THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

# FROM ADHERENTS TO ACTIVISTS:
# THE PROCESS OF SOCIAL MOVEMENT MOBILIZATION

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*This is for Freedom Fighters, past, present, and future*

*This is for the Political Possibilities and the World Ahead*

*And this is for me*

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## Acknowledgements, Or, How I Got Over

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**Abstract**

In this dissertation, drawing from the Black politics and social movement literature, I develop a theory of "Alienated Activist" movements. In Chapter 1, I argue that the nationalization of Black politics, the constraints of Barack Obama's presidency, and the quotidian nature of Black death opened a political opportunity for a new mass movement to occur. I claim that Black Lives Matter (BLM) represents a departure from Black "politics-as-usual," and with other contemporary mass movements, including Occupy Wall Street and the Arab Spring, can be understood as a new social movement type, Alienated Activism. Chapter 2 explains the theory of Alienated Activist movements, which occurred in response to crises in neoliberalism and legitimation in the early 2010s. In three following chapters, I unpack the mechanisms of Alienated Activism, namely, identity, mobilization, and transformation, with a particular focus on BLM.

In Chapter 3, "Mobilizing Identity: Assessing Public Support for Black Lives Matter," I consider how identity influences support or opposition for BLM. Taking an aggregate view, I use national survey data from the American National Election Study and the GenForward Survey of Millennials. I find that movement adherence is consistently determined by politicized identities, especially gender and race. I also find that opposition is motivated by attitudes towards Black Americans—in my models racial resentment. Furthermore, the feeling that police mistreat Black Americans produces support for the movement. This demonstrates that Black Lives Matter elicits a host of feelings amongst Americans; specifically, that movement adherents across racial groups and generations are motivated by identity, racial attitudes, as well as feelings about racial discrimination in policing.

In Chapter 4, "Alienated Activism: Activation, Education, and Mobilization," through 35 interviews with radical, progressive, and racial justice activists in Chicago, I zero in on the local

and further theorize the micro- level processes of Alienated Activism. I describe both activists' orientation towards the state and their forms of political participation. I argue that alienated activists are oriented by 1) their positions of marginality, 2) disillusionment with institutions and political conditions, and 3) via political solidarity. Rather than disengage from politics, however, they pursue political activities rooted in a desire to build collective power in their communities. Through their alienation from the state and via processes of political education, activists participate in 1) relational political activities (such as political organizing), 2) building efficacy in collective movement space, and 3) developing transformative political alternatives. In this chapter, I especially focus on racial justice and Movement for Black Lives activists in Chicago.

In Chapter 5 "Framing Police Violence," I consider how progressives across the United States evaluate various frames and solutions for police violence, testing whether transformative language from recent BLM uprisings has gained support among likely adherents. I consider the discursive transition from reformist to abolitionist language after the uprisings for George Floyd in 2020, comparing progressive support for police reform and police abolition. Police reform is broadly supported across respondents, with very little variation in approval of a "reformist" petition. As for police abolition, I find that younger respondents and those who say they attended a BLM protest after the death of George Floyd in 2020 are more likely to add their name to an abolitionist petition than respondents who are older or those who did not attend a BLM protest. This suggests the BLM movement has made some important progress in advancing its transformative abolitionist frame.

This dissertation contributes to both the Black politics and social movements literature, locating the Black Lives Matter movement as an important development in Black politics and advancing a new social movement paradigm, Alienated Activism.

## Introduction:
## "We Have Choices and Capitulation is Only One of Them."[1]

The study of social movements is a nebulous endeavor. The media, the public, politicians, adherents, and activists themselves all have an idea about what a movement constitutes, its goals, appropriate and inappropriate strategies. At any moment, something could happen—an uprising, an election, or a police murder, and prior sensibilities become passé or what is just beneath the surface of the movement rises to the top. Why, then, should political scientists pay attention to social movements? Social movements have unclear political outcomes, making it difficult to measure their causes and effects. Movements constitute a series of diffuse political events and actions, often over a number of years as they emerge into and then recede from the public sphere. Despite these barriers, however, political scientists should pay attention to social movements, as these multifaceted political phenomena are deeply impactful for 1) political identity, 2) political behavior and learning, and 3) shifting political horizons.

Over the past decade, a new era of social movements have swept the United States. The focus of this study in particular is the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement. Chapter 1 begins this dissertation with the argument that the BLM mass movement emerged in response to crises in neoliberalism in Black politics and recurring instances of anti-Black violence in the United States, especially at the hands of police. In response, a new generation of Black activists became politically activated and created new networks and organizations, including, for example, the BLM Global Network (BLMGN) and the Black Youth Project 100 (BYP100). In December 2014, fifty organizations across the country came together creating the Movement for Black Lives (M4BL) coalition, planning uprisings, proposing policies, and mobilizing the broader public around an agenda of Black life and flourishing. I argue that the politics of Black Lives

[1] Jordan, June. 2003. *Some of Us Did Not Die.* New York: Basic/Civitas Books. Pp. 3

Matter, as it emanates from *both* mass movement and activist organizing, constitutes a commitment to 1) identity politics, 2) marginality and Black queer politics, and 3) transformative political visions.

I assert that BLM is a one of a new social movement (NSM) type, *Alienated Activism*. In Chapter 2, I pose the theory of Alienated Activist movements, which include Occupy Wall Street and the Arab Spring; essentially, early 2010s movements that arose in response to crises in legitimation, neoliberalism, and economic inequality. These networked social movements were mobilized by millennials in response to a government they felt did not live up to its promise to represent them, whether due to inequality, authoritarianism, racism, or some mixture of all three. Alienated Activist movements mobilize against "politics-as-usual," through identity frameworks as well as materialist concerns, departing from the NSM identity focused movements. Political education is the mobilizing mechanism of Alienated Activist movements, helping members of the public learn about the ways the state has failed their and/or other identity groups and mobilizes them to seek opportunities to collectivize their alienation. Alienated activists levy structural critiques at the political system which inform their transformative political strategies.[2]

I explore three aspects of alienated activism in this dissertation. I begin by thinking through identity as a mobilizing or deterring paradigm through which to understand social movements support. In Chapter 3, "Movement Adherents: Assessing Public Support for Black Lives Matter," I consider the rise of the Black Lives Matter movement in the United States and assess the mechanisms of public support for the movement. Through an analysis of 2016 ANES data and 2019 GenForward data on favorability towards Black Lives Matter, I find that across racial and age groups adherent support is driven by race, gender, and party identification. Racial resentment is the most reliable predictor of support among White, Hispanic, and Asian American

[2] I discuss the practice of alienated activism in chapter 5.

respondents, in both the ANES and GenForward samples. As for identity, Black Americans, women, and Democrats are the most consistent supporters of BLM. I also find that the belief that police treat white people better than Black people predicts support for the movement among white Americans and Black young adults.

In Chapter 4, I further theorize the practice of "alienated activism," which describes both the political orientation and political engagement of a range of leftist, progressive, and racial justice activists in Chicago. I demonstrate how political alienation can serve as grounds for political activism when coupled with processes of political education. Individuals can become alienated from the political system through their experiences as marginalized people, through disappointing and isolating political institutions and conditions, and/or through solidarity with marginalized groups. Through mechanisms of political education, alienated activists engage in politics via relational political activities, such as political organizing; through familial and collective movement space; and by pursuing transformative political strategies and goals. This chapter attends closely to anti-carceral and racial justice activism in Chicago, particularly activism associated with the Movement for Black Lives.

Chapter 5 considers how progressives across the United States evaluate prognostic frames for fighting police violence. In the summer of 2020, the slogan "Defund the police," a common, but *transformative*, strain of thought in movement circles, entered the national lexicon, in response to anger at the police killing of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and Ahmaud Arbery. The abolitionist movement has a long story, with origins in the anti-slavery movement and anti-mass incarceration organizing. Black activists have now turned to the police as another system of extraction and exploitation to be abolished. This chapter considers the discursive transition from reform to abolitionist language and compares progressive support for police

reform and abolition. I find that reform is broadly supported across all respondents, with very little variation in support. As for abolition, I find that younger respondents and those who say they attended a George Floyd protest are more likely to sign the abolitionist petition. Furthermore, through a survey experiment, I test whether diagnostic or motivational frames prompt political action concerning police violence. Diagnostic frames define political problems for the public, while motivational frames appeal to political values and incentives. In this study, I consider which messaging strategy achieves the most resonance with movement adherents. Generally, I do not find that the frames motivated action among respondents, though I find that the motivational frame prompts less support among male respondents for the abolitionist petition.

I conclude this dissertation by discussing the implications and future directions for this research, as well as the future of the Black Lives Matter Movement. The significance of this study are its interventions in both the political science and social movements literature. First, I focus on social movements as key sites of political behavior, as important methods of action and mobilization. I rejoin BLM as a contemporary of Occupy and the Arab Spring, arguing that these movements, which emerged at similar moments, mounting similar tactics, and in response to similar crises, constitute a new generation of movements worthy of designation and a distinct label. Second, I deeply assess the emergence of the BLM movement, its politics, and its impact in and on activists in Chicago and broader progressive communities in the US. Future studies should delve deeper into the local expressions of the BLM movement and other examples of racial justice activist ecosystems. Beyond this dissertation, I also hope to continue the causal examination of movement framing on the general public, particularly regarding policing, public safety, and anti-Black violence.

This study builds on a chorus of Black studies and Black politics scholarship, radical and progressive activism, owing each of these cannons an intellectual debt. These lineages will guide this work forward and this dissertation will hopefully contribute to emerging work in this area, imagining a more expansive practice of politics and activism oriented towards the people.

## Chapter 1. Exploding Dreams: The Politics of Black Lives Matter

What happens to a dream deferred?

Does it dry up
like a raisin in the sun?
Or fester like a sore—
And then run?
Does it stink like rotten meat?
Or crust and sugar over—
like a syrupy sweet?

Maybe it just sags
like a heavy load.

*Or does it explode?*

- "Harlem" by Langston Hughes

**Figure 1.1** Edward Crawford, holding a bag of chips and throwing a burning tear gas canister in Ferguson, MO. August 13, 2014. Photo by Robert Cohen/ St. Louis Post-Dispatch.

## I. Introduction

Black Lives Matter is a long story. Though there is a growing body of scholarship and attention to BLM and its effects on political attitudes and behavior, political scientists must first ground the movement in a continuum of Black political strategy and recognize its roots in Black feminist thought and praxis. Global uprisings in the name of George Floyd rocked a world already in chaos in 2020 and expanded the broader public's knowledge of and participation in the movement; yet, the Black Lives Matter (BLM)[1] movement began in 2013 with the acquittal of George Zimmerman for the murder of Trayvon Martin. And even then, the political environment for this movement had long been in motion. BLM was preceded by the election of President Barack Obama, the first Black president of the United States, a moment that *seemed* to be the culmination of Black political efforts since the passage of the Civil and Voting Rights Acts. In reality, the contradiction of Black political representation at the pinnacle of American power and the death of Black people at the hands of police in the streets birthed a political opportunity to mobilize Black Americans against police violence. BLM was also preceded by the Occupy Wall Street and Arab Spring protests, movements which set an environment for mass mobilization in motion and exposed the limits of neoliberal politics. Thus, the entrenched nature of the racialized social and economic hierarchy bounded the uses of representation and respectability in Black politics, and prompted the need for a new Black mass movement in response to the status quo.

In this chapter, I build upon the Black politics literature and draw upon Black feminist thought to discuss the political origins and provide an assessment of the politics of Black Lives Matter. I first locate BLM in the continuum of Black politics, first reviewing post-Civil Rights strategies for racial uplift, including the pursuit of national political representation and a politics

[1] In this chapter, "BLM" will refer to the broad based, mass movement. I will refer specifically to the BLM Global Network in reference to the organization or its founders and leaders.

of neoliberalism. I argue that these strategies ultimately left behind and alienated many Black Americans, and, coupled with ongoing police violence amplified by social media, motivated a new and distinct period of political activism for a generation of Black Americans. I then unpack the politics of Black Lives Matter, which includes 1) Black feminist identity politics, 2) marginality informed by Black queer politics, and 3) a politics of transformation. Second, I assess the social movements literature, particularly "new social movements," considering where Black Lives Matter aligns and departs from this paradigm, which I claim is via a systemic, structural critique, wherein Black Americans recognize the inability for incorporation into the public sphere under "politics as usual."[2] I claim that because of this, BLM should be explained through a paradigm of "Alienated Activism," a social movement framework I unpack in the following theoretical chapter.

## II. The End of Black Politics

### Post-Voting Rights Act Strategies for National Representation

Black politics, or strategies for Black political incorporation and participation, have been dominated by a focus on electoral representation since the 1965 Voting Rights Act (VRA), which expanded access and protected the right to vote for Black Americans. By the time Black mass movements, including Civil Rights and Black Power, lost their steam, Black electoral politics overcame or combined with modes of grassroots organizing to achieve wins for Black Americans, especially at the local and state levels. Black mayoral candidates and representatives entered the political mainstream, and Black voters were packed into political districts that would

[2] In *Stirrings in the Jug* (1999), Adolph Reed discusses the limits of formal politics and the constraints faced by Black incumbents in the post-segregation era. He writes that they "respond to durable interests, and they seek predictability, continuity, and a shared common sense. This translates into a preference for a brokered 'politics as usual' that limits the number and range of claims on the policy agenda. Such a politics preserves the thrust of inherited policy regimes and reinforces existing patterns of systemic advantage by limiting the boundaries of the politically reasonable" (121).

ensure consistent representation of their interests at the local and state levels, at least, symbolically (Swain 1993; Tate 1994). While the Civil Rights Act and the Voting Rights Act improved life and increased social, political, and economic access for the Black middle class, this bifurcation of the Black community left many poor and working-class Black Americans behind (Tate 1994; Wilson 1987). Many Black Americans remained unemployed and in poverty, as Black political regimes were constrained by the limits of corporatized political institutions (Reed 1999).

Despite growing class divisions in the Black community, the transition to electoral politics marked a shift in broad Black political strategy as Black candidates began to look to national offices, including Congress and, this time, the Presidency (Tate 1994; Reed 1986). House member Shirley Chisholm ran for President in 1972, and Civil Rights activist Jesse Jackson ran for President 1984 and 1988. Tate (1994) argues that Jackson's campaign in particular made way for a "new Black voter" and raised Black interest in national politics. The post-Civil Rights era represented a new Black politics, that 1) was primarily "limited to a class-restricted segment of the Black community," and 2) "led to the bureaucratization and greater oligarchization of the original movement structure" (Tate 1994, 165-66). It is true that Jackson, a former Civil Rights Movement activist, led the charge to the nationalization of Black politics and drew upon the vestiges of movement politics to get there: he famously deployed Black Panther Party Deputy Fred Hampton's solidarity concept of a "Rainbow Coalition," as an appeal to the multiracial coalition he hoped to assemble for his run. Jackson did not have enough national support to emerge as a viable electoral or movement leader in the post-Civil Rights era, but even so, the Jackson campaign, specifically, marked the entrance of Black political elites into national electoral politics. Tate (1994) asserts that this turn from grassroots to representative

politics, as well as Black political divisions and stagnant inequality, dampened the possibility for a new radical movement to emerge at this time (Harris 2012; Tate 1994).

In time, the long running aim for national representation in Black politics produced Barack Obama, a young, bi-racial, Black African and white American Illinois Senator. Obama was the fifth ever Black senator in American history, and served from 2005 until 2008, when he won the Presidency. In August 2008 ahead of Obama's historic win, journalist and author Matt Bai penned an op-ed asking "Is Obama the End of Black Politics?" Bai noted that Obama was a part of a new class of Black politicians that departed from the Civil Rights generation of leadership, building upon their successes and broadening their political coalitions to appeal to white liberal voters. Andra Gillespie (2012) furthers this notion in her book, *The New Black Politician,* which discusses an emerging Black political class of well-educated, liberal Black politicians in the early 2000s, like Cory Booker and Barack Obama, relying on de-racialization in their campaigns and visions of racial unity to mobilize support, departing from predecessors who relied primarily on mobilizing high Black turnout and drawing upon racialized cues to signal their Black bonafides. "New Black" politicians wanted to represent all their constituents and not be seen as expected to speak on Black issues, likely in order to ease into a national profile and appeal to white voters. In any case, the 2008 Obama campaign was rocky, due to conservative media backlash and racial stereotyping, raising national alarm at a Black man running for president. For example, in old sermons, President Obama's pastor, Reverend Jeremiah Wright of Trinity United Church of Christ, criticized the US government using hyperbolic, *signifying* language, including one where he proclaims "God Damn America" in response to the United States' exploitation and domination of people of color, including Native Americans and Black Americans. In response, Obama distanced himself from Wright, in order to quell the media

controversy towards the pastor and avoid his racialized critiques of the US government (Gunn and McPhail 2015).

Despite moments of controversy, Obama's de-racialization strategy was largely successful at the national level. The campaign took a grassroots approach and mobilized scores of Americans across racial backgrounds, particularly young people (McKenna and Han 2014; Cohen 2010). Americans were excited to vote for Obama and delivered him a victory with over 69 million votes, nearly 10 million more than his Republican opponent John McCain. The Obama presidency occurred at a moment of political unrest, given the 2008 economic crisis as well as long standing wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. After years of government neglect embodied in Hurricane Katrina, an economic and housing crisis that disproportionately impacted Black people, the Obama years seemed to offer a new administrative tenor towards Black Americans (Dawson 2011). The public, and especially, Black America, heard Obama's message of hope and change as a promise for a better tomorrow.

**Limits of Representation**

***Neoliberalism and Respectability***

For Black people, however, this hopeful message was short-lived. In his 2012 book, *The Price of the Ticket,* Frederick Harris discusses the limits of the Obama presidency, arguing that "the rise of black politics during the Obama presidency has more to do with the symbolism of being the first Black president and less to do with addressing substantive issues that face Black America" (173). Frequent appeals to President Obama in his first term to pass legislation that would uplift the Black community specifically fell on deaf ears, where the president preferred to pass race-neutral economic legislation that would "lift all boats" (Harris 2012, 171). Harris asserts that neither the Democratic nor Republican parties can successfully address racial

inequality, "because both parties push black-specific issues to the margins of national policy-making" (182).

Furthermore, in *Democracy Remixed,* Cohen (2010) discusses the neglect of young Black Americans despite the election of President Obama. Ongoing crises of unemployment, mass incarceration, and a lack of inclusion are persistent problems and barriers to political participation for Black youth (Cohen 2010). Just as the initial transition from "protest to politics," could do little to alleviate Black inequality and prevent Black death, neither could a Black presidency (Rustin 1965). Beyond his race neutral policy proposals, Obama has also been widely criticized for his rhetorical posture towards Black Americans, which Stephens labels a type of "racial distancing" (2020). Obama, in a tradition of Black leaders and Democratic politicians, often drew upon stereotypes and tough-love tactics in his speeches to Black audiences, telling Black people to call "Cousin Pookie" to get them to go vote, exhorting a group of Black graduates from Morehouse College to "take responsibility" (Stephens 2020; Harris 2012). This strategy, in part, was a tried-and-true signal to white voters that Obama would not simply go easy on Black Americans because he was a Black man or a Democratic politician.

Obama's posture towards the Black community embodies the "neoliberal turn" in Black politics. Neoliberalism is a set of logics wherein government is seen as a hindrance to progress and self-advancement, and market principles should prevail over the social order (Spence 2013). Neoliberalism is a politics that emanates from the conservative, austerity measures from the Reagan administration in the 1970s, and Hutchinson (1993) writes that Black leaders began to make the case to end reliance on government in part due to cuts in jobs and social services programs. Even so, in "The Neoliberal Turn in Black Politics" (2013), Spence discusses "secondary governmentalization," wherein neglect forces "already marginalized populations to

problem-solve their own condition, and further [generates] inequality in these populations by doing so" (155). Dawson and Francis further discuss this in "Black Politics and the Neoliberal Racial Order" (2016), arguing that "according to this new guard of neoliberal black leaders, racist institutional structures are no longer the problem and government should not be depended on as a problem solver" (5). Neoliberalism in Black politics is a result of the "underclass rhetoric" about poor Black Americans, which focused on a bootstraps mentality and improving Black behavior, rejecting "male criminality" and "female slovenliness and compulsive, irresponsible sexuality" (Reed 1999; 123). The neoliberal turn coupled state neglect with respectability politics, where "virtues of self-care and self-correction are framed as strategies to lift the black poor out of their condition by preparing them for the market economy" (Harris 2012).[3] Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham espoused a politics of respectability in the early 20th century, when post-emancipation Black Baptist women were active in a strategy of racial uplift, promoting "temperance, cleanliness of person and property, thrift polite manners, and sexual purity" (213). According to Paisley Jane Harris (2003), "[r]espectability was part of "uplift politics," and had two audiences: African Americans, who were encouraged to be respectable, and white people, who needed to be shown that African Americans could be respectable" (213).

When a Florida jury failed to convict George Zimmerman for the murder of Trayvon Martin in July 2013, President Obama, only about 7 months into his second term, unexpectedly spoke to a half-empty White House press corps, what ABC News anchor Diane Sawyer called a

[3] Harris (2012) writes that Black social and political leaders have used different iterations of respectability politics throughout history, from DuBois's "talented tenth" of Black leaders to Booker T. Washington's Atlanta Compromise. Even Black entertainers like Chris Rock and Tyler Perry, and famously Bill Cosby (in his "Pound Cake" speech) have chastised Black youth and the urban poor for their behaviors, like sagging pants and wearing gold chains. These tactics and strategies are deployed to "uplift the race," beginning perhaps as an autonomous method of community improvement but ultimately serving as excuses for Black poverty.

"seismic moment."[4] He said, "Trayvon Martin could have been me, 35 years ago." President Obama spoke as a translator to white Americans, saying "The African American community is looking at this through a set of experiences and a history that doesn't go away." While the president could uniquely speak to these events, the continuation of public, anti-Black violence during his tenure demonstrated that he could do little to stop it. Furthermore, as Dawson and Francis (2016) note, Obama continued to traffic in notions of personal responsibility in the Black community:

> While his remarks were praised by most as the first strong statement made on race relations by a sitting President, one of his potential resolutions—to "bolster and reinforce our African American boys" because as he noted "there are a lot of kids out there who need help who are getting a lot of negative reinforcement"—veered into a familiar familial narrative that Obama has used to contextualize persisting grievances in the black community… According to Obama, government institutions are rarely the source of continuing racial inequalities; to move to a more just society, we must first address the pathologies of our own communities. (25)

Thus, conditions, such as the quotidian nature *and* the spectacle of Black death and the lack of justice through institutional channels (both through a Black presidency and through the criminal justice system) for these deaths opened the political opportunity for the Black Lives Matter movement to emerge.[5] Black Lives Matter is a response to the failure of neoliberal, representative politics and answers what Black scholars have previously called for regarding a return to Black political movement and participation beyond political representation (Dawson 2011; Cohen 2010; Glaude 2007; Reed 1999).

Anti-Black violence and incarceration are foundational features of the American project, but the *repeated* witnessing of Black death mobilized Black millennials into the streets (Rickford 2016). The disappointment and inability of a Black president or the justice system to quell these

[4] ABC News. July 20, 2013. "Obama Speaks on Trayvon Martin." <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l_oy-9-ELtM&ab_channel=ABCNews>.

[5] McAdam (1982) discusses the "political opportunity structure" in the political process model of social movements, or the chance to engage in successful collective action given the "set of power relationships that define the political environment" (40).

concerns and correct course on anti-Black violence and police violence suggested that representation could no longer provide a sufficient answer to Black political needs. These are the grounds of political alienation that are central to the Black Lives Matter movement. This alienation is characterized by disappointments and the limits of formal politics alone to achieve Black political needs. The deaths of Trayvon Martin, Eric Garner, Sandra Bland, Walter Scott, Freddie Gray, *and so on*, angered Black Americans, and the lack of legal convictions of police officers for these deaths were also major mobilizers and sparks for Black political action. The failure to convict George Zimmerman for the murder of Trayvon Martin, for example, prompted the creation of the BLM hashtag and the Black Youth Project 100, a radical Black youth political organization founded in 2013 (Ransby 2018). Though Black Americans, especially young Black Americans had espoused alienation prior to this moment (Cohen 2010), the ubiquity and repetition of *images* and *videos* of Black death inaugurated a new political moment that would define Black politics post-Obama.

Though Obama was constrained by his office, his administration did make progress for the Black community, including improvements such as drops in hate-crimes, increases in high school graduation rates, and higher life expectancies (Gillespie 2019). The Black unemployment and uninsured populations decreased and Black income increased. Though these are important strides and are meaningful for many Black Americans, Gillespie argues that these did not narrow or close the Black-white gaps on these metrics. Even so, Black Americans highly approved of President Obama, with ratings over 75% his entire time in office (Gillespie 2019, 4). Beyond the Black community, however, President Obama's time in office gave rise to a deep sense of white grievance which catapulted Republican Donald Trump to the presidency (Sides, Tesler, and Vavrek 2017). Trump's presidency demonstrated that even as Black electoral politics provides

modicums of progress in symbolic representation and even tangible legislation, the clocks can always be turned back.

In the next section, I argue that the Black Lives Matter movement by and large represents a return to Black mass movement, as a backlash to the nationalization of Black politics and a refocusing on community organizing and collectivity. As discussed, these forms of Black political work have always been coupled with or run parallel to Black electoral organizing. But this time, while reaching the highest mountain of American politics, the illusion of substantive national representation shattered as the work on the ground came together.

## III. From Alienation to Action: The Politics of Black Lives Matter

Alienation and anger are important political mobilizers. Anger, in particular, can motivate extra-institutional political action and many Black political leaders throughout history have appealed to Black anger for mobilization (Phoenix 2020). Yet, Phoenix (2020) argues that there is an anger gap between Black and white Americans, where Black anger does little to motivate Black voter turnout. Phoenix argues that anger, however, motivates more "confrontational and system-challenging domains of action," among Black people, like participation in protests and uprisings than institutional politics (21). What is the work of anger and refusal in Black social movements, then? Minkah Makalani (2017) discusses Michael Brown's parents' reaction to his killing and the abandonment of his body to the street for hours after he was murdered in August 2014. He highlights the anger of Brown's parents, particularly his stepfather Louis Head's repeated call to "Burn this bitch down." Attending to this reaction "enables us to dwell on the possibilities that his defiant call holds for thinking through a mode of black politics that refuses the prevailing protocols and logics governing public demands for reparative justice" (Makalani 2017, 538).

Anger describes the *spark*, the dashed hopes of inclusion, opening the break away from the political system and the realization of repeated injustice. Each generation of Black Americans has an experience with this anger: their Emmet Till or their Rodney King moment. The deaths of Trayvon Martin and Michael Brown provided this angry spark for a new generation of Black Americans (Ransby 2018). Yet, anger does not fully explain sustained participation in a political movement, as BLM has had uprisings and protests since 2013. Alienation, on the other hand, encapsulates a *state of being* outside of the system, the limited "politics-as-usual" where Black Americans cannot get their needs met through typical governmental and institutional channels, even as they enter them. Reed (1999) characterizes politics-as-usual as that which "preserves the thrust of inherited policy regimes and reinforces existing patterns of systemic advantage by limiting the boundaries of the politically reasonable" (Reed 1999, 121). Alienation explains the disappointment, the sustained despair, and the limits of incorporation. This type of alienation is not, perhaps, unique to Black people: many people feel angry or disappointed by political representatives, or even by police violence, and alienation is likely a common experience among those who choose to get involved in protest politics. But the repeated experience and the *expectation* of anti-Black violence as the state of the world suggests a particular experience for Black Americans. Black Lives Matter offers a critical departure from reliance on Black electoral politics as a primary political strategy, especially politics predicated on "hope" and "change." Rather, the movement demonstrates how alienation from political institutions coupled with grassroots organizing and mass participation brings about a visionary Black politics that constitutes a mosaic of strategies for both Black survival and thriving.

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Black critical theory, specifically, "Afropessimism," can speak to the alienating conditions of anti-Blackness that somehow persist over time. Afropessimists like Jared Sexton and Frank Wilderson argue that, proceeding from the African slave trade, world history can only be understood as a continuum of anti-Blackness, which explains the ongoing exclusion, exploitation, and continual death of Black people (Wilderson 2020; Sexton 2011; Sexton 2010). Afropessimism descends, in part, from Saidiya Hartman's "afterlives of slavery," which she describes as Black people's "skewed life chances, limited access to health and education, premature death, incarceration, and impoverishment" (2006). Afropessimism lays a foundation for why Black people the world over can never successfully incorporate themselves into the body politic, even with a Black President (or Vice President). Recognition of an historical and present-day continuum of anti-Blackness explains the alienation and pessimism that animates a new generation of Black politics and the BLM movement. Jasmine Syedullah (2018) discusses the role of pessimism in Black Lives Matter, specifically. She writes:

> A new generation of activist-scholars is rising up and speaking out against the false optimism of post-racialism. Were black lives to matter, were the critical condition of black peoples' lives and the forces that structure that condition a pressing concern to people wherever they live, clear and common across lines of racial, national, and ethnic difference, their pessimism would have no place in a politics of liberation. Their pessimism is, however, a prophetic defense against the future white supremacy makes all but inescapable. Their despair works to expose the limits of political agency, incorporation, representation, and progress. (Gordon et al. 2018)

Syedullah speaks to the ways Black Lives Matter rejects neoliberalism and post-racial sentiments in Black politics. Rather, BLM encompasses a recognition of an anti-Black and white supremacist world *that will continue to operate as such*…that is, without Black activists' intervention. Understanding anger and alienation from the anti-Black world as a departure, in the following sections, I describe the politics of Black Lives Matter. BLM's politics are deeply informed by Black identity, marginality and Black queer politics, and, given the anti-Black state of the world, transformative political visions. Yes, even as movement actors take up the reality of

anti-Blackness and resist white supremacy, the politics of Black Lives Matter is not, by and large, dour or nihilistic: these activists advance an imaginative, Black feminist politics that encompasses practices of transformative justice and visions for the future.

**The Importance and Expansiveness of Black Identity**

In a departure from the deracialized electoral politics of the Obama era, BLM promotes a specifically pro-Black political organizing and movement constituency and calls for a recognition of the range of experiences and expressions of Black identity. Identity politics emanates from Black feminist organizing and scholarship, beginning especially with the Combahee River Collective, a group of Black lesbian feminists that formed a political organization to advocate for the specific interests of Black women in the feminist and racial justice movements in the 1970s (Brewer 1993). The Combahee River Collective Statement laid out a vision of "identity politics," which encompasses a radical politics forged from their own experiences within a white heteropatriarchal system.[6] The collective cites "a combined anti-racist and anti-sexist position" that drew them together, and they go on to "reject pedestals, queenhood, and walking ten paces behind. To be recognized as human, levelly human, is enough." Combahee emphasized a commitment to a socialist politics, specifically one that is informed by the intersections of race, gender, and class status. The statement advanced a politics that encompassed the women's entire being, their Blackness, their genders and sexualities, and a refusal to participate in politics and movements that fail to recognize some aspect of themselves and their communities.

