



**State Repression,
Social Movement Decline and the
Death of Black Power**

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Abstract

Existing investigations of how repression influences political dissent are limited because: 1) they ignore the impact of repressive action on dissident mobilization, which in turn, influences dissent, and 2) they focus exclusively on overt state behavior ignoring the influence of covert activity. Employing a unique database on overt and covert repression by local, state and federal authorities as well as social movement mobilization and dissent of a black nationalist organization called the Republic of New Africa –active in Detroit, Michigan from 1968 to 1973, I examine how repression influences dissent, explicitly addressing the critiques of this literature. As found, covert repressive behavior more consistently influences diverse aspects of mobilization and dissent in a manner consistent with expectations. Additionally, the results disclose a significant amount of complexity in the relationship that has previously eluded detection.

One of the most pervasive myths within the African American as well as American and Western communities is that the fall of the Black Power Movement (BPM), conventionally dated between the late 1960s and mid 1970s, is due – in large part – to the repressive efforts of the United States government. Although the FBI and local police departments are highlighted most prominently, this also includes the Secret Service, the IRS, the Treasury and State Departments, diverse courts at the local, state and federal levels as well as the office of the President. Unified in focus, however, the actual influence of repression as reported in existing research varies.

For example, in one view, the decline of the BPM is attributed to overt repressive behavior: i.e., raids, arrests, beatings, harassment, shootings, indictments and investigations. Seeing brothers and sisters in the struggle repressed, advocates of black power withdrew and the movement died. In short, the state killed the afro – the penultimate expression of black consciousness during the period. Others give a somewhat different reading to the demise of the BPM and the role played by the state. While highlighting repression, focus is on a distinct form of state action: covert repressive behavior such as physical and electronic surveillance, informants and agents provocateur. In this view, it was not out of fear that individuals withdrew from the movement but rather it was due to the lack of trust in those engaged in the struggle who became unable to discern between who was and who was not loyal. Here, the state killed the afro but it did so indirectly, by turning advocates against one another. Yet a third perspective unifies the previous two. In what is generally referred to as the “Radical Flank,” repressed dissident organizations factionalize into one section where members withdraw from action while another redoubles their efforts – normally by adopting some form of violence (Della Porta 1995). Individuals are not deterred in this situation but provoked; indeed, as Zwerman and Steinhoff (2005) argue, the response to the repressive agent (i.e., “the man”) becomes part of the organizations identity (i.e., “the revolutionary”). As a response to increased militancy, however, the state applies even more repression and eventually the dissidents lose ending up in jail, exile, underground and/or traumatized. Unable to continue the struggle, the afro simply deflates with individuals parting and/or turning against one another.

These issues are not just important to African Americans, Americans or the West but they reflect larger issues that exist within social science and public policy, brought to the foreground by the current battle against terror being fought in different parts of the world. For example, one of the most consistent findings in conflict research is the inconsistent influence of repression on dissent. To date, researchers have identified positive, negative, non-linear and non-existent effects. While numerous resolutions have been proposed: e.g., a greater sensitivity to substitution (Lichbach 1987), political-economic context (Gupta et al. 1993), lags (Rasler 1996) and temporal sequence (Moore 1998), what is still missing is an assessment of what takes place within social movements after authorities strike. At present, repressive behavior at time $t-1$ is identified and we infer influences on dissident behavior at time t by comparing this against prior activity at $t-2$. This is inappropriate for several reasons.

First, most of our theories discuss a process that involves repressive activity, some impact on dissidents/social movements and then subsequent dissident behavior. We have missed a step – perhaps the most crucial element. Indeed, without highlighting the emotions (e.g., fear and anger), discursive patterns (e.g., discussion of increasing and decreasing political opportunity), diverse organizational characteristics (e.g., attendance, the number of meetings, the hierarchical nature of group interactions) as well as the type of repressive behavior involved (overt as well as covert), we cannot discern between distinct forms of de-escalation. Behaviorally, all three possibilities identified in the Black Power case look alike. The differences however are crucial as the first highlights overt behavior, increased fear, decreased perceptions of political opportunity; the second highlights overt as well as covert behavior, diminished trust and decreased perceptions of political opportunity; and, the third highlights both overt and covert behavior, anger, fear as well as mistrust, and both decreased and increased perceptions of opportunity. For those interested in eliminating and creating/sustaining social movements, these differences are important.

Second, it is crucial to understand the different influences of repression on dissent because it allows us to understand subsequent dissident escalation. For example, it is currently believed that dissidents are wholly responsible for the activities that they engage in but within the framework identified

above it is reasonable to assess the degree to which state provocation plays a role. Without factoring in the influence of state behavior, one would draw an incorrect conclusion about why dissident actions are enacted.

Third, the different influences of repression on dissent are important to analyze because it problematizes what has been accepted as a clear cut division between repressive behavior and dissident action. Within current research, it is maintained that state coercion is enacted by repressive agents and dissent is enacted by dissident agents, allowing us to assume independence and autonomy. This logic is flawed. For example, some dissident agents are state agents (e.g., informants and agents provocateur). As such, when these individuals facilitate the enactment of dissent in an effort to prompt state repressive action, they are not acting as dissident actors but as state employees. Additionally, it is frequently the case that after repression has taken place (at a protest demonstration for instance), the dissidents discuss this action afterwards in meetings, over dinner, in lawyer's offices and in bathtubs; in short, repressive action resonates within social movements for quite some time.¹

Within this paper, I review the current research regarding how repression influences dissent. I then challenge this work by attempting to move inside the black box (pun intended in this case), exploring the particularities of the relationship. The examination of the conflict-repression nexus utilizes the "Red Squad" record about the Republic of New Africa – a Black Nationalist organization in Detroit, Michigan that existed between 1968 and 1973, as well as the response of diverse local, state and federal authorities to this group. From diverse analyses, results disclose that covert repressive action has a more consistent and pervasive influence over distinct parts of social movement activity but in a somewhat more complex fashion than generally expected. The implications of these results are discussed within the conclusion.

The Puzzle of Punishment

For about thirty-five to forty years, researchers have investigated the effect of repression on dissent (Hibbs 1973; Moore 1998). The approaches to the topic differ significantly across researchers.

¹ While I believe that this also works in the opposite direction with dissent resonating within repressive organizations, I am not concerned with that within this paper.

Within the traditional view, behavior such as harassment, arrests, beatings, imprisonment and shootings are viewed as a form of punishment – a cost levied by the state against those engaged in challenging them (Blalock 1989; Eberwein 1987; Lichbach 1995; Liska 1992; Olson 1965; Smelser 1962; Tilly 1978). In this perspective, repression is something that dissidents (and ordinary citizens) attempt to avoid. Accordingly, as individuals and collectivities they assess the probability of receiving coercive action before joining a social movement – tending to avoid such an association if the possibility of experiencing this form of state action was high. Additionally, again as individuals and collectivities, they would assess the probability of receiving coercive action when already engaged in a social movement – again, they would tend to avoid relevant associations if the possibility of experiencing coercive state action was high.

Not all believe that repression scares off dissidents (and ordinary citizens). Indeed, some argue that state coercive action angers individuals, prompting them to action (Eckstein 1965; Gurr and Duvall 1973; Khawaja 1993; Mason and Krane 1989; Moore 1979; Olivier 1991). Here, repression is not viewed as a cost to be avoided but it is a motivating factor for collective action – a “call to arms,” a grievance requiring redress. Angered by coercive state behavior, “the apathetic become politicized, the reformers become radicalized, and the revolutionaries redouble their efforts” (Lichbach and Gurr 1981, 8).

Similar to this second view, others have recently begun to argue that repression not only prompts dissidents to act within the context of pre-existing identities as dissidents but it also creates a new identity in and of itself (e.g., della Porta 1995; Zwerman and Steinhoff 2005). Generally discussed within what is referred to as the “Radical Flank” where a larger social movement family subject to repression at time $t-1$, fractures with the majority leaving the movement at time t and a smaller but more militant group continuing to struggle at time $t+1$. As stated by Zwerman and Steinhoff (2005, 87), for the radicalized insurgents,

repression represent(s) something other than an obstruction to dissent or a reason to run. Rather, the restrictions on legitimate forms of protest imposed by unjust authorities were seized as an opportunity to intensify the struggle: to test the

individual's mettle as a revolutionary, to escalate the militancy, to deepen the level of support among comrades, and to ensure that the revolutionary potential glimpsed at the end of the 1960s would be realized "the next time around."

Advocating such a position, Zwerman and Steinhoff (2005, 89) not only change the conception of repression as cost to repression as benefit and opportunity, but they also challenge the idea that repression creates a largely fearful faction that withdraws from activism and a small, militant faction that escalates collective action. Indeed, they argue that state coercive action initiates what is best thought of as "generational replacement" within a movement whereby a younger cohort of new activists comes to replace the older.

As discussed at the outset, existing quantitative literature has been mixed in its support for the arguments identified above. To date, researchers have found almost every relationship. As I suggested in earlier work (Davenport 2005, viii),

(c)onfronted with state repression, dissidents have been found to run away (e.g., White 1993), fight harder (e.g., Eckstein 1965; Feirabend and Feirabend 1972; Gurr and Duvall 1973; Koran 1990; Khawaja 1993; Francisco 1996), and alternatively run away or fight (e.g., Bwy 1968; Gurr 1969; Gupta and Venieris 1981; Lichbach and Gurr 1981; Weede 1987; Rasler 1996; Moore 1998) – varying according to political-economic context. Additionally, work has been found where there is no response whatsoever.

While there are numerous problems with these analyses that have been identified (e.g., measurement, allowing for lagged influences and applied methodological techniques), I wish to highlight two fundamental limitations that have not been considered.

First, existing research has ignored what is perhaps the most important form of state repression – covert activity such as wiretapping, physical surveillance, informants and agents provocateur (Cunningham 2004; Davenport 2005a; Marx 1979, for important exceptions). These activities/actors have historically played an important but largely neglected role in social movement organizations and

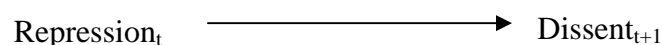
within state repressive efforts to control them. The influences should not be underestimated. Covert action informs authorities about what is and what could take place – allowing them to prepare ahead of time; it provokes social movement organizations to act in particular ways that discredits social movements – legitimating state behavior against them; it identifies who is involved with social movement as well as who those individuals are that are not officially associated with the movement but who facilitate its existence – allowing the state to comprehensively target all aspects of a dissidents life (home, work, places of worship, family, employers, employees and friends).

Second, all quantitative studies in this area examine are indirect and potentially misspecified. For example, as designed, researchers examine repression at time $t-1$ and dissent at time t , inferring what the relationship must have been considering the value of dissent at time $t-2$. This is problematic because there is an issue of behavioral equivalence – distinct causal processes can yield the same behavioral outcome which provides us with essentially no insight whatsoever into how outcomes result. For example, it is one thing if the aggregate amount or type of dissent decreases because individuals connected with a social movement get scared and withdraw like in the case with overt repressive action. It is one thing if the aggregate amount or type of dissent decreases because individuals connected with the movement do not or cannot trust one another like in the case with covert repressive action. Finally, it is quite another thing if the aggregate amount or type of dissent decreases because individuals committed with social movements factionalize into active/angered and inactive/frightened sections. Only by considering and disaggregating social movement organizations will we develop an understanding of how repression influences dissidents. I outline such an approach below.

Inside the Conflict-Repression Nexus

The reorientation of our thinking about how repression influences dissent draws upon a wide variety of research efforts within conflict studies which attempts to enter the “black box” of causal process (pun intended in this case) and explore topics that are largely ignored.

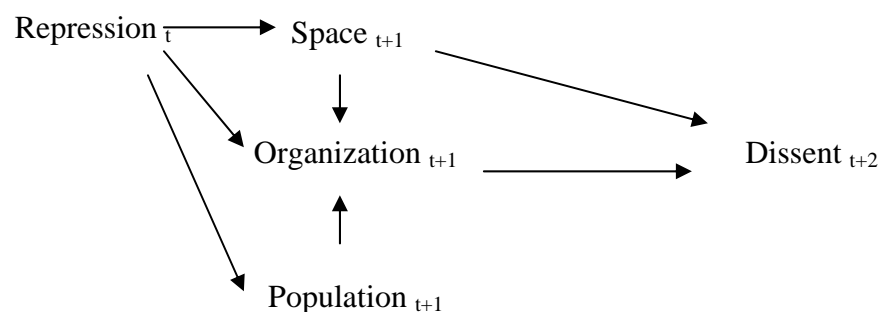
Figure 1. The Basic Conflict-Repression Model



Our discussion begins with what has been the traditional approach to quantitative investigations of how repression influences dissent. As conceived (Figure 1), repressive behavior is directed against dissidents and researchers infer influences from assessing the growth or decay in dissident behavior (the difference between $t+1$ and $t-1$) following the implementation of repression at time t . In this approach, state coercive action is believed to deter and raise the costs of collective action if dissent decreases. State coercive action is believed to fail in deterring dissent and raising the costs of collective action, enraging challengers, if dissent increases. No influence is exhibited if there is no change in dissident behavior at all.

