THE POLITICS OF SPACE:
STUDENT COMMUNES, POLITICAL COUNTERCULTURE,
AND THE COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY PROTEST OF 1968

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ABSTRACT

BLAKE SLONECKER: The Politics of Space: Student Communes, Political Counterculture,
and the Columbia University Protest of 1968
(Under the direction of Peter Filene)

This thesis examines the Columbia University protest of April 1968 through the lens

of space. It concludes that the student communes established in occupied campus buildings

were free spaces that facilitated the protestors' reconciliation of political and social

difference, and introduced Columbia students to the practical possibilities of democratic

participation and student autonomy. This thesis begins by analyzing the roots of the disparate

organizations and issues involved in the protest, including SDS, SAS, and the Columbia

School of Architecture. Next it argues that the practice of participatory democracy and

maintenance of student autonomy within the political counterculture of the communes

awakened new political sensibilities among Columbia students. Finally, this thesis illustrates

the simultaneous growth and factionalization of the protest community following the police

raid on the communes and argues that these developments support the overall claim that the

free space of the communes was of fundamental importance to the protest.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CORE: Congress of Racial Equality

IDA: Institute for Defense Analysis

NYPD: New York Police Department

SAS: Students Afro-American Society

SCC: Strike Coordinating Committee

SDS: Students for a Democratic Society

SNCC: Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee

TPF: Tactical Patrol Force

Introduction

Tom Hayden was never a student at Columbia University. Nevertheless, at two o'clock on the morning of April 26, 1968, he found himself "joining a silhouetted wave of students surging across Columbia's grounds and entering, with a key volunteered by a graduate student, the darkened shell of Mathematics Hall."[1] James Kunen was among this "wave of students" that liberated the fifth academic building and created the final commune of 1968's most famous student protest. In the ensuing days, Hayden—author of the New Left's unofficial founding document, the Port Huron Statement—and Kunen—soon-to-be author of the obscure memoir of the protest, *The Strawberry Statement*—participated in a barrage of political meetings. Hayden remembered these as gatherings "with countless people wanting to be heard, disparate viewpoints needing to be explored, and an internal consensus having to be built."[2] Kunen, on the other hand, passed the time wondering "if the Paris Commune was this boring" and "whether Lenin was as concerned with the breast size of his revolutionary cohorts as I am."[3] Despite their disparate protest interests, Hayden and Kunen both chose to barricade themselves within Mathematics Hall and join hundreds of other students and "outside agitators" in communes across campus as they awaited the violent police eviction that would follow seventy-two hours later.

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[1] Tom Hayden, *Reunion: A Memoir* (New York: Random House, 1988), 275.

[2] Ibid., 276.

[3] James Simon Kunen, *The Strawberry Statement—Notes of a College Revolutionary* (New York: Random House, 1969), 30.

The Columbia upheaval—which extended throughout the remainder of the spring

after reaching its climax during the last week of April—marked the loudest and most widely

noted university protest in a year distinguished by such unrest.[4] Leaders of Columbia

chapters of Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) and Students Afro-American Society

(SAS) united a disparate set of concerns to rally support from hundreds of students. These

issues included Columbia's perceived institutional racism because of its planned gym

construction in municipal Morningside Park, the University's complicity in the Vietnam War

through its affiliation with the Institute for Defense Analysis (IDA), and the lack of student

involvement in disciplinary procedures. All this occurred despite the meager membership roll

of each student group.[5] Before long, Harlem chapters of the Student Non-Violent

Coordinating Committee (SNCC), Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), and Mau Mau—

along with many non-affiliated Harlem residents—also became involved in the protest by

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[4] Student occupation of buildings as a form of protest occurred previously at schools such as Howard University, Bowie State College, Colgate University, University of Michigan, and Trinity College, and subsequently at Northwestern University, Brooklyn College, Boston University, Stanford University, the University of Chicago, and San Francisco State College. For general information on 1968, see Paul Berman, *A Tale of Two Utopias: The Political Journey of the Generation of 1968* (New York: Norton, 1996); Carole Fink, Phillip Cassert, and Detlef Junker, *1968: The World Transformed* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998); Todd Gitlin, *The Sixties: Years of Hope, Days of Rage* (New York: Bantam Books, 1987); Maurice Isserman and Michael Kazin, *America Divided: The Civil War of the 1960s* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000); and George Katsiaficas, *The Imagination of the New Left: A Global Analysis of 1968* (Boston: South End Press, 1987). For information on student activism in 1968, see Ronald Fraser, et al, *1968: A Student Generation in Revolt* (New York: Pantheon, 1988).

[5] SDS was a national organization with local chapters at universities across the country. For information on national SDS, see Alan Adelson, *SDS* (New York: Scribner, 1972); Martha Webb Carithers, "A Social Movement Career: National SDS" (Ph.D. diss., University of Kansas, 1982); James Miller, *"Democracy Is in the Streets": From Port Huron to the Siege of Chicago* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1987); and Kirkpatrick Sale, *SDS* (New York: Random House, 1973). SAS was a Columbia organization. For information on Columbia SAS, see Jerry L. Avorn et al., *Up Against the Ivy Wall: A History of the Columbia Crisis* (New York: Atheneum, 1969); and Cox Commission, *Crisis at Columbia: A Report of the Fact-Finding Commission Appointed to Investigate the Disturbances at Columbia University in April and May 1968* (New York: Vintage, 1968). Journalists for the *Columbia Daily Spectator* authored *Up Against the Ivy Wall* in the months following the crisis. In addition to its worth as a narrative account of the Columbia events, it provides a wealth of primary source material not otherwise accessible to researchers. For this reason, the present article will rely heavily upon the primary sources (speeches, fliers, etc.) collected therein.

occupying the communes, feeding the protestors, or participating in rallies.[6] At the protest's

peak, between five and eight hundred people occupied five communes on Columbia's

Morningside Heights campus and several hundred more supported the protest program.

Despite the enormous scale of the protest and its renown as a seminal event in the

student movement, the Columbia protest has failed to attract scholarly attention in recent

years. While authors produced a wealth of literature on Columbia in the five years following

the protest, more than thirty years have passed without an adequate reappraisal. In that time,

the historiography of the New Left has changed dramatically. The tendency of 1970s

organizational histories to view the Columbia crisis of 1968 as an important student protest in

a movement of movements that spanned the late 1960s and early 1970s is no longer

adequate.[7] The more recent historiographical trend toward analyses of movement culture—

exemplified in recent scholarship on the student left in Austin and Berkeley—offers a

methodological approach that helps enrich our understanding of the Columbia protest.[8]

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[6] For the participation of Harlem activist organizations, see Stefan Bradley, "Gym Crow Must Go!: The 1968-1969 Student and Community Protests at Columbia University in the City of New York" (Ph.D. diss., University of Missouri at Columbia, 2003); and Roger Kahn, *The Battle for Morningside Heights: Why Students Rebel* (New York: Morrow, 1970).

[7] For examples of the use of the Columbia protest as a stopping point in larger movements, see Miller, *"Democracy Is in the Streets"*; Sale, *SDS*. Organizational histories of the New Left are numerous. Those relevant to this particular study include, Adelson, *SDS*; Clayborne Carson, *In Struggle: SNCC and the Black Awakening of the 1960s* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1981); Ron Jacobs, *The Way the Wind Blew: A History of the Weather Underground* (London: Verso, 1997); August Meier and Elliott Rudwick, *CORE: A Study in the Civil Rights Movement, 1942-1968* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973); Miller, *"Democracy Is in the Streets"*; and Sale, *SDS*. For the concept of a movement of movements, see Van Gosse, "A Movement of Movements: The Definition and Periodization of the New Left," in *A Companion to Post – 1945 America*, ed. Jean-Christophe Agnew and Roy Rosenweig (Malden, Mass.: Blackwell Publishers, 2002), 277-303; and Van Gosse, *Rethinking the New Left: An Interpretive History* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2005).

[8] See W. J. Rorabaugh, *Berkeley at War: The 1960s* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989); and David Rossinow, *The Politics of Authenticity: Liberalism, Christianity, and the New Left in America* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998). A similar trend is apparent in the historiography of the civil rights movement; for example, see Charles Payne, *I've Got the Light of Freedom: The Organizing Tradition and the Mississippi Freedom Struggle* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995).

Specifically, the establishment of student communes invites a spatial analysis that emphasizes the distinct forms of political and social participation evident at Columbia. Sara M. Evans' and Harry C. Boyte's concept of "free spaces" offers a particularly compelling methodology for analyzing the Columbia protest. Evans and Boyte argue:

> Particular sorts of public places in the community, what we call free spaces, are the environments in which people are able to learn a new self-respect, a deeper and more assertive group identity, public skills, and values of cooperation and civic virtues. Put simply, free spaces are settings between private lives and large-scale institutions where ordinary citizens can act with dignity, independence, and vision.[9]

Studying the Columbia protest through the lens of free spaces will reveal that the protest was more than a brief stopping point in a movement of movements; it is a critical event in understanding the nature of democratic participation in the New Left and the United States. The concept of free space facilitates the reinterpretation of the role of movement culture and society in the development of the Columbia protest and the New Left. Furthermore, free space analysis reveals a fact easily overlooked by straightforward political analysis: namely, the remarkable degree to which difference predominated among protesting students. Finally, it usefully accounts for the intersection of New Left politics and counterculture in the communes, and the decision of otherwise liberal students to engage in radical protest tactics.

Throughout the Columbia crisis, moderate and radical students alike attempted to synthesize disparate cultural, political, and social impulses into an activist identity. This project forced students to defend their ideals at the very moment of their formation and to grapple with conflicts rooted in political and social difference. Their synthesis—created within the free spaces of student communes in occupied campus buildings—functioned to fuse an eclectic group of young adults into a community united by their immediate political

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[9] Sara M. Evans and Harry C. Boyte, *Free Spaces: The Sources of Democratic Change in America* (New York: Harper and Row, 1986), 17.

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concerns, but also by their creation of a shared commune counterculture that challenged mainstream values.[10] The communes were free spaces that enabled protestors to reconcile their political and social differences, and introduced Columbia students to the practical possibilities of democratic participation and student autonomy.

