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## Student Power and the University Administration

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# *Student Power and the University Administration*

MAUREEN MCCARTHY

"Student Power." These are words that have evoked mixed emotions all over the world. They stand for a notion as elusive of definition as the generation they seem to comprehend. The involved, no matter of what age, have used student power as a vehicle, albeit sometimes an unwieldy one, of their protest against the structural strain, created by the growing impersonality and apparent irrelevance of the megalopolis university and intensified by world tensions.

Those who have studied the phenomenon of "student power" have sought to view it within the larger context of faculty-student relations, and these, within the context of organization. "The problem of modern organization," Amitai Etzioni writes, "is...how to construct human groupings that are as rational as possible, and at the same time produce a minimum of undesirable side effects and a maximum of satisfaction."<sup>1</sup> In the light of this basic assumption concerning organization, the question may be raised: Do students and faculty have conflicting goals or are the elements of the educational process, teaching and learning, not on the same continuum? Toward a better understanding of the problem, Herbert A. Simon's observations concerning psychology in administration seem appropriate. He states that

the route from psychology to administration is a two-way street. Going in one direction, we interpret administrative behavior in terms of psychological laws. Going the other way, we use organizational settings as social environments where psychological laws can be tested, and where ideas may be generated for their development and improvement.<sup>2</sup>

The classical motivational theory by Frederick W. Taylor which emphasizes the close relationship between material rewards and efforts, along Murray's theory concerning need achievement provides some

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<sup>1</sup> Amitai Etzioni, *Modern Organizations* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1964) p. 2.

<sup>2</sup> Herbert A. Simon, cited in the *Foreword of Psychology in Administration: A Research Orientation*, by Timothy W. Costello & Sheldon S. Zalkind (Englewood Cliffs N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc. 1963), p. iii.

ideas worth the attention of both the student and the administration.<sup>3</sup> Faculty student cooperation may be viewed also in terms of the classical administration theory, presented by Gulick and Urwick. They call attention to the significance of the principle of the division of labor in all organizations.<sup>4</sup> Griffiths has proposed that the central objective in administration is the need to develop and regulate the decision-making process most effectively.<sup>5</sup> In all administrative theories, the common concern appears; how may individuals may be stimulated to maximum creativity and productivity, and at the same time to make use as efficiently as possible of the facilities and resources available toward the achievement of their goals? This paper is an attempt to describe, examine, and evaluate the interplay between student power and college administration.

#### MYTHS OF COLLEGE ADMINISTRATION

Since myths stem from a generalized belief, often based on unfounded assumptions, they have often provoked irrational thinking and irrelevant responses to a situation. It is believed, for instance, that college administration is carried out by individuals for individuals, in order to abet human potential for growth and development. Administration, however, has proved to be essentially an ongoing process of perception.

What we perceive is...in large part our own creation and depends on the assumption we bring to the particular occasion. We seem to give meaning and order to sensory impingements in terms of our own needs and purposes and this process of selection is actively creative.<sup>6</sup>

The notion that the top academic executive is a "free agent"<sup>7</sup> is a delusion; every office presupposes both rights and privileges, duties and responsibilities. Commitment and communication are necessary at all levels, including even the pyramid structures of formal organizations, such as those of colleges and universities. Since an institution possesses a durability and an immeasurable tentacle process which extends far beyond the span of human life, Johnson has noted that prestige flows from the institution and the office, not the man, because

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<sup>3</sup> Etzioni, *op. cit.*, p. 21.

<sup>4</sup> Etzioni, *op. cit.*, p. 22.

<sup>5</sup> Daniel E. Griffiths. *Administrative Theory* (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc., 1959), pp. 71-91

<sup>6</sup> Costello & Zalkind, *op. cit.*, p. 18.

