

# Understanding non-normative civil resistance under repression: Evidence from Hong Kong and Chile

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## Abstract

The present research examined the psychological processes underlying engagement in non-normative forms of resistance and the role of repression. We conducted two studies in the contexts of two distinct social movements, both characterized by high levels of repression—the Anti-Extradition Law Amendment Bill Movement in Hong Kong and the “Chilean Spring” protests of 2019–2020. First, we tested whether non-normative resistance was motivated by (1) moralization of non-normative actions (moralization hypothesis), (2) perceived low efficacy of normative actions and lack of hope (nothing-to-lose hypothesis), or (3) perceived efficacy of non-normative actions in achieving movement goals (strategic choice hypothesis). Our results provided converging evidence for the moralization and strategic choice hypotheses, but not the nothing-to-lose hypothesis. Furthermore, we proposed and provided evidence for a model of movement escalation, whereby experiences of police violence predicted stronger willingness to engage in future non-normative actions via heightened motivations for non-normative resistance and increased risk perceptions. Taken together, these findings illuminate that repression in the form of coercive police violence may be ineffective in quelling social unrest. Rather, it can contribute to the radicalization of protesters. Potential boundary conditions and cross-contextual generalizability of the current results are discussed.

## KEYWORDS

radicalization, repression, resistance and collective action, risk perception, social movement

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## INTRODUCTION

From sit-ins and boycotts, to marches and demonstrations, to occupations and road blockades, and to physical confrontations and armed struggles, citizens across the globe engage in a variety of actions to protest perceived injustices and grievances. There is now an abundance of research in psychology addressing the motivational, affective, and cognitive underpinnings of protest or collective action that aims to improve the conditions of one's group (for reviews, see Agostini & van Zomeren, 2021; van Zomeren et al., 2008). This research, however, has by and large focused on normative forms of resistance in Western democracies, where protesting is relatively low risk (for exceptions, see Adra et al., 2020; Ayanian & Tausch, 2016; Ayanian et al., 2020; Saab et al., 2016). The current studies aim to extend the existing literature on resistance by (1) focusing on contexts characterized by repression or high levels of police violence and (2) offering a systematic investigation into the psychological processes that mobilize or demobilize non-normative forms of resistance in repressive contexts.

While the literature lacks a unified definition of *repression*, the term has been used primarily to refer to state actions that are meant to “prevent, control, or constrain non-institutional collective action (e.g., protest)” (Earl, 2011, 263) by increasing the costs of protest (Opp & Roehl, 1990). Studying non-normative resistance under repression is of particular interest because repression creates a unique context where, on the one hand, non-normative actions might be easier to justify, but on the other hand, they also carry substantially more risks when compared with non-repressive contexts. It is thus important to further the psychological understanding of repression as having a multifaceted impact on radicalization.

Across two distinct social and political contexts—the Anti-Extradition Law Amendment Bill (known hereafter as Anti-ELAB) Movement in Hong Kong and the “Chilean Spring” protests of 2019–2020—we address two main research questions. First, what motivates protesters to engage in non-normative forms of resistance in heavily repressed movements? To this end, we preregistered<sup>1</sup> and tested three distinct, but not mutually exclusive, hypotheses: the moralization hypothesis, the nothing-to-lose hypothesis, and the strategic choice hypothesis. Second, how does experiencing repression play a role in non-normative resistance? Specifically, we explored the relationship between exposure to police violence and willingness to engage in future non-normative resistance, as well as the psychological mechanisms underlying this relationship.

## PSYCHOLOGICAL UNDERPINNINGS OF NON-NORMATIVE RESISTANCE

Past research has distinguished between normative and non-normative forms of resistance (for a review, see Becker & Tausch, 2015). Whereas normative actions refer to those that conform to the existing laws, rules, and codes of conduct in a society, non-normative actions refer to those that violate these rules and norms (e.g., Becker & Tausch, 2015; Selvanathan & Leidner, 2020; Tausch et al., 2011). Following Wright (1990), we define the normativeness of a specific action in reference to the norms of the dominant social system. Examples of non-normative resistance include violent actions such as physical attacks and arson, and nonviolent actions such as obstruction of public facilities. Whereas the existing literature has centered on overt, organized, and collective forms of resistance (i.e., collective action), the current research examined a variety of actions, including both collective action (e.g., participating in demonstrations) and more

<sup>1</sup>Anonymized preregistrations are available at [https://osf.io/xrsbm/?view\\_only=3fdb1779f5b948e5a68158996c39037a](https://osf.io/xrsbm/?view_only=3fdb1779f5b948e5a68158996c39037a) (Study 1) and [https://osf.io/nuqb2?view\\_only=9aeaaba15d844cd69db42fc003e05358](https://osf.io/nuqb2?view_only=9aeaaba15d844cd69db42fc003e05358) (Study 2). Deviations from the preregistrations are explained in Appendix A.

disguised, mundane, everyday resistance (e.g., deliberately shopping at pro-protest stores; see Vollhardt et al., 2020, for a review on different resistance strategies in repressive contexts). We therefore use the more inclusive term *resistance* when referring to the political actions considered in the current studies. These acts of resistance, however, should be understood in the context of the large-scale social movements in which our studies took place.

Previous research has suggested that normative and non-normative actions are driven by different psychological mechanisms and processes (for a review, see Becker & Tausch, 2015), with a particular focus on differences in the emotional (e.g., anger vs. contempt or hatred) and cognitive (e.g., distinct efficacy beliefs) pathways (Saab et al., 2016; Shuman et al., 2016; Tausch et al., 2011) to protest. More recent work has also examined, for example, desire for restorative versus retributive justice as predicting support for normative and non-normative collective action, respectively (Selvanathan & Leidner, 2020). In the context of the Anti-ELAB movement in Hong Kong, Gulliver et al. (2022) found evidence suggesting that perceived threat and political distrust might play a greater role in motivating non-normative rather than normative protest intentions. Overall, these findings suggest that the psychological processes that typically predict normative acts of resistance (e.g., anger, general political efficacy) may not be the best predictors of non-normative resistance, and additional motivations should be considered.

In the current research, it was not our goal to examine what predicted normative actions (our samples were indeed primarily composed of individuals who had already participated in normative actions, except the “inactives” in Study 2) and compare those to the predictors of non-normative actions. Rather, we zoomed in on the psychological pathways to non-normative resistance and tested in tandem three major hypotheses that had been put forward in the literature regarding the motivations for non-normative resistance and that also seemed particularly relevant in repressive political contexts.

## Moralization hypothesis

The first hypothesis draws upon the research on radicalization and political violence, which has pointed to their strong moral basis (e.g., Giner-Sorolla et al., 2011). There are several ways in which people can moralize non-normative or even violent actions. The first and most direct way is through believing that the pursuit of non-normative strategies is morally righteous and necessary in itself. Ginges and Atran (2011), for example, showed that among Israeli settlers in the West Bank, perceived righteousness of violence predicted stronger intentions to engage in violent actions against Palestinians or against Israelis enforcing a peace deal. In movements characterized by severe power asymmetry between the protesters and the state, we argue that actions that disrupt the existing societal order and rules may be seen as a moral response to repression—in other words, they are perceived as righteous and necessary in and of themselves. A second way to moralize more extreme oppositional acts is through demonization, or condemning the target of the act as evil and incapable of reform. Once subject to demonization, the target would not only be excluded from the scope of moral consideration, but also fully deserving of extreme treatment (Campbell & Vollhardt, 2014; Li et al., 2014). It has been argued that the demonization of a target is “a special kind of moral mandate” that justifies any actions taken against them (Giner-Sorolla et al., 2011, 10). Recent research on Palestinian resistance in Israel demonstrated that feelings of hatred (but not anger)—an extreme emotion associated with the appraisal of the target as evil and incapable of change (Halperin, 2008)—predicted non-normative collective action (Shuman et al., 2016). When government authorities respond to protests with excessive force, citizens will likely perceive the authorities as illegitimate (e.g., Reicher et al., 2004) and even demonize the state agents carrying out orders of repression (e.g., riot police). We therefore predicted that seeing non-normative resistance as morally righteous

and the police as evil would differentiate protesters who engaged in non-normative tactics from those who did not.

