

Recommendations for Preventing and Policing Celebratory Disturbances in College  
Communities

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Recommendations for Preventing and Policing Celebratory Disturbances in College  
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Gregory M. Brauser

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## **Abstract**

### Recommendations for Preventing and Policing Celebratory Disturbances in College Communities

Gregory M. Brauser

Under the Supervision of Dr. Susan Hilal

#### Purpose

Law enforcement agencies are trained to deal with riotous disturbances with a military type approach such as Mobile Field Force (MFF). This consists of officers being deployed against the crowd in riot protection gear, in units designed to disperse the crowd and arrest troublemakers. Once orders to disperse are not complied with, one of the main tactics used by police is the deployment of chemical agents, such as tear gas. This approach is a very controversial choice in college communities. Gatherings in these situations are generally not composed of criminal minded individuals out to commit criminal acts. They are composed of young adults fueled by alcohol use, a factor not existent in protests or other civil disorders (McCarthy, Martin, & McPhail, 2007). College communities and their respective police departments do not want the image of their towns being portrayed in the media as college age kids being gassed by riot gear clad police. Therefore, law enforcement in college communities is charged with finding ways to combat celebratory disturbances with other multifaceted approaches.

#### Methods and Procedures

The main method of approach will be a review and analysis of secondary data consisting of such information as related empirical, statistical, and theoretical findings.

An analysis of the effectiveness of multifaceted approach to combat celebratory disturbances will be conducted to determine their success. Recommendations will be grounded in empirical and theoretical ideas. Three theories related to celebratory disturbances will be used: crowd identity, neutralization and routine activities theories. They will be examined to explain how they can be applied.

### Findings

This paper can be used as a guide in preparation for, and response to, celebratory disturbances by law enforcement agencies that are charged with protecting and servicing college communities. A multifaceted preparation approach to such events has worked in several college communities across the country. This plan is recommended as a model to follow in any college community faced with the potential for such situations. By building partnerships between law enforcement, municipalities, business entities, student organizations, and college administrations, the potential for such disturbances can be greatly reduced.

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# **Recommendations for Preventing and Policing Celebratory Disturbances in College Communities**

## **SECTION I: INTRODUCTION**

### *Overview*

In the United States, protests have a long history. One of the sparking events for the American Revolution was a public gathering, turned riot. In March of 1770 a crowd confronted British soldiers guarding a customs house. The mob engaged the outnumbered soldiers who subsequently fired on the crowd killing five civilians. That event became known as the “Boston Massacre” (Reid, 1974). This is an early American illustration of a catastrophic government response to a civilian protest.

Due to the regularity of public gatherings and demonstrations, college town settings are ideal for studying how police respond to such events (McCarthy, Martin, & McPhail, 2007). In 1888, Dickenson College in Pennsylvania garnered the distinction of hosting the first documented student Halloween riot (Bobsein, 2002 as cited in Ruddell, Thomas, & Way, 2005). During the 1960s and 1970s the United States saw wide spread civil unrest on college campuses sparked by political and social discord. One of the most infamous college disturbances was at Kent State University in Ohio on May 4, 1970. During that protest, the National Guard was called in to police the event. This turned historic when guardsmen opened fired on the college students, killing four and wounding nine more (Broadhurst, 2010). To this day, Kent State is forever associated with that tragic event.

In the late 1990s a new phenomenon arose around college communities in the United States. They experienced an increase in riotous behavior that appeared to have no common social cause. These events were without a sparking issue and resulted in

property destruction and violence. Law enforcement agencies in these communities were charged with handling these occurrences and determining methods of response and preparation for future disturbances (Ruddell, Thomas, & Way, 2005).

Political and social turmoil during the 1960s and 1970s sparked riots in college communities throughout the United States. The disturbances of the 1990s mentioned above, lack that causation. Instead, these were associated with sports victories or annual community celebrations, leading to the term “celebratory riots” (Ruddell et al., 2005). Large groups of college-aged people formed after calendar or sporting events. Portions of these groups then engaged in traditional criminal riotous behavior, including destruction of property, starting fires, and acts of violence.

Post game victory celebrations are common throughout the United States. The media routinely displays images of fans in the streets following major sporting event victories. These events are composed of fans that are expressing team spirit and celebrating their team’s season and success. Celebratory riots occur when this type of crowd begins to engage in criminal behavior. This appears to be more common at collegiate sporting events, which also have a higher fan ejection rate from their venues than do professional sports (Ruddell et al., 2005).

Other common starting points for these riots are annual community events such as festival or holiday celebrations. Two such examples were experienced in State College, Pennsylvania, home to The Pennsylvania State University (Penn State) during the Central Pennsylvania Festival of the Arts (Arts Fest) and Chico, California, home to The California State University at Chico (CSUC) during annual Halloween celebrations. Arts Fest riots at Penn State in the late 1990s resulted in violence and property damage

(Bosak, 2007). Ruddell, et al., (2005) address similar events occurring at CSUC. These two communities employed a similar multifaceted approach to combat these disturbances. Both experienced success in using this preparation plan.

### ***Purpose***

This paper will present programs established by agencies that have successfully reduced the number of riotous events in communities that were plagued by their occurrences. Law enforcement in college communities across the country have been charged with dealing with celebratory disturbances where drunken college students turn celebrations into riotous events. Law enforcement agencies in these communities must be prepared to deal with these events in a safe and appropriate manner.

### ***Methods***

Chico, CA. and State College, PA. implemented disturbance prevention plans that ended cycles of annual celebratory disturbances in those college communities. This paper will explore the measures those communities undertook and compare those steps to plans used in other college communities. An analysis will discuss literature on the topic, including theoretical motivation (crowd mentality, neutralization and routine activities theories) for participation in disturbances. Finally, recommendations will be made on how communities can better prepare to deal with and prevent such occurrences.

## **SECTION II: LITERATURE REVIEW**

### ***Section Introduction***

This section will be divided into five sections. First, a definition of riots will be provided. Then, the phenomenon of college community disturbances will be explored. Next, disturbances in the late 1990s and early 2000s at the Pennsylvania State University and the California State University, Chico (CSUC) will be explored in relationship to law enforcement tactics. Finally some legislative initiatives will be presented.

### ***Definition***

Riot is defined in chapter 55 subchapter 5501 of Title 18 of the Crimes Code of Pennsylvania as three or more persons engaging in disorderly conduct under any or the following three instances: 1) with the intent to facilitate a felony or misdemeanor, 2) with the intent to prevent or coerce official action, or 3) when the person uses, or knows a firearm or other deadly weapon will be used. Subsection 5502 follows that up by stating that three or more disorderly persons commit a misdemeanor when they fail to disperse upon lawful order.