<sup>7</sup> E. L. Johnson, "Myths of College Administration", *Educational Record*, 45 (Summer, 1964), 235. The merits of this article apropos the problems being encountered today in academic administration are well worth consideration.

an institution is but the lengthened shadow of a man.<sup>8</sup> Another myth is that good administration means speedy, clear-cut decisions.<sup>9</sup> Administrative decision in colleges and universities can have myriad repercussions. Hasty decisions, therefore, are not the best means for surmounting bureaucratic redtape. Rather, timeless and factual data, the total situational context perceived with humility and humane-ness must constitute the basis for competent decision-making. Neither public relations nor merely side-tracking controversy at all costs will solve all problems; they may even result in irreparable damage in the college relative to its inter and intra community affiliations.<sup>10</sup> Public Relations can indeed, project a favorable impression, but it may also distort reality. Even so, controversy could as easily augment, as it can destroy, the academic climate and community relations. One can not generalize that either is consistently a sign of good fortune or an omen of approaching evils. Reliance solely on Public Relations and neutrality in the face of compelling issues could have devastating effects on a college or university. Johnson indicates that it is a myth to assume that academic administration may be accomplished by any academic man.<sup>11</sup> It demands charismatic leaders. As Nelson puts it, to lead is to develop opportunities for self-expression, respect for the facts and viewpoints of others.<sup>12</sup>

#### STUDENT POWER DEFINED

Students have realized their collective new power; its exact boundaries have yet to be determined.<sup>13</sup> A multifaceted phenomenon, student power is primarily an ingrained attitude, a seeking to divest tradition of its embellishments by collective behavior or collective pressure. Altbach has written: "Young people are unwilling to keep higher education within its ivory tower."<sup>14</sup> Collective behavior has been defined as "mobilization on the basis of a belief which redefines social action."<sup>15</sup> In other words, students today while objecting to stereotyping, nevertheless, are employing similar tactics to pursue

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<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 236-237.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 237-238.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 238-239.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 240.

<sup>12</sup> C. W. Nelson, "New Approach to the Development of Institutional Leadership and Communication: A Challenge to Deans", *Nat. Assn. Women's Deans & Counselors J.*, 30 (Spring 1967), p. 137.

<sup>13</sup> J. Katz & N. Sanford, "New Student Power and Needed Educational Reforms", *Educational Digest*, 32 (Spring, 1966), p. 37.

<sup>14</sup> P. G. Altbach, "The Student Movement and the American University", *Phi Delta Kappan*, 47 (April 1966), p. 427.

<sup>15</sup> Neil J. Smelser, *Theory of Collective Behavior* (New York: Free Press, 1962), p. 8.

specific goals which will satisfy their needs and enhance their standing as equals in the academic community. Williamson conceives alienation as perceived denigration and concedes it as a pivotal dimension of contemporary student movements... by which enactment of rights may be won.<sup>16</sup> Aware of their power, students are assessing academic settings with regard to antecedents and consequences needed to establish a new order, one in which unquestioned and unlimited mandates from college administration cannot be tolerated. Thus, student power is a movement toward mutuality and equilibrium to be realized in dialogue and in diadic enterprise such as student-faculty committees.

#### BERKELEYITIS AND ITS INGREDIENTS

Student alienation in the multiversity has been termed the "Berkeley Syndrome".<sup>17</sup> Berkeleyitis, it has been said, must be regarded as "merely among the first fruits of the Every-Man-A-College-Degree Philosophy."<sup>18</sup> Spawned in an environment rendered untemperate by such problems as the growing discrepancy in faculty-student ratio, student press censorship, restrictions relative to guest speakers and gatherings, perplexing anomie, and the increasing tyranny of the punch card, it presents the greatest challenge of this decade to college administration and the leadership of any nation. How should any society or an affluent one as the United States channel the energy and imagination of its youth? Ann Brentlinger recently wrote, "the way to change the system is not to drop out of it and do your thing, or to give up and join it; but rather to fight it and bring intelligent pressure to bear to force changes."<sup>19</sup>

