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Sociology

Crowds, Police and Provocations: Temporal Patterns of Rioting in Britain, 1800–1939

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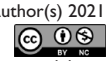

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Abstract

This essay develops an original, temporal approach to the study of rioting. It uses a catalogue of 414 riots from 19th- and early 20th-century Britain to identify several common developmental patterns: (1) riots often begin with provocation, intervention by the police or routines that license violence; (2) while often short-lived, riots can also be linked by cycles of revenge and the feedback loop between action and identity; (3) the state's monopoly of organised violence was often decisive in bringing riots to an end. These findings reveal significant limits to the explanatory power of two widely used concepts in this area: *triggers* and *identity*. More interestingly, they show that this power varies meaningfully over time. I therefore argue for a properly historicised theory of rioting, drawing attention to two key sites of historical change: the norms and traditions which govern public violence, and the state's monopoly of force.

Keywords

career, Chicago School, police, protest, riots, social movements, temporality, time, violence

Introduction

Most studies of riots focus on one of two dimensions: the quantitative question of who participates and why, or the spatial question of where riots take place and their diffusion. These are both important approaches. However, they have inadvertently obscured equally valuable alternatives, distracting us in particular from the temporal profile of riots. Shifting our attention onto time opens up a set of important but often overlooked empirical questions: how do riots begin? How do they sustain themselves? How long do they last? How do they come to an end?

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In order to answer these questions, I apply a refined version of the Chicago School's notion of the *career* to a catalogue of 414 riots from 19th- and early 20th-century Britain. This allows me to identify several recurring patterns in riots' development: (1) they are largely triggered by insults and provocations, the actions of the police or by routines which license collective violence; (2) while most riots only last a short period of time, they are often linked together through various endogenous processes (especially cycles of revenge and the feedback loop between action and identity); (3) while the state was generally unable to prevent rioting, its monopoly on force was often decisive in bringing it to an end.

These findings demonstrate the value of focusing on time and temporality. But they also have theoretical implications for the study of riots and social movements. Most importantly, they demonstrate that the ways in which riots emerge and develop have varied over time. Although many theorists have acknowledged the importance of 'context', few tackle this problem head on. In what follows I draw attention to two key areas of historical change. First, the importance of provocation and routines suggests that the norms and traditions governing the public use of violence need to be integrated into our theories of rioting. Second, changes to the role of the state in initiating riots and bringing them to an end suggest that its power to assert its monopoly of force on the ground also needs to be explicitly theorised. I can only begin this project of historicisation here, but these findings show that our understanding of rioting can be greatly improved by locating rioters, their opponents and the state in their specific historical moments.

Temporality and Careers

Temporality rarely features as an explicit theme in social movement studies (Edwards and Gillan, 2020). But when it does, it tends to take one of three forms. First, time appears in debates about the temporal window being studied: from waves and cycles, to events and the *longue durée* (McAdam and Sewell, 2001). There, it has familiar calendrical form, but is not seen as an object of study in its own right. Second, in work on mechanisms, time appears in the ordering of sequences of interactions (Gillan, 2020). But, in the course of this abstraction loses many of its normal properties. Third, in various attempts at periodisation, time appears as a world map, with borders separating internally homogeneous spaces (e.g. Habermas, 1981).

This limited engagement with time is somewhat surprising given its vital role in the history of sociology. In particular, time and the metaphor of the *career* were central concerns of the Chicago School, which dominated the discipline for much of the early 20th century (Abbott, 1997). This research programme culminated in Goffman's (1959) account of the moral careers of 'mental patients', a groundbreaking work which examined changes in meanings, motivations and identities of patients over time, focusing in particular on transitions between different stages in their career.

Goffman's approach is subtly different to modern deployments of the career metaphor. Most contemporary studies begin with quantitative analysis of whole sequences, measuring the duration and sequencing of various stages and then identifying recurring patterns (Abbott, 2001: 194–199). This requires extremely high-quality data and would be almost impossible to apply to riots for the simple reason that most riot-related datasets

contain almost no information about internal dynamics and are instead designed to be used as event counts. But there are also theoretical reasons to move away from a 'sequence of stages' approach, and to return to Goffman's interest in the 'transitions between stages'. Most importantly, this move allows us to link the Chicago School's rich heritage with more recent interest in the mechanisms and processes governing the evolution of violence and protest (Gross, 2009; Lichbach, 2008; McAdam et al., 2008).

