

The following document is the final report of working group #2 of an Iowa State University/Ames task force assembled following a riot in Ames' Campustown on April 18, 2004 ("Task Force on Assuring Successful Veishea and Other Student/Community Celebrations"). The working group was charged with examining "underlying causes" of the riot and campus riots in general.

Most of this report is contained in the final task force report, which was issued in Nov. 2004. However, this working group report stands by itself as a summary of the current social science understanding of campus riots. It benefited from several sociologists who allowed us access to unpublished research. Particularly useful were Cynthia Buettner's dissertation on the 2002 Ohio State riot and a spreadsheet of campus riots obtained from Andrew Martin.

Members of the working group were:

Steve Schainker (chair)  
Abby LaCombe (co-chair)  
Gloria Betcher  
Tony Borich  
Angela Fredericks  
Ashley Glade  
Jeff Johnson  
Dan Sherman  
David Schweingruber

All documents related to the task force are available at its web site:

<http://www.iastate.edu/news/04/veishea/meetings/tf/tf.shtml>

For more information, contact:

David Schweingruber  
Assistant Professor of Sociology  
Iowa State University  
dschwein@iastate.edu

# **WORKING GROUP #2 REPORT ON FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO AND DYNAMICS OF IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY CAMPUS DISTURBANCES**

## **CAMPUS DISTURBANCES AND THE TRADITIONS OF VEISHEA**

This report from working group #2 discusses factors contributing to campus disturbances and the dynamics of these disturbances. We incorporate research from the social science literature and information about the disturbance that occurred following the official 2004 VEISHEA events (hereafter referred to as the April 18 riot), as well as previous disturbances at Iowa State University and on other college campuses.

The riot that took place in Ames in the early morning of Sunday, April 18, 2004 is part of a nationwide wave of campus disturbances arising from a variety of situations. Since 1985, there have been over 200 of these disturbances, and their frequency is increasing. These mixed-issue disturbances, like the April 18 riot, are distinguished from previous campus riots in that they are not clearly connected to protest. Sometimes called “celebratory riots,” they are often marked by a mood of celebration.

The term “celebratory riot” appears to fit the April 18 riot, which was characterized by celebration, not protest. Much of the riot had the character of a game as rioters taunted police, dispersed as police approached, and then reassembled. Four other disturbances, of similar character but varying in size, have taken place during previous VEISHEA weekends (1985, 1988, 1992 and 1994).

### **The Three Traditions of VEISHEA**

VEISHEA has a long tradition as a pro-social event that showcases Iowa State University, increases campus pride, and builds bridges among Iowa State employees, students, alumni and other supporters of the university. However, two other traditions have become associated with VEISHEA. One of these is the tradition of VEISHEA as a time to party and drink. The other is the completely negative tradition of VEISHEA as an occasion to riot.

In order to best explain the factors contributing to the April 18 riot, the dynamics of this riot, and its connections to the multiple traditions of VEISHEA, this report situates these local phenomena within the nationwide trend of celebratory riots.

### **The Official VEISHEA Tradition**

VEISHEA was conceived as a pro-social event to showcase Iowa State University, to increase campus pride, and to build bridges among Iowa State employees, students, alumni and other supporters of the university. It began in 1922 as a combination of separate events organized by different units of Iowa State University. The event has a rich tradition and has served a number of purposes for the university and its constituents. The 1992 VEISHEA Task Force (Galloway 1992) identified nine traditional purposes of VEISHEA:

1. To provide an opportunity for students, faculty, and staff to showcase the academic programs of the university and its Extension services.
2. To provide opportunities for the development of student leadership.
3. To provide an opportunity to link the university to the Ames community and to the citizens of Iowa.
4. To provide students an opportunity for positive social interaction.
5. To provide an opportunity for student recruitment.
6. To provide a focal point for alumni activity and interaction with the university.
7. To recognize distinguished alumni and friends of the university (e.g., the Parade Marshal).
8. To provide fundraising opportunities for student organizations.
9. To affirm and sustain the traditions of the university.

The 1992 task force argued that VEISHEA was no longer serving some of its traditional purposes and that participation in the event was declining. The task force's survey indicated that "student participation in the organized events of VEISHEA is very low" and "less than one-half of all students surveyed were interested in becoming more involved in VEISHEA." The 1992 task force also stated that "[t]he interest and involvement of the university's faculty, staff, department chairs, and deans in the planning and implementation of VEISHEA and its events appear to have diminished." The 1992 task force called for changes in VEISHEA to strengthen this tradition and increase participation.