Several terms are used to describe the large college community gatherings discussed in this paper. McCarthy et al. (2007) use the term “convivial gathering”. Ruddell et al. (2005) employ the terms “beer riots” and “celebratory riots” when discussing college community riots in their work. “Celebratory riots” is also the term chosen in 2003 by a task force established at the Ohio State University. They define this term as “events that are characterized by a large gathering of students who have consumed large amounts of alcohol and who spontaneously engage in destructive, antisocial behavior (Andrews & Buettner, 2003, p.7).

The Ohio State report lists six common features of these types of community gatherings. First, these events can occur in association with sporting events. They generally occur late at night. Alcohol consumption is generally a contributing factor. Property destruction and fire starting are common destructive practices employed by these crowd participants. White, college age males are the primary criminal offenders in these crowds. Finally, police intervention to stop these events is generally met with defiance and resistance (Andrews & Buettner, 2003).

For this paper the term “celebratory disturbance” will be used to describe college gatherings that turn disorderly and riotous. “Disturbance” is preferred here over “riot” due to the fact that some of these occurrences do not rise to the level of behavior traditionally associated with riots.

### ***Scope of the Problem***

Celebratory disturbances in college communities are not a new occurrence. Lipset and Schaflander (1971) provide a historical perspective on such events. Ancient Greece, medieval Europe and Colonial America all experienced student unrest. These protests and unrest had varying causes. Colonial American institutions saw student protest in support of the revolt from England. Harvard students protested in the 1800s over poor food quality resulting in police intervention at the request of Harvard administration. In the late 1800s many students protested against required military training at land grant universities. Wars were a common focal point of college unrest starting with World War I. The 1960’s and 1970s saw an increase in student protests due to the political and social turmoil of those eras (Lipset & Schaflander, 1971).

Research presented in 2002 by McCarthy, Martin, McPhail and Cress was used in the Ohio State University task force on preventing celebratory riots report (Andrews & Buettner, 2003) to illustrate the recent growth of this problem after the decline of the late 1970s. Appendix 1 shows a graph illustrating the frequency of US college disturbances not associated with traditional protests. It depicts a steady increase in such events between 1985 and 2002. Less than five such events were documented in 1985 compared to 30 in 2000.

The Ohio State report suggests that these disturbances grew in both regularity and size. These disturbances also had similarities. They involved large gatherings of college students for sporting or social celebrations. The participants engage in high levels of alcohol consumption. As the crowd grows, the violent and destructive natures of the gatherings escalate.

The unique challenges presented with collegiate celebratory disturbances are leading to new academic research. In order for communities to combat this growing problem, the problem itself needs analysis. McCarthy et al. (2007) examined nearly 400 such disorderly gatherings. They suggest that the composition and demeanor of the participants mold the police response to these gatherings. A police decision to disband or allow a gathering must depend on the size and disposition of the members within the assembly. Another consideration is the resources available to the police. If there is not adequate manpower and resources to engage a crowd, it may be in the best interest of the police to hold off engagement until resources are obtained. There are also legal differences between protests and convivial gatherings. The First Amendment of the Constitution protects the right to protests in the United States. It does not protect the

right to riot. This places special considerations on police when dealing with public gatherings. The potential for such large gatherings to turn destructive and violent causes great concern for police and college administrators (Ruddell et al., 2005).

McCarthy et al. (2007) mention that convivial and celebratory gatherings do not present the same police-civilian interaction as traditional protests. As was seen recently in demonstrations in Greece over their economic problems, and in the US with the “occupy” movements, demonstrators at these events are protesting against the government or against government policies. In convivial college gatherings, the purpose is not confrontational or adversarial from the beginning. The participants of convivial gatherings do not see law enforcement as representatives of the focus of their gathering. In return, the police do not see participants of convivial gatherings as oppositional to the government they represent. This dynamic changes the perceptions of all involved parties, whether participant or police.

Another key difference in these types of events according to McCarthy et al. (2007) is the lack of an organizational structure at convivial gatherings. Protests generally have an organizing structure based on the political or social motive behind the demonstration. In their 2006 article, McCarthy and McPhail discuss how it has become common place for protest groups to be required to obtain permits to protest or march in the United States. Since the 1980’s, U.S. courts have reformed the public forum doctrine to include requirements that organized protests be managed through negotiations with the government. Part of these negotiations includes the need to apply for, and be granted, permits to march or protest in public areas. With the issuance of these permits, the government can control the time and place of demonstrations and gatherings. They also

recognize the organizers of these events and can place responsibility for self-policing on these leaders, or on the organizations they represent.

Convivial gatherings do not have this organization, which deprives the police of the sense of being on the opposing side of some specific group or cause. This leads to a less confrontational setting from the start. The presumption of a non-confrontational atmosphere lessens the urgency of a suppressive police response (McCarthy et al., 2007). Another component of convivial gatherings not present in traditional protests is the spontaneity of convivial gatherings. With traditional protests events, the police have advance warning, and therefore, can prepare and assemble to police such events. Spontaneous events do not afford time for such preparation.

In 44% of the cases examined in the McCarthy et al. study, the police attempted to disperse the gatherings. In 16% of the cases, police used physical force to resolve the gatherings. This breaks down to an occurrence of only 64 times in 17 years across the entire country. This low occurrence rate adds to the limitations police agencies face when presented with such events.

McCarthy et al. (2007) use two similar Michigan events to illustrate how dynamic these types of events can be, and how their outcomes vary. On April 7, 1992, Ann Arbor, MI experienced a celebratory gathering turned riot. The University of Michigan men's basketball team lost a national championship game. Fans took to the streets. They set fires and threw rocks and bottles at responding police. Police used traditional riot suppression tactics on the crowd of four to five thousand. As a result, five people were arrested and three police officers were injured. In contrast, East Lansing, MI authorities presented a proactive deployment in preparation for such an occurrence when Michigan

State won its men's basketball championship in April of 2000. Although 30 people were arrested at this event, authorities termed the gathering uneventful. In 44% of the cases examined in the McCarthy et al. study, the police attempted to disperse the gatherings. In 16% of the cases, police used physical force to resolve the gatherings. This breaks down to an occurrence of only 64 times in 17 years across the entire country. This low occurrence rate adds to the limitations police agencies face when presented with such events.

### ***Pennsylvania State University***

According to the U.S. Department of Education, Penn State had over 45,000 students in State College, PA, making it the 19<sup>th</sup> largest university in the US in 2009. This community has more than 40,000 additional permanent residents. It is located in the center of Pennsylvania, within a 2 hours drive of both the Pittsburgh and Philadelphia metropolitan areas. Sporting events are the current driving factor in disturbances in this community. Penn State Football is followed like a religion. In addition, both Pittsburgh and Philadelphia have national champion contending sports teams in professional football, baseball and hockey. Given the schools proximity to both these sports markets, there are many fans eager to celebrate after any of these teams' successes.