I also want to extend Goffman's conception of the career by highlighting the issue of self-similarity. As you move between different temporal scales, the pattern of rioting looks fairly similar. Whether we focus on an individual fight, on one riot, or on a wave of retaliatory riots, their careers are characterised by sudden rushes of activity, followed by pauses, regroupings and then further action. This similarity across different temporal scales invites us to consider the endogenous processes connecting these different levels (Abbott, 2001: 194); it invites us to problematise the boundaries of individual cases and so opens up a new set of empirical questions about the interplay between different careers at different scales.

Finally, this focus on time also provides a new perspective from which to evaluate existing theories of riots. It is worth noting that, although some theories do have an implicit temporal dimension (separating the moment of initiation from the ensuing riot), they rarely elaborate on what this set-up implies. They occasionally neglect what happens afterwards (e.g. Waddington, 1989) or, more commonly, dissolve temporality into questions of escalation (e.g. Adang, 2011; Collins, 2012; the same is often true in social movement studies, e.g. McAdam, 1999). Explicitly engaging with questions of temporality therefore allows me to critique and extend existing theories of rioting. My first intervention concerns the role of *triggers* and *identity*, two of the most important themes in this field (Reicher, 2012; Waddington, 1989). In both cases, I find that their explanatory power is real but limited in various ways. Most importantly, this power varies meaningfully over time. This therefore sets up my second intervention: the call to historicise theories of rioting. My findings suggest that there is no universal model of riot development and that our explanations need to engage with the specificities of time and place; in particular, with the norms and traditions regulating public violence, and with the varying ability of the state to deploy its monopoly of force and maintain 'order' in the short term.

Methods and Data

This essay focuses on three questions about the careers of riots: how they begin, how they are linked through time and how they end. In order to answer these questions, I rely on a large sample of historical riots. This catalogue was produced for an adjacent project looking at the history of rioting in 19th- and early 20th-century Britain, a period widely seen as crucial to the history of social movements (Tilly and Wood, 2012). The catalogue contains detailed information on 414 riots from Manchester, Liverpool and Glasgow, between the years of 1800 and 1939. It was populated in two stages. I first used keyword searches of digital newspaper archives, as well as original archival work and a thorough reading of secondary literature, to produce a collection of potentially relevant documentary material (this included over 20,000 items). I then read each item individually to determine whether it referred to a riot happening in each city or not, eventually producing a catalogue of 414

events (the full details of the data collection procedure are available, along with the database itself, from the UK Data Service: Tiratelli, 2019).

I purposefully used a broad definition of riots: public, collective violence against people or property, involving more than 20 participants (Wilkinson, 2009: 330–331). The keywords used were also deliberately varied, including riot, mob, disturbance, tumult and disorder. As such, my research is indebted to recent attempts to elaborate more generalised theories of violence (e.g. Collins, 2008; Walby, 2013; Wieviorka, 2009). These approaches necessarily work at a high level of abstraction, but their broad scope also offers valuable comparative findings and theoretical insights. I also sidestep political debates about whether some of these events would better be described as 'uprisings' or, conversely, as 'criminality'. Although the word 'riot' does have unavoidable implications, I hope to mitigate any distorting effect of language by (1) using it as an explicitly analytic category, and (2) relying on inductive methods in my analysis.

Rather than using these 414 cases to test particular causal hypotheses, I follow the Chicago School's interest in empirical description, searching for common patterns and recurring processes (Abbott, 2001: 161; McAdam et al., 2008; Tilly, 2011). In this spirit, the codes for how each event began, its links with other riots and how it ended, were generated inductively, through careful reading of the primary sources and by grouping similar sequences together. This cross-case approach also moves beyond existing methods for studying riots. As mentioned above, most quantitative research focuses on the incidence of riots and so ignores their internal dynamics, leaving the latter to qualitative case studies. The size and level of detail contained in this catalogue therefore allows us to leverage some of the advantages of each approach.