There is continuing anecdotal evidence for the decline in support for this first tradition. For instance, there is minimal participation by colleges and academic departments, and the event does not serve as a major recruiting tool or showcase for the university. However, there is a great deal of support among certain groups for this tradition as demonstrated by a fall 2004 survey of ISU introduction to sociology students (N = 747) in which 88.4% of respondents indicated they agreed strongly or agreed somewhat that "VEISHEA is an important part of campus life," and 93.5% agreed that "Iowa State should continue to support VEISHEA." 92.4% indicated they disagreed strongly or disagreed somewhat that "VEISHEA should be cancelled." Other groups supporting official VEISHEA include the student leaders who organize the event each year and the many students and community members who continue to participate in sponsored activities.

### **The "Unofficial" VEISHEA Tradition**

The second tradition, which also has a long history, is that VEISHEA is an occasion for students, alumni, and others to party. It is sometimes called the "unofficial VEISHEA," since much of it takes place outside of official VEISHEA events. The 1992 task force survey found that more students participated in the parties of "unofficial VEISHEA" than in official events. Much of this partying involves the consumption of alcohol. (See Outcome Violence and Alcohol Restrictions.) Although it is important to recognize the difference between these two VEISHEA traditions, in the public perception they are linked to one another and to the history of rioting during VEISHEA Weekend.

## **The Tradition of VEISHEA as an Occasion to Riot**

The tradition of rioting during VEISHEA weekend constitutes a third, completely negative tradition. Because of this tradition, official VEISHEA as a whole—its name, the events that comprise it, and the weekend upon which it is celebrated—produces a variety of social cues that a riot may take place (see *The Role of Social Cues in Precipitating Riots*). The impact of this third tradition on future VEISHEA celebrations should not be underestimated.

## **Could Future VEISHEA Disturbances Be Avoided by Altering Tradition?**

Previous responses to VEISHEA disturbances have focused on strengthening and improving “official VEISHEA,” the first tradition. While the 2004 task force could recommend further efforts to do so, it is unclear that even a much improved “official VEISHEA” will eliminate the chances of rioting. One contribution to lessening the chance of a riot may be to move VEISHEA activities away from the Campustown area to decrease the number of people in the area. (See *The Role of Rioter Availability and Access*).

Past task forces have also proposed canceling official VEISHEA as one way to prevent future riots. It is unclear, however, what effect this would have on the probability of another riot. It is possible that continuation of the unofficial VEISHEA tradition without university sponsorship may provide occasions for individuals interesting in rioting. In addition, the variety of mixed-issue disturbances that contribute to the nationwide wave demonstrates that other events on campus, such as sporting events, can also be occasions for riots. Iowa State University has already witnessed campus disturbances that did not occur during VEISHEA.

## **VEISHEA DISTURBANCES AND THE NATIONWIDE TREND**

The tradition of rioting that has become associated with VEISHEA is not unique to VEISHEA or Iowa State University. The VEISHEA disturbances are part of a nationwide trend of what researchers are calling “celebratory riots” or “mixed-issue campus disturbances.” Rioting at universities in the United States is almost as old as this country's university system itself. Most rioting, however, has been associated with protest against institutional policies, such as *in loco parentis* policies and mandatory military training, or protest involving national issues, such as civil rights and anti-war movements.

### **Mixed-Issue Disturbances Nationwide**

A more recent trend is the rise in the number of riots that are unconnected to protest. The factors and dynamics of this recent trend are a relatively new field of study. Since these disturbances sometimes occur following a major sports victory, they are sometimes called “celebratory riots,” but researchers have also called them “mixed-issue campus disturbances” because they arise from a variety of situations. McCarthy, Martin, McPhail and Cress (2002; Martin 2004) have identified 208 such riots, those not related to protest, between 1985 and 2002. Between 1985 and 1995 there were 64 of these disturbances, or an average of 5.8 per year. No year during this period had more than 10 such disturbances. During 1996-2002 there were 144 mixed-issue disturbances, or an average of 20.6 per year. The three years with the most such riots are the three most recent years: 2000 (29 riots), 2001 (25) and 2002 (30).

Forms of collective action, including forms of rioting, often take place in waves. The United States faced waves of race riots in the 1910-1920s and 1940s, and a wave of urban riots in the 1960s. Protest tactics, such as sit-ins, and fads, such as college campus streaking, come in waves. Thus, it is important to view the disturbances that have occurred at Iowa State University as part of a larger national trend.

### **Mixed-Issue Disturbances at Iowa State University**

McCarthy et al. defined a “mixed-issue campus disturbance” as one “that resulted in a public conflict between aggregates of (mostly student) participants and authorities (usually the police), but did not start as an issue-based protest gathering.” Using this definition, we have identified the following eight such events at Iowa State University since 1985:

