

**An Analysis of Issues Related to Celebratory Riots at Higher Education Institutions**

Submitted By: Jeffrey M. Van Slyke

**ABSTRACT:**

The incidents of celebratory riots, or student disturbances which are not associated with demonstrations, have risen dramatically over the past several years. There is also evidence that the crowd size and level of destruction associated with many of these celebratory events have increased significantly. The seriousness of the harm associated with these events i.e., danger to the participants, destruction of student and community property, injury to law enforcement officers, and the damage to a university's reputation, have all raised the level of concern of both university and community leaders across the United States.

There appears to be two dimensions of the problem: the interaction between and among student-athletes, coaches, officials, and spectators during the athletic event; and post-game celebration in which destructive rioting occurs. The cultural characteristics of an institution also play a significant role in creating an environment for inappropriate behavior. The prevalence of alcohol and the inconsistencies of institutional accountability with respect to enforcement of administrative rules and criminal laws have contributed to creating a campus climate that legitimizes inappropriate behavior. Higher education institutions have a compelling interest to address the issue of alcohol, community and culture, event and celebration management, and student behavior.

The purpose of this paper is to provide an analysis of the issues related to celebratory riots at institutions of higher education. The primary policy issue concerns what cultural response and risk management practices should higher educations institutions implement. Specifically, what strategies should institutions develop that will minimize institutional vulnerability and encourage appropriate behavior during athletic events. Strategic policies initiatives should be developed that provide a prescriptive set of actions designed to address the issues related to celebratory riots.

**INTRODUCTION**

Incidents of celebratory riots, or student disturbances which are not associated with demonstrations, have risen dramatically over the past several years with respect to athletic events and student activities. There is also evidence that the crowd size and level of destruction associated with many of these celebratory events have increased significantly. The seriousness of the harm associated with these events (i.e., danger to the participants, destruction of student and community property, injury to

law enforcement officers, and damage to a university's reputation) has raised significant concerns for both university and community leaders across the United States. The purpose of this paper is to provide an analysis of the issues related to celebratory riots at institutions of higher education. The primary policy issue concerns what cultural response and strategic risk management practices should higher education institutions implement to minimize institutional vulnerability and encourage appropriate behavior during university events.

### **HISTORICAL BACKDROP OF CAMPUS RIOTS**

Many people assume that colleges and universities are safe havens from crime and violence. Considering the number of incidents including riots, bombings and even murder that have been documented since the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the image of institutions as an idyllic pastoral retreat from a cruel and violent world is as illusionary then as it is now (Esposito and Stormer, 1989). Historically, Rudolph (1962) found that college campuses are not the safe environments they are often thought to be. During the period of 1800 to 1875, Rudolph reported student unrest on the campuses of Miami University, Amherst, Brown, the University of South Carolina, Harvard, Yale, Dartmouth, Bowdoin, the City College of New York, Dickenson, and DePauw. Including incidents in which students and faculty were killed at South Carolina College, the University of Virginia, Oakland College, the University of Georgia, Illinois College, and the University of Missouri. Harvard University experienced the first recorded student uprising in 1766, when students protested bad food. Harvard continued its problems with additional student rebellions throughout most of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. In 1823, Harvard expelled over half of the senior class, and in 1834 the president of Harvard demanded that city authorities convene a grand jury to indict students involved in a riot. In 1842, there was a confrontation between the students of Harvard and three hundred townspeople in which daggers, pokers, and clubs were used (Lipset and Schaflander, 1971).

From 1800-1836, students at the College of New Jersey (present day Princeton University) had six major rebellions including a riot which lasted several days and involved guns and bricks. In another incident, students at the College of New Jersey seized several buildings and defied authorities to remove them from the premises (Esposito and Stormer, 1989). By the late 1800s, campus unrest and student conflicts reached epic proportions. Like most institutions of the day, Yale University encompassed a large segment of the town that frequently involved conflicts between students and residents, which often

escalated into violent and bloody confrontations. The worst of these mass riots occurred when the citizens of New Haven believed that students from the Yale University Medical School were exhuming bodies from a local cemetery located near the Yale campus, and were using them as cadavers (Powell, 1994).

During the early 1900s, as America continued to grow so too did the demands upon colleges and universities. Campus administrators began to slowly acknowledge institutional problems and attempted to implement greater measures to protect lives and property. Problems associated with the abuse of alcohol, student rebellions, and the national mania associated with intercollegiate athletic events, primarily the game of football, became more prevalent. In a survey conducted by the Ohio State University Task Force on Celebratory Riots in March of 2003, (*The Ohio State University Report*, 2003, p. 29), the following universities responded by indicating that they had experienced at least one celebratory riot during the five year period of 1997-2002:

Colorado State University	Clemson University
University of Connecticut	University of Colorado
University of Dayton	University of Maryland
University of Michigan	University of Minnesota
University of Oregon	University of West Virginia
University of Wisconsin	Indiana University
Kansas State University	Michigan State University
Ohio State University	Ohio University
Pennsylvania State University	Purdue University
University of California Los Angeles	Washington State University

#### **DEFINITION OF A CELEBRATORY RIOT**

Student unrest, sometimes leading to riot, has historically been related to some form of demonstration that was prompted by academic and institutional concerns, or by social and political issues. Most recently, however, student unrest has been associated directly with celebrations related to athletic events. Incidents of celebratory disturbances other than disturbances associated with protests are a new phenomenon that has risen sharply in the last two decades. In fact, the term “celebratory riots” was first selected as a moniker by a joint task force that was established between Ohio State University and the City of Columbus, to describe events that are characterized by “... a large gathering of students who have consumed alcohol and who spontaneously engage in destructive, antisocial behavior” (*The Ohio State University Report*, 2003, p. 7). It is believed that the increased frequency of “celebratory riots” is associated with a perceived increase in disrespectful, inappropriate, and uncivil behavior among students

and other young adults. Such behavior, most often referred to as “poor sportsmanship,” has typically occurred before, during, and after sporting events. While such behaviors are not exclusively predictive of rioting, their increased prevalence is thought to be a contributing factor to celebratory riots.