## Nothing-to-lose hypothesis

When protesters face severe and indiscriminate police violence, they may perceive little hope for change, especially via traditional means of protest. In such desperate situations, non-normative tactics could gain appeal, as they may still—however slim the chance—bring about more changes than peaceful tactics or inaction. After all, they have nothing to lose. This motivation has thus been described as the nothing-to-lose hypothesis when explaining non-normative collective action (Saab et al., 2016; Tausch et al., 2011). Tausch et al. (2011) provided the first empirical evidence that non-normative actions could be driven by a sense of low efficacy among disadvantaged group members or the feeling that the ingroup was powerless to address the perceived injustice. Differentiating between efficacy of peaceful and aggressive actions, Saab et al. (2016) further demonstrated that perceived efficacy of peaceful actions was negatively associated with support for aggressive actions, especially when such actions were viewed as ineffective. While this empirical work focused on perceived efficacy when testing the nothing-to-lose hypothesis, the rationale for this hypothesis also highlights the emotional experiences of despair or lack of hope as motivating non-normative means of protest. Although previous research has focused on differentiating hope from efficacy beliefs by establishing the unique role of hope in motivating (normative) collective action (Cohen-Chen & Van Zomeren, 2018; Włodarczyk et al., 2017), there is evidence suggesting that a lack of hope might motivate non-normative acts of resistance, consistent with the nothing-to-lose hypothesis. In a behavioral experiment (Wright, 1990), for example, perceived lack of hope of future improvement of one's disadvantaged position best distinguished individuals who took non-normative forms of action from those who took normative forms of action. Thus, we extend the previous research by considering both the emotional experiences of despair and hope, as well as the cognitive appraisal of efficacy (of non-normative tactics, in particular), to test the nothing-to-lose hypothesis. We predicted that feelings of despair would be stronger, whereas feelings of hope and perceived efficacy of normative strategies would be lower among people who engaged in non-normative actions, compared to those who only engaged in normative actions.

## Strategic choice hypothesis

Although individuals might endorse non-normative actions out of a nothing-to-lose mindset, this does not necessarily imply that turning to such actions is an irrational strategy (Tausch et al., 2011; Vollhardt et al., 2020). Rather, protesters may strategically shift their course of action (e.g., from normative to non-normative) to adapt to the changing situation or to achieve specific goals, such as attracting attention from the public and building solidarity (Saab et al., 2015), expressing oppositional values (Hornsey et al., 2006), and preserving dignity and honor (Haslam & Reicher, 2012). As the third major hypothesis, we therefore tested the idea that the perception that non-normative tactics are effective in realizing certain movement goals would distinguish protesters who adopt non-normative actions of resistance from those who do not. Extending the previous research on efficacy and non-normative collective action, we adopted a more fine-grained approach to assessing efficacy. We differentiated between efficacy of normative and non-normative resistance, as well as between efficacy for achieving various movement goals (e.g., realizing the explicit demands of the movement, building solidarity, empowering the people, and preserving honor and dignity). Distinguishing between

efficacy for different goals is especially important in repressive contexts where the government may be unresponsive to protesters' political demands (Ayanian et al., 2020).

## REPRESSION AND NON-NORMATIVE RESISTANCE

The second goal of the present research was to investigate more closely the role of *experienced* repression in non-normative resistance. Generally, prior research has considered repression a double-edged sword, both as a deterrent and a catalyst for resistance. On the one hand, threats of government sanctions and state violence significantly reduce the political opportunity for individuals to mobilize (e.g., Klandermans, 1997) and create a political climate of fear (Jarymowicz & Bar-Tal, 2006; Lykes et al., 2007; Young, 2019). On the other hand, research in political science and sociology has shown that moderate (rather than extreme) levels of repression can raise incentives for civil unrest and radicalization, especially when repression is considered illegitimate and a “public evil” (Lichbach, 1987; Opp, 1994; Opp & Roehl, 1990; White, 1989). More recent empirical research has similarly demonstrated the mobilizing and escalating effects of state repression in various contexts (e.g., Turkey after the 2013 Gezi Park protests [Aytaç et al., 2018]; Uganda [Curtice & Behlendorf, 2021]; Morocco during the Arab Spring [Lawrence, 2017]).

Recent theoretical advances in the study of repression highlight the need to examine repression at the micro level—specifically, in terms of experienced and perceived repression (Honari, 2018). The social psychological perspective has provided valuable insights into microlevel repression and its implications for civil resistance. The intergroup relations approach to collective action, for example, suggests that perceptions of generalized police violence often lead to an escalation of conflict between the police and the protesters and even the radicalization of the latter via a dynamic process of collective empowerment among the protesters (Drury & Reicher, 2009; Reicher et al., 2004). In the context of the “Yellow Vest” movement in France, researchers showed that exposure to police violence during the protests increased people's intention to join future protests and even willingness to self-sacrifice for the movement (Adam-Troian et al., 2020).

Taking this research to higher-risk contexts, Ayanian and Tausch (2016) examined the role of risk perceptions in the 2013 postcoup protests in Egypt. They demonstrated that perceived risks attributable to repression (e.g., being injured, killed, or arrested) predicted activists' stronger willingness to engage in future protests. In a series of studies in Russia, Ukraine, Hong Kong, and Turkey, Ayanian et al. (2020) further showed that perceived likelihood of risks predicted stronger intention to protest due to increased outrage at the state, stronger identification with the movement, and increased perceived efficacy of protest in building a movement, as well as a heightened sense of moral obligation to act.

Whereas the psychological research has generally linked repression to mobilization and potential radicalization in social movements, a recent study conducted among migrant domestic workers in Lebanon found that anger and efficacy predicted action intentions only among people with low levels of fear (Adra et al., 2020). This finding suggests that repression can quell opposition when it induces a sense of fear. Indeed, experimental work showed that fear reduced the willingness to participate in collective action on behalf of an experimentally formed ingroup (Miller et al., 2009), as well as hypothetical and behavioral measures of dissent in Zimbabwe (Young, 2019). These findings further illustrate the multifaceted impact of repression on civil resistance.

Integrating the literatures on radicalization and repression, the second primary goal of the current research was to shed further light on how repression experienced at the micro level (e.g., suffering police violence) is associated with non-normative resistance. Consistent with the notion that exposure to repression can lead to radicalization and intensification of protest (Adam-Troian

et al., 2020; Almeida, 2005; Opp & Roehl, 1990), we hypothesized that experiencing police violence during protest should be positively associated with engagement in non-normative resistance. We further extend prior research by exploring the psychological processes underlying the positive relationship between *past* experiences of police violence and willingness to engage in *future* non-normative actions. First, we predicted that this positive link might be explained by enhancing the three major motivations for non-normative resistance, as we discussed earlier. That is, experiencing police violence—either directly or indirectly—might predict stronger intentions to resist in non-normative ways via increased moralization of non-normative or even violent tactics (i.e., perceived moral righteousness of such tactics and police demonization), a heightened nothing-to-lose mindset (i.e., feelings of despair, lack of hope, and low perceived efficacy of normative tactics), and/or perceived higher efficacy of non-normative tactics.

