Street-Level Repression: Protest, Policing, and Dissent in Uganda

Travis Curtice & Brandon Behlendorf [*]

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Abstract

In many countries, police are both guardians of public safety and the primary instruments of state repression. Used to quell dissent, excessive police action can drive further collective action, leading to a repression-dissent nexus. Yet does repression spur dissent for all, or only for those already dissenting? We theorize repression by police causes political backlash, decreasing support for police and increasing political dissent. We argue these effects are conditioned by individuals' proximity to the repressive act and support for the ruling party. Using a nationally representative survey experiment of 1,920 Ugandans, we find robust evidence for political backlash effects of repression across all demographics, regardless of proximity to the event. By examining the politics of policing, we show excessive police-violence triggers political backlash, decreasing general support for the security apparatus and increasing willingness to publicly dissent for some populations.

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Introduction

Does repressive action by police increase political dissent? If so, are these effects conditioned by whether individuals support the regime or identify with dissenters? The relationship between state repression and political dissent has generated substantial discourse over the past three decades (Davenport et al. 2019).[1] While meant to deter future collective action (Davenport 2007, Earl, Soule and McCarthy 2003), state repression also sparks dissident behavior (Moore 1998, Rozenas and Zhukov 2019), creating divergent expectations regarding its (in)effectiveness. Repression can reduce incentives for immediate mobilization by dissenters but also broaden the willingness of sympathizers to protest state actions in the future. As a result, the use of state repression remains a strategic challenge for leaders (Pierskalla 2010), and an empirical puzzle for researchers (Davenport et al. 2019, Ritter and Conrad 2016).

Previous work on state repression and collective action has two key limitations. First, the literature generally assumes repression by governing institutions is binary: either they are repressing (and viewed illegitimately) or they are not repressing (and viewed legitimately). This limited view overlooks the dual nature of many state security institutions, especially in non-democracies. For example, police are both guardians of public safety, providing law and order for all (including those protesting),[2] and instruments of state repression used to quell political dissent. While police presence at protests, even without further escalation, can be an expression of state coercion (Earl, Soule and McCarthy 2003), police are responsible for providing protection – securing public spaces, private property, and physical integrity rights. Consequently, police can simultaneously facilitate dissent and administer repression. Efforts to understand police's role in generating dissent must differentiate between these two functions of police.

Second, previous work on the effects of repression focuses on those already dissenting,

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[1]See for example, Carey (2006), Davenport (1995, 2007), Henderson (1991), Lichbach (1987), Moore (2000), and Nordås and Davenport (2013).

[2]As Earl, Soule and McCarthy (2003, 586) note: "police at a protest event have a wide array of policing options, ranging from continued presence with no further action to the deployment of escalated force." For example, see McCarthy and McPhail (1998), McPhail, Schweingruber and McCarthy (1998).

often at the expense of its broader role in mobilizing public opinion (Lupu and Wallace 2018). Most studies select on those dissenting (Lawrence 2017, Opp and Roehl 1990), focusing on the pathway from repression to mobilization through dissent. However, those engaged in protest have already overcome barriers to mobilization (Kuran 1991, Lohmann 1993, 1994), whether due to strategic choice (Ritter and Conrad 2016) or familial antecedent (Lawrence 2017). Questions remain regarding repression's potential for widening the constituency for dissent, especially among those who identify with the party in power. Government repression influences the general public's assessment of human rights within their country (Anderson, Regan and Ostergard 2002), but little is known whether repression serves to discredit state institutions (Bratton and Masunungure 2006) or encourages greater willingness to publicly criticize or protest actions taken by the state (Rasler 1996, Sullivan, Loyle and Davenport 2012).

Following calls to disaggregate the unit of analysis within repression-dissent studies (Davenport 2007, Lawrence 2017), we extend the study of repression by focusing on the effects of one form of state repression (police using excessive force at a rally) on individuals' attitudes and responses to the state. Examining citizen support for police is important because policing is relational and depends on formal and informal networks, shared norms, and behaviors. To maintain law and order, police require the public's consent; they build that consent by behaving in a trustworthy way during routine interactions with citizens. Citizen compliance with police and cooperation more broadly is foundational to maintaining social order and deterring criminal activity. Yet, police also engage in repressive acts such as targeting minority groups at disproportional rates, intimidating political opponents through electoral violence, and violently shutting down collective action by citizens (Arriola 2013, Hassan 2017, Truex 2019).

We argue repressive action by police triggers political backlash generally, decreasing support for police and increasing willingness for political dissent, including public criticism of the state security apparatus and future protests. Moreover, we expect these effects to be

conditional based on the act of repression. In particular, how police officers use coercion – whether to ensure law and order or repress collective action – affects how individuals respond to use of force by police.

In order to test these arguments, we embed an experiment in a nationally representative survey of 1,920 respondents in 100 districts and 194 parishes in Uganda, an electoral autocracy.[3] Previous work examining the effect of repression on dissent suffers from several methodological challenges which survey experiments address. First, behaviors are endogenous, as governments and political activists act in expectation of each other's behavior (Ritter and Conrad 2016). Second, observational event data are limited in their ability to separate events where police use appropriate force from those where they use excessive force, making the counterfactual unclear. Third, variation in police action is not random and likely to suffer from selection bias, making causal identification with these data difficult. We contribute to this literature by using a nationally representative survey experiment of police-citizen interactions within a state where political authorities often rely on police to repress political dissent

We randomly assigned respondents to one of four hypothetical conditions: 1) they *observe* a rally where police use force to maintain law and order; 2) they *participate* in a rally where police use force to maintain law and order; 3) they *observe* a rally where police use *excessive force*; and 4) they *participate* in a rally where police use *excessive force*. We then measure whether respondents would support, publicly criticize, and/or protest actions taken by police.

Our study provides a unique perspective on police repression within a non-democracy. Conducted in Uganda from June 28 to July 20, 2018, we completed data collection less than a month before the arrest and torture of Robert Kyangulany Ssentamu, also known as Bobi

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[3]We sought to address several ethical concerns by working closely with a highly reputable research firm. The survey experiment was included in a panel survey round focused on safety, policing, and security. Our study was approved by the Uganda National Council of Science and Technology and Mildmay Uganda Research Ethics Committee. The survey experiment was included in a panel survey round focused on safety, policing, and security. Study participants were told the topic of the round and participation remained completely voluntary throughout the study. Moreover, one of the authors has experience working in Uganda going back to 2007. A year before the study, this author travelled to Uganda to discuss this study and other projects with the research firm.

Wine, and other opposition politicians during the Arua Municipal by-elections. Suppressive actions taken by the Uganda Police Force (UPF) and other security sector forces underscore tensions between safety and repression that civilians face toward police in non-democracies, as well as other forms of governance. The excessive force used by the UPF increased political dissent throughout Uganda, providing additional evidence that our results generalize to the observed repression-dissent dynamics in Uganda.

To preview our results, we find robust evidence of general backlash effects. Respondents assigned to treatments involving excessive police force expressed less support for police and an increased willingness to publicly criticize and even protest actions taken by police. Moreover, viewing repression while engaged in the rally led to an increased willingness to publicly criticize police and engage in future protests. We further examine the moderating effects of various demographic factors and individuals' support for the ruling party. Overall, reactive police repression, even in a non-democracy like Uganda, violates people's expectations about the role of police in society.

Repression and the Police

An extensive literature examines the dynamics between repression and protest (Carey 2006, Gurr 1986, Lichbach 1995, 1987, Moore 1998, Opp 1994, Rasler 1996, Tilly 1978, Zimmerman 1980). As a mechanism of control to raise the cost of collective action (Tilly 1978), the strategical goal of repression is to reduce the capacity and/or will to challenge the status quo by deterring future dissent (Galtung 1969, Nordås and Davenport 2013). State repression includes such strategies as psychological intimidation (stigmatization or increased fear entering public spaces), infliction of material losses (loss of economic revenue and destruction of property), or physical rights violations (arrest, torture, disappearance, or death). This relationship is endogenous, as "governments and dissidents act in expectation of each other's behavior" (Ritter and Conrad 2016, 85). Accordingly, many have found that dissent

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positively increases the likelihood and severity of government repression.[4]

However, others argue that repression can both spark and deter dissident behavior, depending on government's repressive tactics (Moore 1998). Targeting clandestine activities might decrease dissent but using it against overt, collective challenges might escalate dissent (Sullivan 2016). We are focusing on the second type of repression: reactive, public crackdowns by police of individuals engaged in collective action.[5]

The literature on state repression and protests often assumes the state is a unitary actor repressing to protect the status quo (Carey 2006, DeMeritt 2012, Fariss 2014, Henderson 1991, Murdie and Davis 2012, Poe and Tate 1994, Ritter and Conrad 2016). Theoretically, the logic of repression develops from the interests and preferences of the executive. Empirically, most quantitative studies offer cross-national analysis with the primary unit of analysis at the country level, i.e., country-year or country-month. Even studies examining within country variation in repression have typically focused on the interests of the political authorities. For example, Truex (2019) examines focal points and preemptive repression in China and Arriola (2014) studies 15,000 protest-related arrests in Ethiopia; both studies employ variation in the pattern of arrests as a proxy for repression motivated by the central government. However, the unitary actor assumption potentially biases our understanding of important sub-state variation in the behavior of and response to the political actors responsible for most repression: the police. By focusing on the preferences and interests of the political authorities, interactions between police and citizens have remained under-explored.

Two perspectives within the literature have relaxed the unitary actor assumption to address the principal-agent problem leaders have in organizing their policing apparatus. First, from a policing perspective, law and order and security more broadly are considered public goods provided by street-level bureaucrats (Lipsky 1971). Within American Politics,

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[4]The theoretical claim is so consistently expressed and real-life examples of governments using repression as a mechanism to deter civilian dissent so ubiquitous, human rights scholars have referred to this relationship as the "Law of Coercive Responsiveness" (Davenport 2007).

[5]We are interested in examining the effects of observable repression by police of collective action, which differs from studies that, at least theoretically, focus on ex ante preventive repression (Greitens 2016, Ritter and Conrad 2016, Truex 2019).

scholars have examined the adverse selection and moral hazard problems associated with policing because policing requires high levels of discretion (Wilson 1968); results in informational asymmetries between officers (agents) and policing principals (Goldstein 1960, Wilson 1968); and monitoring and oversight are costly and not always effective (Goldstein 1960, Wilson 1968). Much of this literature explores problems principals face when they are concerned about selecting the wrong officers or ensuring selected officers remain honest.

Second, from a human rights perspective, studies examine how governments structure their security apparatus to ensure repressive compliance (Hassan 2017), deter threats from coups (Svolik 2012), and evade responsibility for human rights abuses (Cohen and Nordås 2015, DeMeritt 2012, Mitchell, Carey and Butler 2014). In non-democracies, coercive institutions are "a dictator's final defense in pursuit of political survival, but also (the government's) chief obstacle to achieving that goal" (Greitens 2016). Yet many of these studies focus on the dynamics between the government and the military, overlooking the role of the police.

Consequently, the literature assumes that police officers are either street-level bureaucrats or cogs in the state's repressive apparatus. This is problematic as it either assumes away the politics of policing or overlooks the front-line role of police as repressive agents in many countries. In the first case, the prominent assumption is that if principals solve the moral hazard and adverse selection problems associated with policing, governments will effectively provide law and order. In the second case, leaders are often motivated by political survival, often at the cost of violating (or at least failing to protect) physical integrity and property rights. In many non-democracies, the police are the political authorities' primary instruments of repression.

