Does the Messenger Shape the Message's Effect? Race, Black Lives Matter, and the Efficacy of Social Movement Messages

Paul F. Testa* Tarah Williams† Kylee Britzman‡

Karra McCray Gibson§ Matthew V. Hibbing¶

Abstract

In any social movement, the message and messenger matter. This presents challenges and opportunities for movements like Black Lives Matter (BLM), as the same message can reach different groups to varying effects depending on who delivers it. We study these dynamics directly using an experimental design that gives some respondents a choice about whether to hear a Black man's opinions about BLM. Our design reveals what a standard experiment might miss: messages from Black messengers reach broad audiences and produce more support for BLM. However, among those unwilling to hear a message from a Black messenger, encountering a pro-BLM message from a Black messenger causes backlash which obscures the broader, positive effects of the message on its likely audience. These skeptics, however, are less hostile to and potentially persuaded by the same message from a white messenger. The results demonstrate how targeted messaging can increase support for social movements.

Short title: Does the Messenger Shape the Message's Effect?

Keywords: Black Lives Matter, self-selection, experiment, persuasion, social movements, choice

Supplementary material for this article is available in the appendix in the online edition.

Replication files are available in the JOP Dataverse (https://dataverse.harvard.edu/dataverse/jop). The empirical analysis has been successfully replicated by the JOP replication analyst.

The studies reported herein were conducted in compliance with relevant laws and were deemed exempt by the Brown University IRB (#1808002175).

*paul_testa@brown.edu

†twilliams@allegheny.edu

‡kjbritzman@lcsc.edu

§karragibson@sc.edu

¶mhibbing@ucmerced.edu

In 2020, people took to the streets during a global pandemic to protest the murders of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and other victims of police violence in the U.S. Although the Black Lives Matter movement began years earlier, its message took center stage during a summer of protests that scholars have called the "broadest in US history" (Putnam, Chenoweth, and Pressman 2020). After these large, diverse protests, public opinion followed a complicated path. Support for the protests surged among some citizens, pushing them to be more progressive, while others held firm and even hardened their opposition (Reny and Newman 2021; Tesler 2020). Why did the message of the activists and the early 2020 protests change the minds of some citizens, but fail to persuade others?

Social movement persuasion, especially the type valued by New Social Movements (Harris 2015; Rickford 2016; Tillery 2019), relies on a movement's ability to focus public discourse on its concerns (Woodly 2015) and persuade the public to its cause (Benford and Snow 2000). Of course, some messages are more effective than others (Bonilla and Tillery 2020), but the content of the message is not the only factor that can contribute to persuasion. Our central argument is that the success of persuasive efforts depends not just on how people respond to a movement's message, but also on who that message actually reaches.

Understanding this dynamic requires examining how people respond to messages and messengers. While persuasion is challenging, a wide range of scholars across the social sciences have explored the conditions under which attitudes can be changed (DellaVigna and Gentzkow 2010; Druckman 2022; Wood 2000). One of the key insights of this work is the importance of the messenger (Kuklinski and Hurley 1994; Nicholson 2011). The strongest arguments can go unheeded if the target of persuasion does not like or trust the person making the case.

Simply asking how people respond to the same message when delivered by different messengers, however, misses a crucial component of the communication process. The message

source not only shapes how people react to its claims, but also whether they hear the message at all. For this reason, evaluating a movement's impact also requires understanding when individuals will choose to engage with its messengers and the information they convey. Existing research has demonstrated that messengers matter and explored the conditions under which the same argument might prove effective or ineffective. What is missing from much of this work is a theoretical conception of persuasion that treats a message's audience as more than merely passive "recipients." The people that social movements try to persuade are not just waiting to be convinced by a well-crafted argument from an ideal messenger. They make their own choices about what media to consume or whom to engage in discussion. Persuasion is an interactive, multi-stage process, and our understanding of it should reflect that reality.

To address this gap, we adapt our empirical approach to better capture the challenges facing social movements. Standard experimental designs use random assignment to make causal claims, but the average treatment effects identified from forced exposure may provide limited and even misleading insights into questions where the effects of the message and messenger are fundamentally intertwined.

In this paper, we advance a theory of persuasion in which the likelihood that citizens accept a movement's message varies with their probability of encountering such claims. We then present several studies which capture this theoretical process focusing on persuasive messages about the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement. Following the work of Gaines and Kuklinski (2011) and De Benedictis-Kessner et al. (2019), our experimental design incorporates choice as a means to estimate treatment effects for subgroups that are likely and unlikely to be exposed to BLM messages. By offering subjects a choice about whether to engage with our treatments, we find evidence of both support and backlash to the message. While BLM messaging increases support for BLM's goals among those who are likely to receive the message, it decreases support among

those who would choose to avoid these discussions. Although some backlash is unavoidable for social movements, our design offers insights into the size, cause and possible responses to this opposition. While the magnitude of the backlash is large in our studies, it is also concentrated among a relatively small audience. Moreover, we find evidence that co-racial messengers may reduce backlash and even persuade this more skeptical audience. By analyzing open-ended responses provided by participants, we find that how people write about BLM also reflects this backlash. Taken together, our results help us understand how choice conditions the effectiveness of movement messages.

Motivation and Theory

For social movements, frames matter (Benford and Snow 2000). By changing public discourse, social movements can change the incentives of decision makers to align with their goals (Woodly 2015). Similarly, ample evidence demonstrates that different frames have different effects (Chong and Druckman 2010) depending, in part, on the prior beliefs and characteristics of the individual receiving them (Feldman and Huddy 2005).

To take one example, recent work on the BLM movement highlights these effects. Bonilla and Tillery (2020) demonstrate that African Americans respond differently to different movement frames (a nationalist frame, feminist frame, and LGBTQ+ frame) on the basis of gender. Black men are more likely to exhibit backlash against the feminist and LGBTQ+ frames while others are unmoved. Kilgo and Mourão (2019) find that those who rely on more conservative media sources hold more negative attitudes about the BLM movement but the use of mainstream and/or liberal news sources does not correspond with more positive evaluations. Similarly, Crowder (2023) varied both the content of fictitious social media posts about social justice as well as the race of the individual to which these messages were attributed to, finding that the content of the messages appeared to be more influential than the race of the messenger in determining

subjects' emotional responses to the treatments.

The source of a frame's message may also cause its effects to vary. In short, source cues provide individuals with a heuristic for forming opinions (Popkin 1991). Rather than evaluating the specifics on an issue they may know little about, citizens can rely on more general evaluations of the credibility, expertise, and trustworthiness of the speaker in deciding whether to adopt or reject a claim (Dancey and Sheagley 2013). For example, people may be influenced by the messenger's likability and attractiveness (Eagly and Chaiken 1975). They may draw inferences based on the messenger's perceived interests, such that information from unexpected sources or sources with less of a vested interest may be more persuasive (Berinsky 2017; Eagly, Wood, and Chaiken 1978; Susmann and Wegener 2023).

Race, in particular, can be a powerful source cue (Kuklinski and Hurley 1994; White 2007). For example, theories of racial spillover suggest that racial source cues are sufficient to polarize opinion on topics as varied as economic recovery, healthcare policy (Tesler 2012), and climate change (Benegal 2018). Racial cues often convey other information that shapes how individuals respond to messengers. People tend to trust those who share their racial identity more than those who do not (Barreto and Nuño 2011) and may be more open to listening to arguments from co-racial speakers (Crano 2001).

These findings are also apparent in messaging around Black Lives Matter. While some research examines how partisanship conditions the persuasiveness of BLM messages (Drakulich and Denver 2022), much of the existing work focuses on how race conditions these attitudes. White Americans find other white Americans to be more trustworthy than Black Americans when discussing police conduct (Nelson, Sanbonmatsu, and McClerking 2007). Similarly, white Americans evaluated white messengers discussing BLM more positively than Black messengers (Lane, Coles, and Saleem 2018) and were more likely to be persuaded by their messages about

BLM (Arora and Stout 2019).

Studies of both framing and source cues typically rely on survey experiments, where random assignment enables the credible identification of average treatment effects. While such results are important and informative, they leave out part of the process. To persuade others, people must first receive the message. If reception is taken for granted in an experimental design, we cannot fully understand the processes of persuasion. Capturing how persuasion happens among people more or less likely to receive a social movement's message motivates this study.

This process corresponds to long-standing theories of persuasion. Consider, for example, Zaller's 1992 "Receive-Accept-Sample" model of mass opinion. For persuasion to occur, citizens must receive the message, accept it, and then sample from their cognitive store of considerations.[1] Zaller's R-A-S model builds on the McGuire (1985) framework to include the possibility that not all messages are received.