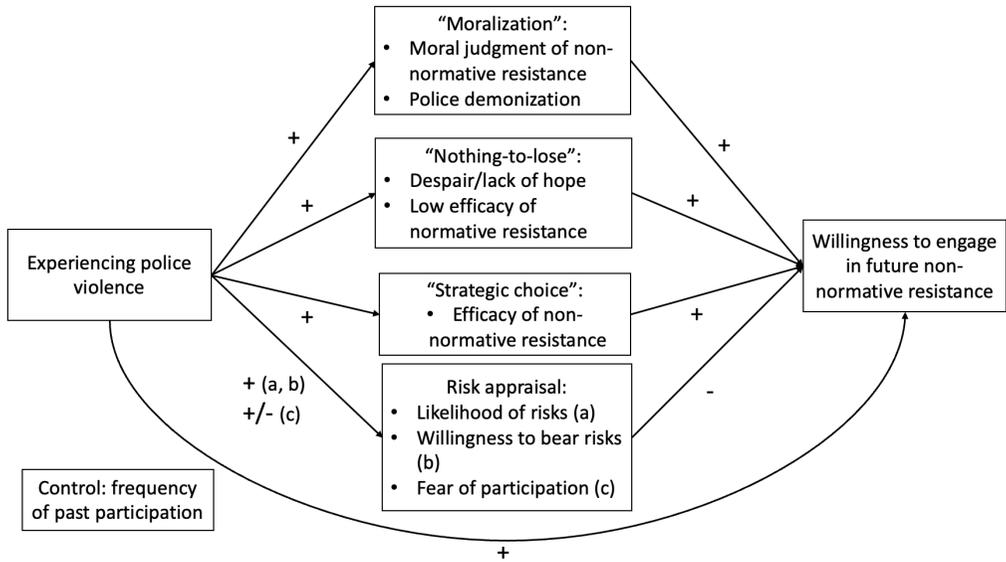
Experiencing police violence may not only enhance these three motivations for non-normative resistance, but it could also influence the intention to engage in such actions by shaping how people perceive and appraise the various risks associated with protesting. Here, we focus on both cognitive and affective appraisals of risks: perceived likelihood of risks, willingness to bear risks, and fear of protest participation. First, experiencing police violence may increase perceived likelihood of risks in general, including but not limited to police violence (e.g., social exclusion, financial loss). Following past research demonstrating a positive relationship between perceived risks and willingness to protest (Ayanian & Tausch, 2016; Ayanian et al., 2020), we expected that experiencing police violence would predict stronger intentions to engage in non-normative behaviors in future resistance via an increase in perceived likelihood of risks. Second, experiencing police violence might also enhance protesters' willingness to bear risks in future protests. As the moralization hypothesis suggests, coercive violence from the state often highlights the morality of the protesters and, conversely, the immorality of the state agents (e.g., Drury et al., 2005; Reicher et al., 2004). Such a heightened sense of injustice may be accompanied by increased commitment to the movement, such as more willingness to bear personal risks while protesting (see also Adam-Troian et al., 2020). Thus, the positive link between exposure to police violence and the intention to engage in non-normative protests might also be explained by increased willingness to bear risks. With regard to fear, the hypothesis is less clear. Although the radicalizing effect of repression and the demobilizing effect of fear together suggest a reduction in feelings of fear as exposure to police violence increases, expectations of risks have been shown to predict increased fear in repressive contexts (Ayanian et al., 2020). Thus, experiencing police violence might be associated with a reduced sense of fear or, alternatively, heightened fear. Exposure to police violence should therefore predict either *stronger* non-normative action intentions via *reduced* fear or *weaker* non-normative action intentions via *increased* fear.

The full hypothesized model linking *past* experiences of police violence to willingness to engage in *future* non-normative resistance is depicted in Figure 1. As shown in the model, we included the overall frequency of past movement participation as a control variable in our analyses. In doing so, we were able to test whether experiencing police violence predicted future non-normative action tendencies via the proposed mediators above and beyond participants' previous levels of involvement in the movement. As people who are more active in the movement are also more likely to have experienced police violence, it was important to control for the potential differences between participants with various degrees of prior involvement in protests.

## THE PRESENT RESEARCH

We conducted two studies<sup>2</sup> during the Anti-ELAB Movement in Hong Kong and the 2019–2020 social movement in Chile, also known as the “Chilean Spring.” Although the two

<sup>2</sup>All study materials, anonymized data, and scripts are available at [https://osf.io/z34es/?view\\_only=634f9aba0001450d8baef233da73a1a4](https://osf.io/z34es/?view_only=634f9aba0001450d8baef233da73a1a4).



**FIGURE 1** Conceptual model depicting the direct and indirect relationships between past experiences of police violence and willingness to engage in future non-normative resistance.

movements took place in vastly different social, political, and cultural contexts, and had different goals and demands, they both evolved into prolonged mass civil unrest, featuring excessive use of force by the police, as well as prevalent use of radical and even violent tactics among the protesters.

In the present research, we targeted active protesters in Hong Kong and a more general population (including movement participants and nonparticipants) in Chile. We assessed participants' past engagement in normative and non-normative tactics (as a categorical variable) and their willingness to engage in different future actions (as a continuous variable). The retrospective behavioral measure allowed us to compare the psychological experiences and motivations of protesters who had engaged in non-normative actions to those of more moderate protesters who had only engaged in normative actions (Studies 1 and 2), and of people who had been inactive in the movement (Study 2). We used these group differences to probe whether the groups differed in their moralization of non-normative resistance, a nothing-to-lose mindset, and perceived efficacy of non-normative actions. The measure of future action intentions was used primarily to test the mediational pathways depicted in Figure 1. In addition, we used the intention measure as a complementary approach to the group comparisons by testing whether the three major motivations *predicted* the extent to which protesters were willing to engage in future non-normative action (over and above general past involvement in the movement).

## STUDY 1: HONG KONG

The Anti-ELAB Movement started off in March 2019 as a largely peaceful, nonviolent protest against a proposed extradition bill that would allow Hong Kong to surrender its citizens to mainland China. The protest quickly escalated into a citywide pro-democracy movement of unprecedented scale and intensity in the region. Over the course of the movement, the Hong Kong government intensified its repressive actions by banning protests and the wearing of face masks during protests, making unlawful arrests, and deploying riot police to attack protesters

(Lee et al., 2019). These government responses were accompanied by the rapid escalation and radicalization of the movement. As a result, two protester groups emerged, one endorsing and actively engaging in more radical forms of actions (also known as the militants) and one endorsing the principles of peaceful and nonviolent resistance (also known as the peaceful, rational, and nonviolent protesters). Against this backdrop, we conducted the first study to examine the motivations underlying non-normative resistance and the role of government repression in the form of police violence.

## Method

### Procedure and participants

The study received ethics approval from Lingnan University in Hong Kong. We launched an on-site study during a mass protest in Hong Kong on December 8, 2019. Details of the procedure are reported in Appendix B. Our final sample consisted of 616 participants who were present at the protest (54% male, 45% female;  $M_{\text{age}} = 32$ , range = 11–70). Respondents' education, social class, political orientation, and prior involvement in the Anti-ELAB Movement are reported in Appendix C.

### Measures

#### *Frequency of past participation*

Participants indicated how many large-scale protests of the Anti-ELAB Movement they had taken part in over the past six months (0, 1–3, 4–6, 7–10, more than 11). The frequencies in the response options were determined by the actual number of large-scale protests that had taken place during the movement. Unless noted otherwise, all items were measured using Likert scales.

#### *Identification with protest camps*

Two items measured the extent to which participants identified with the militant (勇武) camp and the peaceful, rational, and nonviolent (和理非) camp, respectively (1 = not at all, 7 = very much).