- In 1985, during VEISHEA weekend’s “Ash Bash,” which was sponsored by Greek Houses on Ash Avenue, cars were overturned and burned.
- In 1988, a riot took place early Sunday morning during VEISHEA weekend. People in a crowd of approximately 5,000 threw bottles, bricks and rocks and made a bonfire from furniture. The rioting followed smaller disturbances the two previous nights, which were associated with parties being shut down in the Campustown area. Of the 45 people arrested, 25 were ISU students.
- In 1992, during VEISHEA weekend people in a large crowd (est. 8,000) threw rocks, cans and bottles at police. Twenty-seven rioters were arrested and 47 were treated for injuries.
- In 1994, during VEISHEA weekend people in a large crowd threw cans, bottles and rocks at police. A total of 20 people were arrested, 11 of whom were students.
- In 1998, students in a crowd of approximately 300 chanted profanities, set off fireworks, and attempted to tear down a light pole in the Towers Residence Hall courtyard before being dispersed by police. The event, which formed spontaneously, was viewed as a protest against the first “Dry VEISHEA.”
- In 1999, during a planned protest event three weeks before the second “Dry VEISHEA” and near the anniversary of the previous Towers Residence Hall disturbance, students committed acts of vandalism and chanted profanity in a crowd that moved from the Towers to The Knoll and then to Jack Trice Stadium, stopping at various points on campus in between to rally loudly. The event was viewed as a protest against “Dry VEISHEA.”
- In 2000, following an NCAA basketball victory participants damaged cars, pulled down light poles, marched to The Knoll and then to Jack Trice Stadium, where they tried to pull a goal post down. They then tore down pieces of fence and threw them in Lake Laverne.
- The April 18, 2004, disturbance resulted in destruction of Campustown property and the arrest of 37 individuals, including 22 Iowa State University Students and three recent alumni.

Although all these events meet the definition of “mixed-issue campus disturbance,” they vary considerably in their character and severity. The events of 1998, 1999 and 2000 resulted in less damage than the other events and their participants showed less hostility toward police. Representatives of local law enforcement agencies on the 2004 VEISHEA task force reported that policing of these events took into account the festive feeling of the events and attempted, at least to some extent, to accommodate the crowds’ high spirits without compromising the safety of participants or bystanders. These same law enforcement representatives noted that there was “something different” about the attitude of the rioters involved in the April 18 riot; from the police perspective crowds were decidedly more hostile than during earlier disturbances.

## **Contemporaneous Accounts of VEISHEA Weekend Disturbances**

In order to assess popular opinions regarding the nature of the mixed-issue disturbances on VEISHEA weekend 1988, 1992, 1994 and 2004, as well as to the murder that took place during VEISHEA weekend 1997, we reviewed task force reports and news articles included in the VEISHEA documents collection distributed to the 2004 task force; news articles, columns, and letters to the editor that appeared in April 2004 issues of the *Ames Tribune*, *Des Moines Register*, and the *Iowa State Daily*; and reports made to and personal observations of current task force members. Our review included only those factors that someone (reporter, letter-writer, official, etc.) identified as directly causing, contributing to, or escalating the riots and other disturbances associated with the celebration of VEISHEA.

This review suggests a number of factors that contemporaneous observers believed were important for understanding these events. (Appendix 1 provides the details of this analysis.) The factors identified were many and varied. However, we identified several patterns:

- Reports of all five events identified contributing factors related to alcohol, especially binge-drinking and over consumption, and congregation issues, including the number of revelers from outside Ames converging on town for VEISHEA and the high concentration of student housing in the area of the disturbances.
- Reports of all five events identified factors that escalated the situation once it had begun, but the nature of those factors differed from one disturbance to another.
- Reports of all five events identified external factors, most relating to the university and its policies, the City of Ames and its ordinances, tensions affecting the student community, and the rental property situation, but again the nature of those factors differed from one event to another.

Additional factors identified as contributing to at least four of the five events include the impact of out-of-town revelers on the climate of VEISHEA; large parties during VEISHEA weekend that get out of control; media attention on VEISHEA, much of it negative, that may have influenced the expectations and, therefore, the behavior of the revelers; too few "alternative" official VEISHEA events at night; and the relationship between Iowa State University's conduct code and penalties for misconduct and students' off-campus behavior.

Observers of the April 18 riot pointed to two factors that may have contributed to the riot that were not identified by observers of previous disturbances. First, they noted the influence of technology on crowd size. The use of cell phones to disseminate word of the

disturbance and the broadcasting of riot coverage on radio station KURE may have contributed to the size of the crowd. Observers also noted that many onlookers in the 2004 riots were unwilling to give up ground to police because of the bystanders' perceived "right to be there."

Since this review of previous disturbances at Iowa State University is based on a limited number of contemporaneous reports, its findings should be treated with caution. Current research on the dynamics of mixed-issue disturbances casts doubt on some of the claims made by contemporaneous observers. The following sections of this report examine the dynamics of mixed-issue campus disturbances.

