


Campus Riots



April 11, 2008

<http://www.iastate.edu/~soc.134>

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Riot overview

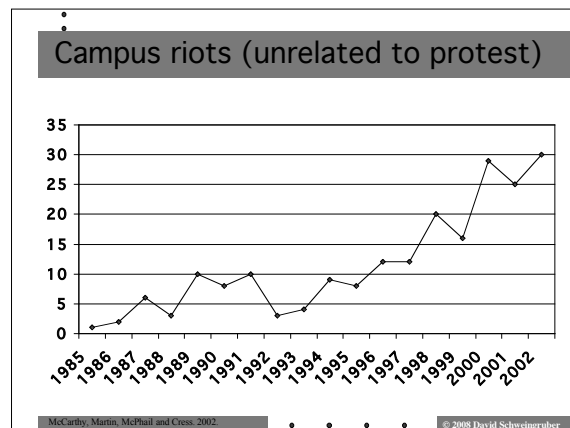
- ✓ Types of riots
 - Communal riot ("race riot"): people targeted because of ethnic group, language or religion
 - Commodity riot: property is destroyed regardless of ownership
 - Protest riot: violence to protest policy or actions by authorities or others
 - Police riot: police beat people instead of arresting them
 - Celebratory riot: violence to celebrate sports victory or other occasion
 - Not found in contemporary U.S.: soccer riots, food riots, machine breaking
- ✓ Riots often take place in waves
 - Race riots in 1910-20s and 1940s
 - Urban (commodity) riots in 1960s
 - Campus riots in 1990s-2000s

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Campus unrest

- ✓ Campus unrest has a long history in the U.S.
 - Students protested in favor of the U.S. Revolution
 - Late 18th Century: Harvard students rioted against bad food
 - 19th Century: Riots against *in loco parentis* and other institutional policies; land-grant students protested against mandatory military training
 - 1960s-70s: Widespread protest regarding the Vietnam War and civil rights
 - 1990s-2000: Riots unrelated to protest become common; these are called "celebratory riots," "mixed-issue campus disturbances," or "convivial disorders"

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Iowa State Campus Disturbances

- ✓ 1985: During VEISHEA weekend's "Ash Bash," cars were overturned and burned.
- ✓ 1988: Disturbances took place on three consecutive VEISHEA weekend nights. During the Sunday morning riot, people in a crowd of approximately 5,000 threw bottles, bricks and rocks and made a bonfire from furniture. Of the 45 people arrested, 25 were ISU students.
- ✓ 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.
- ✓ 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.
- ✓ 1998: Prior to VEISHEA, 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 was viewed as a protest against the first "Dry VEISHEA."
- ✓ 1999: During a planned 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 profanities 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.
- ✓ 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.
- ✓ 2004: Rioters in a crowd of approximately 2,000 destroyed property in Campustown and threw objects at police. Police arrested 37 individuals, including 22 Iowa State University students and three recent alumni.

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April 17-18, 2004, riot chronology

- ✓ 11:20 p.m.: Ames police receive complaint of party on Hunt Street
- ✓ 11:45 p.m.-12:10 a.m.: Police arrest apartment occupant for bootlegging. Two officers arrested intoxicated individual, who fell or was pushed to the ground. Officers were targeted by rocks, bottles and cans. Decision was made to close party. Police wearing face shields and helmets arrived at the scene. Police asked party-goers to leave if they weren't residents.
- ✓ 12:30 a.m.: A large crowd of people dispersing from Hunt Street merged with a crowd already on Welch. Several instances of violence took place: windows were broken; a fire was started in a trash can; one person was struck with a ketchup bottle, resulting in a fight between the victim and thrower. Police asked people to leave the intersection and sprayed pepper spray on people who didn't comply.
- ✓ 1:00 a.m.: Rioters regrouped and returned to Welch just south of the clock tower. They broke windows, threw rocks, pushed over portable toilets. They attempted to flip a police car. Police organized in the Welch Avenue fire station and put on full protective equipment ("riot gear").
- ✓ 1:00-4:30 a.m.: Most riot activity occurred along Lincoln Way between Welch and Sheldon. Police made repeat trips from the Welch Avenue fire station, attempting to disperse the crowd. Approximately 3,000 people were in the street and in front of Friley. Officers from the Ames Police, ISU Police, Story County Sheriff's office, Iowa State Police Division and Iowa State Highway Troopers were on the scene. By 4:30 a.m. the crowd had dispersed.

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Explaining riots

- ✓ Unsupported explanations
 - People are driven mad by the crowd (recall lecture on panic)
 - Community strain
- ✓ Prerequisites/contributing factors
 - People with access to riot area
 - People temporally available to riot
 - Social cues may serve as "invitations to riot," e.g., rumors, media stories, administration/police preparations, police intervention, police in "riot gear," history of rioting
 - People with purposes for rioting
- ✓ Two types of purposes for rioting (McPhail 1994)
 - Intended violence: violence that results from people pursuing inherently violent goals
 - Outcome violence: violence that results from people with non-violent goals, but who face resistance to these goals

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Purposes in a riot area

- ✓ Non-violent purposes:
 - Majority of people in riot area do not commit violence
 - People were in Campustown riot area to watch, transport friends, help injured, protect property.
- ✓ Intended violence (results from inherently violent goals)
 - "A majority of this violence [at the April 18 riot] was committed because it was fun for both the actors and their audience."
 - "Entrepreneurs" take the lead in attempting to start a riot. They are typically young white men. (Buettner 2004)
 - E.g., man chanted "Riot, riot!" from balcony at Hunt Street; "Spartacus" urged on crowd on Lincoln Way
- ✓ Soc 134 survey:
 - "I would like to participate in a riot during my college years." 23.7% agree
 - "I would like to watch a riot during my college years." 49.5% agree
 - "If I was in a riot area, I would leave immediately." 39.8% disagree

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Outcome violence and alcohol restrictions

- ✓ Alcohol has been an important part of university life for centuries
 - 2003 ISU student survey: 73% had used alcohol in past month, 41% engaged in high-risk drinking during past two weeks, Majority believed alcohol helps break the ice (71.4%) and allows people to have more fun (56.1%).
- ✓ Alcohol can contribute to rioting in two ways:
 - Lowers inhibitions and impairs thinking and coordination
 - Restrictions may create encounters between partiers and police attempting to enforce restrictions and respond to problems
- ✓ Alcohol restrictions at ISU included under-21 ordinance, residence hall restrictions and "Dry VEISHEA" (enacted after 1997 murder and revoked following the riot)
 - Restrictions may drive drinking to large off-campus parties and create additional encounters with police

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Outcome violence and police

- ✓ Policing a riot is very difficult; police are often unable to distinguish between rioters and onlookers/passersby
- ✓ Observers/passersby may increase involvement after being affected by police tactics
 - Many eye witnesses complained about overuse of force, usually by pepper spray. Some blamed police for precipitating/escalating the riot.

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