The modern era of rioting at Penn State started in the late 1990s. The Penn State Arts Fest riots are an illustration of the problems facing college community administrators and police. Penn State experienced three large student riots between 1998 and 2000 (Hoover, 2002). Arts Fest occurs annually in mid-July. Thousands of college-aged adults return to the university town for the weekend event. Participants mark this event with heavy alcohol consumption at local bars, fraternities and private functions.

According to State College Police Chief Thomas King (personal communication, March 2, 2012), on the last night of the event in 1998, a large crowd formed in an area of downtown, after bar closing time, where participants could obtain food after a night of socializing. Police presence was very minor in this area. One officer noticed a group of males carrying and drinking from a beer ball. The officer attempted to take the ball and the group resisted. The officer did retrieve the item, which enraged the crowd watching this exchange. This crowd grew in such number that they overflowed the sidewalks, filling the street. Small groups inside this crowd used this opportunity to begin minor acts of vandalism, such as street sign removal. This escalated into streetlights being destroyed, windows being broken, cars being damaged and fires being started. Furniture and other items were thrown off balconies of the buildings lining the street where this disturbance was concentrated. These items were used to fuel street bonfires. The result was riotous behavior by some, encouraged and fueled by the larger group (T. King, personal communication, March 2, 2012).

It was clear that during this riot, area police were ill prepared for such an event. The police were vastly outnumbered and did not have the preparation, manpower or equipment needed to deal with the disturbance readily available. Pennsylvania State Police were called in for assistance, taking several hours to arrive and then quell the disturbance. The riot was not completely stopped until almost daylight. Subsequent riots in 2000 after a Penn State basketball loss in the March 2001 championship playoff resulted in fundamental changes in police, community, and university response to such events (King, personal communication, March 2, 2012). These included better pre-planning to both prevent future disturbances and better planning on how to police such

events if and when they do occur. These fundamental changes will be expanded upon later in this paper.

### ***The California State University at Chico***

A similar situation to that at Penn State occurred in Chico, CA., home to CSUC. CSUC is a mid-sized university with a student enrollment of approximately 15,000 students. According to the City of Chico's web site, the city has a population of 86,900 and is located in Northern California, ninety miles north of Sacramento

Annual Halloween celebrations in Chico deteriorated in a similar fashion to that of the Arts Fest in State College (Ruddell, et al., 2005). Halloween celebrations in this community began to draw crowds approaching 20,000 participants. Again a large congregation of college-aged adults, mixed with alcohol consumption, resulted in riotous behavior and damage. During the late 1990s and early 2000s, these Halloween events grew to an average of around 20,000 participants. In 2001, this event resulted reports of five stabbings, several sexual assaults and a near riot.

Both the Penn State and CSUC communities combated their celebratory disturbance problems using nearly identical multifaceted approaches. They created partnerships within their communities, trained their police forces and prepared for such occurrences in an attempt to stop the cycle of rioting that developed. These responses will be explored in detail below.

### ***Multifaceted Response Approach***

No one step or action can stop the cycle of celebratory disturbances. Communities must employ a multifaceted attack plan to combat such disorders. Following are some successful approaches to combating celebratory disturbances.

Walsh (2003) discusses a multifaceted approach used in Mt. Pleasant, Michigan. He terms their program the “Three Ps”. The three Ps stand for partnerships, planning and police work. Mt. Pleasant is home to 20,000 students of Central Michigan University (CMU). Celebratory disturbances became commonplace at large CMU sporting events.

According to Walsh (2003), the Mt. Pleasant Public Safety Department sought out partnership similar to those discussed above. They joined with community groups and the university to build as many partnerships as they could. CMU and Mt. Pleasant officials work together to present a unified front to combat community problems. At the start of the school year, these partners go out into the community to distribute fliers to the new student residents, informing them of the laws of the community and presenting them with guides to good citizenship and being good neighbors. The police have also built partnerships with landlords to help promote these goals.

Better pre-event planning was also employed. The typical Saturday night compliment of 15 officers in and around Mt. Pleasant was increased to near 160 during events anticipated to bring large crowds. The logistical and budgetary strains of such an increase required additional planning. Ten different police agencies including the Michigan State Police were sought to supplement the Mt. Pleasant compliment. A mobilization of this size required much planning. To ensure all the participants were operating under the same operational objectives, training was held to ensure everyone was working together towards the same goals. Additional dispatchers and other public service personnel needed to be arranged and included in the planning. The control and deployment of all these resources required extensive planning. (Walsh, 2003)

Walsh describes the final P as police work. Once event arrives and the plan is set into motion, police work takes over. High patrol visibility and enforcement of laws helps keep the event progressing without major incident. Solid police work is the final portion of the Three Ps plan. Again, the Mt. Pleasant response is similar to State College and Chico. There is no one initiative employed; a multifaceted attack is utilized to prevent potential disturbances.

Both the communities of State College and Chico employed a multifaceted attack plan to deal with their disturbance cycles. They were faced with the tactical and political challenge of preventing disturbances and quelling them once they began. The traditional methods of riot suppression of using tear gas and less-lethal ammunitions were not considered appropriate for a college community setting. New methods of crowd control and suppression were needed for this type of disturbance.

In both communities a multifaceted approach to combat these occurrences was implemented. According to Ruddell et al. (2005) the response by Chico police mirrored the response in State College, with similar success. These communities formed partnerships between their respective universities, police departments, and citizen groups to combat the building tradition of disturbances at their events. These steps appear to have stopped the occurrences of riotous behavior and restored order to those communities. Other college communities have employed the same practices with similar successful results (Ruddell, et al., 2005).

### ***Partnerships with community***

Community partnerships are a key element of combating celebratory disturbances. The police, the school, the politicians or the businesses alone cannot stop these events.

These entities together will have a greater impact. For example, CSCU partnered in trying to end the alcohol impact of their Halloween events. A student government organization sponsored an alcohol free event. The university library hours were extended to provide additional alcohol free alternatives (Way, Ruddell & Thomas, 2004, as cited in Ruddell, et al., 2005). In State College, community groups were contacted and volunteered to provide alcohol alternatives throughout the downtown area. A church located close to the location of the prior riots opened its kitchen, where members gave out free hot dogs and beverages to pedestrians. A large alcohol free concert was held that ended after the 2:00 a.m. bar close time. Penn State donated land and staff for this concert venue. Faith-based organizations walked the streets wearing “Bless the Fest” shirts and encouraged civil behavior for the young crowd participants. Additionally, a specially trained team of volunteers called the “Peace Team” walked the downtown streets and interceded in minor disputes to prevent them from escalating into assaultive behavior. The mere presence of sober bystanders deterred increased aggression and misbehavior (King, personal communication, March 2, 2012; Ruddell, et al., 2005).

