

THE COLUMBIA STUDENT UPRISING: 40 YEARS LATER

Introduction

Henry Schwartz

Before getting into these essays by our group of contributors, let me excerpt the history of the Columbia student uprising as recounted by Robert Liebert in his book *Radical and Militant Youth: A Psychoanalytic Inquiry*:¹

On April 23, 1968, a noon rally on the Columbia campus was followed by a march to the building site of the new Columbia gymnasium, where students tore down the fence surrounding the site and otherwise interfered with construction. One student was arrested. The other students then returned to Hamilton Hall, the main classroom and administrative-office building of Columbia College, and began a sit-in, detaining the Acting Dean of the college, Henry Coleman, in his office as hostage for the arrested student, whose release they demanded [along with six other demands]....

By sunrise the next morning, the white students had been evicted from Hamilton Hall, and the black protesters — about half the black students in the college — had emerged as a militant political group, with Hamilton Hall established as an all-black protest base. Over the next two days, white students “liberated” and occupied four other university buildings... By April 25, approximately 1,000 students were occupying university buildings...

On April 28, a group of counterdemonstrators, the Majority Coalition (MC), established a “blockade” around Low Library to bar the entrance of food and of other demonstrators. Faculty formed a cordon around the building to prevent overt clashes between the protesters and MC members...

¹ Liebert, 1971, p. 3–5.

ROBERT LIEBERT: TOWARDS A CONCEPTUAL MODEL OF RADICAL AND MILITANT YOUTH: A STUDY OF COLUMBIA UNDERGRADUATES

Reported by Clarice Kestenbaum

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On April 23, 1968 Columbia University parted with its image of the ivy-shaded halls of learning and for a week became the Bastille. Striking students took over five university buildings, including the President's office, in a confrontation between students and administration. Black students, a separate, militant political entity, established Hamilton Hall as an all black protest base. On April 30 police ended the siege and a student strike shut down formal classroom activity for the remainder of the semester.

Chronicling the events of that momentous week, and interviewing fifty of the participants over the next few months, Dr. Robert Liebert, psychoanalyst and consulting psychiatrist of the Columbia College Counseling Service, became the biographer of "The Columbia Riot." His presentation dealt with a discussion of some of the developmental, characterological, and situational factors that must be present to trigger a student into assuming a radical or militant position.

Dr. Liebert defined the student radical as one who no longer believes that existing institutions are capable of correcting the injustices in society, and whose tactics involve confrontation with those in authority by means other than those provided for in present codes of due process and traditional dissent.

Dr. Liebert based his observations on the following:

- A. Personal interviews (non-structured, two to four hours long) with students drawn from all shades of the political spectrum, completed within three months after the strike.
- B. 35 Term papers by students from the Department of Human Development on their reaction to the strike.

- C. Written summaries of the dynamics of the reaction of 25 unnamed undergraduate students supplied by their therapists.
- D. Observations on campus, discussion with family, administrators, students and therapists.

“Why do students confront their university, which is representative of the most enlightened institutions in contemporary American Society?” In response to this question, the speaker noted that the college serves as the transition from family to society. Looking at the Vietnam War, the death of the idealistic, integrated Civil Rights movement, Johnson as moral leader, assassinations and burned cities, and prison terms for refusal to serve in the armed forces, students came to regard the campus as the last bastion in their lives where there was any hope of exercising significant influence over the powers that directly affect them. The ills of Columbia and those of the larger American society were fused, and the Columbia crisis was seen as an attempt to halt the increasing passivity of the individual, the loss of individuality, and the dehumanization of man.

The students interviewed were products of their own unique developmental history and experience. Dr. Liebert viewed each one’s political beliefs and personal action during the rebellion as the outcome of four factors:

- A. Individual character – the outcome of the particular parent-child interaction, ego organization and psychological adaptation, predisposing him to a specific kind of social and political view and commitment.
- B. The specific value orientation – a reflection of the values inculcated in him by his family.
- C. The external socio-political situation, in which the adequacy of existing institutions to meet the needs of powerless and oppressed peoples was questionable.
- D. The nature of the “Radical Action,” and the interaction between the type of stress inherent in it, and the defense mechanisms of the potential radical.

Dr. Liebert warned of oversimplification in treating radicals as a homogeneous entity. He contrasted idealistic radicalism with nihilistic radicalism. At the idealistic pole the student will (a) emphasize program; (b) avoid violence and disruptive tactics as a

source of psychological gratification; (c) empathize with the oppressed and powerless; (d) enjoy sources of pleasure and relatedness apart from political activity; (e) maintain a humanistic credo that he follows in his daily life.

In contrast, at the nihilistic pole the student will (a) offer no programs for constructive change; (b) focus his planning on violence and disruption as ends in themselves; (c) relate to people as pawns in a political struggle; (d) be totally obsessed by questions of politics and race so that other relationships and interests are precluded; (e) deny fantasies of “what might be” or rage at “what is” in order to maintain an essentially paranoid view.

In speculating about the commitment to radicalism, Dr. Liebert turned to Erickson for a developmental framework. The “rudiments of virtue” develop in childhood and are later integrated into a schedule of developmental stages with associated psychosexuality, psychosocial crises and cognitive maturation, ultimately serving as the basis for “virtuous” or “non-virtuous” character traits. Idealistic radicals were committed to such “virtues” as hope, will, purpose, and empathy, while nihilistic radicals embraced the “non-virtues” of cynicism, oppositionalism, random impulse gratification, and isolation.