The Dual Role of Police

Police officers around the world from Bolivia, Colombia, Iraq, Hong Kong, Greece, Malawi, Spain, Tanzania, Uganda, and Zimbabwe have engaged in excessive force violating the phys-

ical integrity rights of protesters, journalists, and others. In Colombia and Bolivia, protests escalated after the police used repressive tactics to crackdown on anti-government protests. In Iraq, more than 200 people were killed in 2019 by police and other security forces during anti-government protests. Rather than quelling dissent, the police violence encouraged greater turnout in street-level protests against the government actions. Similarly, in Spain, hundreds of protesters clashed with police in the heart of Barcelona, assembling fiery barricades and throwing rocks at security forces. In Malawi, Tanzania, Uganda, and Zimbabwe, political authorities rely on the police both for preventative and responsive repression to deter collective action. Although police officers may act alone using their coercive capacity in illegitimate ways, these examples highlight that across an array of regime types, political authorities justify using excessive police force "as legitimate action" to deter protesters and reestablish rule of law. But how do people view actions taken by the police?

Police have two important roles in society. On one hand, police are agents providing law and order as one of the most important and basic public goods states provide (Hobbes 1651, Weber 1946). On the other hand, police function as agents of repression ensuring the survival of political elites and maintaining the political status quo. Existing studies have considered the role of security forces as instruments of repression.[6] However, few examine the interactive relationship between protesters and police. Despite a robust literature on state repression and dissent, we do not know whether individuals respond differently to police officers who use their coercive capacity in a measured way to provide law and order and safety for civilians compared to those who use excessive violence against protesters.

We argue this is problematic for two reasons: first, civilians' attitudes and perceptions toward police likely condition their willingness to cooperate with police (Blair, Karim and Morse 2019, Curtice 2019, Tyler et al. 2018). Second, police officers are responsible for

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[6]Studies have examined the principal-agent problems associated with repression, including: the relationship between executives and individuals responsible for supervising and interrogating (torturing) state prisoners (Conrad and Moore 2010); why executives delegate human rights abuses to militias (Cohen and Nordås 2015, Mitchell, Carey and Butler 2014); and the moral hazard of authoritarian repression and military intervention (Svolik 2013).

both maintaining order and repressing threats to the political status quo. This contributes to potentially opposing views of police: individuals simultaneously resent repression and demand safety from the same institution. Coercive institutions not only pose a direct threat to autocrats through coup-like activity, they pose an additional threat by generating political dissent when they use excessive force.

For civilians, attitudes toward the police condition their responses to police actions. Particularly, individuals who believe the police provide law and order as a public good will support actions taken by the police, even if it requires the use of coercion (French and Raven 1959, Hinsch 2008, Tankebe 2009, Tyler 1990). Alternatively, when that coercion is used to protect the interests of political authorities, upholding the status quo and ensuring the regime's political survival, we should expect individuals to oppose police action (Beetham 1991, Jackson and Bradford 2009). Whether citizens support police actions and cooperate in the co-production of law and order depends on whether they trust that the police are concerned about their safety and security when interacting with them

Citizens' beliefs about the ability of police to secure public spaces and expectations about experiencing repression likely condition whether people dissent from or cooperate with police. Protesting, for example, involves several possible threats to would-be protesters – repression from the state, violence from counter-protesters, destruction of property, and violation of personal integrity rights by fellow protesters. To understand these threats, it is important to examine the ability of police to provide safety and security and whether they use measured or excessive force. Considering the conditions that make political dissent more or less likely requires us to examine how behavior of police at protests shape individuals' attitudes and behavior toward the state. When police use repressive force, citizens will be more frustrated with the status quo. Given police are one of the most visible extensions of the state apparatus, citizens are likely to blame the state for violations by police.

We argue excessive force by security forces while policing political dissent should trigger

expressions of political dissent.[7] Excessive police abuses in democracies likely undermines people's confidence in the police. However, even in non-democracies, where political authorities are not held accountable through elections, individuals can protest government abuses or engage in other forms of dissent. Although these "backlash" effects from police repression are likely stronger under democratic governments, the dual role of police suggests these actions can be viewed as illegitimate even in authoritarian contexts. We expect repression causes political backlash across the complete spectrum of political dissent. In particular, compared to appropriate police actions, excessive police force will decrease support for the police and increase public criticisms and future protests. Importantly, the counterfactual to our claim is not repressive action by police compared to no police action, as protesters might select out of situations where security is not provided. Rather we compare the state's use of excessive violence at a rally with more conventional norms of "appropriate" force, allowing us to compare how individuals perceive the dual role of police in autocracies.

The Spectrum of Dissent

Finally, citizens are more likely to engage in dissent against the government when they are frustrated with the status quo. Dissent might be driven by insecurity, food scarcity, economic and political inequalities, deprivation, and poor economic conditions.[8] Citizens' frustration with the status quo might be in absolute terms or relative to other people or communities (Gurr 1970, Lichbach 1995). There are two important conditions for political dissent: first, citizens are frustrated with the status quo; and second, citizens blame the government for their frustration.

Dissent involves a range of attitudes and actions. First, political dissent might involve a decrease in the expressed level of support for the political status quo. Second, political dissent

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[7]Other have highlighted the inefficiencies of repression to solve "threats from below," for example, see (Gandhi 2008, Wantchekon 2002).

[8]See for example: Acemoglu and Robinson (2006), Gurr (1970), Hollyer, Rosendorff and Vreeland (2015), Muller (1985).

might involve individuals who are willing to make their opinions or frustrations about the status quo known by publicly criticizing actions taken by the state. Third, political dissent might involve collective action such as a protest or riot to challenge the state. While citizens might be more likely to engage in dissent when they blame the government for treating them unfairly or for restricting their opportunities, they also recognize the costs associated with expressing those opinions or acting to challenge them.

When dissent becomes increasingly visible, the incentives for engaging or not vary by citizens' ability to free-ride on benefits from collective action and pressures to falsify their preferences. Knowing they might benefit from any shift in the status quo towards their ideal point, citizens have strong incentives to stay home and free-ride on others actions to challenge the status quo (Lichbach 1995, Olson 1965). However, for citizens willing to engage in collective action, there are costs associated with revealing their preferences and willingness to challenge the status quo.

Whether these individuals engage in dissent depends on whether they believe they have a sufficient threshold to effectively mobilize and impose change from below (De Mesquita 2010, Kuran 1991, Lohmann 1993, Shadmehr and Bernhardt 2011). Given the role of preference falsification in authoritarian politics (Kuran 1991, Lohmann 1993, 1994), we expect that citizens who are willing to engage in collective action are likely more willing to engage in future protests. People who have engaged in previous political actions such as attending or organizing a rally are more likely to collectively mobilize again relative to individuals who are opportunistic by-standers hoping to free-ride. Citizens who participate in protests or other political events will be more likely to express political preferences associated with dissent.

Moreover, people's attitudes toward police and their willingness to engage in dissent might depend on two things: first, whether individuals see themselves as engaged (or not) in collective action; and second, whether police use legitimate or excessive force to provide law and order. Previous studies examining the effect of repression on dissent focus on those who are already engaged in collective action. However, these individuals have already overcome

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the coordination and collective action problems associated with mobilization. Alternatively, the responses of bystanders play a crucial role in linking political opportunities to mobilization (Braun and Koopmans 2014). Fear might deter individuals, including bystanders, from engaging in collective action (Young 2019). However, some argue that observing a protest might increase collective action by consolidating people's willingness to identify with protestors or engendering moral outrage and sympathy among bystanders with repressed groups (Saab et al. 2015). To examine the effects of repression on dissent, we need to consider potential *bystander effects* – whether responses of individuals who observe but do not participate in collective action vary from individuals who identify as participating in a protest.

Observable Implications

Our theoretical discussion above leads to the following observable implications. Table 4 summarizes our theoretical expectations across the control treatment and the three treatment groups.

H1a: Assignment to participation in a rally decreases people's support for police.

H1b: Assignment to participation in a rally increases people's willingness to publicly criticize the police.

H1c: Assignment to participation in a rally increases people's willingness to protest.

H2a: Assignment to excessive police force at a rally decreases people's support for police.

H2b: Assignment to excessive police force at a rally increases people's willingness to publicly criticize the police.

H2c: Assignment to excessive police force at a rally increases people's willingness to protest.

H3a: Assignment to participation and excessive police force at a rally decreases people's

support for police.

H3b: Assignment to participation and excessive police force at a rally increases people's willingness to publicly criticize the police.

H3c: Assignment to participation and excessive police force at a rally increases people's willingness to protest.

Table 1: Experimental Conditions and Theoretical Expectations

	Dependent Variables		
Treatment	Support the police	Publicly criticize the police	Protest the police
Control: Observer, no excessive police force	—	—	—
T1: Participation in a rally	Negative	Positive	Positive
T2: Excessive police force at a rally	Negative	Positive	Positive
T3: Participation, excessive police force	Negative	Positive	Positive

Finally, we argue that "backlash" and "bystander" effects vary by individuals' preferences and characteristics. Responses from individuals who politically align with the autocrat, for example, should differ from those who are opposed to the regime. We expect heterogeneous effects associated with partisanship or support for the autocracy to condition the magnitude of the effects, not the direction.[9]

Empirical Approach

We assess the widely held assumption that repression deters dissent by embedding a survey experiment in a non-democracy. We examine whether individuals self-censor political dissent conditional on 1) whether they participated in a protest or were "bystanders;" and 2) whether the police use excessive force or appropriate police action. We test these assumptions in a non-democracy (Uganda) where the police have regularly been used as agents of repression over the past 30 years.

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[9]Similarly, we consider the role of additional potential pre-treatment moderators, including: respondent's age, gender, whether they live in an urban or rural setting, and their attitudes and perceptions toward the police.

As discussed above, the general phenomenon of political backlash against police abuse should be more likely in democracies than non-democracies. The more democratic the form of government, the more likely backlash to excessive police abuses or repression should emerge. In contexts like a closed autocracy, where collective action is effectively banned or repressed, our theory is least likely. However, if we observe backlash effects in non-democratic countries reliant on the police for preventative and responsive repression of protestors, then our theory is plausible for other cases where collective action is limited but available.

Case Selection: Policing Dissent in Uganda

In selecting a case for our study, we focused on an electoral autocracy where threats to the regime are likely to be repressed but there is still political space to challenge the incumbent government. To that end, we conduct this experiment in Uganda for three main reasons. First, Uganda is a non-democracy where Yoweri Museveni has maintained control since 1986.[10] Although Museveni won the last three elections with an average vote-share of 60.27%, elections in Uganda were generally panned by international and domestic observers as lacking electoral credibility (Abrahamsen and Bareebe 2016). Human rights are severely restricted and in many cases violated. Political freedoms including electoral democracy, access to information and justice, and human rights protections remain curtailed or openly violated by the regime.

Second, high restrictions on free and open political spaces remain as the government limits political competition and represses dissent.[11] Museveni has maintained power with his ruling coalition by using cooptation and coercion, including gerrymandering districts to provide political goods to party loyalists and using the internal security apparatus to repress threats to his political survival. In September 2009, for example, security forces used

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[10]Multiparty elections were first held in 2006 after 92% of voters approved the introduction of a multiparty system by referendum in July 2005. Only 42% of the electorate voted in the 2005 referendum but those who did vote wanted a marked departure from the 2000 referendum where 90.7% voters wanted a "Movement" not a "Multiparty" political system.

