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“When Spiders Unite, They Can Tie Down a Lion”: Student Affairs Practice

Joslyn DiRamio¹

This paper explores the current gap of research on student allies. Specifically, it looks at the definitions associated with being an ally and the difficulties in identifying such students on college campuses. It examines both ally action and developmental models. These models not only illustrate general progressions of development, but are also a springboard for examining the issues facing allies. The paper highlights the roles of student allies on campus and how student affairs professionals and faculty can support and challenge such students.

The Activist Tradition

Students have been an active force on college campuses since the earliest days of higher education in the United States. When students, like the spiders in the title of this paper, pool their energies and resources, they have the ability to effect administrative response, and often change, on campus. Power in numbers is the key to successful student activist movements. Whether students gather together outside of the student union to picket the unfair labor practices of the school's dining services, or congregate across the country using the technology of the Internet to address humanitarian concerns in Southeast Asia, the size of the student participation base of a movement has a direct connection to the ultimate power of that group.

Student activism is often directly related to the broader social currents of change in society. Because of this, the reach of activist movements on college and university campuses can be much further than the borders of an individual campus. Throughout history, "students have played a major role in stimulating unrest and fostering change in many countries" (Lipset, 1972, p. 253). Student groups have played important roles in the political revolutions of many countries including France in the 19th century and both Russia and China during the 20th century. "Social unrest causes student unrest," and the voice of student unrest has proven to be very powerful throughout history (p. 253). Student activism:

will not go away. Whatever the economic, political, social, or psychological climate, societies count on their young adults to identify and confront what has grown outdated, superfluous or hypocritical. In the United States, college students have been playing that role in one form or another for the past several generations--regardless of the evils they choose to attack. (Vellela, 1988, p. 219)

Many administrators on college campuses shudder at the thought of a student take-over of a key building on campus or the creation of a protest site in the center of the campus green. This fear of student activism is founded partly on the realization that once students begin to unite, the potential power that the group possesses can become overwhelming compared to the individual authority each administrator wields depending on title and rank. The apprehension that many administrators feel regarding student activism is also related to the uncertainty that large-scale change can bring to an institution. More often than not, student movements champion large-scale change related to institutional dynamics or structure.

There is a certain irony in the administrative uneasiness in response to student activism given the nature of higher education in the United States. Universities are both organized bureaucracies controlled by "establishmentarians" and intellectual "sanctuaries" for radical academics and students alike (Keene, 1970, p. 80). Student activists have become a cultural stereotype in the popular notion of how a college student should look and act; however, many college administrators do not have an understanding of the nature and focus of student activist movements. An institution of higher education is "at once the most conservative and the most radical institution in our society" (p. 80). Because of the dichotomy that exists within the structure of every college and university, student affairs professionals must be able to negotiate the conflicting roles of administrator and student advocate - especially when activist students begin to organize on campus.

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As campus administrators, student affairs professionals must not only be fluent in the history of student activism, but must also create developmental leadership responses to moments of activism on campus that encourage dialogue and collaborative problem solving. "For an institution to be effectively led through periods of activism, student affairs professionals must be students of activism. They must understand the dynamics, history, psychology, and theories of activism" (Miser, 1988, p. 2). Student affairs professionals must take the lead on campus in approaching student activism, not as a threat to the status quo, but as a student attempt at creating a dialogue of change.

Student Activism Defined

In order to address the many facets of student activist movements and their effects on student affairs administration, an exploration of the language of activism is beneficial. For the purposes of this paper, student activism is defined as any movement on campus organized and carried out by students that addresses issues of social justice - both political and economic - or structural or institutional change. More often than not, student activist movements are characterized by their connection to social issues beyond an individual campus, even if the catalyst for the movement is campus specific.

Student activism can take many forms, from organized protests, to long-established campus organizations with members who address change on an on-going basis. A campus protest, or student activist moment, is a public display created and enacted by students for the purpose of expressing disagreement or disapproval of a social condition or official policy of some kind (Astin, Astin, Bayer, & Bisconti, 1975). Such activist moments can range in type from a silent picket line to the construction of a shanty town on the campus green. Campus protests can range in time from a few hours to a few weeks.