Spectator aggression has been defined as “behavior that intends to destroy property or injure another person, or is grounded in a total disregard for the well-being of self or others” (*NCAA Report*, 2003, p.2). The Ohio State University Task Force on Preventing Celebratory Riots identified a number of factors that defined a celebratory riot:

- Sometimes, but not always, associated with sporting events.
- Typically occur very late at night and extend into the early morning hours.
- Almost always associated with high volume alcohol consumption.
- Involves fire setting as a common practice along with destruction of public and private property, such as overturning and burning cars.
- Involves active participants who are nearly all white, young adult males with a large crowd of onlookers who are predominately white, young adults of both sexes. Many are students of the "host" institution, but other young adults who are not students are often involved.
- Involves eventual police intervention that is met with considerable resistance and lack of respect for authority (*The Ohio State University Report*, 2003).

Thus, the term celebratory riot refers to a wide range of events that includes large numbers of people acting in one or more common areas in a way that threatens personal safety and all property. The events are typically chaotic, frightening, and dangerous from the perspective of those who are present, and they involve arrests and injuries. Celebratory riots may be precipitated by planned events (e.g., homecoming, spring-fling,) or may be more spontaneous following an intercollegiate athletic event (*University of New Hampshire Student Summary*, 2003).

### **DEFINITION OF THE POLICY ISSUE**

According to Fowler (2000), defining a policy issue is a political process that involves identifying a problem that can be addressed by an appropriate governing body. The most predominant governing entities responsible for higher education policy includes a governing board (Board of Regents), a “system” bureaucracy, and the institution’s president and administration. Characteristically, a policy issue may be extremely controversial, complex, and may substantially increase an institution’s degree of financial and environmental vulnerability (Fowler, 2000). Invariably, a policy issue will involve an intrinsic institutional concern that requires some degree of administrative attention. Policy issues may also have a significant impact on the future of an institution because the impending policy decision may, in due time, bind an institution to a significant course of action. For the purpose of this analysis, the “problem” concerns how

higher education institutions will respond to the issue of maintaining a reasonable and acceptable level of sportsmanship and celebration at a minimum risk to a campus community. There appears to be two dimensions related to the problem of celebratory riots: the interaction between student-athletes, coaches, officials, and spectators during the athletic event; and post-game celebration in which destructive rioting occurs.

Generally, higher education policy issues are addressed based upon the objectives and rules of an institution, state law, culture, tradition, historic development, and the present climate of the campus community (Cibulka, 1995). Response to a policy issue requires the ability to identify the actors who need to be involved in purposeful discussion, and that can develop a framework of objectives necessary to implement reasonable strategies or guidelines (Anderson, 1997). Policy decisions tend to be critical decisions because major policies commit an institution to definite goals and strategies for resolving an issue. Thus, higher education institutions have a compelling interest, both legally and ethically, to address the issue of alcohol, community and culture, event and celebration management, and student behavior. Strategic policy initiatives should be developed that provide a prescriptive set of actions designed to address the issues related to celebratory riots.

**CASE STUDY: (*Cimino v. Yale University* – 638 F. Supp. 952; 1986 U. S. District)**

***Background***

As a spectator at the November 19, 1983, Yale-Harvard football game, Harvard University student Margaret Cimino sustained serious injuries when she was struck by a goal post that had been pulled down by students at the conclusion of the game. Consequently, she filed suit in the United States District Court of Connecticut on June 30, 1986. Specifically, the Plaintiff (*Cimino*) contended that Yale University and the City of New Haven were negligent for failing to provide adequate crowd control and security, and for agreeing in advance not to prevent the razing of the goal posts. In *Cimino*, the plaintiff also asserted that the conditions at the Yale Bowl resulted in the creation of a nuisance. The *Cimino* complaint invoked Connecticut General Statute § 7-108, which reads:

Each city and borough shall be liable for all injuries to person or property, including injuries causing death, when such injuries are caused by an act of violence of any person or persons while a member of, or acting in concert with, any mob, riotous assembly or assembly of persons engaged in disturbing the public peace, if such city or borough, or the police . . . have not exercised reasonable care or diligence in the prevention or suppression of such mob, riotous assembly or assembly engaged in disturbing the public peace (*Cimino v. Yale*, 1986).

### **Discussion**

Based on the Court's interpretation of the Connecticut Statute, individuals are not entitled to the same public right protection afforded by the public nuisance law when attending a ticketed football game on private property. Thus, the public nuisance claim was dismissed by the Court on behalf of Yale University because of its status as private property. The civil liability, however, attributed to Yale University and the City of New Haven included the following:

- An agreement that *allowed* the goal posts to be pulled down.
- The obligation to protect the plaintiff and others similarly situated.
- A lack of adequate, trained and organized personnel.
- The obligation to plan for foreseeable contingencies.
- The duty to respond, react, prevent, stop and suppress the conduct of those present in relation to the goal posts by which the plaintiff was injured.
- The responsibility to provide equipment to protect against and prevent the conduct of others that resulted in injuries sustained by the plaintiff (*Cimino v. Yale*, 1986).

The Court further admonished that where the duty of an official is not ministerial but involves the exercise of discretion, an officer (Yale) is subject to liability if "the duty to act is clear and unequivocal," such as when a failure to act "would be likely to subject an identifiable person to imminent harm" (p. 6). In addition, the Court added that police officers at the Yale Bowl were dealing with a specific group of people who were endangering other individuals within the officers' line of sight. Yale also failed to provide security, spectator protection, and crowd control at a particular event, and thus violated a specific duty owed to every person that purchased a ticket and attended the Yale Bowl (*Cimino v. Yale*, 1986).