Since Combahee, identity politics has gained a life of its own and received a bad rap in American politics: the connotation is that identity politics is solely focused on special favors to

[6] "Combahee River Collective Statement." April 1977. <https://combaheerivercollective.weebly.com/the-combahee-river-collective-statement.html>.

some undeserving group and not rooted in equality (Crenshaw 1991). Yet, for the Black Lives Matter Movement, identity politics highlights the particular needs of individuals as they move through the world given the politicization of identities, including (but not limited to) race, gender, sexuality, and class status. Intersectionality theory explicates the ways these identities compound and produce particular positionalities within larger systems of domination and oppression. In Kimberlé Crenshaw's articles "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex" (1989) and "Mapping the Margins," (1991) she lays out intersectionality, which contends with the multiple axes of oppression that Black women face before the law, specifically gender and race. She discusses, for example, the difficulty of political advocacy concerning both racialized gender-based violence in the Black community, given Black women's desire to resist stereotypes of violence about Black people *but also* their experiences of domestic violence. Intersectionality emphasizes the "both/and," the necessity of recognizing the specific experiences of violence given one's identity and the intersections therein.

Black Lives Matter embodies the practice of identity politics and intersectionality in both representation and advocacy. Though much of the movement mobilizations outside of its organizing circles have been focused primarily on the police killings of Black men, the Black Lives Matter Global Network was founded by three Black women, two of whom identify as queer (Ransby 2018; Taylor 2016). In addition, early on in the movement, advocacy for Black women like Marissa Alexander, Rekia Boyd, and Sandra Bland prompted action and advocacy work, specifically #SayHerName vigils and hashtags in remembrance of the multiple points of contact that Black women face at the hands of the carceral state (Ritchie 2017; Cohen and Jackson 2016). Furthermore, Movement for Black Lives (M4BL) affiliated organizations fight

for a multiplicity of issues and attend to the various ways these impact Black people specifically, including sexual violence, economic exclusion, climate justice, and incarceration.[7]

Black Lives Matter harkens back to pro-Black radical movements, including Black Power and Black feminist advocacy, where a commitment to *Blackness* is at the fundamental center of organizing politics. BLM incorporates the multiplicity of Black identities and experiences into the movement. This is a distinct political choice, and a fraught one, both within and external to the Black community. Identity is a lens through which the public understands social movements and can be either a motivator of a barrier to support. Within the Black community, the expansion of Black politics to incorporate specifically queer, immigrant, or transgender identity, for example, can curb some support (Bonilla and Tillery 2020; Lopez-Bunyasi and Smith 2019). Outside of the Black public, identity and experience opens pathways for cross racial solidarities to be built, as individuals with common interests may come together to support a social movement—like Latinx or Asian American communities dealing with carceral immigration authorities. When thinking about support for Black Lives Matter, it is necessary to think about how identity draws in members of the public and how racialized and other politicized identities, like gender and political party, in particular, may influence movement support. The Movement's appeals to Black women and to leftist/ progressive politics might constrain its base to these audiences, and its commitment to Blackness, in particular, given the reality of racial resentment in the United States, will always limit the broader public's support for this and all pro-Black movements, especially in response to political practices that are in violation of political norms.

[7] The Movement for Black Lives (M4BL) is a conglomeration of Black liberation organizations formed in 2015, committed to creating actions and policy for the Black Lives Matter movement. <https://m4bl.org/>.

**Margin-to-Center Politics**

Instead of viewing marginality as a political risk, the Black Lives Matter movement has taken up marginality as a position from which to organize the movement. From the Black Lives Matter website:

> As organizers who work with everyday people, BLM members see and understand significant gaps in movement spaces and leadership. Black liberation movements in this country have created room, space, and leadership mostly for Black heterosexual, cisgender men — leaving women, queer and transgender people, and others either out of the movement or in the background to move the work forward with little or no recognition. As a network, we have always recognized the need to center the leadership of women and queer and trans people. To maximize our movement muscle, and to be intentional about not replicating harmful practices that excluded so many in past movements for liberation, we made a commitment to placing those at the margins closer to the center.[8]

This margin-to-center politics makes the Black Lives Matter movement distinct from previous mass Black movements and electoral organizing. Instead of creating a politics that elides the specificity of difference or appeals to notions of similarity and belonging, the intention is to organize from a position that considers the needs of those who are most vulnerable. This position draws from Black feminist theory, particularly bell hooks. In hooks' work, *Feminist Theory from Margin to Center* (1984), she critiques the feminist movement for its lack of attention to the particular struggles of Black women, specifically poor Black women, and furthermore emphasizes the unique positionality of Black women for movements. Incorporating the perspectives of marginalized women, hooks argues, provides a "special vantage point" from which the feminist movement can better organize and attend to the "lived experiences" that enable a more incisive critique of "the dominant racist, classist, and sexist hegemony as well as to envision and create a counter hegemony" (hooks 1984, 15). In her study of Black feminist organizations, Kimberly Springer (2005) declares that Black feminists have a long tradition of "interstitial politics," or a "politics in the cracks" of race, gender, class, and sexual orientation.

[8] "Herstory." 2021. <https://blacklivesmatter.com/herstory/>.

In other words, organizing from a marginal perspective (ideally) creates more capacious movements that could address a multitude of problems. Beyond organizing against police violence, for instance, a movement centralizing the marginal perspective of transgender men and women can *also* recognize and organize around the specific kinds of gender-based violence that trans people experience in prison and jail.

Cathy Cohen's *Boundaries of Blackness* (1999) emphasizes the particularity of multiply marginalized identities, wherein Black group politics did not account for the needs of Black queer people during the height of the HIV/AIDS crisis. Cohen poses a type of "secondary marginalization," wherein those *within* a group of marginalized people (i.e., Black people who are also queer-identified) will need to find modes of advocacy that speak to their specific experiences. Audre Lorde, in her 1980 essay, "Age, Race, Class and Sex: Women Redefining Difference," also discusses the need to organize around difference within Black politics, writing that "the need for unity is often misnamed as a need for homogeneity, and a Black feminist vision mistaken for betrayal of our common interests as a people" (Lorde 1984, 119). The fear within Black politics is that anything less than unity (or, really, homogeneity) would minimize the potential of Black struggle, or the recognition of deviant sexuality or gender roles as understood and defined by dominant groups would diminish the attempt to demonstrate worthiness to the wider public. The Black Lives Matter Movement has certainly received less public attention and support when mobilizing around and for non-heteronormative and non-male victims of police violence, even as many of those on the margins of gender and sexual normativity are leading and informing the politics of the movement.

***Black Queer Political Praxis***

In rejection of respectability politics, key sectors of the Black Lives Matter Movement have emphasized the centrality of a queer politics: Charlene Carruthers, the founding national director of the Black Youth Project 100 writes about the "Black Queer Feminist lens," which draws upon queer politics as Cohen discusses in her article, "Punks, Bulldaggers, and Welfare Queens" (1997). Cohen asserts the radical and liberatory nature of a queer politics emanates from "deviant" categories of race, gender, and sexuality (1997). Cohen essentially reaches beyond "queer" as an identity category and calls for a politics outside of the political norm and center. Carruthers defines the Black Queer Feminist lens as "a political praxis (practice and theory) based in Black feminist and LGBTQ traditions and knowledge, through which people and groups see to bring their full selves into the process of dismantling all systems of oppression" (10). She specifies that she is using "queer" as a "continuum of possibilities outside of what are considered to be normal sexual or gender identities and behavior" (11).

Black queer politics is in opposition to the white gaze and embraces the fullness of Black queer positionality, including both community struggles and joys. Black queer politics uplifts the *ratchet,* the sex worker, the non-heteronormative, "imperfect" victims and asserts that these individuals have valid political interests and needs that encompass the totality of their experiences as both Black and as "deviants" and/or sexual minorities. By embracing difference within the Black community, as E. Patrick Johnson (Johnson et al. 2005) writes, Blackness can become "a site of possibilities" (118). Further, Black queer politics opens space for celebration and not just *pride* but an expression and performance of freedom from social constraints, rejecting sexuality as usual, rejecting Blackness as usual, rejecting gender-binaries, and ultimately rejecting politics-as- usual with potentially illegible, or "queer" political practices,

including 1) uprisings, which eschew respectability in protests and 2) the rejection of singular male and heteronormative leadership.

***Uprisings***

Iris Marion Young's *Justice and the Politics of Difference* (2011), and her "inclusive participatory framework," provides a lens through which one can recognize the validity of BLM uprisings even as they violate norms of peaceful protest. According to Young a robust "politics of difference" would enable those who are different, nonwhite, nonmale, or nonstraight to bring their concerns to the public sphere without adhering to normative notions of political discourse. The BLM movement has created a *counter public,* then, a space where those on the margins are able express their grievances and demand justice and mobilization as they see fit.

Black Lives Matter uprisings and rebellions embody the illegible (the queer) expression of harm in the public sphere; yet, these uprisings and rebellions should not make their claims less valid, simply because they do not adhere to the unwritten rules of acceptable protest: that is, peaceful and non-destructive. Juliet Hooker (2016) rejects the notion that Black protesters and activists must somehow perform an "appropriate" response to a disregard for Black life. Critics often compare the Black Lives Matter movement to the Civil Rights Movement, framing BLM as "leaderless" and less inclusive (Clayton 2018). Hooker asserts that these conceptions of the Civil Rights Movement are overly romanticized, and that Black Americans cannot be expected to practice a "sacrificial" democratic politics, wherein "any deviation from submission, respectability, and non-violence serves to render black grievances illegitimate" (464). Rather, Hooker posits that riots in the style of the 2014 Ferguson, the 2015 Baltimore uprisings, and, I would add, the 2020 national uprisings for George Floyd, offer a politically productive expression of Black anger and pain. Though the BLM movement encompasses much more than

just riots and uprisings, these public displays jettison the thoughts of concerned onlookers and enable a fuller expression of alienation and anger. These actions do not come without risks however: Wasaw (2020) writes that Black protests and protesters deemed "violent" during the 1960s pushed white voters to the right in favor of "law and order."

***Beyond the Charismatic Leader***

Another example of the movement's rejection of respectability and its queer political practices is its embrace of a "leader-full" structure, wherein many voices and leaders have come forth to represent the movement, in media and in localities (Raelin 2011).[9] This is in direct contrast to prior Black mass movements like Civil Rights Movement and to an extent Black Power, where recognizable leadership usually meant an individual, charismatic, heterosexual *male*. Though both of these movements were advanced by a number of individuals across genders, ages, and sexualities, the trope of the Black male charismatic leader is a long holdover in Black politics, emanating from post-Emancipation Black church customs—a vestige of respectability politics for survival (Edwards 2012). Even in the late 1990s and early 2000s, the idea of Black leadership would most likely evoke mentions of charismatic men, including Al Sharpton, Jesse Jackson, and Barack Obama. *Charisma* is a performance that taps into inspiration and respect, eliciting a willingness to follow and, Edwards (2012) writes "the charismatic leader is both gifted and a gift himself: he is given divine authority and power, given to the people, and given for the sake of historical change" (16). Yet, Black movement has always deviated from the performance of charismatic leadership. Edwards (2012), quoting Diana Taylor,

[9] Rivera, Gibrán. 2015. "A Leaderful Movement." *Interaction Institute for Social Change*. <https://interactioninstitute.org/a-leader-ful-movement/> and Ransby, Barbara. 2015. "Ella Taught Me: Shattering the Myth of the Leaderless Movement." *Colorlines.* <https://www.colorlines.com/articles/ella-taught-me-shattering-myth-leaderless-movement>.

writes that these performances have been interrupted, used to "envision more liberating outcomes," such as when:

> Mahalia Jackson, for example, breaks into King's "I Have a Dream" speech by way of call-and response interruption and gospel conjure, urging black struggles for citizenship toward "a 'greater' unity, an Eros that saw the necessity of community when the 'troubles' of citizenship reached its limits." Shirley Chisholm plays "quintessential lady" even as she stands "as a bridge between previous and present eras of hypermasculine black racial uplift agendas." Bob Moses responds to Wyatt Walker's insistence on singular leadership in his 1960 apologia for Dr. King and asks, "Rev. Walker, why do you keep saying one leader? Don't you think we need a lot of leaders?" And Erykah Badu teeters off-script to reimagine antiracist politics at the 2005 Millions More March. (12-13)

BLM's expansive leadership model could address the "violences of charisma," in Black movement, which includes as Edwards writes, 1) the "silencing" of the "masses of historical agents" who are written out of Black movement historiography, 2) the "undemocratic" nature of singular leadership and 3) the re-inscription of gender and social categories and norms (21). Instead, the Black Lives Matter movement embraces what Sarah J. Jackson calls a "collective visionary leadership" model, drawing from the organizing practices of Civil Rights activist Ella Baker, who espoused commitments to non-hierarchical and youth centered leadership beyond the charismatic, middle class "strong" male leader (Ransby 2003; Jackson 2020). The Black Lives Matter Global Network and the BYP100 elevate the leadership of Black women, Black queer and transgender individuals in particular. Patrisse Cullors, Alicia Garza, and Opal Tometi are recognized as co-creators of the movement, though the BLM Global Network (BLMGN) has for most of its existence been a network, and chapters operate independently of the BLMGN's leadership.[10] Though expansive definition of leadership in the movement has made space for more and different forms of leadership, the "networked" structure of organizations like BLM may leave space for individuals to assume power, undue recognition and credit without clear

[10] In 2021, BLM released an impact report detailing three new and separate entities including the BLM Global Network Foundation (a fundraising body), a BLM Political Action Committee, and BLM Grassroots, the collection of BLM chapters.

structures of accountability. Singular activists have come forth and been recognized as leaders and spokespeople in the broader movement, including activist DeRay McKesson and activist Shaun King. These individuals have done important work, drawing broader public attention to anti-Black police violence and political uprisings. Yet, they have also been widely criticized as unaccountable to organizations for their work and actions (Ransby 2018). And Cullors herself has received this criticism as well.

In 2020, in the wake of global uprisings in the name of George Floyd and unprecedented political protests and donations to the BLM movement, Cullors assumed the role as Executive Director of the BLM Global Network Foundation and also began the BLM political action committee (BLM PAC).[11] Questions about accountability and financial transparency sparked controversy within the Black Lives Matter movement regarding Cullors' role. In December 2020, ten BLM Chapters published a statement demanding financial and leadership accountability for the structure and governance of the BLM Global Network.[12] Though Cullors had become the most recognizable "leader" of the movement, the chapters claimed they had not selected her to lead the network and that she had assumed power without their knowledge. In May 2021, Cullors stepped down from national leadership of the BLM Global Network Foundation, a move she said had been in the works for over a year, long before criticisms of her leadership had been made public.[13] At the announcement, the BLM Global Network Foundation

[11] King, Maya. 2020. "Black Lives Matter power grab sets off internal revolt." *Politico.* <https://www.politico.com/news/2020/12/10/black-lives-matter-organization-biden-444097>.
[12] "It is Time for Accountability." 2020. <https://www.blmchapterstatement.com/about/>.

[13] Morrison, Aaron. 2021. BLM's Patrisse Cullors to step down from movement foundation. *The Associated Press.* <https://apnews.com/article/ca-state-wire-george-floyd-philanthropy-race-and-ethnicity-0a89ec240a702537a3d89d281789adcf>.

reasserted its commitment to "group-centered" and "inclusive" leadership, as modeled by Ella Baker.[14]

These struggles encapsulate the broader movement's resistance to traditional formulations of singular leadership. Local leadership in the BLM movement is often less visible on the national stage, but deeply ingrained in specific, autonomously led fights to transform conditions in cities and states. In Chicago for example, a constellation of racial justice organizations, including BLMChicago, the #LetUsBreathe Collective, GoodKids MadCity, the Chicago Alliance Against Racist and Political Repression, the BYP100 and a number of others draw upon a range of protest and organizing techniques to address long held fights in the city, including achieving justice for survivors of police torture, demanding police abolition and accountability, and struggling to end to the city's persistent gun violence. A thriving, multigenerational, and ideologically diverse activist *community* advocates and leads at different points in the fight for Black lives at the local and state levels. This demonstrates that the BLM movement cannot be attributed to a single organization or leader.

**Transformative Practices**

The aim of the Black Lives Matter movement is a social, political, and economic transformation of the world: the end of anti-Blackness. While Black electoral politics is rooted in elevating more Black people in existing social, economic, and political hierarchies, BLM takes on the broader task of rethinking society from the ground up. Transformation is an interest of Black feminist politics, in particular. Audre Lorde, in "Age, Race, Class, and Sex" calls for women to "identify and develop new definitions of power and new patterns of relating across difference" as "the old patterns… still condemn us to cosmetically altered repetitions of the same

[14] Black Lives Matter Global Network Foundation Announces Leadership Transition. *Black Lives Matter. com.*<https://blacklivesmatter.com/black-lives-matter-global-network-foundation-announces-leadership-transition/>.

old exchanges, the same old guilt, hatred, recrimination, lamentation, and suspicion" (123). This is a future oriented politics, imaginative and *prophetic*, guided by the world that Black activists want to see. Even so, as Denise James (2009) writes, drawing from Patricia Hill Collins, Black feminist theory is a social justice politics also grounded in a sense of the present, a "visionary pragmatism" wherein "the future is something to be pondered and set as a goal for today in our theories and in our practices. The future emerges as a process and not as an end in unrealistic utopia or supernatural salvation" (97).[15] Similarly, Jennifer Nash writes about what she calls a "Black feminist love-politics" which "has long been invested in the 'open end,' in radical possibility, orienting itself toward a yet-unknown future" (Nash 2011, 16). Though Black Lives Matter deploys an identity-rooted politics and an intersectional analysis oriented towards the *present* in the realm of policy and institutional change, I argue that the movement is forward looking and is building a visionary politics towards a future without carceral systems of domination. Sectors of the movement have worked towards these goals in fits and starts, lofty as they may be. Though all of these attempts at transformation have not been successful, their very pursuit are meaningful steps towards producing radical change. In this section, I offer examples of the BLM movement's commitment to transformative politics and attempts to practice them in the present.

In the Movement for Black Lives, "transformative justice," and "restorative justice" have become alternatives to the criminal justice system, or the carceral state. "Restorative justice" according to M.E. Kim, "offer[s] a collective forum elevating the voice of the victim or survivor, recognizing the impact of violence on community members, and allowing the perpetrator of harm to more fully understand the multiple levels of impact" (Kim 2018, 226). Kim notes that

[15] See also Deva Woodly's chapter "Political Philosophy: Radical Black Feminist Pragmatism," in her forthcoming book *Reckoning: Black Lives Matter and the Democratic Necessity of Social Movements* (Oxford University Press, 2021).

restorative justice practices exist in contrast with the retributive practices of the carceral system, with the intention to restore and rehabilitate individuals and communities. She writes that restorative justice practices have been used in conjunction with the carceral systems, particularly juvenile justice or domestic violence issues. Transformative justice, on the other hand, is borne out of radical feminist and LGBTQ abolitionist social movements and seek community-based responses to community-based violence outside of the criminal justice system (Kim 2021; Kim 2018; Brown 2019; Richie 2017; Ritchie 2012; Davis 2003). For example, Patrisse Cullors (2019) in an essay for the Harvard Law review discusses police and prison abolition in practice, through moments in her life wherein she drew upon either the carceral state or processes of restorative and transformative justice. Cullors contrasts these incidents, noting the pain and violence that emanated from, for example, her brother's arrest after a post-incarceration mental health episode compared to when she confronted an experience with intimate partner violence by pursuing a transformative justice strategy. Cullors writes of her attempts to calm her brother and seek help, and, as she was turned away from county health resources since he was formerly incarcerated, she called the police. They offered to taser Cullors' brother should he escalate and caused him deep fear for his life upon their arrival (Cullors 2019, 1689). On the other hand, when presented with an opportunity to pursue transformative justice, Cullors, with a third-party facilitator, confronted the partner, "Jordan," explained the harm done, particularly the violation of consent, and asked for space from them. She writes that Jordan initially became defensive, but after some time, she and Jordan were able to move forward and to heal from the situation, without the intervention of the carceral state (Cullors 2019, 1693-94). Certainly, not every person who has experienced a mental health episode or a sexual assault will be able to pursue the paths that Cullors did—non-carceral paths take both access to resources and the support of a

community. This example demonstrates what it might look like to individually practice abolitionist politics in a world where harm will always exist.

Another example of the BLM movement's abolitionist aims includes when the Black Youth Project 100 early on attempted to practice its commitment to transformative justice principles. Carruthers details in her 2018 book *Unapologetic*, an incident of harm wherein a prominent member of the BYP100 was accused of sexual assault in 2015. Carruthers writes that the organization and its leaders decided to engage in a holistic, "survivor-led transformative justice process" that would seek accountability for the harm done (Carruthers 2018, 13-18). The organization and its leaders practiced their commitment to Black queer feminism and their abolitionist goals in the present, attempting to live out harm reduction and repair without the carceral system. Again, these processes are complex: Carruthers writes that the organization was widely criticized by activists both inside and outside of BYP100. Yet she writes that, in pursuit of living out their values, even as they practice and "fall short," those in movement are "optimistic and steadfast in the idea that we can learn to treat each other better" (18).

In 2020, when George Floyd was murdered by police officer Derek Chauvin, the BLM movement's commitment to abolition and restorative justice took center stage, as "Defund the police" and calls for abolition rang out at protests all around the world.[16] This was the most public and widespread declaration of the movement's commitment to police and prison abolition, though the ideas had been percolating in movement circles for years, drawing ideas and language from the anti-mass incarceration activists and organizations therein, including Angela Davis, Ruth Wilson Gilmore, and the organizations Critical Resistance and INCITE (Davis 2003; Gilmore 2007). The movement has long posed *divestment* in police, prison, and military

[16]Illing, Sean. "The "abolish the police" movement, explained by 7 scholars and activists." *Vox.* <https://www.vox.com/policy-and-politics/2020/6/12/21283813/george-floyd-blm-abolish-the-police-8cantwait-minneapolis>.

structures, yet the 2020 uprisings brought forth the language of "abolition" and "defunding" into the public sphere.[17] As the public and political pundits debated what it meant to "defund the police," activist Mariame Kaba, an influential political educator and thinker in the movement published "Yes we literally mean abolish the police," in the *New York Times*.[18] In this piece, Kaba argues that police reform is a failed endeavor and that to "diminish police violence" we must "reduce contact between the public and the police." Police abolition, then, points to a number of social services and community-building initiatives that can reduce violence and address harm, without the additional harm of the carceral system.

In her book *We Do This 'Til We Free Us* (2021)*,* Kaba discusses the *experimental* nature of police and prison abolitionist organizing and advocacy. An example of this kind of experimentation includes the establishment of autonomous zones free of police, such as Freedom Square in Chicago, IL. The occupation began in solidarity with a direct action led by the Black Youth Project 100 on July 20, 2016, and the #LetUsBreathe Collective reconvened in that space on July 22, 2016. The #LetUsBreathe Collective, "an alliance of artists and activists," established this zone for 41 days in political and physical opposition to Homan Square.[19] Homan Square is a Chicago Police Department site that has been identified as a "secretive" facility where officers "detain and interrogate" individuals in their custody, without notifying lawyers or loved ones.[20] In support of the #BluestLie Collaborative, the #LetUsBreathe Collective held this space in

[17] "Vision for Black Lives," 2016. Movement for Black Lives.
[18] Kaba, Mariame. 2020. "Yes, We Mean Literally Abolish the Police." *New York Times.* <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/06/12/opinion/sunday/floyd-abolish-defund-police.html>.
[19] An, Susie. 2016. "Freedom Square Occupation Ends, But Not Everyone's Leaving." *WBEZ.* <https://www.wbez.org/stories/freedom-square-occupation-ends-but-not-everyones-leaving/1204cd6e-0e92-43f2-a1be-64ae20a7aace>.
[20] Ackerman, Spencer. 2016. "The Hidden: how Chicago Police Kept Thousands Isolated at Homan Square." *The Guardian.* <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2016/apr/13/homan-square-chicago-police-records-secret-interrogation-facility-new-documents-lawsuit>.

North Lawndale, a Black community on the west side of Chicago, to protest a "Blue Lives Matter" ordinance which would provide hate crime protections to police in the city.[21] In this space, #LetUsBreathe Collective set up tents, a library, art classes and offered food and water to those passing through. The encampment ended, however, due to an inability of the organizers to keep up with the "24 hour demands" of occupying the space. The Collective also speaks of some harm done in Freedom Square, including stolen phones and verbal abuse to Black women by some men present in the space.[22] Again, these pursuits are not perfect, and may inflict harm in their own ways even as they protest the harm of the carceral state. Still, these actions demonstrate attempts to live out the community-centered and police-free world activists wish to inhabit in the future.

Although the BLM movement is interested in pursuing radical notions of justice, many activists in the movement continue to work within current political structures, encompassing both identity and experience-rooted political strategies for today as well as their visionary politics for tomorrow. Brittany C. Cooper (2015) asks, "How does Black feminism theorize the configuration of the nation-state, particularly when Black people exist in what nineteenth century Black feminist theorists might call a "peculiar" relationship to the state?" I posit that Black Lives Matter activists, driven by the presence of current conditions and the need for *survival,* pursue strategies that center accountability and concessions that move towards radical change. As mentioned, the Movement for Black Lives (M4BL) Vision for Black Lives Policy Platform, for example, details several demands including: 1) End the War on Black People 2) Reparations

[21] Chang, Bettina. 2016. "What Does the "Blue Lives Matter" Ordinance Really Mean?" *Chicago Magazine.*
<https://www.chicagomag.com/city-life/september-2016/what-does-the-blue-lives-matter-ordinance-really-mean/>.
[22] "Imagining a World." N.d. *Let Us Breathe Collective*.
<https://www.letusbreathecollective.com/freedomsquare>.

3) Divest/ Invest 4) Economic Justice 5) Community Control 6) Political Power.[23] These demands are future oriented: they would fundamentally reshape politics as we know it and change the relationship between all Black people and the state. Less, perhaps, radical and more rooted in the need for Black political representation *now*, is M4BL's Electoral Justice Voter Fund, which "invest[s] in emerging and seasoned leaders making waves to mobilize Black people and win at the polls."[24] The Fund is invested in "accountability, interventions, dismantling, and building anew," seeking out leadership and developing Black political leaders that align with the vision of the movement. This segment of M4BL supports Black caucuses and political mobilizers around the country and is rooted in the real need for Black political representation in a white supremacist system, a need which became achingly apparent with the 2016 election of Donald Trump. This election demonstrated that visions of the Black future cannot subsume the real political threats of the present.

## IV. New Social Movements, Black Lives Matter, and Alienated Activism

The previous section framed Black Lives Matter as a departure from nationalized Black electoral politics and the neoliberal turn in Black politics of the early 2000s. The movement, I argue, is rooted in an experience of alienation and mobilizes a politics of identity, marginality/ Black queer praxis, and transformation. I now turn to how Black Lives Matter builds on and departs from the "New Social Movements" (NSM) paradigm. Though much of the seminal work on social movements, like the political process model, focuses on social structure, the availability of resources, and networks, the NSM literature moves away from these structural theories, stressing the role of collective identity in mobilizing a new wave of social movements and motivating collective action against targeted threats (Johnston and Klandermans 1995; Chong

[23] "Vision for Black Lives." 2021. Movement For Black Lives. <https://m4bl.org/policy-platforms/>
[24]"Electoral Justice Voter Fund." 2021. Movement for Black Lives. <https://m4bl.org/electoraljusticevoterfund/>.

1991; Offe 1985; Cohen 1985). NSM movements depart from previous class conflict paradigms and deeply emphasize politicized identities and their display in the public sphere. These are post 1960s identity movements, including American feminist, gay rights, and green movements.

BLM, I argue, offers a different era of social movement activism, an *Alienated Activism* movement. I define Alienated Activist Movements as a post-NSM type that mobilizes the public in response to entrenched structural inequality and the desire for social transformation. I define the practice of alienated activism as an *orientation* towards the state and a form of political *participation*. I argue that alienated activists are oriented by 1) their positions of marginality, 2) disillusionment with institutions and political conditions, and 3) via political solidarity. Furthermore, through their alienation from the state and via processes of political education, activists participate in 1) relational political activities (such as political organizing), 2) build efficacy in collective movement space, and 3) develop transformative political alternatives. Alienated activist movements comprise these practices, departing from NSMs in their embrace of transformative visions for justice and strategies for survival. This transformative vision guides BLM's internal and external engagement, where it embraces difference and advocates for systemic change.

In this section, I will review the social movement literature to detail the origins of the NSM paradigm. I then argue that Black Lives Matter represents the return of organized mass direct action advocacy to Black politics. However, these moments of uprising and anger *also* demonstrate how BLM is a product of its time period, where mass direct action movements had begun to proliferate all over the world, in Spain, Tunisia, and Egypt in 2011, 2012, and 2013. The BLM movement began as a rejection of politics as usual and state violence against Black bodies and a demand for recognition. The continual death of Black people at the hands of police

served to demonstrate the futility of incorporation as a goal for the movement. I argue that because of the ongoing occurrence of Black death and inequality in the US, BLM has taken a turn towards abolition and transforming politics as usual, qualifying it as more than an identity-focused NSM, but as a movement of individuals alienated from the state acting to achieve structural change.

**Social Movements Theories and Types: From Classic to New Social Movements**

There is a long literature characterizing the types and forms of social movements. Social movement theories are generally derived from assessment and observation of the movements arising at the time, such that new waves of theorization occur whenever new social movements emerge. Classic theories of social movements assert the influence of grievances and the psychological motivations behind social movement activity, where individuals who lack power attempt to achieve it at the instance of an overwhelming social or political strain or power vacuum (Davies 1962; Morrison 1971). Deprivation and relative deprivation theories of the 1960s and 1970s were derived from Marxs' descriptions of revolution, social exclusion and alienation. These theories emphasize that a group's realization of their disadvantage in comparison to others is a primary motivation for a social movement activity—as Davies (1962) describes it "[the] belief that degradation produces revolution" (5). However, these theories could not explain the lack of action in response to ongoing events of exploitation and domination. This suggests that alienation alone is not enough to motivate political action.

