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# Kent State and Berkeley: Revolt and Re-appropriation of the Multiversity in the Spring of 1970

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## Voces Novae: Chapman University Historical Review, Vol 2, No 1 (2010)

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By the early seventies, the American university as an institution had been fundamentally altered by the unique social conditions of the postwar period. As a result of the baby boom and increasing prosperity of the nation, colleges, and their respective populations, were growing at an astounding rate. While the effect of an increasingly college educated population benefited to the nation as a whole, the increased numbers of students, coupled with increased funding to the university to conduct military research, had turned the university into a large, impersonal place. This was especially true of the large state schools such as Kent State University in northern Ohio and the University of California, Berkeley, both of which had earned the pejorative nickname of 'multiversity.' Life at the university became increasingly depersonalized, resulting in students becoming mere numbers in the larger system of university education.

During this time period, student life changed drastically in the American university. Gone were the days of the small college with a friendly environment and a bucolic setting, and in its place was established a factory-like institution which had the purpose of simultaneously conducting massive amounts of research and churning out students by the thousands. This atmosphere ultimately led to protests as students, disaffected with the machinelike atmosphere of the emerging 'multiversity,' began to rise up against what they viewed as an increasingly draconian and depersonalized system that failed to reflect how they felt the university should operate. Many students began to view the university as an extension of the problems they saw in American society, and the betrayal that they felt. If the university was not going to initiate a top down reform of itself, then the disaffected students, who were angered by the status quo, would initiate change from below.

By the mid sixties, such issues as the Civil Rights Movement and the escalation of the war in Vietnam began to have a tremendous effect on student activism and how the university was utilized in regards to protest. No longer were students merely protesting on campus issues like tuition hikes or dormitory regulations, but also on issues outside of the confines of academia that they felt their university was inadequately addressing. In fact, protests concerning off-campus issues increased dramatically, from thirty-four percent in the 1964-65 academic year to approximately eighty percent in 1969-70.<sup>[1]</sup> In the minds of many students, however, the university seemed to fall short when it came to addressing many of these issues and was not adequately working towards ameliorating the

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problems that existed outside of the ivory towers of academia. In many cases, the university simply became too complacent in regards to helping solve the injustices that persisted in American society.

This dramatic increase in on-campus protests over off-campus issues was likely a result of two important factors. First, as previously mentioned, the students at the American multiversity had intense feelings of alienation within their own institution.<sup>[2]</sup> The dissolution of the old conception of the college as a small intimate community was replaced with a sprawling mega-campus where students lost touch with faculty and administration. Students on this campus no longer enjoyed the old camaraderie that existed on the campuses of old, but rather suffered from intense feelings of *anomie*. This complimented the dissolution of *in loco parentis*, which allowed students greater freedoms to take part in student activism and protests.

Besides the dwindling feeling of connection to the university itself, the students of this era were beginning to look upon American society, with the university as one of its main institutions, with a high level of skepticism. It is important to note that the generation of students that occupied the universities in the sixties and seventies was the same generation that had grown up in the tranquil fifties. As children during this period, they were taught to believe that American society, with its material abundance and supposed freedoms was the greatest on the Earth. Never mind that blacks in the South were denied such basic freedoms as access to a decent education or the ability to vote or that their Northern brethren fared little better in urban ghettos, or that women, who had only gained the right to vote thirty years earlier suffered disadvantages in the workplace, home, and society in general. Framed in the Cold War dichotomy between free Western Society and the enslaved populations of the communist East, the America that these children saw in the fifties was an idyllic place to grow up where opportunities were endless and their nation represented something special and limitless.<sup>[3]</sup>

The students who attended the multiversity in the late sixties and early seventies had grown up in an age when one learned to obey authority and accept that the concept of one's nation was sacrosanct. Their childhood included the era of McCarthyism, air raid drills, and the threat of a third world war emanating from flashpoints such as Checkpoint Charlie and the placement of missiles in Cuba. Growing up in this environment, the children who would later become the student activists were taught to believe in their nation and all that it had come to symbolize throughout the world.

While the war in Vietnam intensified and American imperialism threatened liberation movements throughout the world, laboratories and research facilities in large state schools conducted military research that contributed to quashing these movements. It appeared that the university was no longer acting as a bastion of intellectualism but rather was colluding with the government and private corporations for lucrative research grants. Thus, students viewed it as their obligation to actively protest this on their campuses. As Clark Kerr, the chancellor of UC Berkeley, stated in a speech at Harvard University in 1963, "the multiversity is a confusing place for the student. He has problems of establishing his identity and sense of security within it." Later, he stated that "some students were beginning to visualize themselves as a lumpen proletariat-or, in more modern terminology, as prisoners in the

campus ghetto; and a few students wanted even then to make the campus into a "fortress" from which society might be attacked."[\[4\]](#)

Kerr's words, which in hindsight appear particularly prescient, foreshadowed the development of the university into a space where students effectively set the agenda as a response to the increasing alienation that they felt with the way business was conducted. If the university became a massive institution centered on research and procuring government contracts, it could symbolize of the very betrayal of the myths on American society that the students were raised to believe. Students, however, could *also* use the university as a place to make statements about foreign wars, race relations, or other problems that plagued society during this period. The reality was that student groups re-appropriated the university in an effort to fight against what they perceived as the wrongs of society. At this time, the voting age was twenty-one years, and thus most students could not simply cast a ballot to voice their opinions; they had to use other channels. Legitimate political outlets were essentially nonexistent, requiring the students to use other means at their disposal, such as marches and walkouts. Berkeley students would eventually 'Reconstitute' the campus, an attempt to reform the curriculum and structure of the university, while the youth at Kent State even went so far as to destroy the Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC) building on campus.

At Kent State, in the fall before the shootings, a political science professor named Barclay D. McMillen wrote that "the university is being used as a vehicle for restructuring the values and institutions of society; it may continue to be so used. Indeed, in this era such may have great value."[\[5\]](#) Like Kerr before him, he was one of the few that realized the deliberate nature of student protests. While many dismissed student activism as the dalliances of college students and viewed walkouts and the occupation of administrative buildings as more of a "Spring Fling," the reality was that these protests were conscious attempts at reforming the university and society.[\[6\]](#)

By the spring of 1970, the conditions that helped contribute to considerable student unrest were in place. At both Kent State and Berkeley, massive numbers of students had begun to feel the disenchanting effects of an unpopular war abroad for which they could be drafted, as well as the strong feelings of alienation on the campus itself. The feelings of frustration were extended beyond the radical groups and reached all segments of the student body. These factors ultimately became the spark that set turbulent unrest and the many protests that occurred throughout the nation into motion.

The protests that erupted were more than the simple student frustrations with authority; they were representative of student anger towards the war, the militarization of their campuses in the forms of military research and the presence of ROTC, and a general alienation from the university and individuals in society who, by this time, had come to view the student activists with extreme suspicion. At Kent State, students stepped up their confrontation with the administration and the National Guard through writings and direct action. At Berkeley, the students attempted to reconstitute the campus by re-appropriating the curriculum to better suit the issues of the day.

At both UC Berkeley and Kent State, in the spring of 1970, students attempted to utilize their universities for the purpose of protesting the escalation of the war and the egregious militarization of their campus. Although violence broke out on the latter campus, the students were successful in appropriating their university to effect change and to fight against what they perceived as odious aspects of war and their society.

### **Political Activism at UC Berkeley Prior to May 1970**

By the mid sixties, the University of California at Berkeley had earned a reputation as a bastion of radicalism and unrest. While schools like Kent State were still years away from heavy political activity, students at Berkeley were beginning to sow the seeds for a nascent culture of political activism that would eventually blossom into the tumultuous university of the late sixties and early seventies. It was in these early years, when the stage for Reconstitution and other protests were set, that the students began to see the university as an institution to make a statement about American society and the war in Vietnam.

Amidst the conformity and *in loco parentis* that prevailed on universities throughout the nation, students at Berkeley began to strike out and demonstrate as early as the late fifties.<sup>[7]</sup> In 1958, at the height of the Cold War and only a few years after the great red scare of Joseph McCarthy, students at Berkeley formed a group known as SLATE, with the purpose of "ending nuclear testing, capital punishment, Cold War rivalries, and other off-campus ills."<sup>[8]</sup> Although the immediate goal was to get more progressive students elected to student government, the student's concerns over larger political and social issues illustrated a particular awareness of off-campus issues, which would gradually become an increasing concern to students.

Two years later, Berkeley students demonstrated at the HUAC (House Committee on Un-American Activities) hearing that was held at city hall in downtown San Francisco. The demonstration occurred in order to protest what the students saw as the last vestiges of the McCarthyism, which had terrorized the country in the fifties. Despite the fact that the protests were peaceful, the San Francisco Police forcefully dispersed the students by spraying them with fire hoses on the steps of city hall. Heavy-handed measures taken by the police escalated the level of hostility, although the actions of the students reflected that of a group familiar with civil disobedience. As *The New York Times* noted, rather than fight back or become aggressive, "the executive committee of the Berkeley Students Committee for Civil Liberties of the University of California stationed monitors throughout the picket line to maintain order."<sup>[9]</sup> One of the less sympathetic onlookers counter-picketed the picketers with a sign that read, "I protest mob rioting by students. Get out and vote."<sup>[10]</sup> Unfortunately for the students and this counter-picketer, the voting age at this time was twenty-one, an age that excluded many of Berkeley's "rioting students."