Of course, in this conception (as in most conventional analyses of conflict and contentious politics) all the action is in the arrows (McAdam et al. 2001). Immediately, one must note that there are important differences between repressive approaches (Tilly 1978). On the one hand, some activities influence “mobilization” (those efforts regarding the preparation for collective action); and, on the other hand, these influence collective action (the actual claims-making effort/challenge itself). The former is impeded by penalizing contributors and banning an organization; the latter is impeded by jailing leaders and increasing the fines for movement activities.

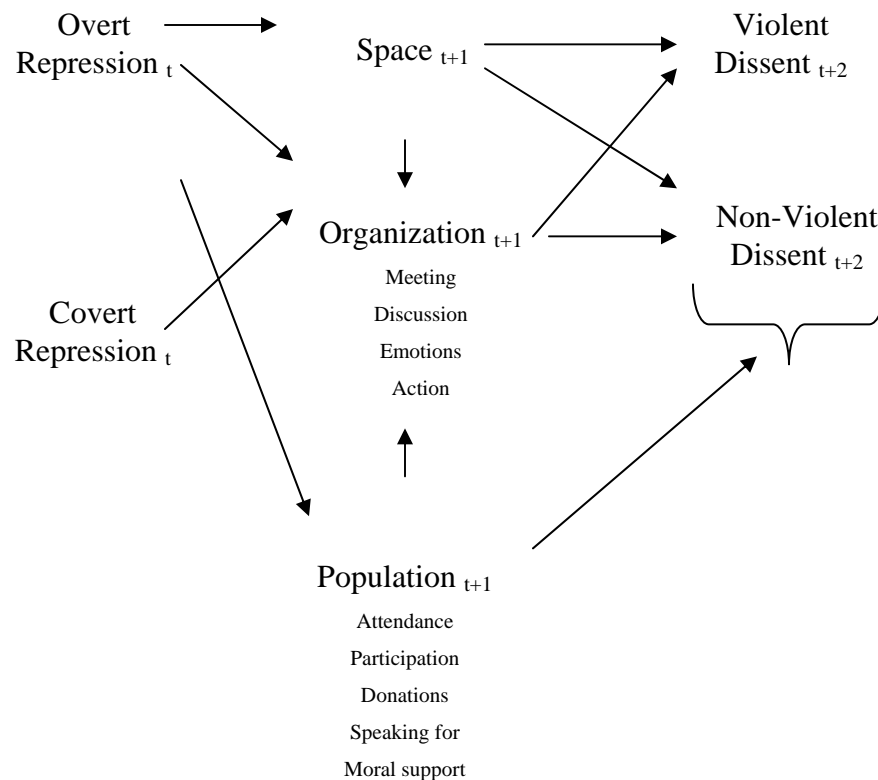
Figure 2. The Modified Conflict-Repression Model



At a minimum this prompts us to unpack the traditional conception and consider a more complex model (Figure 2). Here, repression influences the space within which dissent takes place, altering the perceived and actual access to place. This includes anything that indirectly effects the ability of

dissidents to engage in collective action – an influence observed outside the movement. Imposing limitations on space and direct repressive applications directed towards challengers leads to shifts in dissident organizations (e.g., the frequency and location of meetings, the topics of discussion and the number of individuals that participate, the structure of the organization). These, in turn, lead to shifts in actual dissent as dissidents adjust to the new circumstances. Additionally, repression wields an influence on dissident mobilization from the inside as well. This is achieved by influencing the capacity of the organization to function as an organization. Imposing limitations on organizations compels shifts in basic functions, which in turn influences dissent. Finally, repression influences the relationship between dissident organizations and the mass population shifting recruitment patterns as well as financial and moral support (e.g., making speeches on behalf of dissident organizations or their cause, participating in contentious group activities, attending group meetings as well as providing donations to the challengers or safe houses for group members).

Figure 3. The Final Conflict-Repression Model



Acknowledging that there are different forms of both repression and dissent, we are led to our final model. Here, we acknowledge that overt and covert repressive behavior likely wield distinct influences on social movements. The former (e.g., raids, arrests, beatings, indictments and killing) activates either fear/withdrawal or anger/engagement as individuals are alternatively scared or enraged by repressive action. My belief is that relationships are curvilinear in nature. Below a certain threshold of severity, overt repression reinforces individual and group resolve and identity. In this context, dissent is increased or unchanged in frequency and scope; drawing upon Simmel and Coser the “we” is reinforced relative to the “them.” Above a certain threshold, however, overt repression reduces individual and group resolve and identity – at least among those within the current organization. In this context, dissent is decreased and the identity of the group is weakened.

In contrast, covert repressive behavior (e.g., physical and electronic surveillance, informants and agents provocateur) is generally effective at any level which leads to organizational awareness because it dissolves – almost immediately, all sense of “groupness.” In this context, the sanctity of the organization – under assault in the case of overt repressive behavior – is compromised. Here, no expressions are safe (verbal or physical), no individual or place is above suspicion. Of course, a standard response in this situation is to reduce involvement with the mass public – reducing the likelihood of infiltration, but this might be too late because the deleterious influence might already to be well underway. Additionally, this forces a social movement to survive with a fixed size. This is easy for an organization that has access to wealthy contributors (e.g., Al-Qaeda) or one that can sell some valued product like cocaine, but it does not work for an organization that is physically/geographically, economically and politically isolated.

The differences between coercive strategies are fundamental. Because overt behavior targets and influences individuals and groups as members of a challenging organization from outside the group – as state authority, it has the potential to ignite as well as deflate group identity within both the targets/victims of repression and the general population. The former is influenced because it is their carefully constructed and invested identity that is under attack and thus it exists as something that can be rallied to/around. The latter is influenced because the public nature of the repressive technique allows

them to evaluate the legitimacy of the state and dissident action, assessing the connection with either party and gauging what ought to be done in the situation. Thus in the case of the repression of the Black Power Movement at a certain point, groups and individuals that had no affiliation and perhaps no affinity to the challengers, began to speak on their behavior after what appeared to be excessive and unprovoked repressive action.

In stark contrast, because covert repressive behavior targets and influences individuals and groups as members of a challenge from inside the group as state authorities as well as movement turncoats, it generally deflates group identity within the targets/victims of repression. In this case, there is no direct influence on the general population except that: 1) covert action leads movement participants to shy away from interactions with public (fearing additional infiltration), 2) covert action leads to interactions with ordinary citizens which is physical, emotionally and ideologically distant from citizens, or 3) covert action leads to group activity that alienates potential supporters. This last point is particularly relevant because it reveals that the role played by collective action renders the evaluation and understanding of dissident organization complex. For example, in contexts of covert activity, one cannot be sure if repression is exogenous or endogenous to dissent. Indeed, upon observing overt repressive behavior at time $t-1$ and then observing dissident behavior at time $t+1$, one must first assess what role (if any) some act of covert repression might have had at time t . It is possible that some agent provocateur in the intermediate period convinced the relevant dissident organization to engage in a particular type of behavior that led to overt repressive action. Here, it is not appropriate to evaluate the influence of the state and then consider the action of challengers as though they were independent of one another.

The relevance of all this to dissent is crucial because it reveals that there can be several paths to contentious behavior from repression – distinct paths that tell us very different things about how repression influences social movements.

Exploring Relationships

Revisiting the issue of how repression influences dissent, I identify several possible effects.

First, overt repressive behavior negatively influences the space within which dissent takes place by reducing access (e.g., increasing police presence). This seems to be the only option in terms of an influence. I do not find any argument within the literature that dissidents would repeatedly return to a place that they feel has been compromised.

Second, overt repression can either increase or decrease dissident mobilization structure (e.g., the frequency of meetings, discussion within the group and the expression of distinct emotions). This identifies the fact that government action can have different influences on diverse elements within a social movement organization. On the one hand, overt repression can send dissidents into a “downward” spiral where all elements are impacted negatively; here, meetings, discussions, attendance go down and individuals express emotions such as fear and do so in abundance with subsequent dissent decreasing in frequency and magnitude. On the other hand, overt repression can send dissidents into an “upward” spiral; here, meetings, discussions and attendance go up or stay stable and individuals express anger with subsequent dissident behavior increasing. In line with the “Radical Flank” argument, it is also possible that both dynamics are observed simultaneously. Here, overt repression increases and decreases diverse aspects of the organization (leading to both decreased meetings, discussions, attendance and negative emotional responses for some and increased meetings, discussions, attendance and positive emotional responses for others). Overt repression would also have distinct influences on the mass population. For example, more obvious forms of repression might cause some to be scared off from associating with the dissident organization. Additionally, as Zwerman and Steinhoff suggest, it is possible that other individuals are drawn to the victimized dissident organization in order to redress the hostility shown to the organization.

In contrast, the influence on covert repression is quite distinct. When this behavior is acknowledged (it does not just occur like overt repression; it must be perceived), the influence is exclusively identified in the social movement organization. In this case, I expect all aspects of an organization to be influenced negatively. As a result, when covert repression is perceived, the frequency

of meetings, event attendance, discussion of relevant topics would diminish and expressions of all emotions would be decreased as well. Neither anger or fear is expected; simply, disengagement.

In turn, I expect that changes in the space within which social movement organizations function and in which ordinary citizens relate to social movements alters the likelihood of subsequent dissident behavior. Specifically, as discussed by the downward spiral discussed above, dissent is likely to decrease. In these contexts, individuals withdraw from the movement (emotionally and physically), they participate less and effectively they exit from the social movement family. In the upward spiral, it is expected that dissident behavior following overt repression would increase. In this case, individuals have enhanced their engagement with social movements (emotionally and physically) and they participate more frequently. Finally, it is possible that both spirals exist concurrently with certain forms of dissent increasing and other forms decreasing.

To explore these dynamics, I focus on a specific interaction between a dissident group called the Republic of New Africa and diverse authorities in the United States between 1968 (the founding of the organization) and 1973 (effectively the time of the groups' dissolution).

The Republic of New Africa and Freeing the Land

Largely supporting the narrative of Zwerman and Steinhoff (2005), the origin of the Republic of New Africa is found in the earlier Civil Rights Movement. Disgruntled with the ineffectiveness of the civil rights approach in modifying American attitudes and conditions, observing a continuation of white violence despite the adoption of certain laws and influenced by the thinking of Malcolm X as well as other activists in the area (e.g., the Cleage brothers), a small band of Detroit-area activists disbanded Group On Advanced Leadership and adopted a new agenda under the banner of the Malcolm X Society. Rather, quickly, however, they underwent another change, joined with black nationalists from around the US (from the then defunct Revolutionary Action Movement) and founded the Republic of New Africa in March, 1968.

The primary objective of the RNA was to establish African-American independence from the United States government. As designed, there were numerous means employed toward this end. For

example, the organization sought a plebiscite among blacks in order to determine the “national status” of the “New Afrikan population in North America,” it sought land for the establishment of an independent country (specifically, five states in the deep south: Alabama, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, and South Carolina, from the U.S. government), and it sought reparations for the treatment of blacks as slaves (Republic of New Africa 1968).² Later, as the organization waned, they merely sought to purchase land for the establishment of a city-state (Obadele 1995). The plans of the RNA were not simply domestic in orientation. Internationally, the group’s leaders were in contact with a number of African governments and they were attempting to establish trade and exchange programs with numerous foreign countries. The organization also planned to make contact with the governments of Cuba, China, and Vietnam for the purposes of enhancing its reach to others in the broader struggle against imperialism.