Communal Roots

Evans and Boyte indicate that free spaces are "defined by their roots in community, the dense rich networks of daily life."[11] At Columbia, the critical community institutions of 1968 formed independently of one another years in advance of the protest. Furthermore, individual social networks established through SDS, SAS, Harlem civil rights groups, and the Columbia School of Architecture developed in isolation from one another and without any consciousness of shared interests between one another. During the Columbia protest, however, people from such disparate social organizations lived in communion with one another and built important new relationships through activism. The initial growth of these "networks of daily life" and their slow coalescence into a unified political community account for the eclectic social composition of the protest. Activists from each of these networks participated in the protest for disparate reasons; understanding these motivations provides the best means of accounting for the great scale of the protest and the creation of communes. Thus, before moving to a consideration of the communes themselves, it is

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[10] "Community" is an admittedly slippery term. The present analysis will follow the work of C. J. Calhoun which suggests that communities consist of groups with closer internal relations than characterize society as a whole. Furthermore, Calhoun suggests that "this closeness seems to imply, though not rigidly, face to face contact, commonalty of purpose, familiarity and dependability" ("Community: Toward a Variable Conceptualization for Comparative Research," *Social History* 5, no. 1 (January 1980): 111).

[11] Evans and Boyte, *Free Spaces*, 20. See also, 195.

necessary to analyze the prior roots of individual organizations and issues involved in the protest.

As early as the 1920s, Columbia's trustees had dreamed of upgrading the University's hastily constructed turn-of-the-century gymnasium, but a laundry list of considerations—not least the spatial limitations imposed by Columbia's urban surroundings—checked expansion. The problem neared resolution in 1961, however, when Columbia obtained a contract with New York City to lease 2.1 acres of land in Morningside Park. Soon thereafter the University launched a ten-million-dollar fundraising campaign to support the project.[12] Importantly, the terms of the agreement required Columbia to construct a $1.4 million public-access facility for Harlem residents that the administration understood to be a generous service to the community. For nearly a decade the project attracted little, if any, attention from the Harlem community or Columbia students. The administration anticipated that gym construction in Morningside Park would solve a logistical problem unique to the spatial limitations of Columbia's urban campus while simultaneously endearing the University to the community.[13] In order to understand how the gym issue evolved into a controversy, however, it is necessary to briefly shift our perspective and look up from the ghetto of Morningside Heights.

From the perspective of the working-class black, Chinese, and Puerto Rican families living in the Morningside Heights section of Harlem, municipal Morningside Park held greater symbolic than practical import. On the one hand, the park was a rock-strewn

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[12] Robert B. Stulberg, "Crisis background," *Columbia Daily Spectator*, May 10, 1968, sec. C, p. 2.

[13] For the administration's perspective on the evolution of the gym controversy, see Cox Commission, *Crisis at Columbia*, 75-89. The author would like to thank Roger Lotchin and David Sehat for their helpful insistence that the Columbia administration *is* part of Harlem and that its claim to Morningside Park—though problematic—was legally justified.

wasteland of little practical use, frequented more often by petty criminals and strung-out

druggies than by energetic children or hearty recreationists. The park contained no exercise

facilities and offered little in the way of diversion for the community. In practical terms,

Harlem stood to gain a great deal from the gym; Columbia's presence would likely eliminate

the seedier sort from haunting the park and community members would have access to new

workout facilities. On the other hand, the park represented an important buffer zone between

Morningside Heights and Columbia University—that haven of white academia and leisure

that looked down upon Harlem in the east from its perch atop the park's craggy incline. By

1968, Columbia's encroachment upon Morningside Heights was well underway. During the

preceding decade, the University had evicted more than seven thousand Harlemites from

Columbia-controlled properties—85 percent of whom were African American or Puerto

Rican—and many others continued to sign monthly rent checks to the University.[14] One

Harlem activist called Columbia's president "the biggest slumlord in Harlem,"[15] while

another bemoaned Columbia's "communicidal" policy toward Harlem.[16] Meanwhile,

Morningside Park remained one of the few tracts of sizable real estate unaffected by

Columbia's expansionist policy. Thus, the proposed construction of the new gymnasium

sought to eliminate a sacred Harlem enclave—whatever its practical value.[17]

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[14] Avorn et al., *Up Against the Ivy Wall*, 13.

[15] Arthur Kokot, "Two Black Leaders Support Strikers," *Columbia Daily Spectator*, April 27, 1968, p. 1.

[16] Avorn et al., *Up Against the Ivy Wall*, 13.

[17] The Cox Commission report similarly emphasized the symbolic import of gym construction: "The nub of the issue was that the community's property was being used by a private institution, yet the newly emerging voices concerned with community action had no influence in the decision. Since the community affected was overwhelmingly black, this shortcoming symbolized all the injustices of both poverty and racism. Seen in that light and not as a practical arrangement and business transaction, the plans for a gymnasium building exemplified those injustices: Columbia would enjoy most of the building, assigning a small fraction to the people; Columbia's students would enter from the Heights but its black neighbors through the cellar. From

From the perspective of the Columbia administration, however, the controversy was baffling. Not only had Columbia legally obtained the gym contract, but halting construction also stood to cost the University as much as five million dollars.[18] Inept communication and conflicting visions for the use of Morningside Park set the administration and Harlem activists on a collision course; the conflict was all the more troubling because each proposal for the use of the park was legitimate in its own right.[19]

Organized opposition to the Morningside Park development began with John Lindsay's mayoralty campaign in the fall of 1965 and soon thereafter picked up steam. Drawing upon a report issued by a task force investigating New York City's parks, Lindsay objected to gym construction because the immediate neighborhood had not been sufficiently involved in the process and because he opposed the development of parkland, particularly by a private interest. In January of 1966, sixteen Harlem organizations formed the West Harlem Morningside Park Committee to oppose gym construction. This antagonism soon spread to Columbia's campus. The following month, the Columbia chapter of CORE voiced opposition to the project; the Citizenship Council, Graduate and Undergraduate Student Councils, and—quietly—SDS soon followed suit. By 1967, strains of community opposition became increasingly militant in their stances. At a Harlem community meeting in December of 1967, H. Rap Brown of Harlem SNCC encouraged citizen radicalism: "If they build the first story

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some viewpoints these characterizations are grossly distorted; geography determined the relative positions of the University and community entrances. Yet as symbols of relative power the characterizations were not inaccurate and carried enormous weight in the political and social environment then emerging" (Cox Commission, *Crisis at Columbia*, 87). For more on the gym controversy, see Roger Starr, "The Case of the Columbia Gym," in *Confrontation: The Student Rebellion and the Universities*, ed. Daniel Bell and Irving Kristol (New York: Basic Books, 1968).

[18] Dearing Carpenter, "Estimates Differ On Gym Halt Cost," *Columbia Daily Spectator*, April 26, 1968, p. 1.

[19] For the development of the gym controversy, see Kahn, *Battle for Morningside Heights*, 89-97.

blow it up. If they sneak back at night and build three stories burn it down. And if they get nine stories built, it's yours. Take it over, and maybe we'll let them in on the weekends."[20] At the onset of the student strike in 1968, 60 percent of Columbia students and 59 percent of its faculty favored permanently stopping gym construction despite the administration's and trustees' legitimate acquisition of the project contract.[21] The administration's ownership of a legal contract left it with overwhelming power in the debate over gym construction; this power included the capacity to negotiate with the obviously distraught Harlem community, Columbia students, and faculty—an opportunity that the administration ignored.[22]

While Columbia's encroachment on Morningside Park attracted the attention of Harlem and student activists, another set of students attacked the University's support of the American war in Vietnam. In the two years following its founding in February of 1966, Columbia SDS, in conjunction with other groups, organized protests against CIA, Marine, and Dow Chemical recruiting on campus and constantly harped on the administration's "complicity" in the Vietnam War—particularly through its institutional affiliation with IDA.

In 1959, Columbia became an institutional member of IDA, an organization which the Department of Defense had created four years earlier to fund and organize university research on matters of warfare. Columbia's affiliation with IDA was loose, unclear, and secretive; at the time of the 1968 protest, in fact, only three faculty members had ties with IDA and perhaps a dozen others had advised the organization at various times. In March of

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[20] Avorn et al., *Up Against the Ivy Wall*, 20. During the Columbia protest, Brown echoed this sentiment at a press conference held outside Hamilton Hall; he declared that "if the Jim Crow-Gym in Morningside Park is built it will be blown up" (Steve Diamond, "Columbia: The Revolution is Now," *Liberation News Service*, April 30, 1968, p. 8).

[21] Allen H. Barton, "The Columbia Crisis: Campus, Vietnam, and the Ghetto," *Public Opinion Quarterly* 32, no. 3 (autumn 1968): 342.

[22] For a brief history of the Columbia administration's intransigence in considering student concerns, see Paul Starr, "The explosion had a long fuse," *Columbia Daily Spectator*, May 10, 1968, sec. C, p. 1.

1967, however, SDS began extensive research to uncover the nature of Columbia's IDA affiliation. Over the course of the next year, SDS revealed information that embarrassed Columbia administrators and effectively caught the University in a web of complicity with the war effort. SDS also passed a resolution calling for the abatement of Columbia's IDA affiliation. Although no single SDS effort attracted much attention from the student body, by early 1968, nearly 50 percent of faculty and students favored severing Columbia's IDA affiliation.[23]

In the spring of 1968, Columbia SDS was an organization of roughly one hundred students but played a disproportionately large role in campus activism. While the Cox Commission investigating the 1968 protest determined that "by early 1968, the IDA question had become SDS' bread-and-butter issue,"[24] professor of dramatic literature Eric Bentley argued otherwise: "The gymnasium is *the* Columbia issue *par excellence*."[25] Additionally, the proximate cause of the 1968 protest was a third SDS issue, namely, the discipline of the so-called "IDA Six," a group of six SDS students whom the administration had placed on academic probation on April 22, the day before the initial occupation of campus buildings. SDS abhorrence at these symptoms of the monolithic American multiversity accounts for the conflation of such disparate issues into a common protest program and formed the basis of the protestors' six demands:

> 1) that construction of the gymnasium be stopped
> 2) that all ties with IDA be discontinued
> 3) that the ban on indoor demonstrations be rescinded
> 4) that criminal charges arising out of protests at the gym site be dropped
> 5) that probation of the "IDA-six" be rescinded

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[23] Barton, "The Columbia Crisis," 342.

[24] Cox Commission, *Crisis at Columbia*, 94.

[25] Stephen Donadio, "Columbia: Seven Interviews," *Partisan Review*, 35, no. 3 (summer 1968): 366.

6) that amnesty be granted for the present protest[26]

Of the organizations involved in the protest, SDS was the first to unite their concern about this wide spectrum of administrative policies into a single opposition platform.