In most experimental studies of framing or source cues, reception is determined by the researcher through random assignment. Outside the lab, however, the receipt of treatment is not guaranteed. In our current environment, the sheer proliferation of information means that the vast majority of messages will not be received by all people. Many studies demonstrate that people turn to like-minded sources for political information (Hartman and Weber 2009; Stroud 2008; Hart et al. 2009). Social media has amplified this trend as people make choices that limit their exposure to ideological diversity (Bakshy, Messing, and Adamic 2015). Easy selection into like-minded media spaces further silos individuals who are already likely to live and interact in social networks characterized by homophily (McPherson, Smith-Lovin, and Cook 2001). Individuals, of course, do not exist in complete echo chambers. Some exposure

[1]This, of course, is not the only dynamic at play. Petty and Cacioppo (1981) suggest that when individuals encounter a message, they can deliberatively engage with the message or, to save resources, they can use cues to decide whether to adopt or discard the message.

to dissonant views is unavoidable or inadvertent (Mutz and Mondak 2006), but research on the persuasiveness of social movements must balance this incidental exposure against the many ways that individuals can shape their media diet to filter out uncomfortable, incongruent messages.

Given these dynamics, we make three simple claims: First, individuals differ in their likelihood of receiving a social movement's message. Second, these differences in reception will tend to predict differences in response. Finally, no single factor is likely to explain both dynamics. Each claim, we believe, is uncontroversial, but rarely are their collective implications applied to the study of political persuasion.

To help make these claims more concrete, consider the impact of a cable news interview with a Black Lives Matter activist. The reticence of white Americans to interact with or trust Black messengers poses a challenge for movements like BLM, given that their activists are more likely to be Black (Heaney 2022). How can they reach these individuals with their messages? As we have argued, the total effect of such messages depends on both who it reaches and how this audience responds. We can imagine the potential audience for this message consisting of supporters, skeptics, and undecideds, each of whom differs in how likely they are to encounter the activist's message, and how they will respond upon hearing it. Supporters, say frequent viewers of MSNBC, are perhaps the most likely to encounter this message, but their attitudes may be largely unchanged, not because the message is ineffective, but instead because it already had its desired effect. Skeptics, say frequent viewers of Fox News, are more likely to avoid an activist's message when possible and more likely to counterargue its claims when they encounter them (Kunda 1990; Taber and Lodge 2006). The reception and response of the undecideds, say those who only watch cable news in airports and waiting rooms, likely falls somewhere between these extremes. Finally, consider how the source of the message may shape responses upon reception. Hearing this message from an expected source, like a Black man, likely activates people's

prior beliefs and considerations on this topic and racial issues more broadly. Encountering this information from an unexpected source, say a white ally, may yield different responses. For some, this message from an unexpected source may be more persuasive, as the white speaker may not directly or materially benefit from the cause they advocate. For others, this message may fall flat, as the speaker lacks the credibility of lived experiences possessed by a Black messenger.

The average treatment effect from a standard survey experiment will obscure these differences because who receives a message is determined by random assignment. A message may succeed at persuading the undecideds, but elicit backlash among the skeptics, such that the average treatment effect appears to be zero while its actual effect in the real world is positive. Subgroup analysis offers an imperfect tool for detecting such heterogeneity.[2] A more promising solution to these challenges, we argue, comes from experimental designs that allow some subjects a choice about whether to receive or avoid the message.

Data and Design

To study the effects and reach of a social movement's message, we implement an experimental design in which some subjects are allowed to choose whether they receive the treatment or not. Described as Preference Incorporating Choice and Assignment (PICA) designs by De Benedictis-Kessner et al. (2019), they are also known as patient preference trials among public health researchers. In political science, Gaines and Kuklinski (2011) used such a design to uncover heterogeneous responses to campaign ads, Arceneaux, Johnson, and Murphy (2012) and De Benedictis-Kessner et al. (2019) incorporate the dynamics of choice to study how reception shapes responses to partisan media, and Leeper (2017) explores public policy attitudes.

[2]We elaborate on this point in Section 8 of the Appendix, where we show that divergent responses uncovered by our design in both studies would be missed by standard subgroup analyses of conditional average treatment effects ($CATE$s).

Figure 1: Stages of the Experimental Design

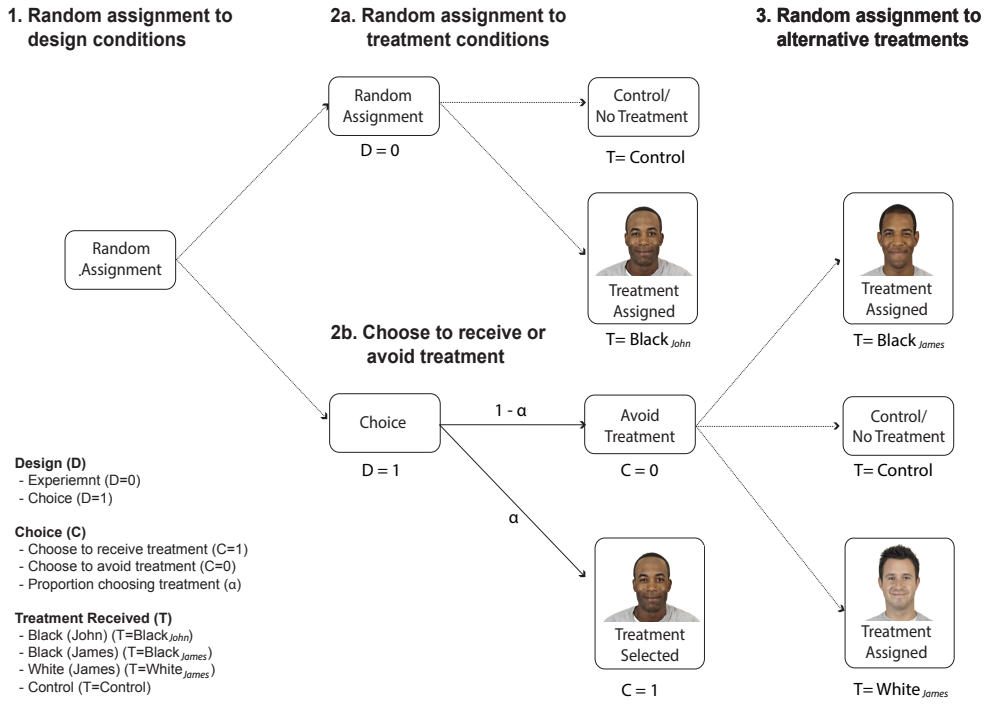

Figure 1 presents the stages of our design. Subjects were randomly assigned (Stage 1) to either an experimental condition (Stage 2a, $D_i = 0$) in which treatment status was determined by random assignment, or a choice condition (Stage 2b $D_i = 1$), where subjects chose whether to receive treatment ($C_i = 1$) or not ($C_i = 0$). Among those avoiding treatment, some subjects were randomly assigned (Stage 3) to receive the same message attributed to either a different Black man or a white man.
Alt Text: Flowchart showing the experimental design. Participants were randomly assigned to either a forced-exposure condition or a choice condition. In the choice condition, those opting out of treatment could be reassigned to view the message from either a different Black messenger or a white messenger.

Figure 1 describes the logic of our design. We randomly assigned some subjects to read an argument in support of Black Lives Matter, while others are given a choice of whether to read this information. Specifically, we told the subjects that they would be asked to share their opinions on the BLM movement. After asking how familiar they were with the movement, we randomized the participants into two design conditions. Two-fifths of the participants were assigned to the "standard" experimental design (Stage 2a), where they had an equal probability of receiving the treatment, a brief persuasive argument about BLM from "John," a Black man, or being assigned to a control condition in which they proceeded directly to answering the

outcomes for the study.

The remaining respondents were assigned to the "choice" condition (Stage 2b) of the study, where they were asked before providing their opinions about whether they wanted to hear what "John" (a pictured Black man) had to say on this topic. Those who agreed to hear John's views read the same persuasive argument as subjects in the treatment condition of the experimental design. Those who elected not to hear what John had to say, were then randomized into one of the following (Stage 3): a control condition where they proceeded directly to answering our outcome measures or one of two treatment conditions where they received the same message provided by a different Black man or a white man (each named "James"). Images for each messenger were selected from the Chicago Face Database (Ma, Correll, and Wittenbrink 2015).[3]

Figure 2 shows the main version of the treatment, attributed to a Black man named "John", which was received by subjects who were either randomly assigned to treatment in Stage 2a or who chose this treatment in Stage 2b. Subjects who opted not to hear what "John" had to say in Stage 2b, but were randomly assigned to one of the two treatment conditions in Stage 3, saw the same text attributed either to a different Black man or a white man, both named "James."