Nevertheless, the general reliance on newspaper data raises several methodological issues (Ortiz et al., 2005). To mitigate against description bias, I relied on a wide variety of local and national newspapers, together with local and national archival materials; and I triangulate across different sources wherever possible. In terms of selection bias, it is worth noting that larger riots tend to be better documented (and presumably therefore more likely to be reported in the first place). Given that a few large events tend to contain a disproportionate number of all participants, this should in fact be reassuring as it reduces the risk that my conclusions are distorted by a few small and unusual riots (Biggs, 2016).

How Do Riots Begin?

When we talk about riots, we often assume that they begin suddenly, that a *trigger* launches them into immediate action. Some riots do begin in this way. At a soup kitchen in Galton, Glasgow, a riot began on 1 August 1816 when some 'gibing expression' used by one of the staff set the crowd to anger, triggering four hours of violent unrest (*Glasgow Chronicle*, 3 August 1816; *Glasgow Herald*, 2 August 1816). But not all riots start instantaneously. On 10 July 1853, there was a riot in Toxteth Park, Liverpool, after a young English Protestant accused a young Irish Catholic boy of throwing dirt at him. The boy denied it and was hit. At that point a number of women intervened, and a larger fight broke out. A group of Orangemen[1] then gathered on a nearby street and marched into the growing Irish crowd, wielding sticks, stone and bricks (*Liverpool Mercury*, 12 July

Table 1. The beginnings of riots.

	Number of riots
Triggered by. . .	
Provocation	75 (18%)
Intervention by police or bailiffs	66 (16%)
Licensed by a routine of. . .	
Factory visiting	11 (3%)
Bread riots	4 (1%)
Marching band	14 (3%)
Attacking strike breakers	21 (5%)
Religious or political meetings	52 (13%)

Notes: These categories are mutually exclusive: where the violence of these routines was triggered by some more immediate factor (e.g. an arrest), the event is counted in the latter group rather than the former. 'Provocation' includes instances where riots began following insults or challenges to norms of behaviour or group hierarchy. 'Intervention by police or bailiffs' is as described. 'Factory visiting' refers to the tradition of violently attacking factories in order to spread the strike. 'Bread riots' are defined with reference to Thompson's (1971) description of the moral economy. 'Marching band' is as described. 'Attacking strike breakers' and 'religious or political meetings' are as stated. Percentages are of the total number of cases (414), including those with missing values.
Source: Tiratelli (2019).

1853). In a gradual process of escalation like this we might be tempted to ask when that initiating process itself began, thus opening up an infinite regress. But this move depends on the assumption that there must be an instantaneous moment of change, that triggers cannot have their own duration. In what follows I will relax that temporal assumption, allowing us to stay closer to the empirical texture of actual rioting and to better identify the dominant patterns in the beginnings of riots.

Three themes emerge from the 414 riots in my catalogue. About a fifth of riots began with a moment of provocation: some insult or challenge to the norms governing appropriate behaviour and group hierarchies. A sixth began with an intervention by the police or bailiffs (which might itself have been a provocation). And a quarter were licensed by some routine or tradition which endorsed the use of collective, public violence (Table 1). These are necessarily rough estimates. Historical sources do not always provide all the information we need and, in many cases, it was impossible to clearly identify how a riot began. In all of the tables reproduced here, the percentages listed are of the full catalogue of 414 riots, including any cases with missing values. The figures therefore represent minimum estimates of the prevalence of each theme.

Provocation

Many 19th- and early 20th-century riots began with some form of provocation. In April 1930, after the Scottish Cup Final, a Protestant gang paraded through the mainly Catholic area of Gorbals in the south of Glasgow. They carried banners, flags and even a replica of the Scottish Cup which Rangers FC had just won. Perhaps unsurprisingly, this provocation did not go unanswered. As they approached Govan Street and entered the territory

of a rival Catholic gang, they were attacked by around 50 men. Eventually the police managed to separate the two sides, but not before serious injury was done to several Rangers fans and four people arrested (Davies, 2006: 211; *Evening Citizen*, 17 April 1930).

At other times, these provocations were purely imaginary. In situations where it is almost impossible for anyone to know what is going on in other parts of the crowd, rumours become the 'characteristic mode of communication' (Rudé, 1964: 257; Turner and Killian, 1957: 32). In Glasgow, during the dockers' strike of 1912, a riot broke out on Plantation Quay when a large crowd heard a rumour that non-union men were being smuggled onto the boats (*Evening Times*, 9 February 1912; *Glasgow Herald*, 10 February 1912). Similarly, in Liverpool on 12 July 1835, riots were triggered by a rumour that local Orange lodges were planning to celebrate the occasion with a march. Determined to prevent this outrage, groups of Irish men gathered in the streets around Orange pubs, armed themselves and started indiscriminately attacking passersby (*Gore's Liverpool General Advertiser*, 16 July 1835, 23 July 1835; *The Times*, 15 July 1835).