Despite the changes in objectives, in certain ways, the group’s repertoire did not change much from the days of GOAL. It still engaged in many legal forms of protest: rallies, petitions, political education courses, “self-defense” programs, food drives, lectures, conferences, and the publication of “independent” news letters/papers. Of course, the content of these activities changed and this is a significant difference. In other ways, however, the organization changed dramatically. For example, the group engaged in efforts to legally separate parts of the United States (e.g., in Ocean-Hill Brownsville in 1968), it had begun to purchase land in Mississippi to serve as the capital of the new nation, it elected a government and it trained an army – the Black Legion (an admittedly small force with limited military capability). Additionally, members of the RNA engaged in diverse illegal and violent activities as well: robberies, shootouts with police, shooting practice, plots to bomb state and federal buildings, and even a plane hijacking.³

This reflected broader changes that took place within black resistance. As Haines (1988, 26) identifies

² Accordingly, one would always hear RNA members declare “Land, Independence, and Self-Determination,” “The Struggle is for Land” or “Free the Land”.

³ These activities resulted in the organization being categorized as a terrorist organization by the National Memorial Institute for the Prevention of Terrorism Knowledge Base (www.tkb.org/Group.jsp?groupID=4226).

(f)rom the closing years of the last century through the 1960s, the guiding philosophy of black liberation has evolved from (a) gradual assimilation through the acceptance of segregation, to (b) more immediate assimilation through the aggressive pursuit of racial integration, to (c) the preservation of racial integrity through the acquisition of political and economic power. Not all black organizations have proceeded from the first of these to the last, to be sure, but the long sweep of history has seen the sequential rise and fall of each of these positions.

A similar process has occurred in the realm of tactics. This century has witnessed the waxing and waning of several tactical repertoires, beginning with (a) black self-help; followed by (b) legalism; (c) nonviolent protest ranging from peaceful, nondisruptive demonstrations through intentionally disruptive actions; (d) violent self-defense; and, among a few groups, (e) urban guerilla skirmishes. All but the last two have enjoyed a degree of hegemony for a time.

The strategy undertaken by the RNA was different from other black power organizations such as the Black Panther Party (BPP). Although several discussed a black nation, none had attempted – openly – to select a location, develop a plan on how to get it and engage in efforts to bring this plan into existence. On this point, the differences from the BPP were especially clear.

In part, the approach to Black Power adopted by the RNA reflected black life in Detroit. For example, the RNA position on segregation and biracial coalitions emerged from Detroit's history of strained race relations. Within this locale, you had high degrees of segregation and isolation of blacks from whites, significantly differing from the situation in the Bay Area – a situation that moderated the position of the BPP. Set within this context, Detroit represented one of the most contentious black-white situations in the US experiencing race riots in 1833, 1863, 1943 and 1967.

In addition to this, within Detroit, there was the third largest black population in the US, a high employed, concentrated and radicalized black working population and a relatively stable African-American community over a long period of time – developing strong churches as well as advocacy organizations (Farley et al. 2000). Indeed, while many have historically referred to Brooklyn as “the Mecca” because of the large number of African-Americans there, Detroit could be thought of in the same way but on a somewhat smaller scale. Finally, while there had been some biracial coalitions earlier in Detroit, this was generally a rare situation by the time of GOAL and the RNA. By this time, blacks and whites were living divided lives politically, economically and culturally. Equally as important, perhaps the most visible attempt at such a coalition resulted in what would kindly be referred to as an immense failure (Farley et al 2000, 42).

Although settled in many respects, The RNA’s strategy was subject to some change. Initially, the organization was committed to focusing its efforts on establishing its nation within the South. All discussion and preparation concerned this location. The explanation for this was simple: this is where our strongest historical roots were located and this is where the largest concentration of blacks was located. The former was important because a major part of nationhood revolved around a shared identity, common history, language and belief system. Geographic concentration, physical isolation from whites and the sheer length of time that blacks had spent in the South thus facilitated a black nation in this locale; indeed, in the RNA’s view, it called out for its declaration. The latter was important because it facilitated a specific electoral strategy developed by the RNA. In this plan, blacks would be moved from the North into specific Southern locales where blacks already held a favorable position regarding their ability to win electoral contests – candidates to be provided or at a minimum trained by the Republic of New Africa. Upon winning contests for Sheriffs, mayors, judges and other local positions, these leaders would deputize blacks in order to serve as protectors of the new community and over time, building on this effort, all positions within the government as well as all services would be transferred over to RNA-affiliates. After this strategy had been replicated across enough of the initial five-state target area, secession would be proposed.

To achieve its objectives, however, the RNA knew that it had to engage in two areas: 1) making African-Americans aware of their nation (e.g., informing them of their shared history and identity) and 2) preparing them for citizenship within this new nation (e.g., informing them about domestic and international law, social movement strategies as well as participation in a plebiscite to determine citizenship). Through diverse efforts, the republic would be born.

The role of state repression is particularly important for the RNA because it is largely believed that these activities led to its eventual demise. Clearly, there is no definitive word on this point because most research on the black power movement has neglected the organization – paying only limited attention (Brisbane 1974; Jones 1998; Ogbar 2004; Pinkney 1976; Tyson 1999; Van Deburg 1992). Indeed, most attention is given to the controversial inspiration and first President of the RNA – Robert F. Williams with passing reference being made to the organization itself (e.g., Pinkney 1976, 182-185).

Even within these relatively brief accounts, however, the standard myth of repressive effectiveness is readily identified and accepted. For example, highlighting overt repressive behavior, Pinkney (1976, 125-126) notes that

(s)ince its inception the Republic of New Africa has encountered friction wherever it has attempted to operate... In August (of 1971) the headquarters (recently moved to the South) was raided by Mississippi policemen and agents of the Federal Bureau of Investigation. During the raid two policemen were wounded by gunfire... The incident in Mississippi has... signaled the demise of the Republic of New Africa.

Brisbane (1974, 184-185) offers a similar account.

Highlighting covert repressive activity, Tyson (1999, 303-304) notes that

The COINTELPRO operation, the FBI's effort to disrupt and divide the black movement, often by illegal means, clearly continued to take its toll, Williams knew, although the name of the operation would not be revealed for several more years. Sometimes it was hard, Williams recalled, to tell the infiltrators from the idiots. Williams complained of "too much bickering, too much conflict among our people," and blamed "the new

militancy” which too often condemns the so-called “Uncle Tom” without trying to win him over...

Again, Van Deburg (1992, 303) offers what amounts to an identical explanation of the demise of Black Power groups, remarking that outside one office the RNA had posted a caution: ‘This office is bugged. The phone is bugged. Don’t say anything you don’t want the boy to know.’ He then asks: “how could any militant organization know which of its seemingly loyal followers actually were part of Hoover’s 7,000-person “Ghetto Informant Post” corps of “racial informants?” Of course, the answer was that they could not.

While insightful, what is problematic about these accounts is the fact that they are not based on any extensive investigation of the topic. To my knowledge, no scholar has examined, in detail, what took place within the RNA (or the larger Black Power Movement) on a day to day basis in an effort to make a reasonable estimation of how it functioned, how it collapsed and what role the state played in these processes. For example, while noting one raid in Mississippi, Pinkney ignores the host of other repressive activities that were directed against the organization in this locale but others as well. Additionally, he ignores the fact that the RNA still maintained offices and activities in diverse cities around the country (including the first office and headquarters as well as the home town for many of the members in Detroit); here, citizens prepared the people for the move to the new nation. While the Mississippi raid was important (as was the shooting and mass arrest that followed the New Bethel incident on March 29th, 1969), repression in one locale was only partially linked to the organizations existence in others. To understand the influence of repressive behavior on social movements in line with the earlier discussion, one has to rigorously investigate the subject. This is undertaken below.

Repressing “The People”: The Coercive Response of the US Government

Of course, U.S. authorities in and out of Detroit did not sit idly by in the face of pre-secessionist RNA activity. Indeed, they applied a wide variety of techniques against the organization in order to identify, counter and/or eliminate dissident behavior. Some of these tactics are familiar to scholars of contentious politics – overt techniques enacted by the police and courts such as raids and grand juries

(Donner 1990; Earl 2003; Goldstein 1978; Wolfe 1978). Others are ignored ignored – covert activities enacted by police and intelligence organizations such as wiretaps, physical surveillance, informants and agents provocateur (e.g., Marx 1979; Cunningham 2004). Clearly overt and covert repressive activity did not begin in response to the Republic of New Africa. Indeed, from available evidence it is clear that these activities represent a variant of repressive technique applied in the US dating back to the early 1900s (e.g., Goldstein 1978; Donner 1990; Cunningham 2004). This was particularly the case in Detroit because of the prominence of the automobile industry and its interest (along with the federal government) with monitoring, controlling and eliminating radical labor organizations in these locales. As a result, all dissidents within Detroit were prime targets. At least in the earlier periods, private actors undertook much of this effort. Confronted with organized labor and consistent effort to improve working conditions, automotive corporations employed private agencies to deal with challengers. This was frequently accomplished by physical confrontation – especially in the earlier periods, but it also involved paid informants, agents provocateur and wiretaps. This quickly overlaps with and is later subsumed under government activities.

The specific period within which the RNA emerged and authorities responded is particularly important because the Detroit riot of 1967⁴ represents a watershed in Detroit-area protest policing – reinforcing and expanding a dynamic already in place. As Donner’s (1990, 291) research tells us:

(a) number of cities, of which Detroit is a prime example, reflected in their police structures and target priorities a similar “urban pathology”: a decaying black ghetto, ... the emergence of potentially violent black and white groups, and the development among white policemen of a “siege mentality” against the black community... after the ghetto riots of the late sixties, self-help and violence inevitably came to be regarded in both camps – police and ghetto – as a vital means of survival. “Law and order” became a coded battle cry as the police were transformed into an army defending white power and

⁴ This is an event “in which forty-three were killed, hundreds wounded, and 7,200 arrested, not to speak of the millions of dollars of property damage” (Donner 1990, 292; also see Locke [1969]).

the status quo. In this confrontation, the urban intelligence unit (the “Red Squad”) played a key role. Blacks – their organizations and activities – became prime targets for ongoing surveillance regardless of their political views...

Adapting programs already in place for criminal investigations, state and local authorities simply expanded their efforts (Goldstein 1978, 504).⁵ These more localized efforts accompanied “an immense buildup in the political surveillance machinery of the federal government” (Goldstein 1978, 443). For example, Goldstein (1978, 450) reveals that

(f)ollowing the mammoth racial disorders in the summer of 1967 in Detroit, Newark and other cities, President Johnson announced that he had given the FBI “standing instructions” to “search for evidence on conspiracy” in connection with riots.

In early 1968,

The FBI expanded its COINTELPRO... initiating a “ghetto informant” program designed to develop sources among people who lived and worked in a “ghetto area” who would report on such topics as “black extremist organizations,” the names of “Afro-American type book stores” and their “owners, operators and clientele” all indications of efforts by foreign powers to “take over” the Negro militant movement (Goldstein 1978, 450).

By the time that the RNA emerged, therefore, perhaps the largest and most aggressive protest policing and surveillance network in US history was in place, laid bare for our investigation because of the sheer amount of records that became available since the events themselves.

⁵ On this point, Donner (1990, 292-3) is clear:

(i)n the decade beginning in the mid sixties, target priorities and operations shifted and expanded markedly. Activities of the New Left and black protest movements became major concentrations, overshadowing the old (communist) left and labor activities. File collections – individual and organizational, “subjects” and events – grew enormously, as did data exchange. The old liason networks were revitalized with new ties (to Army Intelligence) and much closer ones to the FBI on the federal level and close operational collaboration with state and area police generally, as well as with college units such as the Wayne State University campus security police.

Data Collection

My primary source for the investigation of how repression influenced the RNA comes from what is commonly referred to as a “Red Squad” file. These records are compiled from diverse organizations principally based within cities but extending up to state and federal levels, across diverse aspects of governments: police departments, judicial institutions (e.g., the Justice Department and District Courts), intelligence organizations (e.g., the FBI, CIA, State Department and the Army) and the Internal Revenue Service. The objective of the modern Red Squad was twofold: 1) the monitoring of behavior that was deemed radical in its intent, violent or relevant to “national security” (Donner 1990, 3) and 2) the elimination of targeted organizations.

While informative, these records are notorious for their incomplete nature and extensive deletions. Due to an important but bizarre confluence of factors, the RNA records housed at the *Radical Information Project* at the University of Maryland⁶ including files from Detroit Police Department (Special Investigations, Demonstration Detail, Intelligence Division, Inspectional Service Bureau, Security Unit, Detective Division, Criminal Division, Public Complaints Division, and Tactical Reconnaissance), the Michigan State Police (Special Investigation Bureau, Special Investigation Unit), the Internal Revenue Service, the U.S. Department of State, and the Federal Bureau of Investigation. These files describe, in elaborate detail, hourly meetings attended by informants, surveillance reports from police officers of diverse locales (homes, meeting halls, supermarkets), and arrest reports. They also include the strategic planning efforts of the Federal Bureau of Investigation based in Washington, D.C. as well as periodic updates from field officers within Michigan.