Despite their uniform criticism of the war in Vietnam, Columbia's gym plan, and student disciplinary procedures, SDS was hardly united ideologically. The Cox Commission found that "the Columbia chapter attracted a diffuse mixture of communists (Maoist and Soviet), humanists, socialists, liberals, anarchists, and a-politicals."[27] In particular, the organization split into two tactical blocs: the "praxis axis," which emphasized public education and internal organization; and the "action faction," which endorsed boisterous protest demonstrations.[28] The schism within the organization reached a boiling point early in 1968; SDS elections that spring turned into a referendum on its future tactical orientation. The March election of Mark Rudd to lead the organization marked a shift from praxis axis control toward confrontation politics.[29] Thus, political difference defined the protest's leading organization as much as did ideological unity.[30]

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[26] Cox Commission, *Crisis at Columbia*, 104.

[27] Ibid., 56.

[28] Ibid., 56-59. Mark Rudd acknowledged this split, but argued for its insignificance in the final analysis: "For years SDS nationwide has been plagued by the 'base-building *vs.* militant action debate—it took the revolution in the chapter at Columbia and the subsequent mass student rebellion to show the essential unity of the two lines, and the phoniness of the debate" (Mark Rudd, "Columbia: Notes on the Spring Rebellion," in *The New Left Reader*, ed. Carl Oglesby (New York: Grove Press, 1969), 294). On the one hand, Rudd aptly characterizes the capacity of the two factions to work in tandem; on the other hand, the factions were very real and served as a debilitating conflict throughout the New Left.

[29] Stulberg, "Crisis background," sec. C, p. 1. For more on Rudd's background, see Kahn, *Battle for Morningside Heights*, 98-108.

[30] For a thorough history of Columbia's SDS chapter, see Kahn, *Battle for Morningside Heights*, 102-14.

Despite student insistence that the six demands formed the core of their agenda, student radicalization was the foremost priority for SDS leaders. Mark Rudd stated forcefully that

> we see the goal of the student movement not as the creation of an eventual power base, involving all students around all their concerns, radical and otherwise, which is a very old conception of what we're up to, but rather, building a radical force which raises issues for other constituencies—young people, workers, others—which will eventually be picked up on to create a broader, solider revolutionary movement.[31]

In order to create a broad radical constituency, SDS had to radicalize previously moderate—or even conservative—students. Rudd thought that leadership by example formed a critical component of this process. "You have a core of students," he explained, referring to himself and other radical leaders, "who stand for progressive change—for historical progress. The mass of students joins in at one point or another, either earlier or later."[32] The Columbia crisis served as an opportune moment to attract a mass of students to join the radical program. Other SDS leaders echoed Rudd's sentiment. One former member of the SDS steering committee insisted that "if it comes to a choice between acting so as to build a radical movement and acting so as to bring about improvement of conditions, the radical will always give priority to the movement."[33] The immediate impact of this philosophy was to prevent successful mediation between student leaders—who cared little for immediate resolution and practical reform—and administrators. Institutional racism, complicity in the Vietnam War, and authoritarian disciplinary procedures were the proximate causes of the

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[31] Rudd, "Columbia," 302.

[32] Donadio, "Columbia: Seven Interviews," 370.

[33] Avorn et al., *Up Against the Ivy Wall*, 30.

Columbia conflict, but Rudd understood that these issues were means to the end of radicalization:

> Any particular issue we raise probably can't change things all that much, but changing people's understanding of society, getting them to understand the forces at work to create the war in Vietnam, to create racism: this is *the* primary goal of radicals. And the harvest of this planting will not be seen this year when we gain a modicum of student power, not in ten years . . . but sometime in the future when this understanding of capitalist society bears fruit in much higher level struggle. In revolution. . . . [W]e make no bones about this.[34]

SDS leaders anticipated the capacity of commune space to unite an eclectic group of individuals and they sought to manipulate this capacity to their advantage. If SDS motivations for commune protest were myriad and complex, they were also crystal clear. As free spaces, the communes served as critical locations of community building and potential student radicalization.

While SDS involvement in the protest appeared to fit into the organization's natural progression of protest politics, SAS had exhibited little interest in exerting political leadership on campus prior to 1968.[35] Columbia recognized SAS as an official organization during the 1964-1965 academic year, when the University had an African American population of fewer than two dozen students. Intent primarily on addressing the campus concerns of African American students, SAS began to publish the journal *Black Student* in 1966 and organized a black student conference in 1967. In the spring of 1968, SAS boasted a membership of 150 students and elected Cicero Wilson president of the organization;

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[34] Donadio, "Columbia: Seven Interviews," 374. This quote should illustrate the absurdity of Diana Trilling's assertion that "it was interesting that in this social-political effort the word 'capitalism,' with its reference to specific injustice rooted in the economic organization of the society, was never mentioned" (Diana Trilling, *We Must March My Darlings: A Critical Decade* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1977), 92-93).

[35] Kenneth Barry, "Challenge to Administration Strongest in School's History," *Columbia Daily Spectator*, April 24, 1968, p. 1.

Wilson's election impacted SAS in much the same way that Rudd's influenced SDS. More politically astute than previous leaders, Wilson became a champion for Harlem and widened the scope of SAS concern beyond the narrow bounds of Columbia University. Thus, SAS' participation in the protest of 1968 was almost exclusively driven by its newfound concern regarding the University's proposed gym construction in Morningside Park.[36] The simultaneous emergence of gym construction as a hot-button political issue in Harlem and SAS' newfound concern with the Harlem community accounts for the participation of SAS and various Harlem civil rights activists in the Columbia protest.[37]

Students in the School of Architecture formed another important network that actively participated in the protest. Architecture student activists particularly protested Columbia's fractious relationship with the Harlem community; in fact, one architecture student went so far as to announce an additional three demands related to Harlem politics on WBAI radio: "That the University should adopt an expansion policy that doesn't overrun adjacent areas; that the University should make a conscious effort to recruit more black and Puerto Rican students; [and] that the administration should give greater recognition to students and community groups in the formulation of University policy."[38] Architecture student activism owed a great deal to the intellectual influence of two professors, namely Peter Prangell—who was no longer at Columbia in 1968, but who emphasized the social responsibility of architects—and Herman Herzberger—who espoused the concept of

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[36] Avorn et al., *Up Against the Ivy Wall*, 20-21; Cox Commission, *Crisis at Columbia*, 60.

[37] Michael Stern, "Outsiders Influence SDS Action," *Columbia Daily Spectator*, April 25, 1968, p. 1.

[38] Richard Rosenkranz, *Across the Barricades* (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Co., 1971), Log 31. Rosenkranz divides *Across the Barricades* into four sections (Prolog, Log, Postlog, and Epilog) that each contain a separate pagination beginning at 1. The present notes will utilize the text's pagination system and cite the section followed by the page number within that section.

"subversive architecture" to serve the needs of poor communities.[39] The student editors of *Touchstone* magazine—which sought to make the profession "relevant to the major problems of this country"—were greatly influenced by these two professors;[40] they were also influential leaders in the Avery commune. The faculty and students of the School of Architecture had formally opposed gym construction by passing a resolution in opposition to the plan earlier that year. Notably, students in the Avery commune—primarily occupied by graduate students from the School of Architecture—had little respect for SDS. A sampling of comments from Avery students bears this point: "I didn't respect SDS;" "I never liked SDS;" "I didn't care about SDS;" "none of us were members of any political group, certainly not SDS."[41] As a social network, the School of Architecture was initially isolated from the other groups involved in the protest, but student concern for Columbia's policy toward Harlem explains their involvement.

While the relationship between Columbia's architecture students and SDS initially faltered, the fragile alliance between SDS and SAS—so pivotal to the protest's formation— appeared to shatter when SAS and Harlem activists evicted all white students from Hamilton Hall at 5:30 on the morning of Wednesday, April 24. Understanding the rationale for the eviction, however, casts a very different light on the movement toward black separatism in Hamilton. According to SAS representative Bill Sales, the decision to evict white protestors was driven by their desire to establish an African American stronghold, but also by white students who were unwilling to escalate the protest. "White students were asked to leave Hamilton Hall," Sales later reflected, "and told that if they really wanted to be relevant to

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[39] Ibid., Log 34-35.

[40] Ibid., Log 5.

[41] Ibid., Log 5, 10, 28, and Prolog 2.

what black people in the community were doing they would go and take as many other buildings as they could hold. They subsequently did decide to take other buildings and to move their whole program from the level of communication and politics to that of confrontation."[42] Columbia activists created the communes from established social networks, but the coalescence of these groups into a single cohesive protest community remained to be accomplished.

The emergence of commune activism during the last week of April 1968, did not necessitate a birth of new protest communities on campus. Instead, the establishment of communes was rooted in existing "networks of daily life." Evans and Boyte indicate that free spaces are places where people "build direct face-to-face and egalitarian relationships, beyond their immediate circles of friends and smaller communities . . . build networks and seek contacts with other groups of the powerless to forge a broader group identity."[43] At Columbia, the communes functioned as free spaces where disparate social networks eventually coalesced into a protest community of individuals who newly identified with collective activism. As they settled into commune life, however, they soon discovered that living in communion did not necessarily resolve conflicts rooted in cultural, political, and social difference. As we will see, minimizing the deleterious impact of these differences played a critical role in developing the communes as free spaces of collective social and political involvement.

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[42] Donadio, "Columbia: Seven Interviews," 377.

[43] Evans and Boyte, *Free Spaces*, 188, 191.

Rooted in organizations of the Columbia and Harlem communities, the communes also functioned as egalitarian environments where participatory democracy held sway. This participatory structure became all the more apparent when considered in opposition to the authoritarian structure of Columbia University, where President Kirk ruled with supreme power. Evans and Boyte characterize free spaces as "public or quasi-public . . . participatory environments which nurture values associated with citizenship and a vision of the common good."[44] Although limited in their exercise of participatory democracy, the Columbia communes practiced egalitarianism to a remarkable degree and minimized the harmful impact of political and social difference within their free space.

While the relationship between black and white protestors appeared tenuous after the Hamilton eviction, the relationship between Harlem and African American protestors in Hamilton Hall developed into a mutually supportive and increasingly integrated community. Mutual support between Harlem and Hamilton, however, did not eliminate political difference. Instead it united disparate constituencies into a practical consensus to address a common problem. SAS representative Ray Brown acknowledged: "There's probably a great deal of ideological difference between West Harlem [Community Organization] and Harlem CORE. But there was a consensus among all concerned—mainstream Democratic politicians, Republican bureaucrats and civil servants, militant activists and just regular community workers—that these student demands were valid and must be supported."[45] Brown added that, before long, Columbia's African American students even viewed "themselves

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[44] Ibid., 20.