## **THE DYNAMICS OF VIOLENCE IN MIXED-ISSUE DISTURBANCES**

Many popular accounts of violence during riots (as well as now discredited social science explanations) portray rioters as losing their minds. Media portrayals of previous VEISHEA disturbances sometimes used this claim to explain crowd behavior. However, current research suggests that people in riots act purposively (McPhail 1991; Postmes and Spears 1998). In order to understand a riot, it is important to understand the purposes of the rioters. "The goals [these people] have fashioned for themselves appear to influence their behavior even when those goals [may appear to us to be] trivial, vague, unrealistic, or self-defeating" (Tilly 1978).

McPhail (1994) offers a useful typology of violence in rioting: (1) Outcome violence is violence that results from people with non-violent goals, but who face resistance to these goals. (2) Intended violence is the result of people pursuing inherently violent goals. Both types of violence may take place in mixed-issue riots.

Below, we apply this typology while considering the types of violence in these disturbances, particularly as the types relate to the April 18 riot. More specifically, we examine how riots may be precipitated in resistance to the enforcement of alcohol regulations and how people in the riot area may escalate their involvement in response to the actions of police attempting to quell the riot. Then we examine the roles of (1) social cues, (2) access of temporally available people to the riot area, and (3) community strain.

### **Intended Violence and the Role of Entrepreneurs**

A review of the VEISHEA 2004 witness reports and video footage of the April 18 riot suggests that it involved a mixture of intended violence and outcome violence. A majority of this violence was committed because it was fun for those who committed it and for those who were watching. Thus, the term "celebratory riot" seems appropriate for this particular mixed-issue disturbance, as it appears to have had the character of a game or adventure for many of its participants. Much of the action involved taunting police with chants and thrown objects. The gathering dispersed in response to police actions and then reformed. Destruction of property was greeted with cheering.

Buettner (2004), in her valuable study of the 2002 Ohio State riot, points to the importance of "entrepreneurs," her term for those who take the lead in attempting to get the riot

started. These “entrepreneurs” tend to be young, white males. “For these ‘entrepreneurs’ the large gathering provides an opportunity to precipitate situations of greater risk—burning couches, overturning cars, setting cars on fire, and potentially, engaging with the police in a situation where the large numbers provide them with some advantage” (p. 173).

Buettner's study illuminates what may be one of the key factors in the escalation and continuation of the April 18 riot: the involvement of entrepreneurs bent on committing intended violence. Central Iowa and Iowa State University both have a large population of young, white males and over 75% the population of most blocks immediately surrounding Campustown is between the ages of 18 and 24. Of the 37 people arrested following the April 18 riot, most fit Buettner's profile of the typical riot entrepreneur. A fall 2004 survey of ISU introduction to sociology students (N = 747) suggests that many students are interested in rioting. In this survey, 23.8% of male respondents and 10.5% of female respondents agreed strongly or agreed somewhat that “I would like to participate in a riot during my college years.” The survey also found that potential entrepreneurs would have a willing audience: 48.9% of male respondents and 27.6% of female respondents agreed that “I would like to watch a riot during my college years.”

Accounts of the April 18 riot clearly indicate that several “entrepreneurs” were instrumental in beginning and leading the violence. When police attempted to break up the party at 2644 Hunt Street, one man began the chant of “Riot, riot!” from a balcony. Soon thereafter, a few people started a fire by the clock tower. During the confrontation with the police on Lincoln Way, one man (nicknamed “Spartacus” by students watching from Friley Hall) urged on the crowd, threw teargas canisters back at police, and led people in periodic assaults on light poles.

## **Outcome Violence and Alcohol Restrictions**

Research suggests that alcohol is an important part of university life for many college students and has been for centuries. Many students believe that alcohol eases social interaction and relieves stress; they expect alcohol to be available at social events. A 2003 survey of Iowa State University students (Kellogg and Dunn 2003) found that nearly 73% had used alcohol in the past 30 days and 41.5% had engaged in high-risk drinking at least once during the past two weeks. A majority of students agreed that alcohol helps break the ice (71.4%), enhances social activity (69.0%), facilitates a connection with peers (56.4%) and allows people to have more fun (56.1%).

Alcohol can contribute to rioting in two ways. First, alcohol lowers inhibitions and impairs thinking and coordination. Second, policies that restrict alcohol may lead to rioting by (1) driving drinking into large off-campus parties and (2) creating encounters between partiers and police attempting to enforce alcohol restrictions or respond to problems created by drinking.

Buettner (2004) suggests that the emergence and spread of the mixed-issue campus disturbance may be connected to the raising of the drinking age in the mid-1980s to comply with a federal mandate. (In Iowa, the legal age to buy alcohol was raised from 19 to 21 in 1986.) The more restrictive drinking rules resulted in movement of drinking to large, unregulated off-campus parties and created the possibility of more frequent hostile encounters with police.