As to the tradition of allowing fans onto the playing field at the conclusion of each home game, the author of this paper contacted Yale University Chief of Police James A. Perrotti concerning the *Cimino* incident. Chief Perrotti confirmed that at the time of the incident, the Yale University Athletic Department maintained a *tradition* of letting students onto the field following every home football game. The rationale being that the practice served as an opportunity for students to interact with the players and coaches, and also as an "outlet of energy." Chief Perrotti acknowledged that an agreement with the City of New Haven existed which included *not* protecting the goal posts. Officers were also instructed to use "passive deterrence" by making "an initial effort short of physical force" to discourage the destruction of the goal posts. According to Perrotti, "Once students overwhelmed the officers, officers backed off and allowed students to tear the goal posts down." Chief Perrotti indicated that two other factors contributed to the

*Cimino* incident: the prevalence of alcohol which he maintains was “impossible to control or monitor.”

According to Perrotti, there are thirty portals to the football field and a crowd capacity of 80,000 people makes it equally difficult to prevent fans from coming onto the field (Perrotti Interview, March 29, 2004). Eventually, Yale University and the City of New Haven settled with the plaintiff for an undisclosed, “but substantial,” financial figure. The author attempted to contact the plaintiff’s legal representatives, Finger & Finger, White Plains, New York for further information regarding the *Cimino* settlement, but was denied any additional facts. Following the *Cimino* incident, Chief Perrotti indicated that there were significant improvements to the law enforcement planning process regarding the Yale Bowl, as well as a Yale police department leadership change. According to Perrotti, Yale still allows students to “...come on to the field, run around, have little football games, and then after ten minutes an announcement is made to clear the field.” The premise is to allow for students to interact and celebrate in a civil manner but the expectation and message to students now is that the goal posts are off limits.

Chief Perrotti stated that in just about every football planning meeting the *Cimino* incident is discussed, and the case now serves as a planning session benchmark. He indicated that the goal posts are now greased, mounted horses are now assigned to each goal post, the number of officers at each goal post has doubled, and that anyone attempting to approach the goal posts is immediately arrested. The additional annual financial expense incurred by Yale for improving security coverage was increased by approximately \$5,000. Chief Perrotti concluded by stating that the goal posts in the Yale Bowl have never been torn down since the *Cimino* incident occurred in 1983.

### **ORGANIZATION/ADMINISTRATIVE CULTURE**

Higher education culture consists of a complex set of continually evolving core elements comprised of assumptions and beliefs that are shared, to some degree, by members of an institution involved in the policy analysis and decision-making process, which influences major events, activities, or crisis situations (Tierney 1988, as cited by Brown, p. 169). Culture in higher education can be defined as, “The shared beliefs, ideologies, values, practices, and assumptions that guide the behavior of individuals and organizations” (Brown, 2000, p. 147). In the context of higher education, Smirich (1983) describes culture as “social or normative glue” that is based upon shared values and beliefs that hold organizations together and serve four general purposes: 1) culture conveys a sense of identity; 2) culture facilitates

commitment to an entity; 3) culture enhances the stability of an institution's social system; and 4) culture guides and shapes behavior. According to Gage (1978, as cited by Brown, p. 161) culture defines, identifies, and legitimizes the authority within higher education institutions, and culture has policy implications for institutional change.

Typically, the organization and administrative design of higher education institutions is supported by norms pervasive in all aspects of a university's bureaucracy that in some ways operates autonomously but in other ways remains interdependent. Without interdependence there can be no politics, culture, or power. As such, it is only when individuals, interest groups, and subunits rely upon each other that they become interested or concerned about an activity or the behavior of others. Tierney (1997) contends that the socialization process at colleges and universities can be improved upon by defining the modernist and postmodernist perspectives about culture and socialization. Tierney's research considers the nature of organizational culture and identifies values, goals and behaviors that are outdated or inconsistent with twenty-first century expectations.

Tierney (1997) asserts that the modernist position views socialization as a one-way process with the organization being responsible for what has to be learned and the individual as being a passive recipient. He also suggests that the postmodernist perspective claims that individuals are responsible for influencing the culture of an organization, thus making socialization a dual and reciprocal process, which has greater implications and value than the modernist position. Tierney maintains that organizational culture is better served, and far more coherent, when mutual dependency has been derived based upon interaction and not exclusively upon organizational expectations.

The cultural characteristics of an institution also play a significant role in creating an environment for inappropriate behavior. The prevalence of alcohol and the inconsistencies of institutional accountability with respect to enforcement of administrative rules and criminal laws can contribute to creating a campus climate that legitimizes inappropriate behavior. While it is difficult to make a crowd civil, it is certainly within the control of the athletic department, student affairs, university police, and executive administrators to minimize unlawful behavior by effectively communicating clearly stated behavioral expectations and consequences. Underage drinking, open containers, destroying goal posts and coming onto the field of play are all against the law. Institutions should not excuse those behaviors because of

tradition or environment. The “our house” environment that athletic departments tend to create does not mean that campus administrators should forgo the responsibility of enforcing security measures.

Thus, the challenge for higher education institutions is to make a balanced political decision with due regard for the legal authority of governance and the social preferences of institutional culture (Baldrige, 1971). The nature of competition itself tends to create a hostile environment among student-athletes, coaches, officials and fans. Many institutions compound this by trying to create difficult and intimidating environments (with rowdy student sections as the primary vehicle) for opposing teams and fans. Moreover, institutions invest time and promotional resources to encourage rabid fanaticism which may tend to create event environments that are susceptible to poor sportsmanship and fan behavior.