[11]Restrictions on opposition parties have plagued each of Uganda's subsequent elections, including arrests and beatings of opposition leaders like Kizza Besigye and Robert Kyangulany Ssentamu.

live fire to deter protests in Kayunga. Hospitals in the area reported treating more than 88 victims following the violence, the vast majority for gunshot wounds. The official government statement was that 27 people died resulting from security forces' "stray bullets" (Barnett 2018), although some estimate more than 40 died. Rather than investigating the excessive use of force, police targeted protesters, arresting almost 850 suspected of participating in the unrest (Barnett 2018).

Third, the Uganda Police Force (UPF), led by the Inspector General of Police (IGP), falls under the direct control of the president. While the Internal Security Organization (ISO), led by the Security Minister, also contributes to domestic security, the UPF is the primary police institution in Uganda.[12] We focus on the role of UPF, rather than other repressive agents, because they are the security sector most likely to engage in the daily activity we associate with repressing dissent. For example, political authorities have increasingly relied on police to repress political dissent associated with the social media tax protests in July 2018 and the by-election rallies in August 2018. After violence broke-out during the by-elections in Arua Municipality, 5 people were killed by security forces, 33 people were charged with treason and an additional 150 people were held on remand (Monitor 2018).

The UPF's involvement in state repression is long standing. From January 1997 to July 2018, data show that the UPDF and UPF were collectively involved in 2,377 events of political violence and social unrest, with the UPF involved in 30% of them (Raleigh et al. 2010). Although there are concerns with under-reporting within events data, the ACLED data show important variation regarding which state agency engages in repression (see Table 2). While the UPDF conducted more political violence events than the UPF, nearly all (94.2%) were not common policing operations but rather battle-related or remote violence events, primarily involving clashes with insurgent groups.[13] When we consider those involving the UPF, a vast majority (87%) are categorized as state repression, including

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[12]The Ugandan security sector also includes the Uganda People's Defense Force (UPDF) and the External Security Organization (ESO).

[13]For research on insurgencies in Uganda and rebel networks, see Day (2011), Larson and Lewis (2018) and Annan et al. (2011).

political violence relating to riots, protests, strategic developments, and violence against civilians. Events recorded by ACLED, in addition to reports by civil society groups and interviews conducted by one of the authors in Uganda, demonstrate that the UPF is the primary security force used for both preventative and reactive repression. These acts have included crackdowns on collective action, detaining opposition supporters, and arresting opposition leaders like Kizza Besigye, Norbert Mao, and Bobi Wine.

Table 2: Political Violence and Social Unrest Events, January 1997 to July 2018

Conflict Event	Military Forces (UPDF)		Police Forces (UPF)	
	#	%	#	%
Battle	1,536	92.4	90	13.0
Remote violence	30	1.8	0	0
Riots/Protests	4	0.24	422	59.1
Strategic development	21	1.3	73	10.2
Violence against civilians	72	4.3	129	18.1
Total Events	1,663	100	714	100

In this context, the police are the main institution used to repress dissent. Other authoritarian regimes might employ other security forces, like the military or secret police, to repress dissent. Repression by these forces might undermine confidence in these institutions, yet these institutions do not directly serve those they are repressing. The UPF are both prime repressors and public servants, accountable to the executive and the polity. In Uganda, we can examine the implications of repression by the police on people's attitudes toward them where both order and repression are common.

Survey

We employ a survey experiment to mitigate many challenges associated with studying dissent and repression. This approach allows us to overcome several methodological challenges of studying repression and collective action, including problems associated with selection biases and endogeneity. We randomly assigned respondents to one of four treatment conditions: 1) they *observe* a rally where police use force to maintain law and order; 2) they *participate*

in a rally where police use force to maintain law and order; 3) they *observe* a rally where police use *excessive force*; and 4) they *participate* in a rally where police use *excessive force*. After reading the assigned treatment prompt, we asked study participants to gauge their agreement with three related statements along a five-point Likert scale. First, they would *support* the actions the police took. Second, they would *publicly criticize* the actions the police took. Third, they would *protest* the actions the police took. Political dissent takes on many forms and costs associated with collective action vary; however, we designed our study to capture important variation along the dissent spectrum.[14] Treatments were completely randomized at the respondent level with each participant having an equal probability of receiving any individual treatment.

Survey Sampling

Our survey experiment was conducted between 29 June and 20 July 2018, in 194 parishes located in 180 sub-counties within 127 counties, 100 districts and all 4 regions in Uganda. Table 3 shows the geographical distribution of the sample. The survey was embedded in a round of Twaweza's Sauti za Wananchi project with assistance from Ipsos.[15] Twaweza is a highly respected research firm working throughout East Africa. [16]

Twaweza's research team employed a multi-stage stratified sampling approach to achieve a representative sample of the total population of Ugandans who are 18 years and older. The sample frame is based on the 2014 Uganda Population and Housing Census.[17] Given

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[14]Table 4 in the online appendix shows the prompt associated with each treatment.

[15]Sauti za Wananchi is Africa's first nationally representative mobile phone survey. Data were collected by experienced call center agents using Computer Aided Telephonic Interviews (CATI). Interviews were conducted in the respondents' preferred language, which was identified during baseline interviews.

[16]Although "face-to-face" surveys are traditionally used for population-based programs, the use of these surveys as baseline data collection instruments, coupled with subsequent interviews from that panel, provides a cost-effective approach to rapid survey collection and opinion monitoring (Dabalen et al. 2016). As in other countries, mobile phones are ubiquitous in Uganda, where 80% own or have access to a cell phone in 2017, with 67% reporting everyday usage (Afrobarometer 2018). Moreover, researchers have demonstrated that data from mobile phones are representative and useful for capturing results similar to those from population-based surveys. For example, the distribution of wealth from local communities to nation-states (Blumenstock, Cadamuro and On 2015).

[17]Twaweza explains the multi-stage sampling design of Sauti za Wananchi in their technical paper.

Table 3: Overview of Multistage Sampling

	Districts		Counties		Sub-Counties		Parishes		Individuals	
	total	sample	total	sample	total	sample	total	sample	total	sample
Sample by Region	112	100	181	127	1,368	180	6,547	194	34,844,095	1,920
Central	24	16	36	23	258	36	1,324	43	9,579,119	434
Eastern	32	29	50	35	412	51	2,056	51	9,094,960	492
Northern	30	29	45	34	311	46	1,545	47	7,230,661	460
Western	26	26	50	35	387	47	1,622	53	8,939,355	534

Notes: Data on administrative units from the 2016 Uganda Electoral Commission Zoning.

the sensitive nature of the study, our questions were designed in close collaboration with the research firm in Uganda, which contributed to a low refusal rate of 4% (1,920 of 2,000 respondents participated).

Descriptive Statistics

We argue the provision of law and order is a defining feature of governance. We consider how Ugandans assess the government's provision of security compared to maintaining roads and bridges and ensuring free and fair elections. A question in the baseline survey asked respondents to evaluate the government's performance in "reducing crime (ensuring safety and security)." Responses were roughly split (46% had a negative assessment; 52% had a positive assessment). These responses were similar to Ugandans' assessment of the government's ability to provide other public goods (see Figure 1). For example, over half (52%) of respondents gave positive assessments of the government's performance in maintaining roads and bridges.[18]

One possible bias could be preference falsification, where respondents do not answer the security question "truthfully" due to its sensitivity. Considering this, we examine responses to a similarly sensitive question: the government's performance in ensuring free and fair elections. Overall, 53% of respondents negatively evaluated the government's performance in ensuring free and fair elections, with 32% saying the government was performing "very

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[18]We provide the distributions of demographic factors, including respondents' approval of President Museveni job performance and party affiliation in the online appendix.

badly."

Although social desirability bias exerts some influence in surveys about police-citizen interactions (Jackson et al. 2013), the similarity in people's responses about road maintenance and government performance reducing crime suggests that the effect is minimal. Although the UPF are responsible for ensuring Museveni's political survival and repressing dissent, a large proportion of the population still believes they are doing fairly well at ensuring the safety and security of the population.

Figure 1: Provision of Public Goods and Perceptions of Repression
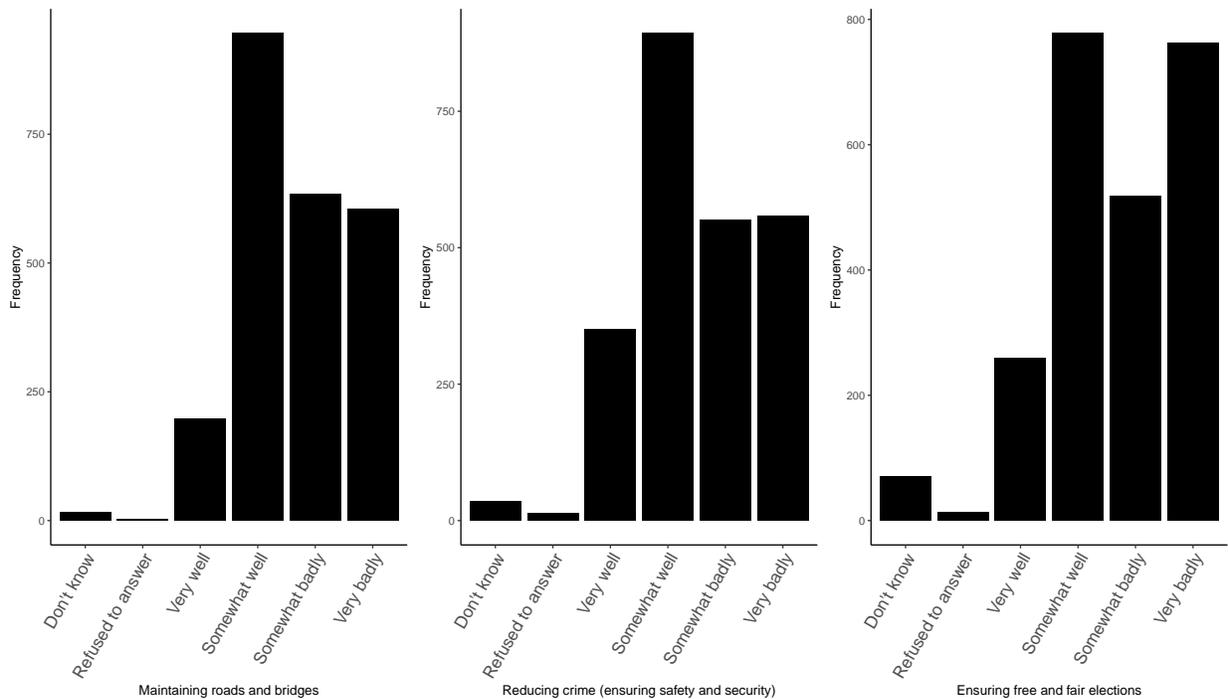
Likewise, responses to police repression may be conditioned by existing positive or negative perceptions of the police. When the police are initially viewed as procedurally fair and respectful in their interactions with the public (Tankebe 2009, Tyler 1990), respondents may be willing to give the police the benefit of the doubt in repressive situations. Moreover, when the police's actions normatively align with a respondent's viewpoint (Jackson and Bradford