In the fall of 1964, the character of student activism in the United States was forever changed when students at Berkeley initiated what became known as the Free Speech Movement. The movement began in mid-September

when the University, pressured by the conservative newspaper *The Oakland Tribune* and local right-wing politicians, enforced a draconian dictum that prohibited students from engaging in political demonstrations on the corner of Telegraph and Bancroft, an intersection that had long served as the outlet for political demonstration on campus. On October 1, campus authorities confronted Jack Weinberg, a graduate student in mathematics, while he sat at a table for CORE (Congress on Racial Equality). When he refused to show identification, he was taken by campus police and placed in the back of a patrol car. Other students, angered by Weinberg's arrest, surrounded the car, trapping it in Sproul Plaza and effectively beginning the Free Speech Movement.<sup>[11]</sup>

From an early stage in the movement, the students at Berkeley saw their university as the place where they could dually protest the egregious nature of their university as well the problems of the greater American society. Mario Savio, the Berkeley undergraduate who came to embody the movement, laid out the students frustrations with the university and society as a whole in a speech delivered on the steps of Sproul Hall: "But we're a bunch of raw material[s] that don't mean to have any process upon us, don't mean to be made into any product, don't mean to end up being bought by some clients of the University, be they the government, be they industry, be they organized labor, be they anyone! We're human beings!"<sup>[12]</sup> The Free Speech Movement was the impetus for using the university as a place of protest; if student voices and concerns were ignored or fell on unsympathetic ears outside of the university, then the students would have to look inwardly to their own campus as the place where their grievances would be heard.

As the fall semester carried on so did the Free Speech Movement, which captured the attention of the entire campus. In December, eight hundred students were arrested for a sit-in on campus, which ultimately resulted in many classes being cancelled or greatly reduced in size.<sup>[13]</sup> The protesters were ultimately achieving their goal of appropriating power on the university and forcing the administration to hear their demands. The sheer number of students involved indicated the broad base of support that the movement had on the Berkeley campus. As FSM leader Jack Weinberg noted, "All the student groups, a real cross-section of the students, joined together and opposed the new rules. Our reaction was, 'They may prohibit it, but we're not going to stop doing it.'"<sup>[14]</sup> The movement on the campus, which started as a mere protest against the student's inability to hold political demonstrations, ultimately resulted in the spark that radicalized the Berkeley campus.

Although the Free Speech Movement officially ended in early 1965, the students at Berkeley continued to utilize university space as grounds for protest. Throughout the late sixties, Berkeley students came together to tackle a plethora of issues ranging from civil rights to environmental issues and the war in Vietnam. In the fall of 1967, in a scene reminiscent of the Free Speech Movement three years earlier, seven hundred Berkeley students held a sit in at Sproul Hall on campus to protest the suspension of two students who were penalized for engaging in an anti-draft demonstration the previous October.<sup>[15]</sup> Despite the alienation and angst that the 'multiversity' bred, students banded together to demonstrate and to engage in such acts of protest as sit-ins.

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Ultimately the height of conflict at Berkeley came in the spring of 1969, when Berkeley students, in conjunction with local activists, attempted to turn a piece of undeveloped university land into a "People's Park." Activists occupied the plot of land, which was slated to be turned into a new residence hall for Berkeley students in May 1969. Their goal was to make the park something that was useful not just for privileged Cal students, but something that was beneficial to the community as a whole; the activists planned to plant flowers and cultivate other plants, build an area for children to play, and to transform this private plot of land into public space.<sup>[16]</sup> In this case re-appropriation extended beyond the already established boundaries of the university and into the lands that the university hoped to acquire.

The response by the police and National Guard was tragic: buckshot was fired into the crowd, resulting in 70 wounded activists and 1 fatality.<sup>[17]</sup> Ultimately, the protesters were successful in preventing the space from being developed. However, the confrontation between the activists and the police and National Guard only further exacerbated the already sour relations between the students and authority. By the academic year of 1969-70, students at Cal, felt alienated by the university administration, the militarization of college campuses (from ROTC to police and National Guard to military-oriented research), as well as the American presence in Southeast Asia. These factors would eventually lead a revolt against both university and societal authority in The Reconstitution of the Campus crisis in spring of 1970.

#### **Political Activism at Kent State Prior to May 1970**

Despite the protests that occurred in the spring of 1970 and the subsequent violence, Kent State's existence up until this period was largely unremarkable for an institution of its size. Ensnared in Northern Ohio, a largely rural landscape dotted with industrial towns, eighty-five percent of the student body was from Ohio when protests broke out in the spring of 1970.<sup>[18]</sup> The students at Kent were largely lower-middle to middle class and came primarily from the surrounding area; in effect, they were the children of Nixon's "Silent Majority." While larger multiversities, like Berkeley, were experiencing social unrest and turmoil in the mid 1960s, Kent State was still a sleepy institution of higher learning with no overt political activity. In fact, simply looking at *The Daily Kent Stater*, the campus newspaper, provides a glimpse into the political activism, or lack thereof, of the Kent student body. Most headlines were more concerned with the school's football team or upcoming formals than they were with exposing the student's grievances with American society or foreign policy.<sup>[19]</sup>

In February 1965, a dozen protesters from two antiwar groups, the Young Socialist Alliance and KCEWV (Kent State Committee to End the War in Vietnam), staged a small protest against the gradual escalation of the war in Vietnam. The demonstration, which took place on campus, included only about a dozen students. After only a brief period, a much larger group of pro-war students broke up the protest. They berated and physically attacked the students in a frenzy of violence, during which time the president of the Young Socialist Alliance was actually kicked in the face.<sup>[20]</sup> The violence that was initiated by the pro-war students, who outnumbered the protesters, was

indicative of the mood on campus at this time. In 1965, dissent, especially against the war in Vietnam, was uncommon at Kent State.

The groups that did feel anger and frustration about the war in Vietnam and the American military presence abroad were limited at this time, and had no real outlet to vent their frustrations. At Berkeley, in contrast, the Free Speech Movement that occurred in the fall of 1964 was largely an all-inclusive affair. Due to the fact that the ban on campus political activity that ultimately led to the Free Speech Movement affected the entire student body (or at least all politically minded students), the students at Berkeley made sure that channels and outlets were present for protest. Even more conservative groups such as the College Republicans were willing to lend support because, after all, banning political activity meant banning all activity, not just the more radical groups. This included taking actions such as ensuring that the strip of sidewalk on Telegraph and Bancroft would stay open for protest.

At Kent State, however, the atmosphere was far less conducive to student radicalism and protest, which initially marginalized certain student political groups. An obvious example of this was groups whose views did not conform to the consensus on campus, such as those who were against the war. When protests did in fact occur, most students responded with apathy. One example occurred in the fall of 1965: as troop levels and U.S. aerial bombardment increased, there were a small number of protests, but no real comprehensive dialogue on the campus. One student attempted to remedy this by creating a forum for student debate. As *The Daily Kent Stater* noted, "Lack of debate and recent demonstrations have prompted a Kent political science major to form a student forum on Viet Nam. Senior Neil Scott, 25, Chairman of the forum, is planning an organization meeting next week."[\[21\]](#) This illustrated that outlets for student debate and discourse were largely absent.

By the late 1960s, Kent State, like many other college campuses across the nation, was beginning to experience a somewhat greater degree of on-campus political demonstrations against not only the Vietnam War, but also social problems within the nation. The university began to transform into a place where students would protest issues concerning American society and the university that they found intolerable. One such issue was police violence, especially that which involved racial issues. In the fall of 1968, the Oakland Police Department, notorious for police brutality against black militants, was invited onto the Kent campus to recruit. The event inevitably aroused the indignation of the more radical student groups on campus such as SDS (Students for a Democratic Society) and BUS (Union of Black Students) who utilized the opportunity to stage a protest against the police department. The Kent chapter of SDS had only been formed in the spring of that year, despite active chapters existing on numerous other college campuses.

In order to protest the presence of the Oakland police, these two groups staged a sit-in in one of the main administration buildings on campus. The BUS, staged a walk-out in defiance of the university's acceptance of the police on campus. As one SDS member recalls, "The protest was a sit-in, peaceful, no one was arrested and ultimately the Administration was forced, by a walkout of black students, to drop even disciplinary action. We felt a real victory had been won."[\[22\]](#) Although these two groups' numbers were limited, their actions exposed the



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beginnings of more radical feelings on campus and a greater alienation of the student body from society as a whole and the draconian actions of the university. There were of course more conservative students, one of whom wrote an editorial to the *Stater* proposing the formation of a conservative student organization to "serve as a voice for the growing number of unrepresented conservative students." However, no further action was taken besides the printing of threatening editorials on page two of the student newspaper.[\[23\]](#)

While the students involved viewed the sit-in and subsequent walkout as successes, many students considered the results of the demonstration as less of a victory and more of an example of the lack of efficacy on the part of the students to effectively communicate with the administration. The fact that the students had to sit-in illustrated to many that the channels of communication on campus were still largely closed; many students shared the sentiment of the protestors but felt that there should have been some means by which the students were able to protest the presence of the Oakland police without occupying university buildings. One article in the *The Daily Kent Stater* quoted the vice president of the student body as saying, "I think there are proper channels for student government to register grievances, but I don't think there are any proper channels for students to accomplish legally what the protestors sought to do with their sit-in."[\[24\]](#)

Kent student frustrations with their university culminated in April 1969 when some of the more radical members of the student body marched on the Music and Speech Building, which was to be the scene of hearings that would decide whether or not certain students would be suspended from school as a result of an earlier protest. Following the confrontation, the Kent administration, rather than attempt to open dialogue with the radicals, ultimately revoked the SDS charter and banned the group from campus.[\[25\]](#) Instead of taking the opportunity to come to terms with the student body, the administration failed to create an environment where student voices could be openly heard and instead radicalized many students in the process. A large number of students who would have otherwise been ambivalent to the happenings on campus, now viewed the administration as a faceless bureaucracy that cared little for what the students had to say. Though the campus chapter of SDS was prohibited, it still distributed literature throughout the campus and was openly tolerated, if not supported outright by many students by the fall of 1969.