#### PROPOSERS' VIEW OF STUDENT POWER

The defender of student power is not necessarily of the younger generation, yet, he is an individual keenly attuned to the thought and dynamism of the college generation. He combines the idealist's vision with the realist's pragmatism, in an effort to remain sensitive, flexible, and objective in the face of pressure and in the struggle to realize universal rights. The youth today places greater value on independence rather than on security. This radical orientation has had its effects

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<sup>16</sup> E. G. Williamson, "Alienation of Students: Have We Missed Their Signals?", *Nat. Assn. Women's Deans & Counselors J.*, 30, (Fall, 1966), p. 29.

<sup>17</sup> "How Colleges Combat Alienation and Improve Teaching", *Phi Delta Kappan*, 47 (April 1969), p. 410.

<sup>18</sup> J. F. Ohles, "Berkeleyitis: A Second Look" *School & Society*, 94 (February 5, 1966), p. 66.

<sup>19</sup> A. F. Brentlinger, "Student Power" *The Massachusetts Daily Collegian* (December 1, 1967), p. 6.

on the character of education. Van Alstyne's comment is pertinent: "a University is not the extension of the parent, but an institution committed to the provision of educational opportunities and the value of critical inquiry."<sup>20</sup> However, endorsement of critical inquiry does not mean *carte blanche* approval of lawlessness.

To learn responsibility, one must be free to be irresponsible at one's own expense. And he is not free who is constrained by lack of opportunity or by inhibition, any more than he who is constrained by ignorance.<sup>21</sup>

Somewhat analogous is Cohen's statement that "the right to dissent and the right of free speech have long been fought for and must be defended—but—no one has the right in protesting to take away the constitutional rights of others."<sup>22</sup> An "all or nothing"<sup>23</sup> recruitment policy cannot be pursued. Compromise must somehow be attempted, alternatives presented which could satisfy majority and minority viewpoints. Acceptance of student power does not mean blind allegiance to mass rule. Educators still have the responsibility to excite a desire for learning so that the whole man is educated. Administrators still have the responsibility to transcend petty departmental ties in order to accelerate the accomplishment of goals and the exploration of new vistas. All are called upon to provide the university and the nation with competent young leaders. Students, too, have their responsibility, to search for truth in a jaunty and patient manner.

#### ANTAGONISTS' VIEW OF STUDENT POWER

Though the view of the university as being "in loco parentis" has been considered *passé*, the fact is that there are those who insist on it. There are those who still prefer to project an image of the not-to-be questioned authoritarian figure of the thirties, forties, and fifties. It has been said of the psychological conflict involved here that public confrontation of one's actions establishes a commitment to a public image, a commitment that acts as a barrier against change.<sup>24</sup> Or to put

<sup>20</sup> W. W. Van Alstyne, "The Prerogatives of Students, The Power of Universities and the Due Process of Law" *Nat. Assn. Women's Deans & Counselors J.*, 30 (Fall, 1966), p. 14.

<sup>21</sup> Samuel Gorovitz, *Freedom and Order in the University* (Cleveland: Western Reserve University, 1967), p. 219.

<sup>22</sup> S. Cohen, "Student Association May Invite Recruiters on Campus," *Phoenix*, IX (November 28 1967), p. 1.

<sup>23</sup> "Dow Shalt Not Kill" *Observation Post*, XLII (November 14, 1967), p. 2.