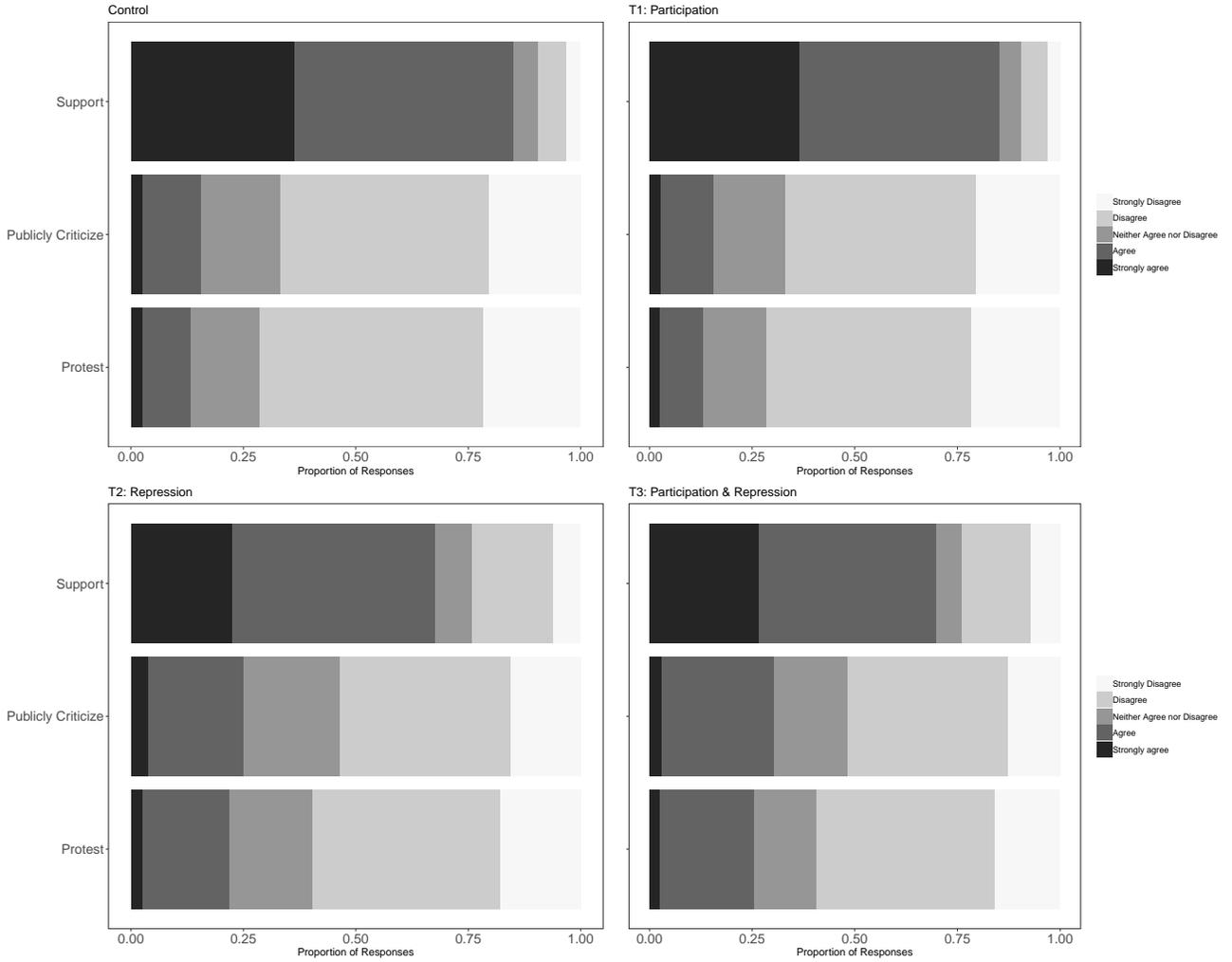2009), repressive actions against protestors may be interpreted as just.[19]

Figure 2 shows the distribution of responses to three survey questions (support, publicly criticize, and protest) across the four treatment groups.[20] There is considerable heterogeneity within and across study participants' responses and observable variation by region. Importantly, we did not have any "refuse to answer" or "don't know" responses. Again, given the sensitive nature of these questions in the context, this was reassuring. We do not expect non-responses to bias our findings. Finally, we can observe preliminary evidence for the backlash hypothesis. Consider, for example, the difference between the control group (top-left panel) compared to the treatment 2 and treatment 3 groups (bottom panels). We can already observe descriptive variation across the treatments.

For example, in the control group, only 9.3% of respondents said they "strongly disagree or "disagree" that they support the police's actions; however, the percent of respondents in treatment 2 and treatment 3 who disagreed more than doubled to 24.1%, and 23.9%, respectively. Similarly, 15.7% of respondents assigned to the control group said they agree or strongly agree that they would publicly criticize the police, which increases to 25.2% and 30.4% for treatment 2 and treatment 3 groups. A similar descriptive patterns emerges for those who said they agree that they would protest the police's actions. Only 13.2% of the control group said they agree that they would be willing to protest; whereas, 22.0% of those assigned to treatment 2 and 25.6% of those assigned to treatment 3 said they "agree"

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[19]Following previous studies of policing, we measured baseline attitudes of procedural fairness with the following two questions: 1) the police make fair and impartial decisions in the cases they deal with; and 2) the police treat people with dignity and respect. Similarly, to capture normative alignment, we asked whether 3) the police usually act in ways consistent with your own ideas about what is right and wrong; and 4) the police stand up for values that are important to you. We plot these answers in the online appendix in Figure 5. Similarly, we asked respondents whether they believed the police were effective (Jackson et al. 2013, Tankebe 2013) and if they felt obligated to cooperate with them (Tyler and Fagan 2008). To gauge effectiveness, we asked whether respondents agreed "the police are not doing a good job in preventing crime in your community" and "if you witnessed a crime happening, you would report it to the police." To measure obligation, we asked whether respondents agreed "you should do what the police tell you even if you do not understand or agree with the reasons" and "the police in your community are legitimate authorities and you should do what they tell you to do." We also show the distribution of the second set of questions in the online appendix in Figure 6. There is significant variation both across and within these responses suggesting that civilians hold divergent beliefs about the role of the UPF to ensure safety and security.

[20]We also plot the distribution of responses by region in Figure 9 of the online appendix.

Figure 2: Distribution of Responses by Treatment Groups

Notes: Distribution of responses to three survey questions (support, publicly criticize, and protest) across the four treatment groups: Control (N=491); Treatment 1: Participate Treatment (N=475); Treatment 2: Repression Treatment (N=481); and Treatment 3: Both Participate and Repression Treatments (N=473).

or "strongly agree" that they would be willing to protest, respectively. The participation (treatment 1 group) appears to have less of a backlash effect alone: 7.4% said they "strongly disagree" or "disagree" with the support measure and 18.7% and 18.9% said they "agree" or "strongly agree" that they would be willing to publicly criticize or protest the police's actions, respectively.

Statistical analyses

We estimate the treatment effects by using the following benchmark Ordinary Least Squares statistical model. Formally, Y_i denotes the response variable for the three outcome measures of interest: 1) *support the police*; 2) *publicly criticize the police*; and 3) *willingness to protest the police*. Each outcome variable is modeled by a separate equation, expressed as follows:

$$Y_i = \alpha + \beta_1 T1_i + \beta_2 T2_i + \beta_3 T3_i + \epsilon_i, \tag{1}$$

where i indexes respondents, $T1_i$, $T2_i$, and $T3_i$ are indicator variables for the respective randomized "treatment" assignments, which represents the treatment given to i, and ϵ_i captures stochastic error.

We are interested in capturing the effects of the following treatment conditions: 1) i participated in a rally, 2) whether the police used excessive force; and 3) whether the police used excessive force when i participated in a rally. These treatment assignments are captured by the following three parameters: β_1, β_2, and β_3, respectively.[21] As a first-cut to examine backlash effects, we report coefficient plots from Equation 1 in Figure 3.[22]

We find robust evidence for the hypothesized "backlash" effect. There is no evidence that repression deters public criticism or political protests. On the contrary, repression in the form of excess police violence decreases support for the police and increases respondents'

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[21] Although the outcome measure is ordered, we use OLS models for parsimony in interpretation and because coefficient estimates are unbiased if the model is specified correctly. The models are specified correctly as we only employ dummy variables for the treatment indicators in the model (Wooldridge 2010). To ensure that the results are not model dependent, we also use ordered logistic regression. Results are robust across the model specifications, reported in Table 6 on page 4 of the Appendix.

[22] Tabular results reported on page 4 of the Appendix.

Figure 3: Main OLS Results
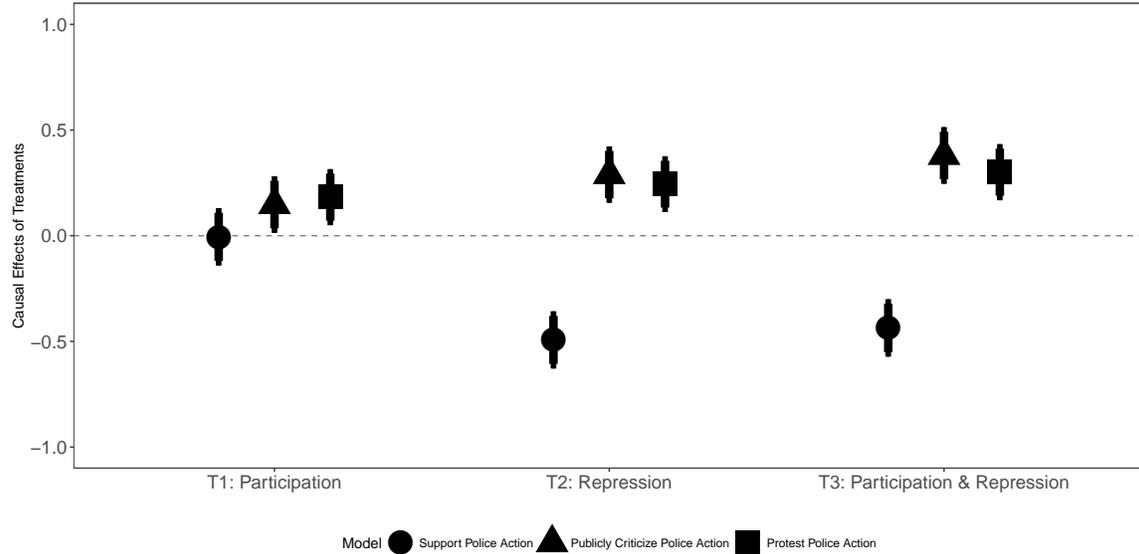
The figure plots the results from three OLS models containing the treatment indicators. Plotted points represent estimated coefficients from the models and the thick and thin horizontal bars represent 90% and 95% confidence intervals, respectively. Each model includes 1,920 respondents from 194 parishes in Uganda. The reference category is the control condition.

willingness to publicly criticize and protest the police's actions.

Comparing the difference between the "bystander" effect and "participation" effects, we find that proximity to a rally has no discernible effect on supporting the police's actions when they behave appropriately; however, it does increase respondents' willingness to publicly criticize police and engage in future protests.

Heterogeneous Effects

In many countries, especially non-democracies, the police are an extension of the state and often used by political authorities to repress political opponents and suppress threats from below (Hassan 2017, Wantchekon 2002). However, we expect support for the ruling party to act as a potential moderator to the backlash effects. We subset the sample to consider variation between those who identified as supporting the NRM party compared to those who do not. Figure 4 examines whether supporters of the ruling party exhibit different responses

to the treatment conditions.[23] As expected, the relationship between repressive action by the police and dissent seem attenuated by support for the ruling party. Interestingly, the backlash effect broadly holds for those who identify as NRM supporters. NRM supporters assigned to the repression treatment were less likely to support the police and more likely to publicly criticize them. In addition to expressing lower levels of support for the police, NRM supporters assigned to the participation and repression treatment were more likely to publicly criticize and protest police actions.