By this time, the apparatus of student government had even begun to oppose the war and United States policy abroad. In one student Senate meeting, the Senate condemned the war in Vietnam, declaring, "The Student Senate believes the war to be a tragic error which should be ended immediately by the withdrawal of all American troops," and expressed unilateral support for the October 15<sup>th</sup> moratorium to end the war in Vietnam.[\[26\]](#) These newfound anti-war feelings were common for the nation's youth, who had begun to grow alienated by a long war with ambiguous justifications and no end in sight.

The politically dormant campus of the mid sixties had been wiped away by the late 1960s. Although the number of students actually participating in political demonstrations probably precluded it from really being considered a "radical" campus, certain elements of the student body were utilizing the campus by the late 1960s to protest

United States policy both abroad and domestically, as well as offenses committed by the university itself. By the following spring, the United States incursion of Cambodia would be the spark that would eventually blow the powder keg. Student groups would find ways to utilize campus space in order to protest this action abroad, while simultaneously critiquing the university as an institution, despite the administration's draconian measures.

### **Student Reactions to the Militarization of the Campus at Berkeley**

Although the war raging in Southeast Asia became the ostensible cause for student anger and unrest in 1970, there were causes closer to home that ultimately stirred student protest. Student anger and demonstrations centered largely on the fact the university acted contrary to its perceived purpose. Whereas the university was supposed to stand as a bastion of learning and enlightenment, by the early seventies, on-campus institutions such as ROTC and military research conducted under the guise of academic inquiry had, in the eyes of the students, effectively militarized the campus. Both ROTC and military research on campus became the targets of student protests as students viewed them as symbols of university complicity with the war.

In the month prior to the Reconstitution of the campus, students at UC Berkeley engaged in numerous demonstrations against the presence of ROTC on their campus. To many students at Berkeley, an organization such as a ROTC, whose purpose was to train young officers to lead troops in the very war to which they were opposed, seemed anathema to how they believed their university should operate. One article that appeared as early as April 7<sup>th</sup> in the campus newspaper, *The Daily Californian*, described how at one of the upcoming protests, SMC (Student Mobilization Committee) would be making numerous demands of the university, one of which was to "abolish the campus ROTC programs".<sup>[27]</sup> Almost every set of demands by students included the abolishment of the ROTC building, or at least the denial of academic credit to these classes.

Throughout April, while universities nationwide were relatively placid, students at Berkeley continued to demonstrate against ROTC's presence on the campus. One editorial in *The Daily Californian* stated how "a great many students on this campus are not only genuinely opposed to Vietnam and ROTC but also interested in taking effective action."<sup>[28]</sup> An April 28<sup>th</sup> rally that took place included 1500 students who marched on Callaghan Hall, the ROTC building, chanting "U.S. Out of Southeast Asia, ROTC Must Go" and "Ain't Gonna Study War No More."<sup>[29]</sup> Although there was some limited rock throwing, students were, by and large peaceful and orderly.

The anti-ROTC protests of April 1970 indicated a new willingness on the part of the students to confront ROTC. For many students, the war in Vietnam, being fought in the rice paddies and jungles over 12,000 miles away, was often an abstraction that they could do little to change. ROTC, however, was located on their very campus and, thus, was a symbol of the war that had earned their opprobrium long ago. Callaghan Hall, and all other ROTC affiliated buildings, were salient reminders of the conflict abroad and the egregious aspects of the military that existed on their campus. By opposing ROTC presence at Berkeley, students were, indirectly, fighting against the war and attempting to appropriate the aspects of the military apparatus on campus.

When the Reconstitution was finally initiated in the wake of the Cambodian Incursion, the mass demonstrations at Berkeley against not only ROTC, but of all symbols of militarization increased. In fact, the very act of 'Reconstituting the University' as a base for anti-war activities was in line with the students' view of how the university should operate. The university, as an institution of higher learning, was viewed as a place to promote higher ideals than those supposedly embodied by the military and by U.S. imperialistic ambitions. As one piece of student literature that was distributed by a group of history undergraduates at the time stated, "By reconstituting the university to end the war we are at the same time working to preserve, in the long run, those values to which this university can should be committed."[\[30\]](#)

Military research conducted on the campus was a particularly odious aspect of the militarization of the campus. By the late sixties, military research at the Berkeley campus alone had risen to a huge portion of the campus's total federal funding. One piece of student literature stated that in the academic year of 1967/68, \$46 million of the school's total income of \$70 million came from Federal government agencies such as the Air Force, Army, Navy, and the Atomic Energy Commission; in 1969 alone, the University of California system received \$15 million in strictly military contracts. Much in the same vein as ROTC, students believed that the university had no place working with outside contractors to develop weapons and strategies to counter wars of liberation. One pamphlet that was distributed by the Black Student Union (BUS) in May 1970 called for ending "University complicity with all war related activities (ROTC, Livermore, Los Alamos, etc.). Any research facilities should be used for the betterment of the human condition and not its destruction."[\[31\]](#) This was of particular issue because strategies designed for defeating the Viet Cong were being developed in their very own research facilities and labs.

Student views highlighted an interesting facet of the protests that occurred in the spring of 1970. For years at Berkeley, students had held on-campus protests against the war in Vietnam and had time and time again shown their disdain for its many aspects such as the draft, its cost to the American economy, and its tenuous moral grounds. Some of the tactics used, beginning during the Free Speech Movement and lasting throughout the mid and late sixties, were the occupation of administration buildings and grandiloquent speeches made on campus. These protests, while often effective, point out something unique about the spring of 1970. In this fateful year, the students at Berkeley did not only use the campus to protest the war and the militarization of their campus, but also tried to transform the university into a base of anti-war activity and alter the very purpose of the university from *theirs* to *ours*.

Distribution of leaflets and pamphlets, demonstrations, and reconstituted classes exemplified this radical transformation of the university brought on by campus militarization. In some cases, students led these reconstituted classes. A flyer distributed by the Center for War/Peace Studies utilized simulations where students would act out foreign policy decisions to "understand the general dynamics of international conflict and their relationships to the current situation in Indochina."[\[32\]](#) Other classes designed to educate students on United

States foreign policy included "Culture and Social Organization of the Military as it applies to Vietnam and in other ways rapes the peoples of the world" and "American Culture and Compartmentalization: Cognitive Aspects of American Imperialism." [33] In other words, the orthodox methods of pedagogy, where a professor lectured to students on already established truths would no longer suffice; students must now appropriate the classrooms and lecture halls and work with supportive faculty in 'Reconstituting' the curriculum that they were to study.

This Reconstitution of classes, was not merely student initiated, but was also faculty supported. After all, it was Dr. Sheldon Wolin who called the Reconstitution on May 6<sup>th</sup> at the Greek Amphitheater in front of an encouraging crowd of 15,000. Within many of the departments, professors and teaching assistants alike supported the students' decisions and topics of discussion concerning the militarization of the campus and the war in Southeast Asia. Rather than merely fail students for abandoning the traditional classes for the newly reconstituted ones, many professors (but not all) instead designed classes with a curriculum that was more salient to U.S. foreign policy, or would at least allow students to pass the class that they were previously enrolled in. The French teaching assistants committee decided in a 28 to 1 vote in favor of providing students with passing credit for their previous classes as long as their grade was a C- or better prior to the Reconstitution. [34]

Although faculty and other academic staff were generally supportive of the endeavor to protest the militarization of the campus, the administration was not particularly pleased with the transformation of the university. In a letter to the University community on May 10<sup>th</sup>, Chancellor Roger Heyns wrote, "I cannot condone the use of the classroom for political purposes... Nor can I approve taking over for political purposes University facilities and resources that have been given to us as a public trust by the state of California". [35] The university's complicity with military and federal contracts, coupled with pressure from Governor Reagan, undoubtedly contributed to the administration's intransigence.

### **Student Anger at the Militarization of the Kent State Campus**

Lingering feelings of resentment towards the presence of ROTC and military research were stirring on the Kent State campus by the spring of 1970 as well. Kent's massive growth following the Second World War was not merely the result of an increase in students who were able to attend the university, but largely a result of the new reconfiguration of the campus within the context of the growing military industrial complex. Like Berkeley, Kent State was also beginning to receive its fair share of lucrative contracts to conduct military research for the Federal government. In fact, by the mid-sixties Kent State had become the twenty-seventh<sup>†</sup> largest university in the nation and had numerous defense contracts. [36] This huge growth in student population combined with military research would inevitably lead to confrontations and animosity on the part of the students.