#### *Engagement in different acts of resistance*

In a multiple-choice question, participants indicated whether they had engaged in 19 activities (adapted from Lee et al., 2019) during the movement, including six non-normative actions (e.g., “obstructing government operations and public transportation,” “vandalizing pro-government businesses”) and 13 normative actions (e.g., “forming ‘human chains,’” “donating to movement organizations,” “shopping at pro-democracy stores and restaurants”). The classification of actions as non-normative or normative was determined based on the consensus among three researchers familiar with the local context, prior to data analyses (see Appendix D for the full list).

#### *Emotions experienced during protest*

Participants indicated the extent to which they experienced feelings of hope and despair during their recent protest participation (1 = not at all, 7 = very intensely). In addition, they reported their feelings of other positive (i.e., proud, hopeful, determined, fearless) and negative (i.e., afraid, angry, outraged, disappointed, despair, hatred, contempt, sad) emotions. Given that hope and despair were of particular interest for testing the nothing-to-lose hypothesis, the

subsequent analyses focused on these two discrete emotions. Results of the other positive and negative emotions are reported in Appendix I.

## Moralization of non-normative resistance

### *Moral judgment of non-normative resistance*

Two items measured moral judgment of non-normative resistance, with a particular focus on the use of radical and violent means (i.e., “The use of radical and violent tactics by protesters is ... (1) righteous, (2) necessary”; 1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree;  $r = .70$ ).

### *Demonization of police*

Responses to two items (adapted from van Prooijen & van de Veer, 2010) were combined into a heterogeneous index of demonization of the Hong Kong police (i.e., “The police officers seem to enjoy hurting the protesters”; “The violent actions of the police are caused primarily by their evilness”; 1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree;  $r = .26$ ).

### *Efficacy of normative and non-normative resistance*

Adapted from Saab et al. (2015), six items measured perceived effectiveness of each type of resistance in terms of achieving different goals (e.g., “achieving the demands of the movement,” “strengthening the solidarity among movement participants,” “empowering the people of Hong Kong”; 1 = not at all, 7 = very much). The order of items for normative and non-normative resistance was counterbalanced across participants. Separate exploratory factor analyses (EFAs) for normative and non-normative resistance revealed two-factor solutions for both protest tactics, one tapping into perceived efficacy in terms of achieving movement goals and expressing opposition to the government (hereafter, “political efficacy”;  $\alpha_{\text{non-normative}} = .83$ ,  $\alpha_{\text{normative}} = .85$ ), and one tapping into perceived efficacy in terms of increasing support and solidarity and empowering the people of Hong Kong (hereafter, “solidarity and empowerment efficacy”;  $\alpha_{\text{non-normative}} = .88$ ,  $\alpha_{\text{normative}} = .86$ ).

### *Experiences of police violence*

Participants indicated whether they had experienced police violence in three different ways (i.e., “experienced police violence directly,” “witnessed police violence in person,” “fled from the police to avoid being attacked”). A total score was created to reflect participants' overall experiences of police violence (0 = no experience, 3 = experienced in all three ways).

### *Likelihood of risks*

Participants indicated their perceived likelihood of facing physical and social risks (adapted from Ayanian and Tausch, 2016) associated with participating in the Anti-ELAB Movement using six items (i.e., “being physically harmed such as being injured, assaulted, or sexually harassed,” “being disappeared,” “being arrested,” “being indicted and imprisoned,” “losing job or being punished at school,” “being criticized by family or friends”; 1 = very unlikely, 7 = very likely;  $\alpha = .91$ ).

### *Willingness to bear risks*

Participants indicated their willingness to bear each of the same six risks listed above for participating in the movement (1 = not willing at all, 7 = very willing;  $\alpha = .92$ ).

### *Fear of participation*

Two items (adapted from Adra et al., 2020) measured fear of participating in the movement (i.e., “I am afraid to participate in Anti-ELAB protests,” “I am scared of the consequences of joining Anti-ELAB protests”; 1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree;  $r = .53$ ).

### Willingness to engage in future non-normative actions

Participants were presented with four non-normative actions<sup>3</sup> in support of the movement (e.g., “obstruction of public facilities and services,” “direct confrontation with the police”) and indicated the extent to which they were willing to engage in each of the four actions (1 = not willing at all, 7 = very willing). A composite score was created based on responses to these four items ( $\alpha = .90$ ).

## Results and discussion

### Preliminary analyses

First, we grouped participants into non-normative and normative protesters based on their self-reported past engagement in different acts of resistance during the movement. A total of 396 participants reported engaging in at least one non-normative action, and 220 reported engaging exclusively in normative actions (see Table 1). Means and standard deviations for all key measured variables are reported by protest group in Table 2. Bivariate correlations are reported in Appendix F (Table S3). Listwise deletion was applied for missing data, but most variables did not have any missing values and the variable with the most missing data had fewer than 10 missing values. Further, there was no univariate outlier in the data. Analyses of general linear modeling (GLM) revealed that compared to normative protesters, those who had taken non-normative actions identified more with the militant camp and less with the peaceful, rational, and nonviolent camp (Table 2).

### Testing motivations for non-normative resistance

We tested the three hypotheses regarding potential motivations underlying engagement in non-normative political resistance with two sets of analyses. First, we tested whether normative and non-normative protesters differed in their responses to the measures capturing the three different motivations (i.e., moralization, nothing-to-lose, and strategic choice). To this end, participants' responses to these measures (i.e., moral judgment of non-normative resistance, police demonization, hope and despair, efficacy of [non-]normative tactics) were entered as dependent variables (DVs) into GLMs, and their group membership (normative protesters vs. non-normative protesters) was entered as an independent variable (IV).

As complementary analyses, we also tested whether the same psychological motivations predicted willingness to engage in non-normative resistance in the future, while controlling for

**TABLE 1** Frequency of participants who reported having engaged in 0–6 non-normative activities (Study 1).

Number of non-normative activities	0 (only normative activities)	1	2	3	4	5	6
Frequency	220	213	82	52	30	13	6

Note: The measure included six non-normative activities and 13 normative activities.

<sup>3</sup>Participants also indicated their willingness to engage in different *normative* actions, but their responses to these actions were not included in the subsequent analyses for two reasons. First, our hypotheses centered on the psychological pathways to non-normative resistance. Second, the sample consisted of protesters at a mass demonstration, which resulted in little variability in their strong intention to engage in normative actions in the future ( $M = 6.78$ ,  $SD = .50$ ). The distribution of the data rendered it inappropriate to predict normative action intentions from other variables.

**TABLE 2** Means and standard deviations by group membership, and test statistics for group comparisons (Study 1).

	Mean (SD)		F	p	Partial eta-squared (LCI, UCI)
	Non-normative protesters (n = 396)	Normative protesters (n = 220)			
Identification with protest camps					
Identification with militant camp	2.86 (1.70)	1.86 (1.28)	58.21	<.001	.09 [.05, .12]
Identification with peaceful camp	5.63 (1.34)	6.13 (1.24)	20.18	<.001	.03 [.01, .06]
Moralization <sup>a</sup>					
Moral judgment of NNR	6.13 (.93)	5.38 (1.30)	69.86	<.001	.10 [.06, .15]
Demonization of police	6.32 (.89)	5.98 (1.07)	17.26	<.001	.03 [.01, .05]
Nothing-to-lose					
Hope	4.67 (1.46)	4.56 (1.37)	.84	.360	.00 [.00, .01]
Despair	4.11 (1.76)	3.60 (1.67)	11.98	.001	.02 [.01, .04]
Political efficacy of NR	3.93 (1.68)	3.84 (1.72)	.34	-.558	.00 [.00, .01]
Solidarity and empowerment efficacy of NR	5.70 (1.19)	5.63 (1.16)	.50	.479	.00 [.00, .01]
Strategic choice					
Political efficacy of NNR	5.85 (1.02)	5.13 (1.02)	54.37	<.001	.08 [.05, .12]
Solidarity and empowerment efficacy of NNR	5.76 (.99)	5.28 (1.18)	29.07	<.001	.05 [.02, .07]
Risk-related variables					
Experiences of police violence	1.93 (.89)	1.31 (.92)	68.27	<.001	.10 [.07, .14]
Likelihood of risks	5.47 (1.28)	5.14 (1.50)	8.04	.005	.01 [.002, .03]
Willingness to bear risks	3.88 (1.66)	2.89 (1.53)	52.88	<.001	.08 [.05, .12]
Fear of participation	2.65 (1.46)	3.32 (1.50)	29.32	<.001	.05 [.02, .08]
Willingness to engage in NNR	4.56 (1.56)	3.18 (1.47)	113.36	<.001	.16 [.12, .20]

Note: The possible range of responses was 0 to 3 for experiences of police violence and 1 to 7 for all other measures.