Additional Analyses

Existing work suggests that several demographic factors matter for patterns of repression and collective action. Nordås and Davenport (2013), for example, hypothesize that political authorities faced with a youth bulge are more likely to apply repressive measures against their populations than states with a less threatening population-age structure. Additionally, they argue governments will focus their attention on "youth bulges because youth are more likely than other age groups to rebel" (Nordås and Davenport 2013, 937). Similarly, Christensen (2018) argues the geography of repression matters in Sub Saharan Africa, finding state repression is more frequent in urban areas, but states are more likely to kill dissidents in rural areas. Finally, a robust literature suggests that gender matters for patterns of collective action and violence (Agarwal 2000, Ness 2004).

We explore the role of additional potential pre-treatment moderators, including: respondent's age, gender, whether they live in an urban or rural setting, and attitudes and perceptions toward the police. Considering these demographic factors, we examine the moderating effects of age, geographic setting, and gender. Although demographics are important, we might expect heterogeneous effects within these groups to be conditioned by pre-treatment support for the ruling party. In the online appendix, we report heterogeneous effects on support for police action (Table 9), willingness to publicly criticize police action (Table 10),

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[23]Tabular results and ordered logistic regressions provided in the Appendix on page 5.

Figure 4: OLS Results by Incumbent Party Support
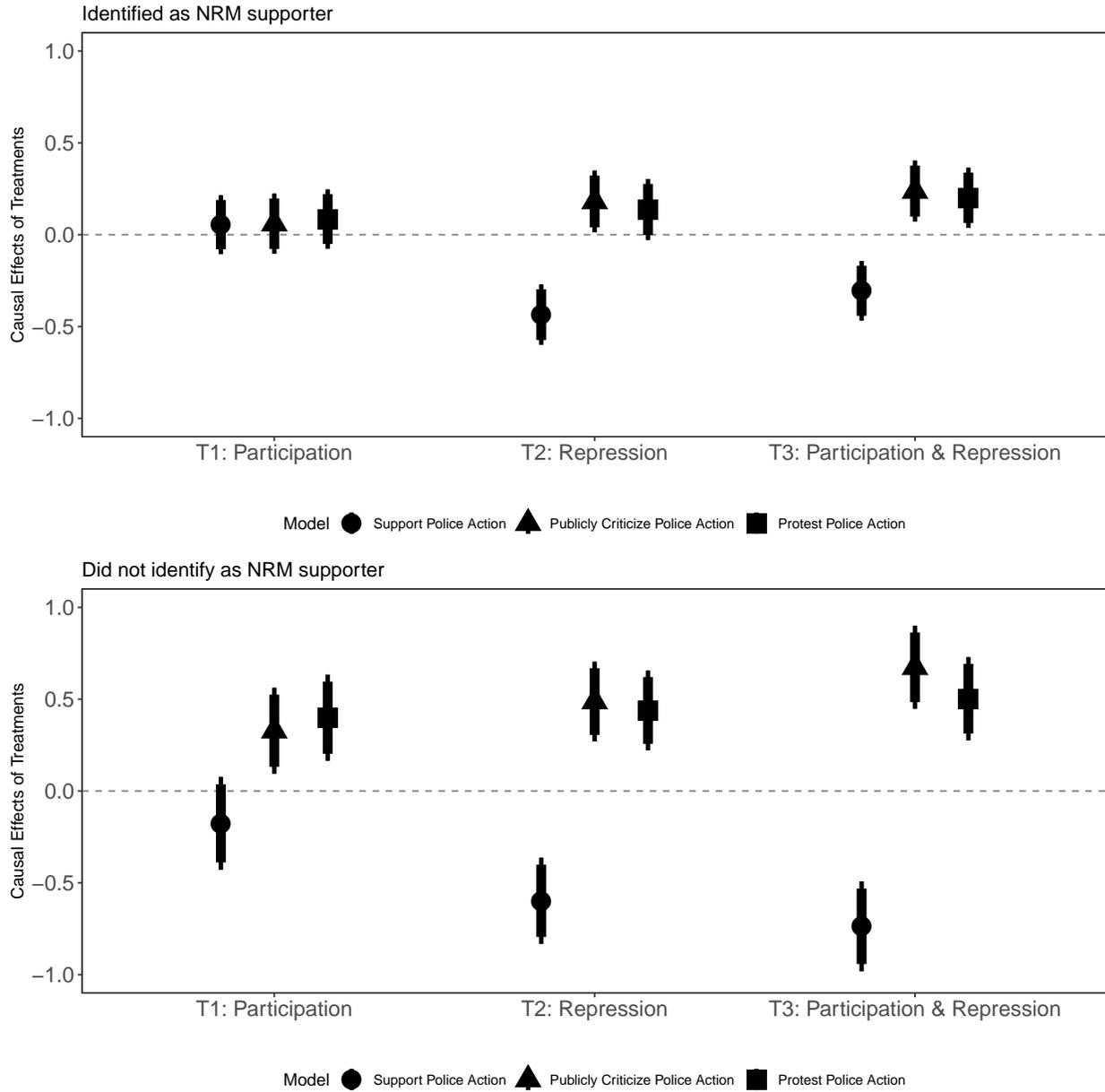
The figure plots the results from three OLS models containing the treatment indicators. Plotted points represent estimated coefficients from the models and the thick and thin horizontal bars represent 90% and 95% confidence intervals, respectively. The models include 1303 and 617 respondents for NRM supporters and not NRM supporters, respectively. The reference category is the control condition in each model.

or willingness to protest police action (Table 11).[24]

In general, assignment to the participation treatment has no discernible effect on support for police action. However, it increases public criticism from female respondents and those older than 35. Additionally, it increases the probability of future protests against police actions among female, rural, and older respondents, especially for respondents who do not support the NRM.

Notably, the repression treatment has a consistent backlash effect on respondents, negatively impacting support for police actions and increasing public criticism and future protests, except for NRM supporters. Interestingly, relative to those assigned to the control group, female NRM supporters were more likely to publicly criticize and protest police action after receiving the repression treatment. Across the various demographic factors, respondents assigned to the participation and repression treatment were less likely to support police action and more likely to publicly criticize and/or protest police action. These results hold even for NRM supporters, except for male respondents and those under 35. Unsurprisingly, excessive force by police at a rally strongly influences how members of the opposition respond, triggering backlash effects. These findings suggest police repression also increases dissent among women and older respondents – even for those who identify as supporting the ruling party. [25] Throughout our analyses, there is no evidence that excessive police violence *deters* respondents' willingness to publicly criticize or protest police's actions. However, these exploratory analyses highlight the need to examine the individual-level characteristics that shape how people view and respond to repression.

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[24]One limitation of these exploratory analyses is that some of the subgroup differences might be capturing some other latent subgroup difference. Although outside the scope of this paper, future work could use Bayesian additive regression trees (BARTs) to model non-linear relationships and interactions between these subgroups and participants' responses (Green and Kern 2012).

[25]We also consider whether respondents' pre-treatment attitudes toward the police affect their responses. Considering the moderating effects of attitudes and beliefs about the role of police as legitimate authorities and individuals' obligation to obey police, willingness to report crimes, and normative alignment conditions their level of support and likelihood to publicly criticize and protest police actions. Results are consistent with the findings discussed here. Treatments 2 and 3 decreased support for police action among all respondents and increased public criticism and protest among most groups. The only group without a discernible effect on public criticism and protest were those who said they were obligated to obey police. We report these results in Table 15, Table 16, and Table 17 on pages 7 and 8 of the online appendix.

Discussion and Conclusion

We test the classic assumption that repression deters political dissent. Rather than focusing on the politics of repression, we argue that we need to compare provisions of security by police compared to excessive force. Previous studies overlook that police are tasked with providing law and order in addition to repressing political dissent. For civilians, whether they believe the police are providing law and order as a public good or repressing political dissent conditions how they respond to actions taken by the police. Our results question whether governments should use repression to deter future dissent. We argue repressive actions taken by the police, and not appropriate police force, should result in powerful backlash effects decreasing support for police and triggering political dissent. Recognizing the costs for individuals to engage in political dissent, we also consider the conditioning relationship of bystanding compared to participating in a rally. Civilians who identify as participating in a rally might be more likely to express their "true preferences" about future political engagement or dissent.

Our survey experiment was conducted in the weeks before the arrests, torture, and trial of several opposition leaders, including Robert Kyangulany Ssentamu. The results of our nationally representative study demonstrate the limits of repression to deter political dissent. Beyond our experiment, these results were borne out during political events that unfolded in Uganda in the months following our survey. Similar to our findings, repressive actions by Uganda's security forces, including the army and police forces, sparked additional protests and political dissent throughout Uganda. Our findings and unfolding political events in Uganda demonstrate the costs of repression to political authorities. Excessive police violence decreases support for police, increases public criticism of the police, and lays the foundation for future political dissent.

We contribute to the existing literature in three ways. First, by employing experimental evidence from an authoritarian context, we demonstrate the limits of repression in deterring political dissent. Specifically, we show that repression results in "backlash" effects decreasing

support for police and increasing public criticism and willingness to protest. By examining the politics of policing and repression, we show excessive state-violence triggers political backlash, increasing expressions of political dissent and decreasing support for the security apparatus. This is the first study – that we know – that provides nationally representative micro-level experimental evidence on the protest-repression nexus debate from within an autocracy. Political authorities, especially within autocracies, are likely to use repression to deter political opposition. However, our study demonstrates the futility of that action.

Second, we address the endogeneity problem and selection bias by examining whether "bystander" or "participation" effects condition on civilians' responses to police action. This provides the first experimental design meant to address the protest-repression nexus debate. Our results suggest that previous work that focuses on those already dissenting might underestimate the effects of repression on dissent. Excessive police force, at least in this context, increases political opposition.

Third, we expand the research on the politics of policing arguing that even in authoritarian contexts, we need to focus on the multiple dimensions of policing. Crucially, police are the actors responsible for implementing repression but they are also the agents responsible for providing law and order. The existing literature on human rights and state repression has not addressed that even autocracies must provide law and order and security for civilians, as a basic expression of governance. Recent work has highlighted the difficulty of restoring trust in police as an institution in post-conflict and weak states (Blair, Karim and Morse 2019). Others show how militarizing law enforcement, blurring the lines between security forces and police, undermines citizen security, human rights, police reform, and the legal order (Flores-Macías and Zarkin 2019), even though it does not enhance police safety or reduce crime (Mummolo 2018).

Our findings demonstrate that repression by the police negatively affects public perceptions of the police, decreasing civilian support and increasing public dissent. Future work is needed to understand why, given these negative impacts, some states rely on the military,

police, or other security institutions to repress dissent, and what that practice means for state and political development.

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Online Appendix for Street-Level Repression: Protest, Policing and Dissent in Uganda

Supporting Information not meant for print publication. Online version of appendix available at the publisher's website:

Table 4: Treatments (English Version)

Treatment	Text
1. Control	*Hypothetically, imagine that you **observed but did not participate** in a rally where the police were providing safety and security. An individual at the rally became disruptive and the **police arrested him**.*
2. Participate Treatment	*Hypothetically, imagine that you **participated in a rally** where the police were providing safety and security. An individual at the rally became disruptive and the **police arrested him**.*
3. Repression Treatment	*Hypothetically, imagine that you **observed but did not participate in a rally** where the police were providing safety and security. An individual at the rally became disruptive and the **police arrested him and others using excess force**.*
4. Both Treatments	*Hypothetically, imagine that you **participated in a rally** where the police were providing safety and security. An individual at the rally became disruptive and the **police arrested him and others using excess force**.*

Notes: Treatments were completely randomized with each participant having an equal probability of receiving any individual treatment.