Do I feel that I have everything? Of course not, but this will never be the case as relevant agencies either destroyed their files entirely or blacked out entries, especially information concerning the most controversial actions. Indeed, had it not been for the interruption of a few judges in Detroit and several police officers that deemed this information worthy for mass distribution, the files employed here

⁶ www.bsos.umd.edu/gvpt/davenport/proj2.htm

would have been destroyed.⁷ This having been said, I believe that a decent amount of information is contained within the files because the information was compiled during a time period before the amendments of Freedom of Information Act by Attorney General Levi in 1974,⁸ when it was believed that someone outside of the relevant organization could potentially see this information. As such, the different organizations were compiling information for themselves and it was not expected that others would be observing it.

The RNA-Authority Event Catalog

The data used to investigate this case were compiled between 1999 and 2003 (Davenport 1999; Davenport 2005a). Repression of the RNA was coded to include the following information:

- The type of activity undertaken by state authorities (e.g., instances of physical and electronic surveillance, wire-tapping, and the forging of letters by authorities);
- The identity of the organization involved in covert action (e.g., Reconnaissance Division, Criminal Division, Special Investigation Bureau, Michigan State Police and the FBI);
- The number of agents involved in each activity;
- The geographic location of activities;
- The date; and,
- The time.

Here, event type is subdivided into two areas: overt repressive action (e.g., arrests, raids and harassment) and covert repressive action (e.g., physical and electronic surveillance). While the records contain information about when and how many individuals were arrested (the conservative measure applied here [N=85]), which readily conforms to our understanding of overt repression discussed above, the records concerning covert behavior are somewhat more complex. For example, while the records contain information about when a false letter was mailed, when a phone was bugged or when an individual was tailed, I do not expect that these would have an influence on the RNA because they would not be aware of such activity. Indeed, I expect covert action to work only when dissident organizations suspect such activity. Accordingly, I use RNA statements regarding the possibility of an informant or agent provocateur being in their midst as an example of covert repressive action (N=20).

⁷ Personal correspondence with a DPD employee as well as member of the RNA confirmed this.

⁸ www.usdoj.gov/04foia/74agmemo.htm#exemption7

(Insert Figure “Alternative Aspects of State Repression Against the RNA”)

As one can see from the Figure, repression against the RNA varies over time. Overt and covert activity starts almost immediately after the founding of the organization in March, 1968. Overt repressive behavior is more concentrated in time with numerous breaks in between activities before it trails off. I have highlighted the two overt repressive events that have been discussed most frequently in the literature: the “New Bethel Incident” of March 29th, 1969 which involved the shooting of a police officer and the single largest arrest of members and supports alike, as well the raid in Mississippi of August 18th, 1971 which involved another shooting of government officials, a mass arrest and several indictments at local, state and federal levels (most notably including “waging war against the state of Mississippi”). Differing from this pattern, we see that discussion of informants persists over a longer period of time prior to New Bethel, but after this time it trails off with larger breaks in between.

Regarding dissident behavior, I coded the following characteristics from the records:

- The activity undertaken by RNA members (e.g., business meetings, fundraising, food shopping, shooting practice, riots, being at home, demonstrations, social gatherings, political education courses, petitions, speeches, mock trials, rallies, the topics of discussion within meetings);
- The identity of specific individuals in attendance and their participation in the organization’s activities;
- The estimated number of people in attendance at each group activity;
- The geographic location of the action;
- The date; and,
- The time.

As conceived, event type was subdivided into six areas: violent dissent, non-violent dissent, preparatory activity, criminal action, land and shooting. This is relevant for the current research because I am able to gauge the influence of arrests and instances where informants are suspected on if meetings are held (N=594), how many people are present (17,360), how many individuals speak at organizational meetings (1,625) and what they say.⁹ The last is particularly important for I use this information to identify diverse emotions. Specifically, expressions of fear (e.g., “(if we do that) they are going to bust us

⁹ Although I do not use this information in this paper, I have also identified how many individual are known by authorities (the informant) at each event (2,421).

man” or “I’m just not going to come back to this #\$_%@ place again sister”). There are 38 instances of this. I also identify expressions of anger (e.g., “Enough of this \$@&*, we need to take it to these #\$_%@ers”). There are 62 instances of this behavior.

Additionally, I use this information to code what Gamson and Meyer (1996, 285) refer to as “the rhetoric of change.” As they state, “movement activists systematically overestimate the degree of political opportunity and if they did not, they would not be doing their job wisely” (p285). Three strategies are identified within this work, each responding to a theme provided within the work of Hirschman (1991) who discussed the techniques that were employed by those who preferred inaction within an organizational setting. For example, to counter *jeopardy* (the argument that “by attempting some change, we risk losing achievements already won” [Gamson and Meyer 1996, 285]), activists engage in *urgency* (act now or the situation will remain the same); “come on brothers and sisters, we gotta do this or we stay in the same @%#@&ing place”. I identify 4 instances of the former and 21 instances of the latter. To counter *futility* (the argument that there is no opportunity for change and that all action is a waste of time), activists engage in *agency* discussing that there is a window of opportunity for change; “the people are ripe; we have to take advantage of this change in consciousness or lose the whole thing.” I identify 2 instances of the former and 9 of the latter. Finally, to counter *perverse-effects* (the argument that attempts at change will simply make the situation worse), activists engage in *possibility* (the argument that attempts at change will make the situation better; “one step towards the people is another step towards the revolution.” Again, revealing that dissident organizations generally seek to overcome optimism, I find 1 instance of the former and 7 of the latter. Graphs of diverse organizational behavior and dissent are provided below.

(Insert “Alternative Aspects of RNA Organizational Behavior”, “Alternative Emotional Expressions at RNA Functions” and “RNA Collective Action”)

The figures of RNA pre-collective action (mobilization) convey mixed messages regarding our topic of interest. As found, the number of meetings first increases and then decreases but before New Bethel – when one would anticipate a response. After this event, the number of meetings increases and

then decreases; again, this occurs prior to Mississippi. Following the latter event, there is another increase in meetings but it is quite low and with large gaps in between them. The number of attendees follows a somewhat similar pattern. Here, prior to New Bethel, one sees a tremendous amount of vacillation in numbers. After New Bethel, the number stabilizes and then decays. Thus by the time of the Mississippi raid, the number of attendees was already quite low. After this event, again one can see a small but infrequent increase in behavior. Along with the last figure, this seems to support Zwerman and Steinhoff. Considering the number of speakers at RNA events, the basic pattern above is again supported. First, one sees a slow growth in numbers. Following New Bethel, fewer individuals speak but this grows again before it decreases prior to Mississippi. After this second repressive event, the number tapers off.

Emotional expressions at RNA events are relatively consistent across time but they abruptly end before the Mississippi raid. For example, expressions of anger are steady with only two instances where more than one was experienced. After New Bethel, there is again a steady pattern but also a larger number of multiple response events. These end around 1971. Expressions of fear generally share the same pattern. The only difference is that there are fewer instances where multiple responses are made and expressions of fear persist over a longer period of time – lasting up until August 1971.

Regarding RNA collective action, one can observe a steady application of behavior with only a few breaks in time. Some of the largest frequencies appear before and after New Bethel – identifying the event as a high point of RNA activity. Following this event, mobilization grows again – reaching the highest point on May 19th, 1970 (the birthday of Malcolm X five years after his assassination). After this, RNA behavior trails off with larger gaps in between fewer events.

Methodology

Of course, ocular inspection of tables is inappropriate for assessing relationships. To facilitate my analysis, I deviate from the basic OLS regression models that have dominated research on the Conflict-Repression nexus and employ a technique that is more appropriate for the model illustrated above. Specifically, I use a vector autoregression or VAR model (Freeman et al. 1989).

VAR models are particularly useful in the context of the research being conducted here. First, while I have a general idea that repression, mobilization (organizational activity before collective action) and dissent influence each other, I am not sure exactly which causal influences, measures or lags would be relevant. Existing research is explicitly focused on influences that move in only one direction at a time and they exclusively consider contemporaneous influences but this is not appropriate. First, it is not accurate to think of repression and mobilization without understanding the impact that each has on the other. Second, it is highly unlikely that any relationships between the two variables would be manifest in a day. States as well as dissidents adjust their actions according to patterns and changes in the relevant context. As a consequence, there should be some flexibility given to the detection of influences.

In following, I explore a system of equations with few restrictions. This is consistent with the VAR approach. In line with this, Freeman et al. (1989, 854) note that

VAR modelers assume... that our theories are relatively underdeveloped, or that our understanding of social reality is severely limited. VAR modelers maintain that we have a poor understanding of how variables are related and that our intuitions in this regard should not be trusted.

This well describes the state of knowledge surrounding the phenomena of interest to this study.

Such an approach is additionally important for it maintains a particular view of theory. As Freeman et al. (1989, 854) state, from the VAR perspective,

(t)heories are loose collections of causal claims about the existence and direction of certain relationships. Only a weak set of restrictions about what variables to include in the model and about the contemporaneous relationships among variable innovations are theoretically justified... In the end, theoretical debates may not be resolved: only one or two of a set of competing theories may be falsified.

Such an exercise is extremely important. Indeed, they add:

VAR modelers maintain that it is possible to discover important, “objective facts” about social reality without having precise knowledge about the true structural model. That is,

data analysis with weakly specified VAR models can play a role in theory building; it can define the “empirical battlefield” for theory construction or the set of objective facts that theories must explain if they are to be considered empirically powerful (Freeman et al. 1989, 854)

This second point is important for it acknowledges that I am not only unsure about which lags are relevant but I am also unclear about how many lags should be employed. As designed, VAR models provide us with an efficient way of gauging this with a modified likelihood ratio test.

In addition to facilitating exploration of lagged influences and model structure, VAR models are estimated in a conventional framework, which facilitates computation of models and communication of findings: specifically, models are fit with OLS estimation techniques. As designed, each dependent variable, within a system of equations, depends on lagged values of the endogenous variables (in this case prior repressive behavior and prior globalization)¹⁰ as well as certain exogenous variables and an error term that is assumed to be independent of the other equations within the system.

Of course, not everything with VAR is as straightforward as running a basic OLS regression and viewing the relevant coefficients. As Freeman et al. (1989, 845) state,

(h)ypothesis tests (within VAR models) are not based on the statistical significance or magnitude of individual coefficients, nor on the fit of VAR models. Instead, VAR modelers test hypotheses by assessing the *joint* statistical significance of the coefficients on single variables or on blocks of variables. F-tests or specially constructed likelihood ratio tests are used for this purpose. These tests indicate whether the inclusion of one or some set of variables improves the prediction of the respective left-hand-side variable. (Additionally)... the tests are robust against the inclusion of irrelevant variables).

Thus while directly applicable to the problem at hand, I show some care with regard to the inferences that we draw from this analysis. Additionally, what is viewed as a strength above may also be viewed as a weakness. Since all variables within a series are bivariately examined against one another – considering

¹⁰ These are commonly referred to as “predetermined variables” for they predate the dependent variable by some lag.

each as a dependent variable and independent variable across diverse lags, one is presented with a large amount of material – some of which may not be well theorized above. This is not particularly problematic for me because existing research does suggest that relationships not highlighted in the model above might exist. First, mobilization might influence repressive behavior. Indeed, one of the aftereffects of covert repressive action is that authorities know what is taking place within movements and might respond to it. Alternatively, it just might be the case that governments do not wait until dissent goes out into the street; once some form of mobilization is perceived, repression might be applied. Second, the existing literature suggest that dissent directly influences repression – especially overt behavior.

Following this discussion, I estimate models with a three-week lag, including the following explanatory factors: one variable for overt repression (arrests), one variable for covert repression (mention of infiltration at an RNA event), one variable for pre-collective action (alternatively mobilizing structures – holding a meeting, the number of attendees or the number of speakers; emotional expressions – anger and fear; and, the framing of political opportunity – *urgency*, *agency* and *possibility*) and one variable for dissent (a combination of rallies and speeches). In later research, I will consider different operationalizations: e.g., for over repression, I will consider raids and trials as well as attempt to understand longer-term influences of large-scale repressive action; for covert repression, I will consider the ratio of total attendees to known attendees as provided by the informant; for mobilization, I will consider the duration of meetings, start and end times as well as specifically who is speaking and what they say; finally, for dissident behavior, I will consider demonstrations and marches as well as conferences and training sessions.

