

Dulling the Impacts of Repression
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Abstract: In the large body of research on social movement repression, research on how activists understand, strategize about, and work to prevent, or dull the effects of, repression is relatively scarce. Even in studies focused on understanding repression effects, features of the repression itself (type, severity, timing, whether it is perpetrated by the government or private actors, etc.) are often assumed to hold the greatest explanatory power, with less attention paid to the strategies that movement actors use in response to, or in anticipation of, repression. Drawing from research both within and outside of social movements studies (e.g. from surveillance studies, law and society and legal scholarship, criminal justice and criminology, cultural studies, and media studies), I review existing research relevant to understanding how movements prepare for, prevent, build networks of support around, and adapt to repression in efforts dull its deterrent effects. This growing body of literature, although fragmented across a variety of disciplines, is beginning to paint a picture of greater agency on the part of activists, compared with what one might gather from the bulk of repression research in social movement studies.

Keyword: security culture, support networks, deterrence, tactical innovation

Introduction

In the large body of research on social movement repression, research on how activists understand, strategize about, or work to dull the effects of repression is relatively scarce. Even in studies focused on understanding repression effects, features of the repression itself (type, severity, timing, whether it is perpetrated by the government or private actors, etc.) are often assumed to hold the greatest explanatory power, with less attention paid to the strategies that movement actors use in response to, or in anticipation of, repression. Drawing from research both within and outside of social movements studies (e.g., from surveillance studies, law and society and legal scholarship, criminal justice and criminology, cultural studies, and media studies), I review existing research relevant to understanding these movement responses to repression and identify fruitful areas for future research.

This growing body of literature, though fragmented across various disciplines, is starting to reveal a clearer picture of the greater agency of activists, contrasting with what is typically

found in the majority of repression research within social movement studies. This body of research explores how movements create systems of legal, medical, and emotional support for activists facing repression. It discusses efforts to prevent repression when possible, as well as strategies to prepare activists mentally and physically for when it occurs. Additionally, the research examines how these movements adapt to repression and offer activists new perspectives on the risks and consequences of repression, which can help mitigate its impact. This review brings together various conversations and lines of research, demonstrating that we have a substantial understanding of how movements can mitigate the effects of repression. However, it also highlights important areas where further research is needed. One major area of further research, which will come up throughout this review, is how activist efforts to dull the effects of repression on their movements, operating in Layers 5-7 of Earl and Braithwaite's (2022) framework, are also constrained or enabled by repression in other layers "upstream."

Legal Support

Several studies have detailed the extensive systems of legal support for social movements that have developed in the US and Europe. For example, Starr, Fernandez and colleagues (Starr and Fernandez 2009; Starr et al. 2011) have detailed the various ways that activists in the alter-globalization movement have adapted to the increased repression that emerged after the 1999 WTO protests in Seattle. They show how activists in this movement developed creative strategies for dulling the impact of this repression through documentation of police abuses, spreading legal knowledge among activists, and engaging in jail solidarity, court solidarity, and political litigation. Walsh (2016) details the legal observer model used to monitor police action at the Brisbane G20 protests in 2014, Yoder (2011/12) describes the deployment of these legal observers at "Occupy" campaigns around the world, and Narro and Gregor (2006) detail the

extensive legal support network created for the Immigrant Freedom Ride of 2003. But, these systems of legal support are not exclusive to any of these specific movements, campaigns, or protest events. Rather, activists from a variety of movements work to maintain and utilize these systems of legal support to the benefit of individual activists as well as the organizations and movements of which they are a part (Reynolds-Stenson 2022).