Figure 5: Attitudes toward the Police: Procedural Fairness and Normative Alignment
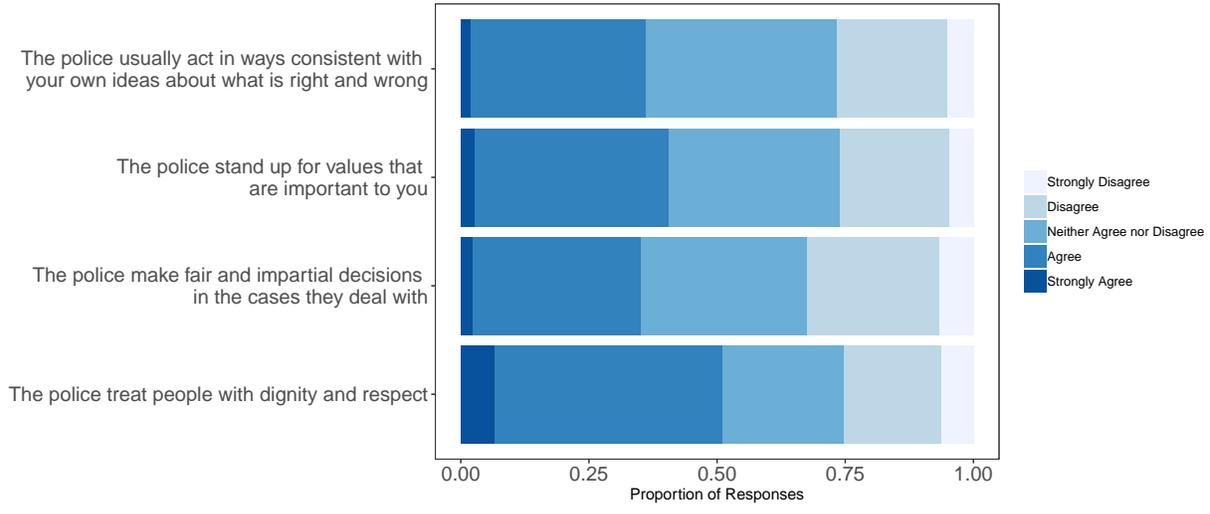
Figure 6: Attitudes toward the Police: Obligation and Cooperation
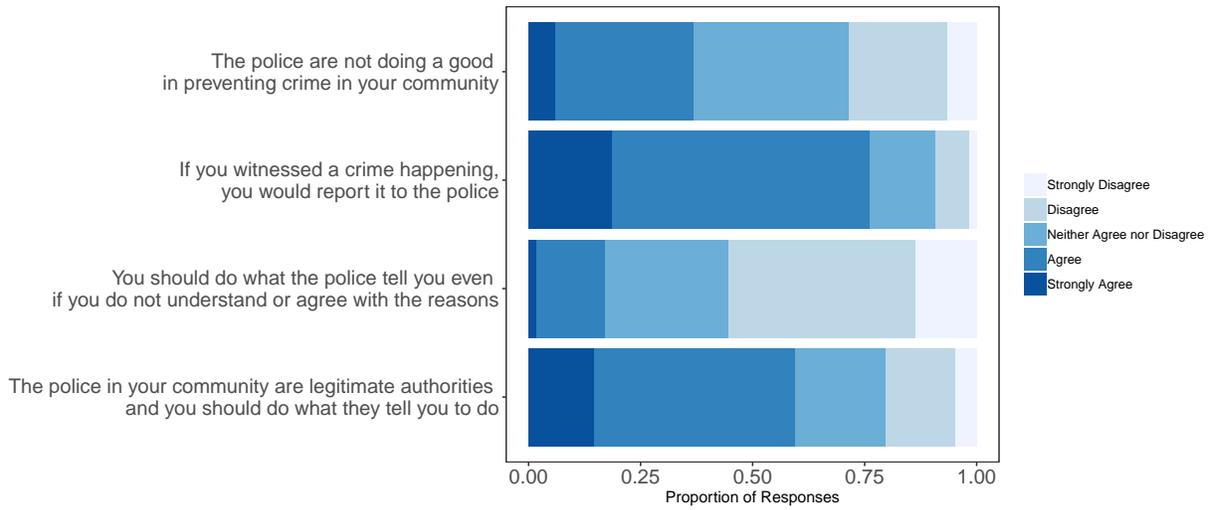
Table 5: Tabular OLS Results: Figure 3

	Support	Publicly Criticize	Protest
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
T1: Participation	−0.005	0.147**	0.182***
	(0.069)	(0.068)	(0.068)
T2: Repression	−0.493***	0.289***	0.244***
	(0.069)	(0.068)	(0.067)
T3: Participation & Repression	−0.436***	0.380***	0.300***
	(0.069)	(0.068)	(0.068)
Control (0bserved)	1.092***	−0.688***	−0.772***
	(0.049)	(0.048)	(0.047)
Observations	1920	1920	1920

Note: Cell entries represent coefficients from an ordinary least squares regression, using the control (observed a rally) as reference category. Standard errors are in parentheses. ***p < .01; **p < .05; *p < .1

Table 6: Ordered Logistic Regression Models: Robustness Check Figure 3

	Support	Publicly Criticize	Protest
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
T1: Participation	−0.102	0.268**	0.311***
	(0.119)	(0.117)	(0.118)
T2: Repression	−0.835***	0.504***	0.429***
	(0.121)	(0.118)	(0.119)
T3: Participation & Repression	−0.687***	0.661***	0.519***
	(0.123)	(0.119)	(0.119)
Observations	1920	1920	1920

Note: Cell entries represent coefficients from an ordered logistic regression, using the control (observed a rally) as reference category. Standard errors are in parentheses. ***p < .01; **p < .05; *p < .1

Table 7: Tabular OLS Results: Figure 4

	Support NRM supporter	Publicly Criticize NRM supporter	Protest NRM supporter	Support Not NRM supporter	Publicly Criticize Not NRM supporter	Protest Not NRM supporter
T1: Participation	0.055	0.060	0.085	−0.176	0.328***	0.399***
	(0.082)	(0.083)	(0.082)	(0.129)	(0.119)	(0.119)
T2: Repression	−0.435***	0.181**	0.137	−0.598***	0.487***	0.438***
	(0.084)	(0.086)	(0.085)	(0.120)	(0.111)	(0.111)
T3: Participation & Repression	−0.305***	0.237***	0.201**	−0.737***	0.674***	0.502***
	(0.083)	(0.085)	(0.084)	(0.125)	(0.115)	(0.115)
Control (0bserved)	1.101***	−0.625***	−0.719***	1.075***	−0.805***	−0.868***
	(0.059)	(0.060)	(0.060)	(0.084)	(0.078)	(0.078)
Observations	1303	1303	1303	617	617	617
R-squared	0.037	0.008	0.005	0.070	0.058	0.038
Adj. R-squared	0.034	0.005	0.002	0.066	0.053	0.034

Note: Cell entries represent coefficients from an ordinary least squares regression, using the control (observed a rally) as reference category. Standard errors are in parentheses. ***p < .01; **p < .05; *p < .1

Table 8: Ordered Logistic Regression Models: Robustness Check Figure 4

	Support NRM supporter	Publicly Criticize NRM supporter	Protest NRM supporter	Support Not NRM supporter	Publicly Criticize Not NRM supporter	Protest Not NRM supporter
T1: Participation	−0.036	0.108	0.158	−0.340	0.629***	0.681***
	(0.144)	(0.141)	(0.142)	(0.216)	(0.215)	(0.218)
T2: Repression	−0.753***	0.306**	0.250*	−1.004***	0.905***	0.780***
	(0.152)	(0.146)	(0.147)	(0.204)	(0.204)	(0.203)
T3: Participation & Repression	−0.522***	0.406***	0.351**	−1.141***	1.230***	0.893***
	(0.149)	(0.144)	(0.145)	(0.219)	(0.213)	(0.212)
Observations	1303	1303	1303	617	617	617

Note: Cell entries represent coefficients from an ordered logistic regression, using the control (observed a rally) as reference category. Standard errors are in parentheses. ***p < .01; **p < .05; *p < .1

Existing work suggests that several demographic factors matter for patterns of repression and collective action. Nordås and Davenport (2013), for example, hypothesize that political authorities faced with a youth bulge are more likely to apply repressive measures against their populations than states with a less threatening population-age structure. Additionally, they argue governments will focus their attention on "youth bulges because youth are more likely than other age groups to rebel" (Nordås and Davenport 2013, 937). Similarly, Christensen (2018) argues the geography of repression matters in Sub Saharan Africa, finding state repression is more frequent in urban areas, but states are more likely to kill dissidents in rural areas. Finally, a robust literature suggests that gender matters for patterns of collective action and violence (Agarwal 2000, Ness 2004).

Considering these demographic factors, we consider moderating effects of age, geographic setting, and gender. Although demographics are important, we should expect heterogeneous effects within these groups to be conditioned by pre-treatment support for the ruling party. We report heterogeneous effects on support for police action (Table 9), willingness to publicly criticize police action (Table 10), or willingness to protest police action (Table 11).

We regress our treatments on the corresponding demographic conditions: female, male, rural, urban, under 35, and over 35. Additionally, we consider if support for the ruling party affects responses within demographics. Assignment to the participation treatment has no discernible effect on support for police action. However, it increases public criticism from female respondents and those older than 35. Additionally, it increases protests against police actions among female, rural, and older respondents, especially for respondents who do not support the NRM.

The repression treatment has a consistent backlash effect on respondents, negatively impacting support for police actions and increasing public criticism and future protests, except for NRM supporters. Interestingly, female NRM supporters were more likely to publicly criticize and protest police action after receiving the repression treatment. Across the various demographic factors, respondents assigned to the participation and repression treatment were less likely to support police action and more likely to publicly criticize and/or protest police action. These results hold even for NRM supporters, except for male respondents and those under 35. Unsurprisingly, excessive force by police at a rally strongly influences how members of the opposition respond, triggering backlash effects. However, these results demonstrate police repression also increases dissent among women and older respondents – even for those who identify as supporting the ruling party.

In addition to demographic factors, we also consider how respondents' pre-treatment attitudes toward the police affect their responses. Considering the moderating effects of attitudes and beliefs about the role of police as legitimate authorities and individuals' obligation to obey police, willingness to report crimes, and normative alignment conditions their level of support and likelihood to publicly criticize and protest police actions. Results are consistent with the findings discussed here. Treatments 2 and 3 decreased support for police action among all respondents and increased public criticism and protest among most groups. The only group without a discernible effect on public criticism and protest were those who said they were obligated to obey police. [26] Importantly, there is no evidence that excessive police violence *deters* future collective action or dissent.

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[26]We report these results in Table 15, Table 16, and Table 17 on pages 7 and 8 of the online appendix.