The text of the treatment was designed to increase general support for BLM and reflect the range of issues, topics, and arguments addressed by the movement. Although not directly focused on "John's" experiences, it is similar in spirit to what Kalla and Broockman (2023) describe as perspective-giving approaches to persuasion, although with a more thematic rather than episodic framing (Iyengar 1994; Gross 2008). It begins by naming high-profile victims of police violence and linking these tragedies to broader structural inequalities in society. The

[3]Using the Chicago Face Database version 2.0.2 norming data, we selected images that independent coders evaluated to be similar in attractiveness, trustworthiness, and racial prototypicality. See Table A.1 in the Appendix for the average coder ratings on our selection criteria and other attributes of the images.

vignette also follows research in social psychology which suggests that efforts at persuasion can be enhanced by acts that signal the persuader's receptiveness to opposing views (Hussein and Tormala 2021). In this particular vignette, the speaker acknowledges opposing viewpoints (e.g. "All Lives Matter," "Blue Lives Matter") before discussing additional evidence about racial disparities in the criminal justice system and society more broadly that lead them to support the movement.

Figure 2: Example of Persuasive Vignette

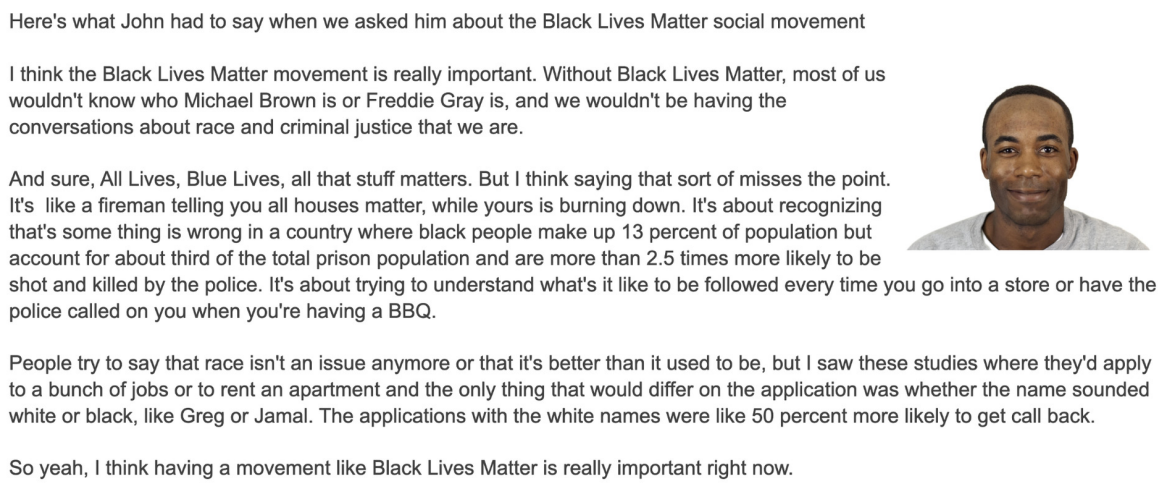

Figure 2 shows an example of the persuasive vignette that attributes common arguments in support of the Black Lives Matter movement and racial justice to either a Black or white male speaker.
Alt Text: Screenshot of the persuasive vignette that attributed common arguments in support of the Black Lives Matter movement and racial justice to a Black male speaker.

Our design allows us to estimate five quantities of causal interest summarized in Table 1 below and defined in further detail in Appendix Section 2. First, we can estimate the average treatment effect (ATE) provided by a standard survey experiment. Second, we can decompose this average treatment effect into separate "choice-specific" treatment effects for subjects likely to select or avoid the treatment. Specifically, the average treatment effect can be seen as a weighted average of the responses of those likely to encounter the treatment (e.g. frequent viewers of MSNBC) as well as those unlikely to encounter it (e.g. frequent viewers of Fox News). By giving some subjects a choice of whether to read a persuasive appeal about BLM from a Black

Table 1: Interpretation of Treatment Effects From Study Design

Estimand	Interpretation: The effect of a message. . .
Average Treatment Effect	
$\text{ATE} = \text{E}[Y\|D=0,T=Bl_{John}] - \text{E}[Y\|D=0,T=C]$	If everyone received it
Average Choice-Specific Treatment Effect	
$\text{ACTE}_{Likely} = \frac{\overbrace{E[Y\|D=1]}^{\text{Average: Choice}} - \overbrace{E[Y\|D=0,T=C]}^{\text{Average: Control}}}{\underbrace{\alpha}_{\text{Proportion Selecting Treatment}}}$	On its likely audience
$\text{ACTE}_{Unlikely} = \frac{\overbrace{E[Y\|D=0,T=Bl_{John}]}^{\text{Average: Treatment}} - \overbrace{E[Y\|D=1]}^{\text{Average: Choice}}}{\underbrace{(1-\alpha)}_{\text{Proportion Avoiding Treatment}}}$	On its unlikely audience
Conditional Average Choice-Specific Treatment Effect	
$CACTE_{Black} = E[Y\|D=1,C=0,T=Bl_{James}] - E[Y\|D=1,C=0,T=C]$	After trying to avoid it, but receiving it from a similar, expected (Black) source
$CACTE_{White} = E[Y\|D=1,C=0,T=Wh_{James}] - E[Y\|D=1,C=0,T=C]$	After trying to avoid it, but receiving it from a unexpected (White) source

man, we can estimate the relative proportion of these two groups and, following Gaines and Kuklinski (2011), decompose the ATE to identify what Knox et al. (2019) call Average Choice-Specific Treatment Effects ($ACTE$) for those likely and unlikely to encounter the message. We calculate standard errors for these estimates via bootstrapping (Leeper 2017) and obtain p-values via randomization inference (Rosenbaum 2010). Finally, among those who would avoid the treatment, we can estimate Conditional Average Choice-Specific Treatment Effects ($CACTE$). These $CACTE$s allow us to explore the effects of encountering this information from either a similar (Black) or unexpected (white) source, among an audience who might otherwise seek to avoid these discussions.

We consider the following set of possible responses.[4] First, the treatment may have a uniform positive effect, such that the estimated ATE, $ACTE$s and $CACTE$s are all similar in sign and magnitude. Incorporating choice adds little additional insight beyond what a standard survey

[4]We pre-registered our design with with EGAP (ID: 20180910AB).

experiment would tell us. Second, and we believe more likely, are patterns of divergent effects among those who choose to receive or avoid the treatment. For example, a positive $ACTE_{Likely}$ suggests that the message performed as expected, while we interpret a null $ACTE_{Likely}$ as evidence of either an ineffective message or an effective message that has already reached its ceiling among its likely audience. Similarly, we interpret a positive $ACTE_{Unlikely}$ as evidence that the message informed and/or persuaded an unlikely audience, while a negative or null effect provides evidence consistent with patterns of counter-arguing or resistance among this potentially more skeptical audience. If the $ACTE$s among the likely and unlikely are both significant, but oppositely signed, then, depending on the relative size of these audiences, the ATE from the standard experimental design may be non-significant, missing these real, but offsetting patterns of response.

Among the subjects who tried to avoid the message but subsequently encountered it, we expect the following: The $CACTE_{Black}$ should have the same sign as the $ACTE_{Unlikely}$ as both received the same message attributed to a Black man. If our message produces a negative backlash, however, it is possible that this effect will be larger among those who chose to avoid the message but were subsequently forced to encounter it (i.e. $CACTE_{Black} < ACTE_{Unlikely} < 0$). Similarly, if hearing this message from an unexpected source is more persuasive (or less threatening), then we expect the $CACTE_{White}$ to be positive (or at least less negative than the $CACTE_{Black}$ and $ACTE_{Unlikely}$). Finally, we also explore whether these heterogeneous results are further moderated by subjects' race, partisanship, and familiarity with the movement.

We implemented this design on both convenience and nationally representative samples. In fall 2018, we recruited 1,478 respondents through Amazon's Mechanical Turk (MTurk).[5] As MTurk samples differ from national probability samples in systematic ways (Berinsky,

[5]MTurk respondents were paid $0.50 to take a 3-5 minute survey. Respondents needed to have at least a 99% Human Intelligence Task (HIT) approval rate and be located in the U.S.