Abbreviations: LCI, lower-level confidence interval; NNR, non-normative resistance; NR, normative resistance; UCI, upper-level confidence interval.

the frequency of past movement participation. To this end, we conducted (one-step) multiple regression analyses. All analyses were performed using SAS OnDemand for Academics and using manifest variables.

## Differences between protest groups

Full results including test statistics are displayed in [Table 2](#).

### *Moralization of non-normative resistance*

Compared to normative protesters, non-normative protesters perceived the use of force and radical actions as more righteous and necessary, and demonized the police to a greater extent. These patterns thus provided support for the moralization hypothesis.

### Hope and despair

Compared to normative protesters, non-normative protesters did not differ significantly in terms of hope, whereas they reported to have experienced more despair. Beyond the higher levels of despair among non-normative protesters, however, they also experienced more intense (negative and positive) emotions in general (see Appendix I), suggesting that they were more emotionally invested in the protest, regardless of the valence or type of emotion. These findings therefore did not provide clear evidence for the nothing-to-lose hypothesis, which posits that people who experienced a heightened sense of desperation and lack of hope would be more likely to engage in non-normative resistance.

### Efficacy of normative and non-normative resistance

To further test the nothing-to-lose hypothesis and to test the strategic choice hypothesis, we examined whether the two protest groups differed on perceived efficacy of normative versus non-normative protest tactics. We conducted a repeated-measure GLM, separately for each type of efficacy, where protest tactic (normative vs. non-normative) was entered as a within-subject variable, and protest group membership was entered as a between-subjects variable.

The repeated-measure analyses revealed significant interactions between group membership and protest tactic on political efficacy,  $F(1, 614) = 18.68, p < .001$ , and solidarity and empowerment efficacy,  $F(1, 614) = 13.81, p < .001$ . Unpacking the interactions, follow-up comparisons (after Tukey–Kramer adjustment) indicated that non-normative protesters perceived *non-normative* tactics as more efficacious in terms of achieving political goals as well as solidarity and empowerment goals than did normative protesters ( $ps < .001$ ), thus supporting the strategic choice hypothesis. The two protest groups, however, did not differ significantly in their perceived efficacy of *normative* tactics regarding both types of efficacy ( $ps > .450$ ). This null effect regarding perceived efficacy of normative resistance again points to a lack of evidence for the nothing-to-lose hypothesis. Results of the main effects are reported in Appendix G.

## Predicting willingness to engage in future non-normative actions

Results of the multiple regressions were largely in line with those of the GLMs, and these are reported in detail in Appendix H. To summarize, the results supported the moralization and strategic choice hypotheses, and provided mixed evidence for the nothing-to-lose hypothesis. Whereas lower perceived solidarity and empowerment (but not political) efficacy of normative resistance predicted stronger intention to engage in non-normative actions in the future, feelings of hope and despair both predicted stronger non-normative action intentions.

## Testing the role of repression

To test the proposed mediational model (Figure 1), we conducted analyses of indirect effects using Process (Hayes, 2018, Model 4). We tested two separate models, one with the variables capturing the three main motivations as mediators and one with risk perceptions as mediators. In the first model, experiences of police violence were entered as the IV, perceived righteousness of non-normative resistance, police demonization, two types of efficacy (political, solidarity and empowerment) regarding normative and non-normative resistance, and hope and despair as parallel mediators, and willingness to engage in future non-normative actions as the DV, with frequency of past participation as a covariate. Tables 3 and 4 display all direct and indirect effects. The results partially supported our hypotheses, such that experiences of

**TABLE 3** Unstandardized coefficients and their confidence intervals (in brackets) for all direct and indirect effects of police violence on willingness to engage in non-normative resistance via three motivations for non-normative resistance (Study 1).

Path in <i>Process</i> model	(a) Effect of IV (police violence) on mediator	(b) Effect of mediator on DV (willingness to engage in NNR)	(c) Indirect effect of IV on DV via mediator	(d) Effect of IV on DV
<b>Mediator</b>				
Moralization				
Moral judgment of NNR	.27 [.18, .37]	.36 [.24, .49]	.10 [.05, .15]	
Police demonization	.18 [.09, .26]	-.01 [-.13, .11]	-.00 [-.02, .02]	
Nothing-to-lose				
Political efficacy of NR	.08 [-.07, .24]	-.001 [-.08, .07]	-.001 [-.01, .01]	
Solidarity/empowerment efficacy of NR	.01 [-.10, .11]	-.18 [-.28, -.07]	-.002 (-.02, .02)	
Hope	.01 [-.12, .14]	.13 [.04, .21]	.001 [-.02, .02]	
Despair	.08 [-.08, .23]	.06 [-.01, .12]	.004 [-.01, .02]	
Strategic choice				
Political efficacy of NNR	.24 [.13, .34]	.23 [.12, .34]	.05 [.02, .09]	
Solidarity/empowerment efficacy of NNR	.22 [.12, .31]	.23 [.10, .37]	.05 [.02, .09]	
				<b>.45 [.32, .57]</b>

*Note:* (a) Path coefficients for police violence on the respective mediator variables; (b) path coefficients for the respective mediator variable on willingness to engage in NNR; (c) indirect effect of police violence on willingness to engage in NNR, through the respective mediator variable; (d) direct effect of police violence on willingness to engage in NNR. Significant effects are boldfaced.  $R^2$  for the DV (willingness to engage in NNR) was .37 in the first model and .36 in the second model.

Abbreviations: DV, dependent variable; IV, independent variable; NNR, non-normative resistance, NR: normative resistance.

**TABLE 4** Unstandardized coefficients and their confidence intervals (in brackets) for all direct and indirect effects of police violence on willingness to engage in non-normative resistance via risk perceptions (Study 1).

Path in <i>process</i> model	(a) Effect of IV (police violence) on mediator	(b) Effect of mediator on DV (willingness to engage in NNR)	(c) Indirect effect of IV on DV via mediator	(d) Effect of IV on DV
<b>Mediator</b>				
Likelihood of risks	.30 [.18, .42]	.23 [.15, .31]	.07 [.03, .11]	
Willingness to bear risks	.45 [.30, .59]	.34 [.27, .40]	.15 (.09, .22)	
Fear of participation	-.18 [-.31, -.05]	-.17 (-.24, -.09)	.03 [.006, .06]	
				<b>.41 [.28, .53]</b>

*Note:* See Table 3 note.

police violence *positively* predicted willingness to engage in future non-normative actions via an increase in perceived righteousness and efficacy of non-normative resistance. None of the other indirect effects were significant.

In the second mediational model, perceived likelihood of risks, willingness to bear risks, and fear of future participation were entered as parallel mediators. As expected, the indirect effects of experiencing police violence on willingness to engage in non-normative actions via perceived likelihood of and willingness to bear risks, as well as fear of participation, were all significant. Note that experiences of police violence predicted stronger non-normative action intentions via reduced feelings of fear.