[45] Donadio, "Columbia: Seven Interviews," 379.

essentially as an extension of the black community and that their primary identity is with the black community and not with the university community."[46] On Thursday evening, a group of Harlem activists marched across Columbia's campus. On Friday, a large contingent of African American high school students entered campus to mingle on the lawn outside Hamilton Hall.[47] SAS leaders emphasized the solidarity between Hamilton and Harlem in an open letter to the Harlem community that they distributed on Saturday: "Our victory is your victory. Your victory is our victory. Every victory for a Black Sister or Brother anywhere is a victory for ALL Black People everywhere."[48] The solidarity between Hamilton Hall and "Black People everywhere" suggests a uniquely public character in the free space of the Hamilton commune.[49]

Perhaps the most overlooked characteristic of the Columbia protest is the extent to which the protest strategy effectively inverted the hierarchical relationship at the heart of the gym controversy. In protest of the perceived encroachment by a white academic institution upon a tract of land in an African American neighborhood, students and Harlem activists claimed a black-controlled space within the bounds of Columbia University. The irate response by Columbia's administration to the supposed invasion of its campus only legitimized the protestors' anger at the invasive nature of the Morningside Park development. Aside from the illegality of trespassing upon Columbia's property, the protestors must be

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[46] Ibid., 378.

[47] A. Bruce Goldman, "Crisis at Columbia," *Midstream* 14, no. 6 (June/July 1968): 43; Robert B. Stulberg, "600 Policemen Occupy University," *Columbia Daily Spectator*, April 27, 1968, p. 1; and Kokot, "Two Black Leaders," p. 1.

[48] Avorn et al., *Up Against the Ivy Wall*, 150.

[49] For the integration of SAS and Harlem civil rights groups in Hamilton Hall, see Stern, "Outsiders Influence SDS Action," p. 1; and Robert B. Stulberg, "Three Day Rebellion on Campus: A Diary," *Columbia Daily Spectator*, April 26, 1968, p. 1.

credited for utilizing a distinctive strategy that dramatized the administration's disregard for the community by similarly disregarding the administration's claim to Hamilton Hall. Furthermore, by involving Harlem organizations from outside the traditional bounds of the University, Columbia activists aped the administration's activity with government organizations such as IDA.[50]

The African American eviction of white students from Hamilton obviously challenged protestor solidarity. Nonetheless, the experience sparked a renewed sense of purpose amongst SDS leaders and white protestors. They were determined that racial difference would not drive a wedge into the community. Eleanor Raskin, a Columbia law student, understood the relationship between black and white protestors with unusual perceptivity:

> The silence and discipline of the black brothers in Hamilton was impressive to the whole campus—the whole city, in fact. Stokely Carmichael and Rap Brown came and spoke in support of our liberation, and of all the demands of the brothers. There was no [interracial] split (although the press tried to publicize one) and despite many administration offers of separate negotiations, Hamilton stood firm with the rest of the buildings. The mayor wanted to hold off on the police, fearing a Harlem uprising. Every day and every night during the period of liberation, hundreds of black people would storm the gates (guarded) of campus in support of us.[51]

A reporter for the *Liberation News Service*—an underground news syndicate—agreed: "The power of the students developed from the complete agreement between the blacks . . . and the whites . . . that both groups most hold out until the common demand of amnesty for all persons taking part in the demonstrations is met. On this all are in agreement and will not be

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[50] For the argument regarding the parallel between Harlem organizations and IDA, see Jeff Shero, "Blockade and Siege," *Rat*, May 3-16, 1968, p. 11.

[51] Eleanor Raskin, "The Occupation of Columbia University: April 1968," *Journal of American Studies* 19, no. 2 (August 1985): 258.

moved."[52] Upon the white liberation of four buildings following the eviction, the interracial

alliance formed anew and remained strong throughout the crisis. SAS representatives and H.

Rap Brown insisted that—despite the fact that opposition to gym construction was their

primary concern—they would have remained barricaded within Hamilton Hall even if the

administration permanently halted gym construction without budging on the other protest

concerns.[53] In other words, they were fully supportive of all six demands. Furthermore,

although the communes were segregated, many protests on campus and in Harlem were

racially integrated. At a Thursday night rally on Broadway, speakers from Harlem's major

activist organizations spoke to an interracial audience from the roof of a car before marching

across campus. Harlem grocers even donated food to all the communes throughout the

crisis.[54] Perhaps the best indication of interracial solidarity, however, occurred before the

crisis erupted. Tom Hayden was visiting the SNCC office in New York when he first heard

about the crisis.[55] His prior business with SNCC indicates that the SDS-SNCC alliance did

not form merely in response to campus concerns. Nonetheless, campus issues did strengthen

the bonds between Hamilton and the other communes.[56]

    Likewise, the practice of participatory democracy functioned to minimize conflicts

rooted in political difference while advancing egalitarianism and autonomy in the free space

of the communes. Participatory democracy—the guiding political philosophy of SDS—

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[52] Diamond, "Columbia: The Revolution is Now," p. 1.

[53] Donadio, "Columbia: Seven Interviews," 379; and Kokot, "Two Black Leaders," p. 1.

[54] Diamond, "Columbia: The Revolution is Now," p. 4.

[55] Hayden, *Reunion*, 272.

[56] *Liberation News Service* reported that the Fayerweather commune was racially integrated. Because no other source makes a similar claim, the statement is dubious. If true, however, the racial integration of Fayerweather would support the present insistence upon the racial solidarity of the protest. For the integration of Fayerweather, see Young, "Columbia Eyewitness: Cultural Revolution," *Liberation News Service*, May 3, 1968, p. 12.

sought direct involvement in decision-making and consensus amongst students. One student remembered: "In Avery, people had been very insistent on following this participatory democracy thing, where everyone had a right to participate in the meeting, where nothing was decided until everyone had a chance to say why he agreed or disagreed or simply what he felt about the issue, whatever it is."[57] In practical terms, the philosophy led to tireless debates that rarely produced consensus; in Fayerweather, students held political debates for up to eight hours daily.[58] Whatever its shortcomings, participatory democracy approached the ideal of a leaderless movement and provided a convenient smokescreen to obscure the vital role of student leaders in negotiations with faculty and administrators.[59] If any SDS leader recognized the tenets of participatory democracy, it was Tom Hayden, who had penned the organization's founding document—the Port Huron Statement—in 1962. At Columbia— where he acted as the student leader in Mathematics Hall for four days—Hayden saw that "the theory of democratic participation held firmly in the occupied buildings."[60]

On the one hand, Hayden's observation is apt. Rancorous political debate pervaded commune life where students confirmed all decisions by the Strike Coordinating Committee (SCC). On the other hand, the strike organization was an unwieldy hierarchical structure that left tremendous power in the hands of select SDS leaders. One representative of the Ad Hoc Faculty Group bemoaned the structure of the SCC:

> They were organized in such a way that negotiations were impossible. First, proposals would go to the negotiators, then to headquarters, then to the

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[57] Rosenkranz, *Across the Barricades*, Log 106.

[58] Young, "Columbia Eyewitness: Cultural Revolution," p. 11.

[59] For a thorough discussion of participatory democracy, see Miller, *"Democracy Is in the Streets"*, 141-54.

[60] Hayden, *Reunion*, 275. Other observers agreed with Hayden's assessment; see Michael Stern, "Damage Negligible in Low; Demonstrators Keep Order," *Columbia Daily Spectator*, April 26, 1968, p. 1.

steering committees in the buildings, then to the general membership in the buildings, then back to headquarters, and finally back to the student negotiators. They were not willing to break their solidarity, and they were constitutionally unable to negotiate.[61]

If students celebrated the egalitarianism of participatory democracy, Mark Rudd certainly celebrated the power that the system's bureaucratic inefficiency left in his hands. Furthermore, the rhetoric of radicalization emphasized by SDS leaders served to limit the range of political expression. Critic Diana Trilling convincingly argued that the emphasis on radicalization "demanded that one choose, simply, between conservatism and revolution."[62] Although Trilling overstated her point, liberalism largely disappeared from the political spectrum, forcing many leftward leaning moderates to participate in radical tactics they might have otherwise denounced.[63] From Kunen's perspective, "threats of violence from the right will bring hundreds of the usually moderate to the SDS ranks just to align themselves against jock violence."[64] Thus, participatory democracy helped establish a community *conceived* as a level and transparent collective.[65]

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[61] Avorn et al., *Up Against the Ivy Wall*, 153.

[62] Trilling, "On the Steps," 127.

[63] For perspective on the political uses of the Columbia protest across the national political spectrum, see Samuel P. Hays, "Right Face, Left Face: The Columbia Strike," *Political Science Quarterly* 84, no. 2 (June 1969): 311-27. At Columbia, many conservative students formed the Majority Coalition to oppose the protest. For the Majority Coalition, see Mark Jaffe, "Coalition Challenges Low Strikers," *Columbia Daily Spectator*, April 29, 1968, p. 1. James R. Andrews—though generally unconvincing because he ignores the agency of the student mass—found that "coercive rhetoric" by activist leaders limited the range of acceptable political behavior during the protest in "Confrontation at Columbia: A Case Study in Coercive Rhetoric," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 55, no. 1 (February 1969): 9-16. Ellen Kay Trimberger argues that "common alienation from the administration and isolation from the faculty" united moderates and radicals in a coalition of trust that respected the moderate position in "Why a Rebellion at Columbia Was Inevitable," *Trans-action* 5, no. 9 (September 1968): 31-32.

[64] *Kunen, Strawberry Statement,* 20.

[65] It bears mention that Evans and Boyte account for the appeal of manipulative leaders amidst otherwise egalitarian communities: "Groups which have had little experience of collective strength and self-confidence . . . remain vulnerable to manipulation by demagogic appeals. Their democratic self-consciousness—not only of themselves, but of themselves in egalitarian relation to other powerless groups—is

Gender provided another challenge to the communes' egalitarian ideal. Despite the

fact that Columbia College was an all-male institution in 1968, the presence of women from

Barnard and Sarah Lawrence Colleges, and Columbia graduate schools established a

coeducational environment that emphasized women's rights within the communes.[66] In fact,

author and activist Barbara Ehrenreich argues that the occupied buildings were "one of the

places where women's liberation was born . . . just over simple things like women saying,

'hey, why should we be serving [and] preparing the food.'"[67] The constant reference to

"liberated zones" on campus was not an exclusively political term; it also included women's

liberation to varying extents. A notice hanging over the basement typewriter in Fayerweather

Hall, for example, articulated the rule that everyone share equally in housekeeping

responsibilities:

> TO ALL WOMEN:
> You are in a liberated area. You are urged to reject the traditional role
> of housekeeper unless, of course, you feel this is the role that allows for
> creative expression. Speak up! Use your brains![68]

In this vein, a varsity wrestler headed Fayerweather's food committee.[69] Similarly, signs on

Mathematics Hall's bathroom doors read: "Liberated John: Men and Women."[70]

Furthermore, one study of the protest found that female members of the faculty were among

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weak" (Evans and Boyte, *Free Spaces*, 189). To assert that Rudd and others were "demagogic" leaders overstates the point, but the weak self-consciousness of a newly formed protest community applies to the Columbia protest to the extent that some leaders stepped beyond the bounds of participatory political roles.