When discussing student activism, there is often discussion about whether expressions of activism are truly dissent or merely disruption. *The American Heritage Dictionary* (1969) defines dissent as a verb that means "to think or feel differently; disagree; differ," and a noun that means "the refusal to conform to the authority or doctrine of an established church; nonconformity" (Morris, p. 381). Therefore, campus dissent can be defined as a refusal by students to conform to a given structure that they believe is not beneficial or just in some way.

The same dictionary defines disrupt as a verb that means "to upset the order of; throw into confusion or disorder. To interrupt or impede the progress, movement, or procedure of" (p. 381). A disruption on campus is an action that disturbs the function of campus for no other reason than to be destructive. Often, "disruption relies upon coercion and violence" (Brown, 1992, p. 6). While no two people will agree that every campus dissent is not merely a campus disruption and vice versa, a general understanding of the language of the debate is useful when studying student activism, and particularly when working on a college campus. This paper will focus on the history of campus dissent, as opposed to disruption, and the historical effects of student activist movements focused on social justice and structural change.

A Brief History of Student Activism in the United States

How did the image of the young campus radical take hold in the American popular imagination? There are many social and historical factors that, in combination, embody the icon of the student activist. One such factor is the cultural reality that an "emphasis on youthful reformism is greater in the United States than in many other countries" (Lipset, 1972, p. 259). This cultural characteristic is reflected in the country's tendency to value youth over old age. Another factor adding to the icon of the student activist is the relatively privileged position that the college student holds in modern American society. A typical college student does not have to "focus on matters directly related to...daily survival," but has the privilege of addressing issues of the privileged status for granted, a vocal minority of students over the years have used this status as power to change both campus life and the social fabric of the country.

The Early Years

Students have been organizing for change since the colonial beginnings of higher education in the United States. Whether students sought to change the quality of food in the dining hall or to increase autonomy over extracurricular activities, the college campus has experienced a great deal of change related to student activism over the years. Changes brought about by student activist movements in the 18th and 19th century include "the establishment of debating clubs, literary societies and magazines, fraternities, an elaborate student government system, and the sanctioning of sporting events" (Magolda & Magolda, 1988, p. 7).

The first half of the 20th century witnessed the ebb and flow of campus activist movements. Increased attention to social and political issues of the greater society beyond the ivory tower characterized the activist movements of the new century. Organizations such as the YMCA and YWCA exposed students to the power of community service focused on social change (p. 7). By the 1920s, student discontent with the state of higher education began to grow. Challenges to curriculum, concern for academic freedom, and criticism of the place of higher education in society became more widespread (p. 8).

World War I and World War II both had significant impacts on the development of student movements. The 1930s saw the advent of the first mass student movement which was directly related to the anti-war movement (Astin, Astin, Bayer, & Bisconti, 1975, p. 18). This movement connected student activists from campuses across the country through organizations, such as the National Student Federation of America, designed to address the political concerns of their members (p. 18). World War II effectively squelched the more radical student movements of the decade, and the wave of McCarthyism following the war placed a limit on the reorganization efforts of student activists (p. 18-19).

Campus Change in the 1960s and 1970s

The student activism and subsequent campus unrest of the 1960s and early 1970s are the historical watersheds of both campus and social change in the United States. Influenced by the social movements of the 1960s, student activists focused their energy during this decade on student power, student life, civil liberties, civil rights, and the peace movement (Astin, Astin, Bayer, & Bisconti, 1975; Magolda & Magolda, 1988; Paterson, 1994). The year 1960 was itself a pivotal year for student activism. The first sit-in at a segregated lunch counter was held by a group of four black students in Greensboro, North Carolina. Also, the Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) held their first national convention in the summer of 1960, and the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) became a major organizing presence in the South (Foster & Long, 1970; Gold, Christie, & Friedman, 1976).

During the 1960s, the New Left was born. The New Left is the name given to student activist movements of this era because of the ideological split from the philosophically rigid pre-war Old Left student activists and the unique personalist philosophy that defined the movements of the 1960s (Farrell, 1997). The personalist perspective that characterized the thought of the New Left, from which student activists connected the personal with the political and vice versa, was influenced by a "combination of Catholic social thought, communitarian anarchism, radical pacifism, and humanistic psychology" (p. 6). Personalist philosophy centered on the "dignity of persons," a concern for the status and treatment of marginalized people in society as an indicator of social health, a belief that the social revolution was not optional for any one person, attention to change on both the individual and structural levels, and the importance of the "harmony of means and ends: 'The more violence,' they said, 'the less revolution'" (p. 6-8).