<sup>24</sup> H. B. Gerald, cited in *Problems in Social Psychology: Selected Reading* C. W. Backman & P. F. Secord (Ed.), (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1966), pp. 245-247.

it in another way, to expect the old to eliminate their often deeply entrenched condescending attitude toward the student is to suggest the removal of an austere facade, to ask that one strip oneself of a personality component built in through numerous years of unquestioned authoritarianism. The publicity given to the bold, the self-seeking, the offbeat students often immobilizes and demeans the less militant, less radical students. While a subtle implication exists in Logan's article concerning the residual need for student rights, he clearly condemns "the reckless resort by leaders of the student movement to tactics of civil disobedience."<sup>25</sup> He says: "The arrogant self-righteousness of these revolutionaries produces a brand of controversy which leads not to liberty, but to lawlessness."<sup>26</sup> Brickman, however, looks at student power more appreciatively: he tries to separate and specify the rational from the irrational. He stresses that faculties and administrations—and students as well—have remained too long silent, foot-dragging, pussyfooting, and otherwise inactive in the face of student invective, demonstrations and violation.<sup>27</sup> Jarrett's suggestion that "change is afoot"<sup>28</sup> must adhere to the cautioned proposal of Koile:<sup>29</sup>

Students should have the freedom to fail, to make mistakes and to recover, within a broad framework of regulations that protect the rights of others, but that convey a faith in the individual student's reasonableness and ability to behave and to learn constructively.

#### PROPOSALS FOR STUDENT-FACULTY ADMINISTRATION

Recommendations for improving student-faculty relations have run the gamut from student participation in major committees (University of Delaware)<sup>30</sup> to reception of students in all units of the university and the provision of authoritative and understanding answers to their

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<sup>25</sup> J. A. Logan, Jr., ch 55 in *The American Student and His College*, E. Lloyd-Jones & H. A. Estrin (New York: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1967), p. 334.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 337.

<sup>27</sup> W. W. Brickman, "Activism Among College Students" *School & Society*, 95 (January 7, 1967), p. 4.

<sup>28</sup> J. L. Jarrett, Ch I, in *The American Student And His College*, E. Lloyd-Jones & H. A. Estrin (New York: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1967), p. 2.

<sup>29</sup> E. Koile, ch 3, in *The American Student And His College*, E. Lloyd-Jones & H. A. Estrin (New York: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1967), p. 25.

<sup>30</sup> ——— "Student Participation," *School & Society*, 95 (April 1, 1967), pp. 214.

questions,<sup>31</sup> to students' acceptance or rejection of the university's goals and the atmosphere conducive to those goals.<sup>32</sup> The problem of higher education today is how to bridge the immense gulf between students and faculty. Axelrod declares that destandardization may be a clue toward alleviating fractionalization and depersonalization<sup>33</sup> "To administer is to serve".<sup>34</sup> Student-faculty participation therefore requires a dedication to accomplishing that which is best for the academic community as a whole. Walton and Wheaton, for example, emphasize that student membership in the Admissions Committee may benefit the student body and the college in three ways:<sup>35</sup>

1. Having at least two novices on the committee each year requires a re-examination and exploration of all old and existing policies.

2. The Committee is always aware of the student point of view on the balance of the present college community and what students feel the goals should be.

3. A smaller item is that by daily contact and sometimes even personal experience the student knows the trials and tribulations of the so-called risk student, which may be of more value in assessing their college experience than their academic record.

Williamson and Cohen recognize that the formal policies of colleges and universities must be coupled with imaginative programming of continuous informal conversations among students, administrators, and faculty.<sup>36</sup> Ayers and Russel suggest, in dealing with the entire question of administration, that the professionals know what they are doing and why, but then they should invite student participation.

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<sup>31</sup> V. A. Rapport "Some Ways Toward Campus Peace," *School & Society*, 93 (Summer, 1965), p. 297.

<sup>32</sup> J. Simmons & P. P. Grande, "Student-Administration War of 1966: The Strategy of Escalation," *Cath. Ed. R.*, 64 (December 1966), p. 588.

<sup>33</sup> J. Axelrod, "New Organizational Patterns in Higher Education," *Educational Digest*, 30 (January 1965), pp. 22-25.

<sup>34</sup> E. L. Katzenback, J., "Changing Administrative Patterns in Higher Education," *Nat. Assn. Women's Deans & Counselors J.*, 30 (Winter, 1967), p. 79.