Even in situations where tensions were already high, some provocation was often necessary to spark violence. To take just one of many examples, in Stockport in 1819, a meeting was called for 15 February. In those tense months building up to the massacre of Peterloo, meetings were frequently rowdy, but what triggered the first violence was when the crowd hoisted a red liberty cap into the air with a flag reading 'Hunt and Liberty'. For the watching loyalists this was too much to bear, and they rode into the crowd on horseback, managing eventually to capture the insulting cap (*Manchester Mercury*, 23 February 1819; on the liberty cap see Epstein, 1989).

This mechanism of provocation is distinct from other emotional dynamics. A riot could be triggered by fear, a sudden opportunity to do something which is usually impossible or a long-standing hatred (Petersen, 2002). In contrast, a provocation is something that violates a norm: a norm governing either behaviour or the relative status of different groups. By violating that norm, provocation produces emotions which make people feel honour-bound to retaliate. In the cases discussed above, systems of honour relating to masculinity (Davies, 1998; Shoemaker, 2001) and to ethnic and religious hierarchies (Miskell, 2004; Neal, 1988) were particularly significant. However, these will vary across time and space and need to be explicitly historicised, even if the abstract mechanism of provocation proves to be widely transferable.

This analysis speaks to some of the differences between social movements and riots. The stress placed on the cultural context in which particular actions become provocations echoes work in mainstream social movement studies on the generation of 'collective action frames', 'grievances' and 'cognitive liberation' (Klandermans, 1997; McAdam, 1999). However, these terms all refer to dimensions of culture which are connected to the movement's substantive claims. But in the case of riots, the cultural frameworks that make instances of provocation meaningful can be unrelated to the substantive issue around which the riot revolves. For example, a particular riot might be triggered by a perceived violation of someone's masculinity, even though the riot's wider meaning comes from its place in an ongoing sectarian struggle. The significance of this fact will be discussed in greater detail below.

The Role of the Police

The second process through which riots commonly began was intervention by the police or bailiffs. On 12 June 1859, for example, a riot broke out in Old Swan village after the police tried to arrest a preacher who was addressing a crowd by Edge Lane. Incensed by this arrest, the crowd rushed to rescue the preacher, struggling violently with the police (*Liverpool Courier*, 15 June 1859). In cases like this, intervention by the police seems to have been felt as a form of provocation, a violation of the 'natural liberties' enjoyed by all 'freeborn Englishmen' (Bailey, 2014b; Churchill, 2014; Storch, 1976; Storch and Engels, 1975). Although this resistance to the presence of the police declined in the early part of the 20th century, the pattern was not consistent across Britain and suggests another important area of historical change which needs to be explicitly addressed in models of rioting (Bailey, 2014a; Davies, 2013; Klein, 2010).

These examples also have a close affinity with the influential Social Identity Model of rioting (SIM) (Drury and Reicher, 2009; Reicher, 2012; Stott et al., 2017). In this model, the key process is the transformation of a *crowd-in-itself* (simple co-presence of people with individual identities) to a *crowd-for-itself* (where people adopt a group identity). This transformation is often linked to the actions of the police who, by treating the crowd as a dangerous and homogenous group, push people into adopting that very group identity (Stott and Reicher, 1998).

Although this model applies to many of the riots in this catalogue, I doubt whether it can do the work that its authors expect of it in all cases. In particular, many riots occurred in situations where people's identities were *already* firmly established, but where violence only broke out after further provocation. This dynamic is clearly visible in the examples described above where tense meetings turn violent after some specific incident; but it can also be seen in many anti-Irish riots. To pick one such case, when an anti-Catholic lecture by the infamous Baron de Camin at Manchester's Free Trade Hall was closed down by a crowd of Irish Catholics on 3 April 1859, it took the sight of the police emerging from the building with someone they had arrested for a riot to start (*Manchester Courier*, 9 April 1859). Defenders of the SIM might argue that, although their identity was established in advance, it only became social after the police intervened. However, the collective identity present in a crowd of Irish protestors is not simply the co-presence of individuals. But if that identity also does not count as fully social (i.e. as a crowd-for-itself), then it is hard to see what would. In fact, this proliferation of different identities and levels of identification massively complicates what is a simple and insightful model.