Higher education institution core administrators (athletics, student affairs, president's office, etc.) must work collectively to address the behavior associated with celebratory riots. The challenge is to safeguard the opportunity to remain competitive for millions of dollars in revenue and maintain a publicly acceptable level of safety and security in both town and gown environments. It is important that institutions acknowledge the difference between civil and unlawful fan behavior. Intercollegiate athletics does not function in a vacuum. Its qualities, redeeming and harmful, have been developed and shaped over time by the culture of greater society. While those within intercollegiate athletics have only marginal control over social culture, individuals within intercollegiate athletics, higher education and other constituent groups have an affirmative duty to remain diligent in their efforts to ensure that athletics events are conducted in contexts that are safe and positive.

### **FINANCIAL IMPACT**

#### ***University of Minnesota Incident***

The April 12, 2003, riot following The University of Minnesota men's hockey team's national championship victory caused an estimated \$250,000 worth of damage to the Twin Cities campus primarily consisting of broken windows, overturned trash containers, and damaged parking booths. Thousands of dollars in damage also occurred to private property in nearby neighborhoods (*Minnesota eNews*, April 17, 2003). Moreover, eight people were charged in connection with the violence, five of those with felonies, and the University of Minnesota also charged twelve students with disciplinary violations under the Student Conduct Code for on-campus behavior.

Immediately following the riot, University of Minnesota President Bob Bruininks joined the community and citizens across the state in expressing outrage at the criminal activity on and around the Twin Cities campus, "We simply will not tolerate vandalism or criminal destruction of property on or off campus by University students, and we are deeply disappointed that the actions of some individuals have tarnished the reputation of this institution" (*Minnesota eNews*, April 17, 2003). Bruininks stated that the University would work with the Minneapolis Police Department to identify the students involved; and those who broke the law would be subject to prosecution by the local authorities and also face disciplinary action by the University. Bruininks also conveyed that even though most University students are young adults, they need to be held accountable for their behavior, especially when it is illegal, regardless of their student status (*Minnesota eNews*, June 12, 2003).

### ***Ohio State University Incident***

Following the November 2002, Ohio State-Michigan game, fans rushed the Ohio Stadium field and attempted to tear down the south goal post to celebrate securing a place in the Bowl Championship Series title game. This mob, however, began to tear up the turf on the field when they faced a barrage of pepper spray from authorities and were unable to take the uprights down. That night, a celebratory riot ensued on the streets of Columbus, costing the city almost \$125,000 in overtime police pay (Burrick, 2003). According to Columbus Police, 250 officers were working the university district dressed in riot gear and armed with tear gas. OSU student Erika Wonn stated that there were two reasons why the partying got out of hand: "Thugs and alcohol. That's exactly what it was. Tons of people watching and they had an audience" (Burton, 2002).

Subsequently, 48 people were arrested, and during the riot, approximately twenty vehicles were burned or damaged as unruly crowds covered a 10-block area east of campus. In addition, firefighters responded to 107 small fires which resulted in damage to property that was estimated to exceed \$400,000. Ohio State University Vice President for Student Affairs Bill Hall stated: "Let's face it; what we have here is a bunch of thugs. Any OSU student involved will be suspended and expelled if convicted" (Burton, 2002). Likewise, OSU President Karen Holbrook expressed her displeasure about the incident by issuing the following press release:

It is sad to note that last night's behavior is not unique to Ohio State. There were similar events at other campuses in the hours following major games yesterday afternoon and evening. Indeed,

this is a national and ongoing problem and regrettably has become an all too common characteristic of our society. What the ultimate answer might be, I am not certain. But, it is my view that such behaviors must be addressed on many fronts by university presidents, parents, and by the students themselves (Holbrook, 2002).

At Ohio State, police estimate that on football game days, 190,000 people gather adjacent to Columbus stadium where beer companies often obtain alcohol permits by making deals with local charities. In what is an admittedly futile effort to keep beer and liquor out of stadiums, colleges are investing heavily in security. According to former Ohio State Police Chief Ron Michalec, "If they have to cut off a leg and hollow it out to get the alcohol in they will do it" (Burton, 2002). At its eight home football games last season, Ohio State spent nearly \$1 million for police. The average of \$108,000 that Ohio State spends on police for each football game is at the high end of the scale. While many schools have acted to restrict tailgating, the notion of policing pre-game parties, many of them wealthy donors, can be a touchy one. "You can get the wrong person," said Michalec, who said he would only arrest tailgaters on a written order from the school's president. "It's one of the toughest propositions we face." In 2003, OSU decided to act by authorizing police to issue citations to tailgaters, warning that open-container laws would be enforced. "It's made a huge difference," said Elizabeth Conlisk, the Ohio State Director of Media Relations. "Before that our students had been saying, 'How come you're bothering us but not all those 40-year-old guys who are drinking right over there in the parking lot'" (Fitzpatrick, 2004).





Photos provided by Columbus, Ohio Police-November 25, 2002 (Burton, 2002).

