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ABSTRACT

In an effort to determine how faculty viewed the student protest activities following the Cambodian invasion in May 1970, a questionnaire was mailed to 1,513 faculty members on 9 campuses in 6 states; usable returns were received from 552, or 36 percent. Sixty-eight percent of those responding viewed protest activities on their campuses as having specific "educational" benefits. The benefit most often cited was "real world education"; other benefits cited were: the impetus some activities gave to the regular curriculum, increasing student motivation to learn, a reexamination of the purposes of education, and a change in faculty-student relationship. Eleven percent of the faculty saw no benefits from the protest activities, and 79 percent expressed concern for the negative effects. Sixty-five percent felt the positive aspects outweighed the negative, while 23 percent felt the opposite. Seventy-seven percent indicated they generally supported the protests, and 52 percent said that they had made some changes in their classroom activities or policies. There was little faculty consensus as to the future effects of the protest activities on their campus. (AF)

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# EDUCATION IN THE REAL WORLD: FACULTY VIEW THE PROTESTS

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The campus protest activities following the United States invasion of Cambodia caused widespread disruption of the educational process. Although there were some violent outbursts, many protests were peaceful and constructive, involving such activities as considering the issues in the classroom, letter-writing campaigns, and community discussions.

What happened to the students' education during these events last May? Did the student anti-war protest activities detract from their education? Not according to the reports of faculty members, many of whom witnessed the activities first hand. The majority of professors who took part in a special survey conducted during the disruption, said these activities produced a variety of educational benefits, including increased student motivation to learn, greater student participation in their own education, and closer relations with faculty and the larger community. However, a majority of faculty also expressed concern for possible negative effects such as a loss of time in "normal" academic work, misuse of educational freedom, and infringement of the rights of others. On balance, most felt that the positive effects outweighed the negative.

An ongoing study of Faculty Characteristics and Impact on Students provided an opportunity to learn how teachers assessed the effects of the protest activities on their own campuses. A one-page supplemental questionnaire was mailed in May to 1,513 faculty members on nine campuses in six states; usable returns were received from 552, or 36 percent. The relatively low response rate can be accounted for by the fact that faculty were asked to complete the supplement within one week, their responses were solicited in the middle of the activities, and no follow-up letter was sent. While the sample may not be representative of all faculty members, it does give some insights about the views and concerns of the faculty respondents.

Sixty-eight percent of the faculty responding viewed the protest activities on their campuses as having specific "educational benefits." As might be expected, the benefit most often cited was "real-world" education in the social and political realities of the nation through contact with members of the communities in which campuses are located. One instructor, who saw value in the students' community-centered campaigns to discuss war-related issues and to write elected officials, said:

The students are learning a great deal about Practical politics as well as about crossing the town-gown communications barrier. My students are involved in making a synthesis of a variety of information from a wide variety of sources, which I think is a useful exercise.

A number of faculty stressed as beneficial the impetus which these protest activities gave to students' pursuit of the regular curriculum. "Seeing the relevance of the irrelevant," one professor of English literature put it. An architecture professor saw, "Lots of educational benefit and even some *academic*—e.g., researching information, supporting views, etc." in the students' anti-war activities. Other faculty members reported an increased willingness to pool or exchange information across disciplines and status boundaries. "I see more in-depth study in all social science and humanities fields being done voluntarily. The issue orientation has made both students and faculty into a mutually sharing resource bank."

Increased student motivation to learn was another positive result of the activities. Two instructors expressed it this way: "It provides them with healthy motivation to seek relevant knowledge," and, "Students learn so easily when they see a reason to know a body of facts."

Many faculty emphasized the superior effectiveness of a changed pedagogical style, in which students became more actively involved with their own education. "Actual participation is always more effective than vicarious experience," and, "The experience of being totally involved in a crucial issue at hand is often of more educational value than a theoretical discussion of the issue."