Hope versus Cynicism

Hope, an indispensable quality of the idealistic, is the outgrowth of a positive encounter with “trustworthy maternal persons” during infancy, as formulated by Erikson: “the enduring belief in the attainability of fervent wishes in spite of the dark urges and rages which mark the beginning of existence.”

Dr. Liebert felt that most of the Columbia activists did have positive kinds of maternal care during infancy, and in spite of contempt for the nature of authority as exercised at Columbia, they had the hope that they would bring about a change for the better.

In other radical students, however, “the component of rage leads to the much more destructive orientation toward the university in political confrontation,” with the university bearing the brunt of the parent-directed rage. Non-hope yields to cynicism, which is reflected in their lack of concern for the personal consequences of their actions and at times becomes inextricably colored by paranoid perception

Will Versus Oppositional

Erikson postulated that, out of the conflicts of the stage of mastery and control in late infancy, there emerges the balance between self-will and submission to the will of others. The outcome of the struggle over inner and outer control (i.e. excretory function) can lead to “shame” and “doubt.” *Will* is the unbroken determination to exercise free choice as well as self-restraint, in spite of the shame and doubt in infancy. The students had the capacity to initiate and sustain actions, harnessed with considerable self-restraint despite inner deterrents of guilt, shame and doubt (i.e. questioning the legitimacy of their authorities, disagreeing with parents).

In contrast, *oppositional behavior* as a dominant character trait may well impel one into the role of rebel. Because character traits associated with oppositionalism generally preclude acceptance into a good school, few Columbia students exhibited unbounded anger, extreme work and study procrastination, and argumentative classroom behavior. But fringe racial groups did contain a number of such students, some failing, who demonstrated these traits.

Purpose Versus Random Impulse Gratification

A sense of “real purpose” emerges out of the child’s play, and with family guidance the child learns to delineate “where play ends and irreversible purpose begins.”

Erikson formulates purpose as “the courage to envisage and pursue valued goals uninhibited by the defeat of infantile fantasies, by guilt and by the failing fear of punishment.” Dr. Liebert noted that this description captures the essence of the “instant” radicals, who pursued a tactic that was harshly realistic and largely successful in its achievement and who were not dissuaded by threat of suspension, arrests, beatings, or parental disapproval.

If the child cannot negotiate this transition from fantasy-dominated play to consensually validated purposeful orientation, he will be left with a propensity to seek *random impulse gratification*, a tendency that makes the extreme anarchistic wing of radicalism attractive.



Empathy Versus Isolation

According to Erikson, the capacity for empathy is determined by the nature of the mother-child relationship, although the trait does not emerge until latency when the child has the cognitive ability to abstract the experience of another as a separate entity. Out of the mutual accommodation of mother and infant comes empathy. Without the positive identification with the mother in preverbal years, the child develops the quality of *isolation*, that is, he can intellectually formulate the experience of another without any affective component.

Dr. Liebert found that among the healthiest, most idealistic radicals there were many who had a sense of isolation in their lives, and attributed it to an inconsistent early mothering experience with wide fluctuations, causing them to search for the lost bliss once shared with the mother and leaving them with a vague sense of deprivation. The speaker referred to Keniston's study of families of young radicals that were generally warm, humanistic, and respectful of children and served as a model for expectation of social units outside the family. When life circumstances did not fit the family "ego ideal," disenchantment followed. Dr. Liebert felt that it is the combination of empathy and personal deprivation that allows the student radical to feel deeply concerned for other truly oppressed and deprived people.

Family Value Orientation and Social Commitment

Character structure alone, Dr. Liebert emphasized, cannot account for radical commitment. Other studies have demonstrated that radicals have acquired a family value orientation, including high emphasis on justice, equality, service and conscience. The speaker presented a number of clinical examples involving white and black students to elucidate his point. The parents' ethics were paramount, regardless of whether they themselves supported the students' actions. He felt that where a discontinuity in moral and political values exists between son and father, the likelihood is far greater that the son will be at the radical end of the spectrum.

Activation of Radicalism

In addition to character structure and predisposing value systems, the "activation of radicalism" requires the individual to

conclude that the institutions and machinery for change are inadequate to meet the needs of powerless, deprived people.

Those students who occupied the President's office felt entirely justified in revolting against anonymity, the "invisible man" whom no student ever saw. The violence of the police action in clearing the office of students served to expiate their guilt while reinforcing their sense of the righteousness of their cause.

Finally, the speaker noted that participation in radical action was facilitated by the unique experience of intense group intimacy and communal living, which served to strengthen peer group bonds. This was true for black students in particular, in spite of profound anxiety which he felt stemmed from the inhibition of assertion that has been part of the childhood training of blacks in white America. The experience, in the words of one black student "was the first in only seeing 'black,' of not shielding part of our personalities from white observation...it allowed one to 'come alive'...it gave a sense of dignity and pride."