In addition to the federally-mandated drinking age, Iowa State University students face a number of restrictions on alcohol consumption, such as:

- An Ames City ordinance forbidding people below the drinking age from entering local bars. This ordinance restricts the ability of those who are underage to socialize with their friends who may legally drink in bars; this restriction, in turn, drives people to the unregulated environment of off-campus parties, where people of all ages may socialize freely.
- Department of Residence rules limiting possession and consumption of alcohol in residence halls. These residence hall policies have grown stricter as the university has attempted to deal with problems related to alcohol consumption.
- University administration-mandated “Dry VEISHEA.” This ban on all alcohol consumption on campus, in fraternities and sororities, at official VEISHEA events, and at all campus events that occur during VEISHEA applies only during VEISHEA and includes even those adults who might normally drink legally.

Alcohol restrictions can lead to “outcome violence” as people with the goal of partying and consuming alcohol resist police who attempt to enforce the restrictions or deal with the problems created by large house parties. Buettner (2004) argues that one path of escalation from party to disturbance occurs when police attempt “to break up large and boisterous parties and are met with an angry response.... [I]ndividuals who were out to party and have a good time (as opposed to the entrepreneurs who intended to engage in antisocial activities) see the police action as an obstacle to meeting their original goal” (p. 174).

This claim agrees with the assessment by other scholars that much crowd violence results from interactions between crowd members and police. “Most collective violence... grows out of actions which are not intrinsically violent and which are basically similar to a much larger number of collective actions occurring without violence in the same periods and settings” (Tilly 1978).

Previous VEISHEA disturbances appear to have started around police enforcement related to off-campus parties where alcohol was served or other alcohol-related infractions. The 1992 disturbance began during a 12:15 a.m. public intoxication arrest. The 1988, 1994 and 2004 disturbances began with police breaking up off-campus parties.

The first VEISHEA riot task force recognized the possibility of drinking restrictions leading to rioting. The 1988 task force identified four “factors [that] contributed to the events of [VEISHEA] weekend.” Two of them were “(1) raising the drinking age and subsequent University restrictions on campus and Greek activities; [and] (2) the relocation of large parties to off-campus locations where controls over drug and alcohol abuse are more difficult to enforce.” (1988 was the first VEISHEA during which residence hall units could not hold parties.) However, rather than recommending loosening restrictions, the task force called for examining additional restrictions. This resulted in a restriction on the number of open kegs permissible at private parties.

Despite the attempts of local and state government to regulate alcohol consumption and off-campus parties, many students do not clearly understand the details and consequences of city ordinances and state laws that proscribe off-campus party activities, such as bootlegging, and other students simply choose to ignore the regulations. The Off-Campus Party Research Project (2004), which conducted a survey in fall 2003, found that Iowa State University students, when asked about their familiarity “with the legal and financial consequences” for a range of alcohol-related offenses were, at best, “somewhat familiar” with those consequences. The same study found that Iowa State University students who had hosted parties thought it was unlikely that police would come to their parties. This belief might contribute to a perception that large off-campus parties will not often be targeted by police, that off-campus parties can be profitable, and that on VEISHEA weekend in particular, those who host off-campus parties have the upper hand. This perception may also contribute to defining police arriving at a party as a social cue for rioting or to outcome violence resulting from the party eventually being shut down. This type of outcome violence seems to have contributed to all of the past VEISHEA disturbances (See Appendix 1.)

## **Outcome Violence and Crowd Management**

While outcome violence seems to have contributed to the April 18 riot, changes in policing tactics over the past thirty years have made outcome violence less likely during riots throughout the United States. The dominant protest policing model in the United States into the 1960s was the “escalated force” model, which is characterized by the use of force to disperse demonstrators and/or mete out physical punishment in lieu of arrests. When using this model, police begin with a show of force and then increase levels of force until people disperse. Such practices often led to outcome violence when police used them against previously peaceful protestors (McPhail, Schweingruber and McCarthy 1998; Schweingruber 2000).

The negotiated management model, which is now the dominant model in the United States, differs from the escalated force model in that police have more tolerance for community disruption, have more contact and communication with demonstrators, and attempt to avoid making arrests and using force.

An exception to the widespread use of negotiated management tactics is to deal with campus disturbances that are not related to protest events (McCarthy, Martin and McPhail 2004). This is somewhat understandable since the negotiated management model assumes that police can communicate with the leaders of a crowd, which is unlikely during a campus riot. However, the escalated force model carries with it the probability of creating outcome violence. “[A]ntagonism against the police often increases as the large-scale tactics of the police affect bystanders (e.g., hit by a ricocheted wooden bullet, engulfed in tear gas, sprayed with mace or pepper spray)” (Buettner 2004, p. 174-5).

Not all of the purposes of people in riots are violent ones. Research indicates that only a minority of people in a riot area commit violence. Others may be there to see and hear what other people are doing, to accompany family or friends, to protest (violently or nonviolently) the “precipitating incident,” to loot, and to advocate non-violence. Campus riots also involve many people who are there to watch and, in many cases, cheer on violent activities. Although they may

distinguish themselves from those who are committing violence, the presence of these bystanders creates a formidable challenge to police officers seeking to stop the disturbance. People who are in the area for what they perceive as legitimate purposes may be affected by police actions. Those affected may include observers who have been ordered to leave the area as well as people there for other reasons unrelated to the riot.