### ***Other Universities\Communities***

In addition to the Ohio and Minnesota incidents, other areas of the United States have also experienced tremendous financial loss and economic impact as a result of celebratory riots:

- Morgantown, West Virginia\University of West Virginia - over 1120 street fires have occurred since 1997 related to sporting events (five times the national average). In 2002, the City of Morgantown incurred over \$430,300 in property damage as a result of “street” arson (Tennant, 2003).
- Iowa State University\Ames, Iowa, April, 2004 - VEISHA Celebration (student run marketing display of ISU) riot resulted in over \$100,000 damage, 41 students arrested; characterized as “alcohol-fueled” (Bolton, 2004).
- Arizona, Boston College, Northwestern, Notre Dame, Wisconsin, Purdue, Nebraska, and Kansas State all recently invested \$30,000 in a pair of “indestructible” goal posts (Rovell, 2002).
- University of Connecticut\Stoors, Connecticut - following the NCAA men’s basketball championship victory in April 2004, student celebration led to beds, couches, bureaus, tree branches, and overturned cars being damaged or burned. Eighteen windows were broken at an estimated cost of \$450 each at one apartment complex, 23 students arrested and 37 treated for injuries (Silva, 2004).
- When the University of New Hampshire lost to the University of Minnesota in the college hockey championship on April 2002, a crowd of 4,000 revelers gathered in Durham, New Hampshire, resulting in 87 arrests and \$12,200 in damage (Billings, 2003).
- In March 2003, thousands of Michigan State University revelers took to the streets of East Lansing after the MSU men's basketball team lost to Texas in the NCAA Tournament Regional Finals that resulted in over \$40,000 damage and more than 30 arrests (McEvelly, 2004).
- More than \$250,000 in property damage occurred at Michigan State University following the March 27-28, 1999 riots that resulted in 132 arrests, including 71 MSU students (McEvelly, 2004).

## **THEORIES AND EXPLANATIONS**

Why do students and fans engage in unsportsmanlike and aggressive behavior? Well-developed theories and empirical research about the collective behavior associated with celebratory riots in the United States is virtually non-existent. Although research of sports riots might seem like a good place to develop common theories and concepts that can be attributed to celebratory riots, the theorizing of sports riots is generally weak. Few researchers have studied sports riots in the U.S. at the same level that hooliganism has been studied in Europe. Likewise, the number of sociological and social psychology theories used to explain the "maddening crowd," and that would seem applicable to celebratory riots, have not survived the scrutiny of empirical research (*The Ohio State University Report*, 2003).

According to sociologist Seymour Martin Lipset, the university and college student populations may be "the most volatile and most easily mobilizable of all social strata" (*The Ohio State University Report*, 2003, p. 19). Moreover, the demographics of sports crowd disturbances in the United States consist largely of police and media reports that can be often inaccurate or difficult to validate. According to research by Wann and Melnick (as cited by *NCAA Report*, 2003, p. 4) this question must be analyzed from psychological and sociological perspectives. Psychological approaches to spectator aggression tend to focus on the impact of specific aspects of a spectator's personality and unique physical factors found within spectator environments. The *social learning theory* involves spectators that learn to act aggressively by watching the aggressive acts of others. For example, the poor sportsmanship of coaches and student-athletes leads to poor sportsmanship among fans. Also, media highlights of spectator aggression and fan violence on college campuses contribute to fans adopting similar behavior because fans see media coverage as validation or promotion of the activity, (*NCAA Report*, 2003, p. 4).

Conversely, sociological viewpoints tend to rely on the impact of larger sociological phenomena such as culture, social structure and social environments. For example, the *Convergence Theory* consists of a number of homogeneous people in a crowd (e.g., a large student section), that leads to higher levels of arousal and lessened inhibitions, thereby increasing the likelihood of collective behavior (e.g., taunts, storming the field). Likewise, the *Contagion Theory* involves the ideas, moods and behaviors that begin with one person and can become rapidly communicated and accepted by crowd

members. Thus, once a few fans decide to run onto the field or begin rioting, the other fans in the area can quickly adopt that behavior, (*NCAA Report, 2003*).

Of the sociological theories on collective behavior, the *perceptual control theory* offers an explanation of riot participation that has been supported by experimental and ethnographic study. A major premise of this theory is that an individual's behavior is not governed by consequences or action outcomes. Rather, individuals select stimuli that match their intentions to what is happening around them, and resist any interference which may prevent them from following through with their intentions. This theory of collective behavior suggests two ways in which individual or collective violence develops: *outcome violence* and *intended violence*. In the path to *outcome violence*, individuals act either alone or together to control the situation relative to some nonviolent goal such as "partying hard." When these individuals encounter resistance, they attempt to eliminate that interference in an effort to maintain the premise of "a good time." If that interference persists along with their continued efforts to overcome it, the struggle between the interference and purposive resistance may lead to violence associated with celebratory riots.

Typically, *outcome violence* results from police trying to disperse large groups of drunken partiers. *Intended violence* is the result of those for whom violence is their sole intention from the beginning. These individuals will act to make their perceptions of the situation match their goal of violence, such as vandalism, looting, arson and assault (*The Ohio State University Report, 2003*). An example of this would be soccer hooligans who go to games intent on beating someone or those who participate in celebratory riots with the primary objective of destroying goal posts or vandalizing and burning property.

### **COMMON DENOMINATORS**

Recent disturbances at campuses throughout the country (Ohio State University, University of Minnesota, University of New Hampshire, University of Maryland, Clemson, and the University of West Virginia) have documented underlying causes and contributing factors related to celebratory riots:

- An increased participation by white females and individuals with no university affiliation.
- An attitude of entitlement or a right of passage i.e., "I paid to go to college, I get to do this; it's my right."
- False belief that no harm is done; that insurance will cover damages.
- Mob mentality sweeps up many who had no intention of becoming involved.
- Excitement factor; many seek a confrontation with police as a way to ratchet up the adrenaline.

- Jurisdictional conflicts among police agencies that hinder the ability to coordinate effective law enforcement response.
- Neighborhood conditions; high population density, run down buildings, absentee landlords, little sense of community.
- Attitudes of parents: “what’s the big deal? I did it when I was a student,” and “My child can’t be at fault; it’s the police, university or someone else’s responsibility.
- Lax zoning ordinances that have encouraged parties and facilitated disturbances due to inadequate parking spaces; and, inability to remove furniture from porches and balconies.
- Ineffective or lack of enforcement of liquor laws that would limit keg sales, glass bottles, etc. versus strict enforcement of underage drinking that encourages those under 21 to seek off-campus resident parties. (Hall, 2002).