As there is a tremendous amount of tables associated with VAR models (available from the author), I decided to only provide diagrams of impulse response functions. These reveal the lagged influence of an independent variable over the eight days following their occurrence. Lags up to 21 days were estimated in order to gauge influences. As designed, only the lags that wield statistically significant relations are identified.

Findings

To present my results, I have grouped them by the type of mobilization: mobilizing structure, emotional expressions and the framing of opportunity. Generally, the results bode well for my model. Overt repression decreases mobilization but only one type – mobilizing structure such as the number of attendees at RNA activities and the number of individuals speaking at an event. The most obvious form of repressive behavior prompts the most obvious form of withdrawal. Covert repression decreases variables relevant to mobilizing structure but it also influences emotional expressions as well as the framing of opportunity – many in unexpected ways. Covert behavior has a direct influence on dissent – again frequently in unanticipated ways. Interestingly, mobilization only leads to dissent when one considers emotional expressions and the framing of opportunity but these influences are not always in the expected direction. Finally, in line with existing literature, dissent is found to increase overt repressive behavior but it also increase diverse aspects of mobilization such as emotional expression and diverse structural characteristics.

(Insert Tables 1a-1c About Here)

Considering the models that address the number of meetings (1a), the number of individuals that attend RNA events (1b) and the number of individuals speaking (1c), I find that the basic model performs quite well. Viewing Table 1a, overt repressive behavior enhances itself such that an increase in this behavior at time t influences later occurrences (1 to 2 days as well as 7 days later to be exact). Covert behavior has a positive lagged influence as well but it also decreases meetings the next day and decreases overt collective action the next day as well as later in the week. The number of meetings tends to increase the number of subsequent meetings. Finally, the occurrence of collective action increases the number of meetings in the short term but later it decreases it while simultaneously increasing the use of subsequent overt repression.

When we consider the model where attendance is the focal point (1b), the results change. Here, overt repression decreases the number of attendees whereas covert repression initially decreases but later increases this behavior. Attendance does not influence collective action but the latter does influence the

former; first positively, then negatively over time. Interestingly, considering the number of speakers at an event (1c) the findings are essentially the same as the meetings model (1a). Here, the only differences are that: 1) overt activity is not increased by the number of speakers but the number of speakers is diminished by overt repressive behavior – as expected, 2) covert behavior does not influence subsequent covert activity, and 3) the influence of covert behavior on dissent exists but at marginal values.

(Insert Table 2a-b About Here)

Moving to consider emotional expressions at RNA events (anger [2a] and fear [2b]), we find results that are almost identical to one another. For example, in both cases, overt behavior only influences subsequent overt activity. In contrast, covert action influences lagged values of this behavior but it also influences anger as well as fear – albeit in slightly different ways. The former is increased immediately but the latter is decreased immediately but after several days is increased. Covert repressive action thus angers those affiliated with the RNA right after it is brought up but it tends to reduce expressions of fear until after a few days at which point it increases it. Anger and fear increase subsequent dissident behavior but the influence is not as expected: the influence of both is negative at first and later positive, with the backlash from fear being much greater. As anticipated, both emotions increase the subsequent experience of these emotions. Anger increases overt repression whereas fear decreases overt repression but first decreases and later increases covert activity. Dissident behavior first increases and then decreases anger whereas dissent in the fear model increases fear but also overt repression as well.

(Insert Table 3a-c About Here)

Finally, I consider models where the framing of political opportunity is addressed as the organizational characteristic of interest. Essentially, these models are very much alike. In all cases, overt repression influences nothing but itself (i.e., lagged overt behavior) whereas covert repression increases subsequent covert activity but also decreases overt behavior, increases perceived opportunity and increases dissent – at some point in the week that follows. The last two move against my argument as they reveal that mobilization and dissent are able to withstand the influence of covert repression. As found, the framing of political opportunity generally decrease overt repression which moves against my

argument. At the same time, framing first decreases and then later increases covert repression which supports my argument. Expressions of opportunity lead authorities to diminish arrests but they create a situation in which the movement begins to question the loyalty of its membership. Differing from the earlier analyses, framing opportunity generally increases dissident behavior. Interestingly, agency (when a group believes that there is a window of opportunity) tends to decrease dissident behavior. Finally, collective action again increases overt repressive action.

Conclusion

This research was motivated by two related puzzles in two distinct literatures: 1) the influence of state repression on dissent generally, and 2) the influence of state repression on black power organizations in particular. These issues are worthy of consideration because they are far from resolved. Individuals generally infer relationships from aggregate investigations ignoring an important intermediate step where repression influences mobilization which, in turn, influences dissent. Additionally, researchers, fail to consider alternative types of repressive behavior – focusing on overt behavior like arrests, raids and shootings over covert behavior like the suspected existence of infiltrators, wiretaps and agents provocateur. Such an analysis not only has implications for social science but also for public policy regarding the current “war against terror – for those who wish to have more effective state action and for those who wish to monitor this behavior.

Employing a unique database on overt and covert repression by local, state and federal authorities as well as social movement mobilization and dissent of a black nationalist organization called the Republic of New Africa – that was active in Detroit, Michigan from 1968 to 1973, I examine a series of models about how repression influences dissent, explicitly addressing the critiques of this literature. Several findings are worthy of discussion. For example, covert repressive behavior more consistently influences diverse aspects of mobilization and dissent in a manner consistent with expectation. Specifically, it decreases the number of meetings, attendance at group activities and the number of people speaking at events. Covert action increases fear but it also increases anger as well. Finally, covert repression has mixed influences on dissent, sometimes diminishing it but other times increasing it. Overt

repression has a negative influence on meetings and attendance but it does not influence any other aspect of social movements. This strongly moves us to better comprehend the role that covert state behavior has on social movements for it influences not just how these movements prepare for dissent but also how they engage in it. As dissident behavior also increases overt repression, this tends to reinforce the point.

Indeed, how can we discuss the influence of how repression influence dissent without also considering the impact of repression on dissent; this is consistent with other research of the conflict-repression nexus but it introduces another form of repression into the discussion.

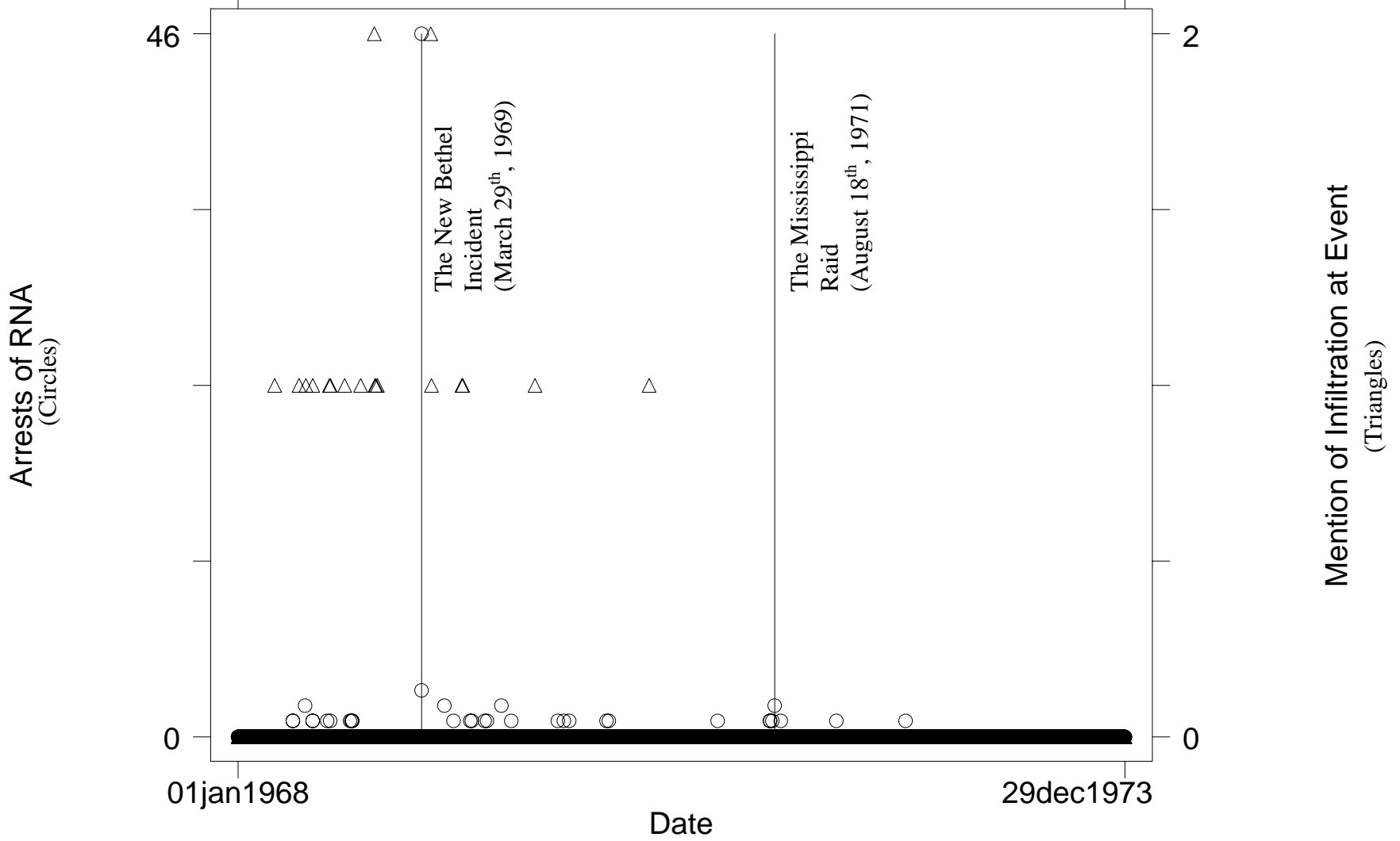
This only concerns one body of literature. What does this tell us (if anything) about the death of the Black Power Movement? In part, my analysis tends to favor those that discuss the influence of covert as opposed to overt activity. At the same time, the research here tends to complicate the traditional understanding. For example, most would expect covert repressive action to uniformly weaken social movements but this is not the case. Suspicion of infiltration was found to increase the number of meetings as well as event attendance – for at least a time, as well as anger, perceptions of urgency (that it was essential to act) and agency (that there was a window of opportunity to act). Results also disclose that covert repression influences overt behavior but in complex ways – sometimes increasing it and in other times decreasing it.

Of the different accounts available in the literature, my research thus appears to support the work of Zwerman and Steinhoff (2005) who suggest that repression has different influences on social movements – some enhancing dissent but others weakening it. I was not able to properly investigate the claims of their argument because I did not incorporate information about RNA cohorts into the examination (i.e., identifying who was in the organization at different points in time) but within a later study I will do so. Additionally, I assumed within the research design that the influence of repression on mobilization and dissent would be comparable over time but this may not be the case. In all likelihood, relationships are different before and after large-scale repressive efforts (e.g., after the shooting and mass arrest of RNA members following the New Bethel incident of 1969) – allowing me to tap a threshold argument discussed above. There are also distinct organizational initiatives that must be considered. For