As a follow up to the 2000 Arts Fest riot, Penn State, State College Borough, and local businesses formed a partnership to help identify and prosecute rioters from the previous year. Web sites were created posting pictures of crowd members engaged in criminal activity. These web pages offered rewards for the identification of the individuals sought for these acts. Businesses also posted these “most wanted” individuals to help in their identification. This particular tactic was used at other universities such as Ohio State and Purdue. Penn State conducted its own investigations, separate from the police criminal investigations, into student misconduct at the riot. This resulted in 81 of

the 83 students identified as participants being either expelled or leaving the University. Again this same type of tactic has been employed at different academic institutions to help punish and deter. (Hoover, 2002).

### ***Law Enforcement Response***

Law enforcement in the Penn State community needed to reevaluate their response to previous disturbances. Changes in their preparedness and actions/inactions needed to be made. The State College Police, along with other area departments participated in Mobile Field Force training to confront large crowds in a standardized fashion. This consisted of bringing in experts on the subject from the Metro Dade Police Department, Miami, FL. State College Police, Penn State Police and five other surrounding police agencies participated in this joint training on riot control and dispersion methods. This training was initiated to ensure that all the agencies that would be called upon to respond to a disturbance around the Penn State campus would do so with a unified plan and objective. The initial training on this topic has been continued through bi-annual refresher training courses.

State College Police requested a preemptive presence, as opposed to a responsive one, from the Pennsylvania State Police. In addition to the 50 State College officers, 150 State Troopers were brought into the town for the 2001 Arts Fest, patrolling the streets both nights. The entire State Police mounted unit was deployed throughout the evenings of the weekend. A State Police helicopter patrolled the event at night. Pedestrian congregations were not allowed in the downtown area. Penn State also supplied manpower from their 40-officer department. Instead of responding to a disturbance at 2:30 in the morning, this large police presence prohibited its formation (King, personal

communication, March 2, 2012).

This increased police presence tactic was also employed in Chico. Three hundred additional law enforcement officers were brought in to supplement the 85-officer Chico Police Department. This included a large supplement of California Highway Patrol officers. Mounted and aerial units were deployed. These policing plans were designed to present a strong, highly visible, proactive police presence. A strong emphasis was placed on enforcing laws geared towards guarding quality of life issues. Public urination, public intoxication, littering and underage drinking laws were strictly enforced. Both State College and Chico police sought help from every available criminal justice resource. To prepare for the increase in potential arrests and prisoner transports, both agencies secured help from their respective states corrections departments. Busses were obtained and staffed by state correctional institutions in both municipalities. Local jails reduced their inmate populations as much as they could, to make room for anticipated arrests from these events. (Ruddell, et al., 2005; King, personal communication, March 2, 2012)

According to State College Police Chief Thomas King (personal communication, March 2, 2012), in 2000 State College and Penn State formed a riot prevention task force consisting of university and borough officials, business, student and church leaders to brainstorm possible strategies that could be developed or employed to reduce the chance of future disturbances. The task force met about 8-10 times and developed about 60 possible strategies. From that list, each member voted and from that the Borough Council and Penn State Administration adopted a 10-step riot prevention plan (Appendix 2). This plan was initiated over the next several years. The plan included suggestions for

better lighting, monitoring of apartment balconies, installation of security cameras and stricter enforcement of quality of life laws. It also encouraged the university to enact penalties for student misconduct whether on or off campus. It also suggested cooperation amongst the parties of interest to promote civility and citizenship through extra curricular events and programs. This same plan creation process was used at Ohio State resulting in a similar 13-step recommendation plan (Andrews & Buettner, 2003).

In the weeks leading up to the 2001 Arts Fest, State College Police mailed approximately 2,500 letters to the home addresses of student residents with leases in the area of the prior riots. The apartment complex managers, who in turn passed the cost on to their renters, took on the expense of the mailings. The intent was for the student to get a letter from the police at their parent's home, days before the event. The letter explained the problems the community had in the past during this event and listed ways the tenants could assist the police and community in keeping the event peaceful. (King, personal communication, March 2, 2012)

On the Friday that started the event, police distributed additional fliers to the predominately student residences in the area of the riots. These fliers warned residents of the possible consequences associated with misconduct and crime occurring within their houses or apartments or on their balconies. Landlords assisted by bolting shut balcony doors of apartments that had violated disorder clauses of their leases. These clauses were in response to the large number of people occupying balconies overlooking the area of previous riots and dropping or throwing items into the crowd and at the police.

### ***Media Response***

In 2001, a media campaign was launched, promoting the above-mentioned steps.

News stories were initiated by the State College Police in many Pennsylvania newspapers and on TV to announce arrests from the prior year and to promote the enhanced police presence for the 2001 Arts Fest. This tactic was also used in Chico in 2002. Chico city council bought television and print media adds targeting both locals and out of town guests to publicize their new zero tolerance approach. These ads ran in the month proceeding Halloween. Chico's adds depicted riot gear clad police arresting young violators. (Ruddell, et al., 2005)

### ***Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design.***

Add topic sentence for general discussion of environmental design response. A final step taken in State College included the physical design of the area where disturbances were taking place. This part of State College became known as the "canyon". Five apartment buildings, four to eleven stories high, lined a two lane, one-way road through the downtown area. In the center of the canyon was a walkup pizza restaurant. Patrons were not allowed inside this business. The walkup window became a gathering point at bar close time. People would wait in line for slices of pizza and then congregate while eating and socializing.

Police sought out Borough Council support in enacting an ordinance to prohibit such types of walkup businesses that provide no public facilities while selling food. Public cameras were installed in the area along with signage to make pedestrians aware of their use. The street lighting of the area was also improved. These steps followed principles of Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED)(Parnaby, 2006).

Another strategy was designed to remove the anonymity of persons on the

balconies of surrounding high-rise apartment buildings. During past riots, these balconies had no identifying markings allowing persons to throw items into the crowd below with little concern of being caught. State College adopted an ordinance requiring buildings over three stories to number their balconies so that the numbers were visible on the street. This subsequently helped reduce the incidents of items being thrown off balconies.

### ***Legislative Initiatives and University Sanctions***

As the phenomenon of these gatherings continues and the media more actively publicizes them, the legislative response has also grown. Both government legislatures and university administrations have enacted or proposed initiatives to punish participants and attempt to deter future participants. This is not a new concept. During the political turmoil of the late 1960's, legislative initiatives were sought to punish college rioters. William Galeota wrote a 1969 article for The Harvard Crimson, which discussed how the federal government was unable to get passage of several laws aimed at cutting off federal financial aid to persons convicted of rioting on college campuses (Galeota, 1969).