Some faculty saw much broader benefits than those of either political or participatory education. "Hopefully, a re-examination of the purposes of education," said one professor of foreign languages. Another responded in the context of his college's policy of accommodating those students who wished to modify their normal course work to pursue anti-war activities:

I think that the academic amnesty both in its granting and its application has had a salutary effect on both the students and the faculty. Each group has had to rethink its attitude toward grades and toward the educational enterprise. This was particularly difficult at a point two



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weeks before the final examination. The students have taken this privilege very seriously and I think most of the faculty have been surprised at this attitude. At the outset, each group expressed some cynicism toward the other, but I think that we have come to a new kind of faith and relationship between these groups. In addition, the students have found a new kind of personal and institutional pride; they are sure they are right about keeping the school open and engaging in dialogue with the community. They have resisted a great deal of peer group pressure from radical students both on and off campus and they are proud of this.

Another result seen as beneficial was a change in faculty-student relationships. In a question about what changes, if any, faculty saw in their relationships with students, a third indicated that there had been changes, and nearly all of them felt that the changes had been positive. Relationships between most of these faculty and their students became closer, more informal, and contacts between them, more frequent. Some representative comments:

Students appear from everywhere asking for advice. Participation between students and myself is now on a *full-time* seek and answer basis.

I know more students, both opposed and supportive of the national strike.

We are more able to see each other as people.

Relationships with students had not changed for two-thirds of the faculty; many indicated that this was because their relationships had already been close. A handful said their relationships had deteriorated with students. "Many

students have become more hostile to me because I am meeting classes regularly and do not recognize the strike," said one professor of English at a leading university, who curiously enough was himself a supporter of the protests.

Only 11 percent of the faculty saw no benefits to the protest activities. Comments such as, "These activities transcend the educational process," or, "I think it is a mistake to look for educational benefits to justify the current protests," were typical of this group.

Concern for negative effects of the activities was expressed by 79 percent of all faculty including many who supported the protests. One of the most common was the loss of time devoted to the pursuit of normal academic work. Considerable concern was focused on the student who was opting for pass-fail, applying for amnesty, or not attending classes but not involving himself in anti-war activities either. Referred to as the "drifters" and "goof-offs," they were seen, in the words of one person, to be "... using the protests as an excuse to vent their frustrations or to get out of their courses, the easy way." Another professor stated cynically, "I don't feel the protests would be very well supported if they were held on Saturdays and Sundays."

The other major concern about negative effects (mentioned by a third of the faculty) had to do with "unreason," whether or not accompanied by physical or psychological violence. This category included all comments regarding "emotionalism," "violence," "coercion," "anti-intellectualism," "the breakdown of reason," "infringements on academic freedom," or what one faculty member called the "... bruising of civil liberties." In their

concern for these aspects of the protests, faculty do not differ greatly from the bulk of the general public—including the “silent majority.” In fact, there is reason to believe that professors are *more* anxious about the threats to their institutions and to the life of the mind than is the general public.

