A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK FOR COLLECTIVE BEHAVIOR AND ACTION AND ITS APPLICATION TO U.S. STUDENT RIOTS IN THE 1990S

B. E. Aguirre

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B. E. Aguirre
Disaster Research Center
Department of Sociology and Criminal Justice
University of Delaware
Newark, Delaware 19711
Aguirre@udel.edu
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Abstract

The paper offers a conceptualization of collective behavior and action incidents, defining them as suffused by socio-cultural emergence, inextricably dramaturgical in nature, exhibiting a limited range of dominant emotions, carried out by five master social units (masses, publics, associational networks, social movement organizations, and small groups), and located both in time and space as well as in social spaces reflecting issues associated with master categories of age, race/ethnicity, class/occupation, gender/sex, and ethnocentrism/nationalism. It then applies the scheme to student riots in the 1990s in the United States.
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Preliminaries

The paper proposes a set of concepts to define the substance of interest to collective behavior scholars and then applies the resulting scheme to the study of recent student riots in the United States. It shows how recent advances in the study of collective behavior and action (cb/ca) can be used to encourage the replacement of common language words and expressions for increasingly precise scientific concepts created to capture complexities and interrelationships in the empirical world that are discovered in the course of research and theorizing. The objective of the paper is to synthesize elements of a number of conceptualizations already available in this literature and to make explicit its underlying unity. Fortunately, it is possible to borrow from the efforts of a number of scholars; I summarize and arrange their ideas to fit my own needs to offer a synthetic conceptualization of the specialty area of collective behavior and action. I then use the scheme to analyze student riots in the United States in the 1990s (for its use in the analysis of the surge of sustainable development see Aguirre, 2002).
A Synthetic Theoretical Framework

I find it useful to combine key insights from the contributions to our understanding of collective behavior and action advanced by R. E. Park, Ralph Turner and Lewis Killian, E. L. Quarantelli, Neil Smelser, John Lofland, Clark McPhail, E. Goffman, David Snow, and Gary Marx. I select what I think is particularly relevant about their writings for my purposes, combining their ideas with my own to offer what I hope is a unified theoretical framework for the specialty area of collective behavior and action. The central tenet that makes possible this proposed synthesis is that, irrespective of the often-heard assertion about the presence of seemingly irreconcilable differences in some of the writings of these scholars, many of their ideas can be fruitfully assembled together to give coherence to the specialty area.

Collective behavior is understood as the behavior of small groups, networks of social relations, publics, and masses, while collective action refers to the behavior of corporate actors such as social movement organizations in so far as these behaviors and actions exhibit the dimensions identified below. It is useful to recognize, as did R. E. Park at the inception of the study of collective behavior in the United States of America (Park and Burgess, 1921), that many types of social behavior take place in collectivities of people and yet are not collective behavior in the sense of the rubric and practice of the profession, for they do not represent socio-cultural emergence. Further, as Herbert
Blumer advised us (1946), the behavior of small groups is different from collective behavior, for in small groups patterns of social interaction and social control are more immediate. Still it is the case that small groups are the most frequently found constituents of gatherings, which may, if the necessary conditions are met, be the foundation of most instances of collective behavior and action. Finally, present in the work of these scholars and others is the very worthwhile insight that all forms of collective behavior and action are enmeshed in social control systems. Collective behavior and action is inextricably linked to the systems of institutions and cannot be understood outside these contexts.

Statics

A static view of the key dimensions that identify the boundaries of the field of collective behavior and action involves the following:

1. The cultural and socio-organizational features of instances of collective behavior. As aptly discussed by Gary Marx (Marx and McAdam, 1994: 1-17), these cultural features are to be understood as arranged in a continuum of emergence and institutionalization of relevant cultural elements such as norms, power arrangements, division of labor, as well as social relationships in instances of collective behavior. I take this dimension, earlier emphasized in the writings of Turner and Killian (1987) and Quarantelli (Quarantelli and Weller, 1973), and with roots in the seminal contributions of Park (Park and
Burgess, 1921) and Blumer (1946), as an important defining characteristic of collective behavior, allowing the differentiation of collective behavior and action from institutionalized social life.