Persons caught during the Penn State riots mentioned above faced both criminal and university sanctions. The most common criminal charges included Disorderly Conduct, Criminal Mischief, Failure to Disperse and Riot charges. Depending on the actions of the involved party and the cost of the damage they did, these charges could range anywhere from a summary to a felony level arrest. Upon conviction, sentences ranged from fines for lesser offenders to county jail time for the most egregious offenders. In addition to these criminal prosecutions and penalties, university students

faced sanctions from the school. These ranged anywhere from official warnings to expulsions.

The majority of person arrested during the Penn State riots came after the actual event. There were relatively few person taken into custody during the riots. Physical arrests during such disturbances drastically impacts manpower levels for police agencies. Arresting one person can take two officers off the street, and away fro the event for some time. In such cases where perpetrators are caught in the act, many times their identification was obtained and they were released with the warning that charges would be forth coming. The more violent offenders were taken into immediate custody. The majority of the arrests and prosecutions were the result of follow-up investigations. Officers reviewed video obtained from media sources and the Internet to identify criminal acts and behavior. They then used these same sources to attempt to identify the persons caught by the video. Tip lines and other investigative measures provided the greatest number of suspect identification and future prosecution.

New legislative initiatives have been successful in recent years. In 2003, Ohio enacted a riot punishment law geared towards college students. According to Young (2003), participants convicted of certain riot related offenses in college communities will be expelled from Ohio supported colleges for one year. They will also be ineligible for state financial assistance for two years. Ohio State University officials have stated this law will serve as a tool to help curb college riots. Pietras (2003) also discussed this Ohio legislative initiative. Pietras points out that the Ohio bill came one year after a similar bill in Colorado, which expels college students, convicted of riot related charges, for one year. Colorado dropped the financial aid penalty portion of that state's bill to accomplish

passage. One of the sponsors of the bill, Colorado State Representative Don Lee, stated the bill had been successful at the time of the Pietras article. Lee proclaimed that no riots had occurred since passage and therefore nobody had suffered suspension. To address the issue of potential misuse of the legislation Lee pointed out that jury trials and criminal due process would ensure no misuse of the law (Pietras, 2003). Michigan has a similar law on their books. Section 769.1g of the Michigan Compiled Laws (MCL) imposes up to a 2-year ban from campus for persons convicted of riot related offenses in that state (MCL, 2012).

These legislative initiatives serve both as a punitive and preventive measure. They punish participants and hopefully discourage future participation. They are another component of the multifaceted approach to combat celebratory disturbances in college communities.

The penalties imposed by universities, which are in addition to the criminal penalties imposed by the state, enhance the damage done to a college student convicted for participation in a celebratory student. College students spending over \$40,000 a year towards a college degree can experience far greater and longer lasting penalties than the non-student rioter caught for the same crime. In these cases students are held to higher standards. Their institutions expect more from them in terms of their behavior while attending college. In many ways a twenty something college student has much more to lose by participating in such disturbances than the average citizen.

### ***Effective Intervention***

Initiating the steps set forth above should reduce the chances of a gathering escalating into a disturbance. In March of 2001, State College Police found themselves

planning for a possible sports celebration as the Penn State men's basketball team entered the national championship playoffs. This was the first such event after the community began looking at this problem with their new game plan. As Penn State made it to the final 16 teams in the tournament, the police prepared for a possible celebration and disturbance. A large police presence was deployed. As the game ended, Penn State lost and a crowd of predominately students formed in the canyon area. Police responded quickly, dispersing the gathering before any disturbance occurred. The preparation for the past several Arts Fests was employed during this sports event with similarly successful results. As a result of these combined efforts, the riot cycle was broken and State College has not seen a return of the riotous behavior during subsequent Arts Fests weekends.

Similar results were obtained in Chico. Again, collaboration between local government, the university, and the community ended a cycle of annual disturbances. They provided a high visibility presence with a zero tolerance philosophy. A multifaceted approach between municipal, university and community leaders was employed with a successful outcome. The preplanning for Halloween in 2002 was a success, ending Chico's cycle of riots. (Ruddell, et al. 2005)

The Pittsburgh Steelers appearance in the 2006 Super Bowl initiated another large police deployment in State College. Situated in the center of Pennsylvania, a two and half hour drive from Pittsburgh, a large number of Steelers fans were present for the event in State College. Police engaged in crowd interaction techniques discussed by Reicher, Stott, Cronin and Adang (2004). Police spread out through the crowd prohibiting them from overflowing onto the roadway and politely informing them that

they could remain and celebrate unless disturbances occurred. The police engaged the civil members of the crowd to help regulate the gathering and prohibit the few rowdy members of the group from gaining the foothold needed to escalate the gathering into a disturbance. This was yet another successful deployment promoting the steps taken to end the cycle of celebratory disturbances in this college community.

Not all riots can be prevented. On November 9, 2011, State College, PA area police were once again challenged with an unexpected large crowd gathering that turned riotous. The Penn State Board of Trustees initiated a late evening press conference announcing the firing of long time football coach Joe Paterno as a result of the Jerry Sandusky sexual assault scandal. Thousands of loyal college age supporters took to the streets surrounding the Penn State campus. Although peacefully protesting against the decision at first, portions of this crowd turned violent, throwing rocks, knocking down lampposts and turning over media vans (Danahy & Vanderkolk, 2011).

Although police could not implement a preemptive plan for this event, they responded using tactics learned from the prior disturbances mentioned in this paper. They assembled into riot platoons and engaged the crowd repeatedly until the disorder was stopped. Police from numerous surrounding departments were summoned and used their prior training for such events. Although prevention was not an option for this occurrence, the response was based on preparation for disturbances.

### ***Conclusion***

This section gives examples of the approach used in State College and Chico. They act as a model to assist agencies faced with a cycle of celebratory disturbances. It also shows the cooperation needed through out a community to undertake such a plan.

Finally, even though total riot prevention is not possible, the plan helps ensure that when such an event occurs, responders are prepared to affectively deal with the situation.

### **SECTION III: THEORIES AND THEIR APPLICATION**

This section will discuss three theories that help explain the motivation behind riotous behavior. Crowd mentality theory, neutralization theory and routine activity theory give insight into what might motivate persons to engage in such activity. These theories will be discussed and linkage to their application to the topic of celebratory disturbances will be explored.

#### ***Crowd Mentality Theory***

In 1895, French psychologist Gustave Le Bon wrote *The Crowd*, still considered a highly influential text for psychology. Le Bon proposed a theory suggesting that participants in large crowds lose their individual identity and a mob mentality takes over (Reicher, Stott, Cronin, & Adang, 2004). Participants no longer act under their own moral guidance, but follow the momentum of the mob. Reicher, et al. (2004) suggest a slightly different view. They propose that individual identity is replaced with a crowd identity. Individuals within the crowd have different reasons for joining. Some are there to enjoy the event, some are there to be witness to the event, and some are there to escalate the event.