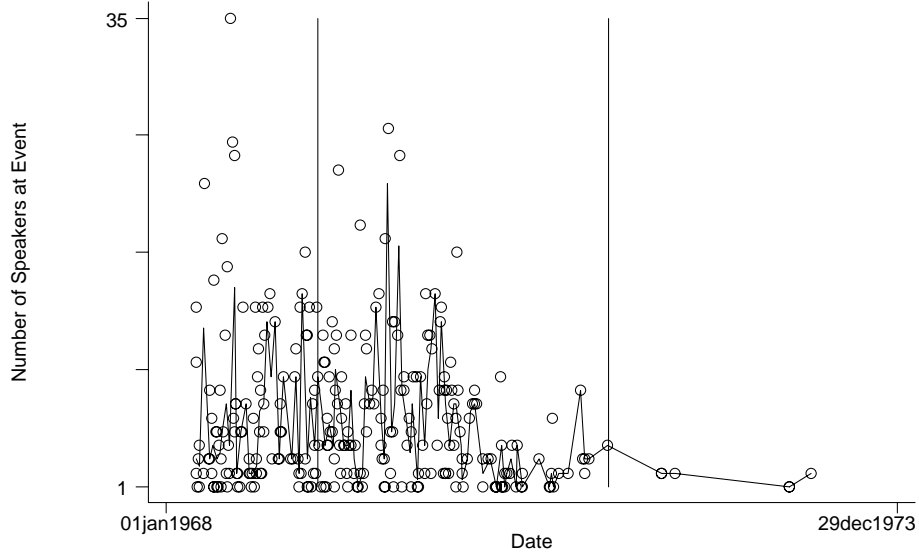
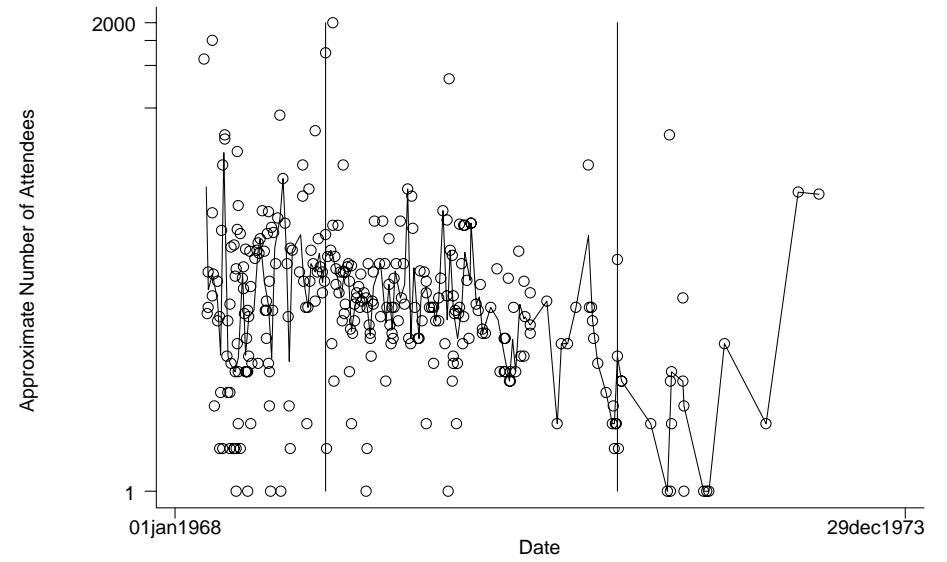
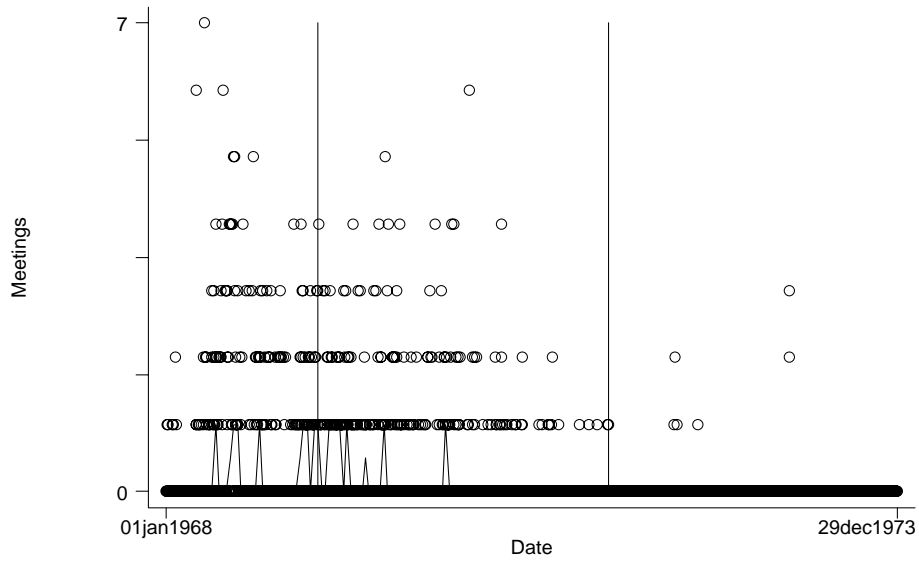
example, in 1968 and 1969, the RNA attempted to assist Oceanhill-Brownsville with seceding from New York and the United States. This drained resources and attention, likely conditioning the influence of repressive behavior directed against those remaining in Detroit who continued their mobilization and dissident behavior. Finally, it may be the case that as the organization moved its headquarters from Detroit to New Orleans and then to Mississippi, that this would also condition the influence of repressive behavior directed against those remaining in Detroit. These will be considered in later investigations.

The research here thus opens up an old debate but offers a new way to explore it. If the difficulty with data accessibility can be overcome (providing information on another case in a manner comparable to the RNA), then this will prove to be an important step for those interested in understanding social movements as well as state efforts to control these activities.

Alternative Aspects of State Repression Against RNA



Alternative Aspects of RNA Organizational Behavior



RNA Collective Action

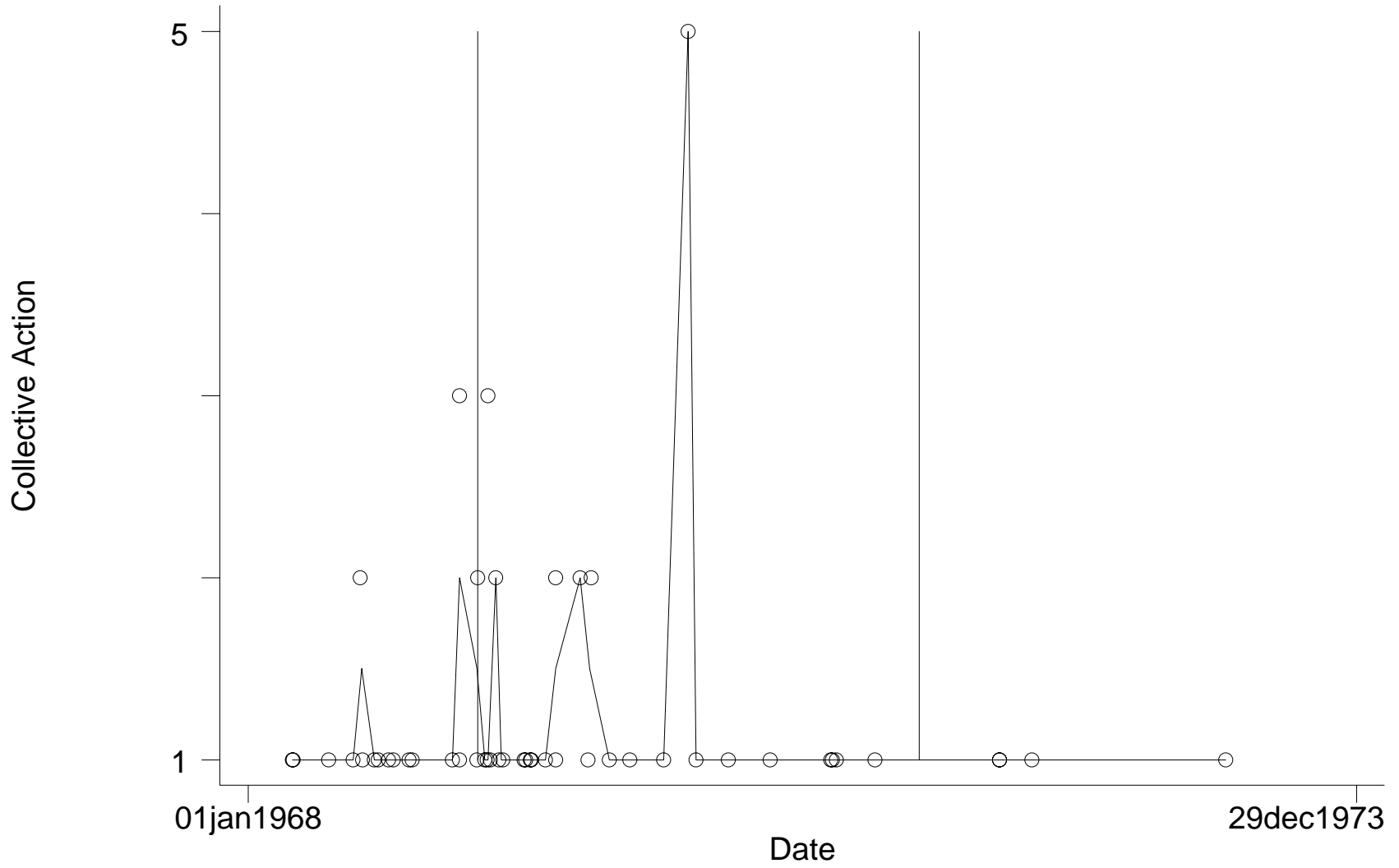
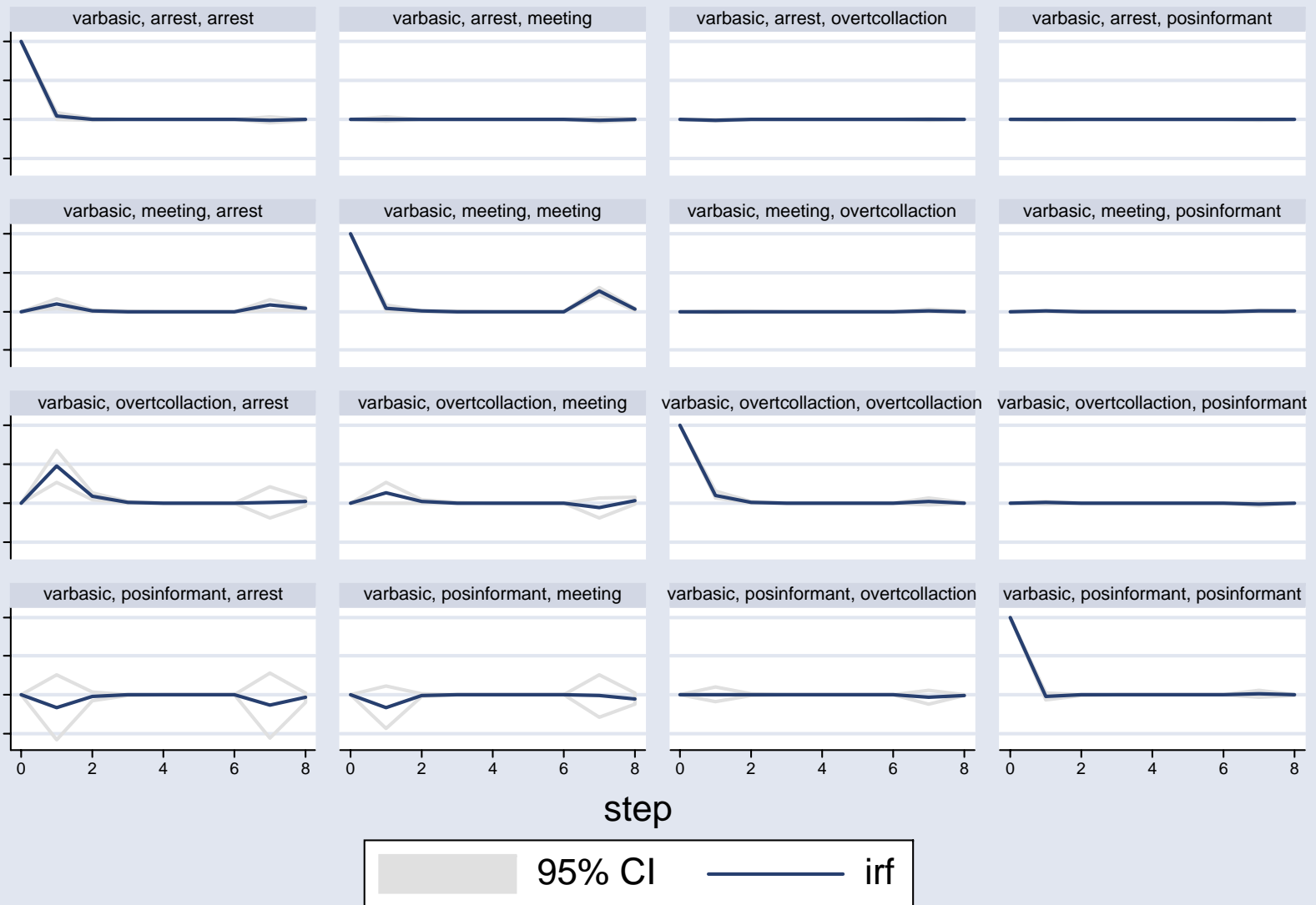


Table 1a. Impulse Response Functions from Basic Vector Autoregression:
 Arrest (arrest), Mention of Informants (posinformant), Overt Collective Action (overtcollection)
 and the Number of Meetings Held (meeting) – by the day/step