Together, this body of work demonstrates how groups like the National Lawyers Guild (NLG) in the US work to create legal coordinating committees, train teams of legal observers, assemble a network of attorneys, and establish networks of communication and emergency response plans ahead of large protest events. Legal observers are trained to collect information that can later be used in criminal defense of arrested protesters or in civil lawsuits against law enforcement. Legal observers are easily identified with distinctive hats, shirts, or vests, in part so that their mere presence might discourage aggressive or unlawful policing (Noonan et al. 2000; Walsh 2016; Human Rights Observer Team 2007). These efforts also often include putting on Know Your Rights trainings and solidarity trainings for activists and organizers before a large protest, including roleplays in anticipation of interactions with law enforcement. Arrested protesters are tracked through the jail system and jail solidarity protests are sometimes organized. After everyone has been released, the legal team moves onto focusing on criminal defense and preparing for civil suits.

Activists also raise money to cover legal costs, post bail, or pay fines incurred (as well as raise awareness of repression) through concerts and parties to benefit arrested protesters (Starr et al. 2011; Reynolds-Stenson 2022). Money is sometimes collected before a protest (or any arrests) so that these funds are ready to mobilize quickly, which also has the benefit of giving activists a greater sense of support going into the event (Reynolds-Stenson 2022). These formal

and informal systems of legal support have developed over time to become something that many activists in the US and Europe can count on. In fact, in my study of activists in Arizona who had experienced state repression, I found that almost all activists who had been arrested at protests received the legal defense they needed free of charge (Reynolds-Stenson 2022).

These networks of legal support are not new. Falciola (2022) described how mass defense strategies for protesters developed in the 1960s in the US in response to the legal needs of the civil rights movement and later the anti-war movement. These strategies were developed to not only resist repression, but to mobilize supporters. As Falciola describes, “As the practical need for a legal arm for the movement emerged, lawyers were catapulted into the midst of student struggles” (2022:64). In 1967, “a system of mass defense for large arrest situations was finally born” and first used at Stop the Draft week in Washington, D.C., including involvement of over 200 law students working with volunteer attorneys. In 1969 and 1970, the Nixon administration began using grand juries as tool of political repression and the NLG began counseling witnesses subpoenaed before political grand juries (which continues today; Starr et al. 2011). They also mounted legal challenges, many of which were successful, to increasing surveillance in the 1970s (Falciola 2022). Zwerman and Steinhoff (2012) describe these legal support networks (LSNs) that emerged out of the New Left movement in the 1960s and 1970s and which continue to provide critical support for activists with long-term prison sentences. These LSNs maintained communication with defendants to keep spirits up, made decisions concerning defense strategies, showed support by attending trials and boosting morale, and continued to challenge sentencing once the trials were over.

Such systems of legal support have been primarily developed in democracies, likely due in part to the move toward increasing legalistic forms of repression in these countries (McCarthy

and McPhail 1999). Also, in authoritarian regimes where there may be little trust in the legal system or in which the legal system is not functional, such legal support might be of little consolation to activists. The ability of legal support networks to dull the deterrent effects of repression is predicated on a functional legal system that the general public trusts. Even among democracies, variation in the criminal justice system may differentially constrain movement actors' ability to resist legalistic repression. For example, in the United States, mass incarceration, racial inequities in the criminal justice systems, and high levels of legal cynicism in minoritized communities arguably undermine these efforts by movements to a greater degree than in European democracies. Therefore, as Oliver (2008) demonstrates, the effects of repression in Layer 2 flow downstream to affect the ability of movements to dull the impacts of legalistic repression (in Layers 5-7).

Medical Support

Some of these same studies have also focused on the systems of medical support developed by activists, which constitutes another way activists can dull the impact of repression. In many countries, police have an increasingly large arsenal of "less lethal" weapons that are deployed both at protests (Wood 2014) and in other contexts, like the War on Drugs (Balko 2013). As state capacity for control of the general population and minoritized groups in particular (Layers 1 and 2) increases, so does capacity for control of social movements and the need for activists to adapt to this changing arsenal (Layers 5-7).