Under this argument, individuals in the group do not forfeit their morals and values. Participants act as if guided by group values. The same person would act differently depending on the group that they find themselves in at any given time. Group identity begins to overtake personal identity. The fate of one member is perceived to be the fate of all. For example, if one member is injured everyone feels their injury. If one member of the group is threatened the group is threatened. As a member of a crowd or

group, suspicion of others can be based solely on group affiliation or lack thereof (Reicher, et al., 2004).

Person involved in large-scale disturbances lose their individual identity. They picture themselves as part of the whole they are involved in. The actions and fate of the entire group are perceived as their own. This results in a crowd mentality replacing the individual's mentality.

### ***Application of Crowd Mentality Theory***

In the context of this paper, college students participating in a riot can be used as an example. A particular college student may participate in multiple demonstrations over the course of their academic career. They may participate in protests to end a war or a protest for lower tuition. These may both be peaceful protests, in-line with their personal beliefs. However, the same student participating in a late night sports victory celebration, where the crowd has gathered after hours of consuming alcohol and watching their favorite team win, may take on the motives of the entire crowd and under these circumstances act against their normal values. This same individual acts differently at each event, based on the values of the whole crowd, not the individual.

A crowd mentality can be observed in fans of sporting events. When watching games, fans take on a mentality that they are part of the team. When the team does good or bad, fans often say "we" look good or "we" should have won that game. At sporting games or venues where fans converge to watch the events, crowd mentalities can be enhanced by common dressing such as wearing team uniforms or colors. This enhances the loss of individual identity, replacing it with crowd identity (Reicher, et al., 2004).

The same concept can be applied to the college community disturbances being examined in this paper. The “we” is used for the collective of college age crowd participants.

When the police engage such crowds, even the non-criminal members see the police response as addressed toward them, as well as the criminal element of the group. The fate of one participant becomes viewed as the fate of all. An action against one is viewed as an action against the whole. This results in the entire crowd resisting the actions of the police (Reicher, et al., 2004). Once engaged by the police, individuals in the crowd unify in opposition to the show of authority. Although members would generally view the criminal acts being committed by a few members as wrong, the police intervention is seen against the whole of the group, not the criminal element, resulting in mass disobedience (Reicher, et al., 2004).

Police actions can easily be misinterpreted under this theory as well. The presence of additional police to ensure crowd member safety can be seen as an increased attempt to disperse the crowd. Blocking off streets to provide crowd gatherings protection can be seen as preparing to move in to disperse the crowd. Because the police are not viewed as members of the crowd, any action or movement the police take can easily be misinterpreted as being against the crowd.

Kent State professor Jerry Lewis (as cited by Hoover, 2002) elaborates on the crowd mentality:

Winning has become so significant in college sports that this type of behavior has been institutionalized. These are rabid fans who strongly identify with the program, so they engage in these feats of skill, like knocking out

windows. They are identifying with the violence that takes place on the football field ... then acting that out.

From the involved members' perspectives, these events are part of the college experience or a "rite of passage" (Hoover, 2002). They are part of the team and act out their membership the only way they believe they can. This particular analogy, and crowd mentality theory can be used to explain disturbances that occur as the result of sporting event victories and losses.

The disturbances mentioned above in this paper provide illustrations of the statements presented above. Crowds of college-aged adults took to the streets after sporting or community events. These crowds grew that they overflowed the sidewalks, filling the streets. Small groups inside these crowds used this opportunity to begin minor acts of vandalism. As police arrived and intervened, the activity escalated into larger disturbances. The result was riotous behavior by some, encouraged and fueled by the larger group. When police took action against crimes within the group, the entire group revolts against the police. Individualism is lost to a crowd mentality.

### ***Neutralization Theory***

Neutralization theory provides another explanation for participation in celebratory disturbances. The factors that change a college student into a riot participant can be explored using the Techniques of Neutralization presented by Sykes and Matza (1957). These authors point out that certain techniques may be more applicable to certain offenses than others. Although Sykes and Matza applied this theory to delinquency, three of their techniques will be explored in relation to this riotous, criminal behavior.

First, Denial of Injury. Sykes and Matza use vandalism as a criminal example of where this is successfully used in neutralization. Vandals may minimize this crime using the rationale that persons affected by the damage are not affected by the cost of repair or replacement. Tearing down a street sign, spray painting a wall or lighting a bonfire in the street is not perceived by the perpetrator as actually causing injury.

Second, Denial of Victim. The types of property damage just mentioned can be viewed by the perpetrators as being victimless crimes. Street signs have no individual person attached to them as owners. Owners of buildings are generally not present when graffiti is placed distancing the association with a real victim. A bonfire of garbage in the street is perceived to not affect a real person as a victim.

Finally, Condemnation of the Condemners. The person committing the crime does not blame himself or herself, they blame the person labeling their acts as criminal. Police breaking up a rowdy student gathering is not the problem, the police trying to stop the groups' fun are.

### ***Application of Neutralization Theory***

Neutralization theory can be applied to celebratory disturbances as well. Damaged property during disturbances is commonly public or corporate property such as streetlights, street signs and building property damage. Participants do not associate actual injury with the knocking down of a stop sign, the pulling up of shrubbery, or the breaking of a business's window. These are crimes that cause damage, but in the minds of the perpetrators, no associated injury. Many of these items are replaced quickly, limiting the time the damage is present.

The lack of a present victim during riots may also present neutralization in the rioter's mind for their behavior. As mentioned above, the owners of damaged property are mainly the government and business. Some businesses are chains or franchises. Rioters do not associate these entities with actual people and therefore deny the existence of a traditional victim. Also, there is no physical presence visible representing these types of victims. A street sign, lamppost or empty business does not correlate to the persons responsible for their existence or up keep. It is easier for someone to not associate a victim with this type of crime than it would be if a home were to be damaged. The lack of perceived victims during riots helps justify damage to public, or perceived ownerless property.

Finally, rioters change the focus of the accusation of wrong doing from themselves to the police responding to the situation. Participants emphasize the use of force and authority of police powers to move the focus away from their own criminal acts (Sykes and Matza 1957). An example of this would be a disturbance participant coming to police to complain about being pepper-sprayed for standing on the hood of a car during a riot. They are attempting to change the focus from their act of criminal mischief to the response provided by the police. Many students involved in these events complain about the use of pepper spray and other tactic used by police to disburse disorderly crowds. They ignore, or do not see, a problem with the crowd that became disorderly and needed dispersal.