Therefore, adopting a temporal perspective reveals two possible extensions to the SIM. First, these findings imply that we might be better off including the transformation of identity within a broader typology of different mechanisms which can initiate rioting, rather than making it into a master variable. Second, a focus on how riots begin has often led advocates of the SIM to assume that identity also explains how that riot then evolves (e.g. Stott et al., 2018). Again, this underplays the variety of different forms that riots can take and obscures other factors which shape the way a riot's career progresses. One of those factors is the focus of the next section.

Routines and Traditions of Violence

The third recurring pattern is the licensing of rioting through particular routines. These are a heterogenous set of cultural scripts, including violent industrial action (factory visiting, attacking strike breakers and bread riots), mass meetings and marching bands. This variety is important. It is widely acknowledged that only some norms break down during a riot and that behaviour continues to be structured in various ways (Collins, 2008: 243; Quarantelli and Dynes, 1970). But many theories of rioting still focus on the carnivalesque breakdown of the normal social order, rather than on what replaces it. Though often revealing, those theories distract us from the historical project of investigating the particular *kind* of riot that is being initiated and examining how those scripts change over time and space. That is to say, they distract us from historicising the practice of rioting itself (Tiratelli, 2020).

Several of the routines which triggered riots were economic in focus. This included bread riots like the events in Glasgow on 20 October 1800, when a crowd stopped a farmer who was coming into town with a cart of meal and – following the strict tradition of the 'moral economy' (Thompson, 1971) – accused the farmer of charging extravagant prices, threw his cart off the Old Bridge, and marched the meal to market to sell at a reduced price (*The Times*, 25 October 1800). Another example was factory visiting, which followed its own particular script. For example, on 15 April 1830, a group of largely Irish shirting weavers walked out of a factory in Manchester and marched through the neighbourhood, travelling from factory to factory intimidating workers into coming out on strike (*The Times*, 19 April 1830). Attacks on strike breakers were also common and carefully targeted. In a telling example from Liverpool in 1889, striking sailors directed their violence exclusively at 'scabs', searching English sailors for their union membership cards while allowing Spanish sailors to pass freely (*Liverpool Courier*, 6 July 1889). In each of these cases, the routines mandated particular kinds of action, directed at particular people – a far cry from the anarchic madness with which riots are normally associated.

Other riots were licensed by carnivalesque celebrations, in particular by the actions of marching bands. Rival Catholic and Protestant bands would frequently parade the streets of 19th-century British cities, waving flags and banners, playing sectarian songs and fighting with passersby. On New Year's Eve in Birkenhead in 1877, a Protestant band paraded near the dock cottages. In response, a Catholic band gathered up a crowd of 2000 followers and marched through the nearby streets smashing houses indiscriminately before turning on the Protestant church of St James (*Liverpool Weekly Albion*, 5 January 1878). In Glasgow, in November 1879, there were four or five separate riots caused by party bands in the course of one single night, each following a familiar pattern (*Evening Times*, 10 November 1879; *Glasgow Herald*, 10 November 1879; *North British Daily Mail*, 10 November 1879).

By describing these routines as 'licensing unrest', I do not mean to imply that the violence was accepted by all. In fact, 19th century riots were rarely endorsed by the powers that be, something which marks a significant change from the 18th century (Randall, 2006: 17; Rogers, 1998; Thompson, 1971: 78). The only exceptions were religious and electoral violence, although even here the picture was complicated. During election

Table 2. The times and places of rioting.