Huber, and Lenz 2012; Huff and Tingley 2015), we recruited a sample of 1,000 respondents through Qualtrics's online panel using quota-based sampling to more closely match population benchmarks on race, gender, age, and education. Replicating our design on two distinct samples allows us to assess the robustness of our findings. Where results differ, we generally give greater weight to the more nationally representative Qualtrics sample.

Our primary pre-registered outcome for both studies is a simple index derived from subjects' responses to six questions tapping support for BLM and agreement with the general arguments of the movement. This support is measured on a sliding scale coded from 0 (completely disagree) to 100 (completely agree) so that higher values correspond to greater support for the goals and claims of BLM.[6] The items are scaled into a single index through principal component analysis (PCA) with varimax rotation.[7] In addition to these pre-registered outcomes, we also conducted a series of exploratory analyses using a sentiment analysis of respondents' open responses to the following prompt: "Do you have any opinions you'd like to share about the Black Lives Matter movement?" We describe the specifics of this work in further detail below and in the Appendix (Section 10).

Results

We begin by considering who "gets the message" about Black Lives Matter when it comes from an expected source. We find that messages about BLM reach large majorities of the participants in our two studies. Next, we examine the effects of this persuasive appeal on its likely and unlikely audiences. Our PICA design uncovers important heterogeneity that a standard forced exposure experiment would miss. Null ATEs in both studies mask large and offsetting $ACTE$s

[6]Question wordings and descriptive statistics are provided in Sections 4-5 of the Appendix.

[7]See Section 6 of the Appendix for further discussion of the item scaling, and Section 10 for a replication of our main analyses using each individual item, separately. The general pattern of results is substantively similar but less statistically precise for some items.

among the treatment's likely and unlikely recipients. Finally, through subgroup analyses and qualitative explorations of participants' open-responses, we investigate potential mechanisms behind these results.

Who Gets The Message about BLM?

Who are messages about BLM likely to reach? Both studies suggest that the potential audience for the movement's persuasive appeals is large. In our MTurk sample in Study 1, over 80 percent of the 963 respondents who were given a choice elected to hear what a Black man named "John" had to say about BLM. In Study 2, with a more nationally representative Qualtrics sample, over two-thirds of the 658 subjects chose to receive the treatment when given the choice.[8]

Figure 3 provides further insights into the characteristics of BLM's likely (and unlikely) audiences by presenting logistic regressions predicting who chooses to encounter a message about BLM ($C = 1$ in Stage 2b of Figure 1) in Study 1 (left panel) and Study 2 (right panel) using a range of pre-treatment covariates.[9] For a given covariate, the dot represents the regression coefficient, with lines corresponding to 95% (thin) and 90 % (thick) confidence intervals.

[8]Statistical power in these designs is a function of effect size, sample size, and, for the $ACTE$s and $CACTE$s, the proportion of respondents selecting and avoiding treatment. As shown in Table 2 of our pre-analysis plan, our design was powered to standardized effect sizes of about 0.35 among the message's likely recipients in a scenario where about two-thirds of respondents selected the treatment.

[9]White men are the excluded categories for race and gender in these models. Appendix Section 7 contains additional information about who chooses to receive or avoid treatment.

Figure 3: Who Gets the Message about BLM

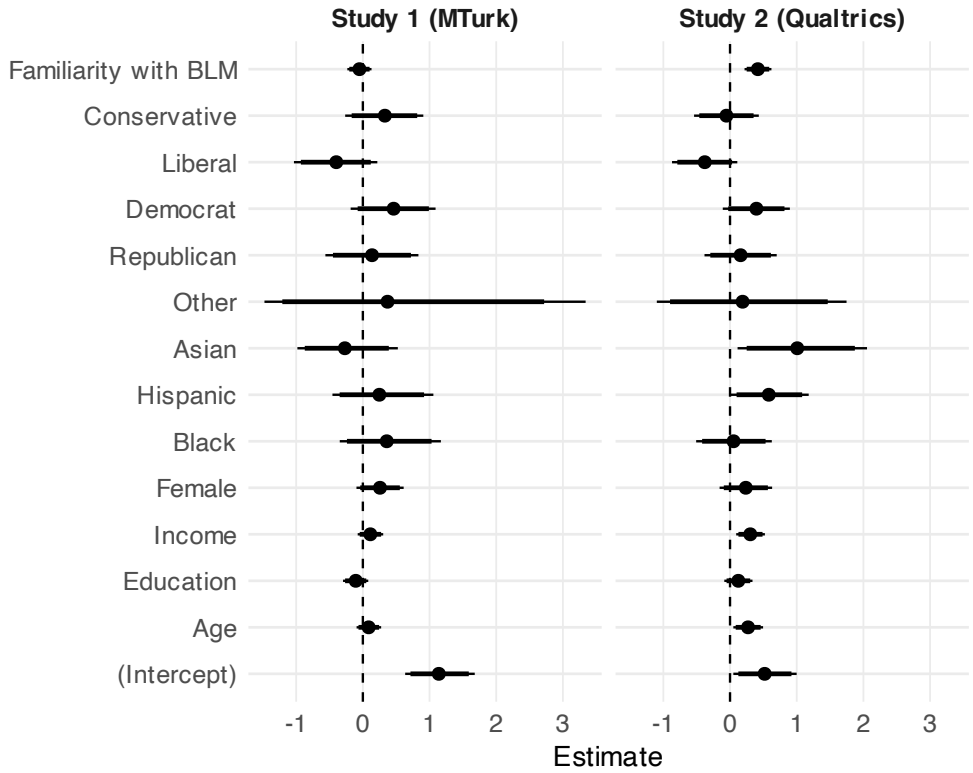

Figure 3 presents a series of logistic regression coefficients predicting who chooses to encounter a message about BLM using pre-treatment covariates with 95% and 90% confidence intervals for respondents in Studies 1 and 2. Positive coefficients indicate people with these attributes were more likely to choose to receive the treatment. See Table A.3 for specific point estimates, confidence intervals and p-values.
Alt Text: Dot-and-line coefficient plots showing logistic regression predicting who chooses to hear a message about BLM in two studies. In the MTurk sample, no characteristics strongly predicted choice. In the Qualtrics sample, older, higher-income, Asian, and more BLM-familiar respondents were more likely to choose treatment.

Consistent with our claim that message reception is a complicated function of multiple factors, none of the 15 covariates are significant predictors of reception in Study 1. In Study 2, respondents who were older, higher income, more familiar with BLM and Asian were more likely to opt to hear the views of John, perhaps reflecting the greater variation in Study 2's more representative sample. Rather than inferring who will seek out or avoid treatment, our PICA design lets us study these behaviors, and their consequences, directly.

How do Messengers Shape Responses to BLM?

Who chooses to receive a message is a complicated process – one that researchers may not be able to predict ahead of time or model after the fact. But the choices people make about

which messages to receive are crucial to understanding the potential effects of a social movement's message. The analysis presented in Figure 4 reflects this complex relationship between respondents' traits, choices, and message response.

The top row provides the ATEs, ACTEs, and CACTEs for Study 1's MTurk sample. Similarly, the bottom row contains the results for Study 2's Qualtrics sample. The first panel in each row presents the results for the full sample, with thin and thick lines again corresponding to 95 and 90 percent confidence intervals, while the remaining panels offer some additional exploratory insights into potential mechanisms behind these results. The second panel presents the results for just white respondents.[10] The third panel presents the separate estimates for white Republicans (diamonds) and white Democrats (triangles). The final panel in each row shows estimates for respondents who reported being more familiar with BLM (solid squares, corresponding to respondents who said they were either very or extremely familiar with BLM) or less familiar (empty squares, corresponding to respondents who said they were moderately, slightly or not at all familiar with BLM). Point estimates and confidence intervals are provided in Tables A.6 and A.7 of the Appendix.

[10] Appendix Section 12 explores these dynamics among racial and ethnic minorities finding similar, although less statistically precise, dynamics.