2. The prevailing locus of interaction/relationship in instances of collective behavior is the second dimension of collective behavior and action that is emphasized. This dimension, initially explored by Erving Goffman and later applied to the study of collective behavior by David Snow (Snow, Zurcher, Peters, 1981), among others in the dramaturgical school, identifies topics for interaction in gatherings as revolving primarily either around behaviors, ideas, or objects. The dramaturgical view of collective behavior (Brown and Goldin, 1973) complements the emphasis on socio-cultural emergence by providing an important way to explore the relationship between social interaction and the ecology of social action in instances of collective behavior and action, particularly the effects of power and social control.

3. The prevailing emotion in instances of collective behavior is the third dimension needed to identify the boundaries of the specialty. As argued by N. Smelser (1963: 67-130) and more recently formalized by John Lofland (1985, 35-88), who rescues emotion from the link to irrationality present in G. Le Bon, among others, three prevailing emotions are present to varying extents in all instances of collective behavior. They are fear, hostility, and joy.
4. The units of social organization that are found in instances of collective behavior. Taking a cue from the seminal typology-centered work of R. E. Park (see Turner, 1967), it can be assumed that there are five master units that may be present to a greater and lesser extent in all empirical cases of collective behavior. They are masses, publics, associational networks, social movement organizations, and small groups.

5. The space-time of instances of collective behavior and action is the fifth dimension needed to establish the boundaries of the specialty. John Lofland (1993) and Clark McPhail (1991) most prominently explore this dimension. It includes in its spatial referent a continuum from the micro space to local, regional, national and international arenas of interaction. Temporally, it is also a continuum from the fleeting instance of collective behavior and action of less than one hour or a few hours to those that occur over a period of weeks, months and even years.

6. Finally, I would add to the aforementioned five dimensions the importance of the social boundaries of instances of collective behavior, to link the study of collective behavior and action to important contemporary social science themes. It refers to the prevailing social location of instances of collective behavior and incorporates the current-day master categories of age, race/ethnicity, class/occupation, gender/sex, and ethnocentrism/nationalism.

A Process View
These six conceptual dimensions would constitute the boundaries of the specialty area of collective behavior and action at present. It is useful to think of them as forming a multidimensional space composed of different regions in which different forms of collective behavior and action can be placed. They summarize a tremendous amount of research and theorizing in the specialty area of collective behavior and action. When considered together, these six dimensions remind us of the great variability of forms and contents in empirical instances of collective behavior and action, of their fluid, unstable, transformation-prone nature, and of their connectedness and continuity with institutionalized social life. The dimensions help us identify the prototypical cases of collective behavior and action while reminding us of the difficult problem of identification at the margins, and of the embeddedness of instances of collective behavior and action in institutionalized arrangements in society and culture.

Fundamental to the proposed scheme of identification is the emphasis on socio-cultural emergence present, among other scholars, in the work of E. L. Quarantelli (Quarantelli and Weller, 1973), R. Turner and L. Killian (1987) and systematized by G. Marx (Marx and McAdam, 1994), whose view of socio-cultural emergence incorporates conceptions of emergent norms and emergent social relationships popular among these and other collective behaviorists. As Marx and McAdam argue, there is no collective behavior and action in the absence of such emergence,
irrespective of the unit of social organization present in the situation.

For reasons explored elsewhere (Aguirre and Quarantelli, 1983), the proposed scheme does not give a priori preference to the study of avowedly political instances of collective behavior and action. Instead, it is a catholic understanding of the field, which would reintegrate to it topics of research that are nowadays increasingly marginalized from it, such as the study of religious movements and religious effervescence and of publics and public opinion.

The proposed synthesis also recognizes the limited use of the concept of the crowd as the prototype form of collective behavior; its starting point is different, namely the assumption of the presence of people in gatherings—a formation central to E. Goffman, John Lofland and Clark McPhail’s (1991) writings, among other scholars. It reserves the use of the term crowd to gatherings that exhibit cultural and social emergence as outlined by Gary Marx. As modern scholarship attests, so-called crowds are in most times and places aggregations of small groups of kin, neighbors, acquaintances, friends. As we argue below on the matter of the student riots in the U.S. in the 1990s, the emergence of a crowd from small groups in a gathering is in part the outcome of proselytizing theorized by E. Goffman (a thorough description of Goffman’s relevance to collective behavior is found in Brown and Goldin, 1973).
From the perspective of the proposed synthesis all collective behavior and action is thus to some extent emergent social behavior varying in the extent to which gatherings represent one of its key distinguishing features. Mass behavior, rumor, and other diffused forms of collective behavior can occur in the near-absence of gatherings, although such situations are rare.