[66] Joseph Gerard Brennan, *The Education of a Prejudiced Man* (New York: Scribners, 1977), 233.

[67] *The Sixties: The Years that Shaped a Generation* (Portland: Oregon Public Broadcasting, 2005).

[68] Avorn et al., *Up Against the Ivy Wall*, 124.

[69] Young, "Columbia Eyewitness: Cultural Revolution," p. 11.

[70] Diamond, "Columbia: The Revolution is Now," p. 10.

the most likely group of professors to support the demonstration.[71] Despite the presence of

rhetoric that encouraged men to share equally in housekeeping responsibilities, however,

women more often performed the brunt of this work. At Strike Central in Ferris Booth Hall,

student journalists noted that "hot meals were prepared by Barnard strikers and visiting girls

twenty-four hours a day,"[72] and women at Low Library prepared salami sandwiches and

other snacks. Nevertheless, women and men alike were anxious to live together in the

communes and attempted to establish egalitarian free spaces where women and men

participated on equal political and social footing.

Admittedly, the Columbia communes were not purely egalitarian; however, the

protestors did attempt to minimize the impact of political, racial, and social difference in the

communes through participatory democracy and the language of liberation. Evans and Boyte

are careful to note the likelihood of only a partial realization of egalitarian principles within

free spaces: "Free spaces are never a pure phenomenon. In the real world, they are always

complex, shifting, and dynamic—partial in their freedom and democratic participation,

marked by parochialism of class, gender, race, and other biases of the groups which maintain

them."[73] Bearing this in mind, we should not dwell upon the fact that Columbia activists

achieved only a limited realization of their laudatory egalitarian vision. Participatory politics

was more than simply a catchword at Columbia; instead, it served as the protest's primary

means of minimizing difference amongst activists. Furthermore, egalitarianism helped

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[71] Stephen Cole and Hannelore Adamsons, "Professional Status and Faculty Support of Student Demonstrations," *Public Opinion Quarterly* 34, no. 3 (autumn 1970): 389-90.

[72] Avorn et al., *Up Against the Ivy Wall*, 128.

[73] Evans and Boyte, *Free Spaces*, 19.

coalesce a disparate set of community organizations into a singular, coherent, and autonomous activist community.

Autonomy

Not only did the communes foster participatory environments, but they also struggled to maintain their autonomy from the University.[74] Columbia activists maintained their autonomy in two basic forms. First, they established political independence by creating their own institutions separate from those of the University and establishing specific demands that sought to realign the relationship between students, faculty, and administrators. Second, they created commune environments that fostered a unique community sensibility defined in opposition to the traditional university and mainstream culture. Following Evans and Boyte, the combination of these forms of autonomy offered protestors "basic alternatives to the conventional ways of the world, what might be called 'movement cultures,' that suggest a different way of living."[75] In order to create a free space where activists could unite in a participatory environment, the protest community had to maintain its autonomy from outside control.

The scale of student protest led to an important reassessment of the University's identity. Whether the university was "a moral community,"[76] "a community dedicated to

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[74] For more on the struggle to maintain autonomy in the face of expanding government and economic institutions in the twentieth century, see Ibid., 189.

[75] Ibid., 19.

[76] Donadio, "Columbia: Seven Interviews," 355.

rational discourse,"[77] "a defenseless place,"[78] or "a place from which to launch radical struggles,"[79] it became clear early in the strike that the protestors challenged the very fabric of life at Columbia. Columbia's vice president considered the protest "a challenge to whether the University will be conducted in an orderly manner or whether it will be torn apart."[80] Rudd insisted that what students "[are] really doing is removing themselves from this ideal situation called the 'university community' in an attempt to gain more leverage within that community."[81] Most observers agreed, however, that "the fundamental strategy of the radical student leaders is that . . . they're operating from outside the community."[82] Regardless of whether students protested in order to assert a new role in a restructured university or sought to remove themselves altogether from Columbia, observers agreed that the radical nature of the protest, at least temporarily, threatened an unsuspecting university community.[83] Activist autonomy—whether real or imagined—forced the University to reevaluate the role of students at Columbia.[84]

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[77] Cox Commission, *Crisis at Columbia*, 210.

[78] Daniel Bell, "Columbia and the New Left," in *Cronfrontation: The Student Rebellion and the Universities*, ed. Daniel Bell and Irving Kristol (New York: Basic Books, 1968), 96.

[79] Rudd, "Columbia," 301.

[80] Barry, "Challenge to Administration," p. 1.

[81] Donadio, "Columbia: Seven Interviews," 372.

[82] Ibid., 381.

[83] Diana Trilling insisted that as a result of the protest, "At Columbia 'community' has now come to mean but one thing, Harlem, the black community to the east and northeast of the campus, although when necessary it is also made to include anyone in the University vicinity who could be antagonistic to it" (Trilling, "On the Steps," 91). Trilling's cynical—though admittedly sophisticated—reaction to the protest is extreme throughout her article, but it is useful to note her perceptivity in recognizing the malleability and fluidity of the protest community.

[84] For a functional definition of community, see Calhoun, "Community," p. 111.

The SCC operated as the most basic organization that intended to establish and exercise protestor autonomy. Protestors established the SCC on Tuesday afternoon to draw up the six demands and expanded as the liberated zone grew. Based on the third floor of Ferris Booth Hall, Strike Central coordinated the operations of the protest, distributed food and cash, and produced a vast number of leaflets. The SCC sought complete self-sufficiency and—aside from relying upon the physical space of campus buildings—largely succeeded in maintaining its independence from University support. The SCC brought together a core of six student leaders and representatives from each of four occupied buildings in an attempt to establish a degree of consensus across campus. Despite this goal, each commune maintained a distinct political culture. The SCC originally formed as an interracial body, but SAS and other black students removed themselves from the centralized authority following the Hamilton eviction. This removal did not necessarily indicate that interracial tension predominated amongst the protest community, but merely that African American protestors valued their autonomy within the overall structure of the protest.[85]

The movement toward black separatism also contributed to the maintenance of autonomy by impacting the administration's range of strategies for defusing the protest. By 1968, the black power movement in the United States was strong; race riots in ghettoes across the country were increasingly common, including one in Harlem as recently as 1964. Thus, the administration cast a wary eye toward nearby Harlem and sought to calm the conflict in Hamilton Hall without arousing popular discontent within the Harlem community.[86] The administration's fears were well-founded; at a Friday news conference

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[85] Avorn et al., *Up Against the Ivy Wall*, 51-51, 129.

[86] The administration's primary tactic for attempting to limit the influence of Harlemites upon the protest was to guard all entrances to the University and require Columbia identification to gain access to the

outside Hamilton Hall, H. Rap Brown declared: "If the university refuses to deal with us, with the black brothers inside this building, then they had better be prepared to deal with the black brothers in the streets."[87] Furthermore, Columbia had made a concerted effort over the course of the 1960s to increase the African American presence on campus and did not want to alienate black students by failing to consider their political concerns. Immanuel Wallerstein, a Columbia sociologist who met frequently with Hamilton students during the strike, noted the importance of the African American presence during the protest: "If it had just been Mark Rudd and his friends going into Low Memorial Library, we would have had the police on campus in thirty minutes. There's no question about it: it would have been an unpleasant but minor fracas in the University had there not been black students who barricaded Hamilton Hall."[88] If the SAS-SDS coalition was threatened by black separatism, it also functioned to facilitate the spread of radical tactics across campus without drawing a violent administrative response. By limiting the administration's capacity to end the protest, it also helped maintain protest autonomy.

As the protest escalated, the student demand for amnesty from prosecution and university sanction increasingly emerged as the primary sticking point in negotiations between students and administrators. Rationales for insisting upon amnesty as a precondition for resolution varied widely amongst students. Ray Brown argued: "Our position on amnesty is a moral one. We believe that the University must grant amnesty because by virtue of its racist policy toward the community the campus is responsible for the situation on this

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Morningside Heights campus. This strategy was only moderately successful (Kenneth Barry, "Plainclothes Police Club CU Faculty," *Columbia Daily Spectator*, April 26, 1968, p. 1).

[87] Diamond, "Columbia: The Revolution is Now," p. 8.

[88] Donadio, "Columbia: Seven Interviews," 356.

campus."[89] Another set of students replaced Brown's emphasis on the racism of gym

construction with the imperialism of Columbia's IDA affiliation. In general, amnesty rested

upon the claim that the University's lack of moral authority forced students to protest and,

thus, deprived them of responsibility for their conduct. Many students also latched upon the

cause of amnesty to protect their educational investment and avoid the perils of criminal

prosecution. Critics took pleasure in noting that students did not in fact demand amnesty—

"the exercise of [legitimate] executive charity"—but instead challenged the right of the

administration to exercise any power over the university community; they questioned the

very legitimacy of Columbia's power.[90] Thus, the amnesty demand—regardless of its

semantic unintelligibility—can be understood as both a demand for autonomy and an

acknowledgement of Columbia's disciplinary capacity. Similarly, the student demand for a

tripartite university disciplinary procedure—involving students, faculty, and administrators—

simultaneously asserted an independent student position while recognizing the authority of

the University.[91] In fact, all six student demands—phrased as they were in the passive

voice—tacitly recognized the administration's power.[92]

    Were the protestors confused over the definition of amnesty, or did they recognize the

multiple meanings observers would attach to the term? In all likelihood, both explanations

are apt. However many students understood the proper definition of amnesty, the term

became inextricably linked with student demands early in the protest. This momentum,

coupled with the tumult of life in the communes, led students to uncritically utilize the term.

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[89] Ibid., 377.

[90] Trilling, "On the Steps," 101.

[91] For the perceived importance of a tripartite disciplinary body on campus, see "The Way Out," *Columbia Daily Spectator*, April 26, 1968, p. 4.

[92] Cox Commission, *Crisis at Columbia*, 104.

While many students failed to recognize the confusion over amnesty, others drew upon the nuances of the term to emphasize both student righteousness and administrative illegitimacy.