	Number of riots
Occurring during. . .	
All symbolic occasions	70 (17%)
Elections	26 (6%)
Glorious Twelfth of July	26 (6%)

Notes: 'Symbolic occasions' include elections, the Twelfth of July, St Patrick's Day, the Glasgow Cup Final and Royal anniversaries and birthdays. Percentages are of the total number of cases (414), including those with missing values.
Source: Tiratelli (2019).

campaigns, huge bills for damages were expected and violence was normalised for much of this period (Lawrence, 2003; *The Times*, 30 January 1869; Wasserman and Jaggard, 2007). The state also engaged in more-or-less covert sponsorship of sectarian riots. The links between the Liverpool Tory party and Orangeism were widely acknowledged at the time. An anonymous letter from 'A Well-conducted Protestant' in 1851 accused Chief Constable Dowling of being afraid that he would be dismissed by the Watch Committee if he stopped the violent Orange parades (HO 45/3471/L-M/16). Similarly, in Manchester, there were accusations that Protestant police officers provoked unrest by raising orange flags and were then sheltered by friendly landlords (*Manchester Courier*, 1 August 1835). But, despite these exceptions, riots (especially economic riots) were loudly and regularly deplored by the press and politicians (e.g. *Manchester Mercury*, 21 April 1812). Therefore, rather than arguing that rioting reflected a broad consensus, my claim about these various routines is more modest: that in this period, large enough groups of people believed that *certain situations legitimated the use of violence* for rioting to remain a common occurrence.

How Much Do Triggers Matter?

This discussion of the processes through which riots begin leaves two questions unanswered. The first is whether triggers really *cause* riots, or whether violence was always likely to happen one way or the other. This cannot be answered in absolute terms. In some instances, riots seem to have been genuinely caused by their trigger. On 16 February 1822, a row of houses in Clyde Street, Glasgow, were brutally attacked after rumours spread that children were being taken into the house so that their blood could be used to make red paint. But the *Glasgow Chronicle* (19 February 1822) and *Glasgow Herald* (18 February 1822) both reported that there had been four previous attempts to raise a mob at the house over the past few weeks. Starting a riot on that particular Sunday took concerted and repeated effort. It could not have come about any other way.

However, in many other cases, riots arose 'from circumstances of the most trivial nature' (*The Times*, 24 May 1825). In particular, nearly one-fifth of the riots in my catalogue took place on notable dates such as the Glorious Twelfth of July,[2] St Patrick's Day or during elections (Table 2). In Liverpool, the Twelfth was not celebrated consistently

throughout the period and yet that date saw riots on at least 14 occasions. Elections were also plagued by rioting. There were 36 General Elections from 1802 to 1935 and riots were recorded in around a third of them in both Liverpool and Manchester. This has important theoretical implications. A growing body of contemporary evidence suggests that the key to explaining when and where riots *do not* break out lies at the micro level of interactions between police and crowds (Newburn, 2016; Tiratelli, 2018: 75). If this is generally true today (and it has not yet been demonstrated conclusively), then it is a remarkable contrast to the 19th and early 20th-century, where certain events and routines provided regular excuses for violence, almost irrespective of the actions of authorities. Again, this demonstrates the need to historicise theories of rioting, paying particular attention to shifts in the norms and traditions governing the public use of violence.

The second unanswered question concerns whether the way a riot begins can give us clues as to its wider meaning. Smelser's (1962) famous framework, in which triggers work by making grievances concrete, suggests an affirmative answer. (Waddington (1989) applies this model to riots, describing triggers as 'flashpoints' given meaning by their 'communicative context'.) But I think it is important here to disentangle two separate levels of analysis. On the one hand, there is the narrow empirical problem: through what processes do riots begin? On the other hand, there is the ongoing political struggle to define what a particular riot means. This latter question ought to have some empirical grounding, but I believe that it is wrong to assume a priori that the answer is to be found in the trigger. There are, in fact, a variety of empirical questions which are obscured by a vague focus on 'what caused the riot?'. If we want to attempt to define what a riot means – to interpret 'the language of the unheard' (King, 1968) – then we need to engage with this wider project of contextualisation. Focusing on triggers alone is not enough.

How Do Riots Endure?

The question of how long riots last has rarely been addressed by sociologists, perhaps because of the methodological difficulties involved. The riots included in this catalogue are a case in point. For some events, the sources provide an explicit estimate of the riot's duration. In others, the description allows for an educated guess. But, in about half of the cases, there is insufficient detail to give a clear answer (Table 3). Nevertheless, it seems unlikely that those poorly documented events lasted very long. This is because more serious episodes of rioting tended to attract more press coverage and more detailed descriptions. On this basis, I would suggest that most urban riots in this period were fairly short, over in minutes, or a few hours, and rarely stretching into days of continuous violence. (There is even some evidence that this might be a universal tendency for all violent situations, although the case is far from closed: Collins, 2008: 3–4.)