The mediation analysis thus lent partial support to the proposed model of movement escalation, where (in)direct experiences of police violence predicted stronger intention to engage in future non-normative resistance, and this positive relationship was explained by increased moralization and perceived efficacy of non-normative actions, enhanced risk assessment and willingness to bear them, and reduced feelings of fear. Experiencing repression, however, did not make salient the nothing-to-lose mindset in terms of a sense of desperation or perceived low efficacy of normative actions.

## STUDY 2: CHILE

The social movement in Chile started out as a series of student-led protests against an increase in metro fare in Santiago, which evolved into large-scale demonstrations demanding social and economic reform. Alongside peaceful protests, violent riots and looting also broke out across the country, resulting in dozens of deaths and thousands of injuries. Although Chile was rated as a “full democracy” in 2019 (Economist Intelligence Unit, 2020), domestic and international organizations have heavily criticized the Chilean government's use of excessive police force in response to the protest. Throughout the movement, repression included a wide range of actions such as shooting protesters with pellets, teargassing health center and university campuses, and staging violent raids in lower-class neighborhoods (Somma et al., 2020).

In the context of the ongoing sociopolitical crisis in Chile, we conducted a survey study in Santiago in May 2020 with two main goals. First, it aimed to provide a conceptual replication of the study in Hong Kong. Second, it extended the first study by including participants who had been either active or inactive during the movement. While focusing exclusively on active movement participants is useful when exploring the motivations for engaging in different protest tactics, it remains unclear whether the motivations examined in the current research are unique to non-normative (vs. normative) resistance or also differ between those who are involved versus not involved in the movement. Extending the sample to uninvolved participants can therefore provide further insights into the motivations and experiences of people with different levels and kinds of involvement in a social movement.

## Method

### Procedure and participants

The study received ethics approval from Andres Bello National University in Chile. Our final sample consisted of 659 Chilean citizens, including 453 from a university sample (59% male, 39% female;  $M_{\text{age}} = 27$ , range = 17–72) and 206 from a community snowball sample (59% male, 39% female;  $M_{\text{age}} = 37$ , range = 18–73). Details of the sampling procedure are reported in Appendix B. The two samples were comparable in terms of education and social class, and they were therefore combined in the subsequent analyses. Respondents' education, social class, and political orientation are reported in Appendix C. The majority of the participants (69%) had taken part in the Chilean movement since October 2019 (Appendix C).

## Measures

Measures were largely identical to those in Study 1, with several context-specific modifications (see Appendix E). Most notably, the list of normative and non-normative actions, as well as the

types of police violence that people might have experienced, was slightly modified to fit the Chilean context.

## Results and discussion

### Preliminary analyses

Among the 659 respondents, 143 reported not engaging in any action to support the movement, 240 reported engaging in at least one normative action but in none of the non-normative actions, and 276 reported engaging in at least one of the non-normative actions (see Table 5). Thus, we created three groups based on their past actions: the inactive, normative protesters, and non-normative protesters. Table 6 displays the means and standard deviations of all key measured variables by group membership. Bivariate correlations are reported in Appendix F (Table S4). There was no missing value or univariate outlier in the data set.

### Testing motivations for non-normative resistance

#### *Group differences*

Results are displayed in Table 6.

*Moralization of non-normative resistance.* In line with the moralization hypothesis, compared to both normative protesters and the inactive, non-normative protesters perceived the use of force and radical actions as more righteous and necessary, and they demonized the police to a greater extent. In addition, normative protesters also scored significantly higher than did the inactive on both variables.

*Hope and despair.* Due to the anchoring of emotions to movement participation, only people who had taken part in the movement before completed the emotion scale. Compared to normative protesters, non-normative protesters reported to have experienced more hope and more despair, compared to normative protesters. As in Study 1, non-normative protesters also reported having experienced stronger positive emotions as well as negative emotions in general during their last movement participation (see Appendix I). These findings again showed non-normative protesters' strong emotional investment in the movement, thus failing to provide evidence for the nothing-to-lose hypothesis.

*Efficacy of normative and non-normative resistance.* Different from Study 1, EFAs revealed one-factor solutions for both protest tactics, suggesting that the Chilean participants did not distinguish between efficacies for achieving different movement goals. We therefore combined the items capturing normative actions, and the items capturing non-normative actions, creating two efficacy variables for normative and non-normative actions, respectively.

**TABLE 5** Frequency of participants who reported having engaged in 0–7 non-normative activities (Study 2).

Number of non-normative activities	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Frequency	383	118	67	44	27	14	4	2

*Note:* The measure included seven non-normative activities and 13 normative activities. Participants who engaged in zero non-normative activities included both those who did not participate in the movement at all (i.e., the inactive,  $N=240$ ) and those who only engaged in normative activities (i.e., normative protesters,  $N=143$ ).

**TABLE 6** Means and standard deviations by group membership, and test statistics for group comparisons (Study 2).

	Mean (SD)			<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>	Partial eta-squared (LCI, UCI)
	Non-normative protesters ( <i>N</i> = 276)	Normative protesters ( <i>n</i> = 240)	The inactive ( <i>n</i> = 143)			
Moralization						
Moral judgment of NNR	5.65 (1.59) <sup>a</sup>	3.91 (2.06) <sup>b</sup>	1.25 (.87) <sup>c</sup>	331.66	<.001	.50 [.45, .55]
Demonization of police	6.13 (1.19) <sup>a</sup>	5.14 (1.86) <sup>b</sup>	1.78 (1.24) <sup>c</sup>	415.24	<.001	.56 [.51, .60]
Nothing-to-lose						
Hope	5.86 (1.36) <sup>a</sup>	5.25 (1.71) <sup>b</sup>	N/A	20.32	<.001	.04 [.01, .08]
Despair	4.11 (1.76) <sup>a</sup>	3.60 (1.67) <sup>b</sup>	N/A	6.01	.01	.01 [.00, .04]
Efficacy of NR	4.62 (1.55) <sup>a</sup>	4.67 (1.45) <sup>a</sup>	2.83 (1.61) <sup>b</sup>	79.40	<.001	.19 [.15, .24]
Strategic choice						
Efficacy of NNR	5.48 (1.24) <sup>a</sup>	4.13 (1.77) <sup>b</sup>	1.45 (.97) <sup>c</sup>	384.67	<.001	.54 [.50, .57]
Risk-related variables						
Experiences of police violence	2.82 (.87) <sup>a</sup>	1.73 (1.13) <sup>b</sup>	.12 (.42) <sup>c</sup>	421.45	<.001	.56 [.52, .60]
Likelihood of risks	5.42 (1.35) <sup>a</sup>	4.49 (1.80) <sup>b</sup>	2.59 (1.64) <sup>c</sup>	148.69	<.001	.31 [.256, .363]
Willingness to bear risks	4.01 (1.84) <sup>a</sup>	2.72 (1.61) <sup>b</sup>	1.66 (1.34) <sup>c</sup>	100.55	<.001	.23 [.18, .29]
Fear of participation	3.14 (1.79) <sup>a</sup>	3.62 (1.83) <sup>b</sup>	2.98 (2.19) <sup>a</sup>	6.37	.002	.02 [.003, .04]
Willingness to engage in NNR	3.92 (1.57) <sup>a</sup>	2.12 (1.17) <sup>b</sup>	1.06 (.22) <sup>c</sup>	283.46	<.001	.46 [.42, .50]

*Note:* Different superscript letters indicate statistical significance (after Tukey adjustment) at  $p < .05$ . The scale for experiences of police violence ranged from 0 to 5, and all other scales ranged from 1 to 7. Due to the anchoring of emotions to movement participation, they were only measured among participants who had taken part in the movement.

Abbreviations: NNR, non-normative resistance; NR, normative resistance.

