

## 6HUM1012 Popular Protest, Riot and Reform

### Workshop 4: 'contentious gatherings' and Charles Tilly

**Table 1:** Verbs in newspaper reports of contentious gatherings, south-eastern England, 1758-1820, [extract] from Charles Tilly, *Popular Contention in Great Britain, 1758-1834* (1995), p. 265

verb	1758-81	1789-1811	1819	1820
attack	17.4 [%]	4.7	3.8	2.8
cheer	0.8	4.2	3.7	8.9
control	15.0	8.0	4.0	4.1
fight	1.5	1.2	0.7	0.5
meet	2.8	9.6	12.1	9.1
move	9.7	6.2	3.2	5.6
resolve	1.6	13.7	23.4	19.1

**Table 2:** types of contentious gathering, south-eastern England, [extract] Tilly, *Popular Contention*, p. 258

Type of event	1758-81	1789-1811	1819	1820
Attacks on persons or their property	46.5 [%]	12.1	3.1	1.5
Seizure of food or property	5.9	1.1	0	0
Meeting to communicate with national government	21.5	35.0	57.8	41.6
Electoral assembly	5.3	13.5	7.0	9.1
Strike or gathering for wage demands	4.6	1.1	0	0

**Analyse the language of the newspaper reports. What words do they use to describe political meetings? What do they show about the development of political movements in this period?**

Tilly, *Popular Contention*, p.25 –

**4 explanations for why ‘contentious gatherings’ and political movements developed over this period:**

- War
- Parliamentarisation
- Capitalisation
- proletarianisation

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Eighteenth century	Nineteenth century
1. People's frequent employment of the authorities' normal means of action, either as caricature or as a deliberate if temporary assumption of the authorities' prerogatives in the name of the local community.	Use of relatively autonomous means of action of a kind rarely or never employed by authorities.
2. Convergence on the residences of wrongdoers and the sites of wrongdoing.	Preference for previously planned action in visible public places.
3. Extensive use of authorised public celebration and assemblies for the presentation of grievances and demands.	Deliberate organisation of assemblies for the articulation of claims.
4. Common appearance of the participants as members or representatives of constituted corporate groups and communities rather than of special interests.	Participation as members or representatives of special interests, constituted public bodies and named associations.
5. A tendency to act directly against local enemies but to appeal to powerful patrons for redress of wrongs beyond the reach of the local community and especially for representing outside communities.	Direct challenges to rivals or authorities, especially national authorities and their representatives.
6. Repeated adoption of riots, irreverent symbolism in the form of effigies, dumb show and ritual objects to state grievances and demands.	Display of programmes, slogans and symbols of common membership such as flags, colours and lettered banners.
7. Shaping of action to particular circumstances and localities.	Preference for forms of action easily transferred from one circumstance to another.
8. Parochial, particular, bifurcated.	Cosmopolitan, modular, autonomous.

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### Eighteenth century contentious gatherings

**Parochial** – issues often confined to one community

Violent direct action enacted locally but redress from national bodies sought through **intermediary** authorities

**Particular** – forms of action vary between localities and do not spread easily

### Nineteenth century collective action

**National** – issues affect many communities, or affected power centres that controlled many localities

**'autonomous'** – address centres of power directly

**'modular'** – forms of action easily transferable methods between localities