Figure 4: Heterogeneous Effects of Messengers

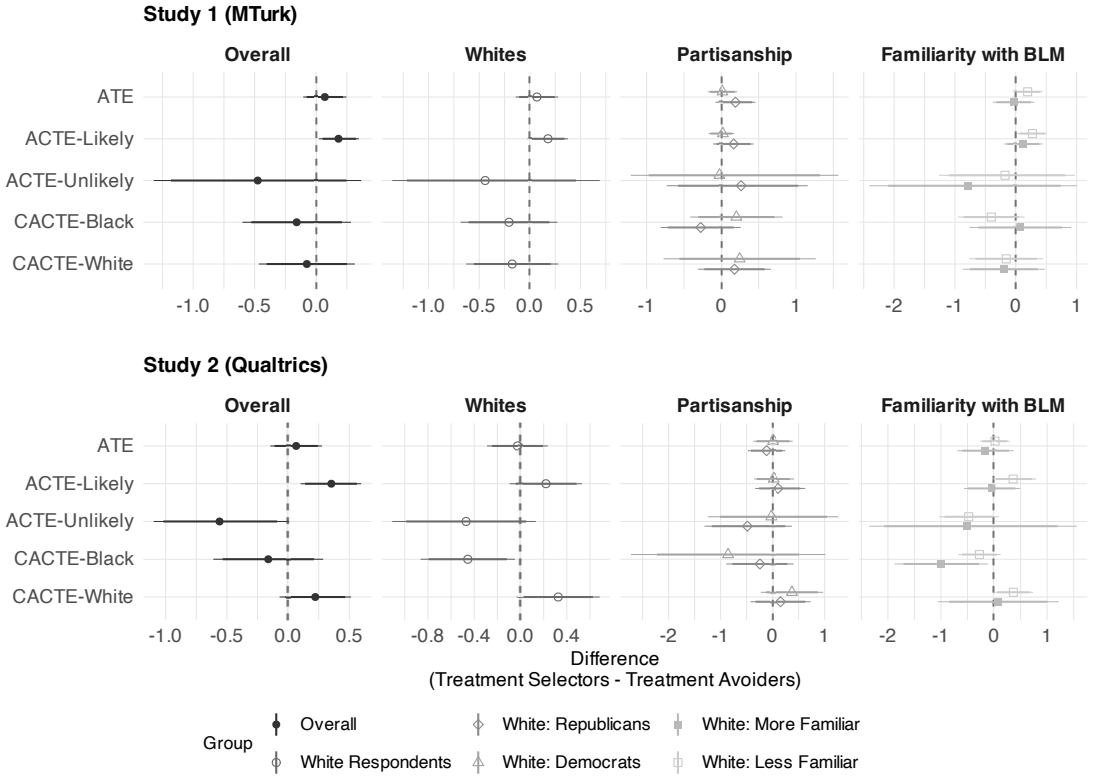

Figure 4 compares the ATE of our message to the $ACTE$s of those likely and unlikely to receive it and the $CACTE$s for those who chose to avoid treatment but then received the same information attributed to a different messenger on a standardized 6-item scale of support for BLM. See Tables A.6 and A.7 in the Appendix for specific point estimates, confidence intervals and p-values.

Alt Text: Coefficient plots showing average and choice-specific treatment effects on support for BLM in two studies in the full samples and then among white respondents, overall and by partisanship and familiarity with BLM. In both samples, those who chose to receive the message (ACTE-Likely) showed increased support, while those who would avoid it (ACTE-Unlikely) showed decreased support. Among avoiders, exposure to a white messenger produced less negative effects in the MTurk sample and positive effects in the Qualtrics sample.

Figure 4 makes the following points clear. First, messages supporting the goals of BLM can have a large effect on their likely audiences. In both studies, the $ACTE$s for subjects who chose to receive the treatment are substantively large and statistically significant ($ACTE_{Likely}$ = 0.18 $p < 0.05$ in Study 1 and $ACTE_{Likely}$ = 0.35 $p < 0.05$ in Study 2).[11] Second, these large effects

[11]Section 10 of the Appendix replicates our results for the individual outcome measures which were measured on 0-100 point scales with standard deviations ranging between 26 and 32 points. The standardized effect sizes of 0.18 and 0.35 on our composite scale correspond to roughly 5 and 10 point increases on the original 100-point scales.

would likely go unnoticed in most standard "forced exposure" experiments as the ATEs for both studies suggest that the treatments, on average, had no effect.[12] Third, these null ATEs reflect the fact that positive $ACTE$s among the treatment's likely audience are offset by even larger negative $ACTE$s among those respondents who would avoid hearing someone's views about BLM if they could. This backlash is particularly evident in Study 2 ($ACTE_{Unlikely}$ = -0.56 p < 0.05) while the effects are similar in size and sign in Study 1, but less statistically precise ($ACTE_{Unlikely}$ = -0.47 p = 0.29).[13] Finally, this unlikely audience may be more receptive to these arguments when they come from a different, perhaps unexpected, source. The $CACTE$ for the white messenger in Study 2 increased support among white respondents for BLM by 0.33 points (p < 0.10), especially among white respondents who reported less familiarity with the movement ($CACTE_{White}$ = 0.36 p < 0.10).[14]

Exploring Sentiments about BLM

Our analysis so far offers two key takeaways. First, the people that movement messages reach tend to be those willing to embrace their ideas. Second, when messages reach those who might ordinarily choose to avoid them, they can backfire, increasing opposition among an audience already skeptical to a movement's message. But what kind of considerations do people bring to bear when they think about BLM? How do these messages shape their thinking and how do they interact with prior knowledge about the movement? Although our experiments were not designed to directly explore these questions, we can gain some insights from subjects' open-ended responses to the prompt: "Do you have any opinions you'd like to share about the Black

[12]Similarly, none of $CATE$s presented in Appendix Section 9 reach statistical significance.

[13]Roughly, a 15 point decrease on the original 100-point measures.

[14]As discussed in Section 3.3 of the Appendix, independent coders rated the image for the white messenger as similarly trustworthy and racially typical as the Black messengers, but perceived this white man to be more attractive and less threatening and angry which likely contribute to the differential CACTEs for the white and Black messengers.

Lives Matter movement?" Approximately 77 and 80 percent of respondents in Study 1 and Study 2 entered some text in response to the prompt. Of those responding, the median length of that response was 42 characters in Study 1 and 40 characters in Study 2. The mean response length was 118 characters in Study 1 and 89 characters in Study 2.

These open-ended responses provide a sharper sense of what respondents thought about when evaluating BLM and the arguments and information provided by the treatment. While some respondents chose to write nothing or very little (e.g. "No", "I don't know enough"), others gave us a detailed picture of the different considerations at play. To explore these dynamics more formally, we conducted a sentiment analysis on respondents' open responses.[15] Table 2 presents a selection of the responses (limited to the first 200 characters) and their corresponding sentiment scores among the subjects given the choice to receive or avoid treatment in our studies. We note upfront that some participants expressed unfiltered views, which may be offensive and discriminatory. Although there are clear limits to what a simple automated coding of open responses can tell us, we believe that these sentiment scores possess a reasonable level of face validity. As Table 2 illustrates, positive scores tend to be associated with more favorable views of the movement, and negative scores tend to correspond to more critical views of BLM, while scores near the middle of the distribution tend to be more ambivalent. Furthermore, the content of these responses is consistent with many of the theoretical mechanisms we might expect to be at play. We see evidence of counter-arguing ("[Michael] Brown was NOT an innocent poor guy," "liberals also think it's NOT okay to say white lives matter"), possible persuasion ("sure some bad things happen") and reinforcement ("I thought the comments attributed to John expressed

[15] We used the `R` package `vader`'s implementation of the Valence Aware Dictionary and sEntiment Reasoner (VADER) to code the sentiment of each open response (Hutto and Gilbert 2014). See Appendix Section 11 for further discussion of the coding and sentiment analysis.

the issue well").[16]

Table 2: Examples of Positively and Negatively Valenced Statements

Sentiment Score	Treatment Status	Text
Study 1: MTurk Sample		
-0.848	Avoided Treatment – No Message	they are so focused on portraying themselves as victimized they both antagonize the very people they are trying to convince and draw attention away from the source ...
-0.987	Avoided Treatment – Assigned Black Messenger	I think it's disgusting that liberals think it's okay to say black lives matter, but liberals also think it's NOT okay to say white lives matter. That is inherently racist, and it's anti-white...
0.273	Avoided Treatment – Assigned White Messenger	I believe that race has a lot to do with discrimination in everything it seems. Getting a job, where you go, what restaurants you are accepted at and more.
0.624	Selected Treatment	I thought the comments attributed to John expressed the issue very well and I do support their cause, including kneeling for the National Athem.
0.958	Selected Treatment	I think the sentiment is honorable. The statistics are very hard to sift through, but I'm certain that many people are treated differently based on their race. I also think that ...
Study 2: Qualtrics Sample		
-0.802	Avoided Treatment – No Message	Judgement on Race is stupid, who gives a crap about Race, we are making the future. Stop dawdling in the past people.
-0.949	Avoided Treatment – Assigned Black Messenger	Stop being violent. You all saying to Fuck the police and get cocky. Brown was NOT an innocent poor guy who was getting his life together. He was violent and arrogant and it got him shot. Oops.
0.229	Avoided Treatment – Assigned White Messenger	seems like they try to make it a bigger deal than what it is, sure some bad things have happened but then a lot of others try to jump on the bandwagon and play the race card too just to get sympathy o ...
0.968	Selected Treatment	As the granddaughter of a biracial woman, Black is part of my heritage. I find it insane that someone would judge anyone based on the color of their skin. I am a wonderful blend of black, jewish, Eur ...
0.968	Selected Treatment	I think it's a great movement, the name may have been twisted but whoever reads a little bit about it knows that it means Black Lives Matter Too, they're not trying to have more benefits than the othe ...