Later structural theories would explain the lack of one-to-one correlation between degradation and political action. These theories assert that protesters are not simply reactionary, and that enough social strain and grievances are always present and worthy of collective action and that movement actors are strategic, rational actors looking for resources and opportunities.

Tilly (1978; 1993) and McCarthy and Zald (1977) posit that a "resource mobilization," model explains that social movements happen upon the availability of new contentious political repertoires and resources. Yet, protest is typically leveraged by those lacking social or political power.[25] Piven and Cloward's *Poor People's Movements* (1977), for example, focuses on the role of disruption and the ways the politically dispossessed use protest and moments of social strain to gain concessions from political elites. How do those without access to resources get involved? While previous work in political participation has suggested that low-income Americans are less likely to participate in activism, additional studies have found that belonging to communities, networks, or organizations where one can develop civic skills might make up for what one lacks in socioeconomic status. This is how Morris (1984) explains the advent of the Civil Rights Movement, with a focus on indigenous organizations and autonomous institutions in the Black community as explaining what Black people do with and for each other. Social proximity and networks are important precursors to risky social movement activity (McAdam 1988; Chong 1991). Those that are part of a community have more complex calculations to make when deciding to participate, since they have "additional social incentives" to consider (Chong 1991, 9). That is, the desire to demonstrate their commitment to their community outweighs the added costs of participation. Networks create and capitalize feelings of obligation to one another and help solve collective action problems (Olson 1965).

Social movements do additional cultural and political work outside of traditional political institutions and modes of participation. McAdam (1982) asserts that individuals first achieve "cognitive liberation," which signals a recognition of injustice and the need for collective action to achieve societal change (McAdam 1982, 52). Cognitive liberation, indigenous organization,

[25] While those in power may not initially wage social movements, they often co-opt movement politics and/ organizations, either to the benefit or chagrin of social movement activists.

plus expanded political opportunities (brought about by social strain or social progress) motivate social movement activity, as McAdam outlines in his "political process model" of social movements (McAdam 1982). In other words, given the right sociopolitical context, marginalized people find community through their expressed grievances and forging connections, building organizations, and advocating for their visions of a different world. In addition, Tarrow notes, in order to separate "general turbulence," or contentious politics, from social movements, one must understand social movements as periods of sustained collective action (Tarrow 1994, 5).

**Table 1.1 Structural Paradigms and New Social Movements Comparison**

| **Structural Paradigms (political process and resource mobilization)** | **New Social Movements (Pichardo 1997 & Melucci 1980)** |
|---|---|
| Goals | |
| • Focus on Economic Redistribution<br>• Are working class movements | • Emphasize quality of life and lifestyle concerns, end of separation between public and private spheres |
| Orientation Towards the State | |
| • Demand incorporation<br>• Rooted in class conflict | • Shaped by identity politics<br>• Call into question structures of representative democracy<br>• Advocate direct democracy, self-help, and cooperative styles of social organization<br>• Centering on autonomy and identity<br>• Transformatory socio-cultural potential; aim to reappropriate society from the state |
| Strategy | |
| • Seen as strategic, seeking to influence political elites, change institutions, and the broader public<br>• Attentive to political opportunities and available resources | • Disruptive tactics, dramatic<br>• Perform identities<br>• Mobilize public opinion and anti-institutional politics to pressure politicians<br>• Multiple repertoires |
| Leadership | |
| • Participation from marginalized and excluded, seen as proletarian<br>• Singular leadership, charismatic | • Middle class/ highly educated activists and leaders<br>• Horizontal leadership<br>• Individualized participation |

Departing from resource mobilization and political process models, New Social Movements are movements like the "feminist movement, green movements, the youth movement, the gay rights movement, the anti- and pro choice movements" as well as nationalist minority movements (Calhoun 1993). These are movements that emanated post-Civil Rights in the 1960s and 1970s, as well as European "New Left" in the 1980s, which emerged in response to "the delegitimization of major political parties" (Larana, Johnston and Gusfield 1994, 3). These movements were considered to politicize issues that were away from the public sphere and outside of what was typically considered to be political. While social structure undergirds new social movements, these movements, according to Pichardo (1997) "emphasize quality of life and lifestyle concerns [and]... end of separation between public and private spheres." The self and the personal are at the center of new social movements. Furthermore, these movements are also characterized as an advancement of democratic pluralisms, or departures from Marxist motivations of prior movements (Johnston, Larana, and Gusfield 1994). New social movements also include anti-war and anti-industrialization movements such as the anti-nuclearization and peace movements.

New social movements favor democratic decision making over representative democracy. While structural social movements deployed hierarchical models of leadership, NSMs are more communal and decentralized. The tactics of new social movements are characterized as "disruptive" and "dramatic" while structural social movements are seen as more strategic. While it could be the case that the end goals of these movements are purely expression, these tactics can also be utilized to push public opinion and ultimately influence institutions. New social movements are understood as mobilized by the educated and members of the middle class, such

that class is not a central mobilizing feature of new social movements, whereas structural paradigms emphasize the participation of the excluded and the marginalized.

Since the establishment of the NSM paradigm, social movement theorists have posited framing theories of collective action, collective identity theories, as well as a focus on emotions and networked social movements (Snow et al. 1986; Benford and Snow 2000; Valocchi 2009; Young 2001; Polletta and Jasper 2001; Simon and Klandermans 2001; Gould 2009; Goodwin, Jasper and Polletta 2001; Castells 2015). Yet, fewer major paradigms have come forth, though movements like Occupy, the Arab Spring, and Spanish anti-austerity movements have been dubbed "new" new social movements, advanced by millennials coming of age and spread using new technology (Langman 2013; Feixa, Pereira, and Juris 2009). These movements are understood to fit into the NSM paradigm to an extent, but also levy structural critiques at moments of legitimation crises in neoliberal capitalism, which place them beyond the expressive category of NSMs (Langman 2013). These movements also levy cultural critiques placing them beyond the pale of political process or resource mobilization models. In the next section, I will speak to BLM's adherence and departures from the NSM paradigm. In the next chapter, I will further delineate the concept of "alienated activism" to answer for these departures in BLM and the movements of the 2010s.

*Black Lives Matter as a New Social Movement: Overlaps and Departures*

Tillery (2019) claims that Black Lives Matter meets the qualifications of a NSM, although it does not neatly fit into the new social movement paradigm. In an analysis of BLM affiliated organizations' Twitter accounts, Tillery argues that because these accounts are primarily expressive (and less prescriptive) and because they signify about marginal identities in the public sphere, BLM may fit into a NSM paradigm, as these movements are less concerned

with the structural and are more about "performing and representing their distinctive identities within post-industrial cultures" (Tillery 2019, 304). Yet, Tillery argues, because the movement urges political action through existing political systems, the movement also fits into resource mobilization paradigms (Tillery 2019, 318-319). Tillery in part builds his analysis upon Harris (2015), who claims that Black Lives Matter is more akin to Occupy Wall Street and the Arab Spring than the Civil Rights Movement. He also draws from Taylor (2016) who names an "American Spring" where BLM was preceded by the execution of Troy Davis and Occupy in 2011, which she asserts offered a "materialist, structuralist understanding of American inequality." Beyond the temporal specifics of BLM that characterize it as a NSM, it is also important to consider the movement within the continuum of Black politics, which new social movement theory does not account for.[26] Taylor (2016) and Rickford (2016) discuss the break between activists from Ferguson and the old guard of civil rights advocacy, as embodied by conflicts with Reverend Al Sharpton, Reverend Jesse Jackson, and NAACP President Cornell William Brooks. Black Lives Matter builds ideologically and materially upon Black Feminist, Black LGBT, womanist, and anti-mass incarceration advocacy work and is resonant of the Black radical tradition threaded through and practiced by these movements. Black Lives Matter also launches a structural critique, highlighting the failures of electoral politics.

How does Black Lives Matter overlap and depart from the new social movements paradigm? I identify three ways Black Lives Matter builds on but extends the NSM paradigm, signalling a new era of social movement activism: 1) Black Lives Matter advances a structural critique of the political system 2) BLM utilizes both disruptive and strategic tactics for social

[26] Tillery, quoting Carty (2015, 27), asserts that scholars have "mainly applied the theories [associated with the new social movement paradigm] to white, middle-class, progressive causes that cut across political and cultural spheres at the expense of paying attention to struggles that pertain to economic and racial issues" (Tillery 303).

transformation, valuing both emotive and survival strategies, including uprisings, as well pushing political candidates and legislation 3) BLM has leaders and activists from a range of class backgrounds, given the cross-class experiences of racism and the decentralization of movements due to social media. Some of the departures from the NSM paradigm are by virtue of being a specifically Black social movement and the activist and intellectual legacies therein. But BLM should not be simply placed in older paradigms like resource mobilization or the political process models. Though the movement is well resourced, its uprisings and advocacy are not solely mounted by established organizations; rather, members of the public often protest and react in response to viral moments of Black death. Furthermore, the movement operates both inside and outside of political opportunity structures, with committed activists continuously pushing against police violence in the US. Its departures from these social movement frameworks speak to the temporality of BLM, newly available technologies, and the practices of BLM and other contemporary movements. These call for a new social movement theory.

**Table 1.2 New Social Movements and Black Lives Matter Comparison**

| **New Social Movements (Pichardo 1997 & Melucci 1980)** | **Black Lives Matter** |
|---|---|
| Goals | |
| ● Emphasize quality of life and lifestyle concerns<br>● End of separation between public and private spheres<br>● Transformatory socio-cultural potential; aim to reappropriate society from the state | ● End of state violence towards Black people<br>● Transformatory socio-cultural potential; **aim to transform the state** |

| **Table 1.2 (continued)** | |
|---|---|
| Orientation Towards the State | |
| • Shaped by identity politics<br>• Call into question structures of representative democracy<br>• Advocate direct democracy, self-help, and cooperative styles of social organization<br>• Centering on autonomy and identity | • Shaped by identity politics and centralizes personal experience<br>• **Multiplicity of identities, axes of oppression, and marginality**<br>• **Advances a structural critique**<br>• **Alienated from representative democracy**, **community oriented,** and cooperative styles of social organization<br>• Centering on autonomy and identity |
| Strategy | |
| • Disruptive tactics, dramatic<br>• Perform identities<br>• Mobilize public opinion and anti-institutional politics to pressure politicians<br>• Multiple repertoires | • Disruptive and strategic elements<br>• Strategic engagement with institutions<br>• **Some elements engage with politicians to gain accountability and receive concessions**<br>• Mobilize public opinion and anti-institutional politics to pressure institutions |
| Leadership & Participants | |
| • Middle class/highly educated activists and leaders<br>• Horizontal leadership<br>• Individualized participation | • A range of leaders and participants especially in locally rooted mobilizations<br>• A range of organizations<br>• **Highly public middle class/ highly educated activist and academic contingents**<br>• Organizational & individualized participation |

***Goals and Orientation towards the State***

As identity is at the center of New Social Movements, their primary goals are to achieve recognition and incorporation for identity groups, bringing issues once thought beyond the realm of politics, like gender and sexuality, into the public sphere (Johnston, Larana, and Gusfield 1994). These movements aim to transform what is socially acceptable, demanding the expansion of what they claimed were human rights and recognition from the state. BLM also demands

social equality and recognition in the public sphere, but at its core constitutes uprisings levying structural challenges rooted in identity and espousing long held experiences of exclusion. Black Lives Matter, in particular, departs from earlier movements advocating Black respectability or even Black leadership, and pinpointed anti-Black state violence as an entrenched structural problem and *mass movement* as the solution. Beyond police violence, Black Lives Matter levies critiques towards systemic inequality that enables Black poverty and economic exclusion, as well as misogynoir, or anti-Black sexism, heterosexism, and anti-transgender violence. Whereas NSMs questioned representative democracy and pushed back against social and political exclusion, Black Lives Matter demands more than incorporation and recognition; rather, the movement assesses politics-as-usual as deadly for Black people and demands more life-affirming structures than those at present.

***Strategy***

While NSMs are known for their agitation, dramatic demonstrations, and *performance,* Black Lives Matter constitutes a combination of uprisings and engagement with the state to achieve concessions for survival, aiming towards transformation. Both NSMs and BLM are often diminished as "unstrategic," but, as previously discussed, marginality often makes political activity illegible (Young 2011; Hooker 2016). The "dramatic" and "disruptive" uprisings of NSMs are intended to sway the public and influence politicians to advance real policy, while the *uprisings* of BLM are intended to express Black anger and disrupt public space (Hooker 2016). Furthermore, BLM has elements that advance both policy and politicians that adhere to its mission to strategically achieve its present day goals towards structurally transforming the state (Ransby 2018). Some of the movements' activists have turned towards election mobilization and policy work, especially at the local level. Some of this work has also been in response to the

election of Donald Trump in 2016, wherein activists learned that no stone could go unturned in the struggle for Black freedom, safety, and thriving.[27]

***Leadership and Participation***

NSMs leaders and participants are understood to be drawn from the middle class, or the individuals who have time to participate in organizing and political protest. As these movements are not seen to be ideologically coherent (though no movement ever really is), their grievances are less understood to be drawn from a unified sense class-rooted conflict and more towards identity and experiences which can occur across class groups (though class experience often informs ideology and tactics). Ultimately, though, NSMs are decentralized allowing for various iterations of them to exist across locales. The same is true for Black Lives Matter, though, because of the Internet and social media, the wide variety of leadership and participation has greatly expanded entry points into the movement, such leaders of different age groups, from various class experiences and backgrounds have lended their voices to the BLM movement. Social media has served as a mechanism for both discussion and education about police violence against Black people. The movement has both individual and collective elements, with some choosing to elevate the movement and their own voices online and others joining organizations in their communities. Furthermore, those most likely to experience anti-Black violence, especially from the police, are low income Black people. Their struggles, in fact, are the primary motivator of the movement.

**VI. Conclusion**

In this chapter, I reviewed the Black politics and social movements literature. I argue that BLM offers a new era of Black political struggle, in response to the inability of national Black politics and the criminal justice system to respond to the deaths of Black youth on the ground.

[27] Author interview with Charlene Carruthers, former national director of the BYP100. January 2020.

Due to its alienation from politics-as-usual, Black Lives Matter offers a new and distinct era of Black political struggle. I argue that the Black Lives Matter movement, including on the ground activists and organizations, offer a politics rooted in 1) identity 2) marginality and queer praxis and 3) transformation. Furthermore, I also demonstrated the ways that Black Lives Matter builds upon and extends the New Social Movements paradigm. BLM extends NSM's critiques of representative democracy, arguing that racial inequality is structural and will not be solved through systemic reform alone. BLM advances disruptive uprisings and strategic institutional actions to shift the boundaries of political action but *also* achieve tangible wins for survival. Finally, even as the movement has struggled with highly visible leadership, its networked structure and understanding BLM as a *mass movement* across many organizations demonstrates that has an expansive leader and participant base, across class groups, due to the cross class experience of racism, the movement's decentralized structure, and its wide accessibility on social media. In these ways, Black Lives Matter exemplifies an era of "Alienated Activism" begun and exemplified by such movements as The Arab Spring and Occupy Wall Street. In the next chapter, I discuss my theory of alienated activism as a necessary extension to the NSM paradigm as it applies to movements of the 2010s.

## Chapter 2.
## Theorizing Alienated Activist Movements

### I. What is an Alienated Activist Movement?

An "Alienated Activist" movement (AA) builds upon and departs from the New Social Movement (NSM) type (Table 2.1). Alienated Activist movements are the movements in response to crises in neoliberalism and legitimation in the early 2010s.[1] In particular, I am referring to the Arab Spring (particularly, the 2011 Egyptian and 2010-2011 Tunisian Revolutions), Occupy Wall Street, and Black Lives Matter, with *alienated activism* describing the activist practices emanating from these movements.[2] I describe these as "Alienated Activist" movements because they depart from post-materialist NSMs focused on incorporation and extension of rights, like women's liberation or the gay rights movements (particularly marriage equality movements) post-1965. AA movements mobilize around both identitarian and material alienation towards "politics-as-usual." Alienated activists are alienated through their marginal identities, their negative experiences with institutions, and/or a desire to be in political solidarity with the marginalized. Political education (occurring offline and online) serves as the mobilizing mechanism of alienated activism, wherein individuals learn about the ways the state has failed their and/or other identity groups and seek opportunities to engage in collective action that builds power in their communities. Alienated activists levy structural critiques and advance transformative political strategies.[3] Alienated activism is intended to describe movements and practices that emanate from progressive and marginalized communities. While the paradigm has

[1] Alienated Activism could apply to earlier or later movements, if they meet the provided criteria. I focus here on the era of the 2010s (especially 2011- 2015) to describe the emergence of movements occuring at this time. Activism occurring in the latter half of the decade (2016-2020) was shaped in particular by the development of these movements during this time period, while the movements themselves serve as the tipping point of the social and political crises occurring throughout the early 2000s.

[2] BLM is the focus of this dissertation, though Langman (2013) and has written similarly of Occupy, naming it a "new new social movement."

[3] I discuss the practice of alienated activism in chapter 4.

the potential to be an expansive description of social movements ideologically oriented from the right, this, I argue, would require an articulation of how right wing activists are disempowered by their identities and/or materially alienated from political structures and institutions.

Alienated activism offers an important opportunity to move beyond the "new social movements" and "new new social movements" paradigms to label and categorize recent, identity-based movements that call for social, economic, and political transformation. Furthermore, alienated activism joins BLM, Occupy Wall Street, and the Arab Spring as co-contemporary movements that drew tactics, language, and strategy from one another and launched similar critiques at the state.

**Table 2.1 Movement Paradigm Comparison**

| **Structural Paradigms (resource mobilization and political process models)** | **New Social Movements (Pichardo 1997 & Melucci 1980)** | **Alienated Activism** |
|---|---|---|
| Goals | | |
| • Focus on Economic Redistribution<br>• Are working class movements | • Emphasize quality of life and lifestyle concerns, end of separation between public and private spheres<br>• Transformatory socio-cultural potential; aim to reappropriate society from the state | • Focus on identity, experiences, and solidarity<br>• Transformation of the state |
| Orientation towards the State | | |
| • Demand incorporation<br>• Rooted in class conflict | • Call into question structures of representative democracy<br>• Advocate direct democracy, self-help, and cooperative styles of social organization<br>• Centering on autonomy and identity. | • Alienated from representative democracy, community oriented, and cooperative styles of social organization<br>• Emphasize autonomy and strategic engagement with the state<br>• Political, materialist, and economic critiques of the state |

**Table 2.1 (continued)**

| Strategy | | |
|---|---|---|
| • Seen as strategic | • Disruptive tactics, dramatic<br>• Mobilize public opinion and anti-institutional politics to pressure institutions | • Disruptive and strategic actions<br>• Strategic engagement with institutions<br>• Mobilize public opinion and anti-institutional politics to pressure institutions |
| Leadership | | |
| • Participation from marginalized and excluded, seen as proletarian<br>• Singular leadership, charismatic leader model | • Middle class/ highly educated activists and leaders | • A range of leaders and participants especially in locally rooted mobilizations<br>• A range of organizations<br>• Highly public middle class/ highly educated activist and academic contingents |

## II. Building on and Departing From New Social Movements

### *Identity*

As discussed in the previous chapter, the alienated activism paradigm builds upon the NSM paradigm to more fully account for the wave of 2010 movements, particularly the Arab Spring, Occupy Wall Street, and Black Lives Matter. The NSM paradigm is rooted in an understanding of identity as a key mobilizer, with primarily expressive political demonstrations and goals to receive recognition and rights from the body politic. NSMs are seen as part and parcel of one's political self, meant to represent some aspect of a person's political commitments and/ or identity (Larana, Johnston and Gusfield 1994). Alienated Activist movements also deploy identity as key paradigms for defining group orientations towards the state. Identity serves as a point of departure for alienation, opening a space for recognition of one's own positionality and especially *marginality* in the eyes of the state and/ or society. Identity offers a realization of one's

own standpoint in society, and opens a point for articulating experiences and joining in solidarity with marginalized groups with whom one does not share an identity (Collins 1990). Thus, the NSM paradigm provides important grounds for the alienated activism frame, as it advances identity as a key mobilizer and informer of politics and movement, particularly politicized collective identities, like race, gender, sexuality and economic status (Simon and Klandermans 2001).

***Legitimation Crises and Structural Critiques***

Langman (2013) writes that the "new new social movements" of the 2010s arose during worldwide "legitimation crises" in government, including recognition of political, economic and social inequality.[4] Particularly, highly educated young people with bleak job prospects mounted mass mobilizations in response to these crises in the Middle East and the US, using social media to connect with each other and mobilize their fights (Honwana 2019; Langman 2013; Milkman 2017). These young people have been described in part as experiencing a delay of adulthood, dashed hopes and dreams promised to them if they only "do the right things," for example, getting an education, only to be left with crippling student loan debt (Milkman 2017, 9). These dashed hopes shifted their orientation towards the government. Of these types of legitimation crises, Langman draws from Habermas's (1975) assertion that legitimation crises arise when "there are failures in the objective 'steering mechanisms' of the systems of advanced capitalist industrial societies" that integrate and adhere individuals into the body politic (Langman 2013, 512). Langman writes,

> Economic crises, implosions, and structural contradictions that threaten survival or the maintenance of living standards, or render social status, dignity and self-esteem

[4] These "new new" social movements, including Occupy, the Arab Spring, and the Spanish 15M movements, Langman argues, are new social movements that advance materialist/ political economy critiques, "informed by morality" and utopian visions. Alienated Activism adds in BLM, considers how these movements launch structural critiques, and strategically engage with the state.

> problematic, lead to questions and challenges to the legitimacy of the economic system, political leadership, and legitimating ideologies" (Langman 2013, 512).

I would also add, as discussed in Chapter 1, that, in the case of BLM in particular, this moment was also a backlash to neoliberal governance and their inability to solve ongoing racial crises, the "structural contradiction" of a Black president unable to solve anti-Black violence and the ongoing failure of the justice system to account for these crimes (Langman 2013, 512). In response to the inability of the system to address these failures, alienated activist movements demand more than simply *incorporation* into the political system. Whereas the NSM paradigm questions representative democracy and charges the system with exclusivity, alienated activists take issue with the very structure of the system and attempt to reform and/ or abolish the systems' logic. As Castells (2015) writes of Occupy, its key systemic critique and demand (if there was one) emanated from its practice of deliberative, horizontal democracy. Activists in the 2011 Egyptian Revolution demanded the removal of authoritarian President Hosni Mubarak, as well as an end to his police state and neoliberal economic policies (Joya 2011). Alienated activists recognize that the system is *intended* to be exclusionary and in response attempt to advocate for new political formulations which incorporate recognition of various positionalities and an end to social and political hierarchies.

***Strategic Engagement***

NSMs are seen as tactically disruptive, consisting of dramatic demonstrations meant to mobilize public support and draw attention to identity movements. Alienated Activism certainly carries forth this tradition, with occupation, uprisings, and reclamation of public space as a key marker of these movements' political resistance and political practices. These practices emanated with the Arab Spring and Occupy, certainly, and continued with Black Lives Matter uprisings and occupations in Ferguson in 2014 and Baltimore in 2015. BLM protests also often take

highways and major thoroughfares to block traffic, for example, Lake Shore Drive in Chicago in 2014, in protest of a jury's decision not to indict the officer who choked Eric Garner to death.[5]

These demonstrations have continued as time has worn on; yet, surviving movements of this moment (namely, Black Lives Matter) have also levied strategic and pragmatic engagement with the state, given, especially, the need for political survival for marginalized communities and the tangible risk of not attempting to address entrenched power structures.[6] In these ways, AA movements draw from past resource mobilization and political process paradigms to advance their goals within existing political institutions (as Tillery (2019) writes of BLM). Though alienated activists levy structural critiques at the state, they recognize that engagement may be necessary to achieve key political wins. Alienated activists may take reformist and/or abolitionist strategies to engage the state, attempting to fundamentally change institutions or do away with them completely. These strategies can be seen in the various ways the BLM movement has engaged with the problem of policing in the US, from advocacy for body cameras and police accountability councils, as well as the "defund" and "divest" movements, which demand for state funding of police departments to be diverted into community building resources, including mental health care, job training, and other affirming institutions.[7]

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[5] "Protesters Jam Chicago's Loop, Lake Shore Drive After NYC Chokehold Death Decision." 2014. NBC Chicago. <https://www.nbcchicago.com/news/local/u-of-c-students-protest-after-nyc-chokehold-death-decision/1990522/>.

[6] I do not in this dissertation consider in depth why BLM has outlived the Arab Spring or Occupy Wall Street, but I venture that it has survived the former due to a comparably less authoritarian political environment (than Egypt, in particular; Tunisians successfully established a democracy after their uprisings) and the latter due to a long Black radical tradition as a blueprint and guide to sustain movement activity, as well as the continual shock of video evidence of anti-Black police violence in comparison to the invisibility of inequality.

[7] "Vision for Black Lives." 2020. Movement for Black Lives. <https://m4bl.org/policy-platforms/>.

***Cross-Class, Networked Participation and Leadership***

NSMs are understood as emanating from the middle class and not ideologically committed to the class elements of prior Marxist rooted movements (Larana, Johnston and Gusfield 1994). Marginal identity and exclusion are the basis of NSMs, which, given cross class experiences of gender, sexuality, and race can be felt by individuals of various class backgrounds. Solidarity in these movements, then, is rooted in identity based societal exclusion. Yet, given the entrenched nature of economic inequality, I argue that the movements of the 2010s are rooted in class solidarity based on *not* belonging to the upper echelon of economic and political power, which had become so extreme.[8] Occupy, for example, was levied by highly educated young people having difficulty entering the job market after the 2008 economic crash, saddled with debt, and growing costs of living (Langman 2013; Hickel 2012). Black Lives Matter demonstrates the ubiquity of anti-Black racism for Black people across class experiences, even as low income Black Americans are most at risk. Furthermore, individuals are able to enter these movements at different points in their experiences and more easily empathize and understand exclusion, in part due to social media, where learning and discussion can emanate from a range of individuals (Juris 2012). The democratized, *open* nature of Alienated Activist movements, however, can obscure tangible class differences between movement participants.

Alienated activist leadership also offers a broad range of individuals of differing positionalities, perspectives, and class backgrounds. Leadership emanates from grassroots organizing, the academy, the professional political class, and from everyday people with the life experience to speak to and for AA movements' core goals. AA movements are ideologically committed to horizontal and democratic practices of organizing, eschewing the singular

[8] Langman (2013) argues that these movements are, in part, rooted in "moral shocks" at the extreme nature of economic inequality.

leadership models, as can be seen in the Occupy Wall Street movement in particular (Gitlin 2012). The decentralized nature of these movements also enables different movement contingents to emerge, with similar goals but various modes of engagement to achieve them. BLM exemplifies the varied nature of leadership within the movement, both through its recognizable founding leaders and local advocates who lead the fights in their cities and states. As mentioned in the previous chapter, this loose leadership structure can also allow for unelected, unaccountable spokespeople to take up representative space in the media, politics, and culture, claiming to speak for the movement. It can also create tense class dynamics, as some are chosen to speak for and represent the movement and are able to profit from these opportunities.

***Political Education Through New Crises and New Media***

Alienated Activist movements arise as members of the public learn about political crises that result in widespread alienation from contradictions between what is promised from neoliberal governance and the political reality on the ground. BLM, for example, is a movement resulting from, in part, the failure of neoliberal governance during the Obama administration. While the Obama government suggested a potential departure from politics-as-usual and a break from the Bush administration, his lack of ability to recompense the death of Black Americans at the hands of police and anti-Black violence shattered the illusion of possibilities for incorporation for a new generation of Black Americans. While older generations of Black Americans had had their moments of departure, including Rodney King, Amadou Diallo, Hurricane Katrina, the Bush tax cuts, the Iraq War, the early 2010s marked a moment for a new generation to learn and collectivize around their shared alienation (Milkman 2017).

Political education serves as a tool to radicalize and move individuals from alienation to action. Political education occurs in organizations, at colleges, informally and formally on the

Internet, through political actions and world events. Particularly, for the movements of the 2010s, the Internet served as a site for collectivization, education, and radicalization for this new generation of movements and activism (Earl and Kimport 2011; Campbell 2017). As Langman (2013) writes, the Internet and social media provide a new "public sphere" to discuss grievances and plan actions. Political blogging and social media allowed members of the public to bypass the traditional media and in their own words share their stories and connect with others who have had similar experiences. Social media allowed activists to share tactics, strategies, and government repression in response to their protests, as can be seen with the #Occupy, #Ferguson, #ArabSpring, #Jan25, and #Egypt hashtags (Juris 2012; Bonilla and Rosa, 2015; Lotan et al. 2011; Eltantawy and Wiest 2011; Castells 2015). These did not, of course, replace face-to-face organizing as Juris (2012) notes, but "as new media were incorporated into the ongoing practices of core groups of activists, they helped diffuse new dynamics of activism," including both networking across geographical space and aggregation for mass actions (260).

Particularly, for young Black people, the Internet, including "Black Twitter," a sphere of public space where Black people talk to and with each other, allowed for hashtags concerning Black protest and death to spread far and wide, as well as visuals of moments of police violence towards Black people and Black protesters (Jackson et al. 2020). Black Lives Matter first arose as an organizing "hashtag" to connect a common conversation and signal commitment to Black life and flourishing in the face of Black death. Since the emergence of BLM, major discussions of Black life and culture have taken place on social media, including #Ferguson, #SayHerName, in reference to police violence against Black women and girls, and #IfTheyGunnedMeDown, in response to media portrayals of Black people as "thugs" when they experience police violence (Jackson et al. 2020, 129; Bonilla and Rosa, 2015).

***Transformative Politics***

An important aspect of alienated activism is the move to, as Langman (2013) writes "bring utopia back in," or reimagine political structures and promote visionary politics. Alienated activists engage in strategies not to just promote incorporation but to deconstruct political hierarchies and reclaim the state, the economy, and reform social and civil society. As Honwana (2019), drawing from Mannheim's (1952) theory of generations, writes,

> Through an unprecedented show of unity, by taking to the streets and braving police, dictatorships have been overthrown, corrupt leaders voted out, unconstitutional presidential term extensions blocked, and governments forced to reverse unpopular decisions. In fact, from a vantage point outside dominant ideologies, younger generations have shown that they are capable of envisioning society and the polity anew, precisely because of what Karl Mannheim calls "fresh contact," a novel outlook that arises as the young assimilate, develop, and alter the social and cultural repository received from previous generations (Mannheim 1952). (Honwana 2019, 15).

