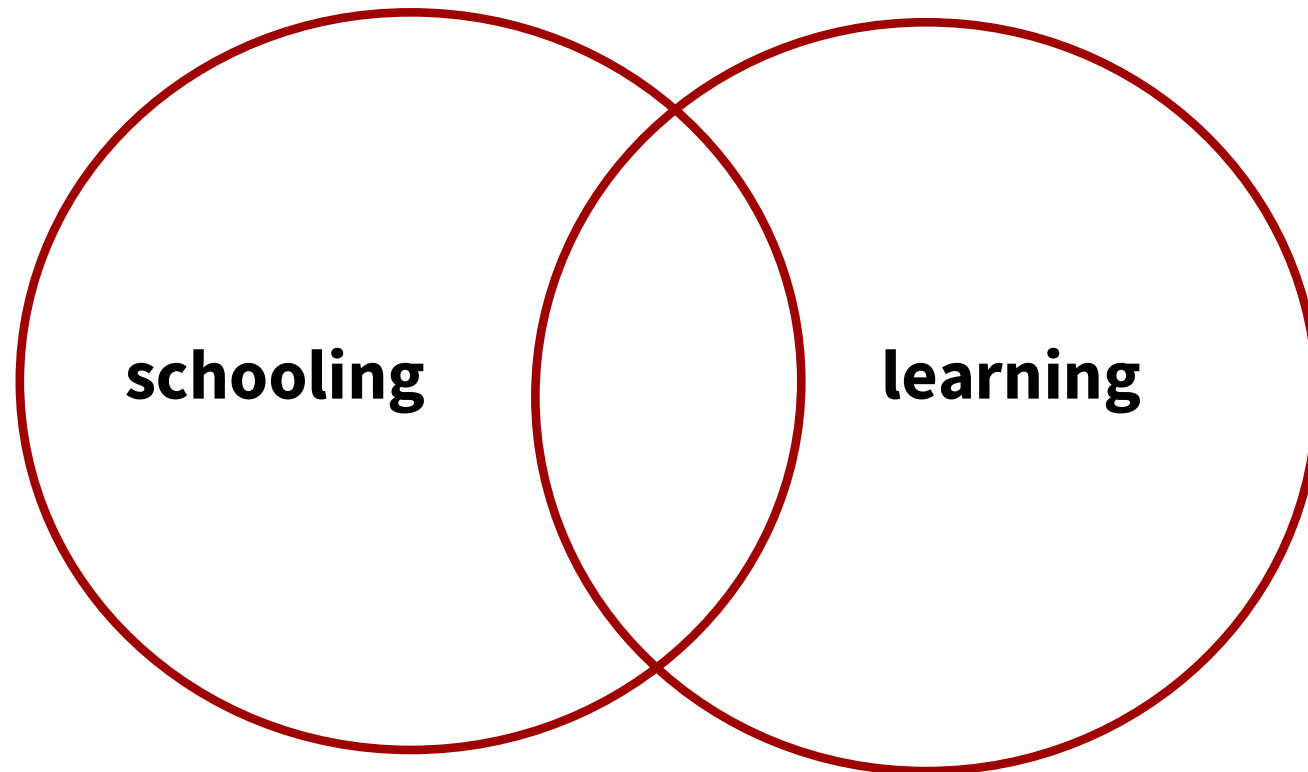


- universal basic education became a right
- expanded self-actualization, social mobility, economic growth, global leadership