The postulate of emergence helps differentiate collective behavior and action from social movement organizational characteristics and from activities that have become institutionalized (see below). The postulate is a matter of degree rather than kind, for all conceptions of role-playing extant in the social sciences acknowledge the universality of sociocultural emergence in social life (Strauss, 1993).

Social movement organizations are recognized in the proposed synthesis as one of the basic units of social organization that may act in instances of collective behavior and action. General social movements often bring about episodes of collective behavior and the collective action of organizations such as social movement organizations. Likewise, instances of collective behavior and action are often found at the inception of social movements and social movement organizations. Attention to the social movement-collective action and behavior interface and its iterative-ness may help bring about the much-needed re-integration of the study of collective behavior/action and social movements while preserving the distinct features of both.
While it makes sense to refer to some of the actions of a social movement organization (SMO) as collective action, i.e., the action of a collective actor, to differentiate it from the action of individuals or networks of individuals for example, not all collective action of social movement organizations are relevant to the proposed synthesis. Rather, as stated earlier, only a certain type of collective action of SMO, showing socio-cultural emergence, would interest collective behaviorists. For example, included in the boundaries of the field would be the collective behavior and the action of SMOs that are brought about by changes in the institutions. A good example is the mobilization of fathers involved in divorce or in out of wedlock unions to preserve their parental rights in light of recent divorce legislation in the US. Another example is the influence of European international organizations “Blood and Honour” and “Hammerskins” on encouraging thrill-seeking violence from right wing, often Skinhead, xenophobic groups (Watts, 2001, 605).

Similarly, while most actions of states and corporations would not be germane to the field, that would not be the case for the collective action of corporate entities that represent the manufacture of instances of collective behavior and SMOs, which indeed would be of interest to cb/ca specialists, or for that matter, the collective behavior that takes place inside corporations (Zald and Berger, 1971). A case in point is the creation, organization and mobilization by the tobacco industry in the US of pro-corporate activism from small groups of smokers.
to discredit the opposition to smoking (Santos); similar efforts by corporations to discredit the environmental movement; and the organizational and inter-organizational emergence that takes place in the immediate aftermath of disasters during search and rescue efforts and in other efforts to help stricken communities. This sort of corporate activity becomes much more frequent in the increasingly state and corporate-directed cultures of advanced capitalism and are key processes of interest to collective behaviorists. Thus, for example, the Stalinist purges would be fertile ground for cb/ca investigations, as is the creation and use by governments throughout the world of SMOs and instances of collective behavior (Aguirre, 1984).

The concept of prevailing emotion in instances of collective behavior (Lofland, 1985) is useful to describe instances of collective behavior and action and is thus incorporated into the proposed scheme, although complex socio-cultural events made up of both collective behavior and institutionalized social life occurring in many places over comparatively long periods of time are often typified by more than one dominant emotion. The World Trade Center’s September 11, 2001 terrorist attack is an example in which multiple instances of institutionalized action and collective behavior and action took place, dominated at various stages by both fear and hostility. Chronologically and anecdotally, they ranged from the anxiety and fear of the evacuees of the doomed towers and the first responders to the dread and sorrow typifying the search and
rescue and the convergence of assistance and sympathy from throughout the country and the world, to the nationwide hostile public opinion, mass anger, and war preoccupations that followed the attack and that eventuated in the U.S. assault on Afghanistan.

Arguably, the proposed scheme can incorporate all existing literature in the specialty. It does not conflict with the substantive emphases of the two models of the citizen surge and of loosely structured collective action forms respectively advanced John Lofland (1993) and Anthony Oberschall (1980) or with Waddington, Jones and Critcher's (1987, pp. 158-163) model of "flashpoint" events, with its emphasis on structural, political/ideological, cultural, contextual, situational, and interaction levels of analysis of disorders (see below). It can also accommodate moral panics of the type Goode and Ben-Yehuda (1994) discuss, such as satanic scares (a collective behavior form suffused by fear and hostility, concerned with a behavior, Satanism, enacted by all five units of social organizations, regional and national in scope, bounded by class, lasting for months if not years). The proposed synthesis can also accommodate financial panics and panics in crowded places such as theaters (the later involving crowds, fear, emergent socio-cultural and social relational elements, behavior centered, localized in time and space; the former involving mass behavior, conventionalized, object centered--money, national and international, limited both by time and class boundaries).
Similarly, the Red Scare of the 1950s involved ethnocentrism/nationalism, was nationwide, deeply impacted by the political institutions of the American state, lasted for years, dominated by hostility and fear, with both emergent and conventionalized cultural and relational elements, and in which all units of social organization participated. Episodes of hysteria typically are of two subtypes. One involves a circumscribed place, is short lived, age and gender related, in which small groups evince either fear or hostility. The other subtype is more mass-like, dominated by more complex features such as multiple acting units and bigger space and time referents. Other examples are possible, such as convergence behavior in the aftermath of disasters.