The consequences of retaliation were far greater for black students than white. Blacks in particular understood the rhythm of an oppressive society, that repression begets protest, leading to even more repression. Dr. Liebert discussed the act of invading the President's office as one which, although resonating with unconscious, unresolved oedipal feelings in all participants, was not primarily motivated by oedipal feelings. It was a highly dynamic operation involving intrapsychic factors, the state of affairs at Columbia as against the background of the nation, as well as the psychodynamic meaning of the form of the radical action.

In conclusion, Dr. Liebert discussed the sense of urgency propelling the "post Hiroshima generation," which experienced two wars in Asia, the Cuban crisis, summers in Watts, and the threat of nuclear war. Unlike their parents' generation, who were reared in a childhood climate of progressive but gradual improvement, this generation wants desperately to effect a change *now*. Dr. Liebert noted that Erikson, Kardner, Keniston and Lifton have encouraged us to abandon the concept of a timeless fixity of character structure and to understand "identity" as "process" forces. The psychoanalytic movement must come to grips with this or run the risk of becoming obsolescent and irrelevant.



DISCUSSION

The first discussant, Dr. Willard Gaylin, complimented Dr. Liebert on his intelligent observation and bright theoretical study. In Dr. Gaylin's opinion, because Dr. Liebert did not adhere to a strictly analytic model in his gathering of data (serial interviews, use of transference, reporting of dreams) the paper was more an example of superb reporting than psychoanalytic research.

The second discussant, Dr. Hugh Butts, considered the paper a scholarly effort to bring psychoanalytic insights to social issues. However, he felt that Dr. Liebert was understandably more attuned to the dynamics of white students than to those of black students and lacked a true understanding of the racist society to which black students are exposed from birth. He felt that "while developmental dynamics are crucial to both black and white student activists, external reality and racist institutions carry a greater valence for black than for white students."



In the predawn hours of April 30...the administration summoned the New York City police to clear the five buildings of the student occupants...

Among the results of the week of confrontation were: abrupt termination of college classes for the final five weeks of the semester, and cancellation of final examinations; considerable destruction of university property by police and students; at least one major act of vandalism, the deliberate burning of ten years of research notes belonging to a faculty member; the disruption of countless friendships, among students and faculty alike, over political differences; and acute polarization of white and black students.

I'm not sure anymore if it was the various reminders about the shocks of 1968 that were in the media last year, or the marvelous articles in *Columbia*, the newsletter from the university, but it got me wondering about those events, about our institute and society's relation to those events, and about the broader question of what sort of relation psychoanalysis, in theory and practice, might have to such events. There has always been political conflict within psychoanalytic organizations, but history goes on around us every day on a larger scale, and we cannot help but participate in that history. It seems inevitable that history will enter our work, whether we know it or not. Has history become so rarefied by the time we enter a session, with all the other influences we find there, that it is irrelevant? Or is it that we are just not attuned to the ways it is present?

It did not take long to learn that in 1968 Robert Liebert, a Columbia analyst who died in 1989, had taken an interest in the student uprising. He explains in the preface to his book how he got involved:

I was speaking with one of the members of the Strike Steering Committee, whom I had known before that spring.

We talked of a critical issue in the negotiations – the striking students' demand for "amnesty"... I explained my view and even suggested some motivational explanations... I added a plea for the striking students to leave the buildings at this time... The young man listened attentively without interrupting and, when I had finished, said quietly:



It is you who are misperceiving events. If we compromise now we will go back to *status quo*, and the faculty will go back to *status quo*... If we leave now all will be lost. What started out as a gymnasium and IDA² issue became a dream of a thousand people in those buildings of a Free University....

Here is Liebert interested, Liebert trying to use his analytic skills, and Liebert suddenly finding himself in the role of the analyst to the young man/“analyst” who “listened attentively without interruption.” But then we hear the young man and quickly realize that he is not playing along in Liebert’s drama. He has his own voice, and we recognize it — it is *our* own voice, wanting to make our dreams come to life. It is not at all difficult to understand how Liebert got pulled in. Unable to join the students in their dreams Liebert did the next best thing, using his training as an analyst and as a researcher to pursue his own dreams.

In psychoanalysis we analyze dreams, but what about when that dream is no longer an individual’s but has become a collective’s? And when the dream enters the realm of historical forces, and comes to represent external, social meanings rather than interior fantasies, does our theory still hold? There is the dream of the young man, but there is also Liebert’s dream. If he is analyzing the students, who will analyze him? Forty years later, having a chance to revisit their dreams, along with what our contributors recall of theirs, we feel invited to remember our own. When are we to stop analyzing and instead allow our dreams their life? In 1968 many felt the answer was clear — the time had come to let them live. Now what do we do with them?

Is Liebert writing a “prescription”³ for our behavior? He seems to be unable to stop himself when he brings his book to a conclusion, but the spirit of his book is different. It is the students who are his teachers, clarifying their actions and delving into their own motives. Liebert, fascinated by them, does little more than ask questions, listen to the answers, and try to tabulate them into reasonable categories. I do not know if it was this experience that

² [Institute for Defense Analysis, a U.S. Department of Defense enterprise that students wanted removed from campus.]