One such area of military research was in the field of liquid crystals. In 1965, Kent State created the Liquid Crystal Institute, an on-campus facility that conducted research in this cutting-edge field. Despite the facility's innocuous name, the research conducted there was of a predominantly military nature. Since the mid-sixties, liquid crystals

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had been a key component in some of the U.S. military's ground surveillance and enemy detection equipment. In fact, U.S. Special Operations Forces, operating deep behind enemy lines along the Ho Chi Minh Trail in Laos and Cambodia, had begun to employ electronic enemy detection devices, a large portion of which contained liquid crystals; in 1968 alone, the Liquid Crystal Institute received an \$800,000 grant to conduct research for military products.[\[37\]](#)

The following fall, the campus chapter of SDS distributed a pamphlet titled, "Who Rules Kent?" which aptly outlined the university's complicity with military research in the field of liquid crystal design.[\[38\]](#) According to the pamphlet, "films coated with liquid crystals have been used in destroying revolutionary movements in Latin America, and are being used in Vietnam."[\[39\]](#) As the university received more and more funding from the federal government for research contracts, student antipathy grew along with the research, categorized under the aegis of "scientific research" conducted on their campus. To the students, conducting research for weapons and tools that were used by the military was not "science," but merely complicity.

Students at Kent, like those at Berkeley, began to view their institution as perpetuating the militarization of American society in a way that was totally unacceptable. The depersonalization of education at a large multiversity like Kent was only exacerbated by the fact that the Regents and Board of Trustees were willing to be complicit with the war that many students found offensive and immoral. As early as 1968, Dr. Barclay D. Mcmillen, a political science professor, wrote a letter to the administration in an effort to explain the prevailing mood that he was seeing in his students. In the letter, Mcmillen wrote that in order to avoid conflict with students over the militarization of the campus and other issues the administration needed to "personalize the administration; the hierarchy of the administration must find time and avenues to reach students on an informal basis on neutral ground (not 'the man's office')."[\[40\]](#) The lack of clear channels for students and administration to communicate, which would always be an issue at Kent State, ultimately culminated in violence.

When the protests began in the spring of 1970, the military research conducted was, of course, a major target of student demonstrations. The rhetoric employed by Kent protesters was much the same as that of the students at Berkeley. For students at both schools, the university's tendency to conduct research for the very war to which they were opposed became a major source of frustration. Ken Hammond, a member of the Kent State chapter SDS (banned in the spring of 1969), wrote how by the spring of 1970 he had "come to view the university as a tool of imperialism, yet there I was going to classes and writing papers and all the rest. I began to try and carry out the struggle in my classes, but without much real success."[\[41\]](#)

The internal struggle that Hammond was forced to endure was not uncommon. Many students at Kent and universities throughout the country were forced to sit by while their school conducted research that was bent on destroying the very values and causes that they stood for. In conducting this research the university had effectively lost its credibility in the eyes of the very students that attended; if the university could not provide a semblance of

academic merit, then the students would do everything in their power to try to reshape the institution in a way that was acceptable to them.

Also, like Berkeley, the ROTC building became a main target of the student's ire. This was especially true following the Cambodian Incursion when the presence of ROTC became particularly odious. Two days after President Nixon's televised speech announcing the United States incursion of Cambodia, students at Kent State burned down the ROTC building on their campus. Gayle Gamble, an undergraduate who witnessed the burning stated that "the burning of the ROTC building on Saturday, May 2, was only a symbol of dissent against authority, the military (and it's aspects of: draft procedures, Asian Involvement, the billions of tax-dollars, its wastefulness with its younger generation) and Spiro J. Agnew." [\[42\]](#)

In the eyes of the students, the burning of the ROTC building was more than the mere destruction of university property; to the students present that night, the torching of the building was, in effect, an attempt by students to dismantle this symbol of military authority that stood in the center of their campus. Its presence was a semiotic reminder of the war abroad and the students own sense of powerlessness on the campus. Ken Hammond wrote how "the ROTC action grew out of simply being on the scene and feeling capable of actually doing something." [\[43\]](#) The destruction of the ROTC building was a way for the students to assert power in the face of overwhelming force in the form of United States imperialism, a strict university administration and, eventually, the Ohio National Guard.

Following the torching of the building, the Ohio National Guard was called on to the campus, which ultimately led to the shootings on Monday, May 4<sup>th</sup> that resulted in four deaths. The students, who had just finished eliminating the ROTC building, were now confronted with an actual military force on the campus. As one student described it, "This is a place you love, you go to school, you're learning, you have friends, and then it's a military zone. It's not totally real." [\[44\]](#) By this point, the war had been brought to their campus in more than just a symbolic fashion.

Although the purpose of the Ohio National Guard was to quell student unrest in Kent, it had the opposite effect. Students, who fought police on Friday in the bar district of Kent and burned the ROTC, were appalled that the Governor would send in a military force to the campus. The university began to take on the characteristics of a military camp with armed soldiers and armored personnel carriers. The "militarization of the Kent campus" no longer simply referred only to military research and symbolic institutions such as ROTC, but rather the literal presence of a military force roaming around the campus and its periphery.

In a statement made by undergraduate C. Scott Duncanson to the CKSUV (Commission on Kent State University Violence), he summed up the feelings of the Kent students: "Some yelled for them to just get off our campus-that was a major theme, that it was our campus, not theirs, and that they should get out." [\[45\]](#) Another student, Susan Dinger, stated unequivocally, "I deeply resented the National Guard's presence on campus and the fact that we

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were not permitted to assemble peacefully."[\[46\]](#) The students simply felt that the presence of an outside occupying force had no place on their campus.

Although the rally on the commons on May 4<sup>th</sup> was scheduled days before the ROTC building or the arrival of the National Guard, their presence on campus became the main target of the student's irritation in this demonstration. The student population at Kent State, like the students at Berkeley, became disillusioned and frustrated with the fact that their university allowed the presence of militaristic institutions, and ultimately the actual military, on their campus. To this end, the students were attempting to fight this unjust form of authority through the dissemination of flyers and pamphlets and confrontations. In the end, however, the authority at Kent State was willing to escalate the level of violence to the point of fatality.

### **Reactions to the U.S. Incursion of Cambodia at Kent State**

Most students at Kent State remembered the incursion of Cambodia on the 29<sup>th</sup> of April and the televised announcement one day later as the catalyst that set the pace for the next four days, culminating in the shooting of four students. In the eyes of the students, the promises of "Peace with Honor" seemed to be lost as the United States crossed into Cambodia. In fact, to many students, the escalation of the conflict was not only a contradiction of the previous policies of de-escalation that had been promised, it also violated the American people's sacred trust. By April 30<sup>th</sup>, anti-war slogans were being spray-painted throughout the Kent campus urging "U.S. OUT OF CAMBODIA."[\[47\]](#)

On May 1<sup>st</sup>, the day after President Nixon's televised announcement of the expansion of the war, a group of students from W.H.O.R.E. (World Historians Opposed to Racism and Exploitation) staged a protest in the main quad of the campus to demonstrate their opposition to the incursion of Cambodia. Rather than stage a march or occupy a building, which were seen as trite acts of opposition to United States foreign policy by this time, the students instead opted to make a symbolic action of protest by burying the United States Constitution. Their reason for doing this was that if Nixon could invade a neutral nation without the consent of Congress, then the Constitution was, in effect, a defunct document.

The students conducting this protest harbored strong feelings against the expansion of the war and felt the need to expound on this to their fellow classmates. Tim Butz, an undergraduate and former serviceman who gave a speech, said that "if a nation can launch a war on Cambodia without declaring it, the Constitution as we knew it is really dead."[\[48\]](#) A pamphlet distributed by W.H.O.R.E. stated, "In essence he [Nixon] has usurped power in a fashion not dissimilar to a coup d'état. President Nixon has murdered the Constitution and made a mockery of his claims to represent law and order. In recognition of the deceased we will commit the Constitution to the Earth at 12:00 noon today."[\[49\]](#)

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This act by a group of students, who were by no means "radicals" or "agitators" as the protestors would later be labeled, illustrated student dissatisfaction with not only United States foreign policy, but also the precarious grounds on which the policy was being justified. Escalating a war was one thing, but completely disregarding the Constitution and the neutrality of a nation was a different matter. Like student groups at Berkeley who 'Reconstituted' their university as a base of anti-war activity, many of the students at Kent State were attempting to turn their university space into a place to protest the war in Vietnam and the incursion of Cambodia.[\[50\]](#)

The protests that occurred on the Kent campus and the subsequent feeling felt by the students indicated a sharp change from the attitude of the student body only a short five years earlier. When the left-wing groups such as the Young Socialists and the KCEWV (Kent State Committee to End the War in Vietnam) had marched against the war, they were attacked and beaten by more conservative students; in the mid sixties, Kent was simply not the type of institution where anti-war politics were being displayed. The evolution of Kent State from an apathetic institution to a bastion of dissent within the anti-war movement was indicative of the *zeitgeist* of the late sixties and early seventies. At college campuses throughout the nation, students began to question their society and, more saliently, the role of the university within that society.