In 1962, the Port Huron Statement was written at the national SDS convention. This statement served as the touchstone document for the personalist New Left student movement throughout the decade. The importance and power of participatory democracy was a central theme in the statement. This connection of a "personalist perspective to democratic theory" was evidence that the "students of SDS believed that the process of participation was not just good for politics; it was also good for the people who participated, helping them develop their full capacities as persons" (p. 142).

In addition to the major philosophical and ideological contributions of the student activists of the 1960s, a number of the most memorable and violent student protests occurred during this decade and the early years of the 1970s. Sit-ins, teach-ins, and protests in reaction to the Vietnam War, CIA and military recruiting, students' rights to free speech, and racial segregation occurred on campuses across the country including the University of California at Berkeley, University of Michigan, Columbia University, and the University of Kansas, to name a few (Foster & Long, 1970). By the end of the 1960s, the violent nature of the protests and the subsequent administrative response to those protests led to the tragic student deaths at Kent State University in Ohio and Jackson State College in Mississippi (Magolda & Magolda, 1988).

Relative Quiet - The late 1970s into the 1980s

Once the Vietnam War ended in the mid-1970s, the voice of student activists became much quieter, nearly silent, as compared to the decade of action just previous. American society, on the whole, shifted its political focus inward to issues of the national economy. The 1970s was a time of economic recession in the United States. As a result, students also shifted focus inward leaving the communitarian personalist perspective for more individual-centered concerns such as career choice and financial stability (Altbach, 1981; Magolda & Magolda, 1988, Rhoads, 1998).

Student activism itself did not disappear during this time, but changed forms. Instead of fighting for broad, community-based change, students joined Public Interest Research Groups (PIRGs) and focused their energies on individual issues such as women's rights, racial and ethnic equality, gay rights, and environmental concerns (Loeb, 1994; Magolda & Magolda, 1988). This more individual focus carried through into the early years of the 1980s as a politically conservative tone pervaded college campuses and the nation.

The mid-1980s witnessed a resurgence of student activism on a scale reminiscent of the 1960s with the anti-apartheid divestment movement. On campuses across the country, including Dartmouth College, The University of Vermont, and Cornell University, student activists constructed shanty towns in the middle of their respective campuses to create a visual image of the poverty of black South Africans. Students demanded that their boards of trustees divest any institutional funds that had been invested in companies that contributed to the system of apartheid in South Africa. In total, 150 campuses experienced some form of student protest related to divestment, and over \$4 billion were divested (Loeb, 1994).

Other issues that student activists championed during the 1980s included United States military activity in Central and South America, CIA campus recruitment, women's issues, gay, lesbian, and bisexual rights, racism, and the economy (Vellela, 1988). Students no longer addressed one issue at a time, but they began to "juggle more causes, [to] more consciously address difficult fault lines of race, sex, and class, and [to] work to overcome greater resignation and resistance" (Loeb, 1994, p. 5).

The 1990s and Beyond

As the decade of the 1990s dawned, campuses across the country were filled with a cohort of students who were "neither wholly radical nor wholly uncommitted" (p. 7). Growing student interest in issues such as tuition costs, university governance, the politics of race and sex, war, hunger, apartheid, homelessness, and the environment became evident in the campus newspapers and student political activity (Loeb, 1994). The emergence of a personalist perspective similar to that of many campus activists in the 1960s also became more clear as the student activists of the 1990s voiced a belief that "if their fellow humans or the earth itself are brutalized and demeaned, such despoliation wounds us all" (p. 129).

The Multicultural Movement, like the divestment movement of the 1980s, is the defining movement of student activism in the 1990s and the early 21st century (Rhoads, 1998). Issues such as affirmative action in admissions policies, financial aid, educational equity, identity politics, women's rights, and gay rights rose to the surface of political activity on campuses during the 1990s. The introduction of the Internet to the daily function of campus and social life enhanced the national and international connection of student activists concerned about issues of human, economic, and environmental rights (Cox, 2000; Rhoads, 1998). Anti-corporate sentiment has also characterized the student activism of the 1990s. Students have rallied around anti-sweatshop and fair labor efforts related to university apparel. Also, student activists were a large presence in the demonstration against the World Trade Organization in Seattle, Washington in 1999 (Williams, 2000).