If widely adopted to guide future research efforts, the framework formed by the six dimensions outlined above can help us accumulate consistently gathered information about instances of collective behavior. It will help us move away from the common sense meaning of words at the basis of social science concepts used in the specialty. In turn, the resulting cumulative knowledge base would eventually facilitate the understanding of collective behavior and action instances as belonging to genres, as genres are understood in the methodology advocated by W. Grisswold to study cultural objects. It would then be possible to think of instances of collective behavior and action as cultural objects belonging to specific genres that are amenable to historical-cultural documentation and comparative analysis.
One of the most important functions of the scheme would be to increase interest in the study of collective behavior and action among social scientists, helping identify analytical questions that until now have not received much attention in the scientific literature.

Student Riots

In the remainder of this paper the proposed scheme is used to understand student riots in the 1990s in the United States. We start from a situation in which there are multiple uses and meanings for the concept of riot. The word has many significations. Google, an Internet search engine, showed close to 2,900 "student riot" sites in September 2001. These sites described different events involving different levels of violence, political dynamics, and community traditions. Moreover, the social science understanding of the phenomenon is rudimentary (for recent reviews of the literature on riots see Miller, 2000; Barkan and Snowden, 2001).

Contrary to most student riots elsewhere in the world, student riots in the United States usually do not have explicit state-level macro political undertones. Gary Marx called them issueless riots (Marx, 1970), collective outbursts without explicit or obvious instrumental goals and criticisms of society that violate group norms. As Brown and Goldin (1973, 8-15) point out, the concept of the issueless riot assumes that the adoption of riotous behavior occurs during the gathering, resulting from the interactions among participants that had no preexisting
prevailing common anxieties, frustrations, motivations, hostile
generalized beliefs, goals and targets prior to their adoption of
riotous behavior. Yet, the riots may have at some future time
instrumental implications, for example, as rehearsals for future
collective action.

The concept of issueless riots represents a fallacy of
division. Even if it is granted that for most of the
participants the generally accepted meaning or cultural and
ideologically-derived understanding of the occasion is as Marx
characterizes it, it is still the case that not all subunits in
the gathering (see below) can be assumed to know this dominant
meaning and accept it in their practice. Members of some of these
subunits and networks may have generalized beliefs that
predispose them towards violence, follow norms that facilitate
violent behavior, evaluate the violent behavior instrumentally,
interpret unfolding events as calling for a violent response, and
may try to convince others in the gathering to accept their
interpretation (see for example Muller and associates, as cited
in Rule, 1988, pp. 218-221). If the foregoing description is
valid, then it follows that a fundamental goal of future research
is to begin to identify the factors that determine the adoption
of a violent collective frame of interpretation by a substantial
proportion of the groups in these gatherings.

The student riots in the United States in the 1990s occur
during a period of increasing professionalism and legal control
of police operations (McPhail, Schweingruber, McCarthy, 1998).
This post-1960 regime is typified by greater police concerns with the First Amendment rights of participants, tolerance, greater communication and coordination of police with participants, and less police violence (ibid. 51). It creates, both, much greater effectiveness for police operations (since the police and other agencies of social control are now capable of monitoring much more closely the operation and likely intent of demonstrators) as well as much greater supervision and external constraints on these agencies (which diminishes the costs of collective action for demonstrators, for the new legal and policy constraint diminishes the risks and penalties associated with riot behavior).

Existing studies of protests and riots indicate that the effects of the severity of police and social control practices on the probability of the adoption of riot behavior by individuals are curvilinear. Past a certain point in the severity of the social control dimension, most would-be rioters do not adopt the criminal behavior. Below that point adoption is not made prohibitive by it and riot is a possible outcome of gatherings. It is in this more "lenient" region of the social control continuum that most of the student riots in the 1990s in the United States take place.