There are significant causal questions to be answered here about why some riots last longer than others, but these lie beyond the scope of this essay. Instead, I want to focus on the more descriptive question of how riots are linked together through time. Almost all of the riots described as lasting more than a day actually consist of several different moments of unrest, followed by pauses and regroupings, before violence breaks out again. The same is true of the many waves of rioting which consumed Manchester, Liverpool and Glasgow throughout this period. Riots are, in this sense, self-similar:

Table 3. The duration of riots.

	1 hour or less	Several hours	More than a day
Number of riots lasting. . .	76 (18%)	56 (14%)	70 (17%)
Duration explicitly mentioned in the sources	15	41	70
Duration inferred from the description of events	61	15	

Note: Percentages are of the total number of cases (414), including those with missing values.
Source: Tiratelli (2019).

across different temporal scales, they follow a similar pattern of discrete moments of action, separated in time, but linked together in various ways. Drawing on the 414 riots in this catalogue, it is possible to identify two particularly prominent links: the feedback loop between action and identity, and the urge for revenge.

There have been various attempts to theorise the excitement and energy which characterises riots, from Sewell's (1996) focus on the disruption of normal routines, to Bourdieu's (1990) interest in the synchronisation of temporalities and Collins's (2008) focus on our neurological tendency for 'rhythmic entrainment'. What matters from a temporal perspective is how long that emotional energy lasts and how quickly it can be transformed into more stable forms such as identity. The industrial unrest which consumed Manchester from 1829 to 1830 is a useful case study in this respect because, there, strikes and violence fed into the process of class formation (Steinberg, 1999). In Ashton, the heart of the unrest, the workers' doomed struggle amplified feelings of alienation and hatred of their employers, which in turn fuelled their growing sense of class identity and led to further violence. A similar pattern can be seen in the sectarian riots of early 1850s Liverpool, where long-standing ethnic identities were solidified by continual action and made salient by the riots themselves (Neal, 1988: 158–162). Moreover, the strength of these identities meant that memories of events could be retained and nurtured, thus providing a feedback loop which provoked further riots. From a temporal perspective it is also important to acknowledge the role that the rhythm of external events can play in this process. Sectarian violence in particular was practically invited by recurring celebrations like the Glorious Twelfth or St Patrick's Day, and often given renewed energy by elections which were generally fought along denominational lines. This rhythm of external events also helped to sustain unrest against the Salvation Army in 1880s Liverpool (Murdoch, 1992). Regular Salvation Army marches and meetings on a Sunday came to be associated with a routine of stone throwing and opposition, giving these events a particular temporal rhythm (*Liverpool Courier*, 6 October 1883; *Manchester Courier*, 6 January 1883).

The second endogenous process is more direct: the urge for revenge. The violence associated with the young 'scuttling' gangs of late 1880s Manchester was largely driven by a dynamic of tit-for-tat revenge attacks (Gooderson, 1997). Because these gangs were based in strong neighbourhood identities (Davies, 1998), they retained a collective memory of feuds, vendettas and prior insults, which could sustain unrest over long periods of time. A similar pattern emerged during the sectarian unrest in Liverpool in the early

Table 4. The end of riots.

	Number of riots
Riots brought to an end by. . .	
Law enforcement	130 (31%)
Loss of object of shared attention	12 (3%)
Dispersed by rival crowds	4 (1%)

Notes: 'Law enforcement' includes the police, militia and military. 'Loss of object of shared attention' refers to riots which ended following the removal of the common focus of attention (e.g. a prisoner the crowd were attempting to rescue being safely removed to the jail, or being successfully rescued). 'Dispersed by rival crowds' is as stated. Percentages are of the total number of cases (414), including those with missing values.
Source: Tiratelli (2019).

1900s. For example, on 6 September 1903, a meeting was held to commemorate the fatal attack on the Protestant preacher John Kensit. An Orange parade marched to the meeting from Islington Square, while a Roman Catholic crowd gathered on the green. Once they arrived, there were continual fights between the two sides, with sticks and stones flying back and forth (*Liverpool Courier*, 7 September 1903; *Liverpool Echo*, 7 September 1903; *Liverpool Evening Express*, 7 September 1903).