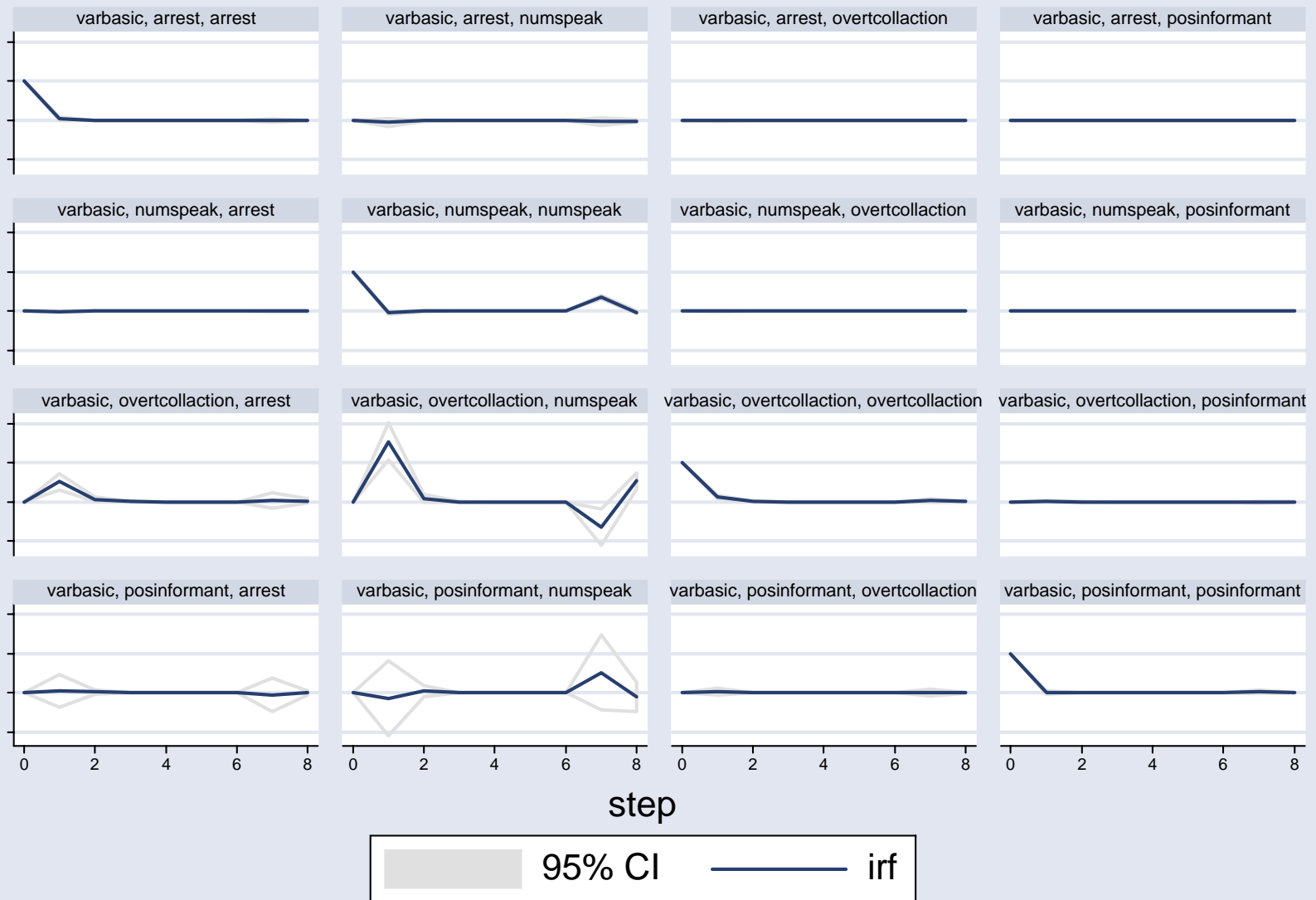
Graphs by irfname, impulse variable, and response variable

Table 1b. Impulse Response Functions from Basic Vector Autoregression:
 Arrest (arrest), Mention of Informants (posinformant), Overt Collective Action (overtcollection)
 and Presence at Group Events (present) – by the day/step



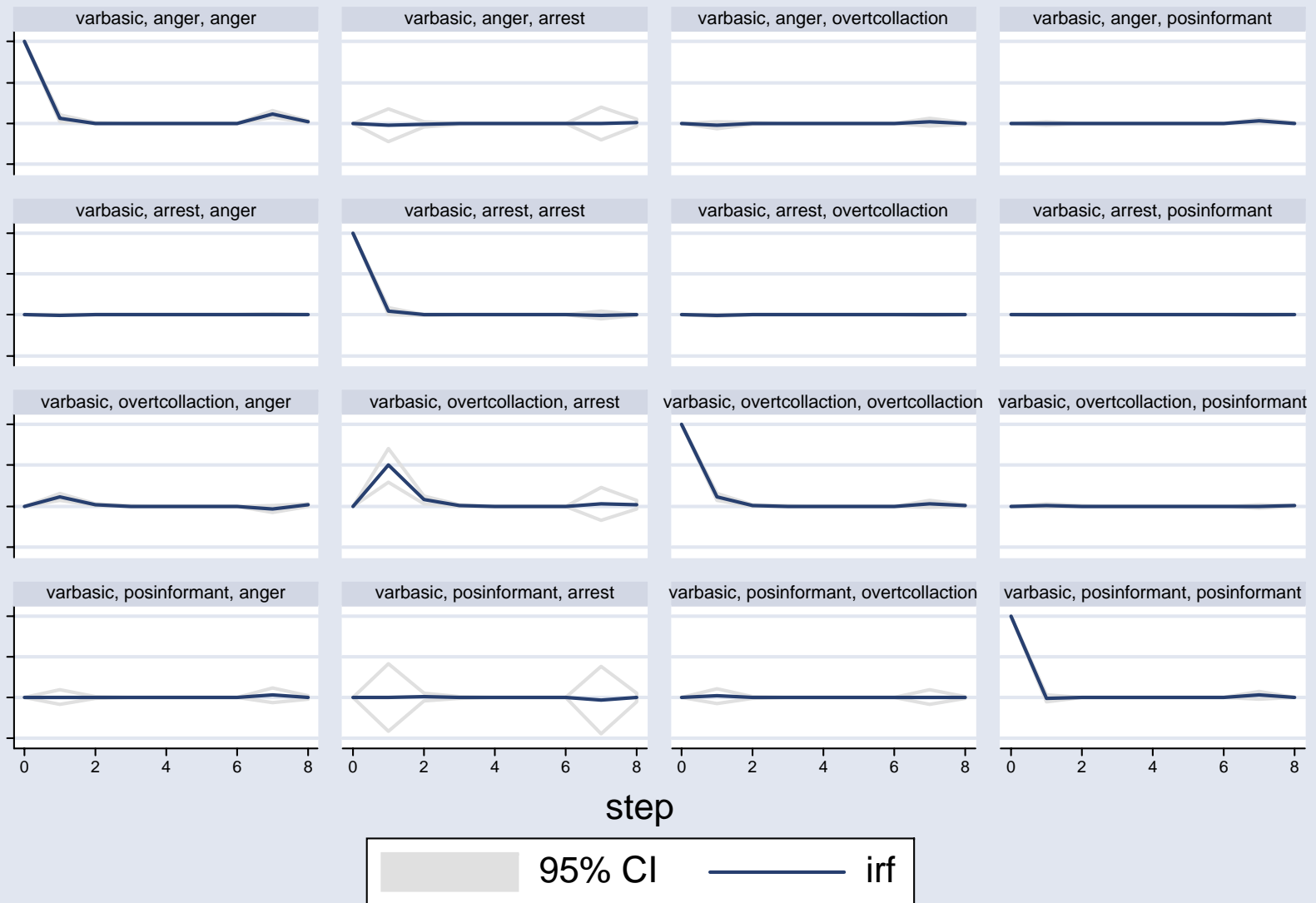
Graphs by irfname, impulse variable, and response variable

Table 1c. Impulse Response Functions from Basic Vector Autoregression:
 Arrest (arrest), Mention of Informants (posinformant), Overt Collective Action (overtcollection)
 and Number of Different Individuals Speaking at RNA Events (numspeak) – by the day/step



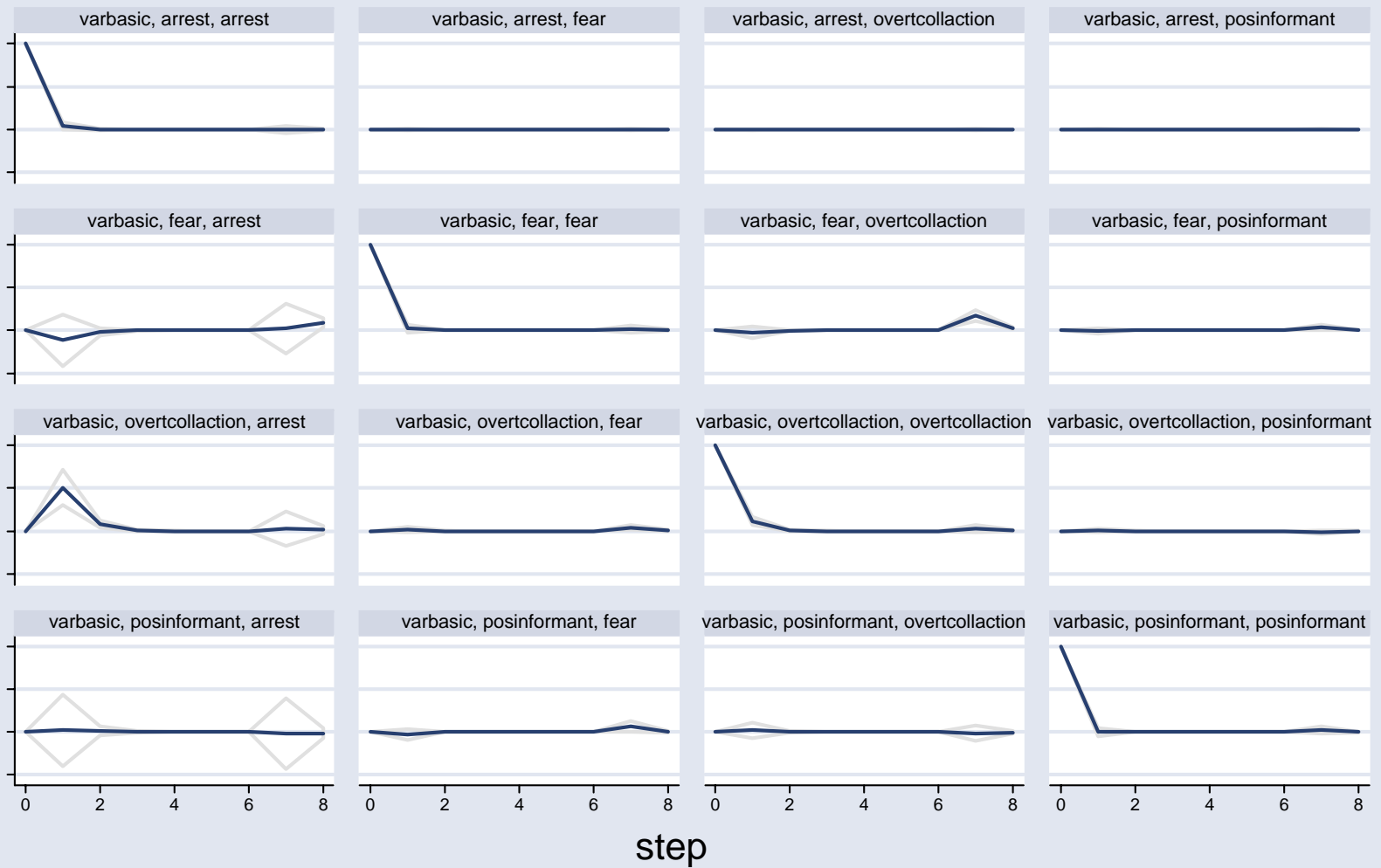
Graphs by irfname, impulse variable, and response variable

Table 2a. Impulse Response Functions from Basic Vector Autoregression:
 Arrest (arrest), Mention of Informants (posinformant), Overt Collective Action (overtcollection)
 and Expressions of Anger at Group Events (anger) – by the day/step