We conducted a repeated-measure GLM for efficacy, with protest tactic (normative vs. non-normative) as a within-subject variable, and group membership as a between-subjects variable. There was a significant interaction between group membership and protest tactic,  $F(2, 656) = 67.35$ ,  $p < .001$ . In line with the strategic choice hypothesis, non-normative protesters perceived *non-normative* tactics as more efficacious than did normative protesters ( $p < .001$ ). Non-normative and normative protesters did not differ significantly in their perceived efficacy of *normative* tactics ( $p = .442$ ), which again did not support the nothing-to-lose hypothesis. Compared to the inactive participants, the two groups of active protesters both perceived higher efficacy of both resistance tactics ( $ps < .001$ ). Results of the main effects are reported in Appendix G.

## Predicting willingness to engage in future non-normative actions

Results of the multiple regressions were consistent with those of the GLMs (see Appendix H). In summary, they provided additional support for the moralization and strategic choice hypotheses, but not the nothing-to-lose hypothesis.

## Testing the role of repression

To test how exposure to police violence played a role in non-normative resistance, we followed the same analytical procedure as in Study 1. Due to the extremely rare encounter with police violence among the inactive (see Table 6), only the data of active movement participants were included in the mediation analysis. As in Study 1, we conducted two separate mediational models using Process (Hayes, 2018, Model 4). Tables 7 and 8 display all direct and indirect effects.

In the first model, past experiences of police violence were entered as the IV, moralization (i.e., moral judgment of non-normative resistance, police demonization), efficacy of normative and non-normative resistance, as well as hope and despair as parallel mediators, and willingness to engage in future non-normative actions as the DV, with frequency of past participation as a covariate. Replicating the patterns observed in Study 1, experiencing police violence positively predicted willingness to engage in future non-normative actions via perceived moral righteousness and efficacy of non-normative tactics. None of the other indirect effects were

**TABLE 7** Unstandardized coefficients and their confidence intervals (in brackets) for all direct and indirect effects of police violence on willingness to engage in non-normative resistance via three motivations for non-normative resistance (Study 2).

Path in <i>Process</i> model	(a) Effect of IV (police violence) on mediator	(b) Effect of mediator on DV (willingness to engage in NNR)	(c) Indirect effect of IV on DV via mediator	(d) Effect of IV on DV
<b>Mediator</b>				
Moralization				
Moral judgment of NNR	<b>.53</b> [.37, .68]	<b>.25</b> [.18, .33]	<b>.13</b> [.07, .20]	
Police demonization	<b>.59</b> [.46, .72]	.05 [-.04, .14]	.03 [-.02, .08]	
Nothing-to-lose				
Efficacy of NR	.07 [-.07, .21]	-.02 [-.10, .06]	-.001 [-.01, .01]	
Hope	.11 [-.03, .24]	.04 [-.04, .11]	.004 [-.004, .12]	
Despair	<b>.25</b> [.06, .43]	.03 [-.03, .08]	.01 [-.01, .03]	
Strategic choice				
Efficacy of NNR	<b>.51</b> [.38, .64]	<b>.10</b> [.01, .20]	<b>.05</b> [.002, .11]	<b>.23</b> [.10, .35]

*Note:* (a) Path coefficients for police violence on the respective mediator variables; (b) path coefficients for the respective mediator variable on willingness to engage in NNR; (c) indirect effect of police violence on willingness to engage in NNR, through the respective mediator variable; (d) direct effect of police violence on willingness to engage in NNR. Significant effects are boldfaced.  $R^2$  for the DV (willingness to engage in NNR) was .46 in the first model and .41 in the second model.

Abbreviations: DV, dependent variable; IV, independent variable; NNR, non-normative resistance; NR, normative resistance.

**TABLE 8** Unstandardized coefficients and their confidence intervals (in brackets) for all direct and indirect effects of police violence on willingness to engage in non-normative resistance via risk perceptions (Study 2).

Path in <i>process</i> model	(a) Effect of IV (police violence) on mediator	(b) Effect of mediator on DV (willingness to engage in NNR)	(c) Indirect effect of IV on DV via mediator	(d) Effect of IV on DV
<b>Mediators</b>				
Likelihood of risks	<b>.42</b> [.29, .55]	<b>.10</b> [.01, .19]	<b>.04</b> [.001, .09]	
Willingness to bear risks	<b>.25</b> [.09, .40]	<b>.23</b> [.16, .30]	<b>.06</b> [.02, .10]	
Fear of participation	.08 [-.09, .24]	-.03 [-.09, .04]	-.002 [-.01, .01]	<b>.36</b> [.24, .48]

*Note:* See Table 7 note.

significant, suggesting a lack of evidence for the radicalizing effects of police violence via a nothing-to-lose mindset. In the second mediational model, risk perceptions including perceived likelihood of risks, willingness to bear risks, and fear of participation were entered as parallel mediators. Partially replicating the findings of Study 1, experiencing police violence positively predicted willingness to engage in future non-normative actions via perceived likelihood of risks and willingness to bear risks, but not fear.

Set in a different social and political context, the current study offered a conceptual replication of Study 1. As an extension, we also compared active protesters' responses with those of participants who had been inactive in the movement. The results demonstrated that the normative protesters also differed from the inactive in their perceptions and judgments of non-normative tactics and the police. Even though the normative protesters had not personally engaged in any non-normative action, they also viewed such actions as more righteous and necessary, demonized the police more, and saw non-normative actions as more efficacious than did the inactive. These findings suggest that the motivations for non-normative resistance are potentially also relevant for normative resistance.

## GENERAL DISCUSSION

Despite the growing psychological research on civil resistance and collective action, the empirical work has largely been limited to normative acts of resistance in liberal democracies. Existing models of collective action (e.g., the social identity model of collective action; van Zomeren et al., 2008) are therefore inadequate in explaining diverse forms of resistance in repressive contexts (see also Ayanian et al., 2020). Empirical insights into non-normative acts of resistance under repression are especially lacking, given the methodological and ethical challenges associated with collecting data in such contexts. Across two distinct social movements that endured high levels of repression in the form of police violence, the present research aimed to fill this gap and had two main goals.

First, we tested three major hypotheses regarding the potential psychological motivations underlying protesters' engagement in non-normative forms of resistance. The results provided converging evidence in support of the moralization and the strategic choice hypotheses, and little evidence in support of the nothing-to-lose hypothesis. In other words, protesters who engaged in or intended to engage in non-normative actions in the Anti-ELAB Movement and the "Chilean Spring" protests did not seem to have done so out of desperation or lack of hope. Rather, they viewed non-normative resistance both as a moral response to repression and a strategic tactic that would help them achieve the goals of the movement. It is worth noting that we extended prior research on the nothing-to-lose hypothesis by measuring its affective dimension (i.e., feelings of despair and lack of hope), in addition to the cognitive dimension (i.e., perceived efficacy; Saab et al., 2016). In Study 1, we were also able to distinguish, at the assessment level, between perceived efficacy of protest tactics in achieving political goals versus solidarity and empowerment goals. The results suggest that both types of efficacy were relevant for engaging in non-normative acts of resistance. While the distinction between political efficacy and solidarity/empowerment efficacy resonates with the research on efficacy of collective action as a multidimensional construct (Hornsey et al., 2006; Saab et al., 2015), the efficacy items loaded onto a single factor in Study 2. Further research is thus warranted to scrutinize the different dimensions of efficacy and their relevance for resistance in different political contexts.

Second, we examined how experiencing repression in the form of police violence contributed to non-normative protest. We tested the proposed model of movement escalation as a result of experiencing police violence. Across the two studies, the more protesters had experienced police violence (directly or indirectly), the more they moralized non-normative actions, perceived higher efficacy of such actions, saw higher likelihood of various risks associated

with protesting, and were more willing to bear those risks, all of which in turn predicted stronger intentions to engage in future non-normative actions. By measuring personal experiences of police violence and appraisals of risks, the current studies highlight the importance of understanding microlevel repression (i.e., experienced and perceived repression), which has received relatively little attention in past research compared to repression at the macro and meso levels (Honari, 2018).