Alienated activists work to reconstitute and re-envision the world as a more equitable, safe, and just place. Hannah Appell takes up the "transformative possibility" of Occupy, considering the formulations and imaginations of financial institutions produced by the movement, including those considered in the Alternative Banking Working Group (Appel 2014, 602). Appell writes that financial institutions have come to overly define financial life in the US, such that, for some, life is unimaginable without them. Appell writes, Occupiers were asked "Don't you like your iPhone? Twitter seems to be working pretty well for you" (Appell 2014, 602). In the same way, carceral institutions have also limited the scope of how we imagine justice in the US. BLM activists are also both taunted and seriously criticized with questions about what to *do* with murderers and rapists and *who to call* when violence occurs. But movements must be more creative and take on the task to formulate solutions beyond the status quo and achieve meaningful social change.

For Black Lives Matter, the movement comes at a moment when Black Americans have largely been incorporated into the upper echelons of American life and culture. From the right to vote, to the ability to run for and win elected office, and Black contributions to culture: all of these pinnacles have been reached time and time again. Yet, white supremacist resistance to Black incorporation into the body politic remains and will continue, as does Black death. Reform, transformation, and abolition emerge as paths through which the very logics of the white supremacist systems, including policing and incarceration, can be addressed and potentially done away with. Woodly (2015) discusses social movements' role in changing political logics in her book *The Politics of Common Sense,* wherein she asserts movements must aim for social, cultural, and political "resonance," or promoting change discursively, to build public support and political acceptance.

***Opportunities and Challenges with Solidarity***

Alienated activism is not without its difficulties. These movements can be structurally siloed by experience and identity, and though they promote a politics of solidarity they do not articulate multiplicities of issues very well. Because the media relies on recognizable frames and often looks for spokespeople, less visible aspects of movements can be ignored and the overall movement can be mischaracterized as a result (Jackson et al. 2020). For example, the Black Lives Matter mass movement, broadly, often mobilizes around police violence against Black men and boys, although major sectors of the movement have been deeply focused on advocacy against police violence towards Black women and femmes (Ritchie 2017). Furthermore, because these movements advocate against structural issues and launch structural critiques, it is hard to say whether there will ever be any ultimate or singular "win" for these movements beyond discursive and legislative changes. These movements for fundamental change may never be over

in the ways that the Civil Rights Movement could point to landmark legislation, court cases, and the end of public segregation.

## III. Alienated Activism and Ideology

I characterize alienated activist movements as progressive, left wing, and/or Black radical movements, as these movements I assert are rooted in the alienation that emanates from systemic, material exclusion. Right-wing movements also contain classes of alienated people, certainly. The Tea Party for example, mobilized a host of angry Americans who felt like President Obama and the browning of America was occurring at their expense, that their government did not represent them anymore, that the US no longer belonged to them (Parker and Barretto 2013; Skocpol and Williamson 2011). Yet, by most measures these groups of individuals are not materially alienated from society and politics; rather, their sense of loss and alienation is rooted in their visions of America as a white nation. The January 6th, 2021 uprisings at the US Capitol, for example, certainly contained a host of individuals alienated by the election results and the loss of Donald Trump. These individuals organized online in their own "public spheres," i.e., right-wing and white supremacist social media platforms, wanting to transform a society they understand as devolving into a people-of-color, third world socialism and communism. Yet, these individuals were not materially alienated or excluded from society: post-uprising analyses showed that the uprising was mobilized by white, middle class Americans, whose interests were largely represented by President Trump and the Republican Party.[9] One might argue that these movements fit into the Alienated Activism paradigm; yet, they

[9] Scott, Eugene. 2021. "Data about the Capitol rioters serves another blow to the White, working-class Trump-supporter narrative." *The Washington Post.* <https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2021/04/12/data-about-capitol-rioters-serves-another-blow-white-working-class-trump-supporter-narrative/> and Pape, Robert. 2021. "What an analysis of 377 Americans arrested or charged in the Capitol insurrection tells us." *The Washington Post.* <https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2021/04/06/capitol-insurrection-arrests-cpost-analysis/>.

must demonstrate some material marginality located in and from these movements. Emotion is certainly an aspect of alienated activism, but these movements are rooted in the *tangible*, literal event of economic exclusion, exploitation, and death. Populism, or anti-elite sentiment, is an aspect of AA movements as well—but populism that does not emerge from marginality and that emerges from a commitment to whiteness and a reaction to growing racial diversity, in particular, only results in domination of another kind.

## IV. Are All Progressive Movements Post-2010 Alienated Activism?

I articulate alienated activism in reference to the Arab Spring, Occupy Wall Street, and BLM movements, as well as the orientation and practices that emanate from these movements. Other movements can have elements of alienated activist practices, including social and political alienation (by marginal identity, material exclusion from government/ institutions, solidarity with marginalized people), political education, relational practices, community building, and transformative goals. Movements/ movement practices that focus on social or political incorporation, or advancing a political candidate, however, are not alienated activist movements. In Chapter 4, I discuss alienated activist qualities and characteristics as I learned them from activists from a number of progressive movements, even as the focus of the chapter is the Black Lives Matter movement in Chicago.

## V. Conclusion: Contributions and Chapters Ahead

The genre of social movement theory spans nearly sixty years of social movement activism and political uprisings. The most recent literatures focus on various aspects and drivers of movement activism, like collective identity, emotions, framing, and networks, as broader paradigms have fallen to the wayside. While these aspects and drivers are still important descriptors and mechanisms in movement, alienated activism returns to these broader paradigms

and recognizes 2010s movements as a defining era of social movement activism and participation on a mass scale, unique enough for their own distinct labels and frameworks. Though social movement activism is a continuum and alienated activist movements share qualities with the "new social movements" label, departures including structural critiques, strategic engagement, new media, and transformative visions, make these movements distinct from the NSMs post 1965. Alienated activism also brings in Black Lives Matter as an important contemporary of the 2010s movements, as it has not been systematically theorized as a contemporary of these movements. BLM builds on a long tradition of Black political activism and organizing, and it is undoubtedly influenced by its co-contemporary movements' styles of movement activism and mobilization.

One may argue that broader paradigms of social movement activism are less useful than the singular study of the movements or their sum parts. One flaw in social movement theorizing is how every contemporary movement of the moment somehow fits into the prescribed temporal paradigm, potentially flattening their specific attributes and eliding the differences between them. This is possible, but when multiple movements emerge at particular moments in history, it is useful to think about their commonalities in response to the overarching political environment and illuminating common practices and positionalities in response to national and global shifts in governance and political economy.

In the following chapters, I consider three aspects of the Black Lives Matter movement, as they fit into the Alienated Activism paradigm. First, I delve into the role of identity as a motivator for social movement support, with close consideration to how race, and racial attitudes, gender, generation, and political party motivate support or opposition. These politicized identities can draw individuals into a movement or, in a polarized political environment, place

them in opposition to a movement's goals. Second, I conduct a case study of progressive, left, and radical activism on the ground in Chicago, with a focus on Black Lives Matter movement and racial justice activism. In this chapter, I articulate the micro process and practices of alienated activism, particularly as they are located external to political institutions. Finally, I survey a national sample of progressive activists regarding their attitudes towards police reform and police abolition, considering how movement adherents thought about these transformative frames after a summer of Black Lives Matter uprisings calling for cities to "defund the police."

## Chapter 3.
## Mobilizing Identity: Assessing Public Support for Black Lives Matter

### Introduction

Since its inception in 2013, the Black Lives Matter (BLM) Movement has opened critical political dialogue around race and policing in the United States. Visibility and national attention towards the movement has ebbed and flowed since its beginning, largely dependent upon viral videos or stories of police brutality against Black Americans. On May 25, 2020, a Black man, George Floyd, was killed by a Minneapolis police officer kneeling on Floyd's neck. Amidst the global coronavirus pandemic, wherein much of the public had been advised to remain at home, record numbers of Americans took to the streets, proclaiming that "Black Lives Matter." Once again these cries against racist state violence arose across the United States and the world, to demand justice for Floyd and all Black people. After the Floyd protests, the *New York Times* declared the Black Lives Matter Movement the largest movement in US history.[1] How can we understand who this movement appeals to and who is likely to support its cause? In this chapter, drawing from the Alienated Activism framework, I consider how "politicized identities"—specifically racial background, gender, and party identification—influences attitudes and, ultimately, public support for the BLM movement (Simon and Klandermans 2001).

#### *Significance*

Classic political science studies assert that the public derives their attitudes from political and media elites they trust, using relevant information shortcuts to make their political decisions (Zaller 1992; Lupia and McCubbins 1998; Sniderman et al. 1991). In addition, social movement

[1] Buchanan, Larry, Quoctrung Bui, and Jugal K. Patel. 2020. "Black Lives Matter May Be the Largest Movement in U.S. History." *The New York Times.* <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2020/07/03/us/george-floyd-protests-crowd-size.html>.

research also demonstrates how ground-up social movements can influence the broader public, elite political attitudes, and behavior (Wasow 2020; Woodly 2015; Gillion 2013; Lee 2002; Carmines and Stimson 1989). My work attends closely to those who support the BLM movement, focusing on the role of identity and group membership. This focus will demonstrate the characteristics and political makeup of the movement, as I seek to provide a baseline political profile of supporters, or "movement adherents." These are the people and groups that activists are most likely to mobilize and with whom they can build solidarity. Furthermore, I recognize the generational context of the Black Lives Matter Movement. BLM was initially advanced by Black millennials, young adults born between 1981 and 1996[2]. This generation's politics emerge within a particular political context, especially the rise of mass incarceration and the "post-racial," Obama era.

Using statistical analyses, I determine how identity, as a key aspect of Alienated Activist Movements, predicts public support for the Black Lives Matter Movement, utilizing public opinion data from the 2016 American National Election Study and the 2019 GenForward Survey of Millennials.[3]

***What is Black Lives Matter?***

On February 26, 2012, Trayvon Martin, a seventeen-year-old Black boy in a hoodie, had been returning from the store on a visit to his family in the Retreat at Twin Lakes Community in Sanford, Florida. A neighbor on patrol, George Zimmerman, saw Trayvon and called 911 to

[2] Pew Research. 2019. "Where Millennials end and Generation Z Begins." <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2019/01/17/where-millennials-end-and-generation-z-begins/>.
[3]The GenForward October survey is a project of Professor Cathy J. Cohen housed at the University of Chicago. Interviews were conducted with a representative sample from GenForward, a nationally representative survey panel of adults ages 18-36 recruited and administered by NORC at the University of Chicago.

report a suspicious individual in the neighborhood—a guy who looked like he was "up to no good" and perhaps "on drugs" (Taylor 2016). Zimmerman followed Martin, fought with him, and ultimately shot and killed him. After questioning by the police, however, Zimmerman was not charged with Martin's murder. Only after pressure from Martin's parents, activist groups, and an investigation by the FBI did the Sanford Police Department charge Zimmerman with second-degree murder on April 11, 2012 (Taylor 2016).[4]

During Zimmerman's trial in the summer of 2013, his lawyers painted Martin as a troubled and aggressive young Black man against whom Zimmerman had the right to defend himself. Ultimately, Zimmerman was acquitted. In the wake of Zimmerman's acquittal, California activist Alicia Garza wrote on Facebook what she called a "love letter" to Black people, ending it with the phrase "Black people. I love you. I love us. Our lives matter." In these moments of pain, political organizations led by young Black people proliferated: Garza, with fellow activists Opal Tometi and Patrisse Cullors founded the Black Lives Matter Global Network. The Dream Defenders was founded in Florida in 2012 by Umi Selah and mounted direct action advocacy in the wake of Martin's Murder (Taylor 2016). In 2013, a group of Black activists and academics founded the Black Youth Project 100 (BYP100), a Black Queer Feminist organization for young Black people aged 18 to 35 (Carruthers 2018). Through the work of these activists, the phrase and the hashtag #BlackLivesMatter has become a known rallying cry

[4] CNN. "Trayvon Martin Shooting Fast Facts." *CNN.com.* <https://www.cnn.com/2013/06/05/us/trayvon-martin-shooting-fast-facts/index.html>.

against racial injustice and anti-Black violence, particularly police violence against Black people (Rickford 2016).[5]

The movement especially gained traction after the murder of Michael Brown in August 2014 by police officer Darren Wilson and the subsequent uprisings and protests by locals and activists in Ferguson, Missouri. Several more names, videos, and hashtags followed, as Black Americans mourned the deaths of Black men, women, and children: Eric Garner, Sandra Bland, Tamir Rice, Walter Scott, and Freddie Gray— "a tragic parade of unarmed Black dead" (Hooker 2016). The United States once again began to grapple with public killings and brutalization of Black people, *as it had with Amadou Diallo, as it had with Rodney King, as it had with Emmett Till.* As the phrase "Black Lives Matter" (BLM) entered the cultural lexicon, protests, rallies, and campaigns called for a review of police use of force and firing of officers implicated in the beatings or killings of Black people (Ransby 2018; Taylor 2016; Chernega 2017).

The Black Lives Matter movement emerged in a particular political and social context. Understanding this context helps clarify the movement's beginnings, as well as the forces and ideas with which activists must contend. As discussed in Chapter 1, after the election of President Barack Obama in 2008, several journalists had proclaimed that America had entered a "post-racial era," suggesting that race no longer was an issue in American society, since white voters could support Black candidates at the highest level (Tesler and Sears 2010; Bonilla-Silva

[5] This phrase frequently trends on social media in response to police violence against Black people. According to the Pew Research Center, the phrase was initially most used on Twitter in reference to the Ferguson protests, with around 200,000 tweets.
Pew Research. 2018. "An analysis of #BlackLivesMatter and other Twitter hashtags related to political or social issues."
<https://www.pewresearch.org/internet/2018/07/11/an-analysis-of-blacklivesmatter-and-other-twitter-hashtags-related-to-political-or-social-issues/> .

2003). Obama's election, so it went, was evidence that formal barriers to Black success were things of the past and Black Americans could achieve anything. Yet, at the time of Trayvon Martin's death, President Obama remarked to the press, "If I had a son, he'd look like Trayvon," suggesting that, despite Obama's success in America, Black Americans were still at risk of racial stigma and profiling in public (Taylor 2016). In light of Martin's death and Zimmerman's acquittal, it seemed the "post-racial" promise of Obama's presidency had not come to fruition. Yet, the contradictions between the image of Black political power and the stark reality of persistent Black death at the hands of police provided a political opportunity for a social movement to develop.[6]

The Black Lives Matter movement has experienced some successes in its attempts to frame conditions of anti-Blackness in the United States. Since 2014, when the Ferguson protests began, white racial attitudes have begun to become more liberal, with more white Democrats likely to say that the country needs to continue making changes to give Black people equal rights as white people (Tesler 2020).[7] Yet, recent turns in Black Lives Matter activism have more explicitly called into question the form and function of policing in the United States. As mass incarceration, including policing, imprisonment, and surveillance, has become more pervasive

[6] African Americans have maintained both descriptive and representative forms of political power since the 1960s, serving at all levels of government in the US (Tate 1993). The fact that protest remains a part of the Black political repertoire, even for the millennial generation despite 30 years of political representation and a Black president demonstrates the continued fraught political positionality of African Americans.

[7] Tesler, Michael. 2020. "The Floyd protests will likely change public attitudes about race and policing. Here's why." *The Washington Post.* <https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2020/06/05/floyd-protests-will-likely-change-public-attitudes-about-race-policing-heres-why/?utm_campaign=wp_monkeycage&utm_source=twitter&utm_medium=social&tid=sm_tw_monkeycage>.
Yglesias, Matthew. 2019. "The Great Awokening." *Vox*. <https://www.vox.com/2019/3/22/18259865/great-awokening-white-liberals-race-polling-trump-2020>.

since the 1980s, especially targeting Black communities, it is necessary to also consider the public's breadth of attitudes regarding policing when assessing their support for BLM, a movement that has some police reformist factions but has become more vocally abolitionist in recent years.[8]

Beyond police, Black Lives Matter calls for something broader: a margin-to-center politics and a radical reimagining of Black life in the United States. This movement departs from the most famous Black American movement— the Civil Rights Movement— in important ways. Black Lives Matter promotes the leadership of and advocates for individuals marginalized within the Black community, including women, queer, and trans individuals. Though these individuals were present and active in prior Black freedom movements, organizations and activists within Black Lives Matter call for the *centering* of the most marginalized, creating campaigns and frameworks that promote the concerns and issues of these groups.[9] Furthermore, the movement is "unapologetically Black," with many segments vocally rejecting the respectability politics of movements past and calling for a new kind of Black politics rooted in collectivity and built upon the legacies of Black feminist, abolitionist, and queer politics (Carruthers 2018; Cohen and Jackson 2016; Hooker 2016).

As we consider how identity mobilizes public support for social movements, we should assess the frames emanating from the movement and consider how the public might be

[8] Police and prison abolition have a long activist history. As Barbara Ransby (2018) writes, "No movement emerges out of thin air," and BLM has important theoretical and activist antecedents including INCITE and Critical Resistance, feminist of color and abolitionist organizations, respectively (Ransby 11). These organizations foreground theoretical and activist legacies of resistance towards the prison industrial complex.

[9] For example, in 2019, the BYP100 created the "She Safe, We Safe" campaign to address gender-based violence against "Black women, girls, femmes and gender non-conforming people." This campaign specifically seeks strategies that reduce contact with the carceral state. <https://www.shesafewesafe.org/>.

responding to them. The BLM movement has grown and shifted substantially since those initial police killings and uprisings, and the political environment shifted dramatically since its emergence in the Obama years. By 2016, three years after the beginning of the movement, the US was embroiled in a highly polarized Presidential election between Republican Donald Trump and Democrat Hillary Clinton. On the campaign trail that summer and fall, Black activists (both affiliated and unaffiliated with Black Lives Matter) pressed Democratic presidential candidates Bernie Sanders and Hillary Clinton on their policies regarding the movements, especially their plans to combat police brutality (Clayton 2018).[10] Protesters interrupted Trump as well and he voiced his oppositional stance towards the movement, declaring "All lives matter," at a rally in Virginia and rejecting the movement's very premise.[11] In July 2016, both Alton Sterling and Philando Castile had been killed by police in the same week. Videos of their murders were posted online, prompting protests in opposing police violence around the nation. At one of these protests in Dallas, Texas, Micah Xavier Johnson, a Black man shot at a Dallas Police, killing four Dallas Police officers and one Dallas Area Rapid Transit officer.[12] Though Johnson was not affiliated with BLM, a roiling public debate emerged over the movement, violence, and policing, just a few months ahead of one of the most consequential presidential elections of our time. According to the Pew Research Center, over the ten days between the police killing of Sterling

[10] BBC. 2015. "Black Lives Matter Activists Interrupt Clinton Campaign Rally." <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-34684809>.
[11]Swan, Jonathan. 2016. "Trump to Protesters: All Lives Matter." *The Hill.* <https://thehill.com/blogs/ballot-box/presidential-races/271159-trump-to-protesters-all-lives-matter>.
[12] Fernandez, Manny, Richard Pérez-Peña and Jonah Engel Bromwich. 2016. "Five Dallas Officers Were Killed as Payback, Police Chief Says." *The New York Times.* <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/07/09/us/dallas-police-shooting.html>.

and the Dallas shooting, #BlackLivesMatter was mentioned in nearly 500,000 tweets daily.[13] Since the summer of 2016 and Trump's election that November, the movement has grown in reach, scope, and prominence, especially since the killing of George Floyd in May 2020. Given the context of an aging movement, increasingly polarizing elections, and continuing violence against Black Americans, how can we understand public attitudes towards the Black Lives Matter movement? In the next section, I will consider how politicized identities direct public support for social movements across racial groups and generations.

**Literature Review**

***Public Opinion and Social Movements***

In order to bring people in, movements must formulate relevant and effective frames that capitalize on a collective identity, emphasizing points of mutual purpose and goals with members of the public. Successful social movements achieve support by communicating a public problem in a way that fosters collective action by reminding the public that the movement aligns with their innate values (Benford and Snow 2000). Movement messaging needs to achieve "resonance" with the public, redefining terms and changing fundamental understandings of key issues (Woodly 2015; Gamson 2004). Favorable public opinion is a necessary first step in an individual's likelihood of mobilizing or being amenable to mobilization by activists and organizers.[14] In the case that an individual cannot be mobilized to participate in political

[13] Pew Research. 2018. "An analysis of #BlackLivesMatter and other Twitter hashtags related to political or social issues." <https://www.pewresearch.org/internet/2018/07/11/an-analysis-of-blacklivesmatter-and-other-twitter-hashtags-related-to-political-or-social-issues/> .

[14] The "political opportunity structure" is McAdam's explanation of the series of events or political restructuring that creates political space for insurgent politics (McAdam 1982). For example, McAdam

activism, support for the movement through public opinion is still valuable, serving as a signal to politicians and governing elites that the public is on a particular side of an issue and are supportive of sympathetic policy proposals. For this reason, analysis of public opinion of social movements provides useful information, for politicians and activists alike.

***Identity: The Limits and Potential of Solidarity***

Since I take up a Black political movement as the central case in this study, the role of racial attitudes and the legacy of racialized political appeals is crucial in order to evaluate the contours of public support. Movements work to establish collective identities for their supporters in order to persuade political action (Polletta and Jasper 2001). Collective identity is defined as "an individual's cognitive, moral and emotional connection with a broader community, category, practice or institution," essentially a shared understanding of social and/or political status (Polletta and Jasper 2001, 285).[15] We should consider, then, how social movements politically activate already held personal identities to mobilize their members. According to Simon and Klandermans (2001), a *politicized* collective identity denotes "an awareness of shared grievances, adversarial attribution to blame opponents, and the involvement of society" (324). This is the point of collective activation for members of the public, a signal from activists that, due to one's social and political location, they also belong to a social movement's base or constituency.

So what are the racial rallying points and cleavages around Black Lives Matter? Black support for the Black Lives Matter Movement will likely be motivated by feelings of linked fate,

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focuses on the "broad social processes" brought about by industrialization that he demonstrates elevated the political position of African Americans before the Civil Rights Movement.

[15] According to Polletta and Jasper (2001), collective identity may also be ascribed by outgroups or may constitute cultural identities.

or the feeling that what happens to other Black Americans matters for one's own life (Dawson 1994). This concept suggests that for Black Americans, what is good or bad for the group is good or bad for the individual. Given the continued significance of race for one's social and economic life chances in the United States, feelings of linked fate serve as a shortcut for gathering information related to political decision-making. The Black Lives Matter Movement draws upon Black collectivity and solidarity to achieve policy wins and to disrupt politics as usual. The Movement prioritizes a Black identity and Black issues: though some organizations are multi-racial, some require Black racial identity for membership, such as the Black Youth Project 100.[16] In addition, the BLM movement emphasizes the intersections of Black identity with gender identity and sexuality— a notion which can complicate broader support for the Movement.[17] Drawing from Black and queer feminist thinkers, activists, and organizations (including Audre Lorde, Cathy Cohen, bell hooks, Angela Davis, Barbara Smith, Barbara Ransby, Beth Ritchie, Critical Resistance and the Combahee River Collective), the movement uplifts the most socially and political marginalized populations to visible leadership roles in their advocacy and policy work (Ransby 2018, 107). This includes Black queer people, the incarcerated or formerly incarcerated, Black trans people, and Black women and girls.

Because Black Lives Matter is a pro-Black political movement, this sentiment may alienate members of other racial groups, as racial background is an important organizer of

[16] The movement has built racial solidarity coalitions, however, with other marginalized race and ethnic groups including Mijente, a Latinx advocacy organization that seeks "racial, economic, gender, and climate justice" ("Our DNA"; Ransby 2018).
"Our DNA." *Mijente.* <https://mijente.net/our-dna/>.

[17] For example, in their 2019 paper "Do All Black Lives Matter Equally to Black People?" Lopez-Bunyasi and Smith importantly find that, though African Americans largely support the Movement for Black Lives, there are limits to Black linked fate around key movement constituencies— including Black members of LGBTQ community.

American political beliefs (Omi and Winant 2014). Anti-black affect and racial resentment are particularly powerful in light of white attitudes towards politically racialized policies— such as welfare or affirmative action (Gilens 1996; Bobo 1983). Tesler and Sears (2010) even find that presumably nonracial issues (like taxes or healthcare) publicly championed by President Obama became racialized and influenced public attitudes towards those issues. In addition, attitudes about racial solidarity may inform mass attitudes regarding Black Lives Matter. Kim (2000) asserts that groups are racialized according to proximity to whiteness in the United States. For example, her study of Black-Korean conflicts in New York City highlights the two axes of the American racial order: namely, 1) that of superior and inferior and 2) that of insider - foreigner. She asserts that Black and white Americans constitute the bottom and top anchors (respectively), and those groups perceived as "immigrants"— Asian Americans and Hispanics— are positioned relative to these groups. Asian Americans are perceived to be closer to whiteness than Hispanics due to persistent "model minority" myths and advantages in income and educational status. Furthermore, Masuoka and Junn (2013) demonstrate in their book *The Politics of Belonging* that attitudes about racial hierarchy, or the power that a racial group is perceived to possess, and the location of one's own racial identity on the hierarchy influence public attitudes about racial issues. Since Black Lives Matter is a racialized political movement, one's own racial identity is likely to influence attitudes about the movement as well. Perceptions of a racial heirarchy could influence cross-racial solidarities with the Black Lives Matter Movement, especially from other communities of color that report negative interactions with police or also experience racial discrimination.

***Party Identification***

Party identification is an enduring political status in American politics, found to be more stable even than political values (Goren 2005; Campbell et al. 1960). Partisanship offers another heuristic by which the public is able to make political decisions, a fast way to determine which policies and politicians they support (Alvarez and Brehm 2002). Social movements, over time, may influence, become adopted into or affiliated with political parties, especially as activists attempt to target elected officials to achieve policy changes and set political agendas (Piccio 2016). Though Black Americans, the movement's key constituency, are more likely to align with Democrats, the Black Lives Matter Movement has a complicated relationship with the Democratic Party. In 2016, though some prominent activists endorsed Clinton, including DeRay McKesson, Brittany Packnett, and mothers of victims of police violence, Alicia Garza and the Black Lives Matter Network did not endorse Clinton and were often vocal about the ways the Democratic Party has been instrumental in passing legislation they view as expanding mass incarceration, including the 1994 Crime Bill.[18] Even so, the Democratic Party remains movement supporters' most viable political option, since, though Republican Party has taken up issues of mass incarceration in recent years, Republican candidates (particularly President Trump) continue to deploy racialized political appeals (Reny et al. 2019) and the Party often positions

[18] Owen, Tess. 2016. "Two prominent Black Lives Matter activists endorse Hillary Clinton." *Vice News.com.* <https://www.vice.com/en_us/article/zmqbwx/two-prominent-black-lives-matter-activists-endorse-hillary-clinton>.
NBC News. 2016. "Black Lives Matter Won't Endorse a 2016 Candidate: Report." *NBC News.com.* <https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/2016-election/black-lives-matter-wont-endorse-2016-candidate-report-n430306>.

itself in opposition to the Movement.[19] Furthermore, President Trump's mobilization of "white grievance," wherein he casts Black protesters, immigrants, and people of color as threats to white Americans, continues to make the Republican Party untenable for most Black Americans and BLM supporters (Hooker 2017).

***Racism, Generations, and Social Movements***

Young people are an important constituency in political movements, often due to their biographical availability, or lack of costly personal obligations and commitments, like children, family, or full time employment, that make political activism more costly (McAdam 1986). In Ruth Milkman's (2017) article "A New Political Generation" she argues that millennials constitute a new, distinct wave of political activism, as evidenced by the post-2008 (and post Obama) wave of political protests, including the Dreamer Movement, Occupy Wall Street, the Movement for Black Lives, and the campus movement against sexual assault. Milkman builds on Karl Manheim's (1927) theory of generations, suggesting that due to a set of political experiences and circumstances, millennials are politically distinct. Milkman describes millennials as 1) digital natives 2) highly educated but experiencing precarious employment and a polarized labor market, and 3) as "experiencing the discourse of intersectionality," that is, millennial activists approach race, gender, sexuality, and class as intertwined issues.

Though Milkman accurately describes millennials as uniquely positioned given their access to new technology (particularly social media), and the precarious labor market which has

[19] Barron-Lopez, Laura and Alex Thompson. 2020. "Facing bleak November, Republicans look to stoke BLM backlash." *Politico.*<https://www.politico.com/news/2020/08/10/elections-republicans-black-lives-matterbacklash-389906>.

defined (and limited) job stability and career prospects, she does not adequately consider how millennials *themselves* are divided by race and ethnicity. Though millennial activists (in the Dreamer (Terriquez 2018) and Movement for Black Lives (Carruthers 2018), particularly) deploy intersectionality as an important organizing frame, powerful racial divisions still exist amongst millennials. DeSante and Smith (2020) discuss enduring racist attitudes among millennials due to their lack of familiarity with explicit systems of structural racism, like Jim Crow. Despite, then, the racial diversity of millennials, building cross-racial solidarities may continue to prove difficult (Cohen 2011).

**Theory: Politicized Identities Motivating Support**

A confluence of factors drive support for social movements. In this chapter, I unpack the attitudes and participation of "movement adherents." In social movement literature, movement adherents are defined as those members of the public who support a social movement (according to McCarthy and Zald they "believe in its goals") and take on its collective identity (McCarthy and Zald 1977; Gamson 1992).[20] I clarify and add an extra dimension: I posit that holding a prior, politicized identity is an important factor informing attitudes and experiences, which determine movement adherence or opposition. The adherence model (Figure 3.1) takes into account the factors that could lead to social movement support. Identity (in this case, racial background, gender, and party ID) informing political attitudes determines whether one adheres to or opposes a social movement's message. Social location and experience as determined or informed by identity help people make political decisions, and political attitudes often emanate from these identities. When measuring adherence to a social movement, it is important to acknowledge and

[20] McCarthy and Zald (1977) make further distinctions about movement adherents, delineating into *conscience adherents* who are in solidarity with a movement but may not benefit from its goals.

delineate support by identity to understand how different segments of the public respond to movement frames and events.

**Figure 3.1. How Politicized Identity Influences Movement Support**

<table>
<tr><td rowspan="2">Politicized Identity →</td><td rowspan="2">Attitudes and Experiences→</td><td>Movement Adherence</td></tr>
<tr><td>Movement Opposition</td></tr>
</table>

**Research Hypotheses**

A number of identities and attitudes motivate support for Black Lives Matter. Racial background, gender, and party identification mark important politicized identities in the US. Further, attitudes about police and racial attitudes towards Black Americans will motivate movement support, since these are the key motivating issues of BLM and are often informed by racial background. Given the literature and the political context of BLM, I test the following hypotheses:

H1: African Americans, Democrats, and women will be most likely to support Black Lives Matter.