By 1970, however, the issue of the war in Vietnam and the conflict's seeming inability to be de-escalated greatly incensed students, especially those who could be drafted and on the frontlines in only a short time. Nixon's televised speech on April 30<sup>th</sup>, in which he declared, in his most bombastic rhetoric that "if, when the chips are down, the world's most powerful nation, the United States of America, acts like a pitiful, helpless giant, the forces of totalitarianism and anarchy will threaten free nations and free institutions throughout the world," only exacerbated the situation.[\[51\]](#) This rhetoric, although undoubtedly intended to please his political base by appearing tough on the communists, inevitably angered students who could be drafted to fight in the widening conflict.

This jingoistic language also angered students at Kent State because it represented a complete change in United States policy. For students, the incursion was simply a further betrayal of their faith in the policymakers in Washington. One undergraduate, Joseph L. Carter, in a statement made to the Commission on Kent State University Violence, said, "President Nixon's announcement of the Cambodian invasion on Thursday evening, April 30, angered me more than any political statement I have heard regarding the Southeast Asian conflict, because of its incendiary tone in reference to winning and to saving national pride."[\[52\]](#) Ken Hammond, one of the leaders of the banned chapter of SDS, wrote only a few months after the protests that "though claiming that this action [the incursion] did not escalate the conflict in Southeast Asia, it clearly represented to the people at Kent State that the Indochina War was not to be phased out, as they had been led to believe."[\[53\]](#)

Although the academic year of 1969-70 had been relatively quiet in regards to student protest, Cambodia became the cause that stirred student anger at Kent State. This was because it essentially stated to the students, and much



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of the country for that matter, that they had been lied to about the intended actions of the U.S. abroad. When the burial of the constitution was finished on Friday, the students called for a rally on the commons on Monday, May 4<sup>th</sup>, to further protest the war in Cambodia and to continue to call for the end of university complicity with the war machine. The rally on the commons, which would ultimately lead to the shooting of four students showed the wide support on campus for ending the war in Vietnam. One student, Michael S. Erwin, stated in an interview only three days after the shooting that one of the main reasons that he was protesting on May 4<sup>th</sup> was because "I don't want any part of President Nixon's policy of Invading Cambodia."[\[54\]](#)

Even though violence eventually erupted, resulting in the deaths of four students, many students at Kent State did not feel that the deaths of their fellow classmates were in vain. In fact, some students believed that the protest at Kent State and at universities throughout the nation ultimately reversed the course of American foreign policy. The student strike that swept the nation and closed hundreds of college campuses, including Kent State and Berkeley, had the effect of pulling the American forces out of Cambodia and derailing Nixon's foray into that neutral nation. As William Arthrell, a Kent undergraduate, stated in an interview years later, "After May 4<sup>th</sup> and the student strike of 1970, Nixon got out of Cambodia in six weeks. So, you know we did make a difference; Lyndon Johnson lost his job, and so did Richard Nixon, because of their immorality."[\[55\]](#)

The protests that occurred on both the Berkeley and Kent campuses showed a new willingness on the part of the students to utilize their university for protest. From the burial of the constitution on Friday, May 1<sup>st</sup> to the noon rally and subsequent shooting on May 4<sup>th</sup>, the students were willing to use their university as a place to protest the incursion of Cambodia and the escalation of the war in Vietnam. Although no 'Reconstitution' took place, the use of the university as a platform to make a political statement against the war was remarkable. Like students at Berkeley, the students at Kent State fought with tenacity against the authorities on campus and off to assert themselves in a society that was becoming more and more alienated from students.

### **Anger at Berkeley: Reactions to the Incursion of Cambodia**

Despite the rhetoric of de-escalation employed by the Nixon Administration, on April 29, 1970, American armored divisions in coordination with South Vietnamese Army units crossed the border into neutral Cambodia. The purposes of this strike, which was referred to as an "incursion" were twofold: to apply pressure on policymakers in Hanoi in order to gain some leverage at the negotiating table in Paris, and to strike at North Vietnamese and Viet Cong sanctuaries to assure the success of the American policy of "Vietnamization." As one Pentagon official stated, the move was "necessary... to save American and other free world lives and to strengthen the Vietnamization Program."[\[56\]](#)

While many decision makers in the White House and Pentagon viewed this as a strategic gamble to ultimately strike a blow at the communists, the incursion itself only exacerbated the already latent anti-war feelings in the United States. Many students had begrudgingly believed the Nixon administration would keep their campaign

promises to bring "Peace with Honor" to the war in Southeast Asia. From the point of view of the students, this meant an end to the war that they had long seen as immoral. All of this changed with the incursion, and any remaining faith in Washington was lost. This was especially true in the universities where protests erupted almost immediately. Demonstrations at Berkeley would ultimately lead to the Reconstitution of the campus in early May. Students sought to alter the role of their university from a complacent, and at times complicit institution with the Military Industrial Complex, to a base for anti-war activity. This Reconstitution of the Campus, which would last well beyond the nationwide student strike and into the summer, was an attempt by the students to remold their institution into one that better reflected their values and beliefs.

The Reconstitution began on May 6<sup>th</sup> when political science professor Sheldon Wolin stepped in front of a crowd of 15,000 at the Greek Theater on campus and announced that "this campus is on strike to reconstitute the university as a center for organizing against the war in Southeast Asia."[\[57\]](#) A student pamphlet distributed two days later helped elucidate the plans of the Reconstitution by explaining, "We do not seek simply to shut down the University, but to OPEN IT UP as an instrument to fight the militarisms of U.S. institutions."[\[58\]](#) Rather than merely close for the remainder of the academic term, students and faculty realized that their efforts were better spent trying to reform policymaking and the war abroad. The university was the only true platform for their message to be heard and in order to broadcast this, the instruments of the multiversity had to be re-appropriated; this included the restructuring of curriculum and the demand for a change from the 'Business as Usual' policy of university complicity with the military industrial complex that was occurring.

In understanding the act of Reconstitution at Berkeley, one must invariably look at the larger picture of student activism of the time. At major state schools like Berkeley and Kent State, students were beginning to look at their university with increasing skepticism. While the university supposedly stood for enlightenment and learning, students, by the late sixties and seventies, were looking at the institution as more of a machine whose purpose was to produce middle class drones to fill a function in society. Students saw their course work and academic requirements as constricting, without any real relevance to the war abroad or the social issues at home. One student article that was published in the school newspaper *The Daily Californian* stated that "A great university, well constituted, will stand dedicated not only to the pursuit of academic virtuosity, but also towards those humane and humanistic goals which should have been its own from the outset."[\[59\]](#) Education and knowledge were viewed not as esoteric facts, but rather as the practical application of knowledge to existing social problems.

Thus, from the beginning of the Reconstitution, one of the central goals in transforming the university was to reform of the curriculum to provide more salient classes for the students. In lieu of the traditional courses there were student-led seminars that dealt directly with issues that were most relevant to the students such as the war and the iniquitous structure of American society. Classes with titles such as "American Culture and Compartmentalization: Cognitive Aspects of American Imperialism" and "The Anthropology of Contemporary America" were offered to educate students about issues that were occurring during this period and ways in which students could combat these problems.[\[60\]](#)

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The restructuring of curriculum was crucial because it illustrated a willingness on the part of students and faculty to come together with the common goal of opposing the war and, more specifically, the recent escalation of the war into Cambodia. In fact, the Reconstitution itself was initiated by a professor who, in accordance with student wishes, set the plans into motion to alter the university. Support from the administration was virtually nonexistent; administration officials maintained surveillance on strike activities and put pressure on the faculty to keep their students and other employees from Reconstitution activities.<sup>[61]</sup> Despite this, students and faculty carried out the adapted curriculum with great success. This was one of the main reasons that, rather than close down like many other institutions of higher education, Berkeley continued classes well into June.

What is interesting about the lack of support from the administration lies in the history of education at UC Berkeley. From the beginning of the Reconstitution itself, the administration had stated that they were opposed to granting credit to reconstituted classes. The administration believed that the University of California system had a responsibility to the people of the state of California and that providing college credit for classes for "taking a political stand" would be shirking their duties as educators. An article from *The Daily Californian* told a different story about Berkeley's policy of giving credit to students for political reasons. Following the attack on Pearl Harbor in December 1941, the University of California allowed full credit to students who enlisted in the armed services, even though they did not finish their coursework or take final exams.<sup>[62]</sup> Students a generation later demanded the same consideration, believing firmly that they too were performing a patriotic duty.

The fact that the students in 1970 had to fight for recognition of their reconstituted classes as legitimate while the students of the previous generation were able to receive credit seemed to be an unfair policy by the administration. It illustrated that the university was not against the taking of political stands in education, simply taking *certain* stands. In fact, the students who took part in the Reconstitution viewed their actions as more beneficial to education. Rather than abandon the university they stayed throughout the summer and transformed their classes to deal with the most pressing issues.

Aside from the revised subject matter, the Reconstitution targeted the actual incursion itself and the grounds on which it was justified. Like students at Kent State, the students at Berkeley took issue with the tenuous constitutional grounds on which escalation was conducted. To many students, the invasion of a neutral nation without the consent of either house of Congress seemed to be a flagrant violation of the Constitution and one more example of President Nixon's attempts to create some form of imperial presidency. In a pamphlet that was published and distributed in May 1970, students lambasted the decision-makers in Washington, stating, "If the decision making process leading to Cambodia is as reported, then we are in a constitutional crisis. HAS THE MILITARY COME TO POWER IN WASHINGTON?"<sup>[63]</sup> This fear of militarism becoming institutionalized within the power structure of Washington was a persistent fear among many students during the Reconstitution because it

did not simply represent the extension of the war in Vietnam, but also the growing influence of the military in all aspects of policy making.