The findings additionally pointed to the potentially complex role of fear in resistance under repression. On the one hand, fear of movement participation was associated with less willingness to engage in future non-normative actions in Hong Kong. This deterring effect of fear was also suggested by results of the group mean comparisons where the non-normative protesters reported to be less fearful than the normative protesters in both studies (Tables 2 and 6). On the other hand, experiencing police violence predicted stronger non-normative action intentions via reduced fear in Hong Kong. These findings are therefore in line with the previous work showing that fear hinders collective action and dissent (Miller et al., 2009; Siegel, 2011; Young, 2019), and they lend support to our hypothesis that repression may not always be successful in inducing a strong sense of fear (see also Aytac et al., 2018). Rather, at least in some social movements, experiencing repression in the form of police violence might even make protesters less fearful, paving the way for further mobilization and radicalization. While this finding offers fresh insights into the link between repression and fear in civil resistance, it should be interpreted with caution since exposure to police violence was not related to fear in the Chilean context. It remains to be tested the conditions in which repression heightens, lowers, or has little impact on political fear in social movements—a point that we return to below.

Taken together, these findings illuminate that repression in the form of excessive police violence may be ineffective in quelling social unrest. The observed conflict-escalating effect of repression echoes some of the previous research on collective action in response to government repression or police violence (e.g., Adam-Troian et al., 2020; Almeida, 2005; Opp, 1994). Our data also showed that under repression, even movement participants who had never engaged in non-normative actions were sympathetic toward those who had and largely approved the use of non-normative tactics. In Chile, normative protesters differed significantly from the inactive participants, showing more favorable attitudes toward non-normative means of resistance, including the use of violence. Importantly, normative protesters in both movements scored, on average, above the midpoint of the moralization and efficacy scales, suggesting that the psychological processes contributing to non-normative resistance were not absent among them. Our mediational analyses hinted at the possibility that with increased exposure to repression, even peaceful protesters may be radicalized over time, especially if they are not deterred by feelings of fear.

It is important to note, however, that our findings do not suggest a general ineffectiveness of political repression in suppressing dissent or that it can only lead to movement escalation. It is possible that certain characteristics of the Hong Kong and Chilean contexts might have made the governments' repressive responses catalysts rather than deterrents of civil disobedience. Despite facing disproportional police violence in Hong Kong, the movement was gaining strong momentum at the time of data collection, attracting widespread public support and international attention. In Chile, although the movement came to a halt in the spring of 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, it had made a breakthrough with the government agreeing to propose a new constitution. Furthermore, the political situations in Hong Kong and Chile were both characterized by relatively low levels of repression prior to the movement (categorized as “partly free” and “free,” respectively; Freedom House, 2019). Though Hong Kong's status as a semi-autonomous region had been increasingly threatened in recent years, it had a long tradition of pro-democracy protests as well as a strong civil society. As discussed earlier, exposure to police violence in Hong Kong even predicted less fear among protesters, potentially due to strong public support and the sense of solidarity among movement participants.

In the absence of a momentous movement or functioning civil society, however, high levels of coercive violence can be quite powerful in instilling fear (see, e.g., Lichbach, 1987).

The unique characteristics of the current political contexts should also be considered when understanding the motivations for non-normative resistance. Although we did not find robust evidence for the nothing-to-lose hypothesis, we do not suggest ruling out this motivation altogether, especially when attempting to generalize the current findings to other repressive contexts. Under severely repressive regimes that exercise extreme and prolonged forms of coercive violence, an enduring sense of despair might indeed drive highly discontented individuals to radicalize while demobilizing others.

## Contributions, limitations, and future directions

The present research makes several novel contributions to the psychological literature on political resistance. First, it offered an empirical analysis of the psychological processes underlying non-normative resistance in ongoing social movements characterized by high levels of state repression. Second, it targeted active movement participants and assessed their actual engagement—albeit based on self-reports—in non-normative (and normative) resistance and their behavioral intentions in tandem, which had been rare in past research conducted in violent or repressive contexts (for similar arguments, see Tausch et al., 2011; van Zomeren et al., 2008). Third, it extends prior psychological work on the link between repression and political resistance (Ayanian & Tausch, 2016; Ayanian et al., 2020) by measuring actual experiences of repression (in addition to perceived repression or risk assessment) and its radicalizing potential (rather than a general mobilizing effect on peaceful, normative actions). By exploring the psychological consequences of microlevel repression in terms of individuals' experiences of police violence and appraisals of risks, the current work also contributes to the interdisciplinary literature on repression that takes a mix of macro and micro approaches to studying the dynamics of repression and civil resistance.

Notwithstanding these contributions, several limitations of the present research should be acknowledged. First, the correlational nature of our data prevents us from making strong causal claims regarding the motivations underlying non-normative resistance, as well as the effects of repression. Engaging in non-normative resistance, for example, might have served to return a sense of power to the protesters and strengthened their determination (as reflected in the higher levels of positive emotions such as pride, hope, and determination among the protesters). Indeed, past research has demonstrated the experience of empowerment during protest, for example, as a result of actualizing one's collective identity against the power of the dominant group and overcoming the police (Drury et al., 2005). Regarding the effects of repression, the temporal reference in our measurements of past experiences of police violence and future radical intentions to some extent lends plausibility to a causal order between these two variables. As the conflict spiral model (e.g., Pruitt & Kim, 2004) would suggest, however, non-normative resistance is also more likely to be responded to with violence (see also Chenoweth et al., 2018). Given the constantly evolving nature of social movements, it would be useful for future research to examine the psychological processes involved in movement escalation and radicalization across time, for example, using a longitudinal design. By shedding light on the dynamic development of movements, such an approach can help uncover the causal links among movement participation, repression, and the underlying psychological mechanisms.

Second, and as discussed above, the specificity of the political contexts in the current research limits the generalizability of our findings to other repressive contexts. Government repression varies widely in its severity, frequency, form, and arbitrariness (Davenport, 2007). These differences can potentially explain the mixed findings in the existing literature regarding the deterring,

mobilizing, or radicalizing effects of repression (for a review, see Earl, 2011). Similarly, cognitive and emotional appraisals of risks may depend on the severity and type of risk. In the current research, we measured perceptions of different kinds of risks, including physical violence, repercussions at the workplace or school, and social exclusion. Factor analyses suggested that our participants did not distinguish between these risks, but a more elaborate multidimensional scale of types of risks might better capture risk as a multifaceted construct. A fruitful direction for future research is therefore to systematically examine the variation in repression and the associated risks, along with their role in shaping how people engage in civil resistance.

Third, although we extended previous work on the nothing-to-lose hypothesis by examining its affective dimension, future research can potentially further improve the measurement of this rather complex mindset. A multi-item scale that captures both its cognitive and emotional dimensions, for example, may be particularly suitable for measuring the perception that the situation is so desperate that there is nothing more to lose by taking on extreme actions. As a complementary approach, qualitative research can provide rich insights into what it actually means to feel there is nothing to lose and how prevalent this motivation is among people who have engaged in non-normative resistance.

## CONCLUSION

Using a mix of on-site and online surveys in two different repressive contexts, the present research suggests that non-normative resistance under repression can be both morally motivated and a strategic choice. Further, it provides empirical evidence for the conflict-escalating effect of repression, as well as some of the psychological processes underlying this effect. These findings together contribute to unpacking the complex link between repression and civil resistance, especially the escalation process during social movements that are met with excessive police violence. The research also points to the need to disaggregate repression and risks into different forms and dimensions, and it highlights the importance of considering the sociopolitical context when studying resistance from a social psychological perspective.

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