Oddly enough, the cell phone phenomena can turn a small disturbance into a full-scale eruption, as described by Ohio State Vice President for Student Affairs Bill Hall: “Students can now communicate when something is about to occur in a specific area. Curiosity takes effect, the crowds escalate very quickly, and trouble builds. The availability and use of cell phones has now enabled students involved in a disturbance to alert each other of where the ‘action is’” (Hoover, 2003).

### ***Alcohol Consumption***

According to Chermack and Taylor (1995), alcohol can lead to an increase in fan aggression, as intoxicated subjects with high expectations about the effects of alcohol were more aggressive than subjects with low expectations. In short, alcohol tends to provide fans with a type of liquid confidence to do things they normally would not. Merrill Melnick, a social psychologist at the State University of New York at Brockport, describes alcohol as an “inflammatory agent” that contributes to the problem of celebratory riots (Burrick, 2003). In speaking directly to the issue of celebratory riots, Dr. Kermit Hall, President of Utah State University stated that: “Alcohol is recognized as the fuel for this behavior and is the single biggest drug problem on campuses” (Paul & Lingo, 2003).

Educational approaches alone have proven largely ineffective in reducing rates of high-risk drinking; whereas, approaches that emphasize skill building along with attitudinal change and feedback-based interventions have proven more effective (*The Ohio State University Report*, 2003). The most consistent data supports the efficacy of two particular approaches: social norming and motivational interviewing. The social norm approach focuses on wide scale changes in misperceptions about alcohol consumption. The premise is to change the “everyone’s doing it” perception around high-risk drinking by crafting messages that more accurately reflect acceptable behavior.

A variation of the social norm practice is to craft messages that will stigmatize unacceptable

behavior within a peer group (*The Ohio State University Report*, 2003). This approach has been used successfully in the Greek and other student affairs organizations. Motivational interviewing is a more individualized approach that gives direct feedback to drinkers on their rates of consumption compared to the population at large. In a structured interview, drinkers are asked to report their levels of consumption. Data is then compared with drinking rates in direct comparison to the student population at large. The discrepancy, even in situations where most students may have consumed alcohol periodically, is in itself motivational. Student affairs professionals have used this relatively simple procedure to motivate high-risk binge drinkers to effectively reduce consumption (*The Ohio State University Report*, 2003).

### ***Levels of Spectator Behavior***

Incidents of inappropriate fan behavior in recent years have known no geographical bounds, and have occurred after an institution's football, basketball, or hockey teams *either* won or lost critical games during regular and postseason play (*NCAA Report*, 2003). cursory studies of celebratory riot incidents have failed to conclude that there is one single factor that contributes to spectator/student aggression. Psychological approaches to spectator aggression argue that the specific aspects of an individual's personality and the unique physical factors of a sporting environment can nurture hostility. The sociological viewpoint tends to rely on the impact of culture, social structure and social environments.

The recent *NCAA Report on Sportsmanship and Fan Behavior* (2003) has identified four levels of spectator aggression, and has strongly encouraged higher education institutions to develop policies that address each level:

- **Level One:** Spontaneous reaction by an individual or small group to individual events that occur during a contest (e.g. verbal taunts or throwing projectiles after a bad call).
- **Level Two:** Premeditated acts by a large group (e.g. rehearsed chants intended to demean coaches, student-athletes or officials by a group of students).
- **Level Three:** Thousands of fans storming the court or field after a game, often times destroying property in the process.
- **Level Four:** Riots that occur after the event, involving the same number of fans as level three, and that occur beyond the stadium or arena. Unlike fans in level three, many of those involved in level-four riots did not attend the game. (*NCAA Report*, 2003, p. 4).

## **LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

### ***Institutional Rules, Policy, and Practices***

Institutions of higher education should be concerned about possible civil liability for injuries that result from celebratory riots. Changing the culture of institutions that have experienced celebratory riots is

not just related to athletic events, but also about promoting responsible behavior regardless of the occasion. Any long-term process to change culture will require creating and implementing new policies and rules, or in some cases simply enforcing those already in existence. As the Chair of the Ohio State University Task Force on Preventing Celebratory Riots, Dean David Andrews articulated the following: "We're trying to encourage a culture of responsibility among students, and student engagement and ownership is the key" (Seal, 2003).

In most states, the general rule is that the law does not impose liability on schools for the criminal actions of third parties unless there is a special relationship between the school and either the person injured or the person causing the injury. At the grade school level, the special relationship nearly always exists between students and schools stemming principally from the state's requirement to provide an education. Institutions of higher education, however, do not have the same automatic special relationship. When a special relationship exists, it is not easily quantified. Defending a liability claim, or taking precautionary steps to prevent the claim, depends upon the campus and the unique circumstances of each situation. Just as there is not automatic liability associated with criminal acts, and in fact there are many circumstances that would preclude liability or allow for implementations that could avoid liability, it is important to assess the legalities of each situation fully and critically (Watson, 2002).