To this end, activists often organize street medic teams for large protests, as well as provide training on the basics of treating the effects of police weapons so that this knowledge is spread broadly among activists (Starr and Fernandez 2009; Starr et al. 2011; Reynolds-Stenson 2022). Maguire et al. (2023) found that at the 2017 Trump rally in Phoenix, Arizona, where

police used a variety of forms of force and weapons against the crowd, it was common for protesters to respond to this police violence by helping those in the crowd who were most vulnerable (e.g., the very young or old and those who were disabled). Just as I have argued elsewhere, much of the medical support at protests comes not just from organized teams of medics but from fellow activists, as “being prepared to help others is often taken for granted as part of activist culture” (Reynolds-Stenson 2022:75). Activists in my study spoke of the importance of this support when they needed it (e.g., when they were injured by police at a protest), and how even the presence of medics and other activists with basic medical supplies and knowledge made them feel safer and more able to face the risks of police violence (Reynolds-Stenson 2022).

Activists develop other ways to protect themselves and each other from police violence, such as the use of gas masks or vinegar-soaked cloths to protect against tear gas (Starr et al. 2011) or developing tactics for “de-arresting” fellow protesters (Starr et al. 2011). At large protests, such as economic summit protests, protest camps and Convergence Centers also provide an important function in this regard. Starr et al. (2011:144) explain, by “offering a safe space for retreat, they provide a place where activists can rest, regenerate, sleep, and eat ... Camps also provide a medical clinic, which is important because activists do not feel safe visiting (and in the United States cannot afford to visit) a hospital for help with injuries caused by police violence.”

These networks of medical support, along with the networks of legal support discussed in the previous section, help to reduce the costs of repression, spread out these costs among activists, and more generally create a culture of solidarity and support in the face of repression. In all of these ways, these kinds of support can help dull the effects of repression on those who

are most directly impacted by it as well as create stronger, more repression-resistant, movements (Reynolds-Stenson 2022).

Preparation and Training

Activist trainings can not only help activists manage and mitigate the physical and legal impacts of repression, but they also have the power to dull the impacts of repression by mentally preparing activists for what they may experience, thus making it less of a shock if repression does occur. Sometimes civil disobedience training of activists involves roleplay for dealing with pain compliance techniques that police might use, with some going as far as pepper spraying each other (Reynolds-Stenson 2022). This kind of preparation in advance of civil disobedience demonstrations is not new. During the civil rights movement, activists also engaged in roleplay exercises before the lunch counter sit-ins, to help them mentally prepare for and remain calm when faced with hostility from white counter protesters (Cosgrove 2013).

Earl (2011) analyzed deterrence and radicalization among activists arrested at the 2004 Republican National Convention protests and found that individuals who had more realistic expectations about the risks of protest were more likely to be radicalized, rather than deterred, by the experience of arrest. Sometimes these more realistic expectations came from prior arrest experiences, but other times they came from attending civil disobedience trainings. I similarly find that preparing activists for repression helps to buffer individuals against the shock of repression, which has significant consequences for continued engagement (Reynolds-Stenson 2022).

More generally, Davenport (2014:10) argues that “the effect of repression on SMOs is conditioned by the challengers’ attempts to prepare its members for repressive behavior”. To this point, Nepsted (2008) argues that making a conscious decision to accept repression (and

particularly long-term incarceration) was critical to persistence in the high-risk, anti-nuclear Plowshares movement. She further shows that incarceration, when chosen and prepared for, actually had unintended benefits for the movement, such as strengthening ties among activists and promoting internal cohesion (and reducing internal conflict).

Such training and preparation are an important (and understudied) way that movements learn and adapt to changing political opportunities and repression contexts and diffuse knowledge to younger generations of activists and to other organizations and movements. Sometimes, this training and preparation comes from actors external to the movement or even the country where the movement is active (Kim et al. 2024). Chenoweth and Stephan (2021) examine 68 nonviolent campaigns and find that organizers who receive external support in the form of training before a mobilization went on to build nonviolent campaigns with higher participation, lower fatalities, and greater numbers of military defections. Training can be a critical way to share skills and strategy, but also build relationships, communication, and confidence among activists (Chenoweth and Stephan 2021), all of which can help to dull the impact of repression. In fact, Jackson et al. (2020) have found that even the anticipation of such external support in the face of government repression can increase the likelihood of an uprising.