<sup>35</sup> J. B. Walton & W. L. Wheaton, "Student Participation in The Admissions Program," *Nat. Assn. Women's Deans & Counselors J.*, 30 (Spring, 1967) pp. 115-119.

<sup>36</sup> E. G. Williamson & J. L. Cohen, "Role of the President in the Desirable Enactment of Academic Freedom for Students: Processes of Policy Determination," *Educational Record*, 46 (Fall, 1965), p. 371.



They conclude that a periodic review of organizational procedures should consider:<sup>37</sup>

1. A line-staff chart which clearly indicates the working relationships among the general administrative officers and their relationships with subordinate personnel.

2. A clear distinction between policy-making and policy-administering.

3. A clarification of the role of the faculty as an organized group.

4. An examination of the function of faculty committees; and

5. The development of position descriptions which set both extent of responsibility and extent of authority.

Towards achieving the goal of education, which is still "An open mind and an adaptability in the matter of ends,"<sup>38</sup> — the students' ideas and point of view must be sought and used.

#### SUMMARY

Student Power has become synonymous with protests and demonstrations. It has aimed at massive and often radical changes, both within the educational framework and the broader structures of society. Gallagher admits that "controversy is the essence of academic freedom"<sup>39</sup> and indicates the value of the Heuristic attitude which, by definition, leads a person to find out for himself, rather than by being told. On these premises, he mediates student-faculty conflicts and tries to mitigate extremism by proposing that:<sup>40</sup>

1. We ought not to assume that all wisdom is resident with any segment of academe.

2. We cannot permit alien pressures and processes to replace academic freedom.

3. We cannot permit pressures and prejudices to be projected as personifications, attributed to opponents.

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<sup>37</sup>A. R. Ayers & J. H. Russel, "Organization for Administration in Higher Education," *Higher Education*, 20 (April, 1964), p. 10.

<sup>38</sup>D. Hawkins, "Open Mind is Education's Goal, Hawkins Explains," *The Colorado Alumnus*, (December, 1967), p. 3.

<sup>39</sup>B. Gallagher in *The American Student And His College*, E. Lloyd-Jones & H. A. Estrin (New York: Houghton Mifflin Co.), p. 291.

<sup>40</sup>*Ibid.*, 297-298.

According to Halleck, "the task of university administrators is that of deciphering and responding to those student needs that are powerful and real and in dealing firmly but kindly with student demands based on unrealistic and personal misconceptions".<sup>41</sup> Student leaders regard the traditional cleavage between students and faculty as an opium to successful cooperation. Their apotheosis of student power derives from a deep concern for dignity, recognition, and equality on matters that concern their future, their life, and their development. Halleck observes concerning the psychological and political effects of student dissent, that "oppressive stresses may be indirect, subtle, and insidious and will have an effect upon an individual even though he may be totally or partially unaware of them."<sup>42</sup> He emphasizes the influence of mass communication as a molder of attitude, and consequently, he asserts that "we must at least begin to study the impact of technological progress upon man's personality".<sup>43</sup>

Perhaps, the categorization of students as submissive juveniles must give way to one that reflects a vigorous search for ways of fostering maturity and respectability. If educators and administrators turn a deaf ear to the surging cries for involvement, not only will educational institutions be torn from strife, but law and order will appreciably suffer. Coercion or manipulation by either the administration or the students does not constitute a true solution. Free exchange of views, however, combined with dedication and sincerity of purpose will do much to bring student power and the college administration closer in the context of dialogue.

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<sup>41</sup> S. L. Halleck, "Why Students Protest: A Psychiatrist's View," *Think*, (November-December 1967), p. 7.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

<sup>43</sup> J. W. Brann quoting Halleck in an article entitled: "Student Activism called Warning on Unplanned Technology Growth," *The Chronicle Of Higher Education*, (March 25, 1968), p. 1.