Because of the criminality of trespassing upon University property—to say nothing of holding an administrator hostage—the administration's authority included the capacity to contact the police and dismantle the communes. Thus, the physical defense of the five buildings became a vital component of maintaining protestor autonomy. Defense initially consisted of the construction of barricades—formed by gathering furniture at building entrances—to prevent a police raid. In particular, the architecture students in Avery Hall took pride in engineering the finest barricades at Columbia.[93] Avery also established the most creative plan for confronting the police upon the eventual raid of the commune; according to their plan, "each floor of Avery [was] set aside for people who wanted to express their resistance in a certain way," with the most radical students occupying the uppermost floors of the building.[94] The Fayerweather commune's Building Defense Committee—charged with maintaining commune security—split into two factions: the pacifists and—in Raskin's words—the "maniacs with guns."[95] Rumors of Harlem militants in Hamilton armed with guns and ingredients for Molotov cocktails also circulated throughout the week.[96] If the armed defense of buildings was an impractical strategy to oppose an impending police assault, it was also an appealing method of resisting authority and asserting autonomy.

[93] Rosenkranz, *Across the Barricades*, Log 55.

[94] Ibid., Log 176. For a similar plan in Fayerweather, see Wolfe Lowenthal, "Columbia Eyewitness: The Bust in Fayerweather," *Liberation News Service*, May 13, 1968, p. 9.

[95] Raskin, "The Occupation of Columbia University," 257.

[96] See Avorn et al., *Up Against the Ivy Wall*, 62; Diamond, "Columbia: The Revolution is Now," p. 4; and Stern, "Outsiders Influence SDS Action," p.1.

Furthermore, the administration's reluctance to utilize city law enforcement to quell the protest legitimated student assertions of autonomy.[97]

If the Columbia administration maintained an intimate link with the city's law enforcement authorities, it also influenced mainstream press reports of the protest.[98] Columbia trustee Arthur Ochs Sulzberger, in fact, worked as the president and publisher of the *New York Times*, which ran notoriously pro-administration and anti-activist stories throughout the week. Furthermore, the major metropolitan dailies—to say nothing of the national media reporting on the incident—misrepresented the number of students participating in the strike, the degree of destructive actions taken by protesting students, the role of the faculty in the protest, and many other issues throughout the week. The student-run *Columbia Daily Spectator*—sympathetic to, but independent from, the protest—carefully catalogued these inconsistencies and placed a sign on its door to fend off "prostitutes of the national press."[99] Seventy-five students grew so angry over *New York Times* coverage of the protest that they picketed Sulzberger's Fifth Avenue home on May 2.[100] Another group of

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[97] For commune defense, see Diamond, "Columbia: The Revolution is Now," p. 9; and Michael Stern, "Protestors in Each Building Develop Separate Defenses," *Columbia Daily Spectator*, April 29, 1968, p. 1. For a thorough analysis of the administration's confused enforcement of rules and laws, see, Louis Lusky and Mary H. Lusky, "Columbia 1968: The Wound Unhealed," *Political Science Quarterly* 84, no. 2 (June 1969): 169-288.

[98] For mass media's skewed representation of Columbia activists, see Todd Gitlin, *The Whole World is Watching: Mass Media in the Making and Unmaking of the New Left* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 189, 193-95, and 275-75; and Sale, *SDS*, 441-43.

[99] Tom Hamilton and Allen Young, "Columbia: The Students Stick With It," *Liberation News Service*, May 3, 1968, n. p. For examples of discrepancies between mass media and student-run media, see Alice Embree, "The Urban Removal Masquerade: Columbia and the New York Times," *Rat*, May 17-30, 1968, p. 4; Stern, "Damage Negligible in Low," p. 1; Michael Stern, "City Newspapers Distort Protests," *Columbia Daily Spectator*, April 27, p. 1; Robert B. Stulberg, "Report Buildings Vandalized After Students Leave," *Columbia Daily Spectator*, May 2, 1968, p. 7; "Misrepresentations," *Columbia Daily Spectator*, May 7, 1968, p. 2; particularly, Michael Stern, "Twisting the news: perspectives or prejudice?" *Columbia Daily Spectator*, May 10, 1968, sec. C, p. 6; and Young, "Columbia Eyewitness: Cultural Revolution," p. 11.

[100] "75 Students Picket Sulzberger's Home," *Columbia Daily Spectator*, May 3, 1968, p. 1.

students picketed the home of trustee William Paley, president of CBS, for allowing

President Kirk to appear on "Face the Nation."[101]

Beyond protesting the mass media portrayal of the protest, student activists enlisted

the support of underground newspapers and other forms of alternative media to set the record

straight about the Columbia fracas. *Liberation News Service*, *Rat*, and other underground

newspapers sent journalists to live in and report from the communes, where Columbia

students rewarded them with unfettered access to commune life.[102] *Liberation News Service*

stories appeared in newspapers across the country.[103] The campus radio station WKCR also

broadcast important coverage of the protest throughout the week. The University trustees

grew so resentful of its stories, however, that they forced the station to briefly shut down

before the administration convinced them otherwise.[104]

Students did not always assert their autonomy in such political forms. Equally

important to many student activists was the creation of a new protest community grounded in

a society and culture that challenged mainstream values. Faculty members noted this trend.

Columbia literary critic Lionel Trilling argued for the cultural appeal of political

involvement: "There has developed among young people an appetite for gratuitous political

activity. . . . [T]here is . . . the desire to be politically involved, in some extreme and exciting

way."[105] Trilling added that "for young people now, being political serves much the same

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[101] Hamilton and Young, "Columbia: The Students Stick With It," n. p.

[102] For background on the American underground press, see Abe Peck, *Uncovering the Sixties: The Life and Times of the Underground Press* (New York: Pantheon, 1985).

[103] For the best available account of the Liberation News Service, see Raymond Mungo, *Famous Long Ago: My Life and Hard Times with Liberation News Service* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1970).

[104] Diamond, "Columbia: The Revolution is Now," p. 7.

[105] Donadio, "Columbia: Seven Interviews," 387.

purpose as being literary has long done—it expresses and validates the personality."[106]
Another professor echoed this sentiment, noting simply that "a great number of people who
acted were not specifically political in their motivations."[107] At least one student supported
this view by admitting that "I'll do anything to feel like I'm doing something."[108] In other
words, political activity was not entirely political.

To a great extent, students participated in the Columbia protest for the opportunity to
create an authentic social and cultural community according to their distinctive values. Tom
Hayden—borrowing from Fidel Castro—referred to the protestors as "guerrillas in the field
of culture."[109] A reporter for the *Liberation News Service* described a cultural "revolution
within the revolution."[110] Lionel Trilling echoed this sentiment in less emphatic terms:

> The actual issue, I believe, was—is—a very large and general one,
> best described as a cultural issue. The most radical students were expressing
> their doctrinaire alienation from and disgust with the whole of American
> culture. The less radical but still militant students were attempting to reach a
> new definition of what a young person is in relation to the institutions he is
> involved with.[111]

His wife and fellow critic Diana Trilling—in her scathing critique of the protest—made a
similar argument: "The revolutionary scene at the University represented the moral substance
of contemporary art translated into actuality; indeed the triumph of culture over politics. . . .
It was an event in contemporary life, an event in the culture of our time, a revolution in and

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[106] Ibid., 387.

[107] Ibid., 360.

[108] *Kunen, Strawberry Statement,* 27.

[109] Tom Hayden, "Two, Three, Many Columbias," *Ramparts*, June 15, 1968, 40.

[110] Young, "Columbia Eyewitness: Cultural Revolution," p. 10.

[111] Donadio, "Columbia: Seven Interviews," 386-87.

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of modern culture."[112] Although culture and politics are not mutually exclusive as Diana

Trilling suggests, culture was critical to the substance of student activism at Columbia.

Of the five Columbia communes, students in Hamilton Hall established the most rigid

protest culture. SAS and Harlem leaders considered themselves to be the vanguard of the

protest and emphasized that orderliness would legitimate their cause to outside observers,

including the Columbia administration. After the first day of the protest, SAS leaders

maintained tight control over those entering and leaving the commune. They also monitored

commune life: "Schedules were set up by the SAS leadership to provide eating periods, study

periods, relaxation periods and sleeping periods. There was an interval set aside for bathing,

beginning at 6 A.M."[113] Such rigidity, however, did not prevent those living in the commune

from enjoying their time together and even fostered a community sensibility. Surviving on

large cartons of food provided by Harlem CORE, Hamilton Hall became a destination for

African American activists and politicians from across New York City. One woman who

occupied Hamilton remembered that "the spirit inside was beautiful; there was singing,

talking, dancing to music from small phonographs, watching TV, participating in the

interminable meetings."[114] Her emphasis on the interminability of the political meetings

suggests that life in the commune was not narrowly political; instead, the spirituality of the

commune's unique space and culture seemed to create unique community bonds. The

orderliness and cohesion of the Hamilton commune also prevented the administration from

dismissing it as merely an example of student rowdiness, a charge leveled at the other

communes throughout the week.

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[112] Trilling, "On the Steps," 95, 108.

[113] Avorn et al., *Up Against the Ivy Wall*, 127.

[114] Ibid., 127.

Avery Hall, more than any other commune, took on a distinctly academic feel. Occupied primarily by graduate students in the school of architecture, protestors in Avery carefully designed their barricades to maximize their repellant capacity. They also held a "design-in" to create a blueprint for gym construction on land already owned by the University, illustrating a unique enthusiasm for proposing alternative solutions to protest conflicts.[115] The design-in represented an attempt to utilize the free space of the communes to revision the spatial dimensions of the University; it also indicates that students were genuinely interest in resolving the conflict on terms acceptable to Columbia students, administrators, and the Harlem community. Comparatively moderate at the outset of the protest, many protestors in Avery were the most politically engaged by the end of the week.[116]

Commune décor—which overwhelmingly reflected a radical ideology—provided another medium through which to express activist ideals. In Hamilton Hall—prior to the eviction—an argument sprung up over whether a poster of Lenin ought to be hung in the lobby; when the Leninists won, posters of revolutionaries Che Guevara, Stokely Carmichael, and Malcolm X soon followed. Red balloons and crepe paper—the color of choice throughout the week to follow—adorned the walls and various students strummed guitars while a rock band set up for an afternoon concert. The milieu was restive and Hamilton quickly turned into an eclectic representation of 1960s student culture, a commune decorated in artifacts representing specific political values.[117] Students similarly adorned the

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[115] Rosenkranz, *Across the Barricades*, Log 81.

[116] Avorn et al., *Up Against the Ivy Wall*, 85-85, 125.

[117] Ibid., 57-58; Diamond, "Columbia: The Revolution is Now," p. 3; and "Protestors Crowd Into Hamilton Hall For All-Night Vigil," *Columbia Daily Spectator*, April 24, 1968, p. 1.