Figure 5 replicates the analysis from the previous sections using the composite sentiment scores as our main outcome of interest.[17] Note that respondents who failed to provide an open

[16] We explore these themes further in Section 11.6 of the Appendix.

[17] See Section 11 of the Appendix for additional analyses of the open-response data. Treatment did not systematically affect who gave an open response (Figure A.11), and those who did tended to express more negative views of BLM (Figure A.12).

response are not included in this analysis. In general, we find a similar pattern of results to those for our primary outcome. Sentiment scores tend to be more positive among respondents who would choose to receive the treatment (particularly in Study 1) and more negative among those who would avoid the treatment (Study 2). In the Appendix Section 11.3 we present additional analyses exploring the effects of treatment on positive and negative sentiment separately. [18] Given the limits of automated sentiment coding to capture the complexity of these open responses, we are cautious to draw further inferences about the potential affective mechanisms at play. Overall, however, we take these results as another indicator of the robustness of our general findings and further evidence that the effects of a message can differ widely across likely and unlikely audiences.

[18] Briefly, we find that the effects in Study 1 appear to be driven by increases in positive sentiment (see Figure A.13). The pattern of responses in Study 2, meanwhile, seem to result from declines in negative sentiment among likely audiences and increases in negative sentiment among unlikely audiences (see Figure A.16).

Figure 5: Heterogeneous Effects of Messengers on Sentiment of Open Response about BLM

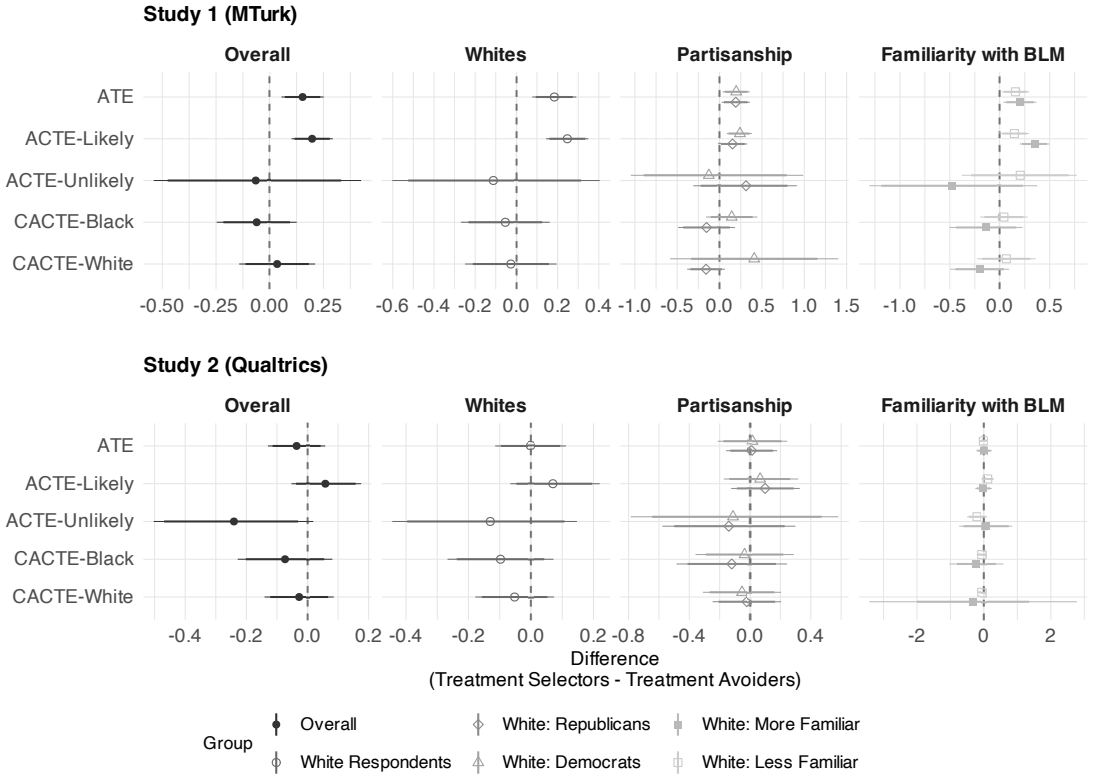

Figure 5 compares the ATE of our message to the $ACTE$s of those likely and unlikely to receive it and the $CACTE$s for those who chose to avoid treatment but then received the same information attributed to a different Black man or white man on a composite sentiment score of respondents' open responses to the question: "Do you have any opinions you'd like to share about the Black Lives Matter movement?" See Tables A.20 and A.21 for specific point estimates, confidence intervals and p-values.
Alt Text: Coefficient plots showing treatment effects on the sentiment of open-ended responses about BLM in two studies. Respondents who chose to receive the message expressed more positive sentiment particularly in the MTurk sample, while those who chose to avoid it expressed more negative sentiment, particularly in the Qualtrics sample.

Discussion

Studies 1 and 2 provided a simple message in support of Black Lives Matter and broader efforts for racial justice but the message's effects are not so simple. The decision of whether to receive the message was not a function of any one characteristic of our subjects, such as their race or partisanship. By asking respondents to choose, we did not need to infer differences in reception and response based on these characteristics. The choice to receive treatment, in turn, predicted divergent responses. Across both samples, we found that a message supporting the goals of Black Lives Matter and racial justice increased support for the movement among the 83 (Study 1) and

69 (Study 2) percent of respondents who would likely receive it. Among those who would avoid this message, however, support for the movement declined sharply. These differences would be overlooked by standard survey experiments.

Our findings highlight that when messages reach beyond those who are open to or supportive of movements, they can face a backlash, consistent with targeted messages in electoral contexts (Hersh and Schaffner 2013). This backlash comes through in respondents' open responses as well. Our sentiment analysis demonstrates that when those unlikely to receive a Black messenger's message about BLM encounter this message, they are more negative in their responses to our open-ended question. And, this holds true even when respondents bring other personal experiences, media exposure and racial attitudes to bear in their evaluations of BLM.

By randomizing conditionally on subjects' choices, we found suggestive evidence that co-racial messengers might be more effective at persuading these hard-to-reach audiences. Specifically, a white messenger elicited less backlash in Study 1 and was associated with higher levels of support among these respondents in Study 2, whereas a Black messenger appeared particularly effective among Black respondents who had initially avoided the message in Study 2. This provides a strategy for how movements can persuade those who are hard to reach or those who may encounter a message unintentionally. The effectiveness of co-racial movement messengers mirrors similar findings about gender (Testa et al. 2020).

Our experimental findings mirror the changes in public opinion about BLM, race, and policing in the United States. At the early stages of the BLM movement in 2014, messaging was largely publicized by people of color, with opinion shifts being most pronounced among groups likely to sympathize with the messengers, including Democrats, young people, and those close to protests. Similar to our findings, those who chose to receive a supportive message about BLM supported the movement. However, after George Floyd's death in May 2020, the BLM

movement gained global momentum, and citizens across the world took to the streets to express their frustrations. The protests saw participation from people of all races and ethnicities, allowing the movement's message to be voiced by a diverse group which in turn shifted and catalyzed whites' racial attitudes in a more progressive direction (Tesler 2020). Racial resentment declined among young white residents who lived in close proximity to protests as they became more concerned about racial equity and had less favorable attitudes about the police (Tesler 2020). However, as support for the movement waned by late summer of 2020, support polarized along racial and partisan lines (Griffin et al. 2021). Democrats became more liberal on issues related to BLM, while Republicans became more conservative, mirroring our findings.

In this way, our results demonstrate the benefits of incorporating choice into experiments focusing on social movement messaging; yet, many open questions remain. In our experiment, we used a choice about whether respondents wanted to hear from a single messenger and we exposed respondents to a single message. We would encourage future research to explore each of these choices and to create scenarios that further reflect the real world. In particular, we believe that exploring the impact of intersecting identities, like gender and partisanship, differences between citizen and elite messengers, and the impact of multiple, perhaps unexpected, messages, represents particularly fertile ground for further inquiry.