By this time, entirely reconstituted departments voiced complaints about the war. The anthropology department, which was one of the earliest departments to completely reconstitute, stated in a declaration on May 11<sup>th</sup> that the department "renews its declaration of opposition to the immorality, folly, and unconstitutionality of the extension of the war into Cambodia." In fact, this department, like many others, excused its students from prior coursework stating that "for the duration of legitimate protest, students absenting themselves from formal instructions for reasons of conscience will not be penalized." [64] The department's tolerance represented the widespread support that the Reconstitution received throughout the Berkeley campus.

The unconstitutionality and immorality of the incursion became the center of student protests. It seemed that the discrepancy between what was being said by the White House, and what was occurring in Southeast Asia, became a main source of the students' ire. In a sense, they had been lied to, and were now venting their frustration with the abhorrent actions that had been authorized by the White House. [65] Undoubtedly, the war, which was unpopular to begin with, began to be seen as a war without end. One writer for *The Daily Californian* discussed the seemingly perennial nature of the conflict in an article, stating that "the decision to mount a full-scale attack on North Vietnamese and Viet Cong positions in Cambodia, by contrast, has made Cambodia into a permanent battlefield." [66] The students, who had heard promises of "Peace with Honor," now saw the U.S. military and decision-makers in Washington behaving in a wholly dishonorable way. The escalation meant continued conflict, something which most young men who were eligible for the draft feared.

In some cases, the students were even willing to strike out against symbols of the war that were closer to home, such as military installations. These installations were viewed in the same light as the ROTC building, as symbols of U.S. militarism. One example of this was the picketing of an Oakland induction center. A pamphlet that was distributed on May 20<sup>th</sup> stated, "It's time for an active demonstration of mass opposition to the Invasion of Cambodia, the intervention into Laos, [and] the endless war in Southeast Asia. We must show now our vocal and physical determination to end the war, we must move beyond the talking stage." [67]

The Reconstitution lasted through May and into June, and became an example of students restructuring the university space to conform to their beliefs and values. The catalyst for this massive wave of protests was the incursion of Cambodia, which, to students at Berkeley and other universities, symbolized American aggression abroad. Like the students at Kent State, those at Berkeley tried to appropriate the tools of higher education to meet their own demands and to better reflect the needs required to combat the war and other social issues in the United States during time.

#### **Anti-Draft Sentiment at Both Institutions**

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Aside from the escalation of the war in Southeast Asia and the militarization of the multiversity, student protests at both institutions focused largely on a matter deemed incredibly salient: the draft. Throughout the sixties, the military draft had been an issue that had captured the attention of young men between the ages of nineteen and twenty-six. Since 1948, the Federal government had kept a peacetime draft in order to ensure an adequate supply of manpower in the event of armed conflict. While many students enjoyed deferments because of their academic commitments, they could lose this by graduating, dropping out, or flunking, placing enormous pressure on the youth of the nation.

The possibility of conscription into an unpopular war also brought this generation into conflict with their parents and their respective values. Many students in the late sixties and early seventies had been told by the older generation that service to one's country was the ultimate act of sacrifice. Only a quarter century earlier, their parents helped defeat the forces of totalitarianism in the forms of Fascist Germany and Italy, and Imperial Japan. The new generation of students, however, looked out at the world from the safety of the multiversity with a sense of uneasiness that came with the betrayal by society that they felt. In their case, the war in which they would be forced to fight was less about vanquishing some evil that threatened freedom everywhere and more an effort to establish American hegemony and subdue the seemingly abstract threat of communism.

In December of 1969, the draft was altered when the Select Service System, under the advice of President Nixon, converted to a lottery system.<sup>[68]</sup> The effects of this switch were felt immediately throughout the nation. Millions of students who were eligible decried the completely and totally dehumanizing process of the draft, which may or may not have resulted in them being called up to serve in the military based on the mere selection of one's birthday. While appalled, students in the university had by this time become very familiar with having their identity boiled down to a number.

Anti-draft sentiment at Kent State developed in the late sixties in response to the growing resentment towards the Vietnam War. Many students from Kent State came from rural and blue-collar areas of Ohio that were disproportionately affected by the war and the draft. These students, many of whom were first generation college students, believed that it was their obligation to fight against the draft. One group on campus that was notorious for its anti-draft sentiment and writings was the Kent SDS. Despite the fact that SDS was outlawed in the spring of 1969, it continued to educate the Kent State student body about the egregious aspects of the draft. In the pamphlet "Who Rules Kent?," released in the fall of 1969, members of SDS complained of various aspects of American society including "overt bigotry and racism, the Vietnamese War, and the draft."<sup>[69]</sup> Later in this pamphlet the students went on to lament the "increasing intrusion of an artificial 'plastic' culture" into the university." In the minds of many of the students the draft simply became one more symbol of an overly profligate American society bent on the procurement of material wealth rather than addressing the needs of its citizens.

The discriminatory aspect of the draft incensed many students at Berkeley due to the fact that student deferments disproportionately hurt lower income young people who could not afford to go to a university. One flyer

distributed at the height of the Reconstitution of the campus stated, "The classification, II-S, extended to the middle class is discriminatory." In fact, anti-draft resistance was widespread at Berkeley, with thousands of students coming out to demonstrate against the act of conscription. One example of this opposition was led by the Berkeley Peace Brigade collected draft cards to "Be sent to President Nixon, either directly or through a sympathetic congressman."[\[70\]](#)

Opposition was not merely limited to the young male students vulnerable to the draft; their female counterparts took part as well. Like the Reconstitution itself, women played a crucial part in fighting against the draft and utilizing the university to protest the unfair nature of the draft itself. The Berkeley Peace Brigade, the same organization that was collecting draft cards, urged its female members to take part in the struggle against the draft as well. One piece of student literature from the period instructed female members and other students to "substitute draft cards for men who have already gotten rid of theirs."[\[71\]](#) By doing this, women could effectively render the draft card system useless and support their fellow male activists who were subject to the draft.

These acts of protest against the draft visibly illustrated the student's resentment against the authority of the university and the selective service system. In the minds of the students, both the draft and the multiversity had the same dehumanizing effect of devaluing the student as an individual and effectively assigning them a number. The impersonality that this bred irritated the students and forced them to revolt and protest these intolerable institutions that had, in their minds, betrayed society. To the students, the multiversity had grown too large and impersonal to effectively educate students and was seen as a machine to churn out middle class workers, insulated from the issues that afflicted society. The draft, in much the same fashion as a machine, was stealing men in the prime of their lives to go off and take part in a war that stood contrary to the foundational principles of liberty and freedom of American society.

### **Aftermath**

By the end of the 1969-70 academic year, protests throughout the nation forced hundreds of college campuses throughout the nation to close down. Not only at Kent State, but at numerous colleges throughout the nation, students took action against the administration and burned down ROTC and other administration buildings. Many scholars point to this spring of 1970 as the apex of the student movement; never again would students in the United States revolt against authority in such large numbers and in such a cohesive fashion. The cause of the protests was not decentralized, but rather a nationwide feeling of alienation on the part of the students. To be a student at this time meant being an outsider, a pariah of a system that acted completely contrary to what most students believed in.

At Kent State, the killing of four students at the hands of the Ohio National Guard became the ultimate reason for the university's closure. In the wake of the killings, the students were sent home and allowed to finish the term via

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correspondence. Despite the premature end of the academic year, tensions between the students and the surrounding community were still incredibly high. In one education class, the final was to sit in on a high school class and observe the pedagogical methods of the instructor to learn which strategies were successful and which were not. While a seemingly banal exercise, the professor attached a note to the instructions stating that "for those in Portage County [where Kent State is located], we are not sure that it is a good idea for you to actually visit the schools." Later in the note the professor, Dr. John Ohles, wrote that "we think and hope that those some distance from the campus will find understanding from school people. Close to the campus this may not be true."[\[72\]](#)

The protests and subsequent shootings only exacerbated the tenuous "town/gown" relations that had existed. In this letter from Dr. Ohles, we see the intransigent nature of the townspeople and Middle Class America who viewed the students as nothing more than radicals bent on the destruction of the campuses and American society as a whole, rather than students frustrated by what they perceived as a society that had betrayed its people. By the early seventies the rest of the nation viewed the students revolting in the universities across the country as outsiders. This level of "otherness" was intensified by the response of the much of the nation after the shootings at Kent State, which much of the middle class blamed on the students. In fact, in the aftermath of the shootings, twenty five students were put on trial, known subsequently as the "Kent 25."[\[73\]](#)

What occurred at Kent State was more than just the killing of four students. Although traditional historiography of this event shows the students as merely victims, the reality is that they were not simply casualties; the students at Kent State in the days leading up the shooting had attempted to use the university as a vehicle to express their own desires and beliefs as to how a university and society should operate. In fact, students throughout the nation realized what was occurring at Kent State reflected student feelings everywhere. Even activists at Berkeley saw the students at Kent as their coequals and counterparts. One piece of activist literature stated how "if students here [Kent State] are successful with nonviolent action, then it will likely spread easily to other Midwestern campuses. Students will no longer have to look to Berkeley and other large universities to learn nonviolent revolution. Another park will have bloomed."[\[74\]](#) There was a sense of oneness that swept through hundreds of multiversities across the nation.