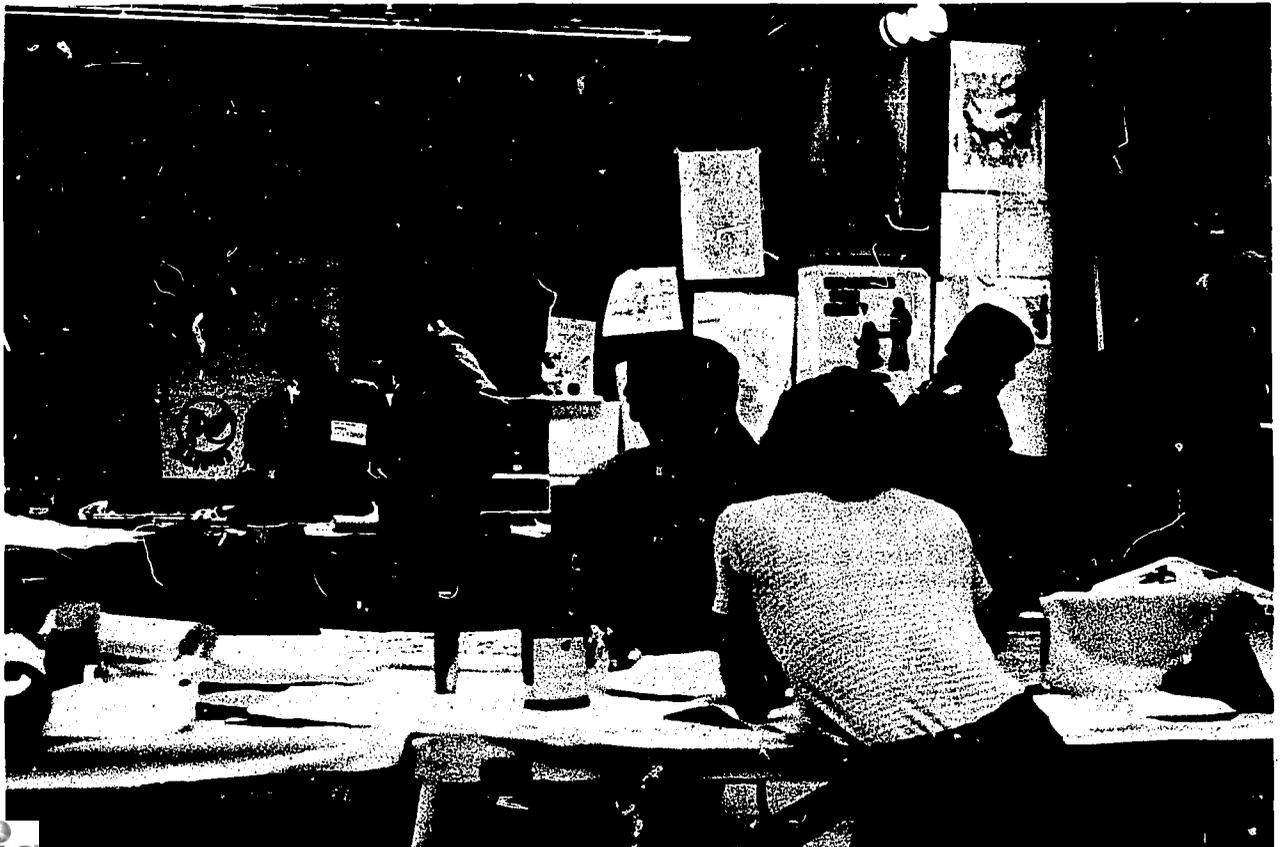
Other concerns about negative effects included: polarization of colleges and universities, right-wing repression, further alienation of the public from college students and further alienation of students from their society, their government, and “democratic” and moderate forms of dissent. These latter comments expressed some faculty members’ fears that the student activities will neither accomplish their purposes nationally nor end our involvement in Southeast Asia. Several specifically said they feared student disillusionment as one of the major negative consequences of the anti-war activities. In the words of one anthropology professor, “The protests arouse expectations which stand to be painfully unfulfilled.”

When asked to evaluate these two sets of consequences, 65 percent checked the alternative that, “The positive aspects outweigh the negative,” 23 percent said “The negative aspects outweigh the positive,” and 12 percent made some other response. This judgment was clearly not an easy one for faculty to make. They were emotionally aroused by the events. Most were angered at the expansion of what they considered an immoral, illegal, and tragic war, confused about the reasoning in Washington, uncertain (in light of past rhetoric) as to military objectives, and fearful of the effects the prolongation of

hostilities would have on the nation. Closer to home, faculty members feared that the process of “normal education” had broken down again and were apprehensive about the effects the protests would have on their campuses. In addition, their analytic training led them to see both positive potential and danger in the activities and attitudes they witnessed. Yet a substantial majority concluded that the positive aspects were greater.

Related to their assessment of the effects of this new form of protest were the attitudes of faculty members themselves. Although a larger sample may have provided a more accurate index of faculty sentiment, 77 percent of the respondents said that they “. . . generally supported these protests,” but many specifically made their statements of support conditional on the absence of violence of any kind. Others defended the protests on constitutional or political grounds and explained their support in terms which assumed that the protest activities could be peaceful. Still other faculty supported the protests because moderates, working within the system, were reasserting control of anti-war and social change activities. Finally, a number of faculty endorsed the protests in purely political terms, thus expressing their own outrage and anguish over the events in Cambodia, Kent State, and Jackson State.

The role of faculty members themselves in the protest activities has been hotly disputed, and the questionnaire solicited information about what professors did with their courses during that critical period. Fifty-two percent of the faculty in the sample indicated that they had made some changes in their classroom activities or policies.