These links between different riots at different scales reveal a limitation in how the career metaphor is normally deployed. The assumption that each career is an independent entity with clear boundaries is useful in many contexts (particularly quantitative ones). But in this case, the interconnections between different riots point to the need for a more flexible application of the metaphor, one which allows us to move between different temporal scales and to explore the relationships between the careers of individual fights, of whole riots and of longer waves of unrest.

How Do Riots End?

The ends of riots have received far less attention than their origins. But my catalogue suggests one dominant theme: many urban riots in 19th- and early 20th-century Britain were brought to an end by the police (Table 4). (Again, 31% should be seen as a minimum estimate, as many poorly recorded riots resulted in arrests which suggests that the police played at least some role.) To take just one example, in Glasgow in April 1844, a policeman tried to intervene in a fight on Havannah Street and was himself attacked. A large crowd gathered and, as more police arrived, a general melée ensued with some of the crowd defending the police, and others opposing them. Eventually further police reinforcements materialised, and they managed to restore order (*Glasgow Herald*, 19 April 1844). Although the central importance of the police in bringing riots to an end might not be surprising, these interactions are often ignored in the study of riots (Wilkinson, 2009). More importantly, they suggest that historical variation in the power of the state to enforce its monopoly of force ought to be explicitly acknowledged in our theoretical models.

Britain's first professional police force was established in Glasgow in 1800 (Barrie, 2000), with the more famous Metropolitan Police Force following in 1829 (Brogden, 1987). Over the course of the 1830s and 1840s, a series of Acts of Parliament led to the formation of local constabularies in many regions of Britain, culminating in the County and Borough Police Act (1856), in which the Treasury agreed to fund local police forces across the whole of England and Wales (Channing, 2015; Klein, 2010). Although there are still significant debates about the extent to which the growth of the police contributed to falling crime rates (Bailey, 2014a: 1–10) and the extent to which their tactics may have shifted from protecting private premises to promoting public order (Joyce, 2003; Navickas, 2016: 141–142), the increasing availability of a dedicated police force had profound implications for rioting. These changes made the pattern of termination for 19th- and early 20th-century riots historically distinctive,[3] particularly compared with 18th-century food riots. In the latter case, rather than being subdued through force, riots often ended in negotiated settlements founded on a shared ideological framework and dense community networks (Bohstedt, 1983; Randall, 2006; Thompson, 1971). In many cases, local officials responded openly to the demands of rioters, weighing them against competing interests and enacting various policies in response (Thwaites, 1996). As before, this points to the need for explicitly historicised theories of rioting, which recognise that the roles played by different explanatory variables have shifted in important ways over time.

Conclusion

This article began by setting out the need for a temporal approach to the study of rioting and the value of the Chicago School's concept of the career. Applying that perspective to a catalogue of 414 riots allows us to characterise their development in three ways: (1) riots often begin with insults and provocation, intervention by the police or with routines which license violence; (2) while most riots are relatively short, they are also linked together through time by cycles of revenge and the feedback loop between action and identity; and (3) the weight of the state's monopoly of organised violence often proved decisive in bringing riots to an end. Taken together, this suggests that a 'temporal turn' can produce novel and important empirical findings. But it also provides vital theoretical insights. On the one hand, these findings suggest important limits to the explanatory power of identity and triggers in accounting for riots' development. On the other, they demonstrate the need to historicise theories of riots, and to pay particular attention to two areas of historical change: the norms and traditions governing the public use of violence, and the relative power of the state to assert its monopoly of force on the ground in the short term.

Further research is needed to expand this temporal approach. There are significant causal questions which this article has raised but left unanswered. I have also focused entirely on external clock time, setting aside rioters' own temporal experiences. The archival sources that underpin this essay are radically unsuited for investigating those subjective dimensions, but they are significant questions which would richly reward further study.

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Notes

1. The Orange Order is a Protestant Unionist organisation which began in Ireland and spread to England in the 19th-century.
2. A Protestant celebration of the Battle of Boyne.
3. It is worth mentioning that my catalogue does not allow me to cleanly distinguish between historical change on the one hand, and the change between rural and metropolitan settings on the other. However, my reading of the existing evidence (especially work on earlier urban riots) suggests that historical change is a more plausible argument.

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