H2: Negative racial attitudes towards African Americans will reduce support for Black Lives Matter.

H3: Positive attitudes towards the police will reduce support towards Black Lives Matter while negative attitudes will increase support for the movement.

I test these hypotheses using data from the 2016 American National Election Study and the July 2019 GenForward Survey of Millennials.

**Data and Method**

To assess the impact of identity on movement support, in addition to full sample models, I break the data down into individual models by race and ethnicity to consider how BLM is perceived and supported across racial groups. The American National Election study has 4271 respondents of Americans 18 to 90 years old, with 398 Black respondents, 450 Hispanic respondents, 148 Asian respondents, and 3,038 white respondents. Pre-election data collection took place from September 7 to November 7, 2016 and post-election data is from November 7, 2016 to January 8, 2017. My models incorporate the ANES post-election weights.

The GenForward Survey includes respondents from age 18 to 36 years old, with over-samples of African American, Hispanic and Asian American young adults. These groups are typically undersampled in national survey data and by oversampling, the GenForward Survey is more able to assess experiences and beliefs of young adults of color. My models draw from a partial sample of 1697 respondents who were randomly selected for the question "Do you think the police treat Black individuals better, worse, or about the same as white individuals?" There are 441 African American, 266 Asian American, 475 Hispanic, and 444 white respondents in this sample.[21] Data collection took place from June 27th, 2019 to July 11, 2019. Responses have been weighted in order to remain representative of the national population. This particular dataset focuses on young adult attitudes about race, police, and prisons.

[21] The full July 2019 dataset has 3427 respondents: 903 white respondents, 539 Asian American, 955 Hispanic, and 896 African American, and 134 members of "other" races. I do not incorporate other races into my models.

***ANES Models: Dependent Variables***

For the ANES BLM attitudes models, I use ordinary least squares regression modeling, since the dependent variable, a feeling thermometer towards Black Lives Matter, is a continuous measure. Respondents were asked "How would you rate Black Lives Matter?" and could enter any number from 0 to 100.

***Prediction and Control Variables***

The prediction variables in the ANES models are racial resentment, favorability towards police, whether you believe police treat white people better than Black people, and linked fate. The racial resentment measure is included in the full sample, white, Asian, and Hispanic models. Racial resentment is an additive scale measured from 0 to 1 and constructed using four questions and asking respondents the extent to which they agree or disagree, including: "Irish, Italians, Jewish and many other minorities overcame prejudice and worked their way up. Blacks should do the same without any special favors," "Generations of slavery and discrimination have created conditions that make it difficult for blacks to work their way out of the lower class," "Over the past few years, blacks have gotten less than they deserve," and finally "It's really a matter of some people not trying hard enough; if blacks would only try harder they could be just as well off as whites." Favorability towards police is a feeling thermometer from 1 to 100 where respondents are asked "How would you rate: the police?" I also include a variable, measured from -1 to 1, for the question "In general, (1) do the police treat whites better than blacks, (0) treat them both the same, or (-1) treat blacks better than whites?" Lastly, linked fate is included in models for African Americans, Asian Americans, and Hispanics in this study. I have coded the ANES measure "How much do you think that what happens generally to [Black, Asian

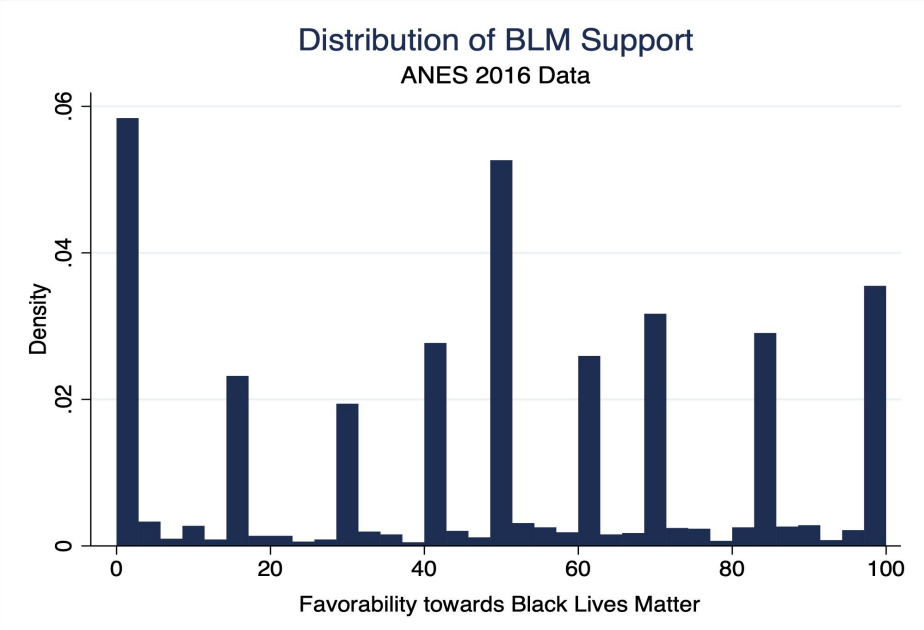
American, Hispanic] people in this country will affect what happens in your life? Not at all, Not very much, Some, or A Lot?" as a four point scale from 0 to 1.

I control for demographic variables including race, gender, age, party identification, income and education. I break out the self-identified race variable into dummy variables, for Black, Asian, and Hispanic, and White. White is the baseline category in the full sample models. Gender is a binary measure, with 0 for men and 1 for women. Age is a seven category variable coded by decade from 18 to 90+. Party identification is broken into dummy variables for Republicans, Democrats, and Independents (the baseline category in my models). Income is a 9 category variable from under $10,000 to over $150,000. Finally, education is a 5 category variable from 1) Less than high school 2) High school diploma 3) Less than a BA 4) BA and 5) Master's, Professional Degree, or PhD.

**Findings: Modeling Support for Black Lives Matter**

In this section, I assess a full sample, African American, White, Hispanic and Asian American ordinary least squares regression models predicting national attitudes towards Black Lives Matter. While feeling thermometers are not the most reliable measures of political attitudes, they offer an opportunity to approximate how the public feels towards a particular issue or group. According to the ANES BLM feeling thermometer, roughly 14% of the sample rate BLM at 0, 14% rate BLM at 50, and 11% of the sample rate BLM at 100. Fifty-six percent of the sample rate BLM at 50 or below, while 44% rate BLM from 51 to 100. From this distribution, it appears that just over half of respondents are cool to moderate on Black Lives Matter, while the rest are moderate to warm. The average rating of Black Lives Matter is 48.35.

**Figure 3.2 BLM Support (ANES)**




***ANES Model of Attitudes towards Black Lives Matter***

In the full sample ANES model (see Table 3.1 in Appendix A), the dependent variable is the BLM feeling thermometer, and the independent variables are racial resentment, whether you feel that police treat white people better than Black people, a feeling thermometer measuring favorability for police, racial group dummy variables (Black, Hispanic, and Asian American), dummy political party variables (Republican and Democrat), income, age, education, and a dummy variable for gender. The average rating of Black Lives Matter in this model, holding all variables at their means, is 49.5. In this model, racial background (Black, Hispanic, and Asian), political party, gender, education, racial resentment, and attitudes towards Black Americans are all statistically significant measures.

Identifying as an African American increases Black Lives Matter ratings by 17.8 points higher than identifying as a member of other races. Identifying as Hispanic increases BLM

ratings by 9.3 points, and identifying as Asian American increases ratings by 5.4 points. This finding suggests that people of color drive public support for the Black Lives Matter movement. Identifying as a Republican decreases BLM ratings by 7.7 points on the feeling thermometer, while being a Democrat increases ratings by 7.6 points, nearly in direct polarization with Republicans. Women rate BLM at 5.7 points higher than men. Higher levels of education decrease BLM ratings by 2 points. A stronger sense of racial resentment decreases ratings by 48 points. Lastly, agreeing that police treat white people better than Black people is correlated with higher ratings of BLM, increasing support by 5.1 points. Favorability towards police is not a significant predictor of ratings of Black Lives Matter in this model.

***ANES Models by Racial Category***

I break out each model by racial category to further delineate public support for BLM and to compare each racial group. The dependent variable is the BLM feeling thermometer, and the independent variables are racial resentment, whether you feel that police treat white people better than Black people, a feeling thermometer measuring favorability for police, political party variables (Republican and Democrat), income, age, education, and gender. For African Americans, Asian American, and Hispanic respondents I have added in a measure of linked fate to consider the influence of in-group racial solidarity in supporting the Movement. I do not include racial resentment in the model of African American attitudes nor linked fate for white respondents.

***African American ANES Model***

The average rating of Black Lives Matter in this model, holding all variables at their means, is 81.75. For African Americans, identifying as a Democrat and identifying as a woman

both significantly correlate with positive ratings of BLM. Black Democrats rate BLM at 15.5 points higher than members of other parties, while Black women rate BLM 7.2 points higher than Black men. Higher educational status decreases movement ratings amongst African Americans by 3.4 points with every unit increase, and older age also decreases ratings by 3 points. Linked fate is not a significant variable in this model and neither are attitudes about police treatment of Black Americans or favorability towards police. This suggests important political nuances among African Americans in support for this movement: though attitudes about police or how they treat Black people do not differentiate Black supporters of BLM, gender, education, age, and party identification reveal cleavages in what appears to be a wall of Black support for the movement—since 89% of African Americans rate the movement at or above a 51 on the feeling thermometer.

***White ANES Model***

The average BLM rating for white respondents in this model is 42.3. For white respondents, political party, gender, educational status, racial resentment, and attitudes about police treatment of African Americans are statistically significant measures. Republicans rate Black Lives Matter 8.5 points lower than non-Republicans, while being a Democrat increases ratings by 6.4 points. White women rate BLM at 5.8 points higher than white men and those white respondents who agree that police treat white people better than Black people rate BLM at 5.7 points higher on the feeling thermometer. Increases in educational status decrease movement ratings among white respondents by 1.3 points. The most racially resentful whites rate the movement at 51.4 points lower than the least racially resentful— a major reduction in white

favorability towards this movement. The findings concerning gender in particular are notable, suggesting that women make up a reliable portion of public support for the Movement.

***Hispanic ANES Model***

The average rating for BLM in this model is 59.3, holding all variables at their means. The model of Hispanic support for BLM suggests that increases in education and racial resentment decrease Hispanic ratings of the movement. Every unit increase in educational status decreases Hispanic ratings of BLM by 6.2 points. Respondents who score high on the racial resentment scale rate BLM lower by 49 points. Interestingly, neither political party, attitudes towards police, or attitudes about police treatment of African Americans drive Hispanic ratings of BLM. Though racial attitudes make an important distinction among supporters and nonsupporters, 59% of Hispanic respondents rate BLM at above a 51 on the favorability scale, the second highest group rating of the movement after African Americans.

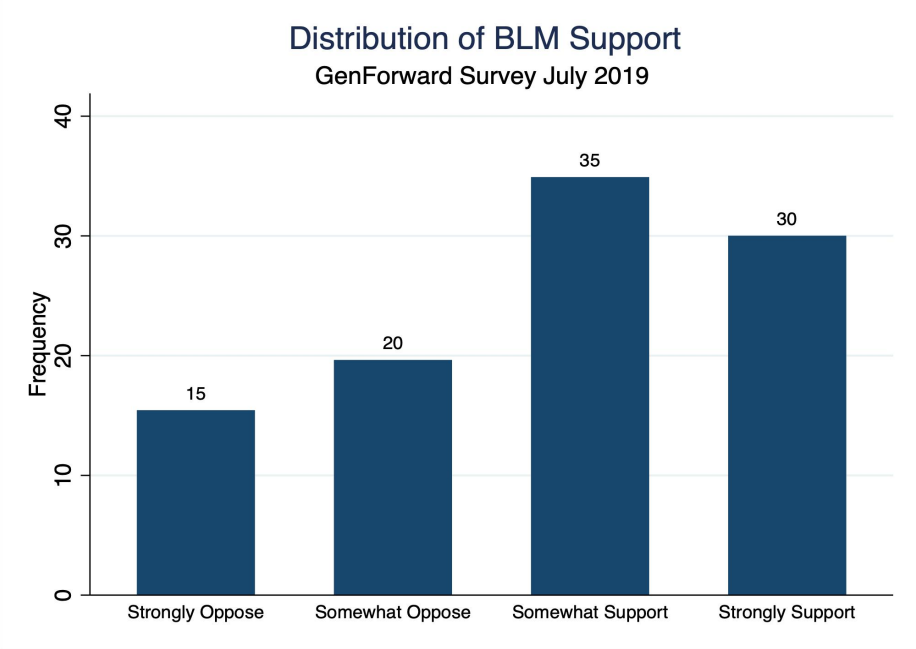
***Asian American ANES Model***

The average rating of Black Lives Matter in this model of Asian American attitudes is 52.5. Racial resentment is the only significant measure in the model of Asian American attitudes towards BLM, with the most racially resentful decreasing ratings towards BLM by 47.3 points. I should note that this model has the smallest sample of respondents (87), which makes these results less robust than the other models. Further research, including larger sampling, is needed to delineate the distribution of support for the Black Lives Matter Movement amongst Asian Americans. What emerges from this analysis, however, is that Asian Americans support BLM at higher rates than whites, but less than Black Americans and Hispanics.

**Young Adult Support for Black Lives Matter**

In this section, I examine support for BLM among young adults (see Table 3.2 in Appendix A). I find that support for the Black Lives Matter Movement is widely distributed across the GenForward sample, with a majority of individuals expressing at least some support for the movement. Around 65% of all respondents in the sample either somewhat or strongly support Black Lives Matter. Even so, young adults of color express much higher percentages of support than white young adults: African American young adults support the movement at 82%, Asian Americans at 67%, Hispanic respondents at 70% and white Americans at 58% (Figure 3.7 in Appendix A) . Though younger Americans are more likely to support Black Lives Matter, the following models unpack the determinants of support and avoid sweeping generalizations of racial liberalism amongst young adults.

**Figure 3.3 BLM Support (GenForward)**



***Modeling Young Adult Support for Black Lives Matter***

I assess ordered logit models for support for the Black Lives Matter Movement (see Table 3.3, Appendix A). The dependent variable in this model is support for Black Lives Matter, ordered from 1) strongly oppose, 2) somewhat oppose 3) somewhat support 4) strongly support. I construct a full sample and individual racial group models of the June 2019 survey to assess how demographics, favorability towards police, and racial attitudes correlate with young Americans' support for Black Lives Matter (Model 1). For clarity in reporting ordered logit findings, I present predicted probabilities of support for the movement using the margins post-estimation commands in STATA, focusing the significant variables and holding all other variables at their means. The prediction variables include favorability towards police, racial resentment, and whether one believes that police treat Black people worse than white people.[22] This model also incorporates demographic variables, including race dummy variables (Black, Hispanic, and Asian), a gender dummy variable, education, income, age, and political party variables (Republican and Democrat).

***Full Sample GenForward Model***

In the GenForward July 2019 Model, I assess the full sample's propensity to support the Black Lives Matter Movement. In this model, holding all variables at their means, respondents are 25% likely to strongly support Black Lives Matter and 44% likely to somewhat support. I find that race, gender, party ID, racial resentment, and attitudes about how police treat Black people significantly predict support for the movement. Identifying as African American or

[22] The distributions and measurement of these variables are available in Appendix A. In addition, this dataset does not include a measure of linked fate, so this variable is not included in these models. Also, the measure of "police treatment" of Black people is differently worded. Instead of "police treat whites better" the answer choice is worded "police treat Black individuals worse than whites."

Hispanic significantly increases the likelihood of movement support. African American young adults are 40% likely to strongly support the movement and 42% likely to somewhat support the movement. Hispanics are 31% likely to strongly support BLM and 44% likely to somewhat support. Women are 31% also likely to strongly support Black Lives Matter and 44% likely to somewhat support, while men are 20% likely to strongly support the movement and 43% likely to somewhat support. Democrats are 32% likely to strongly support BLM and 42% likely to somewhat support, once again locating these partisans in the movement's base. The racial resentment and police treatment variables are also significant predictors of support. Those who score highest on the racial resentment scale are 6% likely to strongly support the movement and 24% likely to somewhat support Black Lives Matter. Those who score the lowest are 60% likely to strongly support BLM and 31% likely to somewhat support. This demonstrates that racial attitudes about Black people are still impactful in young adults' political decision-making. Furthermore, those who believe that police treat Black people worse than whites are 30% likely to strongly support and 44% likely to somewhat support. Believing otherwise systematically decreases support for the movement: those who believe police treat Black and white people the same are 20% likely to strongly support the movement and 43% likely to somewhat support and those who believe that the police treat Black people *better* than white people are 13% likely to strongly support Black Lives Matter and 38% likely to somewhat support the movement.

This model largely reflects the ANES findings, with racial background, attitudes towards African Americans, party identification and attitudes about police treatment of Black people driving young adult support towards Black Lives Matter. This model differs, however, in that only controlling for racial resentment reveals a *positive* and significant ($p<.05$) correlation

between supporting Black Lives Matter and favorability towards the police, whereas in the ANES models, controlling for racial resentment renders favorability towards police insignificant in the full and white sample models (favorability towards police is not at any point a significant correlate for people of color). Only after adding in the measure of police treatment towards Black Americans is favorability towards the police insignificant in the GenForward full sample model. Importantly, however, this finding does not hold across the individual racial group GenForward models, including for young white Americans. In these models, the police favorability measure is not significant at any point, before or after adding racial resentment or the police treatment variables. I further investigate young adult support in the next section, breaking down the GenForward sample by race.

***African American GenForward Model***

Young Black Democrats, Republicans, women, and those who agree that police treat Black people worse than whites are significantly likely to support Black Lives Matter. In this model, holding all other variables at their means, respondents are 53% likely to strongly support BLM and 33% likely to somewhat support. Young Black Democrats are 67% likely to strongly support Black Lives Matter and 25% likely to somewhat support, while young Black Republicans are 69% likely to strongly support the movement and 23% likely to somewhat support. This finding suggests that identification with the major parties is simply not an important cleavage of support among young Black supporters of BLM: 82% of young Black adults somewhat or strongly support Black Lives Matter. Further, young Black women are 59% likely to strongly support and 30% likely to somewhat support, compared to young Black men who are 48% likely to strongly support and 30% likely to somewhat support. Young Black

women are, of course, an important sector of support for the Movement, since the Black Lives Matter Network was founded by three Black women and, as mentioned, works centers the experiences of Black women, trans, and gender non-conforming people. Those young Black adults who agree that police treat Black people worse than white people are 57% likely to strongly support the Movement and 30% likely to somewhat support the movement. Black respondents who believe police treat Black people the same as white people are 46% likely to strongly support and 34% likely to somewhat support. Those who believe Black people are treated better than whites are 34% likely to strongly support and 40% likely to somewhat support BLM.

***White GenForward Model***

For white young adults racial resentment and attitudes about police treatment of Black people are significant predictors of support for the movement. These findings demonstrate the lingering impacts of racism on white young adults' political attitudes, as well as an understanding of the intertwined nature of race and policing. Holding all variables in this model at their means, white respondents are 18% likely to strongly support Black Lives Matter and 42% likely to somewhat support the movement. White respondents who score the highest on the racial resentment scale are 3% likely to strongly support the Black Lives Matter Movement and 16% likely to somewhat support. Those who score the lowest on the racial resentment scale are 58% likely to strongly support BLM and 32% likely to somewhat support. White respondents who believe police treat Black people worse than white people are 25% likely to strongly support Black Lives Matter and 45% likely to somewhat support. White respondents who say police treat Black and white people the same are 13% likely to strongly support Black Lives Matter and 38%

likely to somewhat support the movement. White respondents who say police treat Black people better are 7% likely to strongly support BLM and 26% likely to somewhat support.

***Hispanic GenForward Model***

For young Hispanics, identifying as a Democrat, identifying as a woman and racial resentment all significantly correlate with support for Black Lives Matter. In this model, with all variables at their means, respondents are 27% likely to strongly support BLM and 48% likely to somewhat support BLM. Once again, Hispanic support for the Movement is only second to Black support: 71% of Hispanic respondents in the sample support BLM. Young Hispanic Democrats are 40% likely to strongly support Black Lives Matter and 45% likely to somewhat support. Hispanic women are 38% likely to strongly support and 46% likely to somewhat support BLM. Hispanic men, on the other hand, are 19% likely to strongly support the movement, but 47% likely to somewhat support. These party and gender differences mark a departure from the national model of Hispanic support for BLM, suggesting young Hispanic Democrats and women may form a significant site of movement solidarity. Lastly, Hispanic respondents who are the most racially resentful are 9% likely to strongly support Black Lives Matter and 35% likely to somewhat support the movement. Those who are the least racially resentful are 59% likely to strongly support BLM and 33% likely to somewhat support.

***Asian American GenForward Model***

Party identification and racial resentment are significant measures in the Asian American model. The average respondent in this model, holding all variables at their means, are 18% likely to strongly support BLM and 49% likely to somewhat support the movement. Asian American Democrats are 25% likely to strongly support Black Lives Matter and 50% likely to somewhat

support. The significance ($p<.05$) of party identification amongst young Asian Americans differs from the national model. Similar to young Hispanics, this finding indicates that identification with the Democratic Party may be a salient political identity amongst young Asian American supporters of BLM. Furthermore, the most racially resentful respondents are 3% likely to strongly support Black Lives Matter and 17% likely to somewhat support. The least racially resentful are 62% likely to strongly support the Movement and 32% likely to somewhat support.

**Discussion**

In this chapter, I find that adherence to the Black Lives Matter movement is driven by both racial attitudes towards Black Americans and identity. Racial resentment shapes *every racial group's* attitudes towards BLM, an important indicator of the continuing significance of race in American political decision-making. As for identity, I find that Black Americans, women, and Democrats are the most staunch and consistent base of movement supporters. White, Republican, and male respondents emerge as the most consistent opposers. In addition, I find that Hispanic and Asian American respondents fall between Black and white support, as mediated by educational status and racial resentment for Hispanics and racial resentment for Asian American respondents.

Importantly, I find that positive favorability towards police does not predict opposition towards BLM. Attitudes towards BLM more consistently hinge upon the recognition of unequal treatment of Black people by police, and this attitude is more consistently held by White adults, Black young adults and white young adults. This demonstrates the nuances of how Americans are thinking about Black Lives Matter: that some movement supporters have specific concerns about policing and racial discrimination which steers their support for the movement rather than

a general sense of like or dislike of police. This finding could guide further studies about general attitudes towards policing as an institution and the public's concerns about racial discrimination therein.

***Hypothesis Testing: Identity, Racial Attitudes, and Policing***

A few consistent findings rise to the top of this chapter. First, we can confirm Hypothesis 1, that identity influences adherence towards Black Lives Matter, especially gender, race, and party. Women are consistently more likely to support Black Lives Matter than men— and this finding holds across the full sample, African American, and White ANES models and the GenForward full sample, African American, and Hispanic models. In the ANES models broken down by race, both Black women and White women are significantly more supportive of BLM than their male counterparts. This finding points to women as an important political base of the Movement for Black Lives, aligning with the Movement's focus on gender-based violence, and especially its focus on Black women and uplifting individuals at the intersections of gender, sexuality, and race. Importantly, however, though both Black women and white women are more progressive than their male counterparts on this issue, it is important to note that these two groups still widely differ in their support for the movement—Black women are the *strongest* supporters of the Movement for Black Lives with 25% of Black women in the sample rating the movement above a 51 on the favorability scale, and 67% rating the movement above a 75 (Table 3.4 in Appendix A). White women are only second to white men in their opposition towards the movement, with both groups rating the movement above a 51 at 39% and 30%, respectively. This highlights white women's unique positionality, given their relative power within a white supremacist racial heirarchy *and* subjugation due to their gender. Intersections of age and gender

offer an additional dimension of BLM support. In the full sample ANES and GenForward models, Hispanics are more likely to support the movement, but there is not a significant gender difference in movement support amongst Hispanics broadly. Amongst *younger* Hispanics, however, gender differences in support are significant, suggesting that young Hispanic women depart from young Hispanic men in propensity to support BLM.

In addition, party identification is a consistent predictor of support for BLM—Republicans are most consistently in opposition towards the movement while Democrats are consistently in support. Even so, the importance of political parties varies across race and ethnicity: it is significant for both Black Democrats in both ANES and GenForward samples, young Black Republicans, white Republicans and Democrats in the ANES sample, and for young Hispanic and Asian Democrats. This demonstrates that Black Lives Matter has become an important political site for the Democratic Party in particular. Still, the Movement's relationship to the Democratic Party is not simple. Ahead of the 2020 election, many prominent movement activists added their voice to the election process, endorsing progressive Democratic candidates, namely Elizabeth Warren and Bernie Sanders. Furthermore, although the ANES data is 3 years old, we see the continued significance of party identification in the 2019 GenForward models where young Democrats are significantly more likely to support the movement. Struggles still remain: Joe Biden has had to account for his record on race and policing, in particular, as a former champion of the 1994 Crime Bill. In August 2020, Biden named Senator Kamala Harris, a Black woman and a former prosecutor, as his Vice Presidential Candidate. Though Harris' nomination is historic, it further demonstrates BLM advocates' struggle with the Democratic Party. Biden and Harris are more amenable (and even more desirable) adversaries than the

Trump administration; yet, both Biden and Harris represent the Party's center left approach to policing and incarceration. It remains to be seen how the Movement approaches the Democratic Party for policy concessions in these areas.

I can confirm Hypothesis 2 that racial attitudes towards African Americans are consistently powerful indicators for support or non-support for Black Lives Matter. Racial resentment is the most significant (always at $p<.001$) and consistent measure of opposition towards the Movement in both the ANES and GenForward samples. Racial resentment reduces positive ratings of BLM in the ANES sample, and among young adults the most racially resentful are the least likely to strongly support BLM. Racial resentment continues to be a powerful explanation of racial attitudes, even in a supposedly racially "liberal" generation. Though the Movement for Black Lives is advanced by young Americans in a supposedly 'post-racial' era, this finding affirms the premise of the Movement—that racism is still a defining feature of American political life (Omi and Winant 2014). This finding reaffirms the role of identity in motivating and informing movement support— with attitudes towards African Americans from whites, Asian Americans, and Hispanics informing these groups' support for Black Lives Matter.

Furthermore, I must partially reject and partially accept Hypothesis 3, that favorability towards police predicts opposition towards Black Lives Matter. Favorability towards the police was not significant in the ANES full or GenForward models. However, attitudes about police treatment of Black people predicts support for the movement among White respondents in the ANES models and among young Black and white respondents in the GenForward models. As discussed, these findings demonstrate that Americans hold complicated attitudes about police

and the movement: that some BLM adherents specifically take issue with discrimination and racism in policing. As BLM activists call for police abolition, activists will need to contend with the public's attitudes toward policing as an institution: across datasets respondents are generally favorable towards police. In the ANES survey 82% of respondents rate police at a 51 or above on the feeling thermometer. In the GenForward Survey, 72% of respondents are "mostly" or "very" favorable towards police.

**Conclusions and Paths for Additional Study**

This chapter unpacks the influence of identity and racial attitudes on social movement support. Importantly, it demonstrates that politicized identities like race, gender and party identification inform attitudes and experiences, which in turn, drive BLM support. This chapter sketches the process of movement adherence and breaks down *who* supports the Black Lives Matter Movement—showing, importantly, that BLM is a movement of marginalized people, particularly Black Americans, women, and people of color. Finally, this chapter considers the political message of Black Lives Matter, a social movement changing political understandings of social and racial equity in the United States. It is clear that, in the aggregate, attitudes towards Black Lives Matter are not especially predicated on supporting or opposing the police specifically; rather, support for the movement emanates from racial attitudes about Black Americans and thoughts about racial discrimination in policing in the United States.

Future research on public support for Black Lives Matter might attend to the ebb and flow of support for the movement over time. According to Pew Research, in June 2020, after the police killing of George Floyd and subsequent protests, public support for Black Lives Matter spiked to 67% nationally. Though support settled down to about 55% nationally in September,

this suggests that major moments in the movement, police killings or public demonstrations, have the power to broaden the base of the movement. A long term study on support for the movement since its emergence in 2013 would demonstrate its enduring base, as well as what moments are most impactful in broadening public support.

Given the broad base of adherence to BLM, how can activists and politicians mobilize these attitudes to find solutions to police violence? Especially now, roughly eight years since #BlackLivesMatter went viral, five years after the Ferguson uprising and in light of the George Floyd uprisings in the summer of 2020, how can M4BL activists mobilize their supporters, beyond attending one-off protests? Recent calls to defund police and abolish the prison industrial complex have injected new life into the movement as activists are developing alternatives to public safety. In addition, the widening of the Black Lives Matter mass movement, particularly the growing participation of white protesters, raises questions about the type of politicized identities needed for movement support beyond racial background. This study opens ground for further inquiry and unpacking how politicized identities influence support for a social movement, as well as determining what political goals compel public support of the Black Lives Matter movement. In the next chapter, I more fully explore the Alienated Activism paradigm. As we understand that politicized identity and social location motivates public support for BLM, the next chapter will demonstrate the modes of participation and motivations for mobilization of activists on the ground, beyond political institutions.

## Chapter 4. Alienated Activism: Activation, Political Education, and Mobilization

*"But then the second thing he said was, "You are interconnected to everyone, because the world doesn't work without everyone." You may think that you're alone, but you're never actually alone. This was really important because at a very young age that made me understand the importance of collectivity, and that we can't do anything alone that's worth it. Everything worthwhile is done with other people. So that became the soundtrack in my head."*

- Mariame Kaba[1]

*"Wayward, related to the family of words: errant, fugitive, recalcitrant, anarchic, willful, reckless, troublesome, riotous, tumultuous, rebellious, and wild...Waywardness: the avid longing for a world not ruled by master, man or the police. The errant path taken by the leaderless swarm in search of a better place than here."*

- Saidiya Hartman[2]

### Introduction

On March 13, 2019, I attended a protest at Chicago City Hall. Upon entering the building, I was directed to a long line of individuals ready to protest the construction of a $95 million training compound for police and firefighters in West Garfield Park, a neighborhood on Chicago's predominantly Black west side. As I approached the elevator to the city council chambers, I could see that each protester was being body scanned by a group of Chicago police officers. I had arrived at 9:30AM, and by around 10AM, a crowd of roughly 100 people stood outside the second floor chambers ready to protest under the direction of #NoCopAcademy, a coalition of young Black and Brown activists and organizers.[3] The space was tense; the spirit of the protest was antagonistic towards the proposed police academy, as well as towards the

[1] Ewing, Eve L. 2019 "Mariame Kaba: Everything Worthwhile is Done With Other People." *Adi Magazine.* <https://adimagazine.com/articles/mariame-kaba-everything-worthwhile-is-done-with-other-people/>

[2] Hartman, Saidiya. 2019. "Wayward: A short Entry on the Possible," in *Wayward Lives, Beautiful Experiments.* Norton: New York. 227.