First-hand accounts of the April 18 riot suggest the range of purposes people had for being at the riot. In addition to those who wanted to participate or watch violence, people came to transport friends, help the injured, and protect property. Others were there for purposes unrelated to the riot; some of them were subsequently targeted by rioters or police.

The task force collected first-hand accounts of the April 18 riot. Many of these contain complaints about overuse of force by police. In particular, many people believe they were unfairly sprayed with pepper spray. Some on the scene blamed police for precipitating and/or escalating the riot. (Some students surveyed after the 1992 riot also believed that the presence and actions of police precipitated the disturbance.) A smaller number of accounts complimented the police and their tactics. Although complaints about police actions outnumbered compliments, generalizing from this sample should be done with caution since the sample was self-selected.

The Iowa Law Enforcement Academy, which trains and certifies Iowa law enforcement agencies in crowd management tactics, reviewed and evaluated Ames Police actions at the riot and reported that “We believe the tactics used by the officers were sound.... We believe that the officers did a competent job with the tactics and numbers of officers they had to work with that evening. Based on the after action briefing we feel that the Ames Police Department acted in the most professional manner in handling a very volatile situation” (Ciechanowski 2004).

The ILEA report indicates that Ames police used the tactics that they had been trained to perform. It is beyond the expertise of this task force to evaluate how effective these tactics are. The task force also did not attempt to determine to what extent the other law enforcement agencies that policed the April 18 disturbance used the same tactics or employed the same policing philosophies the Ames Police Department did.

## **The Role of Social Cues in Precipitating Riots**

Although the spread of the “campus riot” as a cultural repertoire may make many large campus gatherings occasions for entrepreneurs to engage in violence, specific social cues may suggest to people before or during an event that a riot is likely to occur. Social cues do not cause anyone to riot, but they may serve as invitations for those who desire to do so. Others may respond to the same social cues by urging non-violence or leaving the area. In her study of the 2002 Ohio State riot, Buettner (2004) identified several of these cues, including communication and actions of university administration who encouraged students not to riot, inadvertently communicating expectations of trouble; media stories reporting on the potential for disturbances; activities of police, who planned for a riot; other students, who speculated that a riot would occur; and alumni, who told students stories about previous campus disturbances.

The 1992 task force survey indicated that ISU students expected a disturbance because of press reports and rumors among students. The April 18 riot was also preceded by media reports on previous riots and rumors about upcoming violence.

Messages predicting rioting may attract to VEISHEA additional people who are interested in a riot, both entrepreneurs and spectators. Unfortunately, each disturbance may increase the likelihood of future disturbances because it results in additional messages indicating that future VEISHEAs may be occasions for rioting. Because of its history of rioting, VEISHEA signals to many people that a riot may occur.

During the course of a gathering, social cues may indicate that a riot is about to take place. At least two of these cues took place when a party at 2644 Hunt Street was broken up by police. First, someone from a balcony began a chant of “Riot! Riot!” Another cue was that police arrived wearing what some people believed was riot gear.

Each disturbance may also increase the likelihood of future disturbances by affecting the attitudes of those who participate in them. “As might be expected, the experiences of the different actors shape the perceptions each person and their reference group take to the next party/event. Entrepreneurs who escape detection may be emboldened. Partiers who feel unjustly persecuted and the unwitting bystander harmed in the confusion of the disturbance will resent the police, and the police will expect the worse when they next confront a group of partying young adults” (Buettner 2004, p. 175).

## **The Role of Rioter Availability and Access**

Riots cannot begin or continue unless a sufficient number of people who are temporally available have access to the riot area (Snyder 1979, McPhail 1994). For instance, urban riots in the 1960s began near high-density housing or major traffic thoroughfares. Large college campuses and adjacent off-campus student housing districts are conducive to riots because of the availability of potential rioters and bystanders. Entirely limiting availability of potential rioters and bystanders on a large residential college campus is impossible without fundamentally changing the nature of the university.

## **The Campustown Neighborhood**

The April 18 riot took place in an area that contained or bordered: (1) higher density off-campus housing, (2) large residence halls, (3) large off-campus parties, (4) bars filled to capacity, and (5) VEISHEA events taking place in Campustown. Other residence halls and much student housing is within easy walking distance to the riot area. Out-of-towners in Ames for VEISHEA provided another pool of available people.

Upzoning of the Campustown area, which has occurred over the past six years, has contributed to an increased number of students renting properties conducive to off-campus parties, while reducing the number of non-students in the neighborhood. According to the City’s proposed University Impacted Sub-Area Plan, the allowable density in this area will increase in the next five years.