Security Culture, Counter-surveillance, and Information Control

Movements also work to dull the effects of repression by preventing it when possible. Many studies have examined the ways that activist groups protect themselves against repression through developing a “security culture,” engaging in counter-surveillance, and otherwise controlling information about their actions or the actions of the state (Wade et al. 2021; Andonaegui 2022; Ullrich and Knopp 2018; Reynolds-Stenson 2022; Honari 2018a, 2018b, 2021; Gunzelmann 2022; Starr et al. 2011; Starr et al. 2009; Case 2022; Robinson 2008; Snow

and Cross 2011; Phattharathanasut 2024). Security culture is defined by Ullrich and Knopp (2018:192) as: “established movement or group specific norms and sets of practices intended to secure political agency under conditions of perceived threats”. These practices have been adopted by many activist groups in recent decades, especially more radical activists (Reynolds-Stenson 2022) or activists organizing in more repressive contexts (Honari 2018b), but also among activists more broadly as the state’s technological tools of surveillance and monitoring have become more advanced and movements have increasingly relied on information communication technologies (ICTs) to organize.

Some security culture practices are digital, such as using encryption (Gunzelmann 2022; Reynolds-Stenson 2022), secure message apps (Reynolds-Stenson 2022), or circumvention tools (e.g. VPNs) when organizing (Honari 2018a, Honari and Muis 2021). Some advocate only organizing face-to-face with trusted others (Gunzelmann 2022; Reynolds-Stenson 2022; Starr et al. 2011), using “burner” phones, not having their cell phones nearby or removing the batteries from their phones when discussing actions (to prevent them from being remotely turned on and used as “roving bugs”; Reynolds-Stenson 2022). Many are very careful in their use of social media for organizing, or do not use it at all out of fear of monitoring (Reynolds-Stenson 2022).

Many protesters, especially those who are more radical, also use black blocs or other ways of obscuring their identity or visibility to cameras and police while at protests (Ullrich and Knopp 2018; Reynolds-Stenson 2022; Star et al. 2011; Case 2022). The goal of a black bloc is “to provide anonymity by making individuals indistinguishable from one another. The more people who participate in this tactic, the more effective it can be and the harder it can be for authorities to single anyone out for arrest” (Reynolds-Stenson 2022:63).

To protect themselves against the possibility of infiltration of their group by undercover officers and/or informants, groups develop systems for vetting and vouching for new-comers and identifying and expelling infiltrators (Reynolds-Stenson 2022). As I explain, this identification is made easy by the “clear lack of cultural fit between the undercover officers and the activist group. In this way, one of the strongest defenses that activist groups have against infiltration is having a distinctive, nuanced subculture that is not easy for an outsider to mimic or learn convincingly” (Reynolds-Stenson 2022:65). In zines and online, they also work to share information about how to spot infiltrators based on known cases of infiltration and to warn others about known infiltrators (Reynolds-Stenson 2022).

Adopting such practices of security culture can have many benefits for movements in terms of prevention of, or protection from, repression or otherwise dulling the effects of this repression. Robinson (2008:225)’s ethnography of a highly organized and active anarchist community in the US examines anarchists’ resistance to the “terrorist” label that was increasingly applied to them after September 11, 2001 and argued that “Security culture is a form of collective resistance that functions as a protective mechanism against the panoptic gaze that the terrorist label authorizes”. More generally, Snow and Cross (2011) argue that: “free spaces” outside the reach of control agents, along with the development of affinity groups and security culture, allows trust to develop within radical groups and that such trust is critical to organizing amid the possibility of repression. Andonaegui (2022) also argues that security culture is key to embracing a “diversity of tactics.” As I explain, “Security culture rejects the notion that ‘if you aren’t doing anything wrong, you have nothing to worry about,’ and instead advocates for the normalization of practices that increase privacy and security for everyone involved in social movements. Security culture is especially important for planning direct action or actions that

require an element of surprise, and to avoid arrest or other repressive consequences” (Reynolds-Stenson 2022:64).