[3] "Organizing" as I use it here refers to processes of building relationships and connections with individuals, bridging common connections and shared values in order to ultimately mobilize them for political action.

Chicago Police officers standing on the periphery of the protest, in front of the chamber doors. When the doors opened and the meeting commenced, only individuals designated to give public testimony were allowed into the council chambers. The #NoCopAcademy coalition led the protesters assembled outside the chambers in chants, shouting "Let us in! Let us in!" "Fuck 12!" "No. Cop. Academy!" "Back up, back up, we want freedom, freedom, all these racist ass cops we don't need em, need em." Protesters yelled "16 shots and a cover up!" in reference to the killing of Laquan McDonald, a seventeen year old Black boy shot 16 times by Chicago Police Officer Jason Van Dyke in 2014. The activists placed a banner in the middle of the protest that read "FUND COMMUNITIES, DEFUND POLICE, #NoCopAcademy." Later that day, despite the protests, the Chicago City Council approved the construction of the fire and police academy.

**Figure 4.1**

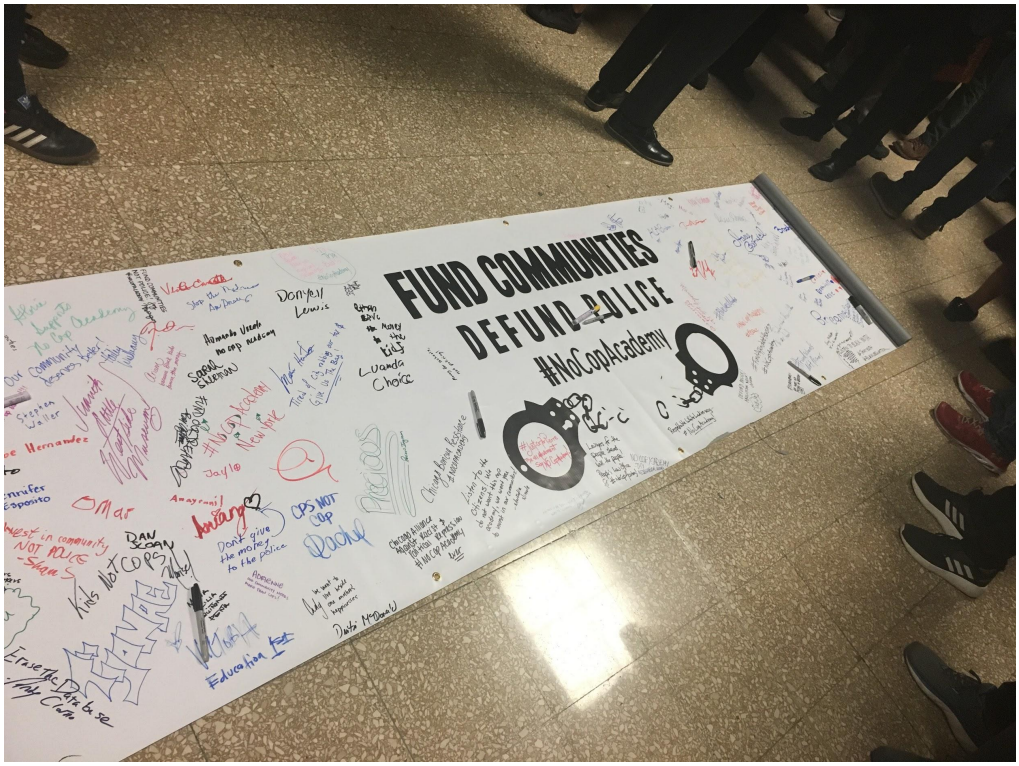



Photo Taken by Jordie Davies, March 13, 2019 at Chicago City Hall, 9:44 AM.

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Though Chicago is known for its reliably Democratic machine, progressive politics, and as a locus of Black electoral representation, the city faces ongoing issues with income inequality, police violence, and entrenched segregation.[4] The #NoCopAcademy protests lay bare activists' work to gain access to resources and build power from the ground up. The demand itself "Fund communities, Defund police," is an abolitionist slogan that asserts that policing is the wrong way to achieve public safety.[5] The chants for Laquan MacDonald lambast the Chicago Police Department for the violence it has inflicted upon the public, particularly Black Chicagoans. Rather than continue to accept government investment in harmful institutions, the No Cop Academy activists assert a demand to invest in the people themselves, a demand that reimagines what public safety might look like.

Drawing from 35 in-depth interviews with leftist, progressive, and racial justice activists in Chicago, I theorize the concept of "alienated activism" which describes both activists' *orientation* towards the state and a form of political *participation*. I argue that alienated activists are oriented by 1) their positions of marginality, 2) disillusionment with institutions and political conditions, and 3) via political solidarity. Rather than disengage from politics, however, they pursue political activities rooted in a desire to build collective power in their communities. Through their alienation from the state and via processes of political education, activists participate in 1) relational political activities (such as political organizing), 2) build efficacy in collective movement space, and 3) develop transformative political alternatives.

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[4] Bosman, Julie. 2020. "Black Families Came to Chicago by the Thousands. Why Are They Leaving?" *The New York Times.* <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/02/16/us/black-families-leaving-chicago.html>.
[5] I am referring to police and prison abolition, as promulgated by Angela Davis and the organization Critical Resistance.

**Literature Review**

The micromobilization literature provides insight into the mechanisms of grassroots mobilization and the everyday practices of activists and organizations, departing from overly structural analyses of movement (White 1999; Johnston and Klandermans 1995; Klandermans 1992; Snow et al. 1986).[6] McAdam et al. (2001)'s emphasis on the environmental, cognitive, and relational mechanisms of mobilizations proves a useful framework for thinking about political activism from the ground up. Research on the activism of those most marginalized often attends to these individual level mechanisms. For example, emotions, personal motivations, activated racial group consciousness, and social location (intersections of race, class, and gender), serve as explanations for political activism and action among those neglected by government (Gould 2009; Han 2009; Zepeda- Milan 2017; Robnett 1996). In line with this research, this study explores individual level choices to engage in political activism and the mobilization outcomes of these choices.

In addition, a common approach in the social movements literature is a focus on how activists work for inclusion, or how they accomplish policy goals within the current system, or how minorities win over majorities (Gillion 2013; Weldon 2012; Lee 2002). Yet, social movements and political activism establish important alternative spaces, or "free spaces," away from institutions, to develop and engage in politics beyond existing understandings, from political thought to political participation (Polletta 1999; Gamson 1996; Evans 1979). For marginalized groups in particular, social movements become the positions from which they can

[6] Scholars have critiqued the political process and political opportunity models as being overly concerned with structure (Giugni and Grasso 2016; Goodwin and Jasper 2004; Goodwin and Jasper 1999; Gamson and Meyer 1996).

advocate collectively, while social movement organizations serve as alternative entities they can rely upon or seek out when larger institutions fail them. In these spaces, marginalized groups can create and establish systems to meet community needs (Cohen 1999; Morris 1984). Furthermore, an important prior to social change includes the ways activists work to transform society, creating new logics and meanings— new modes of "common sense" (Woodly 2015). In her study on Black women's organizations Julia Sudbury (1998) discusses a "politics of transformation," which encompasses personal exploration, consciousness raising, as well as the realignment and transformation of social and political institutions. Imaginations of a better future can shape action, and this paper will consider specifically how transformative political ideas shape political strategy.

*Alienation*

Alienation is a useful concept to think about orientation towards the government and, I will argue, through processes of political education, a path to political activism. A number of classic political and sociological texts espouse theories of alienation. In Marx's (1976; 1864) formulation workers are alienated from themselves, the process and fruits of their labor, and workers are alienated from others due to their location at the bottom of a capitalist society. The working class's alienation arises from a lifetime of exploitation and powerlessness. In *Suicide*, Durkheim (1951) describes processes of *anomie,* or normlessness, which leads to social alienation. Seeman (1959), drawing from classic thinkers including Marx and Durkheim, constructs five types of alienation, including powerlessness*,* meaninglessness*,* normlessness*,* isolation*,* and self-estrangement. Clearly, alienation foregrounds processes of disinvestment and withdrawal.

Alienation is associated with feelings of low political efficacy, or the feeling that one is unable to influence governing institutions, a sentiment which can lead to low political participation and engagement (Craig and Maggiato 1982; Aberbach 1969). Political efficacy, however, has two important dimensions: internal efficacy, or the feeling that one has the understanding and knowledge to influence government, and external efficacy which is the feeling that governing institutions are responsive (Morell 2003; Niemi et al. 1991; Acock et al. 1985). Accordingly, studies demonstrate that low feelings of trust in government and a high sense of internal political efficacy, however, can result in non-traditional political action such as protest, which suggests that alienation can be a political motivator (Bowles and Gintis 1982; Citrin et al. 1975). This makes social movements an important potential location to find how alienation informs action.

Americans with marginalized racial and gender identities are more likely to feel less efficacious and more politically alienated, though belonging to a marginalized group can motivate political action (Cohen 2012; Michaelson 2000; Guterbock and London 1983; Rodgers 1974). Furthermore, the political empowerment thesis asserts that descriptive representation can improve feelings of efficacy and participation among African Americans and Latinxs (Merolla et al. 2012; Rocha et al. 2010; Pantoja and Segura 2003; Gay 2001; Bobo and Gilliam 1990; Howell and Fagan 1988). Yet, as more individual politicians from marginalized groups achieve political power, questions still remain about the continual alienation and political agitation of those communities who they would presumably represent, either descriptively or substantively. What does it mean for example, that a mass movement for Black lives occurred after the election of the first Black president? What does it mean for Black queer feminists to organize in Chicago

during the term of its first Black lesbian mayor? This project, in part, seeks to understand how the racially marginalized (and activated) mobilize their interests, how they think about political structures, and ultimately how they engage in politics. I consider how alienation through marginality informs resistance and what systems the marginalized imagine otherwise, since marginality provides a unique vantage point for political critique. For example, in her essay on Black political behavior "Deviance as Resistance," Cohen (2004) asserts that, in their quest for autonomy and belonging, those deemed as "deviant" or outside of social, political, and economic systems could foreground spaces for political resistance.

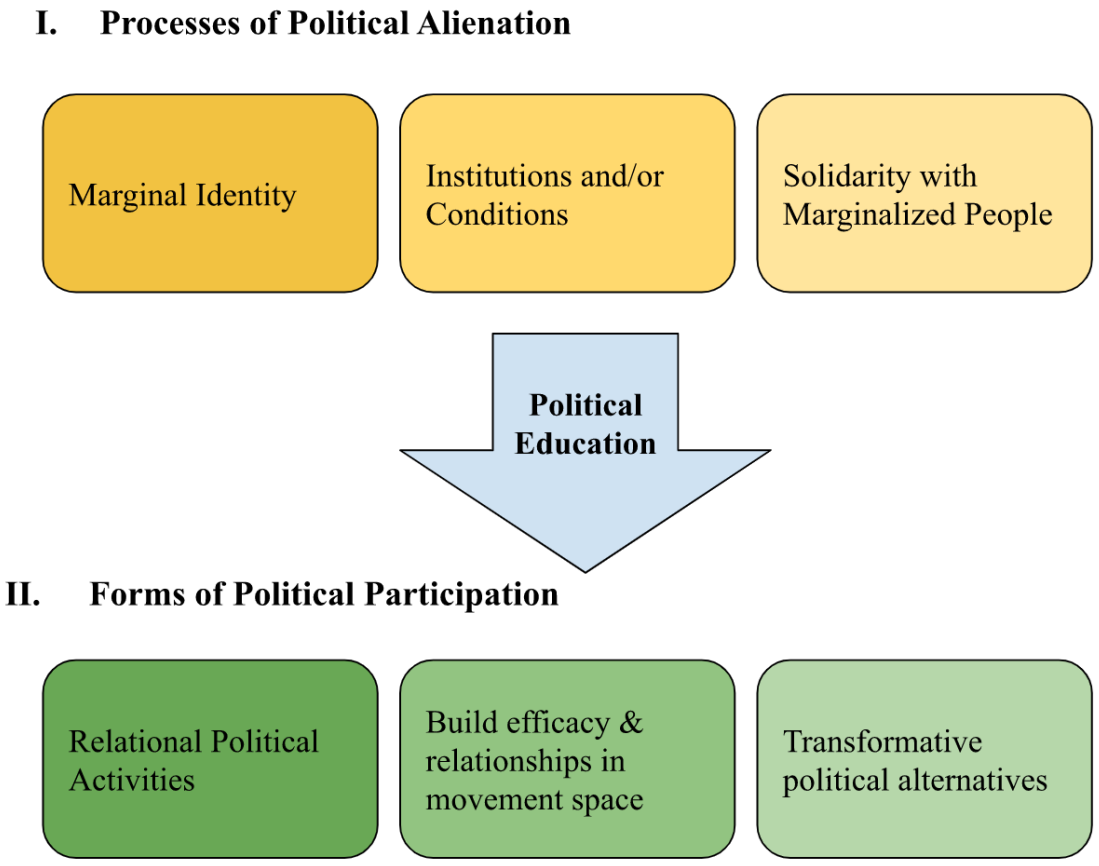
These literatures lead me to my formulation of alienated activism, wherein alienation from the state results in more expansive forms of political engagement amongst progressive, radical, and racial justice activists. Alienation has primarily been studied in political science as a concept in survey research largely as an indicator of disengagement; yet, I found in my interviews that the sentiment comes up among some of the most politically engaged individuals. I argue that some forms of alienation can be politically productive, untethering members of the public from "politics-as-usual" and helping them imagine what is politically possible.

**Theory: Defining Alienated Activism as Political Orientation and Engagement**

I define alienated activism as both an orientation towards the state as well as a form of political participation. Figure 4.2 denotes this process. An alienated orientation may be a product of experiences having a 1) marginal identity, 2) alienating political conditions, and/or 3) political solidarity. Each type describes some "rupture" with the individuals' relationship to politics-as- usual or the state, and serves as an activating or conscious-raising moment wherein activists describe moments of realization that sparked new political journeys. Through processes

of political education, alienated activists engage in 1) *relational* political activities, that is, political actions rooted in collectivity, relationship building, and dialogue; for example, political organizing. Alienated activists 2) build their sense of efficacy in movement spaces (formal and informal organizations, collaborations, and coalitions) and through familial relationships and dialogues with fellow activists and organizers. Lastly, 3) alienated activists envision transformative political possibilities beyond government institutions and current political formations.

**Figure 4.2 Alienated Activism**



**Alienated Orientations**

The following typology explains how the activists I spoke with decided to become involved in political organizing. These typologies do not necessarily build upon each other and neither are they discrete: alienated activists may be alienated in one or multiple ways.

*I. Alienated by marginal identity*

Racial, gender, and sexual identities often contribute to one's alienation from the political system. For Black activists in particular, this sense of alienation is stoked through the conditions of Black life in the United States: experiences of marginalization that include interpersonal racialization, poverty, disinvestment in Black communities, as well as personal and familial experiences with police violence and incarceration. Holt (1990) considers DuBois's formulation of alienation. He writes that in *The Souls of Black Folk,* DuBois describes the condition of Blackness in the United States as being "an outcast and stranger in mine own house" (Du Bois 1994; 1903, 2). Yet, according to Holt, DuBois' later writings suggest that the unique experience of Blackness provides a special vantage point from which to question and critique American politics and culture. Holt writes that alienation, "once achieved, it becomes a tool for probing the deeper meanings and contradictions of experience and for creating change," and for Black Americans racial alienation in conjunction with class alienation can serve "revolutionary purposes" (Holt 1990, 306). Similarly, women and queer activists (and those especially at the intersections of race, gender, and sexuality), also experience conditions of alienation, disempowerment, and exclusion in their lives due to their identities. Collins (1997), in her explication of standpoint theory asserts that these marginal, group-based positions afford

individuals sites of knowledge of social structures, a standpoint from which they are able to both experience and understand constructions of power.

While experiences of racism, sexism, and homophobia can be politicizing, identity itself is not always enough to mobilize the public to political action. We know from the previous chapter these identities and perspectives can motivate support for social movements. Yet, the social movements literature emphasizes the power of collective identity in motivating collective action and social movement activity (Polletta and Jasper 2001; Snow and McAdam 2000). However, before adopting a *politicized* collective identity, activists from marginalized backgrounds also may need to experience a combination of politicizing events and/or political education to motivate their participation in collective action and placing themselves in solidarity with other members of their group. I will discuss the process of moving from alienation to participation later in this study.

*II. Alienated by institutions and conditions*

My formulation of alienated activism suggests a sense of cynicism and ambivalence towards political institutions (specifically) through politicizing life experiences and/or processes of (formal or informal) political education that break down belief or trust in governing institutions. I draw in part from Dawson's (2001) description of the "disillusioned liberal" in his explanation of the core tendencies of Black political thought. Dawson asserts that a disillusionment with the United States, a recognition of it as fundamentally racist, and an understanding of the failure of capitalism is a key tendency in Black political thought. In similar ways, alienated activists question the foundations of American institutions, or at the very least, recognize that they are inadequate at solving public problems without their intervention or measures of accountability. I also consider how geographic neighborhood conditions, namely,

that of gentrification and segregation in Chicago can contribute to alienation, wherein members of the public become oriented towards public institutions like politicians or police via neglect and violence (Cohen and Dawson 1993).

*III. Alienation via solidarity*

I argue that activists can be alienated by choosing to be in solidarity with the marginalized. Scholz (2008) asserts that those in privileged positions can be in solidarity with the marginalized, and personal experiences with injustice are not necessarily required to be in solidarity. Scholz, however, asserts that those in solidarity movements must examine their own actions and positionality, to ensure their practices align with their values. Attempts at solidarity can certainly present its challenges within movement; yet, I find that the decision to be in solidarity with marginalized people is a defining orientation towards the state for alienated activists, wherein they reject or criticize privileges they may have that others do not.

For example, white activists can be alienated towards the government, though their process of alienation is fundamentally different from activists that are Black or people of color. White people who are queer, low-income, and who have marginal gender identities (women, transgender, and gender non-conforming, in particular), also experience alienating conditions in their lives. Furthermore, white people can experience alienation from the state that comes from politicizing experiences and political learning that cause them to divest from political structures and institutions in solidarity with people of color. It is not a given, however, that white activists are alienated towards the state because they are in opposition to racism. Due to their race these activists still need to make a *political choice to align with people of color and Black people*, a breaking of the "racial contract" specifically, by situating themselves in solidarity with members

of communities that experience conditions of social, political, and economic marginalization in their daily lives due to their racialization (Mills 1997). Without this choice, white progressive activists can continue to uphold the forces that alienate Black people and people of color.

Activists from marginalized communities can extend their solidarity to groups who share a common oppressor (if not the same specific struggle) to build coalitional power. Given the racial hierarchy in the United States, cross-racial solidarity coalitions in particular demonstrate how marginalized groups that are relatively privileged in some aspects over others can still align their struggle with others (Kim 1999). For example, Black Americans are racially disadvantaged but privileged over Latinx and Asian Americans in terms of citizenship. Given the expansion of the carceral state into immigration enforcement in particular, however, both groups can benefit from solidarity strategies that undermine and target collaborations between law enforcement and Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE).

**Alienation informing Activism**

How do activists move from alienation to activism? I find that *political education* functions as one mechanism that moves individuals from alienation to action. In processes of political education, activists focus on teaching, learning, and consciousness raising about political histories and injustices in order to mobilize themselves, each other, and the broader public. As Freire writes in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (2007; 1970), political education is dialogic, centers the lived experiences of the marginalized, and widens the scope of what is politically possible. Political education helps activists identify problems and realize potential solutions. As a result of their political education, I find three ways that alienation informs political activism, including 1) participating in relational political activities; 2) engaging in

autonomous collective activity to build political efficacy and develop chosen familial support and relationships, and 3) proposing and imagining transformative political alternatives.

*I. Relational forms of political engagement*

A key indicator of alienated activism is participation in relational forms of political engagement, rather than solely engaging in individualized or self-centered forms, like voting or donating money. I focus on political organizing. Snow et al. (1986) in their article "Frame Alignment Processes, Micromobilization, and Movement Participation" describe a process of "frame bridging" in social movements, wherein movement organizations and individuals link "two or more ideologically congruent but structurally unconnected frames regarding an issue or problem" (467). I argue that political organizing is a process of frame bridging and a method of micromobilization (an "interactive and communicative process") meant to bring members of the public into movement by linking shared political values through personalized conversations and by providing movement oriented space to live out one's values and goals (i.e., formal or informal organizations or collectives). In processes of political organizing, activists describe having conversations to figure out what angers or motivates individuals and connecting those concerns back to movement, drawing participants into their organizations and movements.

*II. Build efficacy and belonging through collectivity in movement space*

Alienated activists build their political efficacy by forming bonds with affirming communities in familial space. Movement spaces provide shared understandings and communities away from dominant structures to (ideally) safely live out one's identity and truth, exercise leadership, and to be affirmed, ultimately motivating their political participation (Gould 2009; Han 2009; Cohen 2004; Gamson 1996; Morris 1984). There is a long literature focused on the ways social movement organizations and activist networks provide "space" for activists to

reimagine politics as usual, as well as spaces where members of marginalized groups can build power around common oppression (Evans 1979; Morris 1984; Gamson 1996).[7] Scholars emphasize that these spaces serve as sites of politics away from formal power, wherein activists deliberate, develop tactics and countercultures and plan mobilizations. Furthermore, Habermas's (1962) public sphere literature constructs the social space where the public debates about politics. Fraser's (1990) "subaltern counterpublics" and Dawson's (1994) "black counterpublic" assert the necessity of these spaces for marginalized groups, countering Habermas' formulation as bourgeois and exclusive of those with marginal identities.

*III. Engage in transformative political action, political imagination*

Lastly, alienated activists engage in transformative political activities, building campaigns and strategies that reimagine institutions, or do away with them altogether. Alienated activists recognize and name *structural* and *systemic* problems in American politics and institutions, expressing ambivalence towards the system as is and imagining politics otherwise. Alienated activists engage with institutions strategically, in order to achieve concessions and a political terrain that is more consistent with the world they imagine. Through processes of relational politics, including political organizing, and in collective movement space, alienated activists conjure and imagine transformative political possibilities, strategizing for a better world beyond the one at present. A key example of transformative political ideas I found in my interviews were Movement for Black Lives and racial justice advocates fights for police abolition and police accountability in Chicago. These fights seek to build agency and safety for communities deeply alienated by the Chicago Police Department.

[7] To be sure, movement space is not *always* affirming or "safe" for those involved. Activists are people and people fail to accomplish their goals. The emphasis here, however, is that people come together to provide themselves and others with the room to live out their purported values.

**Data and Methodology**

I conducted 35 semi-structured interviews with progressive and racial justice activists in Chicago, from March 2019 to February 2020.[8] The primary qualification for the interviews was that activists could name "political work" they were doing outside of traditional politics, i.e., direct action activism, advocacy, or membership in political collectives. This work could be done with formal or informal political collectives, volunteered, or paid. I also included activists that were current or former members of political organizations. This broad swath allowed me to talk to activists at various points in their political activism, including new activists attempting to start or just beginning their collective political work and seasoned organizers who had transitioned out of their formal roles. My sample is focused on racial justice activism, which may make it less representative of the broader Chicago political left. Even so, I spoke to a wide range of activists, from communist organizers to more progressive liberal activists and advocates. Interviewees were recruited through cold emails, advertisements on social media (particularly Facebook and Instagram), flyers around the University of Chicago and the University of Illinois at Chicago, and via snowball sample. I attended protests and events around Chicago with the intention to observe actions and recruit potential interviewees. Some of the activists I knew previously from my own networks and political activism in Chicago. I met with 30 of the interviewees in person and I spoke to 5 over the phone. I met activists all over the city of Chicago, in public locations (most often, restaurants, offices at UChicago, or their own offices) that were either of their choosing or my suggestion.

[8] This period of time encompassed an intense political period in Chicago, including the election of Lori Lightfoot, the first openly gay Black woman and former President of the Chicago Police Board, as mayor of Chicago in March and April, as well as strikes from the Chicago Teachers Union in September. The No Cop Academy Protests bore down on the mayoral election, as some activists began a "Stop Lori Lightfoot" campaign after she expressed her support for the proposed academies.

I asked a list of 10-12 planned questions of each respondent, and periodically asked follow up questions to understand their motivations or deeper context concerning the events they described and/or their political activities.[9] Though I asked all of the activists the series of planned questions, I let the interview be guided by the topics of conversation as I attempted to give activists enough time and space to share as much information as they wished, talking through the beginning stages of their politicization and the topics that mattered to them in particular. A list of all the guided questions is included in Appendix B.[10]

I conducted each interview myself. I am a 27 year old, bi-racial Black-identified woman from the South and these characteristics afforded me cultural familiarity and easy conversation with Black interviewees, especially. I both audio recorded and took handwritten or typed notes during each interview.[11] Interviews typically lasted from 45 minutes to 1 hour (on average 55 minutes), with the shortest interview being 24 minutes and the longest 1 hour and 42 minutes. Most of my interviews resulted in one meeting, though with interviewees from the Chicago

[9] Interview questions are included in Appendix B.

[10] I began this project intending to make distinctions between movement "participants" and movement "activists," with two sets of questions to guide the conversation. Participants would be those who attended protest actions or did not possess a leadership role in their organization, while activists would demonstrate a sustained commitment to their political work or a leadership role. After interview #5, I decided that this distinction was not useful as I wanted to focus on activists' individual political journeys more than their organizational duties, and each of the respondents I spoke with demonstrated a sustained commitment to their political work. For each interview after, I asked 10-12 guided questions pulling from both the "participant" and "activist" sets for the interviews. After Interview #19, I more systematically asked the first "political values" question from the Participant set and folded it into the larger set of "Activist" questions. I dropped the other two "Participant" questions ("Does this organization align with those values? If so, how? If not, how?" and "Would you call yourself politically active? What are some political activities you have participated in?").

[11] One interviewee objected to being recorded, so I wrote notes during our interview.

Alliance, in my capacity as a researcher, I attended three meetings, two neighborhood tabling efforts, and a court packing event.[12]

This sample includes 19 female/woman identified participants, 11 male/masculine participants, and 3 nonbinary/genderqueer participants. One participant identified as female/ nonbinary and one participant did not provide the answer. The sample has 10 white respondents (including two who identify as ethnically Jewish), 16 Black respondents, 4 mixed race respondents (Black and white), 2 Latinxs, and 2 Asian Americans. One respondent identified as Arab. The youngest respondent aged 19 and the oldest 62 at the time of the interview. The median income was between $50,000 and $74,000 per year (two respondents did not provide their income). Twenty of the respondents are employed full time, four are employed part time, seven are students, two are self employed, one is an independent contractor and one is temporarily employed. Eleven of my interviewees are originally from Chicago, three were born internationally, and the rest are from the US. I use pseudonyms in the study and only use the names of activists who agreed to share their names publicly.

I spoke to a range of activists from various sectors of Black, leftist, and radical activism.[13] Interviewees discussed their (current, multiple, or former) participation in racial justice, abolitionist, or anti-police violence organizations including the Black Youth Project 100 (BYP100), the Chicago Alliance Against Racist and Political Repression, BLM Chicago, BLM/Justice for Families, Women's All Points Bulletin, the Chicago Community Bond Fund, UChicago United, Care Not Cops, and GoodKids Mad City.[14] I also spoke to members of the

[12] I also attended events outside of my formal capacity as a researcher and in my capacity as an activist, to support political work, deepen my own knowledge, or build rapport with respondents.
[13] More information about the sample and the organizations represented is in Appendix B.
[14] Some activists were members of multiple organizations.

Arab American Action Network, the Jewish organizations IfNotNow and Never Again Action, and Invisible to Invincible, a queer Asian American political organization. I spoke with activists in labor organizations including the Chicago Teachers Union and Graduate Students United, and one respondent who was at the beginning stages of organizing her workplace.[15] I spoke with an activist working with the climate justice network, Mutual Aid Disaster Relief, and an organizer with Tenants United. One interviewee was also a member of the Democratic Socialists of America, another a member of Freedom Road Socialist Organization. One interviewee, a Black anarchist (former Black Nationalist Muslim) was not a member of a formal organization but with friends organized political education events around Chicago. Three organizers did not wish to share their organizations, though one works in women's advocacy, environmental advocacy, and elder issues; one is in labor; and one works on Black grassroots organizing. Interviewees shared a range of leftist ideological views, from liberal progressivism, Black radicalism, communism, anarchism, and socialism.

To analyze these interviews, I digitally transcribed them using Descript, loaded the transcripts into NVivo, cleaned each transcription checking for accuracy, and coded each one while listening to the interview audio. I would occasionally refer back to my handwritten interview notes if something was lost in the recording or in the transcription. I organized the relevant themes as they arose in each interview into NVivo nodes. I coded utilizing both a deductive and inductive analytical process. Through an initial process of thematic coding, I searched for responses to the research questions "Why do people turn to political activism/ movement politics?" and "How do social movements influence political behavior?" (Saldaña

[15] One labor activist requested that I not share her workplace.

2013; Elliot 2018; Williams and Moser 2019). I constructed codes regarding politicization, attitudes about government and politics, ideologies, activism sectors, and institutional and non-institutional participation. In addition, I coded common themes as they emerged across interviews with an eye towards experiences with Chicago politics, police, and historical narratives regarding the Movement for Black Lives. I identified 55 codes with references across 5 or more interviews, collapsed into 35 thematic categories.

In the next section, I describe three paths to alienated activism, including marginalized identities, through political conditions and experiences, and via solidarity. Then, I consider how alienation shapes political activity through engagement in relational political activities, participation in movement space, and the development of transformative political ideas.

**Part I. Alienation by Identity, Political Conditions, and Solidarity**

In this section, I focus on three distinct areas of alienation as presented by my interviewees. I began the interviews by asking each participant about their early lives and the experiences that got them involved or interested in politics. We also discussed their political values and where they think these came from. These conversations, besides being autobiographical and grounding the interview in a familiar subject matter for the interviewee, pointed to a range of early motivations and experiences that set the stage for their political activism. Activists shared experiences that were deeply personal and resonant, but that also indicated broader structural problems in society.