There is no doubt that the history and power of student activism, and the icon of the student activist, are alive on college campuses and the broader society today. What the major issues of the first decade of the 21st century will be for students is still unknown. However, a connecting theme throughout the history of student activism is this: for student activists, on the whole, the personal and the political are one and the same. The major student political movements to this point have shown this precept to be true. No matter what lies ahead for student activists, a strong personalist perspective and a connection to the students of the 1960s will certainly be evident.

Student Activism and Student Affairs Practice

What does the history of student activism tell us about the history and development of the student affairs profession? History has shown that "during periods of dissent, institutional leadership is often challenged in an emotionally charged environment" (Miser, 1988, p. 1). Student affairs professionals are members of the institutional leadership that are often directly affected by the emotions, changes, and challenges produced as a result of student activism.

In 1970, Landrum R. Bolling illustrated the fact that "as institutions have ballooned in size, as academic bureaucracies have expanded, the problem of communicating effectively with students has grown increasingly complex and difficult"

(p. 164). Student affairs professionals play a pivotal role on campus as the administrative liaison between the student body and the members of the bureaucratic hierarchy. As an integral piece of the campus communication network, student affairs professionals can, and do, have a profound effect on the success or failure of institutional response to student activism. However, as administrative student advocates, they also have a great deal to lose with regard to relationships and credibility with students and co-workers alike during times of campus dissent.

Changes in Institutional Responses to Activism

The catalyst for change. Prior to and during the student activist movements of the 1960s, the administrative structure of colleges and universities in the United States was one based on the *in loco parentis* paradigm (Bickel & Lake, 1999; Magolda & Magolda, 1988; Paterson, 1994). This institutional framework perceived students as children and the institution as the guardian, or parent. Students had few if any freedoms on campus, and campuses were insulated from the interference of the national legal system. This institutional paradigm was put to the ultimate test during the campus unrest of the 1960s, and eventually met its demise. "The fall of *in loco parentis* in the 1960s correlated exactly with the rise of student economic power and the rise of student civil rights" (Bickel & Lake, 1999, p. 36).

During the student movements of the 1960s, the typical institutional responses to dissent were reactionary, harsh, punitive, and often violent. Expulsions and suspensions of dissenting students without sufficient due process were the norm. Student arrests and increased police or military presence on campus were also considered to be reasonable and effective administrative tactics. Unfortunately, for students and administrators alike, these tactics often resulted in an increasingly violent situation on campus (Paterson, 1994). Students began not only to protest the social ills of the country at large, but also began to address unfair campus practices by taking their schools to court to ensure increased freedom on campus.

The court case of *Dixon v. Alabama State Board of Education* (1961) set the legal precedent for due process in student judicial hearings at public universities and colleges. The case was a result of the expulsion of several Alabama State College students who had participated in a sit-in at a segregated lunch counter. The students were expelled from school without the application of due process to their case. Because of this, the court stepped in and effectively struck down the historical insularity of campus judicial proceedings and required public institutions to apply the constitutional right of due process to all student judicial hearings.

A new relationship defined. The Dixon case combined with the sheer volume of campus protests and institutional unrest throughout the 1960s contributed to an era during which the "relationship between the student and the institution was significantly changed from both philosophical and legal perspectives" (Miser, 1988, p. 1). The resulting relationship between students and institutions of higher education was contractual as opposed to familial (Paterson, 1994). While the new relationship brought with it many more legal regulations than in years past, students were afforded many more freedoms on campus and were considered to be adults in the eyes of the institution.

Another significant philosophical shift that began to take place among the administration of many institutions of higher education following the student dissent of the 1960s was a shift from an administrative stance of conflict avoidance to one of conflict engagement and management. In the late 1960s, E.G. Williamson (1986) addressed a group of senior student affairs administrators and voiced his support of this changing philosophy. He said that "conflict is natural and is at the very essence of higher learning" (p. 265). No longer would the institutional response to student activism and change be based on negativity, fear, and knee-jerk reaction.