Students at Berkeley, unlike the rest of the University of California system, and much of the country for that matter, continued the Reconstitution and the re-appropriation of the university. This act was a way for the students at Berkeley to try to reshape the university to better reflect their own ideals and to try and return to the university of old. Classes continued to be reshaped to deal with the issues of the war, with the students' unrelenting demands for a reformation of society and the university.

Throughout late June, the Reconstitution continued in earnest. Even though many students had returned home, thousands were still on campus protesting the war and the militarization of their university. One article from the campus newspaper was as well; *The Daily Californian*, stated on June 30<sup>th</sup> that "Many campus strike and

reconstitution activities organized last quarter are continuing during the summer session." [75] This article indicated that not only were the strikers and those taking direct action in the Reconstitution still active on campus, but also the campus newspaper. Many who remained on campus began to view the Reconstitution activities as simply commonplace for campus life. Reconstitution activities by this time even targeted administration officials and what they perceived as breaches of their own conduct. One article in *The Daily Californian* from late June covered how one UC Regent who owned an oil company used a UC holding company to avoid \$800,000 in state and federal taxes. [76]

Although the Reconstitution would eventually peter out in the late summer, before the start of the fall term, the actions of the students were revolutionary. Never before had students attempted to take over the university to reflect their own views and beliefs and in turn repudiate those of society. Battling the dominant societal paradigm, the Berkeley students attempted a bottom up reformation of the university and society as a whole. What started as protests over the ROTC presence on campus and the American incursion of Cambodia morphed into a statement on the failings of the university and American society that failed to live up to the standards that the students had set.

For the students at Berkeley, Reconstitution was a remarkably progressive action. At the height of the Reconstitution in early June, an article appeared in *Life* magazine by the author Joan Didion, a Berkeley graduate from the class of 1956 who contrasted her idyllic experience with that of the current situation there. In the article, titled "A Generation not for Barricades," she wrote that "to think of Berkeley as it was in the 1950s is not to think of barricades and reconstituted classes. 'Reconstitution' would have sounded like newspeak, and barricades are never personal." The atmosphere on the campuses had changed completely, from the placid campus where young men would ask coeds to a football game or a formal, to a place where the national guard and campus security monitored students and patrolled the quads. In concluding her article, Didion made an interesting note about students from her era and what their hopes were following their time at Berkeley, indicating a change from the students of old, and the ones trying to reform society through the university. She wrote, "We would make some money and live on a ranch. We would survive outside of history in a kind of *idée fixe* referred to always, during the years I spent at Berkeley's some-little-town-with-a-decent-beach." [77]

What occurred on college campuses throughout the nation in the spring of 1970 was unlike anything that had occurred in the United States before. Students were taking a stand on a number of issues ranging from the draft to the escalation of the war into Cambodia to the impersonality of their multiversity. These attempts to re-appropriate the university to the ideal of old and to make a statement about the egregious aspects of the war and American society represented the unadulterated anger those students felt during this period. Outside of the multiversity was a society that, by many students' standards, had failed them, as had their educational institutions. At both Kent State and Berkeley, the university ceased to be a place run by a faceless administration and now became a platform to voice student discontent.



By the fall of 1970, student protests had reached their nadir. Never again would American students strike out at authority or attempt to re-appropriate the university in such a manner. The fact that students throughout the nation, regardless of institution, class, race, or gender were attempting to alter the conditions in the university is indicative of the period. Students at Kent State and Berkeley, two seemingly divergent institutions, were protesting and attempting to re-appropriate their universities in much the same manner. In both cases, students tried to utilize the university to make a statement on the war and the state of a society that could be complacent while institutions of higher learning conducted research for the military and stood by complacently while a war escalated overseas. In this sense, the students were largely successful because in many cases they were able to re-appropriate the university to reflect their values.

By this period, the concept of being a student was a unifying identity that transcended all boundaries. The notion of a compartmentalized student identity, with elite radicals from the ivory towers of Berkeley and Columbia and a complacent population of students from lower end state schools like Kent State, had ceased to exist. All lines had been abolished, with students from institutions throughout the nation radically changing the campus dynamic to reflect their feelings of apprehension about the war, American society, and the role of the university. Re-appropriation was not an impromptu spring carnival, but rather the deliberate attempts by students to take the one last vestige of society that they felt was theirs-the university-and transform it back to the institution that they had previously known. It was as if to say, "You can control Congress, the White House, the press, and all other major aspects of the society, but you cannot take our university." In a sense, the university became the last stand for a disaffected youth who had been at odds with the America in which they had grown up. Although the re-appropriation of the universities of Kent State and Berkeley were ephemeral phenomenon, they showed the real power of the student movement during this period.

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[1]Kenneth Kenniston and Michael Lerner, "Campus Characteristics and Campus Unrest" *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 395 (May 1971): 39.

[2]The term 'multiversity' was made popular by Clark Kerr, the Chancellor of UC Berkeley from 1958-67, when he made this the subject of the 1963 Godkin lecture at Harvard University. In this speech, which was later turned into a work titled *The Uses of the University*, Kerr expounded on the changing nature of the large research-oriented university. With its multiple colleges and research objectives, the large state school had effectively morphed from a university, to a multiversity whose purpose extended beyond simply teaching undergraduates to an institution dedicated to conducting research for both the government and private sectors.

[3]The baby boomers that were born immediately after the Second World War were the first generation to be brought up on television. American popular culture in the form of television and film were a crucial aspect in the socialization and the installation of norms for children. It was here that many kids would develop their first conception of what American society was. They were raised on and taught by television shows such as *Father Knows Best* with it's overt themes of patriarchy and family, *Leave it to Beaver* with the portrayal of men and women

in rigid social roles, and westerns like *The Lone Ranger* that framed conflict in good and evil or black and white, a perfect metaphor for Cold War politics.

[4]Clark Kerr, *The Uses of the University* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1963), p.42.

[5]"The Student and the University: A Perspective in Change," Barclay D. McMillen, 8 September 1969, Box 131, Folder 10, May 4 Collection, Kent State University.

[6]While many outside of the university did in fact view the protests and various forms of student activism as harmless, a large segment of the population viewed the students as incredibly destructive. After the shooting at Kent State, the universities' administration office was flooded with letters and telegrams saying that the Ohio National Guard should have killed more students. In fact, in the days after the shooting, the mail office at Kent State was flooded with letters and telegrams from an unsympathetic public who, among other things, described the students as "brown-shirts" and "communists." The irony of these accusations was likely lost on the accusers.

[7]*In Loco Parentis*, which translates to "in the place of the parents," was the prevailing policy in place at American universities until the mid sixties. The basic premise of *In Loco Parentis* was that the university would act as the main authority presiding over student's lives in lieu of the parents while students were at the university. More than simply dictating curriculum or enforcing the law, the university was allowed to establish norms and guidelines for the intimate details of students' lives, ranging from personal hygiene to interactions with the opposite sex. Inherent in this policy of centralized authority was a lack of student input in the decision making process. If the university wasn't willing to allow students to make their own decisions regarding fraternizing with the opposite gender or certain dormitory regulations, then they would also surely limit the students input in decisions that affected the campus. Thus, the re-appropriation in the spring of 1970 was largely an effort to fight against the remnants of this stringent policy.

[8]David Burner, *Making Peace with the Sixties* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996), p. 138.

[9]"Pickets Orderly at Coast Hearing," *New York Times*, May 15, 1960.

[10]*Ibid.*

[11]Todd Gitlin, *The Sixties: Years of Hope, Days of Rage* (New York: Bantam Books, 1987), p. 164.

[12]*Free Speech Movement Archives*, <http://www.lib.berkeley.edu/MRC/saviotranscript.html>, 9 February 2010.

[13]"801 UC Arrests," *The Los Angeles Times*, December 4, 1964.

[14]Joan and Robert K. Morrison, *From Camelot to Kent State: The Sixties in the Words of those Who Lived It* (New York: Times Books, 1987), p.226.

[15]"700 Hold 'Mill-In' Protest After Berkeley Suspensions," *New York Times*, November 30, 1967.

[16]Mark Edelman Boren, *Student Resistance: A History of the Unruly Subject* (New York: Routledge Press, 2001), p. 181.

[17]"Copter Breaks Up Berkeley Crowd," *New York Times*, May 21, 1969.

[18]*Akron Beacon Journal*, May 24, 1970.

[19]Kent State University's student newspaper *The Daily Kent Stater* was a notoriously apathetic piece of student literature. As previously mentioned, most articles in the paper were focused on such outings as upcoming formals or events concerning Greek life. Looking at the paper from the mid sixties, one can clearly see the conservative nature of the institution and the views of its students, who seemed unaffected by the already raging Civil Rights Movement or the burgeoning conflict in Vietnam.

[20]*The Daily Kent Stater*, Feb. 17, 1965.