***Alienation through a Marginalized Identity***

Marginality, through race, gender, sexuality, can serve as a site of political alienation. American society is constructed of social and economic hierarchies, and processes of realizing

that one belongs to the *other* and not the center of political life and power were often consciousness-raising moments for my interviewees. An aspect of Black activists' political socialization was some early memory of being racialized, or experiencing racism in school. Black activists reported becoming acutely aware of being "onlys" in a classroom or a school, or being put down by teachers, administrators, and fellow students. These early experiences served as seeds of politicization and/or *awareness* of one's position in a racial hierarchy. One Black woman involved in racial justice work, Silvia*[16], shared her experiences becoming politicized on her college campus after an administrator called Black male students "animals." Another racial justice activist talked about activation on her campus after the school paper questioned the necessity of Black history month. Still another shared an early experience of being called the n-word at school. These experiences informed later processes of participation and collectivity rooted in Blackness, specifically. Through these moments of disappointment, Silvia, for instance, was able to find comfort in community with other Black students. She and her fellow students staged a sit-in in response, and of those moments, she said, "I was like, there's something here about bringing people together and living out the world that we want to live in, like, recognizing what we're up against but also finding such compassion and the comfort in that solidarity of a community."

Furthermore, gender and sexuality are also important grounds for shaping political alienation. Women and queer interviewees shared that gender and sexuality were important lenses in which they couch their political values and approach politics, often through the lens of personal experiences and the feeling that violence (by the state or otherwise) against their

[16] A * indicates that names have been changed.

identity groups is not adequately addressed. Crista, from Women's All Points Bulletin, an anti-police violence organization, spoke about the need to attend to police violence against women, as she had personally experienced police violence and wanted to provide support for women with similar experiences. Kerri*, an advocate in women's, elder, and environmental organizations, rooted her politicization firmly in her experience as a woman with experiences of harassment and speaking out against sexual assault on her college campus.

Queer-identified folks (who disclosed their identity to me voluntarily, without being asked), in particular, noted that it was important to incorporate queerness into their activism, especially the organizers I spoke with in BYP100. Members of BYP100 spoke about women, transgender, and gender non-conforming people as typically left out of political advocacy and the need to center these populations in advocacy and leadership. I asked a young BYP100 organizer about her political values and she noted that "A lot of her values directly align with [her] experiences" as a queer Black woman. BYP100 deploys a "Black Queer Feminist Lens" (BQF) of organizing. Founding BYP100 National Director Charlene Carruthers describes it in her book *Unapologetic* (2018) as "a political praxis (practice and theory) based in Black feminist and LGBTQ traditions and knowledge, through which people and groups see to bring their full selves into the process of dismantling all systems of oppression" (12). *Queerness* then, though rooted in a marginal identity and experience, is an expansive lens for political organizing outside of traditional channels and inclusive of those who identify with queerness either personally or politically.

Chad*, an Asian American queer man and member of Invisible to Invincible, a collective for queer Asian Americans, discussed specifically looking for organizations that would speak to

both his racial and sexual identities. He discussed the development of his organization, which began first as a social space for queer Asian American men, but became more politicized around racial identity in the wake of the killing of Michael Brown. He said that, as well as cross-racial Asian and Black solidarity, queerness was a central aspect of his organization and that it is important to "emphasize queerness" in politics, particularly the intersections of race and queer identity in order to name the "multifaceted" forms of suppression and policing that queer individuals face at the hands of the state, particularly trans people of color and Black trans people. In these ways, queer identity serves as a guiding political perspective, informing political strategies and goals.

In this section, I focused on the processes of alienation through possession of a marginal identity. I specifically attended to personal experiences of marginality, though, certainly, these processes are often *also* linked to larger institutional problems, like poverty, exclusion, citizenship, or experiences with police. I find, however, that the personal can also be alienating and an essential part of grounding motivations for activism, especially when marginality serves as a basis for forming and building political communities. In the next section, I focus on marginalization via institutions and political and social conditions.

***Alienation by Conditions and Institutional Failures***

In describing their decisions to become involved in political activism, respondents shared ruptures in their lives predicated by some institutional failure. The nature of these experiences were often engagements with institutions or authorities that led to a realization that the system alone would not come through for them or their communities. I asked a white male respondent, Bill*, about what organizations he was involved in and how they aligned with his values. He

shared that he decided to become a tenant organizer after unknowingly experiencing an eviction while living on the South Side of Chicago.

> **Bill*:** So at the moment I am deeply involved in Tenants United, which is a tenant organizing group in Hyde Park but— it's Tenants United in Hyde Park and Woodlawn. But the reality of the housing situation is that [my neighborhood] is also part of that conversation since the dynamics around housing are shaping all three of those neighborhoods. And I came to be involved with them because I found out that I was evicted the week of Thanksgiving. And I had not known that there was an eviction case against me. So I reached out to people I knew and I'm like, I need a lawyer! Because I was, I found out literally the day of the hearing that I'd missed it. So I started reaching out to people because I was like, I'm pretty sure that at this point in time I— if I just get my ass down to the courthouse, I can probably file some paperwork and get this slowed down, if not reversed. But I needed to find a lawyer. So I was reaching out to people and I got a lawyer connection, but also the person was like *and* there's some tenant organizing […]

Bill went on to share that tenant organizing brings together community members, enabling those without capital to leverage and assert their "people power" around neighborhood housing pressures. Another activist, Mo*, an Arab man involved with the Arab American Action Network shared that he became activated after realizing the "structural racism" of working in a food desert in Englewood. In 2013, Whole Foods announced that it would build a store in Englewood, a predominantly Black South Side Chicago neighborhood once notorious for neglect, blight, and gun violence. Neighborhood organizations and activists were quick to get involved in the Whole Foods proposal, ensuring that community members would have a voice in the process. Mo shared that these organizers "sparked his activism" and "raised his consciousness," leading him to pursue social justice causes. These activists name alienating conditions of living and working on the South Side of Chicago as motivating their participation.

Folded into the experience of local conditions *and* institutional failure, for Black activists in particular, were experiences with police. Three activists I spoke to were survivors of police

violence, two from the Chicago Police Department.[17] Each shared that they were activated at the moment they experienced police violence. One activist, Martinez shared that he felt that he was "closed off from the political world" growing up in his neighborhood on the South Side of Chicago. In further discussions about the development of his political values, Martinez shared that resources were stripped away from his community which led to issues that local politicians labeled a "gang problem" and sought to solve with *more* police. Ultimately, it was the police murder of his sister Rekia Boyd that motivated him to get involved in activism concerning police violence, albeit reluctantly. Martinez shared that Rekia's death illuminated the reality of police violence against women and the lack of public discussion of women victims of police violence. Another survivor, Arewa, from the Justice for Families Working Group from Black Lives Matter expressed a commitment to voting as she grew up, even excitement at the election of Black politicians like Mayor Harold Washington and Barack Obama. However, she said she was "catapulted" into activism when she lost a family member to police violence, telling her family after the fact "we have to know" where politicians stand and "they have to know who we are." Arewa discusses a rupture, an event so egregious that it casts mistrust on all figures involved in the process, from the police to the medical examiners. I asked her to share a bit of her nephew's story:

> **Arewa**: So this happened in 2016, so, and actually he was 16 years old, my nephew named Pierre...Supposedly he was in a stolen car and the police was following the car and he wasn't driving. He was the passenger, but, um, when the police got behind them, they pulled over and they, the two of them, they got out and they ran. And my nephew ran like on the side of a restaurant cause he, he knows the community, it's where he grew up, and he ran and he was climbing. Uh, they keep calling it a fence, but it was more like a six foot kind of wrought iron, one of those, and he was, he was running, of course the police behind him. And then he's trying to get over that fence. And the police officer, *they claimed* the officer shot him in the chest. We're

[17] "Survivors" include those who either have lost family members to police violence or have been brutalized by the police themselves.

> not buying that. Because we're like how, how was he going over the fence with his back turned and got shot in the chest?

For Black activists, then, it seems alienation is a condition of their lives: in addition to being racialized by institutions like schools, or authority figures therein, Black people share experiences of violence with police and the carceral system that impact their orientation towards the state.

In this section, I consider how socioeconomic conditions as well as neglect and violence from institutions alienate members of the public. Next, I will consider how individuals are alienated through choice, or processes of solidarity with marginalized groups with whom they do not necessarily share an identity or specific experience.

***Alienation through Solidarity***

For white activists, solidarity with marginalized groups motivated their desire to participate in some forms of political activism. For younger white respondents, learning about police violence against Black Americans shifted their understanding of racism, as well as their location in social justice work. They discussed becoming activated by seeing Black people organize and protest as a part of the Black Lives Matter Movement on their college campuses and in their cities. One activist, Mary*, a young white woman/non-binary person and climate justice activist involved with Mutual Aid Disaster Relief, when discussing their long path to political activism and involvement in activist networks, pointed to the Laquan MacDonald protests as an important turning point in changing their understanding of the continued significance of race and racism.

> **Mary*:** It was really like when I came to Chicago I think like things ramped up for me. Like I moved here shortly before the Laquan McDonald dash cam footage was released. And when that happened, anybody who was here can tell you, like, the whole city just, like, it was a wild time

> and I like, you know still to this day like you never really seen such just, like, raw emotion out like on the street and like just being felt so deeply by everyone.
>
> **Interviewer:** Was that like your intro into, like, racial justice activism?
>
> **Mary*:** Yeah, I would probably say so. Honestly for a long time I just didn't think that racism or like sexism for that matter was like a thing anymore because that's what I was raised thinking [...]

Mary* went on to share that their participation in these protests further educated them about the police and their willingness to inflict violence on members of the public. They said that it was their first time being scared at a protest, and ultimately, their first time personally experiencing police violence and being "hit by a cop." Another labor organizer Tom*, a white man involved with Graduate Students United, talked about joining the Chicago protests for Eric Garner that shut down Lakeshore Drive in 2014. He mentioned from his experiences attending this protest and learning from other labor organizers that activists that are "most invested" in these struggles know best what they need. He described a process of "listening and showing up for other people's demands," which contrasted with models of participation that he had been taught in school, which emphasized that leadership was the most valuable mode of getting involved in political activism. In these ways, through shocks over police violence, young white activists were able to more clearly comprehend state violence towards Black Americans, as well as stand in solidarity by following Black activists in resisting police violence. It is important to note that though white activists participated in protest and organizations resisting police violence and mass incarceration, Black people are primarily on the front lines of these issues, leading organizations and advocacy in this arena. In this way, we see that solidarity can be a useful mobilizing force; yet, personal experiences and social location likely drives sustained commitments to these issues.

For people of color, solidarity offered an opportunity to extend and link their positionality to other marginalized populations. Shelly* from BYP100 discussed the campaign to erase Chicago's gang database. The #EraseTheDatabase Coalition includes Organized Communities Against Deportations, the Black Youth Project 100, and Mijente. These groups have been working to push the Chicago City Council to "expand what it means to be a sanctuary city," for both immigrants and Black people targeted by the police, specifically advocating for the erasure and deletion of the Chicago Gang Database, since, although Chicago is a sanctuary city for undocumented immigrants and refugees, the Chicago Police may collaborate with Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) to disclose whether an undocumented person is a member of a gang. Shelly* mentioned that the campaign taught her what "true solidarity" means, and that it is more than turning out for each other, but thinking through what sanctuary and safety means for both Black people and Brown people in the context of the Chicago Police Department. She asserted that "nobody is safe, Black people, Brown people, [or] white people in a city where the police department budget is $1.5 billion."

**Part II: Political Education as a Mechanism of Mobilization**

*Political Education: From Alienation to Mobilization*

Building upon politicizing and alienated life-experiences, learning and political-education were consistent parts of respondents' path to political activation, as well as part of their own political work. Political education functions as a method of mobilization, building understanding, sharing information, and providing broader context for grievances and action. Experiences of alienation pique disappointment and serve as the spark to seek out information and alternatives. Political education can extend alienation beyond individual experiences to the collective, place it

within a historical context, and conjure transformative political opportunities. Political education undergirds alienated activism, providing members of the public with the tools, foundational understandings, and transformative possibilities that make activism possible and worthwhile. Political education happens in a number of ways: through individual or group study, formal or informal education, one on one conversations, events and actions.

As interviewees learned about historical and present mechanisms of oppression and exploitation, they became involved in political activism and passed on these forms of knowledge to others in their communities and in their organizations. Engagement in political education included building relationships to teach and talk with people about difficult topics, like police violence or community neglect. Within movement, the process of political education is not always an easy one, but is a method of delivering movement messages to the public and building a base of support. One organizer, May*, discussed how the Chicago Alliance educated and mobilized members of the public via tabling. At that time, members of the Alliance set up tables with literature, support cards, and buttons in various Chicago neighborhoods to garner public support for a Civilian Police Accountability Council (CPAC), which would install "a democratically elected council to oversee the Chicago Police Department."[18] Tablers returned to their spot each week, such that members of the neighborhood came to expect them.

> **Interviewer:** Um, kind of give me like, kind of the dynamic of like tabling, like, um, it's kind of a one-to-one or, um, is it like a couple of people talking to a couple people?
>
> **May*:** We have almost, we can have up to maybe 10 people at a table at once working the table. But we get out on the corners. We don't just stay at the table, but the dynamic of it, is a family. It's a group. You know what I'm saying? We're here to let you know how wonderful CPAC is. That's our job. We're here to let you know how CPAC is here for you. And we educate the community, whatever community we're in, educate that community on how CPAC can help them.

[18] "STOP POLICE CRIMES - ENACT CPAC FOR COMMUNITY CONTROL." <https://www.caarpr.org/stop-police-crimes#:~:text=CPAC%20stands%20for%20Civilian%20Police,oversee%20the%20Chicago%20Police%20Department.>.

Tabling provides CPAC organizers an opportunity to offer their ideas to the public, promote dialogue and understand how their organization can advocate for those struggling with police. Michael*, another Alliance activist, named tabling as "an opportunity to talk to people about what public safety should be." In these ways, political education serves as a bridge from communities to political activism, particularly for those who felt unheard but concerned about the Chicago Police Department. The tablers discussed other possibilities for safety with members of the public and let them know they were not alone in their frustration with the CPD. In the next section, I dive deeper into movement activity. Building on foundations of their political education, activists engage in relational and collective political activities, including organizing, building relationships and efficacy in movement space, and working for transformative political alternatives.

**Part III: How Alienation Informs Activism**

In this section, I discuss how respondents thought about engaging with formal political institutions and the tension they feel between needing to act and feeling ambivalent towards the government as such. I then consider 3 ways that alienation, mobilized via political education, informs political activism. First, I discuss processes of relational political engagement, particularly the political organizing conversation. Second, I discuss engagement in movement space, wherein alienated activists find community with other advocates to educate themselves and build their sense of belonging and political efficacy. Third, I discuss transformative political strategies and goals, wherein alienated activists shared campaigns and solutions that would either change government institutions from the ground up or do away with them altogether: in this study, police accountability and police abolition.

***Engagement with Formal Institutions: "Girl, I Guess"***

In discussions about their participation in political activism and organizing, I discussed with activists their thoughts on electoral politics and political work inside and outside of institutions—whether they voted, why they chose to do political work outside of traditional politics, and whether they saw this work as "political." Activists often expressed their disillusionment and disappointment in the current political system. Even so, most of them expressed that they participate in electoral politics anyway as a part of their political work. They understand voting, campaigning for progressive politicians, or even running for elected office as important potential means to their broader goals to create change. One campus activist discussed her ambivalence towards politicians, saying that she consulted a progressive Chicago voters guide entitled "Girl, I Guess," a reference to the social media campaign #GirlIGuessImWithHer wherein young women of color and progressive voters discussed their decision to vote for Hillary Clinton in 2016, despite mixed feelings and reservations about her as a candidate.[19] These mixed feelings are characteristic of "alienated activism," where activists recognize that electoral politics gives them a valuable chance to influence the terrain, but they see major flaws in the system as it currently functions. Alongside their engagement with the political system, alienated activists recognize "systemic" and "structural" problems with institutions.

One BYP100 activist, Victoria*, mentioned the need for an integrated strategy for both electoral organizing and extra-institutional political activism, noting that there need not be a dichotomy between the two. She emphasized that some grassroots activists *specifically* focus on electoral organizing, and she discussed the need to work with amenable politicians like Jeanette

[19] #GirlIGuessImWithHer was a hashtag created by Twitter user Mad Black Thot in wake of Clinton's winning the Democratic Presidential nomination in 2016. The meme was popularized by women of color and progressive voters.

Taylor, a progressive politician from Chicago, a former activist turned alderperson in Chicago's 20th ward. Taylor is known especially for her participation in a 2015 hunger strike protesting the closing of Dyett High School, a predominantly Black high school in Bronzeville, a historic Black neighborhood on the South Side of the city. With other Bronzeville residents, Taylor refused to eat solid food for 34 days to save Dyett.

Victoria named Taylor as someone who could help BYP100 activists accomplish their policy goals in the city, particularly eliminating the Chicago Gang Database.[20] In addition to her assertion of the need for a two-pronged approach, Victoria asserted that she participated in political organizing because she recognized the need for a structural change.

> **Victoria*:** In order to organize effectively, you are interacting with people in those systems, because those are often— when you're running a campaign, say the gang database, like the city council has to pass an ordinance that says that they will do that. Um, and so, you know, we want people to get out and vote for, like, people like Jeanette Taylor and like others, other people who are going to sponsor our thing. So anyway, there should be a strategy that's integrated no matter, kind of, where you sit. Um, I think, the reason I organize and even maybe, like, organize in like a kind of grassroots and radical way, um, it's because, yeah, I think that like, we need broad sys— not, not even just systemic, but like structural change. Like I want to live in a world that's, like, structured in an entirely different way and I think we need to be building um, like insurgent power, outside of, um, the institutions of a violent state in order to ready ourselves to create that change.

Another activist from the Chicago Alliance Against Racist and Political Oppression shared his feeling that American politicians in general were not close enough to the people that elect them, but had campaigned for Taylor, feeling that she represented something different: a possibility for representation beyond politics as usual. Taylor had pledged her support for the Civilian Police

[20] The #EraseTheDatabase Coalition includes Organized Communities Against Deportations, the Black Youth Project 100, and Mijente. These groups have been working to push the Chicago City Council to "expand what it means to be a sanctuary city," for both immigrants and people of color targeted by the police, specifically advocating for the erasure and deletion of the Chicago Gang Database, since, although Chicago is a sanctuary city for undocumented immigrants and refugees, the Chicago Police may collaborate with Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) to disclose whether an undocumented person is a member of a gang.

Accountability Council, the Chicago Alliance's proposal to gain community control of the Chicago Police Department. For Lex, Taylor's activist past and accessibility made her fundamentally different from other politicians.

> **Lex*:** I mean, I think a lot of people kind of, like, there's distance between the actual grassroots stuff, which I feel like the aldermanic campaigns that have happened here this year were really grassroots. And there's still, the involvement is still very communal, and... but like, when you look at the mayoral elections, or the elections for governor or presidents there's just such a huge distance between the voting, the voters and the people who are running. And I feel like that distance kind of, like, in that distance, there's a lot of just, like you're not going to get any help from whichever president you vote for. Because you're just not, they're not in conversation with you, you know, they're talking to their donors and their pundits and stuff, but they're not talking to working class people, marginalized people.
>
> **Interviewer:** What was the difference with Jeanette Taylor?
>
> **Lex*:** Um, I think that just the fact that she shows up, you know, she's accessible. And like, she was at the GSU protest.[21] She was at like, there was a protest against the FOP,[22] um, a few weeks ago and she was there and this was the day before the election. And yeah, she was just there in the movement, and even the stuff that, like, I didn't see, but I just heard about, like, she went on hunger strikes and stuff like that.[23] And I don't know, just the fact that she's been like, there's a certain kind of career politician trajectory where you're just like, "You know what? I'm going to be in politics for 10, 20 years, and then I'm going to get a nice, cushy job at some kind of policy uh think tank or something," but, the way that she's, her trajectory and the politics has not been like that. So I'm more trusting of her.

At the local level, then, activists recognized that they needed to work and support politicians amenable to their causes; specifically, they targeted and offered support to those that appeared to offer something different than politics as usual. I asked Aislinn, a co-founder of Black Lives Matter Chicago, whether she wanted to see the movement fold into the Democratic Party or into

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[21] Jeanette Taylor spoke at a march and rally held by the University of Chicago's Graduate Students United Union on May 1st, 2019.

[22]The Fraternal Order of Police held a protest against State's Attorney Kim Foxx on April 1st, 2019 . They disagreed with Foxx's decision not to charge actor Jussie Smollet in the wake of his determined false claims of being the victim of a hate crime. The Chicago Alliance mobilized counter-protesters at this demonstration.

[23] Jeanette Taylor joined a hunger strike to prevent the closure of Walter Dyett High School in 2015. This strike was in response to a slew of school closures in predominantly Black and Hispanic neighborhoods in Chicago beginning in 2013.

an interest group, or see more movement organizers running for office. She had spoken about elections as one of many political tools that one can use, but, in terms of the Black Lives Matter Movement, she emphasized that elections can disrupt movement mobilizations as organizers exit the movement to become involved. Yet, she also noted that politicians themselves, particularly new left and socialist politicians are specifically a *result* of movement building. For Aislinn, then, movements offered an opportunity to fundamentally shift the state of electoral politics, as movements produced politicians amenable to activist agendas and outside of the current political establishment.

> **Aislinn:** A danger that often happens is that when elections appear some of our most valuable folks can be taken away from organizing. Out of the field and thrown into, like, campaign work and then get just sucked into that machine. And that's a loss. That's a loss for the movement. So I would not say that, um, you know, that, that would be a goal. But I do want to qualify that. I think we are seeing the emergence of a left that, um, self identified socialists who are taking positions in office. And that's, that's a new trend that we haven't seen since before the McCarthy era in this country. And that's significant, right? That's a flex, a significant shift. So I'm encouraged by that. So I think that's good. I think it's also a reflection of larger movement building that is happening. So I would put the emphasis on building mass movement. Politicians are an *outcome* of that. So the stronger and the bigger that we can build the movement, the more ripple effects we'll see in, in elected officials. And so our focus should be on building and increasing mass movement.

Some activists voiced objections to electoral politics, feeling like they'd rather put their energy elsewhere or that voting was constrained to a preconditioned set of choices. One labor organizer, Molly*, did not believe that elections were the path to social change. She said that those predecessors who fought for the right to vote *did not* do so to achieve the status quo systems of government and political representatives. Molly felt that the presidential election as well as the mayoral elections in Chicago were like a "circus." She asserted that one cannot simply, passively vote, but they have to "fight, do something, get involved."

Though alienated activists desire to transform the political system, most assert that they had been or are open to being formally involved in institutional political activities—working on campaigns, voting, and even running for office, especially given the stakes of their political fights. Founding BYP100 National Director Charlene Carruthers discussed her work on Black Womxn For, a collective of Black women and gender non-conforming people who supported and organized for the Elizabeth Warren campaign in the 2020 Democratic presidential primaries. Carruthers noted her decision to become so heavily involved in the primaries this time was due to the election of Donald Trump in 2016 and the feeling that she needed to "show up differently" ahead of the 2020 presidential election and prevent Trump's reelection. Another racial justice activist talked about her run for public office, and despite experiencing institutional and financial barriers while campaigning, she expressed how much voting meant to her, given Civil Rights activists' contentious struggles for the vote. Alienation, then, as I formulate it here, does not indicate disengagement as a rule; rather, a broader recognition of structural problems and a desire to achieve a transformative future for marginalized communities.

In this section, I have discussed activists' attitudes towards formal political engagement, identifying a range of attitudes about involvement. Though alienated activists value and take advantage of the opportunity to engage with and influence formal politics, they do not see these institutions as they are as exemplary of the worlds they wish to build. They see engagement as an important and necessary means to an end, an opportunity to influence terrain and achieve concessions from systems and politicians they've identified as inadequately serving their communities. Alienated activists identify structural, systemic problems in political institutions and engage in multi-pronged political work inside and outside of them to push for social change.

### *Relational Political Engagement: Political Organizing*

*Political Organizing*

Alienation from the state coupled with political education prompts relational forms of political participation that are different from individualized or self-centered forms like voting or donating money. Alienated activists bring relational and communally minded forms of engagement to their political work, including political organizing. Many of the activists I interviewed identified as "organizers" or discussed engaging in "organizing." Staples (2004) defines grassroots community organizing as "collective action by community members drawing on the strength of numbers, participatory processes, and indigenous leadership to decrease power disparities and achieve shared goals for social change" (1). Specifically, I spoke with a few of my interviewees about the process of organizing people, as they mentioned having "organizing conversations" to build connections and bring people into their struggle. I asked Charlene, former director of BYP100 and who had at the time been organizing with Black Womxn For (a collective of Black womxn supporting former Democratic Presidential Candidate Elizabeth Warren) how she would have an organizing conversation with me.

> **Interviewer**: Yeah. Yeah. Um, So I feel like I want to sort of really unpack—I don't think that political science sort of pays enough attention to community organizing as a mode of, um, political participation. Um, what, can you kind of walk me through, like, say you were trying to organize me. What are the things that you would talk to me about? Like how would you sort of bring me into your org or bring me into the, to an action or a campaign that you were trying to do?
>
> **Charlene:** I would have a one-on-one with you. And I would start similarly to how you started our conversation. So tell me, like, tell me about where you grew up. What was that like? And I would just start from there, or go from there and, um, ask you about people who were important to you in your life. When's the first time you remember getting involved—or caring about something? Is your community exactly how you want it to be? What would you change about it? So I would, mostly, ask a lot of questions and do a lot of listening and then discern if there's something that makes sense or that exists for us to work on with each other and then gauge your interest in that and make an ask. And not necessarily an ask to like, volunteer or become a member, but it may be an ask to have a one-on-one, a follow up or, 'Oh, I think we should talk

> with such and such.' Um, but it could be a variety of things. That's what I would do. Yeah, I wouldn't lead with here's what I want you to do. Are you interested in doing that? Nah, that's not how I would lead in.
>
> **Interviewer:** And you would leave it sort of open ended, leave it—
>
> **Charlene:** Find out who you are. Well I wouldn't lead, I wouldn't lead with an ask. I wouldn't start the conversation with asking you to do something. I would start the conversation with finding out who you are and what you care about and what makes you angry. And that's how I was taught to organize. So, and I've been using it for a long time now.

I asked another labor organizer, Jill*, how she does her job and she mentioned the "*methodology"* of the organizing conversation. She said in these conversations "she wants to know what moves you" and that she "love[s] hearing people vent" because that provides a chance to "polarize people" and paint a "vision" about the "light at the end of the tunnel," say, a fairer contract. Then she said, it's about "moving people to be a part of the struggle" and helping people to understand their personal reasons for getting involved.[24] The political organizing conversation then is deeply rooted in *listening* and relationship building with members of the public over issues that deeply resonate with them. Organizing can happen in groups or one-on-one, but it is ultimately conversational, educational, and meant to draw people into collective action not out of obligation to other organizers but as a method of living their own values and achieving their goals. Political organizing conversations, besides activating those outside movement, are ultimately meant to provide or guide members of the public to an outlet, an organization or action, for them to practice their politics.

[24] Another activist, Sarah*, a member of the Jewish organization IfNotNow, framed this as appealing to peoples' "self interest" to mobilize them and their communities. She named relationships as central to this work to build power.

***Engagement in Movement Space: Efficacy and Relationship Building***

Activists shared with me the political work they do or did within their organizations and neighborhoods. Activists work together to establish safe spaces counter to societal expectations for themselves and people in their communities, developing their identities and attempting to involve and activate themselves and mobilize the public. Activists described their organizations relationally— as their family, friends, their community. These familial relationships facilitate processes of political education and efficacy building, both inside organizations and in communities.

Activists discussed engaging in community facing work to deliver their new ideas to the public, as well as the need for a basis of support to do that work successfully. May* from the Chicago Alliance referred to the organization as the "CPAC family," and said that it was open to the public and anyone interested in being involved. She noted that the members keep in touch, host cookouts, and show up for one another. Similarly I talked to, Ginger*, a young activist involved with BYP100 and GoodKids Mad City (a youth anti-violence organization) about what was important to her about the organizations to which she belonged. She pointed to political education, particularly the giving of "language" by BYP100, as well as community-facing work of GoodKids Mad City. She mentions that GoodKids gives her opportunities to connect with those who might not typically be asked to talk about community issues, the "dude on the block" that people are afraid to approach. Lastly, she mentions the sense of family, noting that one cannot engage in political work without a base of support.

> **Ginger*:** And so, like I said, BYP has given me a lot of language, um, to really understand policy and policy making, GoodKids Mad City has given me a lot of opportunities to connect within communities and talk to the dude on the block who everybody's so afraid to talk to [...]
>
> **Ginger*:** And so, I feel like, that's why I really resonate and why I really love being in these spaces and then they're also very family oriented, as much as they are about the work and about

> doing these things it's also like, you know, I'm gonna check in on you if you need it. Like, you haven't shown up in two months, are you okay? Are you burned out? What do you need? Um, which I think is super important in that this work needs to have a base of family and a base of support and community because you can't do the work if you don't have anybody. You can't do the work alone. Period.

Furthermore, BYP100 members described the organization as their "political home," or, a space by and for all young Black people, particularly those at the margins, to develop their political analyses and build community with each other.

Alienated activists named organizational and communal space as key sites of political development and analysis. These organizations allow activists to bring in members of their communities who also might feel frustrated with or excluded from formal politics. Movement spaces serve as familial and safe spaces for people with marginal identities and allow them to be their full selves. In this process of community building, activists engage in political education and imagine alternatives. For example, in the next section, I consider how racial justice activists imagined and worked on alternatives or transformative strategies for public safety, including police and prison abolition and police accountability.

***Developing Transformative Political Strategies: Abolition and Accountability***

Due to their politicizing experiences and education in movement spaces, alienated activists engage in processes of developing transformative political ideas. They advocate and conduct campaigns to gain concessions, widen the scope, or transform the nature of existing political structures. For example, racial justice activists in Chicago at this time (March 2019-February 2020) were engaging in processes of political learning, education, and action around police abolition and accountability. Activists shared dual processes of 1) sustained on the ground strategies to eliminate and reduce carceral contact, end police violence, and assert control over the police in the present as well as 2) imagining and dreaming of alternative systems of safety

altogether. In this section, I briefly consider the transformative strategies of the Chicago Community Bond Fund, The Chicago Alliance, BLM Chicago, and BYP100.