During the protest activity of the 1960s, a "willingness by administrators to establish communications with protestors seemed to be one way of avoiding violence" (Astin, Astin, Bayer, & Bisconti, 1975, p. 86). An openness to increased communication with students was another characteristic of conflict management as opposed to conflict avoidance. Open communication is the hallmark of a sense of trust within a relationship. Within the student/institution relationship, open communication must exist on issues of policy, adjudication procedures, time and place expectations with regard to freedom of expression, and contractual expectations. When communication is open and flowing, negotiation is often a viable alternative to campus-wide dissent or disruption (Brown, Miser, & Emmanuel, 1988).

A challenge to change had been posed by the students of the 1960s and institutions of higher education, including student affairs professionals, responded in turn. Not all institutions and administrators have responded positively:

Some have reached out, creating mechanisms that allow students to share in decision-making processes; most, however, regard activism as something to keep in check, and have redesigned their disciplinary procedures, security measures and even, some charge, admissions policies accordingly. (Vellela, 1988, p. 1)

Fence Sitters vs. Effective Student Advocates

Throughout the 1960s, "student affairs staff were often called upon to assist in solving the problems created by campus dissent" (Brown, Miser, & Emmanuel, 1988, p. 55). As a result, the nature and perception of the profession were changed. Student affairs professionals no longer were thought of as cogs in a meaningless wheel of paperwork and bureaucracy. Slowly, student affairs administrators were included in the creation and implementation of campus policies and institutional decision making. Presently, student affairs administrators function not only as campus decision makers, but also as "advocates for student involvement...and as the [administrative] communication link to key student leaders and their organizations" (p. 55). They also play the "professional role...of change agent" whose function is to plan "systematically for change rather than to react to its effects" (Saddlemire & Rentz, 1986, p. 180).

During the 1960s, members of the campus bureaucracy were more often than not either mediators during campus unrest or targets of student activism. Very rarely were any administrators seen in the role of a supporter of the student cause (Astin, Astin, Bayer, & Bisconti, 1975). Student affairs professionals, during the 1960s, were both mediators and supporters of student activism; however, they also became targets of student activism. As the doctrine of *in loco parentis* was challenged, so too were the intentions and purpose of student affairs administrators. The loss of relationship that occurred between students and student affairs administrators during the 1960s marked a period of uncertainty and dramatic change for the profession of student affairs as a whole (Saddlemire & Rentz, 1986).

Given the nature of the role that student affairs professionals have on campus, they often straddle the line between student advocate and institutional administrator during times of campus unrest and student protest. This presents an often difficult situation for student affairs professionals "since protest...almost inevitably develops into a clash between students and campus authorities, it represents a deterioration of relationships" (Foster & Long, 1970, p. 419). The nature of the work that student affairs professionals do on campus is based almost entirely on relationships with students. When these relationships are challenged, as they often are during campus unrest, the life and work of a student affairs professional can become very stressful and, at times, disappointing.

The entire experience of responding to student activism is a difficult one for student affairs administrators. Personal values are questioned. Relationships with students developed over past semesters are threatened and, at times, dissolve completely. Many feelings about the issues and decisions have been repressed. The problems of acting as a neutral, rational figure usually take a toll. It is disheartening to feel misunderstood by some members of the campus community (Brown, Miser, & Emmanuel, 1988, p. 70).

An Educational Mission

By the mid-1960s, professional opinion changed regarding the institutional role of student affairs administrators. The growing belief was that the "student personnel practitioner will be an educator rather than a procedural technician" (Saddlemire & Rentz, 1986, p. 180). This change is reflected in the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators (1989) statement, *A Perspective on Student Affairs*. In that statement, the basic assumptions and beliefs of the student affairs field are described. A number of the assumptions, such as "the freedom to doubt and question must be guaranteed" (p. 10), "effective citizenship should be taught" (p. 11), and "student involvement enhances learning" (p. 10), include elements of student learning and the student affairs professional's responsibility to foster and support that learning. This focus on student learning has important implications for the approach that student affairs professionals should take to student activism.

Democratic citizenship. One of the assumptions of the field that speaks directly to the need for an understanding of student activism is the belief that "effective citizenship should be taught" (p. 11). The democratic principles upon which the United States was founded include the belief that the participation of each member of society in the political functioning of the nation is essential for the creation of a just and non-tyrannical government. While the realization of such an ideal is eternally debatable, the involvement of citizens in the political discourse of the nation is desirable. "A rich and participatory culture supports a vibrant democracy" (Guarasci, 2001, p. 9). Many citizens participate in the political structure of this country through pre-determined channels such as voting or legislative representation. Activist movements, including student unrest, promote critical democratic participation outside of the more formal channels.