³ Robert Michels’ (1971) term for the overreaching assumptions by analysts on how to respond to the students.

radicalized Liebert (who, from my limited contact with him, impressed one as anything but radical), or whether he came to the task already radical. In one of the closing paragraphs he tries to draw out the lessons he has learned, and in doing this he lets us know that he too is that young man:

Freud knew well that people cannot be cured in the consulting room alone. Man must be studied in the context of his society. Psychological health is an abstraction. To move toward its actualization demands social change. If man is to progress to a state of emotional freedom and begin to live with a sense of trust and community, the psychoanalyst must pioneer not only in bringing people to recognize what they fear — when they have become so “numb” that they do not even know that they are afraid — but also in elucidating the psychological process by which practices and institutions in our society rob us all of part of our humanity. I am speaking of the *subversive* role psychoanalysis should play, both as social commentator and in individual therapy. True psychological liberation requires not only that the patient become aware of repressed instinctual urges and their maladaptive forms of disguised expression but also of the ways in which he has been conditioned to collaborate in his own repression and to accept the social *status quo* instead of to dream of and work for what might be.⁴

On April 1, 1969, Robert Liebert presented some of his research on the Columbia student uprising to the APM. Clarice Kestenbaum served as the APM reporter of that meeting and we have reprinted her summary of it here. We invited others who had been present at Columbia during the takeover, or who had clinical experiences with anyone involved, to contribute to this section, and Dr. Michels was asked to provide an update to his article. This section is presented with thanks to all the contributors, in memory of Dr. Robert Liebert, and in honor of students and faculty on both sides of those events for having made their contribution to our collective history as they continue to do so.

⁴ Liebert, p. 251.



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My Private Columbia

William Glover

When I arrived at Columbia College in 1964 freshmen were given beanies and competed in a rope pull with sophomores. In spring of the year I graduated, 1968, we engaged in another contest, this time pushing between protestors occupying university buildings and those opposed to them. These contrasting images bookend my years at Columbia and portray the immense changes that occurred and shaped those of us who were there.

I came to Columbia from Nebraska on the Greyhound, and recall first seeing the city as we drove through the Jersey wastelands, like the opening scene in *Midnight Cowboy*. My father was a career army officer and although we moved a lot I had never been to New York. I wanted very much to experience life in the big city. I was thrilled to be in New York, but my fears soon outweighed my thirst for the new and I created a life much like what I had come from by joining the crew team and a fraternity. In retrospect the mounting turmoil over Viet-Nam was part of what intimidated me. In my first week at Columbia there was a violent demonstration against marine recruiters on campus right outside my dorm.

My father, as an army officer, had been involved in the run up to the war. During high school he was stationed in Hawaii and worked for the Commander in Chief, U.S. Pacific Command, Admiral Harry Felt, arranging military assistance in Viet-Nam. The January 6, 1961 *TIME* magazine cover article on Admiral Felt has a group photograph of his staff that includes my father. There was a great deal of cognitive dissonance for me between the values of my military family and the strong anti-war sentiment at Columbia.

A joke I like to tell is that while I was at Columbia in the 1960s I was a member of an underground paramilitary organization — called Naval Reserve Officer Training Corps. I attended Columbia on a Navy scholarship and was part of the small NROTC program there. I say underground because after my freshman year we never wore uniforms or held the customary weekly drills in order to avoid confrontations with the anti-war movement on campus.

Our only activity was a course in Naval Science each semester held in a hard-to-find classroom in the basement of Butler Library.

I majored in Government and followed the debate over Viet-Nam. A course in Spring 1968 on the crisis in Viet-Nam, by a TV correspondent whose name I can't recall, was an eye-opener. I became convinced that the war was militarily unnecessary but remained on the sidelines politically. I was due to be commissioned in the US Navy upon graduation. I listened to friends who were opposed to the war but didn't trust the self-righteous demagogues who led the student protests. During the occupation of Low library I aligned with the Majority Coalition blockading the protestors occupying the President's office. We weren't particularly supportive of the university's involvement in the war or the proposed gym in Morningside Heights (the reasons for the protest), but were mainly opposed to the occupation of the campus by the radicals and their allies from off campus. I recall walking by Hamilton Hall one day and feeling highly offended when I saw through a window a student I knew rummaging through the desk of Henry Coleman, the Acting Dean, who was held hostage during the occupation. Coleman was my advisor and a good guy. There was a lot of pushing and shouting and both sides became inflamed and more than a little exhilarated by the conflict. My fraternity held coffee hours for the police and I remember how incredulous the working class cops were that students privileged to attend this Ivy League school would act like this.

No one was surprised when the bust came. The police were out of control, but I saw the protestors provoking the police on many occasions. After the bust I went into avoidance and went with a friend on a jaunt to the Kentucky Derby. Immediately after graduation I was commissioned an Ensign in the US Navy and by the fall I was serving on the USS Canberra providing gunfire support for Marines in I-Corps. Witnessing the war first hand led me to conclude that the Viet-Nam war was not only unnecessary, but an immoral war that I could not participate in. This crisis of conscience led me to become a conscientious objector. This wasn't an easy thing to do as a regular Navy officer, but that's another story.

I was reminded of those days a few years ago when my daughter's high school history teacher invited me to participate on a panel discussing the Viet-Nam war. One of the other guests was David Harris, the war resister. Reminiscing about his '60s heydays

Clarice Kestenbaum

On the morning of April 30, 1968, I was in my Upper West Side office when I received a telephone call from a distraught patient — my second analytic control case. Mitch (not his real name) was a twenty-one year-old Columbia University senior, several weeks from graduation. He had recently been accepted into Columbia's post-graduate fine arts program on partial scholarship.