Fayerweather commune in revolutionary regalia that included two red flags flapping atop the roof and Maoist posters pasted to the walls. Rudd insisted: "Every militant in the buildings knew that he was there because of his opposition to racism and imperialism and the capitalist system that needs to exploit and oppress human being from Vietnam to Harlem to Columbia. It was no accident that we hung up pictures of Karl Marx and Malcolm X and Che Guevara and flew red flags from the tops of two buildings."[118]

Of course, not everyone at Columbia was a communist. To illustrate the full spectrum of their political views, students adopted a symbolic language of clothing that facilitated individual expression without disrupting the community emphasis on solidarity. Blue armbands represented "peace" for some while meaning "conservatism" for others. Faculty members bore white armbands. A set of students who emphatically sought amnesty wore green armbands, while—most common of all—red armbands signaled those who sought a revolution, but not necessarily communism.[119] This trend illustrates the degree to which the protestors respected individual expression while simultaneously emphasizing solidarity in the communes.

Music pervaded life in all the communes and provided a lighthearted method of expressing political ideals and fostering community. A piano in the rotunda of Low Library enabled one woman to give a brief performance of Chopin as an opening act for an impromptu concert by Professor Otto Luening.[120] In Mathematics Hall, one student brought

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[118] Rudd, "Columbia," 300.

[119] Avorn et al., *Up Against the Ivy Wall*, 293-94.

[120] Ibid., 123; and Jerry L. Avorn, "If Grayson Kirk were alive . . .," *Columbia Daily Spectator*, May 10, 1968, sec. C, p. 1.

in a stereo and dozens of rock and blues albums.[121] At various points throughout the protest,

students erupted in spontaneous song, most often evoking music of earlier civil rights

protests such as "We Shall Overcome" and "We Shall Not Be Moved;" they inserted their

own lyrics to these songs that were specific to the Columbia protest.[122]

Loose sexual mores also attracted many Columbia students to the communes.

Because Columbia College was an all-male institution, the coeducational commune

environment provided opportunistic spaces wherein Columbia men and visiting women

could—to the extent that sex was possible in crowded university buildings—explore their

sexuality.[123] To facilitate sexual expression, Fayerweather actually created "liberated

bedrooms" in faculty offices.[124] One student—who eventually settled in the Avery

commune—remembered that in Fayerweather "there were couples screwing all over the

building."[125] James Kunen—who pondered over the breast size of his fellow women

activists—initially participated in the protest because he and a buddy decided that they were

"absolutely bound to meet some girls" in Hamilton Hall.[126] At the same time, however,

Kunen argued: "I can assure you that the Columbia action cannot be dismissed as an

overgrown panty raid, a manifestation of the vernal urge. It lasted too long; participants

endured hardships, and worse, boredom, conditions through which collegiate fetishistic folly

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[121] Avorn et al., *Up Against the Ivy Wall*, 126.

[122] Ibid., 51; and Raskin, "The Occupation of Columbia University," 259.

[123] Avorn et al., *Up Against the Ivy Wall*, 126.

[124] Young, "Columbia Eyewitness: Cultural Revolution," p. 12.

[125] Rosenkranz, *Across the Barricades*, Log 107.

[126] Kunen*, Strawberry Statement,* 22.

could never sustain itself."[127] The lively cultural milieu and sexuality of the communes do not indicate that the Columbia protest was devoid of meaningful politics.[128]

The personal component of Columbia's political life during the protest was nowhere more apparent than inside the Fayerweather commune on Saturday night. As dusk faded into night, the students illuminated the flags that towered over the building and welcomed the Pageant Players, a radical mime troupe of street actors, to perform "guerrilla theater." The plot consisted of a nation of peasants who ransacked their king's castle and stole his crown. Eleanor Raskin described the affair: "[It was] a very simple and lovely play, which turned into a beat bacchanal . . . . It became a real primitive rite, more unifying and inspiring than any political rally could have been."[129] Revelers wildly danced, chanted, and waved candles while others destroyed an effigy of Columbia President Grayson Kirk to the rhythm of makeshift drums.

Just as the Pageant Players' performance wound down, attention turned toward the back of the room where a woman appeared in candlelight, clad in a white sweater and white jeans, holding a bouquet of daisies. Beside her stood a man, neatly dressed, and as they proceeded to the stage area at the front of the room, the Reverend William Starr appeared at the entrance. The couple had been engaged for some time, but the electric communal environment in Fayerweather led them push their nuptials forward by several months. The

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[127] Ibid., 150.

[128] For a psychoanalysis of Columbia's student activists, see Robert Liebert, *Radical and Militant Youth: A Psychoanalytic Inquiry* (New York: Praeger, 1971). Liebert's analysis does not directly address the role of sex in the Columbia protest. The text is dated, but helpful insofar as it indicates one contemporary avenue of inquiry into the Columbia protest.

[129] Raskin, "The Occupation of Columbia University," 257.

wedding vows were brief and Starr pronounced them "children of the new age."[130] Raskin, who had met neither the bride nor the groom prior to their occupation of Fayerweather, described the wedding as "by far the most moving one I've ever seen."[131] If the conditions inside the commune fomented hyperbole, they also bore little resemblance to recognizable forms of political protest.[132]

Fayerweather's guerrilla theater performance and the ensuing wedding each illustrate how commune cultural expression doubled as political activity and articulations of student autonomy. The plot of the Pageant Players' performance reflected student discontent with the Columbia administration, and the destruction of Kirk's effigy—however tasteless—articulated political discontent through cultural expression. The Fayerweather wedding likewise expressed commune autonomy through a familiar social institution. By taking their wedding vows in the Fayerweather commune without the oversight of a justice of the peace or any representative of the state, the couple asserted the independence and legitimacy of the protest community.

Protestor autonomy facilitated the practice of participatory democracy and functioned to unite disparate community organizations into a practical consensus. Beyond mere autonomy, however, students established new identities through the political culture they created within the communes. Free from elite control, students and Harlem activists were free to determine and act upon their own distinctive values. The communes were free spaces

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[130] Avorn et al., *Up Against the Ivy Wall*, 130.

[131] Raskin, "The Occupation of Columbia University," 258.

[132] For a brief campus report of the wedding, see "Couple Is Married In Fayerweather," *Columbia Daily Spectator*, April 29, 1968, p. 7.

where hundreds of students came to understand democratic political participation in new and exciting ways. But they were also destined to be short-lived.

<center>Columbia After the Communes</center>

Throughout the week of protest, Columbia administrators toyed with using the New York Police Department (NYPD) to break up the communes, but a variety of concerns led them to avoid such an unsavory alternative. Events over the weekend, however, created an overwhelming impression in the communes that police intervention was imminent.[133] Shortly after two o'clock on Tuesday morning the NYPD's Tactical Patrol Force (TPF) moved onto campus.[134] After the police dispersal of the communes, protest support at Columbia simultaneously grew and splintered into numerous factions; both of these developments illustrate the degree to which the *communes* fostered the growth of democratic political participation on campus and the critical role of free space in perpetuating solidarity within the activist community.

What is most striking about the TPF intervention is the officers' use of arbitrary violence—a critical factor in the growth of support for the protest after the dissolution of the

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[133] Late Saturday morning, the Board of Trustees—which held final control over administrative decisions—issued the Peterson-Trustee statement which denied the viability of various small concessions that Kirk had preliminarily offered students, illustrating the wide gap between campus politics and actual control over Columbia's future. Students and faculty alike responded with anger and distrust. The protestors in Fayerweather Hall even attempted a proposal that would have relinquished amnesty as a demand, which their comrades in the other communes squarely rejected (Avorn et al., *Up Against the Ivy Wall*, 162). On Sunday afternoon—after lengthy all-night sessions—the Ad Hoc Faculty Group (AHFG) issued a "Bitter Pill" resolution that Kirk and the strikers rejected the following morning. Later Monday afternoon, the AHFG called on a leading labor negotiator to meet with student leaders. Afterward he reported: "This was unlike a labor dispute in that it was in the interests of one of the disputants, SDS *not* to settle. There was no proposal I could name to satisfy them" (Ibid., 173).

[134] For a detailed account of the police raid, see Ibid., 181-99; and "University Calls in 1,000 Police to End Demonstration As Nearly 700 Are Arrested and 100 Injured; Violent Solution Follows Failure of Negotiations," *Columbia Daily Spectator*, April 30, 1968, p. 1.

communes. Of the 109 injuries specified in the NYPD's interim report on the ordeal, only thirty-two occurred in or near the five occupied buildings.[135] Activists incurred the majority of injuries apart from the communes while the TPF cleared campus and dispersed crowds gathered around the Sundial, College Walk, and South Lawn at the center of campus. Of those students who saw police force used during the intervention, 74 percent described it as "greatly excessive to the point of brutality;" of faculty who witnessed the use of force, 66 percent agreed.[136] In over three hours, the police arrested 712 protestors, many of whom had never set foot inside the communes.[137] Whatever its methods, the TPF cleared all five communes; the students in Hamilton Hall agreed to leave peaceably, whereas students in the other four communes forced officers to dismantle the barricades and drag them outside.

While police intervention successfully cleared Columbia's campus, it also served to rally sympathy for the protestors and strengthen the bonds of community formed in the communes. The number of observers who thought that the occupation of Columbia buildings was "probably or definitely justified" increased 29 percent amongst students and 25 percent amongst faculty who witnessed police use of force.[138] One observer suggested that "the 'bust' confirmed the students' new beliefs."[139] He added: "The worst incidents of brutality happened in Avery and Fayerweather, in which the moderate students predominated. Having wavered before, the students in these buildings now seemed intent on 'proving their

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[135] Avorn et al., *Up Against the Ivy Wall*, 181. For a compelling analysis of the impact of police brutality against students stationed at the Sundial, see Margi Werner, "Columbia Eyewitness: Radicalization at the Sundial," *Liberation News Service*, May 13, 1968, p. 6.

[136] Barton, "The Columbia Crisis," 340.

[137] Avorn et al., *Up Against the Ivy Wall*, 181.

[138] Barton, "The Columbia Crisis," 341.