"As dissenting students identify and frame issues for public deliberation and compel attention to their concerns, they assume vital citizenship roles through their engagement in principled dissent" (Hamrick, 1998, p. 449).

During college, students are exposed to the historical and philosophical roots of challenges in society such as poverty, racism, hunger, and disease in many of the classes they attend. While an academic understanding of society's problems is useful, a meaningful education designed to encourage active civic participation cannot ignore the importance of personal engagement and social responsibility (Hamrick, 1998). "Because education plays such a key role in fostering and enhancing a democratic citizenry, as John Dewey's work reminds us, it is reasonable to expect that many of the social tensions of the democratic adventure will be apparent in campus life" (Rhoads, 1998, p. 23). Even though most university and college administrative structures are not designed as democratic institutions themselves, these very institutions serve as "sites for learning about and experiencing democratic citizenship" (Hamrick, 1998, p. 454).

Student leadership development. A second assumption of the student affairs profession that has direct bearing on the perceived importance of student activism on campus is the belief that "student involvement enhances student learning" (NASPA, 1989, p. 10). One of the ways in which student affairs professionals traditionally approach this belief about student learning is to encourage students to become involved in campus leadership opportunities. Joining campus clubs and organizations, participating on intramural sports teams, running for student government positions, or working as a campus tour guide are all examples of the traditional venues for student involvement and leadership development.

While most of the student leadership research focuses on more traditional means of student campus involvement, studies related to student leadership development through community-based organizations have direct correlation to the student learning dimensions of student activism (Chambers & Phelps, 1993). Some of the leadership experiences that students gain through community-based work include: 1) making decisions under pressure, 2) exercising responsibility, 3) learning, first-hand, about their personal effect on others, 4) exploring the value of involvement and a commitment to change, and 5) being exposed to the "untidy world, where decisions must be made on inadequate information and the soundest argument does not always win" (p. 23). In many ways, campus activist movements are community-based projects founded on the premises of community involvement and civic duty (Hamrick, 1998). Given this connection, the leadership development opportunities available to student activists as they work to better the world in which they live are extremely important. Student activists are profoundly involved in their campus communities. By working for change on campus or in the broader society, student activists "insist on contributing" to the educational environment in which they live (Hamrick, 1998, p. 457). Student affairs professionals must become more flexible in the ways in which they conceive of student involvement and leadership development. The student activist experience is an integral part of a college education for many students. The developmental consequences of such involvement are both powerful and positive (Hunter, 1988, p. 34). Student activists not only promote meaningful social change, they also represent a non-traditional model of student involvement and development.

The Future of Student Activism

Student affairs administrators must be aware of the currents of student activist thought on their campuses, and they should encourage continued dialogue about issues that are of importance to students. While no one person can predict the future of student activist thought and movement, there are a number of indicators that are helpful for projecting possibilities. Arthur Levine's theory, from his book *When Dreams and Heroes Died*, of cycles of student activism states that "generations of students move through periods of individual ascendancy...[into] periods of community ascendancy" (as quoted in Miser, 1988, p. 2). When students are concerned more about the community than the individual, student activism is at its height. An aspect of the individual and community ascendancy is the state of the national economy. The more stable the economy, the more active students are regarding issues of community concern. When the economy is weak, students are more focused on the individual realities of securing a job and a steady income, as was witnessed in the late-1970s and early-1980s when the "me" generation dominated college campuses.

Robert Rhoads (1998) describes yet another indicator of student activist potential in society. As the size of youth cohorts grows, the potential for "periods of revolutionary social change" also increases (p. 51). Rhoads bases his argument on the work of Herbert Moller. His theory was based on the campus activism of the 1960s, which was largely a product of the Baby Boom generation attending college. While members of the Baby Boom generation near the age of retirement in the next decade, the student population of the next ten years in this country is changing in ways that have connections to the future of student activism.

Current College Student Demographics

A cursory look at the projected demographics for the college student population in this country in the next five years, combined with the theoretical importance of cohort size presented by Rhoads, offers student affairs professionals a hint at the potential student activist movements of the future. Demographic studies, based on the United States Census, show that the number of white children who are nearing college age is decreasing as the number of children of color nearing college age is increasing (Outtz, 1995). The traditional college age group of 18 to 24 year-olds is projected to grow by 2.3 million people by the year 2005. All of the growth is projected to be in the number of people of color in that age range. What these statistics indicate is that "a different population of youths (different in terms of its racial and ethnic composition) will attend college in the coming decade" (p. 66).