But security culture has its costs as well (e.g. Francis 2022; Gunzelmann 2022), prompting Clough (2012:1683) to conclude that it has a “mixed record” and Starr et al. (2011:143) to call it a “double-edged sword.” Starr et al. (2008), through in-depth interviews with activists at social movement organizations representing a variety of causes and areas of the United States, document the impact of pervasive surveillance on how organizations work to recruit members, build community, plan actions, and agitate for change. Not only have many left activism due to surveillance, those who remain are marginalized and criminalized, and spend less time on their original cause or project and more time on self-defense and resisting repression. They may also suspect and distrust one another, fear rather than welcome new members, make decisions less democratically (with input from fewer people and in secret), avoid reflection and debriefing about past actions, and destroy records of their meetings and therefore of movement history (Starr et al. 2008; Starr et al. 2011). The sum of all of this is a profound chilling effect on activists which they argue not only deters experienced activists and weaken organizations but may also deter potential activists.

While security culture often emphasizes the vulnerability of ICTs to surveillance and works to avoid or mitigate these vulnerabilities, some studies demonstrate how such technologies can be used by activists to “turn the tables” on state agents of repression or lessen the information asymmetries between them and their opponents. For example, Ullrich and Knopp discuss how activists engage in “sousveillance” or surveillance “from below.” This includes legal observing discussed previously or otherwise observing police (mis)conduct for the purpose of “lawsuits and disciplinary complaints, media attention, and political campaigns to influence

the legal framework of protest events” (Ullrich and Knopp 2018). Starr et al. (2011) show how activists also work to resist infiltration by watching for possible undercover officers among crowds of protesters and, when found, taking pictures or video of the evidence so that this can be distributed among activists or used in litigation. Similarly, Earl et al. (2013) show how protesters at the G20 meetings in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania in 2009 used Twitter to share location information about protesters and police and therefore reduce the existing information asymmetries between police and protests. Others have shown how “pirate communication” through a combination of trusted face-to-face communication and use of technologies can play an important role in spreading tactical and other information among protesters (Starr et al. 2011: 127). They also show that “mobile communication can be appropriated to increase activists’ repertoire of actions, foster resistance, and shut down opportunities” (Neumayer and Stald 2014:117). Neumayer and Stald (2014:119) are also careful to note that: “The provision of information using mobile phones is neither inherently empowering nor disempowering; everything depends on the actors, their goals, and the power relationships that they are attempting to resist.”

Security culture, counter-surveillance, and information control are especially critical to dulling the effects of repression in contexts, like the United States and Europe, where CCTV as well as other security cameras (e.g. doorbell cameras on private residences) have become ubiquitous, as well as in countries, like China, where the state engages in extensive censorship of online content and activity. In such contexts, these greater levels of control and surveillance of the general population (Layer 1) also increases states’ capacity for repression of movements through these same technologies. And, as discussed above, if a security culture develops in

activist circles in response to this surveillance, this may provide some measure of protection against repression, but may also have negative impacts on movements.

Tactical and Other Adaptations

In addition to changes to how they communicate and share information with one another, movements may change their tactics or demands, or individual activists may change how they participate, as a way of dulling the impacts of repression. Perhaps most famously, McAdam (1983) demonstrates that all tactical innovations have a shelf life, as forces opposing social movements eventually figure out ways to neutralize the disruption created by the emergence of a new tactic. Through analysis of the sequence and count of protest events initiated by the civil rights movement as reported in newspapers, McAdam reveals a pattern in which events surge with the development of each new tactical innovation by the movement and then decrease as each tactic is in some way neutralized by opponents. More recent studies have similarly shown this interplay between protester and police tactics as they unfold on the ground at protests (Scholl 2012; Gilham and Noakes 2007; Starr et al. 2011; Haimson 2020).