Table 9: Heterogeneous Effects on Supporting Police Action

	Female	Male	Rural	Urban	Under 35	35 and older
	Dependent variable: Support Police Action					
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
	All Respondents					
T1: Participation	−0.093	0.103	0.010	−0.052	−0.012	−0.002
	(0.090)	(0.108)	(0.077)	(0.153)	(0.103)	(0.093)
T2: Repression	−0.571***	−0.399***	−0.475***	−0.553***	−0.579***	−0.414***
	(0.090)	(0.106)	(0.077)	(0.154)	(0.102)	(0.094)
T3: Participation & Repression	−0.460***	−0.405***	−0.366***	−0.755***	−0.374***	−0.492***
	(0.092)	(0.106)	(0.077)	(0.159)	(0.102)	(0.095)
Control (0bserved)	1.145***	1.027***	1.107***	1.022***	1.035***	1.142***
	(0.064)	(0.075)	(0.054)	(0.111)	(0.072)	(0.066)
Observations	1,050	870	1,546	374	905	1,015
	Self-Identified NRM Supporters					
T1: Participation	−0.017	0.147	0.058	0.048	0.068	0.041
	(0.106)	(0.127)	(0.090)	(0.197)	(0.122)	(0.110)
T2: Repression	−0.525***	−0.321**	−0.457***	−0.318	−0.457***	−0.413***
	(0.109)	(0.130)	(0.092)	(0.200)	(0.123)	(0.114)
T3: Participation & Repression	−0.306***	−0.300**	−0.267***	−0.555***	−0.301**	−0.309***
	(0.109)	(0.127)	(0.090)	(0.209)	(0.122)	(0.112)
Control (0bserved)	1.134***	1.058***	1.115***	1.021***	1.047***	1.148***
	(0.077)	(0.092)	(0.064)	(0.146)	(0.087)	(0.080)
Observations	724	579	1,099	204	607	696
	Did not Self-Identify as NRM Supporter					
T1: Participation	−0.293*	−0.046	−0.161	−0.190	−0.225	−0.130
	(0.168)	(0.200)	(0.154)	(0.238)	(0.191)	(0.172)
T2: Repression	−0.661***	−0.532***	−0.512***	−0.841***	−0.810***	−0.416***
	(0.159)	(0.182)	(0.138)	(0.235)	(0.178)	(0.159)
T3: Participation & Repression	−0.811***	−0.657***	−0.640***	−0.974***	−0.525***	−0.957***
	(0.165)	(0.190)	(0.146)	(0.239)	(0.180)	(0.171)
Control (0bserved)	1.167***	0.976***	1.092***	1.023***	1.012***	1.130***
	(0.112)	(0.127)	(0.097)	(0.167)	(0.125)	(0.112)
Observations	326	291	447	170	298	319

Note: Cell entries represent coefficients from an ordinary least squares regression of the repression and participation treatments, using the control (observed a rally) as reference category. Standard errors are in parentheses. *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01.

Table 10: Heterogeneous Effects on Publicly Criticizing Police Action

	Female	Male	Rural	Urban	Under 35	35 and older
	Dependent variable: Publicly Criticize Police Action					
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
	All Respondents					
T1: Participation	0.178**	0.108	0.125	0.222	0.083	0.207**
	(0.090)	(0.105)	(0.077)	(0.146)	(0.102)	(0.091)
T2: Repression	0.292***	0.286***	0.257***	0.408***	0.162	0.401***
	(0.090)	(0.104)	(0.076)	(0.147)	(0.101)	(0.092)
T3: Participation & Repression	0.416***	0.338***	0.313***	0.680***	0.291***	0.453***
	(0.091)	(0.103)	(0.076)	(0.152)	(0.101)	(0.093)
Control (0bserved)	−0.699***	−0.676***	−0.703***	−0.622***	−0.535***	−0.824***
	(0.063)	(0.073)	(0.053)	(0.106)	(0.071)	(0.064)
Observations	1,050	870	1,546	374	905	1,015
	Self-Identified as NRM Supporter					
T1: Participation	0.129	−0.030	0.076	−0.025	0.011	0.110
	(0.109)	(0.130)	(0.092)	(0.202)	(0.127)	(0.110)
T2: Repression	0.257**	0.083	0.139	0.374*	0.043	0.300***
	(0.112)	(0.133)	(0.094)	(0.206)	(0.128)	(0.114)
T3: Participation & Repression	0.311***	0.148	0.199**	0.485**	0.213*	0.258**
	(0.112)	(0.129)	(0.092)	(0.215)	(0.127)	(0.112)
Control (0bserved)	−0.659***	−0.580***	−0.630***	−0.596***	−0.459***	−0.769***
	(0.079)	(0.094)	(0.066)	(0.150)	(0.091)	(0.080)
Observations	724	579	1,099	204	607	696
	Did not Self-Identify as NRM Supporter					
T1: Participation	0.285*	0.377**	0.192	0.556***	0.212	0.431***
	(0.160)	(0.180)	(0.143)	(0.208)	(0.174)	(0.164)
T2: Repression	0.362**	0.623***	0.498***	0.447**	0.380**	0.583***
	(0.150)	(0.164)	(0.129)	(0.205)	(0.162)	(0.151)
T3: Participation & Repression	0.646***	0.703***	0.576***	0.895***	0.434***	0.909***
	(0.157)	(0.171)	(0.136)	(0.209)	(0.164)	(0.163)
Control (0bserved)	−0.778***	−0.833***	−0.855***	−0.651***	−0.671***	−0.924***
	(0.106)	(0.115)	(0.090)	(0.146)	(0.114)	(0.106)
Observations	326	291	447	170	298	319

Note: Cell entries represent coefficients from an ordinary least squares regression of the repression and participation treatments, using the control (observed a rally) as reference category. Standard errors are in parentheses. *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01.

Table 11: Heterogeneous Effects on Protesting Police Action

	Female	Male	Rural	Urban	Under 35	35 and older
	Dependent variable: Protest Police Action					
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
	All Respondents					
T1: Participation	0.238***	0.111	0.164**	0.239	0.171*	0.196**
	(0.090)	(0.103)	(0.076)	(0.146)	(0.101)	(0.091)
T2: Repression	0.230**	0.261**	0.232***	0.281*	0.178*	0.301***
	(0.090)	(0.102)	(0.076)	(0.147)	(0.100)	(0.091)
T3: Participation & Repression	0.264***	0.342***	0.258***	0.491***	0.217**	0.373***
	(0.091)	(0.101)	(0.075)	(0.152)	(0.100)	(0.092)
Control (0bserved)	−0.770***	−0.775***	−0.791***	−0.689***	−0.687***	−0.847***
	(0.063)	(0.071)	(0.053)	(0.106)	(0.070)	(0.064)
Observations	1,050	870	1,546	374	905	1,015
	Self-Identified as NRM Supporter					
T1: Participation	0.183*	−0.041	0.092	0.051	0.097	0.081
	(0.108)	(0.128)	(0.091)	(0.196)	(0.125)	(0.109)
T2: Repression	0.214*	0.039	0.119	0.223	0.078	0.188*
	(0.111)	(0.131)	(0.093)	(0.199)	(0.127)	(0.113)
T3: Participation & Repression	0.234**	0.158	0.167*	0.412**	0.200	0.201*
	(0.111)	(0.127)	(0.091)	(0.208)	(0.126)	(0.111)
Control (0bserved)	−0.754***	−0.674***	−0.719***	−0.723***	−0.635***	−0.793***
	(0.078)	(0.092)	(0.065)	(0.146)	(0.090)	(0.079)
Observations	724	579	1,099	204	607	696
	Did not Self-Identify as NRM Supporter					
T1: Participation	0.377**	0.414**	0.311**	0.508**	0.321*	0.468***
	(0.165)	(0.173)	(0.142)	(0.218)	(0.173)	(0.165)
T2: Repression	0.261*	0.632***	0.463***	0.356*	0.363**	0.506***
	(0.155)	(0.157)	(0.128)	(0.215)	(0.161)	(0.152)
T3: Participation & Repression	0.326**	0.694***	0.458***	0.578***	0.241	0.772***
	(0.162)	(0.164)	(0.134)	(0.219)	(0.163)	(0.163)
Control (0bserved)	−0.800***	−0.940***	−0.939***	−0.651***	−0.780***	−0.946***
	(0.109)	(0.110)	(0.089)	(0.153)	(0.113)	(0.107)
Observations	326	291	447	170	298	319

Note: Cell entries represent coefficients from an ordinary least squares regression of the repression and participation treatments, using the control (observed a rally) as reference category. Standard errors are in parentheses. *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01.

Table 12: Ordered Logistic Regression: Support Police Action

	Dependent variable: Support Police Action					
	Female	Male	Rural	Urban	Under 35	35 and older
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
	All Respondents					
T1: Participation	−0.233	0.054	−0.088	−0.133	−0.136	−0.077
	(0.161)	(0.177)	(0.133)	(0.273)	(0.176)	(0.161)
T2: Repression	−0.982***	−0.667***	−0.800***	−0.993***	−0.996***	−0.698***
	(0.165)	(0.179)	(0.135)	(0.280)	(0.179)	(0.165)
T3: Participation & Repression	−0.713***	−0.649***	−0.572***	−1.271***	−0.625***	−0.743***
	(0.168)	(0.179)	(0.135)	(0.294)	(0.178)	(0.170)
Observations	1050	870	1546	374	905	1015
	Self-Identified as NRM Supporters					
T1: Participation	−0.168	0.131	−0.039	0.0001	−0.055	−0.022
	(0.192)	(0.218)	(0.157)	(0.374)	(0.216)	(0.194)
T2: Repression	−0.935***	−0.530**	−0.778***	−0.629	−0.871***	−0.646***
	(0.204)	(0.228)	(0.166)	(0.390)	(0.225)	(0.207)
T3: Participation & Repression	−0.501**	−0.538**	−0.444***	−1.071***	−0.621***	−0.435**
	(0.203)	(0.221)	(0.161)	(0.402)	(0.220)	(0.203)
Observations	724	579	1099	204	607	696
	Didn't Self-Identify as NRM Supporters					
T1: Participation	−0.467	−0.206	−0.326	−0.329	−0.433	−0.262
	(0.300)	(0.311)	(0.257)	(0.405)	(0.310)	(0.302)
T2: Repression	−1.107***	−0.894***	−0.866***	−1.407***	−1.279***	−0.821***
	(0.287)	(0.291)	(0.236)	(0.407)	(0.301)	(0.279)
T3: Participation & Repression	−1.279***	−0.994***	−0.997***	−1.579***	−0.716**	−1.610***
	(0.306)	(0.315)	(0.254)	(0.438)	(0.308)	(0.317)
Observations	326	291	447	170	298	319

Note: Cell entries represent coefficients from an ordered logistic regression of the repression and participation treatments, using the control (observed a rally) as reference category. Standard errors are in parentheses. ***p < .01; **p < .05; *p < .1

Table 13: Ordered Logistic Regression: Publicly Criticize Police Action

	Female	Male	Rural	Urban	Under 35	35 and older
	Dependent variable: Publicly Criticize Police Action					
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
	All Respondents					
T1: Participation	0.317**	0.207	0.234*	0.418	0.162	0.362**
	(0.158)	(0.175)	(0.130)	(0.273)	(0.172)	(0.160)
T2: Repression	0.523***	0.482***	0.441***	0.777***	0.289*	0.690***
	(0.160)	(0.175)	(0.131)	(0.273)	(0.172)	(0.162)
T3: Participation & Repression	0.735***	0.576***	0.532***	1.273***	0.496***	0.798***
	(0.162)	(0.174)	(0.131)	(0.280)	(0.171)	(0.165)
Observations	1050	870	1546	374	905	1015
	Self-Identified as NRM Supporters					
T1: Participation	0.217	−0.028	0.124	0.034	0.044	0.166
	(0.187)	(0.214)	(0.153)	(0.366)	(0.209)	(0.191)
T2: Repression	0.432**	0.153	0.224	0.754**	0.086	0.490**
	(0.195)	(0.220)	(0.159)	(0.375)	(0.214)	(0.200)
T3: Participation & Repression	0.514***	0.279	0.319**	0.947**	0.365*	0.431**
	(0.194)	(0.215)	(0.156)	(0.380)	(0.210)	(0.197)
Observations	724	579	1099	204	607	696
	Didn't Self-Identify as NRM Supporters					
T1: Participation	0.563*	0.702**	0.460*	1.009**	0.384	0.872***
	(0.298)	(0.310)	(0.253)	(0.416)	(0.307)	(0.302)
T2: Repression	0.742***	1.082***	0.936***	0.839**	0.676**	1.137***
	(0.285)	(0.293)	(0.238)	(0.406)	(0.292)	(0.287)
T3: Participation & Repression	1.252***	1.206***	1.059***	1.733***	0.753**	1.712***
	(0.296)	(0.308)	(0.248)	(0.422)	(0.297)	(0.308)
Observations	326	291	447	170	298	319