## **Weather and Available Rioters**

Time of year also affects the availability of rioters, as can be seen from the nationwide pattern of campus disturbances from 1985-2002. Campus disturbances are less likely to occur during the traditional summer break (only 9% of the total took place in June-July-August) when fewer students are on campus. Disturbances are also less likely to occur during the coldest months of the year (only 10% in December-January-February). Riots are more prevalent during the spring semester (48% in March-April-May) than the fall semester (34% in September-October-November). Precipitation is also likely a deterrent to riot participation. No VEISHEA disturbances have taken place when it was raining or snowing.

Moving VEISHEA (or a replacement festival) to a colder time of year might decrease the chances of a riot taking place. However, riot-friendly (higher temperature) weather may occur in winter just as riot-unfriendly weather (rain) may take place during the spring.

## **The Impact of Community Strain on Riots**

The Ames/Iowa State community, like other college towns, has its share of town-gown conflict. It seems logical that riots may be a result of community strain related to this conflict, that disenfranchised students may be more likely to become rioters, and that the April 18 riot was a protest related to some community issue. However, we believe the evidence for these connections is weak.

A number of factors related to campus/community conditions and/or student attitudes have been suggested as underlying causes of the April 18 riot. These include:

1. Increased strain in the relationship between students and the university, related to student grievances about tuition increases, the effects of budget cuts, and other university actions.
2. Increased strain in the relationship between students and the City of Ames, related to student grievances about the passage of an anti-couch ordinance, aggressive enforcement of over-occupancy regulations, and other City ordinances and actions.
3. A lack of broad ownership in Iowa State University by the larger Ames community.
4. A lack of campus pride by students, faculty and administration, as suggested by a purported low level of knowledge about and enthusiasm for campus traditions.

Establishing a connection between these factors and the riot is difficult to do. Many of the student grievances deal with matters that are quite recent. Since other Iowa State campus disturbances occurred before these developments, any connection between them and the riot is speculative. In addition, there is little evidence that this riot was a protest riot, e.g., the rioters' chants did not refer to tuition increases or anti-couch ordinances.

Since this riot is part of a national wave of riots, it is doubtful that unique local factors are responsible. Establishing, for example, a correlation between campus pride and prevalence of

rioting would require a large-scale study of college campuses, including those that haven't had riots. No such study has been conducted.

Previous research on riots also suggests caution about attributing the causes of riots either to community-level factors or individual predispositions of rioters. Observers of urban riots during the 1960s assumed that cities where rioting occurred (or rioting was more severe) had worse conditions, e.g., social disorganization, deprivation, worse political representation. However, none of these hypotheses were confirmed (Spilerman 1976, McPhail 1994). Thus, claims about connections between campus riots and campus/community conditions should be approached with skepticism. Likewise, studies of riot participation have failed to show that an individual's deprivation or disenfranchisement make him more likely to riot (McPhail 1971; for an overview see McPhail 1994).

The ideas that communities are more likely to have riots if they exhibit strain (what social scientists call the structural strain hypothesis) and that individuals who are deprived are more likely to participate in rioting (the deprivation-frustration-aggression hypothesis) are intuitively appealing. However, neither has mustered empirical support in previous studies of riots.

Improving relationships between students, the university, and the community are worthwhile goals. However, we should be cautious about the claim that they will have an effect on the probability of future disturbances.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

There is much that we don't know about campus riots in general and this riot in particular. Riots begin with gatherings of people similar to many others that do not result in a riot. On April 18 a number of conditions came together to produce this riot. However, we can't say that these conditions would always produce a riot or that these particular conditions were necessary for a riot to develop.

As long as even a small group of students or others are interested in rioting, there is probably no fool-proof way of preventing another riot from occurring at Iowa State University. However, we are suggesting some steps to the task force to consider that we believe may make riots less likely or decrease their severity:

**1. Relocate post-dusk VEISHEA events to Central Campus.** Since official VEISHEA events on Welch are close to many large house parties and bars, moving post-dusk official events to Central Campus will decrease the number of people available for a riot in the Campustown area at night. VEISHEA events on Welch should run until dusk and other expanded or enhanced events should be held on Central Campus after dusk until the early morning hours.

**2. Modify alcohol restrictions and enforcement.** Since current restrictions on alcohol result in more drinking taking place in off-campus house parties, lifting or changing restrictions may decrease the chance of rioting. We suggest that the task force should recommend modifying one or more of the following: (1) restrictions on underage people in

bars, (2) restrictions on alcohol in residence halls, (3) “Dry VEISHEA” policies, and (4) enforcement practices regarding off-campus parties.

**3. Implement strategies to more effectively clear the riot area.** We are proposing strategies that may help ensure that a small disturbance does not escalate into a riot and are necessary to move people out of the area if a riot occurs. These strategies should involve police, business owners, Iowa State University administrators, and students.