Do these demographic projections foretell student activist movements in the future? Perhaps. As the number of people of color who are traditional college age, and therefore, potentially attending college, has been growing, the traditionally white-centered faculty and administration of many college campuses has been slow to change. "In fact, the numbers of non-white [sic] faculty, administrators, and members of boards of trustees have changed little in the past 30 years" (Outtz, 1995, p. 69). A cultural institution that is notoriously slow to change is beginning to face the changing demographic realities of the United States in the 21st century. These very institutions may be presented with opportunities for change from student activists who are products of the changing demographics themselves.

A Multicultural Agenda

A realistic projection for the student activist movements of the coming years is an increased intensity of the Multicultural Movement in its many manifestations. The focus of the Multicultural Movement is on the "inclusion and representation of diverse cultures within the social institutions which give shape to the larger society" (Rhoads, 1998, p. 228). Institutions of higher education are just such institutions. Currently, "many dissenting students are from minority and traditionally underrepresented groups on predominately white campuses that have been characterized as hostile or, perhaps worse, indifferent to their needs" (Hamrick, 1998, p. 457). This situation mirrors the campus dynamic minority students faced throughout the 1960s.

During the 1960s, "black militancy escalated, fed by the bitterness felt by many black students whose enrollment through major recruiting drives of the mid '60s were not accompanied by institutional support to enable success" (Baxter-Magolda & Magolda, 1988, p. 11). University administrators, particularly student affairs professionals, must learn from the lessons of the 1960s in order to create campus environments that not only house students of color but also support these students in the same way as they support white students. There is no doubt that the Multicultural Movement will continue to gain momentum as long as colleges and universities resist meaningful change with regard to the changing student, faculty, and staff populations on campus.

A Hope for the Future

The history of higher education in this country has proven that student activism has been a part of the campus fabric since the earliest days of university life. There is much to be gained from studying the history of student activist movements in this country, not only for an understanding of the past, but also for a window into the future of campus life and student interaction. "Student activism is not to be taken as a sign that the university is in agony, but instead may be seen as an example of the plurality of voices struggling to be heard" (Rhoads, 1998, p. 27).

Student affairs professionals who espouse this perspective on student activism will be able to provide the most effective leadership on campus when a period of student dissent becomes a reality on their campus. "A realistic goal for any institution is to maintain consistent and strong communication with student activists to avoid a reactive approach to student unrest" (Brown, Miser, & Emmanuel, 1988, p. 56). As the administrators who will most likely be called on to serve as the link between student activists and the other administrative leaders on campus during times of campus dissent, student affairs professionals must be skilled as communicators who are able to forge relationships based on trust and respect with students and administrators alike.

The Power of Dialogue

Danah Zohar, in her book *Rewiring the Corporate Brain* (1997), borrows elements of quantum physics and the new science of the 20th century to reframe the structure and leadership of organizations. In one of the final chapters of the book, Zohar explores the power of dialogue in organizational leadership through the lens of quantum physics. She explains

that dialogue is about finding out what another person is thinking or feelings as opposed to knowing what that person needs. Dialogue is about questions as opposed to answers. Dialogue is about respect as opposed to power. Dialogue is about challenging assumptions and making change as opposed to reaching consensus or smoothing over disagreements. Dialogue is "about knowing that human nature and human situations and human problems are not simple and that if there are any solutions, there, too are seldom simple" (p. 141).

Zohar's description of dialogue in quantum terms is extremely powerful when thinking about institutional response to student activism. Historically, administrators have approached campus dissent from a win-lose paradigm (Foster & Long, 1970). The concept of talking with the students about what they want during times of protest was a foreign one. One of the most salient lessons campus administrators learned during the 1960s is that communication is the key to the most effective institutional responses to student dissent. Zohar takes the concept of open communication to a deeper level with her discussion of quantum dialogue. Student affairs administrators must revolutionize the traditional campus approach to student activism through the use of Zohar's dialogue theory. Not only will campuses become a more productive and welcoming place, the practice of the student affairs profession will become a more nourishing and fulfilling endeavor.

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