Understandably, university administrators struggle with their roles and responsibilities with respect to influencing student behavior. Recent court decisions, however, reflect a growing expectation that campuses must proactively address foreseeable risks to students (Bickel & Lake, 1999). The University of Pennsylvania Legal Studies Professor Scott Rosner suggests that the celebrations create safety concerns as well as pose enormous legal problems. According to Rosner, "The property owner is ultimately responsible for the safety of its fans. The facility operator must keep users and spectators safe during their use of the premises" (Burrick, 2003). Thus, higher education institutions must proactively consider factors within their control that might contribute to the likelihood of violence or injury. Failure to institute basic measures such as educating students about acceptable behavior, enforcing institutional rules and policies, implementing comprehensive alcohol prevention efforts, and reviewing incidents with the aim of preventing future problems, may expose institutions to legal action. By identifying and addressing cultural conditions that contribute to violence, individual campuses can reduce both the

probability of harm and the likelihood of a successful lawsuit, and also enhance the learning environment. While avoiding liability is desirable, higher education administrators must broaden their view beyond a “rules and regulations” orientation in order to foster a safe, healthy, and civil campus environment (Bickel & Lake, 1999). Violence prevention and safety promotion should be seen as part of the broader mission of any institution of higher education; namely, to create a context in which all campus constituents flourish both academically and personally.

## **INSTITUTIONAL GAME MANAGEMENT**

### ***Best Practices***

Given the complexity of celebratory violence and the cultural diversity that exists at universities, there is no simple one-size-fits-all solution for addressing campus violence. University officials must design and implement strategies that meet the challenges of athletic and student organized events. The nature of competition itself may have a tendency to provoke a hostile environment among student-athletes, coaches, officials and fans. Athletic departments should be cognizant of the consequences associated with creating intimidating environments for opposing teams by establishing sections of a venue that nurtures a level of “rowdy” student behavior. By creating such environments, however, campuses are increasing their level of vulnerability for poor sportsmanship and erratic fan behavior. Institutions must publicly acknowledge the difference between civil and lawful fan behavior and communicate a level of acceptable behavior that is supported by administrative rules and state laws.

Underage drinking, open containers, destroying goal posts and coming onto the field of play, are all violations of the law. Institutions should not excuse those behaviors because of “traditions.” The “our house” environment that athletic departments tend to create does not preclude the responsibility that campus representatives have to maintain a safe and secure sports venue. If expectations are clearly stated and consequences widely known, university officials can act decisively when disorderly behavior erupts in or around a stadium or arena. In an effort to ensure appropriate sportsmanship and fan behavior, three topical game management areas may be within the most control of an institution. Those actions an institution implements before, during, and immediately after the contest. (*NCAA Report, 2003*).

### ***Before the Contest***

The potential for a serious episode of fan violence is present wherever fans gather to watch a

sports event. Institutions should attempt to maintain a consistently high level of preparation before every contest. As a matter of best practice, campus administrators that take an inclusive approach to game management place a university in a better position to avert the likelihood of violence attributed to celebratory riots. In an effort to articulate institutional best practices and project consistent behavioral expectations, a collaborative effort must be developed between the Office of Student Affairs, the Student Government, the media, law enforcement agencies, the alumni association, athletic department officials, and city/town representatives. A balanced approach that promotes responsible fan based enthusiasm and articulates the consequences for misbehavior can strengthen the community climate. Institutions should develop a comprehensive communication strategy that conveys the campus rules and state laws regulating alcohol consumption, and implement measures to designate and monitor areas for alcohol consumption.

An institution's high profile athletes, coaches, alumni, and other university officials could deliver such messages. For example, university officials from both The University of Texas at Austin and Texas A & M University meet to discuss game management issues before their annual rivalry football game in an effort to maintain a cooperative effort between both institutions, regardless of who is hosting the contest. The ticket offices from each institution also collaborate to ensure that complimentary admission seats for the friends and family of the visiting team are not situated near notoriously raucous areas of the stadium or arena. Prior to each football season, game management staff at the University of Miami (Florida) meets with student groups to educate them about safe game management and remind them to stay off the field after games.

The Southeastern Conference has offered an annual summer workshop for university game management staff to educate and provide advice to each other on how to better manage the pre-game warm-up area in football e.g., a 10-yard buffer between teams (*NCAA Report*, 2003). Other common sense approaches include analyzing football, basketball or other high profile sports schedules and identify contests, particularly rival or championship games, which have the potential to generate incidents of poor sportsmanship and fan behavior. Doing so will enable a campus to plan for, and implement, higher measures of preparedness. Institutions should also consider a budget strategy that will enable a campus to absorb additional safety and security related costs associated with developing a prevention-focused

campus violence intervention strategy.

### ***During the Contest***

During an athletic event, there are a number of best practices that can be employed which would decrease the level of fan aggression that may serve as the catalyst for abhorrent behavior. For example, athletic officials should consider not seating students and band members near the visiting team bench area of football and basketball venues. In fact, some conferences have adopted rules which mandate that institutions block a certain number of seats behind the visiting basketball team's bench for the exclusive use of the visiting team (*NCAA Report, 2003*). Likewise, students should be seated in areas that do not offer easy access to the field or court. Institutions should also consider not allowing signs to be displayed by fans during a game, and also prohibit fans from wearing t-shirts that have inflammatory or derogatory messages.

Institutions should consider the negative ramifications of allowing instant replay of controversial plays which can adversely affect the attitudes of the fans. Video boards could be used for displaying positive plays, statistics, and advertisement and to entertain the crowd. Likewise, cheerleaders and band members can be encouraged to help dissuade or drown out negative cheers and taunts with positive cheers and music. Public address announcements should also be made on a frequent basis that reminds spectators to stay off the field or court. In an effort to decrease the level of intoxicated fans, The Big 12 Conference recently mandated a "no pass-out" policy that prohibits fans from leaving and returning to a football stadium. No longer will fans be allowed to leave the stadium for the purpose of consuming alcohol and return more intoxicated. The Big West Conference has developed pocket-sized management handbooks that are published and reviewed annually with athletic department staff. Game management personnel now have access to information from the handbooks that provide guidance on how to resolve game day issues (*NCAA Report, 2003*).