Importantly, the social control setting for student riots in the United States in the 1990s is not only more lenient in this sense but the very indeterminacy of these collective behavior events represent anomalies to the standard approach now
guiding police operations, for in them often there are no would-be demonstrators with whom the police can negotiate and reach some sort of accommodation. These riots occur under cover as it were of other, more mundane topics, such as sport events and celebrations that are not considered important for police intelligence gathering and operations (compare to De Biasi, 1998; Miller, 2001).

What makes student riots so difficult to control is this seemingly unplanned, spontaneous nature. Their seeming spontaneity violates the key assumption of the model of police operations in vogue in the United States and Europe (Della Porta and Reiter, 1998), in which mass gatherings and protest demonstrations in the 1990s have negotiated understandings that create both freedom for the participants as well as assurance to the police that behavior will be kept within acceptable pre-agreed boundaries. As is the case in Italy (De Biasi, 1998), the seeming "spontaneity" of these events is due in large part to the absence of attention by police intelligence-gathering surveillance units and the common unwillingness of local police departments to take seriously the potential for violence in these types of gatherings.

Borrowing from E. Goffman to understand these student riot events, it is useful to assume a gathering, and in it the presence of small groups (research shows that the isolated individual is rare in gatherings, and that most people participate as members of small groups). Each of these groups
has its own "definition" of the gathering and the occasion for interaction, what it means and how it can/should be experienced, what behavior is appropriate, what are the normative expectations surrounding it. Such definitions correspond, however imperfectly and to varying extents, to the prevailing cultural definition of the occasion for interaction.

The riot is the outcome of a diffusion process among the subunits in the gathering, in which a significant number of these small groups interact and adopt a definition of the situation in which breaking the law is accepted as appropriate behavior, participating in what Goffman called a topic (see Brown and Goldin, 1973, Pp. 152-156). Thus, the assumption is that collective behavior in gatherings is never uniformly and universally adopted. The question is not that every subunit joins in it but that a significant number of them do. Gatherings are heterogeneous, and not everyone in the gathering adopts the collective behavior that may occur in the gathering. There is no unanimity and homogeneity of perception, belief, or action.

The basic unit in student riots is small groups of participants in the gatherings, which are often parts of larger networks of social relationships and may also share associational identities (for an example of the importance of these networks and associational links in football riots see De Biasi, 1998). The locus of student riots is behavior deemed criminal by the police, rather than objects or ideas. They have limited time and space referents, usually occurring in a specific small area of a
city and lasting for a few hours. They also have age, gender, and class boundaries. Most often the participants are middle and upper class young adult males attending college. Based on previous research on riots, it can be assumed that the deviant behavior adopted by the subunits is not continuous for the duration of the riot but interspersed with mundane activities. Moreover, there is mobility of the subunits in and out of the riot. Participants in student riots are dominated by hostile emotions that emerge from gatherings of people who initially define their interaction as either joyful or sad. Joy and much less frequently, sadness, is the first dominant emotion in the gathering, which at some point turns into hostility if a riot materializes. A seeming constant in available descriptions of these events is the use of alcoholic beverages by students in the gatherings in which the riots occur, and it can be assumed that this customary practice is a factor facilitating fluctuations in dominant emotions.

What can facilitate the adoption and acting out of a violent collective frame of interpretation by a substantial proportion of the groups in these gatherings?

**Hypotheses**

**Communication.** Effective adoption of a novel perspective by subunits in a gathering is a function of the viability of communication among the subunits. Thus, anything that impedes communication can be hypothesized to block the spread of the new perspective among them, things like darkness, uneven terrain,
lack of visual access and other visual impairments, noise (Wright, 1978). Effective communication can also be impeded by social differences among the subunits along racial, economic, linguistic, or nationality characteristics, for example. Pre-existing networks of relationships and associational identities among the members of subunits in a gathering will have a powerful facilitative effect on the flow of information and on the adoption of the new collective frame of interpretation.

**Presence of Planning and Leadership.** Is the gathering such that it reflects the arrangement by planners to keep definitions flowing in conventional, expected directions? Is there organization to block the emergence of new leaders in the gathering, and of keynoters, so that the planners’ version of reality is sustained? This is another key matter of social control. Is planning such that the police or security personnel cooperate with organizers in planning the gathering and move quickly and effectively to remove the keynoters and troublemakers? Is there a visible cadre of organizers that cooperate with police in maintaining the non-criminal collective definition viable?