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- [21] *The Daily Kent Stater*, October 29, 1965.
- [22] Ken Hammond, "History Lesson: Kent State, a Participant's Memoir, 1974," Box 21, Folder 13, May 4 Collection, Kent State University.
- [23] Roger W. Norris, "How Can We Stop SDS?" *The Daily Kent Stater*, November 19, 1968.
- [24] Myron Kukla, "The Channels of Student Representation," *The Daily Kent Stater*, November 19 1968.
- [25] *Ibid*, 4.
- [26] Kent State University Student Senate, Bill F-69-001, 1969, Box 131, Folder 13, May 4 Collection, Kent State University.
- [27] *The Daily Californian*, April 7, 1970.
- [28] *The Daily Californian*, April 23, 1970.
- [29] *The Daily Californian*, April 29, 1970.
- [30] "No Business as Usual: Reconstitute," May 10, 1970. Distributed by the History Community, Reconstitution of the Campus anti-war Handbill Collection, Bancroft Library, University of California at Berkeley.
- [31] "On University Neutrality," May 1970, distributed by the Philosophy Publication Committee; Kenneth J. Heineman, *Campus Wars: the Peace Movement at American State Universities in the Vietnam War Era* ( New York: New York University Press, 1993), p. 13; "Black Students Unite!" May 8, 1970, Distributed by Black Student Union, Reconstitution of the Campus anti-war Handbill Collection, Bancroft Library, University of California at Berkeley.
- [32] "Star Power," May 1970, Distributed by the Center for War/Peace Studies, Reconstitution of the Campus Anti-War Handbill Collection, Bancroft Library, University of California at Berkeley.
- [33] "The Berkeley Liberation Farm," May 14, 1970, Reconstitution of the Campus Anti-War Handbill Collection, Bancroft Library, University of California at Berkeley.
- [34] "French Teaching Assistants Meeting," May 11, 1970, Reconstitution of the Campus Anti-War Handbill Collection, Bancroft Library, University of California at Berkeley.
- [35] "Letter to the University Community," May 10, 1970, from the Office of Chancellor Heyns, Reconstitution of the Campus Anti-War Handbill Collection, Bancroft Library, University of California at Berkeley.
- [36] Kenneth J. Heineman, *Campus Wars: The Peace Movement at American State Universities* (New York: New York University Press, 1993), p. 37.
- [37] *Ibid*.
- [38] By this time, the campus chapter of SDS had been banned as a result of protests staged in April of 1969. The protests were deemed by the administration to be a threat to the stability and well being of the campus. Although officially banned, the Kent chapter of SDS still continued its process of surreptitious distribution of pamphlets and protest literature to combat the perceived militarization of the campus and ROTC, as well as the Incursion of Cambodia in April/May 1970.
- [39] "Who Rules Kent?" Autumn 1969, Box 107, Folder 3, May 4 Collection, Kent State University.
- [40] Letter from Barclay D. McMillen to President Robert I. White, 5 December 1968. Box 131, Folder 1, May 4 Collection, Kent State University.
- [41] "A History Lesson: Kent State, a Participant's Memoir," Ken Hammond, March 1974, Box 21, Folder 13, May 4 Collection, Kent State University.

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- [42] Statement from Gayle M. Gamble to the CKSUV (Commission on Kent State University Violence), June 8, 1970, Box 193, Folder 34, May 4 Collection, Kent State University.
- [43] Ken Hammond, "Kent State: 1-4 May 1970", June 1970, Box 21, Folder 14, May 4 Collection, Kent State University.
- [44] May 4 Collection, <http://speccoll.library.kent.edu>, 24 February 2010.
- [45] Statement by C. Scott Duncanson to CKSUV (Commission on Kent State University Violence), May 28, 1970, Box 193, Folder 26, May 4 Collection, Kent State University.
- [46] Statement by Susan Dingler to CKSUV (Commission on Kent State University Violence), May 26, 1970, Box 193, Folder 23, May 4 Collection, Kent State University.
- [47] "A Political Analysis of May 1-4 at Kent State," by Ken Hammond Fall 1970, Box 21, Folder 14, May 4 Collection, Kent State University.
- [48] Tim Butz, quoted in James A. Michener, *Kent State: What Happened and Why?* (New York: Random House, 1971), p. 13.
- [49] "Help us...Bury the Constitution of the United States," May 1, 1970, distributed by W.H.O.R.E. (World Historians Opposed to Racism and Exploitation), Box 107, Folder 16, May 4 Collection, Kent State University.
- [50] The speech took place near the Liberty Bell, a small bell that was situated in the middle of the main quad only a few hundred yards away from where the shooting would occur three days later. Although the burial of the constitution had all of the trappings of a prank, it had a reasonably large audience in attendance to watch and hear members of W.H.O.R.E. speak on the incursion. In fact, even James A. Michener's famous work *Kent State: What Happened and Why*, a work notorious for its unsympathetic view of the students, places the number of people in attendance at three hundred. This, number, while not exorbitantly high, suggests wide spread support for the protests that occurred. As mentioned, the fact that three hundred students would show up to support and listen reflected a drastic change from the protests of 1965.
- [51] Richard M. Nixon, quoted in Stephen A. Ambrose, *Nixon: the Triumph of a Politician 1962-1972* ( New York: Simon & Schuster, 1989), p. 345.
- [52] Statement made by Joseph L. Carter to CKSUV, May 17, 1970, Box 193, Folder 15, May 4 Collection, Kent State University.
- [53] "A Political Analysis of May 1-4 at Kent State," by Ken Hammond Fall 1970, Box 21, Folder 14, May 4 Collection, Kent State University.
- [54] Statement made by Michael S. Erwin to the CKSUV, May 7, 1970, Box 193, Folder 29, May 4 Collection, Kent State University.
- [55] Interview with William Arthrell, *Kent State Shootings Oral History Collection*, <http://speccoll.library.kent.edu>, March 3, 2010.
- [56] "Escalation in Indochina," *New York Times*, April 30 1970.
- [57] "Thousands Put Books Aside to Oppose Indochina," *Los Angeles Times*, May 25, 1970.
- [58] "Strike Goals," May 8, 1970, Reconstitution of the Campus anti-war Handbill Collection, Bancroft Library, University of California at Berkeley.
- [59] *The Daily Californian*, May 29, 1970.
- [60] "The Berkeley Liberation Farm," May 14, 1970, Reconstitution of the Campus, Reconstitution of the Campus anti-war Handbill Collection, Bancroft Library, University of California at Berkeley.

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- [61] David S. Kemnitzer, "Surrender at Berkeley," *Change* Vol. 3 No. 2 (Mar-Apr. 1971): 21, <http://jstor.org>.
- [62] *The Daily Californian*, June 30 1970.
- [63] "The Decision to Invade Cambodia," May 1970, Reconstitution of the Campus, Reconstitution of the Campus anti-war Handbill Collection, Bancroft Library, University of California at Berkeley.
- [64] "Declaration of the Anthropology Department Faculty," May 11, 1970, Reconstitution of the Campus, Reconstitution of the Campus anti-war Handbill Collection, Bancroft Library, University of California at Berkeley.
- [65] It should be noted that the incursion was not unanimously supported in the White House itself. The Secretaries of Defense and State, Melvin Laird and William Rogers, were opposed to the escalation of the conflict into neutral Cambodia.
- [66] *The Daily Californian*, May 6, 1970.
- [67] "Mass Picket! Oakland Induction Center," May 20, 1970, Reconstitution of the Campus, Reconstitution of the Campus anti-war Handbill Collection, Bancroft Library, University of California at Berkeley.
- [68] Although many in the Nixon Administration advocated an All Volunteer Army, the lottery system was chosen as an expedient way of quickly raising large numbers of men that could be deployed to the war in Vietnam in order to put pressure on Hanoi.
- [69] "Who Rules Kent?" Autumn 1969, Box 107, Folder 3, May 4 Collection, Kent State University.
- [70] "Why Your Draft Card?," May 1970, distributed by Berkeley Peace Brigade, Reconstitution of the Campus anti-war Handbill Collection, Bancroft Library, University of California at Berkeley; "Your Draft Card," May 1970, distributed by the Berkeley Peace Brigade, Reconstitution of the Campus anti-war Handbill Collection, Bancroft Library, University of California at Berkeley.
- [71] "What Women Can do about the War?" May 12, 1970, distributed by Berkeley Peace Brigade, Reconstitution of the Campus anti-war Handbill Collection, Bancroft Library, University of California at Berkeley.
- [72] Letter from Dr. John Ohles to Education 342 Class, May 12, 1970, Box 171, Folder 2, May 4<sup>th</sup> Collection, Kent State University.
- [73] Twenty four students and one faculty member were brought up on charges for actions that occurred throughout the weekend, including the burning of the ROTC building on early Saturday morning. Although charges were dropped on twenty one of the students and one was acquitted, two students did in fact plead guilty with one more actually being convicted. While it was in fact Kent State students that helped burn down the ROTC building, the trial was largely a show by the state to appear tough on student radicals. Many point to the fact that Governor Rhodes, the man who ordered the guardsmen onto campus, was up for re-election that fall.
- [74] *Gentle Strength: A Revolutionary Newsletter of Nonviolence*, Vol. III, No. 1 May 1970, Box 107, Folder 15, May 4<sup>th</sup> Collection, Kent State University.
- [75] *The Daily Californian*, June 30, 1970.
- [76] *Ibid.*
- [77] Joan Didion, "A Generation not for Barricades," *Life*, June 1970, 26.