- The actions of police play an important role in the dynamic of a riot. Research suggests that bystanders and passersby who become affected by police actions may increase their participation in a riot. Police should do as much as possible to mitigate the negative impact of their riot response on bystanders and passersby by ensuring that all police enforcement agencies employ the same riot control philosophy. In addition, we support the recommendations of the Iowa Law Enforcement Academy, specifically: (1) employ an amplification system to communicate with the crowds for dispersal in an unlawful assembly; (2) assign a supervisor to each squad of law enforcement with communication capacity to a central command center; (3) establish and maintain a command post as soon as practical; (4) evaluate chemical munitions with regard to the types that were most effective and ensure that adequate supplies are available; and (5) if departments other than the Ames Police Department could potentially become involved in these situations, multi-jurisdictional training, coordination and planning should continue to occur.
- Campustown businesses should work with the Ames and Iowa State University police departments to develop a consistent and efficient emergency evacuation plan. All employees of Campustown businesses should be trained in these procedures. This plan should be publicized and posted in all Campustown business, rental properties and made available to neighborhood organizations.
- The University administration should encourage new Iowa State University students to become responsible members of the campus and Ames communities by learning and understanding the rules and regulations of these communities as well as learning and understanding the consequences of illegal behavior. In particular, people should be informed that it is illegal to remain in an riot area regardless of whether a police officer orders you to do so. In addition, the University should have policies in place that would create an effective deterrent against failing to disperse from a riot area.
- Students have a responsibility to learn and understand the rules and regulations of these communities and the consequences of breaking them. Representative groups of students, such as GSB, need to help students understand rules and regulations through Daily ads, a code of conduct handbook and/or additional measures.

**4. Build community in the Campustown area.** As one important step to aid in strengthening community and representation of students living in high-density off-

campus areas, it is strongly recommended that GSB evaluate off-campus student demographic shifts and adequately reflect that in the make-up of its off-campus constituency representatives. To this end, we suggest that one senator be a Campustown resident. In addition, we recommend creating a Campustown Student Association modeled after residence hall student leadership organizations, e.g., RCA, UDA. This association should seek to cooperate with the existing South Campus Neighborhood Association.

## REFERENCES

- Buettner, Cynthia. 2004. "Parties, Police, and Pandemonium: An Exploratory Study of Mixed-Issue Campus Disturbances." Ph.D. Dissertation, Ohio State University. Columbus, Ohio.
- Ciechanowski, Arlen. 2004. Letter to Ames Mayor Ted Tedesco reporting findings of Iowa Law Enforcement Academy review, May 28.
- Galloway, Thomas. 1992. *Report to President Martin C. Jischke from the President's Task Force on VEISHEA*. Iowa State University, Ames, Iowa.
- Kellogg, Sara and Brian Dunn. 2003. *Iowa State University Student Alcohol Survey*. Ames, Iowa.
- Martin, Andrew W. 2004. Personal communication, June 25.
- McCarthy, John D., Andrew Martin, and Clark McPhail. 2004. "The Policing of U.S. University Campus Community Disturbances, 1985-2002." Paper Presented at the Workshop on "Policing Political Protest After Seattle." Fiskebackekil, Sweden.
- McCarthy, John D., Andrew W. Martin, Clark McPhail and Dan Cress. 2002. "Mixed-Issue Campus Disturbances, 1985-2001: Describing the Thing to be Explained." Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Sociological Association. Chicago, IL.
- McPhail, Clark. 1991. *The Myth of the Madding Crowd*. New York: Aldine De Gruyter.
- McPhail, Clark. 1994. "The Dark Side of Purpose: Individual and Collective Violence in Riots." *The Sociological Quarterly* 35:1-32.
- McPhail, Clark, David Schweingruber, and John McCarthy. 1998. "Policing Protest in the United States: 1960-1995." Pp. 49-69 in *Policing Protest: The Control of Mass Demonstrations in Western Democracies*, edited by D. della Porta and H. Reiter. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Off-Campus Party Research Project. 2004. *Participating Institution Report for Iowa State University*. Michigan State University, East Lansing, Michigan.
- Postmes, Tom, and Russell Spears. 1998. "Deindividuation and Antinormative Behavior: A Meta-Analysis." *Psychological Bulletin* 123(3): 238-259.

Schweingruber, David. 2000. "Mob Sociology and Escalated Force: Sociology's Contribution to Repressive Police Tactics." *The Sociological Quarterly* 41:371-389.

Snyder, D. 1979. "Collective Violence Processes: Implications for Disaggregated Theory and Research." Pp. 35-61 in *Research in Social Movements, Conflicts and Change*, L. Kriesberg (ed.). JAI: Greenwich, CN.

Spillerman, S. "Structural Characteristics of Cities and the Severity of Racial Disorders." *American Sociological Review* 41:771-793.

Tilly, Charles. 1978. *From Mobilization to Revolution*. New York: Random House.