**Injustice Frame.** The adoption by some participants in a gathering of a sense of injustice and injury often results from the blocking of behaviors that are assumed to be traditional rights by youth culture and that causes the people in the gathering to react against the police and other mechanisms of social control. This injustice frame can emerge prior to or after
a gathering materializes. In the first, the authorities disallow
the occasion typically allowed in the past. Or the occasion is
allowed, the gathering takes place, and then the police disrupts
it, creating an injustice frame among participants that justifies
a new mood facilitating their protest behavior. In the streaking
fad, for example, there were campuses in which students defined
the situation as fun and games, the police and college
administrators adopted different, more restrictive
interpretations of what was going on, taking action to stop the
streaking, and what was once joyful occasions turned into riots
(Aguirre, Quarantelli, Mendoza, 1988). Much more needs to be
known about what is involved in the creation and adoption of an
injustice frame by student rioters (for an analysis of the micro-
dynamics of mobilization and creation of injustice frames by
small experimental groups see Gamson, Fireman and Rytina, 1982).

**Distillation Effects.** As the gathering proceeds over time,
it can be assumed that the people that continue in it are more
committed to the activity. The gathering is transformed as less
committed subunits leave it in its later stages. Those who
remain will be more prone to accept a more radical version of
what is or should be going on.

**Effects of Size.** There will be a greater probability of
illegal behavior in larger gatherings than in smaller ones, for
large gatherings have greater heterogeneity of cultural
understandings and thus greater probabilities that some subunits
would be drawn to criminal behavior. Adapting G. Simmel’s views
to our purpose (Janowitz, 1972), it can be assumed that small gatherings will have high solidarity, little individual differentiation, a homogeneity of cultural perspectives that more effectively support the initial cultural definition of the occasion for interaction in the gathering as fun, blocking the adoption of criminal behavior. Large gatherings are more open to transformation of frames, since they depend on organization, tactics, propaganda, and symbols to exercise social control over the subunits.

Importantly, the size of gatherings may interact with the preceding factors to facilitate the emergence of riots. Large gatherings should last longer, allowing for a greater probability that a distillation effect will take place. The nature of the disbanding of the gathering, what McPhail calls the dispersal processes, is a key element, so that if some dispersal patterns concentrate certain types of subunits, it may make their adoption of a new, deviant frame of interpretation more likely. Similarly, large gatherings should be harder to plan and control, creating situations in which police overreact or act ineffectively and precipitate the riot.

**A First Empirical Approximation**

Unfortunately, it is not possible to submit these hypotheses to rigorous testing, for there are, as far as I know, no surveys of participants or other systematically collected empirical information on student riots that would satisfy standard scientific criteria and allow us to test them. Instead,
as a first approximation to the question I conducted a search of
the Internet for descriptions of student riots, Lexus Nexus of
published student riot articles in major newspapers, and of one
university campus student newspaper, to illustrate the conceptual
dimensions previously identified. Let me offer the following
observations:

1. In some but not all of the few instances of student
riots that I was able to identify there is a clear ecological-
historical nexus to the event. The riot occurs in places with a
history of collective disturbances. Many of the campuses
impacted by the riots continue to experience riots in the
"expected" areas. Examples are, for Ohio State University, High
Street in Columbus, Ohio, East Beaver Avenue for Pennsylvania
State University at State College, and the Hill business district
for the University of Colorado at Boulder. Within these areas
there are well-known buildings or places associated with fun
making in local lore, such as Hunting Lodge at the University of
Connecticut, or Munn Field at Michigan State University. The
riot reenacts youth rowdiness, sporadic troublemaking, and
tension with the police and local government associated with
these spaces.

There is also an "expected" time to many of these riots.
Most of them occur during nighttime, weekends, in the spring of
the year, in Halloween, with parties prior to university final
exams and graduation, and with local celebrations such as the
Veishea spring festival at Iowa State University. They are
dramatically impacted by the prevailing institutional calendar.

2. In almost every case observed the riot is a reactive, defensive collective act. Segments of the population of young people involved react violently to what they perceive are unreasonable exertions of power by people in authority. These power acts are perceived as negating or curtailing traditional rights or at least established practices that furnished a degree of freedom to the young people in these spaces. The riot represents a largely unplanned protest against this perceived violation. Characteristically, young folks are having fun, partying, more and more young people join the ongoing festivities, and at some point the police arrive and the confrontation begins, often attracting the curious and the bored. "Get tough" policies such as stricter enforcement of bar closing hours, checking for underage drinking, patrolling and raiding of parties and increased police ticketing of students and other young people are the usual approximate contexts to these incidents.