We also know from case studies in a variety of contexts that tactical shift is a common response to repression (e.g. Almeida 2008; Francisco 1995, 1996; Boudreau 2002; O'Brien and Deng 2015; Cunningham et al. 2017). In many cases, this involves an escalation from nonviolence to violent protest, in other words a move from Layer 6 to Layer 7 in Earl and Braithwaite's model (e.g. White 1989; Araj 2008; Moore 1998; Lichbach 1987; Ryckman 2020). But other times, groups may adapt by employing "safer," less confrontational forms of protest (Titarenko et al. 2001) or taking on new roles within a movement (Reynolds-Stenson 2022; Honari 2018a, 2021), sometimes as a way to remain organized and ready for an opening in the political system or a lessening of repression (Moghadam and Gheyntanchi 2010; Johnston and

Mueller 2001). Other studies show that groups, in response to repression, may form new coalitions (Osa 2003; Chang 2008), form and act in “affinity groups” that are less vulnerable to repression (Starr et al. 2011), engage in more dispersed forms of protest (Schock 2005; Arslanalp and Erkman 2024), escalate their demands (Kang 2023), or change their arena of struggle (O’Hearn 2009; della Porta et al. 2006; Honari 2018b, 2021). For an in-depth review of these and other responses to repression, see Honari (2018).

Emotional Support and the Reframing of Repressive Experiences

Several studies have also documented how activists in a variety of contexts provide emotional support to one another or manage the emotions that can come with taking on risks and/or experiences of state repression (e.g. Brown and Pickerill 2009; Clough 2012; Goodwin and Pfaff 2001; Mok 2022; Nah 2021; Fantasia 1998; Fogelson 1995). Formal structures for providing emotional support can often be seen at larger protests in the form of the “chill-out spaces”, “out-of-action” tents, and “healing or trauma centers” where protesters can take a break from street protest, process traumatic experiences, and hopefully avoid burning out after experience of state repression (Starr et al. 2011). When activists are arrested at protests, others often join together to welcome and care for activists as they are released from jail, and organize court solidarity events so that the courtroom is filled with supporters when activists appear in court (Starr and Fernandez 2009; Reynolds-Stenson 2022). In cases of long-term incarceration of activists, groups like the Anarchist Black Cross hold letter writing parties and send letters and literature to political prisoners to counter the isolation of prison (Hackett 2015). Nepsted (2008) documents how the systems of material and emotional support for prisoners and their families were critical to the persistence of some Plowshares movement groups and Zwerman and

Steinhoff (2012) show how the longer-term support LSNs provided to long-time New Left prisoners was often as much emotional/social support as it was legal.

Much of this emotional support for dealing with repression is not just apparent at protests, or provided only to those arrested or incarcerated, but is ongoing and woven into the fabric of activist cultures to help dull the effects of repression. For example, King (2005) describes the various forms of counseling, meditation, and self-care work that occurs in social movement communities. Yam (2023) shows how zines produced by those involved in the 2019 protests against the Anti-Extradition Law Amendment Bill (Anti-ELAB) were used to provide self-care and community care in the face of state violence. I have also documented how activists sometimes organize free therapeutic events (with free massage, acupuncture, etc.) that are not associated with any specific protest but instead provide stress relief to activists on an ongoing basis, or how friends and fellow activists throw parties for each other to celebrate when charges are dropped, parole is ended, or as a farewell before a lengthy prison sentence (Reynolds-Stenson 2022). As I explain, “This kind of emotional support and solidarity among activists facing repression can help to take the sting—and the stigma—out of spending time in jail or prison, experiencing police violence, or otherwise being repressed by the state for political activity” and, furthermore, this kind of support is critical to increasing the odds of persistence, as opposed to deterrence, for individuals in these situations (Reynolds-Stenson 2022:80-81). It is for these reasons that some scholars have argued that movements should place even greater focus on improving activist wellbeing as a way of steeling movements against the impacts of repression (Saab et al. 2024).