"I'm in the President's office, and the police are storming the building — should I jump out the window?" I was momentarily stunned — what would my supervisor say or do? My hesitation lasted only a fleeting minute. "What floor are you on?" I asked. "The first floor." "Then jump and we'll talk about it tomorrow."

What was Mitch thinking? Would he lose his scholarship, or be placed on academic probation?

The events preceding the university takeover have been well documented in Robert Liebert's book, *Radical and Militant Youth*, a psychoanalytic inquiry into the causes of the 1968 student rebellion at Columbia. On March 27, 1968, over 100 members of Students for a Democratic Society entered Low Library to petition President Grayson Kirk to sever ties with a military research organization, The Institute for Defense Analysis. Because the demonstration was a violation of a ban on holding such meetings indoors, six SDS students were placed on probation ("The IDA Six"). A second grievance involved the construction of a gymnasium in Morningside Park. Black students, members of the Afro-American Society, protested what they considered discriminatory practices, and together with SDS students decided to "liberate" Hamilton Hall. On April 24th, 200 students broke into the Low Library and occupied the president's office, Mitch being one of them. In addition to Hamilton Hall, three other buildings were occupied.

As Dr. Liebert noted, "The ills of Columbia and those of the larger American society, were fused." He contrasted the "idealistic radicalism" of most of the members with "nihilistic radicalism" of those who refused to negotiate, to compromise, or offer solutions to the multiple problems.

Mitch was on the idealistic side of the spectrum, believing that the country was failing its people and was ethically and morally wrong.

Leaving the scene along with dozens of others as the police were storming the library was, I thought, a wise personal decision. (He really didn't need my help.) Mitch spent the next three years pursuing his doctorate and eventually took a position in an academic institution out West. I am in yearly contact with him. He remained deeply committed to civil rights, the feminist movement, and other liberal causes.

The Columbia riots were not my only dealings with the SDS and repressive government tactics. In September of 1971, Nixon's "plumbers" broke into the Beverly Hills office of Dr. Lewis Fielding, the psychiatrist who was treating Daniel Ellsberg, in search of damaging information about Ellsberg, who was working for The RAND Corporation as a Vietnam expert.

In 1967, Ellsberg had been asked to participate in a top secret study of classified documents regarding the Vietnam War, later known as "The Pentagon Papers." Dismayed, even horrified by the cynicism and hypocrisy he found, he leaked the documents to The New York Times in June of 1971. Dr. Fielding was not the only psychiatrist whose privacy was invaded during the Nixon administration. That same year, the office I shared with my former husband, Michael Stone, was ransacked. Nothing of value had been taken, including drug samples in the medicine cabinet. Patients' charts had obviously been searched, some left helter-skelter on the floor and desk.

The charts of my three SDS students had been removed from the files and sloppily returned, out of place; Michael's experience was the same. We believed the charts of his SDS students had been photographed. (Both of us subsequently developed a fool-proof method of note taking: concealment. His by writing in Sanskrit or private symbols, and mine by having the worst handwriting that even a pharmacist could not decipher.)

We believed Americans were very close to losing their civil rights. Shortly afterwards, on June 17, 1972, the Watergate was burglarized and history was made. America had lost its innocence.

Dr. Robert Liebert was a dear friend and colleague who died too young. He was a true humanitarian who had much to teach us. He found that most of the students he interviewed for his still-timely book were sensitive, intelligent, and idealistic, and were responding to deep societal problems in the microcosm of the



university. He urged his psychoanalytic colleagues to confront the relationship of the psyche to the political and social realities of our time.





he monopolized the discussion, portraying himself in heroic terms and exhorting the students to share his political philosophy. I was reminded of why I had distrusted many of the anti-war leaders. Like John McCain, Harris seemed stuck in the past, still making his living off the Viet-Nam war. I spoke to my daughter's class about my own path, from being the loyal son of a military family unquestioningly serving his country to becoming an active duty conscientious objector. The experience was traumatic in ways but also initiated a course of truth seeking and self-discovery that eventually led to my becoming a psychoanalyst. I encouraged the students in my daughter's class to learn to think for themselves, to thread their way between competing arguments and persuasive demagogues and decide for themselves what to believe, something that I began to learn to do at Columbia in 1968.



Robert Michels, M.D.

Thirty-nine years ago I presented my first paper at The American Psychoanalytic Association, afterwards published in *The Journal of The American Psychoanalytic Association* (1971). It was on the student uprisings of the late 1960s, of which I had a privileged view, serving at the time as a psychiatrist at the Columbia University Student Health Service. My major thesis, with which I still agree, was how little our psychoanalytic theories offered in helping us to understand these events. Ethics, politics, sociology and history all seemed more relevant. I was particularly critical of those who had offered facile Oedipal interpretations of sons rebelling against their fathers.