3. The specific sequence of behaviors starting the riots vary but in all of the instances for which I was able to obtain information there is always a keynoter or keynoters that begin a line of behavior that is highly symbolic and deviant if not criminal—such as burning couches and other furniture in the middle of the street, starting fires in garbage cans, overturning cars and setting them ablaze, fighting—that brings about repressive acts by the police towards large segments of the
entire gathering, such as the use of pepper spray, mace and tear
gas. It is this combination of a deviant keynoting and a
repressive generalized police act that is the immediate
precipitant of the riot.

4. In almost every riot it seems as if the police was
surprised by the riotous events, so that they did not have the
manpower, equipment, intelligence gathering systems, and tactics
in place to respond effectively to the disturbances. Thus, there
is a recurrent theme in the mass media reports that the police
used excessive force, or the wrong equipment, or acted in an
untimely fashion.

5. Finally, there is clear documentation in the record,
scant as it is, of differential involvement and differential
definitions of the situations by groups of young people in the
gatherings in which the riot takes place. Some participate;
others do not. Some young people condemn the police; others
approve of their action. Some do not participate but are
sympathetic to the demonstrators; others disagree with what they
do.

An Example

In Newark, Delaware, the home of the University of
Delaware, student riots customarily occur at or near the Deer
Park Tavern, at the intersection of Main Street and Elkton Road.
One of the largest of these disturbances occurred in the spring
of 1974, during the nationwide streaking fad, when more than 4000
students objected to police interference in their frolicking
about in the nude. More recently, a riot took place in the afternoon of the last Saturday in April of 1998. It lasted approximately 3.5 hours (to compare it to an extended case study of the student riot at Michigan State University see Wykowski, 1999). Involved were police officers from 10 police agencies and more than 2500 students from the University of Delaware. It began as Spring Fling '98, a party for the benefit of the Make-a-Wish Foundation. There was nothing unusual about the planned event, for there is a local tradition among students of weekend afternoon parties that end in the early evening hours. Initially, the student organizers tried to obtain a police permit and were told that they would have to hire four officers at a cost of $176 per hour, purchase liability insurance, and obtain permits from the Alcoholic Beverage Control Commission and their landlord. They did not. Four bands played for free, hundreds of young people came and kept coming, and at some point in the middle of the afternoon the police decided to break it up. The organizers encouraged people to leave but the attendees refused, instead throwing bottles, rocks, and other readily available hard objects at the police. Police clubbed them and used pepper sprays and dogs. 10 students were arrested. Afterwards there were accusations of police brutality and abuse of power (The Review, 4-28-98).

Conclusion

This paper presents a synthesis of key ideas available in the specialty area of collective behavior and action to identify
the boundaries of the field. Such identification is useful, particularly for a field that has experienced so much controversy and soul-searching during its recent past. In its terms, collective behavior incidents are suffused by socio-cultural emergence, are inextricably dramaturgical in nature, exhibit a limited range of dominant emotions, are carried out, to varying extent, by five master social units (masses, publics, associational networks, social movement organizations, and small groups), and are located both in time and space as well as in social spaces reflecting issues associated with the master categories of age, race/ethnicity, class/occupation, gender/sex, and ethnocentrism/nationalism.

The proposed synthesis should help provide a coherent sense of the existing scholarship and encourage interested scholars to locate fruitful areas of research and theorizing. It is only a preliminary first step, for as is generally true of science, typological exercises such as this one are very important, albeit ineluctable precursors to the development of theory; if adopted by others, it will serve to organize and orient research in collective behavior and action and to facilitate the disciplined accumulation of scientific findings in the specialty. Perhaps this program of research will eventually permit the identification of genres of instances of collective behavior and action, their comparative treatment as cultural objects, and their elucidation following established methodologies for the study of culture (see Grisswold, 1987). So far, the scheme has
proven useful to understand the surge (fad) of sustainable development (Aguirre, 2002), as well as to begin to make sense of the student riots in the US in the 1990s. Preliminary information about student riots seems to confirm some of the predictions about these events, although a much more rigorous test is obviously needed.
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