[139] Bell, "Columbia and the New Left," 99.

manhood,' and they resisted bitterly."[140] The shared experience of violence healed many

divisions that may have developed over the course of the protest. The *expectation* of violence

functioned similarly. In the lead-up to the TPF raid, Raskin notes, Fayerweather students—

who in the days leading up to the raid had challenged the insistence on amnesty—banded

together in community: "Monday night had been hectic—more songs and movies and great

spirit of courage and unity. Many brothers . . . burned their draft cards; our newlyweds

encouraged us and the expectation of the police unified our factions."[141] After her arrest,

Raskin remained upbeat: "Its a good lesson, I think, for every law student, to take it on the

other side—eight hours in jail (Jonah had twelve)—with no food, lights on all the time (after

a sleepless night), forty sisters in one tiny cell."[142]

Although police intervention dispersed the communes, it strengthened the bonds of

community. The shared experience of violence helped form a collective identity based on

empathy and mutuality. The day after the police raid, a graduate student emphasized that the

administration "thought that they were bringing an end to this strike yesterday, but in reality

it has only just begun!"[143] Another commentator noted: "Outrage grew from the thought that

the sanctuary had been defiled. Many moderates were at last won over."[144] The fundamental

purity of the student cause—as they saw it—allowed them to attach a peculiar grandeur to

their experience of violence. It served as a baptism by fire and bound them in community.

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[140] Ibid., 86-87.

[141] Raskin, "The Occupation of Columbia University," 259. For corroboration of Raskin's description of the atmosphere in Fayerweather during the raid, see Lowenthal, "Columbia Eyewitness: The Bust in Fayerweather," p. 9.

[142] Raskin, "The Occupation of Columbia University," 259.

[143] John F. Khanlian, "Statements of Injured Students," *Rat*, May 3-16, 1968, p. 14.

[144] George Kateb, "The Campus and Its Critics," *Commentary* 47, no. 4 (April 1969): 42.

The bonds formed during the protest did not evaporate, but instead expanded and took on a multiplicity of new forms.

Immediately after the police bust, the Strike Coordinating Committee constituency grew to include some four thousand students who organized a student boycott of classes that thousands more supported. Students called for a general strike within hours of the police intervention.[145] The administration cancelled classes for the remainder of the week and soon established a policy whereby students could obtain passing grades for all classes in which they were enrolled without further attendance or completion of coursework.[146] Raskin remembered that the communes became new social units on campus: "[We] continued to meet, on the lawns, in tents outside our buildings. . . . We hold liberation classes, rallies, concerts outside, and the sculpture classes are making us a symbolic monument."[147] The Grateful Dead played an outdoor concert, Beat poet Allen Ginsberg spoke to several hundred students, and a newly formed Strike Education Committee organized counter-classes in which they encouraged "all participants . . . to exercise their *freedom* to experiment with and create new and different forms and content, according to a continuing *democratic procedure*."[148] If the physical bounds of the protest could no longer be contained within the walls of five communes, students continued to cross the line between politics and culture in new and exciting ways that emphasized democratic participation and student autonomy.

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[145] "Robert B. Stulberg, "Students Plan General Strike After Police Action on Campus," *Columbia Daily Spectator*, April 30, 1968, p. 1.

[146] Michael Stern, "Formal Final Examinations Abolished; Spring Semester Will Be Extended," *Columbia Daily Spectator*, May 6, 1968, p. 1.

[147] Raskin, "The Occupation of Columbia University," 260.

[148] Avorn et al., *Up Against the Ivy Wall*, 226. See also, "Strike Activities Attract Crowds," *Columbia Daily Spectator*, May 6, 1968, p. 1; Arthur Kokot, "Strikers Will Picket Buildings; 50 'Counter Classes' Planned," *Columbia Daily Spectator*, May 6, 1968, p. 1; and Jim Shaw, "Krassner, Ginsberg Speak to Students," *Columbia Daily Spectator*, May 8, 1968, p. 1.

While students from the communes successfully maintained support for the strike and alternative forms of education, new and smaller communities began to appear amongst protesting students. Kunen quipped that "everyone is organizing now—moderates, independent radicals, Liberated Artists, librarians."[149] Although the Strike Coordinating Committee continued its commitment to further the strike and deepen support for protest, it became increasingly moderate. Meanwhile, other students formed the Students for a Restructured University, a liberal group that sought reconciliation with the administration while emphasizing increased student involvement in campus affairs. Thus, while the total number of students involved in the protest increased dramatically following the police bust, they divided into distinct factions. The migration of some students toward liberal campus politics should not be construed as an end to radical protest at and around Columbia; the communes continued to meet throughout the spring and a large number of students remained committed to radical tactics. Nonetheless, the shift from the spatial limitations of the five communes to the open environment that followed made the negotiation of difference less imperative and contributed to the ensuing factionalization on campus. Apart from the free space of the communes, it became less vital to achieve consensus. Factionalization, however, should not be mistaken for the diminution of student political assertiveness. Indeed, the presence of *liberal* reform filled a void at a campus increasingly divided between conservatives and radicals.[150]

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[149] *Kunen, Strawberry Statement,* 36. Stephen Donadio echoed this sentiment: "Once grievances were being voiced with passion and perhaps for the first time even listened to, *all* grievances rose to the surface: every group and splinter group demanded its due" ("Black Power at Columbia," *Commentary* 46, no. 3 (September 1968): 70.).

[150] For a full discussion of campus life following the protest, see Avorn et al., *Up Against the Ivy Wall*, 223-52.

Three protests, in particular, indicate the persistence of student activism at Columbia. On May 1, Mark Rudd spoke next to various Harlem activists at a rally attended by one thousand spectators and which the NYPD again busted.[151] The second occurred on May 17, when a mixed group of Columbia students and Harlem residents staged a sit-in at a Columbia-owned property to protest Columbia's "tenement-removal tactics."[152] At the administration's insistence, police arrested 117 protestors, nearly half of whom were students. Four days later, a group of five hundred students protested the discipline of four SDS leaders by again raiding Hamilton Hall. Before the night was over, police arrested another 177 students, 51 students and 17 officers were injured, and fires burned in Hamilton and Fayerweather Halls.[153] Radical student protest persisted throughout the spring of 1968 and the bonds formed in the communes during the last week of April continued to strengthen.

The persistence of student radicalism at Columbia also took more enduring forms as activists who met in the communes formed organizations to continue important struggles around the city. Most notably, Mark Rudd and two other SDS activists helped form the Weatherman faction a year later and explicitly advocated the violent overthrow of the United States government. To a great degree, Weatherman developed as a result of an increasingly close alliance between Columbia SDS and the New York Black Panther Party that developed following the Columbia protest.[154] More in the spirit of the initial Columbia protest, a group of students from the Avery Commune continued to meet following the protest and formed a

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[151] Michael Stern, "Ten Students Hurt at Amsterdam Age In Melee Following Rally for Strike," *Columbia Daily Spectator*, May 2, 1968, p. 1.

[152] Avorn et al., *Up Against the Ivy Wall*, 242.

[153] For a full discussion of April 21 occupation of Hamilton Hall and ensuing protest, see Ibid., 253-76; and Jon Moore, "The Second Battle of Columbia," *Rat*, June 1-14, 1968, p. 6.

[154] Rudd, "Columbia," 310; and Jacobs, *The Way the Wind Blew*.

non-profit organization named Urban Deadline that operated into the 1970s on principles founded within their commune; a list of their activities—primarily urban social programs—is far too long to list here.[155]

The impact of the Columbia protest on student activism persisted beyond the last week of April 1968. In new forms and organizations, students who first learned to be activists at Columbia continued in protest politics. The spatial limitations of protest were no longer defined by the strictures of five liberated campus buildings. The communes had run their course, but their legacy continued.

Conclusions: The Politics of Space

The lens of free space provides a methodological approach that makes sense of the disparate cultural, political, and social elements that students wedded throughout the Columbia protest. As free spaces, the communes facilitated the coexistence of individuals with radically different concerns. SDS founder Tom Hayden, for example, shared the plush confines of Mathematics Hall with James Kunen whose interest in the protest initially focused on his prospect of meeting women. Many others entered the communes with concerns similar to those of Kunen, but the protest experience often transformed the priorities of such individuals. One student indicated that life in the communes "was a process of

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[155] Rosenkranz includes a sampling of Urban Deadline's programs: "In our two years of existence, we've designed and renovated sixteen storefronts as schools for high school dropouts, mostly in Harlem . . .; helped two community groups design playground parks on vacant lots in their areas; set up a small construction training program on the Lower East Side . . .; worked with tenants' committees from three slum tenements in upper Manhattan on various projects—to repair their apartments, to rehabilitate the buildings, to purchase the buildings from the landlord" (Epilog 3). This list includes only a small fraction of the programs undertaken by Urban Deadline between 1968 and 1970.

learning and relearning why we were there."[156] *Rat* also recognized the political awakening

and social coalescence that took shape inside Columbia's communes:

> Participants by the hundreds realized new concrete possibilities in their
> lives and were forever changed. Alliances between black and white, between
> campus and the community, the exaltation of people over property and the
> unchallenged participation of outsiders in the struggle—ideas found only in
> radicals' fondest pot dreams slowly emerged into realities.[157]

Such transformations were simultaneously political and personal, and the environment in

which they occurred dramatically shaped their development. The spatial dimensions and

social milieu of the communes cannot be separated from the politics of the protest. They

were one and the same. Admittedly, space cannot practice agency, but individuals may create

spaces that radically impact political interaction.

Columbia was by no means the sole site of conflict influenced by the politics of

space. Contrasting political spaces confronted millions of Americans four months after the

Columbia protest as the 1968 Democratic National Convention unfolded on national

television. Viewers saw meticulously dressed politicians deliver prepared speeches inside

Chicago's International Amphitheater, but also witnessed National Guardsmen violently

disrupt the spontaneous form of democracy in the streets. It was precisely the formulaic

democracy of political conventions that New Left activists sought to challenge in the late

1960s, and the contrast between political spaces could not have been more dramatic.

To a great extent, this divide represents the fundamental tension between liberal and

radical politics. At Columbia the conflict centered on the disputed role of the university in

American life. Liberal intellectuals like Lionel Trilling understood the university to be a

marketplace of ideas. Accordingly, intellectual exchange occurred in published texts, seminar

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[156] Ibid., Prolog 3.

[157] Shero, "Blockade and Siege," p. 11.

rooms, and academic conferences. In contrast, Columbia protestors understood the university to be a participatory egalitarian space. Accordingly, abstract intellectualism stood beside—but not above or beyond—activism in defining the role of the university. In this way, the establishment of student communes during the Columbia protest of 1968 represented a political statement; activist space fundamentally reflected activist politics.

The politics of space was not limited to the Cold War race to the moon. Activists struggled to mold the university into a free space that included students in participatory democratic politics. Understanding the environment in which students created their distinctive political culture provides an angle into activism that narrow political analyses cannot provide. Politics did not occur in a vacuum at Columbia, Berkeley, Austin, or the Sorbonne. Students created free spaces where the line between identity and politics blurred. They created a politics of space.

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