Neutralization Theory permits crowd members to visualize themselves as "in the right", regardless of their involvement with a disturbance (Topalli 2005). The three techniques above help explain how this theory is applicable to self-justification by

disturbance participants. Condemnation of the condemners may also be viewed as fueling the crowd mentality theory mentioned earlier in this section. Condemning the police for their actions focuses the whole group against police authority, not just the criminal minority of the group.

### ***Routine Activity Theory***

A final theory to be examined for this topic is routine activity theory by Cohen and Felson (1979). The premise of this theory is composed of three elements. First there needs to be a ready and willing offender. Second there must be a good victim or "target". Finally, there needs to be a lack of "guardians" against the crime. If any one of these components is missing, the completion of a "direct-contact" crime will be hindered. They further state that the mere lack of guardians might lead to an increase in these types of crimes.

Under this theory, a willing offender needs to be present and able to carry out a criminal act. You can't have a theft of a car without someone there to steal it. Following with this example, you can't have a theft of a car without an available car to steal. Finally, if there is someone watching over the car, it is unlikely that that car will be stolen. To the contrary, an unattended car with the keys in the ignition is a much more likely target of theft. When crime is afoot, it can be presumed that a willing and able perpetrator is available. This leaves the available target and lack of guardians as the key components to this theory (Cohen & Felson, 1979).

### ***Application of Routine Activities Theory***

In the case of celebratory disturbances, ready and willing offenders are of constant supply. As has been discussed previously in this paper, college students readily

associate themselves in a common group with their colligate counterparts. They are commonly assembled for sporting and social gatherings. This provides an automatic setting for ready and willing participants. These group members are many times already assembled together and view themselves as having a common bound, i.e. their school.

The second component of this theory, a good victim or target, is met by the community itself. College communities are generally acceptant of gatherings of collage age people. The majority of these disturbances happen at night when the regular population of law-abiding citizens is not present. This lack of supervision and openness of the community provide a viable victim/target for these types of disturbances.

The final component of this theory is the lack of guardians. As mentioned above, these disturbances often happen when the general public is not around. In addition, the participants are generally college age persons, who are away from home for the first time and are exploring their new found freedom away from parents and guardians. Another “guardian” component of these types of disturbances are the police. When a police presence is not provided at events that typically lead to celebratory disturbances, the lack of guardianship is enhanced. The participants have no sense of being supervised.

### ***Theory Summary***

These three theories can be combined to help explain celebratory disturbances. First routine activity theory can be used to explain the formation of disturbance crowds. Assembled college students at bars, parties or sporting events represent the willing participant. The easy target is the public street or other gathering spot. A lack of initial police or other authoritarian presence provides the final need under routine activities theory. Neutralization can be used to explain how this crowd can turn criminal. Pulling

down street signs is not perceived to cause harm, or have a victim. This can escalate to larger items like climbing lampposts, which eventually fall or rocking parked cars, which eventually tip. When police do arrive and attempt to stop this type of behavior, the crowd feels they are justified in their assembly and turn on the police for stopping their celebration. Finally, crowd mentality takes affect when the police move to address the illegal behavior of some of the participants. Crowd members view this action as against the whole crowd, not just against an individual member of the crowd. Therefore the crowd may react as a whole. Combined these three theories provide insight into celebratory disturbances.

## SECTION IV: RECOMMENDATIONS and CONCLUSION

Since the late 1990's, celebratory disturbances have been on the increase on and around college campuses. These events presented a new challenge to police departments, governments and universities in dealing with student populations engaging in riotous behavior without any underlying political or social cause. The tactics employed by the agencies discussed in this paper are examples of successful approaches for dealing with these types of occurrences.

Penn State University, California State University at Chico and Central Michigan University are communities where similar multifaceted plans appear to have stopped cycles of celebratory disturbances in those communities. The key components used by these communities are what are needed to enact an affective plan for preventing and responding to celebratory disturbances. The following must be included in any plan of attack.

Better police training is a necessary starting point. Agencies must be trained in dealing with riotous crowds and also train in policing large events to prevent riots from starting. A good example of how this can be accomplished is what was done at Penn State. They brought in professional riot policing trainers to teach mobile field force tactics. They followed this up with continuing education training to ensure what was originally taught did not get forgotten. The training and continuing education ensured that officers in that community had the tools necessary to professionally deal with such occurrences.

Communities must forge partnerships between law enforcement, student groups, businesses, civic organizations, municipal officials and university administrators.

Together these groups can brainstorm to help prevent celebratory disturbances. They can come up with alternative events to help alter the behavior of students at events that are traditionally starting points for disturbances. They can also brainstorm to come up with solutions to environmental and other contributing factors that can help reduce the chances of events turning riotous. These entities alone are much less effective in meeting this goal. Together they bring all the concerned parties to the table to broaden the knowledge base. Partnerships are what is needed to combat such a complicated issue. Together these groups are much more effective than when they act independently.

Finally legislative initiatives can be examined to enhanced criminal laws and university sanctions. This can be done to help make participation in celebratory disturbances more costly to students, thus providing a substantial deterrent, both legally and academically. Legislative penalties, to include loss of financial aid, not only help deter riotous behavior, they help rid college communities of persons with less than academic motives for being at school. Including university sanctions can help link the community and the university. They help promote a sense of responsible citizenship amongst students. Not only can a student face criminal arrest, but they are held accountable with their school.

Walsh (2003) uses the term “Three Ps” to describe this model plan. The Ps stand for partnerships, planning and police work. When implemented together, as has been described in this paper, multifaceted plans have proven successful in dealing with celebratory disturbances in college communities across the country.

Several theories help explain reasons for these types of disturbances. Crowd mentality theory, routine activities theory, neutralization theory, and in particular the

techniques of denial of injury, denial of victim and condemnation of the condemners, provide a criminological explanation for these types of occurrences. The tactics employed by the agencies discussed in this paper are examples of successful approaches for addressing the components of these theories.

The three techniques proposed by Sykes and Matza (1957). Validation of injury and victims were established by police publication of the amount of damage, and continued media and web coverage of the aftermath of riotous behavior. Follow-up prosecutions helped promote the presence of injury and victims as well. Successful prosecutions help validate the response by authorities and eliminate the condemnation of the condemners aspect of neutralization. The study of neutralization employed by students involved in riotous celebrations helps explain how a presumed “average” college student becomes involved in criminal behavior (Topalli, 2005).

The effects crowd mentality has on large gatherings were addressed in successful deployment plans used at events described in this paper. Police have successfully used the crowd to police itself based on this theory. Instead of the police initially regulating the behavior of the crowd, they encouraged appropriate behavior in the crowd and told participants that as long as they remained peaceful the gathering could continue. Police only take action against the isolated persons that are acting against the norms of the crowd. Police must take great care to instill a feeling that law enforcement is not against the gathering as a whole, they are only against the few in the crowd with dubious intentions.