Note: Cell entries represent coefficients from an ordered logistic regression of the repression and participation treatments, using the control (observed a rally) as reference category. Standard errors are in parentheses. ***p < .01; **p < .05; *p < .1

Table 14: Ordered Logistic Regression: Protest Police Action

	Dependent variable: Protest Police Action					
	Female	Male	Rural	Urban	Under 35	35 and older
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
	All Respondents					
T1: Participation	0.400**	0.203	0.286**	0.405	0.290*	0.335**
	(0.160)	(0.175)	(0.132)	(0.273)	(0.174)	(0.161)
T2: Repression	0.412**	0.451**	0.409***	0.509*	0.301*	0.542***
	(0.162)	(0.176)	(0.132)	(0.274)	(0.173)	(0.163)
T3: Participation & Repression	0.447***	0.600***	0.436***	0.909***	0.345**	0.673***
	(0.164)	(0.175)	(0.132)	(0.279)	(0.173)	(0.165)
Observations	1050	870	1546	374	905	1015
	Self-Identified as NRM Supporters					
T1: Participation	0.315*	−0.031	0.164	0.139	0.198	0.130
	(0.191)	(0.214)	(0.155)	(0.367)	(0.211)	(0.193)
T2: Repression	0.380*	0.092	0.214	0.446	0.156	0.328
	(0.198)	(0.222)	(0.161)	(0.375)	(0.216)	(0.202)
T3: Participation & Repression	0.374*	0.317	0.277*	0.830**	0.349	0.347*
	(0.198)	(0.215)	(0.157)	(0.385)	(0.213)	(0.199)
Observations	724	579	1099	204	607	696
	Didn't Self-Identify as NRM Supporters					
T1: Participation	0.622**	0.739**	0.554**	0.843**	0.494	0.871***
	(0.299)	(0.318)	(0.258)	(0.412)	(0.311)	(0.306)
T2: Repression	0.483*	1.112***	0.833***	0.619	0.578**	0.985***
	(0.281)	(0.294)	(0.235)	(0.407)	(0.292)	(0.284)
T3: Participation & Repression	0.613**	1.217***	0.814***	1.038**	0.312	1.457***
	(0.293)	(0.310)	(0.248)	(0.410)	(0.300)	(0.303)
Observations	326	291	447	170	298	319

Note: Cell entries represent coefficients from an ordered logistic regression of the repression and participation treatments, using the control (observed a rally) as reference category. Standard errors are in parentheses. ***p < .01; **p < .05; *p < .1

Table 15: Average Treatment Effects on Potential Moderators to Support Police Action

	Dependent variable: Support Police Action				
	All	Police are legitimate authorities	Obligated to obey police	Would Report a crime to police	Normatively aligned with police
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
T1: Participation	−0.005 (0.069)	−0.054 (0.088)	−0.035 (0.173)	−0.035 (0.077)	0.010 (0.110)
T2: Repression	−0.493*** (0.069)	−0.517*** (0.085)	−0.473*** (0.171)	−0.498*** (0.077)	−0.385*** (0.109)
T3: Participation & Repression	−0.436*** (0.069)	−0.556*** (0.086)	−0.735*** (0.170)	−0.485*** (0.076)	−0.290*** (0.110)
Control (0bserved)	1.092*** (0.049)	1.262*** (0.059)	1.123*** (0.121)	1.201*** (0.054)	1.169*** (0.078)
Observations	1,920	1,142	328	1,464	695

Note: Cell entries represent coefficients from an ordinary least squares regression of the repression and participation treatments, using the control (observed a rally) as reference category. Standard errors are in parentheses. ***p < .01; **p < .05; *p < .1

Table 16: Average Treatment Effects on Potential Moderators to Publicly Criticize Police Action

	Dependent variable: Publicly Criticize Police Action				
	All	Police are legitimate authorities	Obligated to obey police	Would Report a crime to police	Normatively aligned with police
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
T1: Participation	0.147** (0.068)	0.203** (0.088)	0.089 (0.169)	0.133* (0.078)	0.072 (0.120)
T2: Repression	0.289*** (0.068)	0.288*** (0.085)	−0.037 (0.167)	0.264*** (0.078)	0.255** (0.119)
T3: Participation & Repression	0.380*** (0.068)	0.443*** (0.086)	0.140 (0.166)	0.383*** (0.077)	0.345*** (0.120)
Control (0bserved)	−0.688*** (0.048)	−0.880*** (0.060)	−0.481*** (0.119)	−0.743*** (0.055)	−0.727*** (0.085)
Observations	1,920	1,142	328	1,464	695

Note: Cell entries represent coefficients from an ordinary least squares regression of the repression and participation treatments, using the control (observed a rally) as reference category. Standard errors are in parentheses. ***p < .01; **p < .05; *p < .1

Table 17: Average Treatment Effects on Potential Moderators to Protest Police Action

	All	Police are legitimate authorities	Obligated to obey police	Would Report a crime to police	Normatively aligned with police
	Dependent variable: Protest Police Action				
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
T1: Participation	0.182***	0.204**	0.113	0.139*	0.130
	(0.068)	(0.086)	(0.167)	(0.076)	(0.120)
T2: Repression	0.244***	0.238***	−0.071	0.215***	0.217*
	(0.067)	(0.084)	(0.165)	(0.076)	(0.120)
T3: Participation & Repression	0.300***	0.358***	0.108	0.322***	0.294**
	(0.068)	(0.085)	(0.164)	(0.075)	(0.121)
Control (0bserved)	−0.772***	−0.939***	−0.543***	−0.820***	−0.797***
	(0.047)	(0.058)	(0.117)	(0.053)	(0.085)
Observations	1,920	1,142	328	1,464	695

Note: Cell entries represent coefficients from an ordinary least squares regression of the repression and participation treatments, using the control (observed a rally) as reference category. Standard errors are in parentheses. ***p < .01; **p < .05; *p < .1

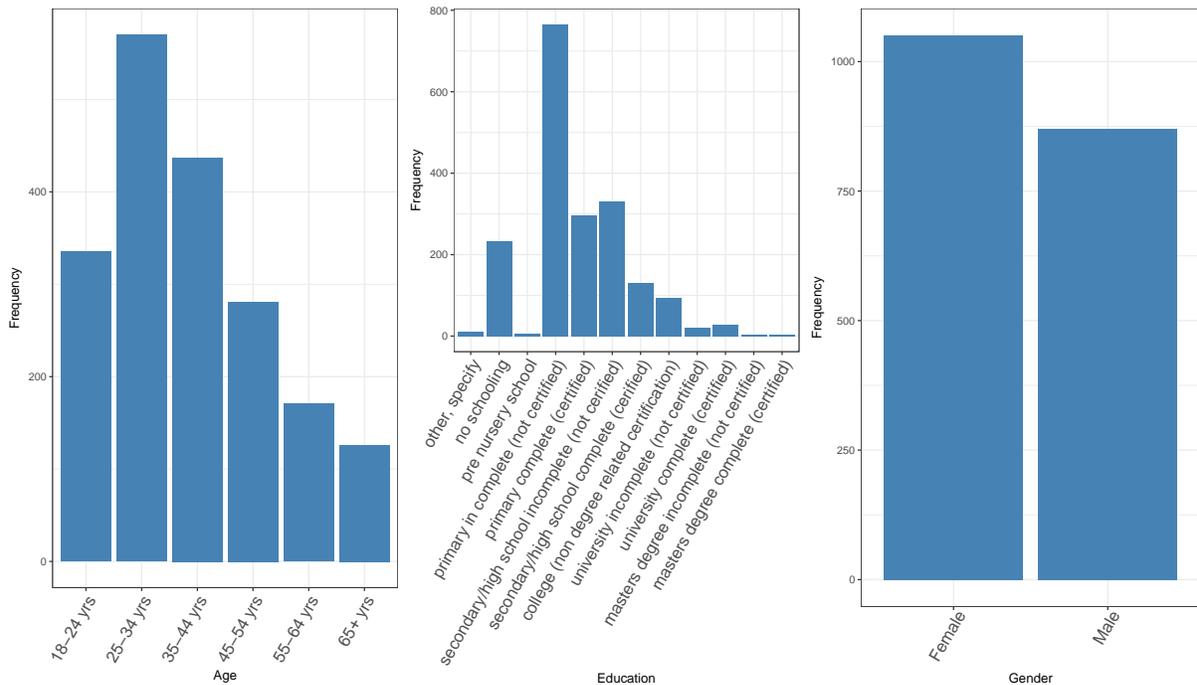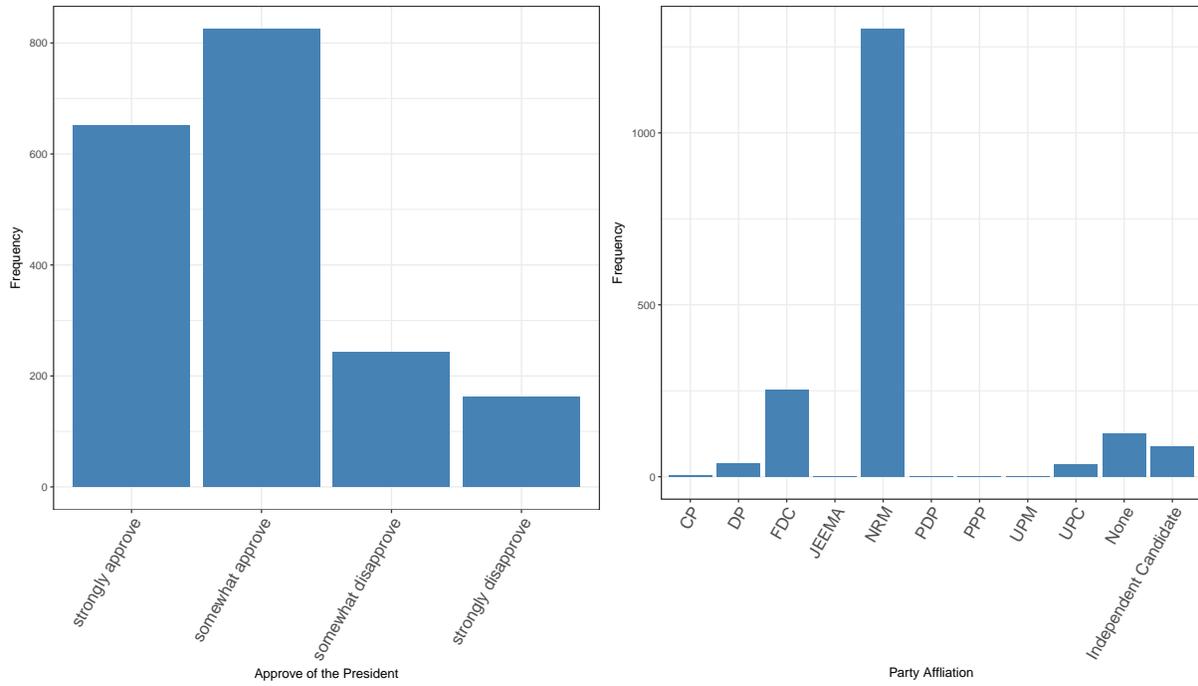Figure 7: Respondents' Demographics

Figure 8: Respondents' Political Affiliation

Figure 9: Survey Responses by Regions