Given the much larger body of work demonstrating both the mobilizing and demobilizing potential of emotions in a variety of contexts (Gamson 1992; Fogelman 1995; Brockett 1995,

2005; Jasper and Poulsen 1995; Jasper 1997, 1998, 2011; Klandermans 1997; Flam 1998, 2004, 2005; Goodwin, Jasper and Polletta 2001; Gould 2002; Perry 2002; Kim 2002; Klatch 2004; Reed 2004; Sturmer and Simon 2009; Summers-Effler 2010; Pearlman 2016; Gledhill et al. 2022), the dynamics of emotional support in encouraging persistence in the face of repression arguably also deserves greater attention from scholars.

Groups sometimes also work to take the sting out of repression by reframing the experience for individuals. Voss (1998) showed that labor unions work to reframe their experiences after a major loss or set-back in ways that encourage continued commitment and Einwohner (2002) examined how animal rights activists worked to keep morale high and put a positive spin on their efforts through “fortifying strategies.” I further demonstrate that groups can shape how an individual responds not just to setbacks or losses, but also repression by giving them new ways of understanding the risks and rewards of collective action. As a result, “repression, rather than being perceived as a blow to themselves or their movement, is often taken by activists as further proof of the power of their collective action” (Reynolds-Stenson 2022: 87) as Snow and Cross (2011) have also argued. Furthermore, I argue that these understandings of the meaning of participation and repression can help mitigate the potentially deterrent effects of repression and that such reframing is associated with persistence following repression (Reynolds-Stenson 2022).

Conclusion and Areas for Future Research

The studies reviewed here demonstrate that there are many ways that social movement actors can, and already do, work to mitigate the negative effects of repression on individual activists, organizations, campaigns, and movements. Together, these works highlight the agency that social movements have in shaping the impact of repression, agency which is not generally

featured in research on social movement repression. There are even some who are beginning to explicitly argue that understanding this agency is key to resolving long-standing debates about repression effects (Reynolds-Stenson 2022; Honari 2018b).

Despite progress in this area, there remain many understudied areas related to how movements dull the effects of repression. For example, while several studies mention the use of Know Your Rights trainings for activists, there are no in-depth treatments of these trainings, which I argue can help us understand how legal consciousness around protest rights is created and diffused among activists and organizations. Understanding of rights to protest and what to do in interactions with law enforcement can change how or if one participates, but it also more fundamentally affects individuals' understanding of rights and the line between governance and repression. The law and society literature on legal consciousness and rights consciousness (for reviews see Chua and Engel 2019 and Sibley 2005) may provide a fruitful framework from which to examine this specific form of repression resistance. Researchers should also work to more explicitly compare how methods of resisting or damping might differ by the type of repression (Earl 2003). While increasing attention is paid to activist responses to surveillance, this is generally a separate conversation that remains largely disconnected from the overt repression-focused literature in social movement studies. Few studies bring these into dialog with each other to examine the effects of these different types of repression on participation, or how these effects may be mitigated by activists differently.

Finally, perhaps the most glaring area for future research is related to how repression is dulled or damped differently in different regime types or amid different levels of repression. Most of the research in this area, especially within sociology, focuses on social movements in Western democracies. In fact, about 70% of the articles included in this review were studies in

Western democracies and none explicitly compared repression resistance across regime types. If we are to develop a fuller understanding of how activists work to lessen the impacts of repression, more attention must be paid to how this is done in a variety of regime types with varying levels of political repression. Doing so will also better illuminate how different layers of political repression work to constrain or enable the strategies activists can use to build more repression-resilient movements.

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