While these findings are important, they are not without limitations. The choice we give respondents in our studies captures a common situation in media consumption where the listener can either attend to the information being presented to them or turn away (by changing the channel or scrolling past). But obviously there are a number of contextual factors that could shape a choice of this kind. Simulating naturalistic choices remains challenging and varying the source, message, and nature of the choices in such designs represent important and potentially fruitful avenues for further research.

We found that backlash can happen when a messenger manages to reach someone who would avoid their message. But some backlash is expected for social movements. By pushing back against existing power structures, some individuals will respond by trying to hold onto their power (Mansbridge and Shames 2008). But not all backlash is the same. Our design not only provides insights into both the magnitude of the effect and size of the population in which it occurs, but also offers possible ways to minimize backlash's impact. But to do this most effectively, more research could help explore how different messages might provoke or avoid backlash. For example, people who are reluctant to hear BLM messaging might be sensitive to any appearance that they are being "scolded" or talked down to by the person delivering the message. Some of this sensitivity likely transcends any action that the messenger could take, but successful persuasion happens at the margins. Crafted messages by social movements can make their message palatable (at moments where that aligns with their goals) if they understand the conditions that inhibit and exacerbate backlash.

Conclusion

The power of social movements flows from instances where movement members demonstrate their willingness to face extreme consequences and violence to stand up for their beliefs (McAdam 1996). These moments can persuade the public (Wasow 2020) and change elite behavior (Gause 2022). The 2020 protests demonstrated that people are still willing to pay these costs. They also made clear the continued need to fight for racial justice. Since the height of the Black Lives Matter protests, support for the movement dropped (Tesler 2020) and the kind of criminal justice reforms activists sought have not materialized. To realize these changes, then, the movement will need to convince more than the already converted.

We suggest one path forward, by examining who movement messages reach. To assess when messages meaningfully change public opinion, most studies examine the average effects

of specific messages. Yet with a captive audience of respondents we cannot determine the likelihood of individuals receiving that message in the first place. Choice is a major component of our political lives, and our experimental design takes this into account. The ability to avoid a social movement messenger makes public support a more challenging goal.

Our studies demonstrate that we can model this process. By itself, the race of a messenger seems to have no effect on the response to a message. Yet, when respondents choose to read or avoid a message from a Black messenger, the message has the expected effect on the likely audience. Individuals who choose to receive the message become more supportive of BLM, whereas those who would prefer to avoid the message but still encounter it become less supportive. In our nationally representative study, there is also evidence that white respondents, who would avoid hearing the message of a Black messenger, are more receptive to the same message from a white messenger. Ultimately, these heterogeneous effects are only apparent when choice is combined with the classic experimental design.

In other words, BLM faces headwinds because racial bias makes it harder to reach and convince some audiences. Some individuals avoided hearing from a Black messenger and some of them recoiled from the message delivered by a Black messenger. This is the dark cloud around a silver lining. Our silver lining suggests that white messengers may be able to help convert those who are more difficult to reach and persuade. Other work and activism has emphasized the need for whites to engage in high-risk protest because Black protesters are more likely to endure negative consequences from social protest (Davenport, Soule, and Armstrong 2011). This is valuable and necessary work. Our findings suggest another way that the BLM movement can continue to build on the diverse protests of 2020 in the future. With more white supporters who are active and visible in a post-2020 environment, there are messengers who can amplify the voices of activists by reaching different audiences and persuading skeptics. This can limit

the potential backlash that some messengers might provoke. So, while these findings suggest a potential short-term solution for spreading a movement's message, they also highlight the deeper challenges that racial justice movements face.

Acknowledgments

The authors thank Cindy Kam, Andy Bloeser, and the anonymous reviewers for their helpful feedback. We also thank participants at the Pacific Northwest Political Science Association and Midwest Political Science Association for their thoughtful feedback.

References

Arceneaux, Kevin, Martin Johnson, and Chad Murphy. 2012. "Polarized Political Communication, Oppositional Media Hostility, and Selective Exposure." *Journal of Politics* 74 (1): 174–186.

Arora, Maneesh, and Christopher T. Stout. 2019. "Letters for Black Lives: Co-ethnic Mobilization and Support for the Black Lives Matter Movement." *Political Research Quarterly* 72 (2): 389–402.

Bakshy, Eytan, Solomon Messing, and Lada A. Adamic. 2015. "Exposure to Ideologically Diverse News and Opinion on Facebook." *Science* 348 (6239): 1130–1132.

Barreto, Matt A., and Stephen A. Nuño. 2011. "The Effectiveness of Coethnic Contact on Latino Political Recruitment." *Political Research Quarterly* 64 (2): 448–459.

Benegal, Salil D. 2018. "The Spillover of Race and Racial Attitudes into Public Opinion about Climate Change." *Environmental Politics* 27 (4): 733–756.

Benford, Robert, and David Snow. 2000. "Framing Processes and Social Movements: An Overview and Assessment." *Annual Review of Sociology* 26:611–639.

Berinsky, Adam J. 2017. "Rumors and Health Care Reform: Experiments in Political Misinformation." *British Journal of Political Science* 47 (2): 241–262.

Berinsky, Adam J., Gregory A. Huber, and Gabriel S. Lenz. 2012. "Evaluating Online Labor Markets for Experimental Research: Amazon.com's Mechanical Turk." *Political Analysis* 20 (3): 351–368.

Bonilla, Tabitha, and Alvin B. Tillery. 2020. "Which Identity Frames Boost Support for and Mobilization in the #BlackLivesMatter Movement? An Experimental Test." *American Political Science Review* 114 (4): 947–962.

Chong, Dennis, and James N. Druckman. 2010. "Dynamic Public Opinion: Communication Effects over Time." *American Political Science Review* 104 (4): 663–680.

Crano, William D. 2001. "Social Influence, Social Identity, and Ingroup Leniency." In *Group Consensus and Minority Influence: Implications for Innovation,* edited by Nanne K. De Vries and Carsten K. W. De Dreu, 122–143. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.

Crowder, Chaya. 2023. "When #BlackLivesMatter at the Women's March: A Study of the Emotional Influence of Racial Appeals on Instagram." *Politics, Groups & Identities* 11 (1): 55–73.

Dancey, Logan, and Geoffrey Sheagley. 2013. "Heuristics Behaving Badly: Party Cues and Voter Knowledge." *American Journal of Political Science* 57 (2): 312–325.

Davenport, Christian, Sarah A. Soule, and David A. Armstrong. 2011. "Protesting While Black?: The Differential Policing of American Activism, 1960 to 1990." *American Sociological Review* 76 (1): 152–178.

De Benedictis-Kessner, Justin, Matthew A. Baum, Adam J. Berinsky, and Teppei Yamamoto. 2019. "Persuading the Enemy: Estimating the Persuasive Effects of Partisan Media with the Preference-Incorporating Choice and Assignment Design." *American Political Science Review* 113 (4): 902–916.

DellaVigna, Stefano, and Matthew Gentzkow. 2010. "Persuasion: Empirical Evidence." *Annual Review of Economics* 2:643–669.

Drakulich, Kevin, and Megan Denver. 2022. "The Partisans and the Persuadables: Public Views of Black Lives Matter and the 2020 Protests." *Perspectives on Politics* 20 (4): 1191–1208.

Druckman, James N. 2022. "A Framework for the Study of Persuasion." *Annual Review of Political Science* 25:65–88.

Eagly, Alice H., and Shelly Chaiken. 1975. "An Attribution Analysis of the Effect of Communicator Characteristics on Opinion Change: The Case of Communicator Attractiveness." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 32 (1): 136–144.

Eagly, Alice H., Wendy Wood, and Shelly Chaiken. 1978. "Causal Inferences about Communicators and Their Effect on Opinion Change." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 36 (4): 424–435.

Feldman, Stanley, and Leonie Huddy. 2005. "Racial Resentment and White Opposition to Race-Conscious Programs: Principles or Prejudice?" *American Journal of Political Science* 49 (1): 168–183.

Gaines, Brian J., and James H. Kuklinski. 2011. "Experimental Estimation of Heterogeneous Treatment Effects Related to Self-Selection." *American Journal of Political Science* 55 (3): 724–736.

Gause, Lagina. 2022. "Revealing Issue Salience via Costly Protest: How Legislative Behavior Following Protest Advantages Low-Resource Groups." *British Journal of Political Science* 52 (1): 259–279.

Griffin, Robert, Mayesha Quasem, John Sides, and Michael Tesler. 2021. *Racing apart.* Research report. Democracy Fund Voter Study Group.