Graphs by irfname, impulse variable, and response variable

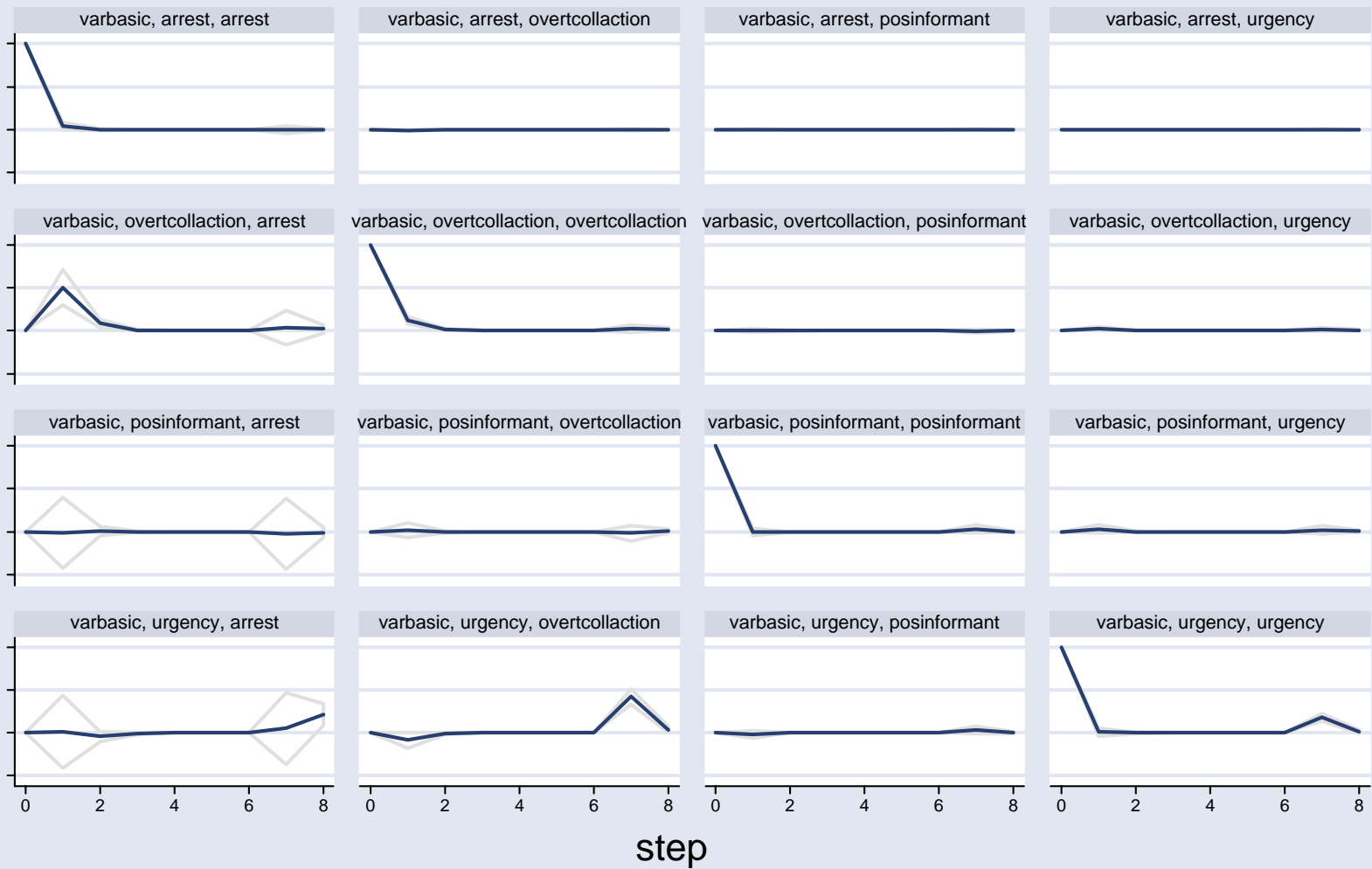
Table 2b. Impulse Response Functions from Basic Vector Autoregression:
 Arrest (arrest), Mention of Informants (posinformant), Overt Collective Action (overtcollection)
 and Expressions of Fear at Group Events (fear) – by the day/step



95% CI irf

Graphs by irfname, impulse variable, and response variable

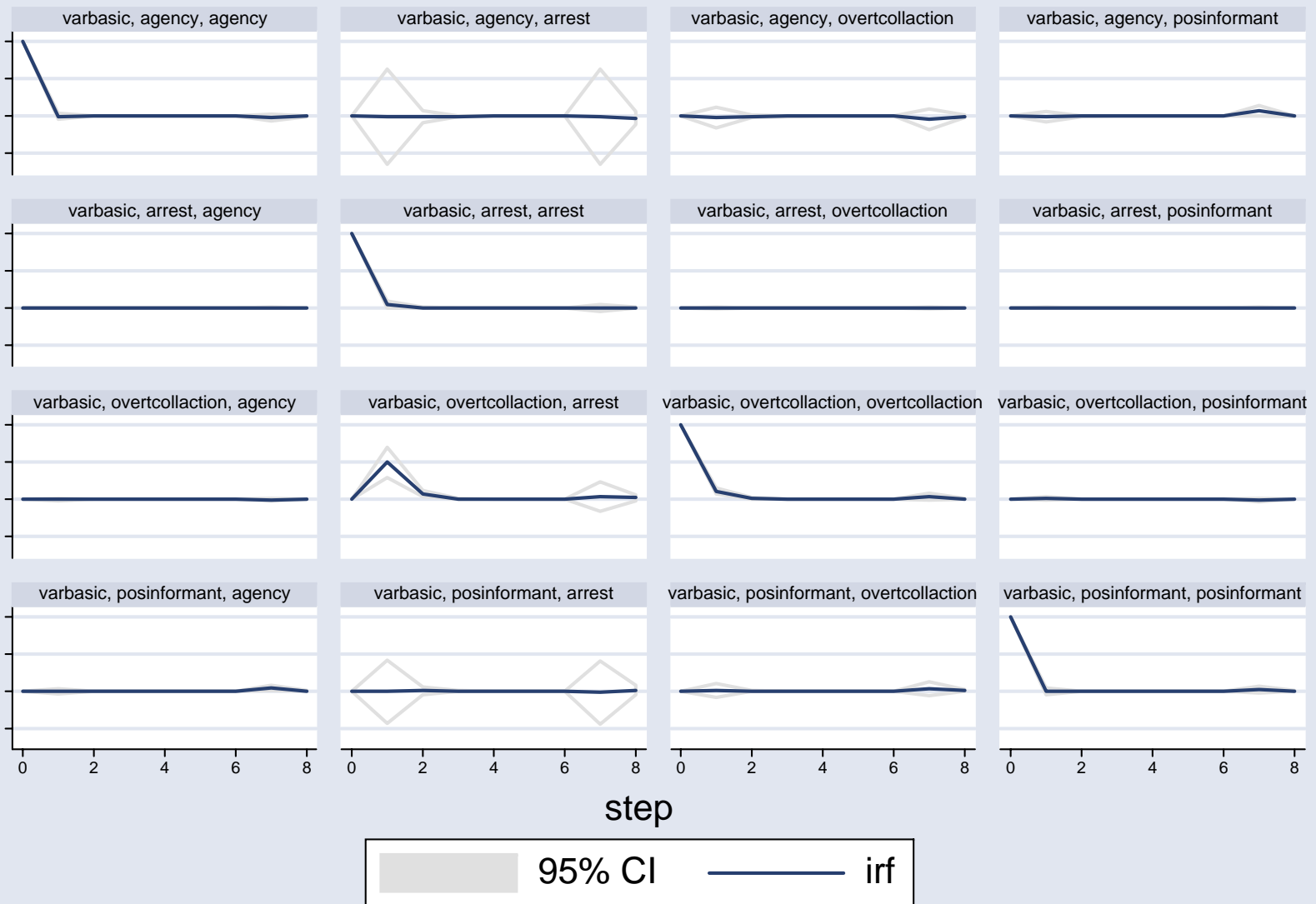
Table 3a. Impulse Response Functions from Basic Vector Autoregression:
 Arrest (arrest), Mention of Informants (posinformant), Overt Collective Action (overtcollection)
 and Expressions of “Urgency” at Group Events (urgency) – by the day/step



95% CI irf

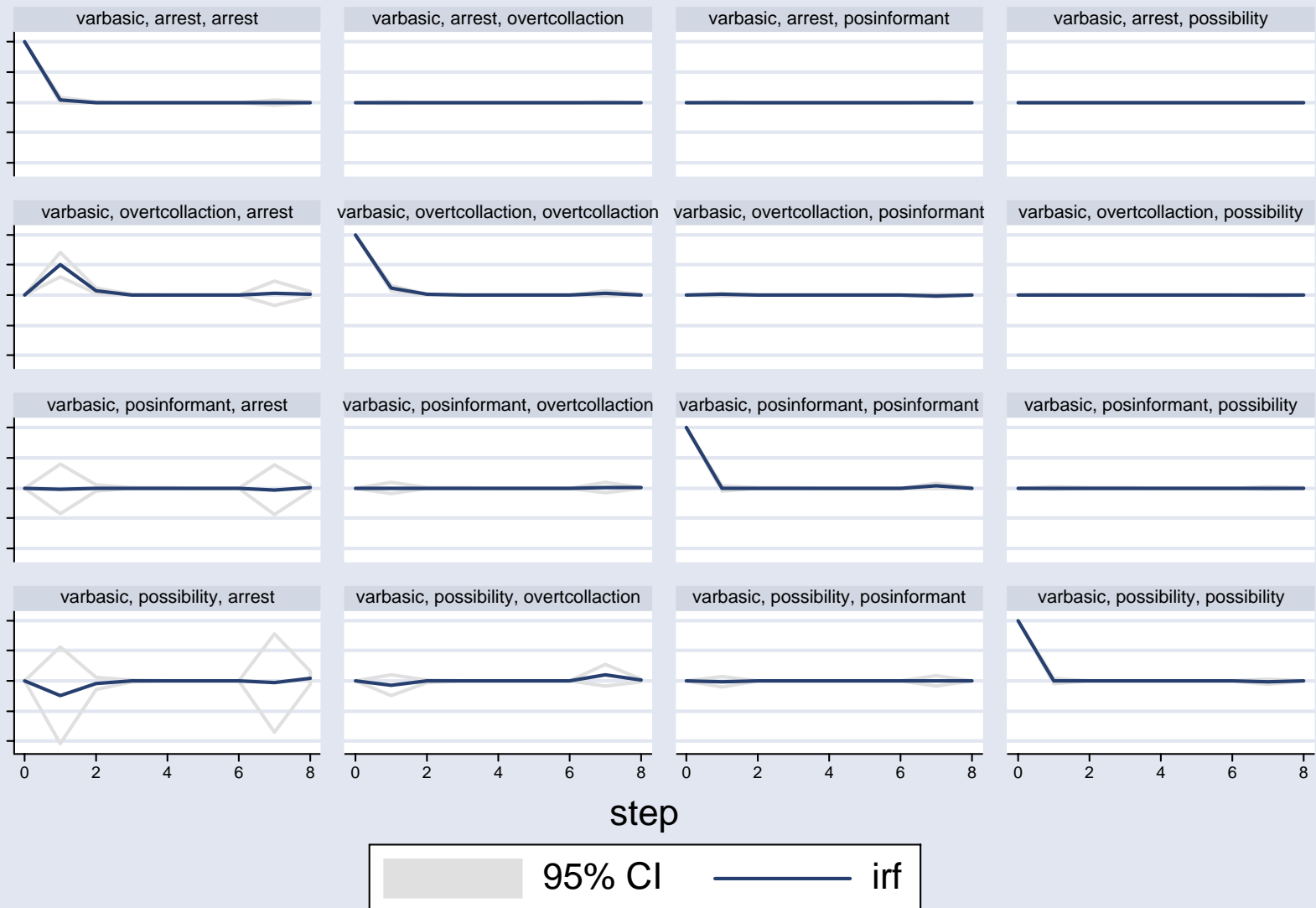
Graphs by irfname, impulse variable, and response variable

Table 3b. Impulse Response Functions from Basic Vector Autoregression:
 Arrest (arrest), Mention of Informants (posinformant), Overt Collective Action (overtcollection)
 and Expressions of “Agency” at Group Events (agency) – by the day/step



Graphs by irfname, impulse variable, and response variable

Table 3c. Impulse Response Functions from Basic Vector Autoregression:
 Arrest (arrest), Mention of Informants (posinformant), Overt Collective Action (overtcollection)
 and Expressions of “Possibility” at Group Events (possibility) – by the day/step



Graphs by irfname, impulse variable, and response variable

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