My own experience with individual students, along with that of my colleagues — perhaps particularly Bob Liebert, who consulted at Columbia's counseling service and knew the leaders of the student rebellion — was that the students were much more often expressing the values that their parents embraced, but on which their parents had been reluctant to take action. The students felt that they were doing good, had little internal conflict, and found much support in family and family surrogates, such as young faculty. The enemies were more distant — the government, the school administration, "society." The behavior had dynamics, as all behavior does, but the highly varied and individual meanings it had for each of the students offered little assistance in explaining the social phenomenon.

Today, looking back over the thirty-nine year interval, it isn't clear that the student uprising had much effect. We have seen major changes in the lives of other groups for which organized protest seemed to be crucial — blacks, women, gays — but those are lifelong roles, while students are only passing through a stage. Psychodynamics haven't changed, or if they have, it is because we are toying with new theories, not because people are any different. Psychoanalysts haven't changed much either. They are still quick to point out Oedipal themes and other universal dynamic patterns in social and political phenomena, with the suggestion that this somehow explains them. In 1971 I quoted Freud (1931) on the issue:

Precisely because it is always present, the Oedipus complex is not suited to provide a decision. ... The situation ... in a well-known anecdote might easily be brought about. There was a burglary. A man who had a jimmy in his possession was found guilty of the crime. After the verdict had been given and he had been asked if he had anything to say, he begged to be sentenced for adultery at the same time — since he was carrying that tool on him as well. (p. 252)

His argument remains valid.

Because of the intense passions with which they were associated, and because they involved our friends and ourselves, many of us were intrigued by these events and tried to study them. For me the most important lesson we learned was the limits of our method and the boundaries of the domain to which it is appropriate.

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The Students Rise

Arlene Kramer Richards

In 1968 I had my first professional job as a psychologist, as Director of Research at The Center for Research and Education in American Liberties at Columbia University. The Center was a joint project of the law school and the educational psychology department at Columbia's Teachers College. I was to do the statistics and research design. Our project was aimed at making education in civics courses more effective. It was well funded by the United States Office of Education to the tune of half a million dollars for a two year project. That was a lot of money at that time. There was already concern that people did not believe in the Bill of Rights or understand the Constitution and that the high schools were falling into anarchy.

To give you an idea of how things were in those days, our Center was headed by a famous civil liberties law professor. I was still a graduate student, just finishing my dissertation, but experienced in research design and statistics; I took every course offered in statistics at Teachers College with Rosedith Sitgreaves, who was the statistics editor of the journal *Science*. She was pleased to have another woman who loved statistics as her student. I also took all of the offerings in research design including a course in test development with Thorndike, the primary test developer of the time. I thought I was qualified to do the work of developing a test to determine why young people were not learning civics and why they were so opposed to the "system."

At an initial interview with the foremost educational psychologist of that day, Professor John DeCecco, I was told that my credentials were impressive, but that I would know whether I got the job by the end of that week. I waited with much angst. At the time I had three children attending Agnes Russell School, the lab school for TC and Columbia. They could only continue there if I got that job. And I would be working just across the street. I could even meet them for lunch — if I got the job. On Friday afternoon I got a call from Professor

DeCecco. He said that I could have the job because no one else had applied! All I had to do was pass an interview with the law professor who ran the place. Could I come down now? Yes. I caught the bus and was there in ten minutes. I was 33 years old, but felt as eager as a teen applying for her first job. The law professor had my resume on his desk as he interviewed me. "I see you have three children. How do I know you won't get pregnant on me?" "Oh," I said, "you use a condom." Realizing the civil rights implications of what had just been said, the man blushed and said: "Okay, you're hired." I never saw him after that except at large meetings.

Meanwhile, the streets were crowded with police, reporters, TV crews, sightseers and students with placards. I was afraid for my children, who had to pass this chaos on their way to their elementary school. I worried that they were hearing that they were part of the "system" and that they were getting an elite education while the other kids in the Columbia neighborhood had to go to the run down overcrowded, unsafe public school. The student strike in that way was a strike against me and my family. How could that be, when I was a strong supporter of integration and human rights? How could this be, when I had organized an inter-racial art show in then segregated Petersburg, Virginia, when I had marched on Washington with a bus full of black people from Hopewell, Virginia? How did I and mine get to be the enemy?

I was interested in psychoanalysis and had seen its efficacy for myself; I was in analysis for a writer's block that had stalled my dissertation. Together with John DeCecco, I wrote a structured interview based on the Flanagan Critical Incident Technique. Each interviewee got a chance to describe an incident in her or his own life that seemed to raise a problem in American liberties. Then the interview protocol led to an analysis of how and why this was problematic. This required an interviewer for each classroom of students. So I hired 37 interviewers, mostly graduate students in psychology, sociology, anthropology, theology and education.

The interviewers were themselves rebelling against the draft and, I now think, against the authoritarian atmosphere on campus that had been accepted by the ex-GIs who dominated the student body during the 1950s. These 1960s students had grown up in a time of less desperation than the Depression kids or the

World War II kids. They were used to more openness and thought they knew what freedoms they were entitled to have. When the campus erupted that spring we had already gathered a great deal of data. The interviewers were now coding the data for inputting on the punch cards that fed the giant computer of those days. The coding was boring, and preparing the cards was even worse. I was in constant fear that the coders would either destroy or ignore the interview protocols. And some of them did. But the sample was so large that the data destroyed did not affect the study.