About a quarter indicated that they had altered in some degree the content of their classes—in most cases by turning over a certain amount of class time to discussion of events in Southeast Asia and on college campuses at home. In some cases this was done by refocusing the course somewhat, e.g., a professor of historical methods allowed historiographies of campus events in lieu of traditional assignments, and a biology professor focussed his course on defoliation in Southeast Asia. Only one in six professors changed the meeting times or places of scheduled classes and a similar proportion, in accord with their school's policies, altered the grading system of courses by allowing "pass-fail" or "incompletes."

As to the future effects of the protest activities on their own institutions, there was much less faculty consensus than on any of the other questions. About a third of the faculty thought that whatever effects there might be would be positive. These included more flexibility and increased reforms in the college curricula, grading system, and requirements; closer faculty and student interaction; and increased social awareness, social consciousness, and "relevance" within the institution as a whole. Even among the faculty who saw positive effects, however, there was considerable uncertainty as to whether or not these would actually come about. Their statements were often prefaced with, "I hope," "perhaps," "if we're lucky," or made conditional upon the continuing commitment of the students as well as the absence of direct repression or financial retaliation by legislatures, boards of governors, regents, or the taxing public.

A sixth of the faculty were outrightly pessimistic about the effects of the protests on their institutions. These included both supporters and opposers of the protests. They feared further politicization, violence, repression, a decline of academic standards, and a decline in public support.

The largest single proportion of faculty, 39 percent, said that there would be little or no effect on their institution or that it was too early to predict what the effects might be. Their reasons were varied. "I am afraid to think," said one; "Probably negligible: we are so ossified here that a far greater shock is necessary," said another; "Too soon to tell. This, too, may pass," said a third.

As faculty indicate, the end of the script has not yet been written. The future course of the war and the outcome of the November elections will help to determine whether the student movement will continue to be controlled by moderates. If peaceful (and educationally beneficial) efforts by students to work within the system do not prove to be effective, and if these activities are met with repressive force, then violence may once again escalate.

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This article is a product of an ongoing study of Faculty Characteristics and Faculty Impact on Students, a team research project staffed by Robert C. Wilson, Jerry G. Gaff, Evelyn R. Dienst, James L. Bavry, and Lynn Wood. All members of the staff participated in the collection and analyses of the data and the writing of this report.

## *There is the Matter of Emphasis*

*Nationwide, the blacks have been conspicuously absent from many of the protests regarding America's foreign policy. Understandably, their Number One commitment is to changing the domestic policies of this nation. The blacks at the Center were noticeably quiet in the midst of the noise surrounding demands for a strike and for reconstitution of the University of California at Berkeley. In this statement, they explain why.*

K.P.C.

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It has to do with the new feeling of black independence, the refusal to let white people decide what issues blacks will support. (William Raspberry, *San Francisco Chronicle*, May, 1970).

**T**he recent events in Southeast Asia and the murders at Kent State have dramatized to much of the nation, and to the universities in particular, that collective action is required for the country to alter its movement down the path to militarism. We are in full support of the "redirection" of the university and its activities to the end of averting a military dominance of our foreign policy. *We are equally opposed to military dominance on the domestic scene.* Long before most whites in the United States had come to realize the pathologies of unattended and unscrutinized militarism abroad, Blacks generally understood the problem on the domestic scene as it connected with the central issue of racism. For while we, as Blacks, share in the denunciation of the slaughter at Kent State, we call your attention to the slaughter of Black students at Greensboro, South Carolina, last year, when the only response in the white part of the nation was a soft whisper of "Shame! Shame!" We have seen a similar lethargic white response when scores of Blacks have been killed (Emmit Till, Fred Hampton, Medgar Evers), and watched the white community awake in fury only at the killing of whites (Viola Luizzo, etc.). The issue, domestically, is racism, and the connection to increasing militarism allows us to join in common cause and support of the present movement in the nation.

However, there is a matter of emphasis, and a matter of competence. We applaud the attempt to let the university serve as a focal point for anti-war work. While the attendant statement that each man's conscience should dictate the nature and direction of his work is a bit ambiguous, we take that to mean that anti-war work against domestic militarism and racism must necessarily be included.

We announce today the formation of a Black Caucus in the Center, not as a divisive or counter group necessarily opposed to "white" groups, but hopefully a group that can begin to better articulate some issues around the problem of racism, where our emphasis is honored and our competence can best be utilized.