Gross, Kimberly. 2008. "Framing Persuasive Appeals: Episodic and Thematic Framing, Emotional Response, and Policy Opinion." *Political Psychology* 29 (2): 169–192.

Harris, Fredrick C. 2015. "The Next Civil Rights Movement?" *Dissent* 63 (3): 34–40.

Hart, William, Dolores Albarracín, Alice H. Eagly, Inge Brechan, Matthew J. Lindberg, and Lisa Merrill. 2009. "Feeling Validated versus Being Correct: A Meta-Analysis of Selective Exposure to Information." *Psychological Bulletin* 135 (4): 555–588.

Hartman, Todd K., and Christopher R. Weber. 2009. "Who Said What? The Effects of Source Cues in Issue Frames." *Political Behavior* 31 (4): 537.

Heaney, Michael T. 2022. "Who Are Black Lives Matter Activists? Niche Realization in a Multimovement Environment." *Perspectives on Politics* 20 (4): 1362–1385.

Hersh, Eitan D., and Brian F. Schaffner. 2013. "Targeted Campaign Appeals and the Value of Ambiguity." *Journal of Politics* 75 (2): 520–534.

Huff, Connor, and Dustin Tingley. 2015. "Who Are These People?' Evaluating the Demographic Characteristics and Political Preferences of MTurk Survey Respondents." *Research & Politics* 2 (3).

Hussein, Mohamed A., and Zakary L. Tormala. 2021. "Undermining Your Case to Enhance Your Impact: A Framework for Understanding the Effects of Acts of Receptiveness in Persuasion." *Personality and Social Psychology Review* 25 (3): 229–250.

Hutto, Clayton, and Eric Gilbert. 2014. "VADER: A Parsimonious Rule-Based Model for Sentiment Analysis of Social Media Text." *Proceedings of the International AAAI Conference on Web and Social Media* 8 (1): 216–225.

Iyengar, Shanto. 1994. *Is Anyone Responsible?: How Television Frames Political Issues.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Kalla, Joshua L., and David E. Broockman. 2023. "Which Narrative Strategies Durably Reduce Prejudice? Evidence from Field and Survey Experiments Supporting the Efficacy of Perspective-getting." *American Journal of Political Science* 67 (1): 185–204.

Kilgo, Danielle, and Rachel R. Mourão. 2019. "Media Effects and Marginalized Ideas: Relationships Among Media Consumption and Support for Black Lives Matter." *International Journal of Communication Systems* 13:4287–4305.

Knox, Dean, Teppei Yamamoto, Matthew Baum, and Adam Berinsky. 2019. "Design, Identification, and Sensitivity Analysis for Patient Preference Trials." *Journal of the American Statistical Association* 114 (528): 1532–1546.

Kuklinski, James H., and Norman L. Hurley. 1994. "On Hearing and Interpreting Political Messages: A Cautionary Tale of Citizen Cue-Taking." *Journal of Politics* 56 (3): 729–751.

Kunda, Ziva. 1990. "The Case for Motivated Reasoning." *Psychological Bulletin* 108 (3): 480.

Lane, Daniel S., Stewart M. Coles, and Muniba Saleem. 2018. "Solidarity Effects in Social Movement Messaging: How Cueing Dominant Group Identity Can Increase Movement Support." *Human Communication Research* 45 (1): 1–26.

Leeper, Thomas J. 2017. "How Does Treatment Self-Selection Affect Inferences About Political Communication?" *Journal of Experimental Political Science* 4 (1): 21–33.

Ma, Debbie S., Joshua Correll, and Bernd Wittenbrink. 2015. "he Chicago Face Database: A Free Stimulus Set of Faces and Norming Data." *Behavior Research Methods* 47 (4): 1122–1135.

Mansbridge, Jane, and Shauna L. Shames. 2008. "Toward a Theory of Backlash: Dynamic Resistance and the Central Role of Power." *Politics & Gender* 4 (4): 623–634.

McAdam, Doug. 1996. "Conceptual Origins, Current Problems, Future Directions." In *Comparative Perspectives on Social Movements: Political Opportunities, Mobilizing Structures, and Cultural Framings,* edited by Doug McAdam, 23–40. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

McGuire, William J. 1985. "Attitudes and Attitude Change." In *The Handbook of Social Psychology,* 3rd, edited by Gardner Lindzey and Elliot Aronson, 2:233–346. New York: Random House.

McPherson, Miller, Lynn Smith-Lovin, and James M. Cook. 2001. "Birds of a Feather: Homophily in Social Networks." *Annual Review of Sociology* 27 (1): 415–444.

Mutz, Diana C., and Jeffrey J. Mondak. 2006. "The Workplace as a Context for Cross-Cutting Political Discourse." *Journal of Politics* 68 (1): 140–155.

Nelson, Thomas, Kira Sanbonmatsu, and Harwood McClerking. 2007. "Playing a Different Race Card: Examining the Limits of Elite Influence on Perceptions of Racism." *Journal of Politics* 69 (2): 416–429.

Nicholson, Stephen P. 2011. "Dominating Cues and the Limits of Elite Influence." *Journal of Politics* 73 (4): 1165–1177.

Petty, Richard E., and John T. Cacioppo. 1981. *Attitudes and Persuasion: Classic and Contemporary Approaches.* Dubuque, IA: Brown.

Popkin, Samuel L. 1991. *The Reasoning Voter: Communication and Persuasion in Presidential Campaigns.* University of Chicago Press.

Putnam, Lara, Erica Chenoweth, and Jeremy Pressman. 2020. "The Floyd protests are the broadest in U.S. history – and are spreading to white, small-town America." *The Washington Post* (June 6, 2020).

Reny, Tyler T., and Benjamin J. Newman. 2021. "The Opinion-Mobilizing Effect of Social Protest against Police Violence: Evidence from the 2020 George Floyd Protests." *American Political Science Review* 115 (4): 1499–1507.

Rickford, Russell. 2016. "Black Lives Matter: Toward a Modern Practice of Mass Struggle." *New Labor Forum* 25 (1): 34–42.

Rosenbaum, Paul R. 2010. *Design of Observational Studies.* New York: Springer.

Stroud, Natalie J. 2008. "Media Use and Political Predispositions: Revisiting the Concept of Selective Exposure." *Political Behavior* 30 (3): 341–366.

Susmann, Mark W., and Duane T. Wegener. 2023. "The Independent Effects of Source Expertise and Trustworthiness on Retraction Believability: The Moderating Role of Vested Interest." *Memory & Cognition* 51 (4): 845–861.

Taber, Charles S., and Milton Lodge. 2006. "Motivated Skepticism in the Evaluation of Political Beliefs." *American Journal of Political Science* 50 (3): 755–769.

Tesler, Michael. 2012. "The Spillover of Racialization into Health Care: How President Obama Polarized Public Opinion by Racial Attitudes and Race." *American Journal of Political Science* 56 (3): 690–704.

———. 2020. "Support for Black Lives Matter Surged during Protests, but is Waning Among White Americans." *FiveThiryEight* (August 19, 2020).

Testa, Paul F., Tarah Williams, Kylee Britzman, and Matthew V. Hibbing. 2020. "Getting the Message? Choice, Self-Selection, and the Efficacy of Social Movement Arguments." *Journal of Experimental Political Science* 8 (3): 296–309.

Tillery, Alvin B. 2019. "What Kind of Movement is Black Lives Matter? The View from Twitter." *Journal of Race, Ethnicity, and Politics* 4 (2): 297–323.

Wasow, Omar. 2020. "Agenda Seeding: How 1960s Black Protests Moved Elites, Public Opinion and Voting." *American Political Science Review* 114 (3): 638–659.

White, Ismail K. 2007. "When Race Matters and When It Doesn't: Racial Group Differences in Response to Racial Cues." *American Political Science Review* 101 (02): 339–354.

Wood, Wendy. 2000. "Attitude Change: Persuasion and Social Influence." *Annual Review of Psychology* 51:539–570.

Woodly, Deva R. 2015. *The Politics of Common Sense: How Social Movements Use Public Discourse to Change Politics and Win Acceptance.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Zaller, John R. 1992. *The Nature and Origins of Mass Opinion.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Biographies

Paul Testa is an assistant professor at Brown University, Providence, RI 02912

Tarah Williams is an assistant professor at Allegheny College, Meadville, PA 16335

Kylee Britzman is an associate professor at Lewis-Clark State College, Lewiston, ID 83501

Karra McCray Gibson is an assistant professor at University of South Carolina, Columbia, SC 29208

Matthew Hibbing is an associate professor at University of California-Merced, Merced, CA 95343