A story about a professor who had years of his data destroyed terrified me. Would all of our work be ruined? Locking the office at the end of each day and opening it each morning, I would pat the piles of papers and punch cards as if to reassure myself that they were safe. I was torn between empathy for the students and fear of their possible violence. It was terrible. At the same time I was afraid for my own children. Would the police protect them? Some of the college students believed that the kids in the lab school were having an unfair elite education while the neighborhood's poor black children were being given an inferior one. Of course the Columbia students were themselves having an elite Ivy League education. And as a believer in the civil rights activism of the early 1960s, and a marcher for equality and against the war, how could I not side with the students? It was a terrible dilemma. It was ironic. I was having a critical incident happening just as we were studying those of the high school students.

And, like the incidents reported by the students, the conflicts I was having were leading to new understanding. I had to reason out what was causing the intensity of the feelings on campus, just as I thought about the intensity of my own feelings. The Columbia students were facing the draft and the possible loss of their lives; painful wounds and illness from living in jungles; the certain loss of some years of schooling, as well as separation from their families and from women they might love, and deprivation of sex. Above all, they were protesting at not having the opportunity to determine their own choices, their own lives.

As a result of our interviews John and I wrote a book together that led the way for the conflict resolution paradigm for high schools in the 1970s. The book illustrated the high school students' need to

participate in the governance of their own lives and their awareness of the responsibilities that that would entail. It is my hope that we made some difference.



Everyone is Young Once ... 1968 through a Glass Grayly

Barbara Stimmel

How much do I know
To talk out of turn?
You might say that I'm young,
You might say I'm unlearned.
(Bob Dylan, 1963)

A great deal has been written about the 1960s and the culture of the young (most of whom are now in their 60s). This era has been pored over and dissected through the long lens of the telescope of time. Whether disparaged or idealized, misunderstood or “gotten”, it has dominated so much of subsequent American culture. It is very inviting for a psychoanalyst to apply her essential way of thinking about human behavior to times, places, and events, but this too often results in a caricature of sound clinical thinking. This is the temptation for me when I try to find words to describe one of the most tumultuous, terrifying, and thrilling historical realities of which I was a part. I am speaking of the protests and riots which took place on the Columbia campus in 1968.

I was an undergraduate student at General Studies, taking courses as well in the College and the Medical School. I was an out-of-phase person on a campus which embraced me fully; I knew people all over campus and I loved Columbia. There and elsewhere, faculty were conducting teach-ins to help create structures where thought and analysis could perhaps hold sway, as the world continued to spin out of control. The shock waves from John F. Kennedy's assassination continued to roll over us and Martin Luther King had just been killed before our eyes. TV relentlessly confronted us with war and death in ways guaranteed to disrupt shared naïve perceptions that sanity prevailed.

One irony of this time was that, while those of us who opposed the war turned our backs on and scorned the soldiers caught in fighting it, we simultaneously and increasingly embraced the underdog and the abused closer to home. We foolishly, and

shamefully, mistook the cogs for the machine, thereby bringing everlasting disrepute on our honorable intentions. Back at home, we at Columbia were provoked and fired-up by the expansionist plans the university was imposing on those who lived right next door. BURN IT DOWN! This was H. Rap Brown railing against the gym which would invade Harlem, allowing entry to just some of its residents, and that through a separate door.

What we couldn't and wouldn't see was that those fighting this god-forsaken war half a world away might as well have come from right next door. The protests against the arrogance of the university, including its involvement in The Institute for Defense Analysis — WE WON'T STUDY WAR NO MORE — unleashed such complicated choices and chances among us that we soon were united in futile but compelling action aimed at those who would not take us seriously. Grayson Kirk, president of Columbia, who actually wrote a letter protesting the war, was a despised stand-in for our war-waging, bomb-dropping President, Lyndon Johnson, who agonized deeply and ineffectually over the war. So much for the black and white hats we thought different ones of us wore, when most things were, deep down, a muddled shade of gray.

I had already been seriously involved in protesting the war, in the time-honored tradition of political dissent, via the press. Some fellow undergraduates and I created and published a campus newspaper, the *ICV* (Independent Committee on Vietnam), patterned after the newsletter of I.F. Stone, the great journalist-radical of our time. Stone studied Greek in his advanced years and his idea that one could and should always be learning, informed his every move. The *I. F. Stone Weekly* was a true forerunner of our most powerful, political blogs; the *ICV* faithfully followed suit.

We published news, commentary, opinions, and frustration. We tried to distribute the *ICV* off-campus but our resources were limited and our sophistication slim. In the midst of all this, it is not surprising that some of us fell under the sway of the SDS (Students for a Democratic Society), the SAS (Students for an Afro-American Society), and the YSA (Young Socialists Alliance). They were exceedingly radical, while we mostly were not. But their passion and their convictions were infectious; the heady combination of fighting injustice and creating change was an extraordinary elixir, and it still is.

In the midst of all this I one day found myself with a gun pointed at my back by a member of the NYPD SWAT team, called to campus by the enraged, increasingly ham-strung administration. The Pigs were sent by the Parents and the Children were astonished. It is important to note that the Children came in all ages and sizes and that the Parents included those young enough to be the Children. Identifications crossed chronological lines which in turn blended ideological currents. Needless to say, this radicalized me, and I was never again the same.