Routine activity theory is also addressed by the multifaceted approach suggested in this research. There will always be ready and willing participants for celebratory

disturbances in college communities. Whoever, communities using a multifaceted plan attempt to remove the target and lack of guardian aspect of this theory. They must create atmospheres and locations that are not conducive to fueling disturbances. Finally, a strong police presence and sober community presence provides the guardianship needed to deter behavior that leads from celebration to disturbance.

Agencies must prepare for, respond to, and successfully deploy at these events to ensure public safety while at the same time not infringing upon the freedom of assembly rights of individuals. Preventive measures must be taken to ensure legal gatherings do not evolve into celebratory disturbances. If disturbances do occur, police must be prepared to professional respond to quickly end the event with minimal damage and disturbance.

This course of action will help agencies dealing with such events better prepare for, and respond to, these occurrences. As mentioned by the Ohio State University Task force on Preventing Celebratory Riots (2003), there is a lack of research regarding this topic. Additional research is needed to better examine this unique college community phenomenon. Engaging in a multifaceted plan to police gatherings in college communities is a promising tactic for prevention and policing of celebratory disturbances.

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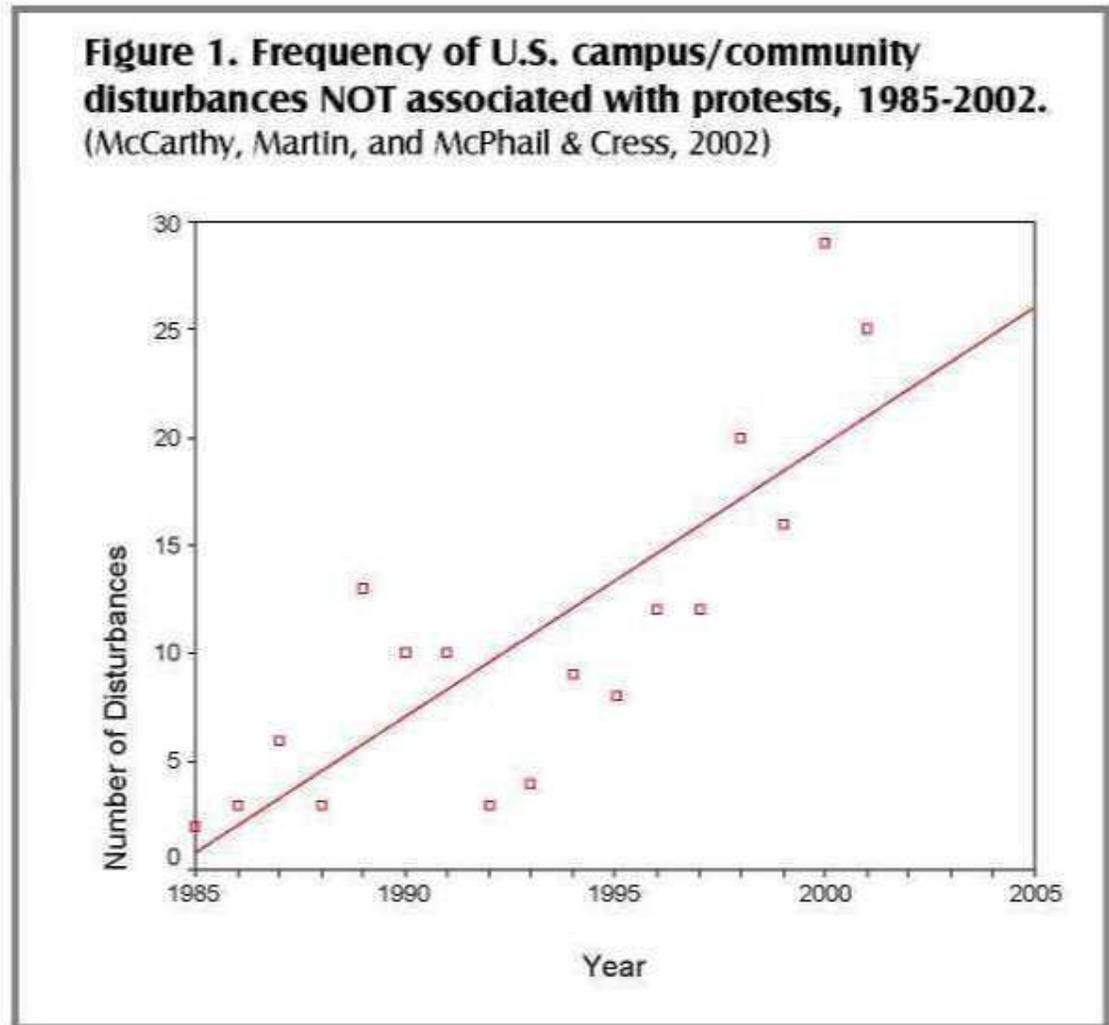
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## Appendix 1

### Disturbance Frequency Graph



Andrews, D. & Buettner, C. (2003) *The Ohio State University task force on preventing celebratory riots: Final report*. Columbus: The Ohio State University.

## Appendix 2

### **Borough of State College, Penn State, Apartment Owners and Students 10-Part Plan**

- 1) Lighting. A new lighting plan to be developed to better illuminate the area where disturbances have traditionally formed.
- 2) Monitor Balconies. Apartment managers would aggressively monitor the use of balconies overlooking this area. Clauses would be added to leases stipulating that any violations of local ordinances would result in the balcony doors being sealed shut to prevent further use by the residents during their lease period.
- 3) Public and Private Safety Cameras. Public security cameras to be installed to monitor public spaces and private cameras installed to monitor balconies and other common areas or private student housing buildings.
- 4) Enforcement of Loitering Laws. State College would begin enforcing loitering laws in the area of previous disturbance formation to prevent large crowds from forming.
- 5) Zero Tolerance for Riots. Penn State would initiate broader communications to students regarding the University's zero tolerance policy for riots and would enhance its educational programs about laws and policies that relate to such disturbances,
- 6) Change in Penn State's Code of Conduct. Penn State will more aggressively address student crime issues that occur off campus in State College.
- 7) Increased Police Presence. There will be increased visible police presence during potentially troublesome events.
- 8) Patrol Apartment Buildings. State College Police will be invited to patrol private student housing buildings to promote safety and engage in educational advisories. The community partnership will deliver "Welcome Student Citizen" packets to the door of every apartment at the start of each fall semester.
- 9) Increased PLCB Presence. The PA Liquor Control Board enforcement agents will provide a greater presence to prevent illegal alcohol gatherings and consumption at the start of each school year.
- 10) Improving Citizenship and Civility. Penn State's student government leaders have pledged to work cooperatively with State College and Penn State to promote

concepts of civility, citizenship, social responsibility and improve town/gown relationships. This to be accomplished through sponsorship of extra-curricular programs and events.