### ***After the Contest***

Strategies should be developed that address the safety and welfare of athletes, coaches, officials, and spectators. Universities should consider the deployment of a strong, well-equipped and visible police presence, including the use of mounted horse patrols and canine units, which have a tendency to garner more crowd compliance than ushers or ticket takers. The University of Iowa has installed collapsible goal

posts that can be removed quickly which eliminates the opportunity for fans to use them for destructive purposes. Punitive sanctions should be levied against fans that are arrested or removed from a venue for being intoxicated, or who have directly accessed the field or court. Such measures may involve suspension or permanent revocation of an individual's season ticket(s) and prohibition to attend future athletic events. Institutions should also consider the installation of video tape equipment at specific venues that can monitor crowd behavior as well as record information that can be used to support an arrest or student judicial action. By implementing some of the aforementioned initiatives, institutional game management staff may be able to help create a positive but competitive game day environment. Such initiatives, however, are not a panacea for preventing spectator aggression. In an effort to maintain an acceptable level of behavior and a safe environment, there must be consistent accountability measures in place for spectator indiscretions. Security staff may not be able to catch every violator, but catching a few may send the message to other fans that violation of the law or institutional policies will not be tolerated (*NCAA Report, 2003*).

## **INSTITUTIONAL VULNERABILITY**

### ***Relevant Policy Implications***

In the 1970s, the concept of *in loco parentis* was eradicated as a means of imposing liability on universities and colleges, and higher education institutions have been held to have no custodial duty to students for acts of other students. In the civil law context, questions of custodial liability, particularly regarding the liability of universities and colleges, stem from claims of negligence. The resulting de facto immunity has led some scholars to dispute the conclusion that custodial liability was the basis in which courts originally imposed liability. Seemingly, there is now stronger institutional concern that courts may be more willing to impose liability on universities to a far greater degree than in the past (Rutledge, 1998). As such, the portion of this paper will address principles and preventative strategies that may provide institutions with alternatives to reduce the vulnerability associated with celebratory riots.

### ***The Need for Prevention***

Quite often, responding to campus violence tends to focus on how an institution *reacts* to specific incidents. Typically, this is exhibited by relying on disciplinary measures and the criminal justice system. Such efforts are essential to maintain a safe environment and strong enforcement sends a clear message

about an institution's intolerance for violent behavior. A comprehensive approach to the issue of celebratory violence, however, should also include measures aimed at early intervention and prevention. Institutions of higher education can minimize the broad spectrum of factors that contribute to celebratory riots by assessing campus conditions and identifying institutional vulnerability. Comprehensive policy initiatives should include approaches such as the following:

- Address attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions, which contribute to celebratory violence through education and peer accountability at student orientation.
- Engage student leadership to develop peer programs that supports responsible behavior, healthy group norms and promotes bystander intervention during athletic events.
- Convey clear institutional expectations for conduct among students, faculty, staff, and visitors during campus events.
- Create and disseminate comprehensive policies and institute training programs and procedures that address violent celebratory behavior.
- Provide a range of support services for students, including mental health services, crisis management, and alcohol programs.
- Create student led initiatives to address off-campus student living, high-risk student drinking areas, and better neighborhood relationships.
- Develop a proactive university wide planning system that specifically addresses celebratory riots and conduct tabletop exercises.
- Monitor alcohol abuse at fraternities and sororities
- Strengthen existing alcohol policies and disciplinary actions as appropriate.
- Consider hiring a Student Community Relations Coordinator to facilitate efforts to change the culture of students who reside off-campus.
- Develop a special celebratory event fund that would designate institutional resources for safety and security measures at high profile special events (Frazier, 2003, pp. 5-6).

Some of these approaches already exist on campuses. While such risk reduction efforts can be an important part of an overall approach, these measures must be supplemented with other programs and policies that specifically target celebratory violence before, during, and after athletic or other special events, that address the potential perpetrators and bystanders.

### ***Principles for Designing Effective Campus Violence Interventions***

In recent years a consensus has emerged from community-based prevention research about the best practices for developing, implementing, and evaluating interventions designed to reduce health and safety problems at university campuses. The following principles suggest how to address violence attributed to celebratory riots, and provide specific actions to campuses and communities to assess culture, set priorities, and implement well-designed strategies:

- **Prevention-focused** in addition to response-focused.
- **Assess** - identify problems and risk levels shared by an institution and the surrounding community that pertain to special events.

- **Plan** - use a systematic process to design, implement, and evaluate strategic initiatives and document best practices.
- **Network** - stay informed of celebratory riot incidents and other peer campus best practices.
- **Coordinate** - build partnerships within the campus community and develop efforts to complement the initiatives that address the behavior attributed to celebratory riots.

Given the complexity of violent behavior and the diversity of environments, structures, cultures, and students among campuses, there is no simple, one-size-fits-all solution for violence in higher education settings. Higher education administrators should prepare and demonstrate strategic safety and security initiatives that will address their particular circumstances and needs (Langford, 2004).

### **CONCLUSION**

Institutions of higher education and communities across the United States have been concerned about the harmful effects of celebratory riots that have included danger to participants, destruction of property and damage to university reputation. The purpose of this paper has been to analyze the issues related to celebratory riots. The most pervasive problem concerning celebratory riots have been the long-term ramifications on university\community relations, as each occasion serves as the impetus for other people to “act out” in the future. While there are no quick and easy fixes for sustainable prevention, an effective multifaceted response with strategic emphasis upon student involvement, and a focus on the broadest issues of independence, health, safety, and positive engagement should be considered. In the final analysis, the most effective method of preventing celebratory riots is to eliminate or manage conditions which could lead to violence or abhorrent behavior. What will most likely deter the behaviors associated with celebratory riots is a combination of peer pressure, creative programming, stricter enforcement of institutional rules and state laws, and stiffer penalties for offenders.

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