I continued on — WHAT DO WE WANT? PEACE! WHEN DO WE WANT IT? NOW! — recoiling from tear-gas at the Pentagon while taking over the streets of D.C., marching through a phalanx of hostile mounted police and hecklers in hard hats on Whitehall Street as we tried to shut down the selective service station, pelted and spit upon in Lincoln Park while a corrupt convention occurred behind closed doors. Yet these surreal battles, fearsome and fraught with mutual rage and misunderstanding as they were, somehow didn't produce the heartbreak I felt when my own NYC police on my own beloved campus turned against me and my friends. It made no sense. Protest was how our country started. We believed we were throwing tea on to 116th Street and Broadway, into the lap of Alma Mater, and at the face of an insensitive administration.

Just a few months later Bobby Kennedy was murdered — he who had stood on the roof of a car in lower Manhattan at an impromptu street rally, where he brought people to tears, as we joined his and each other's hands, jumping for joy because it seemed really possible that our world would, or could, somehow be restored — and Nixon became the president; we knew we were doomed. And then, more impossible than we could ever imagine, Kent State blew up.

Outside in the distance, a wildcat did growl,
Two riders were approaching,
The wind began to howl...
(Bob Dylan, 1968)

In 1968 I was studying in an idiosyncratic context in an increasingly idiotic world, but I was not alone. For example, although my co-editor on the ICV was a Columbia College

undergraduate, five or six years younger than me (a divorced woman of 23), we were true compatriots. I lived alone, supporting myself through merit scholarships, academic loans, and babysitting, meandering through space and time. Mark lived on campus, his tuition paid by family, decidedly on-track in the long developmental line from nursery through college, career plans firmly in place. But we both, as did so many others, subsumed our differences and marched forward on the printed page, on the campus, and in the streets. It seemed to us that we had no choice; in some way we were doing the bidding of our better natures. We were often afraid, sometimes confused, but almost always determined.

I could tell you much about my own history and conflicts, with their coalition of compromises, and how they surely had an impact on where I stood those days at Columbia. But that would be an inadequate exercise, failing to do justice to the myriad marchers, mourners, and misled, among whom I was but one. It would describe little about the swirl of events which caught so many of us in the same net of madness and greatness. Undoubtedly, our individual characters and psychology had to dictate to some extent why we were there and why we made our choices to become involved. Yet at the same time, the extraordinary diversity among us would make such an analysis shallow. When you next see a revival of *HAIR*, listen to the nasal twangs in "Masters of War," rediscover "Fear and Loathing on the Campaign Trail," finally read a Thomas Pynchon novel, or even reread a timeless paper of Freud, and don't forget that sometimes culture provokes human behavior and in ways which give one hope. In the end, individual personality structure is often strikingly uninformative when it comes to explaining political activism and the decision to rise up in protest against those in power and their misbegotten aims, hurled at the people like so many thunderbolts.

I have been "in power" myself since then, but I am still something of an anti-establishment radical at heart. This does not seem to me a contradiction, rather the result of accepting that I was now over 30 and taking responsibility was my only recourse. The greater complexity of meaning and possibilities in making the world work, of course, became increasingly clear. How could they not, without figuratively blowing myself up in a Greenwich Village brownstone while building bombs, in a frantic and crazy attempt to

destroy the government? Nonetheless, I have hung on to my refusal to compromise when asked to grant legitimacy to an unjust war, a corrupt government, or the lies of those around me. That small revolution of swarms and storms of protesters at Columbia, which took place on an urban college campus almost half a century ago, helped shape how I think, vote, and even dream today. Having been there, it was inevitable that I would find myself on the same streets in 2003, as millions of us, all over the world, marched in a futile attempt to be heard by a deaf and dumb government.

In the summer of 2008 my son trekked across Vietnam, by bike, on foot, and alone. But I was with him every step of the way as he wrote from Hanoi, Ho Chi Minh city (our Saigon), Hue, Danang, Ha Long Bay and China Beach. He left a different kind of American imprint on a country which once gave his mother the impetus to leave her imprint, among millions of others, on the streets of America, as we marched our way out of adolescence and young adulthood into the bittersweet years in which we became the Parents of the next generation of Children. Would that we could do better...

After these many years, I look back on the calls to brave action and to dangerous stupidity that resounded during those decisive days at Columbia University. Although Grant Park radiated a resplendence this past November which we could only hope for in 1968, I believe that most of what we hoped would change hasn't, that time is running out, and that the sober recognition of this reality is what passes for wisdom in later years. But the genius of youth, infused with quixotic passion and idealism, is fueled by the seductive future which falsely offers the transcendent promise of the vast expanse of forever. So, we wish for the young in particular, who in 2008 believed in their power to create change, that their dreams come to pass and they are protected from unjust wars rather than being led foolishly into them.

One mundane truth in life might be that, if she simply keeps her eyes open, a young woman in any era won't miss the watershed events which could carry her across the threshold, thereby granting the possibility of leaving her mark in the room. The young woman I was 40 years ago hopped on to the barricades — an act which unfurled a life-long attachment to the transformative truth of standing up and being counted. And much as in the

profession I love, those spring days of 1968 helped me believe in my power to create change while banging into the limitations of my voice.