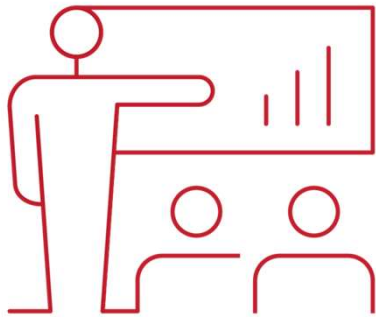


- unequal educational opportunities
- schooling disconnected from rest of life
- unsustainable provision model
- talent & dignity without credentials demeaned





schooling & learning compared



schooling

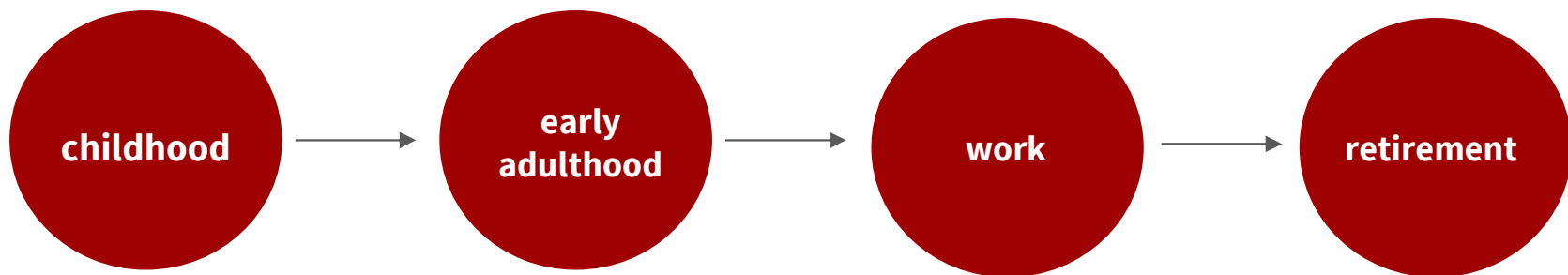
- happens in designated settings / formats
- organized around credentials / certifications
- governed by education agencies
- associated with early life



learning

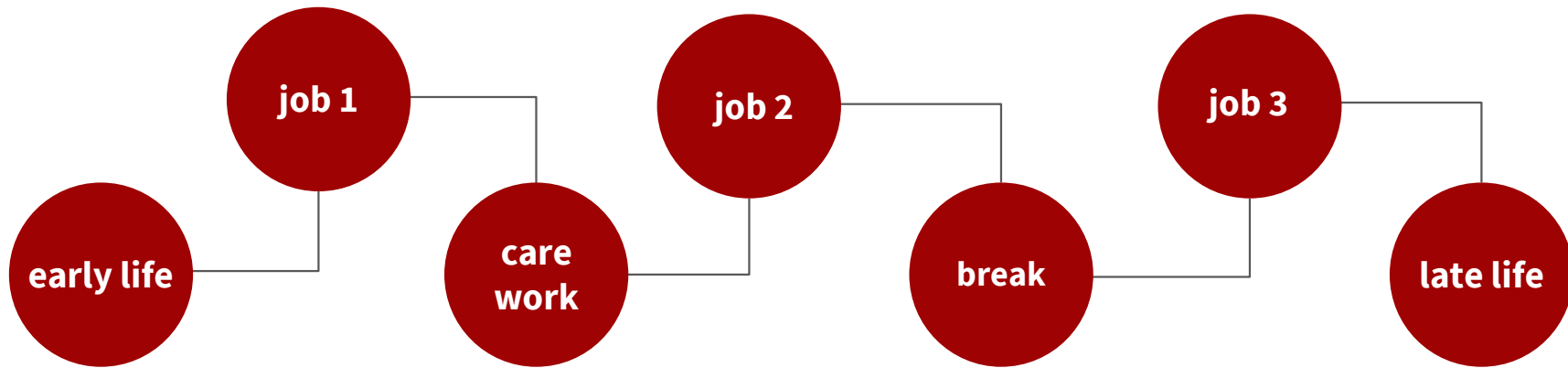
- happens everywhere
- agnostic about credentials
- governed variably per context
- spans the entire life course

idealized life course in the schooled society



school.....work.....leisure

idealized life course in the learning society



learning.....



Building a Learning Society

Design Principles for
Human-Capital Investment
2025 - 2035

Futures Project on Education and Learning for Longer Lives
September 2025

learningsociety.io