I spoke with Ruby from the Chicago Community Bond Fund which focuses on ending cash bond in the state of Illinois. The Chicago Community Bond Fund was founded in 2015, after working to bond out friends and family of DeSean Pittman, a 17 year old Black boy who was killed by Chicago Police in 2014. Five of DeSean's friends and family were arrested at a vigil for DeSean that was disrupted by CPD. When I asked about the goals and values of the Bond Fund, Ruby said that the Bond Fund recognizes that pre-trial incarceration in particular does not reduce incarceration or solve issues of community violence. In recognition of a system that disproportionately affects low income people, the Bond Fund works to counteract the system of pre-trial incarceration by bonding people out of jail regardless of guilt or innocence. She asserted that, even though not every coalitional partner of the Bond Fund is abolitionist, the Bond Fund's strategies would move them toward a broader, abolitionist goal of divestment from carceral systems to investment in community resources.

> **Interviewer:** What would you say are the political goals of this organization, of the organizations you've been a part of, the organization you're currently a part of, um, if you could sort of list the goals, the values of the organization, what would they be?
>
> **Ruby:** Sure, let me—so, obviously the Bond Fund and our Coalition[25] are very concerned with wealth based pretrial incarceration. So that means that like with money bond if you can't afford your money bond, that's the only thing standing between you and freedom and it's really super unfair that if a judge has cleared you for release, technically, except for the fact that they know you don't have $5,000? For them to get around the presumption of innocence which is guaranteed in our Constitution. You know what I mean? So it really, money bond is a way to illustrate the extreme inequity, financially in our court system, but the Bond Fund itself is a prison and police abolitionist organization and so we believe that we want a world without prisons and police and that's a really complicated, obviously, conversation to have with a lot of folks. Because at the Bond Fund when we bond people out we don't discriminate between charges or guilt or innocence, you know we bond people out who are charged with murder sometimes because our point is that like keeping somebody in a cage doesn't help that situation. So we would advocate

[25] The Coalition to End Money Bond

> for the defunding or divestment of prisons and police and investment in community resources like healthcare, education, community centers, counseling, all that kind of stuff.

The Chicago Alliance has mounted a long campaign for a Civilian Police Accountability Council (CPAC). Members of the Alliance expressed a commitment to imagining and fighting for democratic, community based control over the police, educating communities, and advocating for survivors of police violence. Leigh*, named CPAC as a demand on the continuum of achieving Black liberation, freedom, and flourishing communities. Eric*, emphasized that the CPAC demand was not about reforming the police because "that's not possible," but about giving "oppressed communities democratic control over the police," and avoiding reforms that "get mass struggles to subside." Michael* emphasized that things should be "both and"— that abolition is an ideal, but that it is important to keep working with present systems to gain control of police and achieving justice for survivors of police violence. For example, May* mentioned that the organization assists members of the public with family who have been harassed or mistreated by police, and that they can come to an Alliance meeting and find support from the organization to help them navigate the carceral system. The Alliance is committed to addressing the carceral system and seeking transformative justice *collectively* and *communally*, by lending ongoing support to survivors of police violence and torture through campaigns, court-packing, and advocacy.[26]

Aislinn from BLM Chicago said that the goals of the organization are to "advance and carry on the banner of Black liberation work" in Chicago and (quoting activist Mary Hooks), "be

[26] According to survivors, activists, and anthropologist Lawrence Ralph (2020), 125 Black people were tortured by the Chicago police between 1972 and 1991, led by Chicago Police Department Commander Jon Burge. Survivors and activists in Chicago have established several modes of redress for these crimes, including the Chicago Torture Justice Center and the Reparations Ordinance— the first form of reparations legislation for police violence in the nation, passed in 2015.

transformed in the service of the work." She said this means dismantling oppressive systems *as well as* working to create liberatory structures and systems. As for their on the ground work, Aislinn mentioned that one of the most important aspects of BLM Chicago's work was with families and survivors of police violence and working to achieve their visions of justice in addition to the organizations' own ideals. She noted that the organization held abolition as a value; yet, they were also intentional about supporting grieving families and survivors who may not ideologically align with abolition in order to achieve major wins, like the Consent Decree.[27]

> **Interviewer**: Can you talk a little bit about, um, sort of the work you do for BLM and like, what is most important to you about the work that BLM does?
>
> **Aislinn:** I think for me the most important aspect of our work as BLM Chicago, um, is our relationship with families. I think that's really been our glue. And it's been the driving force of how we have decided to organize. We work with these, you know, we work with families and we are made up of families and of people who have survived police violence and police torture. And so that means that a lot of our decisions are, are, um, are intentionally inclusive of, uh, impact. How does this impact, um, you know, a grieving family member or, um, the relatives of a family? You know, what, what does justice look like to, to them as well as to us? Recognizing that there may be differences in, uh, in, you know, ideological differences. Um, because we all come to this work from different places. Um, and, and that there are going to be contradictions. So you know, where we are with abolition, um, as, as our, you know, as a value that we hold while also supporting families who are very much committed to seeking justice as they define it. We hold those knowingly that there may be a contradiction there and that we are still going to support this family *regardless*. And we're going to show up and we're going to be there physically.

BYP100 members shared with me that they are (and had grown into) an explicitly abolitionist organization and view abolition as a political goal of theirs. One member, Shelly*, discussed political educator and organizer Miriame Kaba's influence on this form of thought in Chicago—

[27] In 2017, the Department of Justice handed down a court order, or Consent Decree, after a year long investigation into the Chicago Police Department. This order named the necessary reforms the CPD needed to adopt in order to build trust with Chicago communities and reduce the harm inflicted by the department. This order is enforced by a federal judge, and was in part shaped by the families of victims of police violence.

pushing the boundaries of what it means to be safe in one's community.[28] For Shelly, BYP100's abolitionist goals were folded into their "She Safe, We Safe" campaign, which assesses strategies to prevent violence against Black women, girls, and gender non-conforming people outside of carceral systems and redirect funds from police to community programs that address gender based violence in Black communities. "She Safe, We Safe" encapsulates BYP100's margin to center strategy, wherein activists build strategies and policies around the most vulnerable in society such that everyone will benefit.

> **Interviewer**: So okay, we're coming up on the end, but I want to ask you, so what would you kind of say broadly are the goals of BYP100?
>
> **Shelly***: Yeah. Um, a future that, so like, right. Abolition, I heard Miriame Kaba— I'm pretty sure it was Mariame Kaba who said that abolition is "everything-ist," and it's like—
>
> **Interviewer:** It's "everything-ist"?
>
> **Shelly*:** Yes. And she's right. Like I feel that, and I think that that's the world that BYP100 is working towards. Like, everything as we know it, has been abolished and transformed. Um, so, so a world where decisions and policies are, like, not based off of violence or oppression, like we are, we just launched the "She Safe, We Safe" campaign a couple months ago, which is a campaign against, um, gender based violence, against black women and femmes. Right? And that like fully encompasses, like how we believe in, like, centering the most marginalized or the most impacted as a way to uplift everybody. I think that one thing that BYP100, has taught me and like made me realize, right, like when you think about the Civil Rights Movement, um, black people were at the forefront, but *everybody* got something out of that.

The activists I spoke with were considering what the world would look like without police or prisons and working out safety alternatives and advocacy strategies in their organizations. They named political education as part and parcel to this process, learning with and from each other and working in partnership with communities to figure out how to advance

[28] Several organizers mentioned Kaba's influence on their political work. Kaba is the founder of Project NIA, an organization working to end youth incarceration. Aislinn discussed her work in pushing leftist organizers to collaborate in Chicago; Crista talked about being recognized by Kaba as an "Unsung Hero." Ruby mentioned that Kaba was one of the first people to target State's Attorney Anita Alvarez after the shooting of Laquan McDonald.

goals of community safety while eliminating or mitigating the ever-present risks of police violence and incarceration towards individuals and families already caught in this system. These activists did not believe that the carceral system in its current iteration could alone or ever advance justice. Activists opted for sustained advocacy both within and without this system as well as strategies that would construct entirely new paths for justice and safety in Chicago.

**Conclusion**

In this chapter, I theorize the orientation and practice of "alienated activism," wherein activists express alienation from the political system which ultimately informs the modes of political activism they adopt. Some members of the public are alienated through marginality, through negative conditions or experiences with institutions, and/ or through processes of solidarity. Through processes of political education and informed by their ambivalence towards institutions, alienated activists are mobilized and engage in relational political activities, build efficacy in movement space, and adopt transformative political goals. This study reframes political activism as an ongoing practice that emanates from an orientation towards the political system, detailing the process through which alienation can lead to certain types of action. Other studies might consider how alienation informs activism in the aggregate, how negative orientations towards the government or alienated political experiences motivate or dampen different forms of political participation.

This study also deeply attends to the political organizing landscape in Chicago which hosts a range of radical, progressive, and racial justice activists working in tandem to challenge and push city government towards their visions of the future. Deeper attention to local campaigns and organizations sheds new light on the struggles and the material conditions that

activists face as they formulate their campaigns and work on their goals. The city of Chicago emerges as a fraught economic and political landscape for the marginalized; however, through collective action activists work to challenge politics as usual in the city and achieve tangible concessions to advance their goals. With the reemergence of Black Lives Matter on the national stage and as we think about what it means to "defund the police," this project shows that racial justice activists and organizers in Chicago were already working on strategies to reimagine public safety and achieve accountability in the face of police violence. It is important to recognize that moments of political opportunity are preceded by less visible moments of activists working in community with each other to prepare their imaginative demands for a better world. In the next chapter, then, I explore how those empathetic to the movement take up these demands, specifically whether they support police reform or police abolition.

# Chapter 5.
# Framing Police Violence: Support for Reformist and Abolitionist Messages Among Progressive Activists

## Introduction

In this final empirical chapter, I explore how transformational solutions of the BLM movement resonate with movement adherents, or likely supporters. The violent deaths of George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery, and Breonna Taylor in 2020 gave rise to the largest protests in United States history, and certainly the largest Black Lives Matter (BLM) protests to date.[1] The movement, conceived in 2013 after the acquittal of George Zimmerman for the murder of Trayvon Martin, has steadily gained public support in recent years, linked to the stream of violent encounters between police and Black Americans filmed and posted to the Internet.[2] Given the increased awareness of and public support for the movement, as well as movement activists' recent, more robust calls for transformative solutions, specifically, police and prison abolition, this chapter considers how progressives, those who are a part of BLM's political coalition, respond to prognostic frames of police violence—namely, police reform and abolition. Furthermore, with a survey experiment, I explore whether diagnostic or motivational police violence frames motivate support for reform and abolition.

## Literature Review

### *Framing a Movement Message*

According to Snow et al. (1986) framing is a foundational component of social movements. Benford et al., drawing from Goffman (1974) define a "frame" as a "'schemata of

[1] Buchannan, Larry, Quoctrung Bui and Jugal K. Patel. 2020. "Black Lives Matter May Be the Largest Movement in U.S. History." *The New York Times.* <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2020/07/03/us/george-floyd-protests-crowd-size.html>.

[2] Cohn, Nate and Kevin Quealy. 2020. "How Public Opinion Has Moved on Black Lives Matter." *The New York Times.* <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2020/06/10/upshot/black-lives-matter-attitudes.html>.

interpretation' that enable[s] individuals to 'locate, perceive, identify, and label' occurrences within their life space and the world at large. By rendering events or occurrences meaningful, frames function to organize experience and guide action, whether individual or collective" (Snow et al. 1986). Collective action frames are used "to mobilize potential adherents and constituents, to garner bystander support, and to demobilize antagonists" (Snow and Benford 1988; Benford and Snow 2000). Framing is an ongoing discursive contest between activists, politicians, and the media. Movement frames, drawing from common culture and language, signify to the public what a social movement is all about and what it is trying to achieve (Larana et al. 1994; Gamson 1992; Gamson 2004). Movements and activists must achieve resonance with potential adherents, providing new modes of common sense and understanding in order to accomplish their goals (Woodly 2015).

Activists utilize various collective action frames to resonate with and mobilize the public, including diagnostic frames, prognostic frames, and motivational frames (Snow and Benford 1988). Diagnostic frames comprise the "identification of a problem and the attribution of blame or causality" (200). For example, the climate justice movement diagnoses global warming as a result of human activity, such as burning fossil fuels and deforestation. A prognostic frame, identifies "strategies, tactics, or targets" to be addressed. This is a solution focused frame, like the charge to "reduce, reuse, and recycle" plastics to eliminate waste (201). Finally, motivational frames prod collective action, tapping into "selective incentives" for participation, including "material, status, solidarity, and moral inducements," such as the call to join the climate justice fight to save the planet for future generations (203).

In the case of Black Lives Matter, a barrage of videos and stories of police violence and murder against Black people often serve as further evidence of the movement's diagnostic frame, the ongoing *problem* of police violence. More difficult to establish, certainly, are prognostic frames about how to solve this problem, given present and historical attachments to policing. Policing adjudicates the everyday protection and distribution of rights and space in the United States. It is part of nationalistic and popular cultural narratives about who Americans are (Bandes 2019; Salter 2014). Police are a powerful and entrenched political constituency at the local and national level, often protected from scrutiny, legal repercussions, and reform efforts by police unions (Bandes 2019; Fisk and Richardson 2017; McCormick 2016).

Given this reality, Black activists face tough questions about which solutions to end police violence will receive support from sympathizers and the broader public. As Wahlstrom et al. (2010) write in their study of the climate justice movement, "rank-and-file participants in a movement do not necessarily frame political solutions to a problem as do its movement intellectuals or the SMOs to which they belong" (119). Agreeing on prognostic frames helps movements achieve "consensus mobilization, the interpretive foundation upon which movement ideology, recruitment, participation and action are built" (Benford 1993, 679; Klandermans 1984; Snow & Benford 1988). I also focus on diagnostic and motivational frames of state violence towards Black people. Specifically, I consider whether underlying problems (diagnostic frames) or political values (motivational frames) are more effective motivators for mobilization. Diagnostic frames detail particular problems in the world, while motivational frames appeal to political values (van Steklenburg et al. (2009)). Motivational frames can hold "emotional resonance," mobilizing and validating the fears and feelings of movement adherents, moving

them to action (Schrock et al. 2004). The mobilization differences between these frames can help determine why people support social movements, whether because they identify particular problems to be solved in the world or whether they see the movement as addressing political values they hold dear. Though a mixture of both frames are deployed by movement actors, and the supportive public is likely motivated by both, I will attempt to isolate diagnostic and motivational frames and assess which is more effective for mobilization, especially considering the role of race and ideology in motivating support against anti-Black police violence.

***Framing Black Movements: Incorporation versus Transformation***

The Black Lives Matter Movement is not only a policy fight but an ideological one. Ideology is an important aspect of framing as it is interpretative and definitive. Dawson (2001) writes that those who share an ideology share a common "language" and define the "norms, values, and 'central practices' common within a given political community" (58). Yet, classic political science literature asserts that the public is not ideologically coherent (Converse 1964). Oliver and Johnston (2005) assert that ideology is a distinct mode of messaging, that "cannot just be 'resonated with,' they have to be learned...educated or socialized into" (196). Thus, a single social movement may have a broad base of supporters who agree with its central problem but come from a range of ideological backgrounds; essentially, a coalition of people speaking different political "languages."

This is the difference between reformist and abolitionist solutions to police violence: reform suggests that the police are a salvageable institution that needs to undergo important changes, while abolition calls for a retooling of how we understand what public safety and demands more holistic solutions that divest from violence, carcerality, and anti-Blackness (Kaba

2021). Ending police violence may resonate with a broad swath of Americans, but supporting "police abolition" constitutes a higher ideological hurdle for those outside of a movement's core constituency.

Fundamentally, Black Lives Matter is a mass movement, with both committed organizers and spontaneous protesters, for Black liberation and freedom from violence (Ransby 2018; Taylor 2016). The movement is most widely recognized for its fight and mass mobilizations against police brutality. Black movements are saddled with the complex tasks of having specific goals (such as legislation and policy items) and needing to build (often, cross-racial) coalitions to accomplish them. However, Black movements also mobilize a worldview, naming their fights against anti-Blackness and white supremacy.

We can consider the framing contrasts between the Civil Rights Movement (CRM) and Black Power to think about how the movement supporters, as well as the broader public, might respond to police reform versus abolitionist prognostic frames in a Black movement. Black Power was a stark contrast to the conciliatory and integrationist language of the Civil Rights Movement. Civil Rights leaders famously advocated for equality before the law, with emphasis on voting rights, integration, and non-violent resistance. This is not to say that the Civil Rights Movement was not radical, or did not have more radical elements; rather, the master frame of the movement centered upon incorporation of Black people into the body politic (Snow and Benford 1992, 145; Benford 2013). The most well known sectors CRM often drew upon Christian brotherhood, inclusion, democracy, and friendship, especially as promulgated by the Southern Christian Leadership Conference and Martin Luther King. In his famous "I Have Dream" speech, King exhorts the fight for civil rights as follows:

> Now is the time to make real the promises of democracy. Now is the time to rise from the dark and desolate valley of segregation to the sunlit path of racial justice. Now is the time to lift our nation from the quicksands of racial injustice to the solid rock of brotherhood. Now is the time to make justice a reality for all of God's children.[3]

The Black Power Movement took a different approach. In "The Ideology of Blackness: African American Style" T.J. LeMelle (1967) writes that critics of the Black Power Movement claim that it "killed" the Civil Rights Movement. Ogbar (2019) argues that differences between Civil Rights and Black Power leaders became more evident over time, particularly as the NAACP and the Urban League denounced "Black Power," in fear of white backlash to the legal progress made in the South (123). He emphasizes that the backlash was in response to the slogan "Black Power" as well as violent uprisings in the name of Black Power and rebellion (124).[4] Some strains of Black Power advocated for separatist and self-deterministic elements, an end to reliance on white institutions and an investment in community power (Van Deburg 1992). Van Deburg (1992) writes "spurred by Black Power activists and encouraged by government poverty programs...black urbanites began to organize within their neighborhoods. Their goal: to completely reorient the institutions that were most central to their daily living" (115). The idea of "community control" and quest for autonomy drove sectors of the Black Power Movement and movements for Black nationalism.

The Black Lives Matter Movement carries various elements of the movements and advocacy work that proceeds it, not just Civil Rights and Black Power, but Black Feminism,

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[3] "I Have A Dream Address." King Institute. <https://kinginstitute.stanford.edu/king-papers/documents/i-have-dream-address-delivered-march-washington-jobs-and-freedom>.

[4] Violent uprisings during this era have been shown to increase white support for the Republican Party in the 1968 Presidential election—and opposition to the Democratic Party's civil rights agenda (Wasaw 2020). Recent experimental work affirms that violence associated with anti-racist activism also reduces support for these mobilizations (Simpson, Willer, and Feinberg 2018).

Black queer politics, and anti-carceral organizing. With regard to police violence, which could be seen as a central problem and mobilizer of the movement, organizers have given voice and grown into more radical solutions over time. As the movement began in 2013 and 2014 in response to the murders of Trayvon Martin, Michael Brown, and Eric Garner in particular, the most prominent calls, both in and outside of movement, centered around police reform, including solutions like body-cameras and the firing of officers who committed violence or killed Black people.[5] While abolitionist politics have always been an element of the Black Lives Matter movement, the continual murder of Black Americans at the hands of police and the constant barrage of videos circulating online, especially from 2014 to 2020 has continued to move the movement forward and has given way to more public discussions and advocacy for police and prison abolition and abolitionist reforms.[6] Even so, the discursive shifts from incorporation to abolition and social transformation may come with coalitional costs, as was the case with the Civil Rights and Black Power Movements.

*Context: Framing Police Violence*

Framing strategies are deeply affected by context and by the personal attributes of those interpreting the frame (Druckman 2004). Thus, the larger sociopolitical context, as well as the commitments and identities of individual receivers will impact how frames are understood. As discussed, Black Lives Matter constitutes an important political context for this project. The movement began during the tenure of the first Black president, revealing the stark contrast

[5] "Defunding the Police Can Achieve 'Real Accountability and Justice' Black Lives Matter Co-founder Says." *WBUR*. <https://www.wbur.org/hereandnow/2020/06/03/black-lives-matter-co-founder>.

[6] The organization Critical Resistance explains the difference between "reformist reforms" and non-reformist reforms. Non-reformist reforms diminish the power and scope of the carceral state, rather than increase public investment and reliance on these institutions.

between Black political representation at the highest levels and ongoing strife and political alienation in the streets. The movement has shifted since its inception: multiple organizations, a policy platform, and more radical ideas to address police and other forms of anti-Black state violence have emerged over time. According to the *New York Times*, in the summer of 2020, between 15 and 26 million people attended Black Lives Matter protests across the US, as the violent death of George Floyd in particular motivated members of the public into the streets, especially young white adults.[7] Though young Black Americans have led the charge for this movement since 2013, 2020 represented a political rupture brought about by intense political circumstances exacerbated by the coronavirus pandemic. One could argue this period of time represented the most impactful framing of BLM since its beginning, given the stark increase in participation than in previous years.

A number of frames came forth during this time period, and while more common police reform messaging rang across the country, more radical notions of Black liberation and freedom from violence also proliferated during this time. Most prominently, the "Defund the police" and other abolitionist slogans took off at protests and rallies across the US (Kaba 2021).[8] This concept, with origins in the anti-carceral organizing work of organizations such as Critical Resistance and activists like Angela Davis, Ruth Wilson Gilmore, and Mariame Kaba, calls for public funds to be *divested* from carceral solutions like prisons and police and *invested* in more holistic solutions for community flourishing and safety (Davis 2003; Gilmore 2007; Kaba 2021). This has long been an advocacy focus of the organized sections of the BLM movement, with

[7] Buchannan, Larry, Quoctrung Bui and Jugal K. Patel. 2020. "Black Lives Matter May Be the Largest Movement in U.S. History." *The New York Times.* <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2020/07/03/us/george-floyd-protests-crowd-size.html>.
[8] "Defund the Police." Movement for Black Lives. <https://m4bl.org/defund-the-police/>.

"Divest/ Invest" appearing in the 2016 Movement for Black Lives Platform.[9] In summer 2020, however, protesters and media outlets carried this message, marking a moment of resonance for the defund frame. While BLM is not *solely* about police, movement organizers and adherents are deeply invested in addressing police violence. To gain support, then, organizers will have to contend with the racialized way Americans view crime and policing.

White Americans express the most favorability and confidence in police, Black Americans are least likely to express confidence and trust in the police, and people of color broadly are least likely to approve of police use of force (Thompson and Lee 2004; Flanagan and Vaughn 1996).[10] According to a 2016 Pew Research Poll, there is a "racial confidence" gap in police performance, with Black Americans half as likely to have a positive view of how police do their jobs than whites. Stories about police violence are shown to reduce public trust in the police across racial groups, though white Americans regain trust in the police over time (Lasley 1994; Tuch and Weitzer 1997; Weitzer 2002).

Attitudes about and experiences with police are tied to racial background. Perry et al. (2019) find that Christian nationalist Americans are less likely to believe in anti-Black police violence and that police shoot Black people more often because they are more violent than white people. Experimental studies find that white people are more likely to recommend criminal charges to police officers who attack white victims than Black victims, while Black Americans are more likely to express anger at police violence (McGowen and Wylie 2020). Experiment participants respond more negatively to a Black speaker when making "more extreme claims"

[9] Critical Resistance. <http://criticalresistance.org/>.
[10] Morin, Rich and Renee Stepler. "The Racial Confidence Gap in Police Performance." Pew Social Trends.
<https://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2016/09/29/the-racial-confidence-gap-in-police-performance/>.

about racial injustice than they respond to a white speaker making similar claims (Schultz and Maddox 2013). News media can legitimate police violence to the public *or* turn public sentiment against police, especially in cases of high-profile police violence (Arora et al. 2018; Hirschfield and Simon 2010; Chermak et al. 2005). These studies suggest the framing of police violence— both the race of the messenger and the content of the frame— has an important effect on how the public understands this problem.

Recent studies on BLM and framing focus on the mobilization of emotion, identity frames, and ideology. Studies find that BLM movement messaging on social media advances expressive frames (fear, grief, outrage) in response to instances of police violence in the United States, rather than tactical mobilization strategies (Tillery 2019). The Black Lives Matter movement emphasizes its Black feminist roots and advances a queer politics (Carruthers 2018). Thus, scholars have tested the impact of intersectional messaging strategies, or strategies that emphasize marginal identities, finding that they can be demobilizing for those who do not possess a multiply marginalized identity (Bonilla and Tillery 2020).[11] This is consistent with findings that Black Americans express less support for some of the most marginal members of the Black community, particularly Black undocumented immigrants and Black LGBTQ people (Bunyasi-Lopez and Smith 2019). In addition, studies find that when white people deliver messages in support of Black Lives Matter, they can increase white peoples' support for the movement (Lane et al. 2018).

Missing from framing studies of the Black Lives Matter movement are assessments of the movement's core frames concerning police violence. This study will consist of an exploration of

[11] In this experiment, Bonilla and Tillery varied a BLM frame where they explained the movement's advocacy via feminism, LGBTQ advocacy, and Black nationalism.

how and whether police reform and police abolition frames elicit support and mobilization from a potentially empathetic audience. Recent public opinion polls have found that police reform is a very popular solution to police violence, across race and party. According to Gallup, in the wake of the George Floyd protests, a majority of Americans (58%) agreed that policing needs major changes, supporting reforms like "promoting community based alternatives such as violence intervention" (82%) and "Changing management practices so officer abuses are punished" (96%). Though police reforms are widely popular, they are often met with resistance from police departments (Skogan 2008; Sykes 1985). Skogan (2008) writes that "The public must understand how the investment they have in policing will be enhanced, and not threatened, by reform," as reform efforts often call for more cooperation and collaboration with police departments (23). This also points to the fact the reform often means pouring more public funds into police departments for additional training and equipment.

From the same Gallup 2020 poll that found broad support for police reform, little support was found for abolition: just 15% of Americans overall support abolishing police departments, including 22% of African Americans, 27% of Asian Americans, 20% of Hispanic Americans and 12% of white Americans. Police and prison abolition has been a part of the political imagination of activists for decades; yet, even within Black Lives Matter Movement organizations there was a *coming to* abolition over time and the BLM protests after the murder of George Floyd provided the national stage for the refrain "Defund the police" to reach a wider audience than ever before.

**Theory and Hypotheses**

The Black Lives Matter movement is making a major statement about police violence: that it is an entrenched, structural problem in need of radical solutions rather than just a one off

instance of violence that should be rectified. In addition, the Movement advances the values of Black liberation and resistance to white supremacy. This leads me to the research questions: How do movement adherents respond to BLM prognostic frames, police reform and police abolition? Second, are movement frames that emphasize specific problems (diagnostic frames) more effective mobilizers than those that advance the movement's transformative values and ideology (motivational frames)? This chapter considers which movement frames—anti-Black police violence (diagnostic) or Black liberation (motivational)— is most useful in mobilizing support amongst movement adherents, or those most likely to be mobilized by a movement. Messaging might utilize both strategies, but questions remain about which strategy is most effective at prompting public support.

Drawing from a survey of Community Change Action activists and supporters, I begin with an analysis of respondents' support for police reform versus abolition of police, assessing how support is distributed demographically and by type of organizations that respondents are affiliated with. Because abolition is a more ideological and radical prognostic frame, I hypothesize that, for these individuals, abolition will be less popular than reform.

*H1: Respondents will express more support for police reform than abolition.*

As for demographics, I expect that Black respondents will support abolitionist efforts at higher rates than respondents of other racial groups, since they are the core constituents of the Black Lives Matter Movement.

*H2: Black respondents will express the most support for police abolition.*

I then follow this with an experiment testing which frames are more successful at motivating support. Those with whom the motivational frames resonate may be more inclined to take radical

steps to accomplish a movement's goals, since they adhere to a movement's values and "value violation plays a key role in the ideological path to collective action" (van Steklenberg et al. 2009, 818).

*H3: Motivational frames will prompt support for more radical solutions against police violence, like police abolition, than diagnostic frames.*

On the other hand, research shows that, among the public, there is less popular support for extreme protest actions (Feinberg et al. 2020) and these can reduce identification with movement. Adherents (broadly) may want to solve the core problems of a movement, but its ideology and transformative solutions may not resonate.

*Hypothesis 4: Diagnostic frames will prompt more support for reformist solutions than motivational frames.*

**Research Design**

To field this experiment, I collaborated with Gilbert Nuñez, PhD, the Electoral Data Manager for Community Change Action (CCA).[12] CCA is a c4 organization with a mission to build the power and capacity of low-income people, especially low-income people of color, to change the policies and institutions that impact their lives through electoral work. CCA works with partner organizations in communities around the country to create the conditions in which everyone can thrive. Utilizing Qualtrics Survey Software, we conducted a pre- and post-election survey of CCA's 2020 Impactive (previously, Outvote) mobilization campaigns. Impactive is a mobilization application through which individuals can send mass text messages to their friends

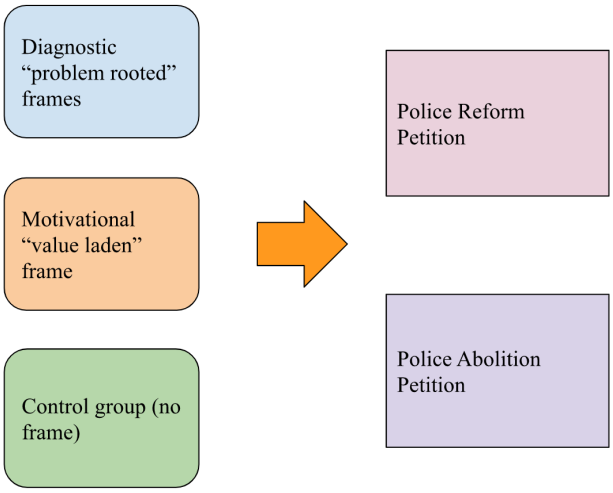
[12] Electorally, CCA helps engage people who are traditionally overlooked by campaigns: people of color, women, youth, and other "low-propensity" voters. In 2020, CCA worked closely with partners across the country (but particularly in Arizona, Colorado, Florida, Georgia, Michigan, Minnesota, Nevada, Ohio, and Wisconsin) to help deliver candidate and ballot measure wins up and down the ballot with particular investments in relational organizing work.

and families. Through the Community Change Power Relational Organizing Project, CCA and CCA affiliated organizations recruited thousands of individuals across the country to the Impactive application to mobilize their friends and family around the 2020 election. My survey experiment was conducted in partnership with the project's relational organizing survey of recruited Impactive users. This partnership was sponsored with a grant from the Center on Democracy and Organizing and the University of California Berkeley and the PowerPAC Foundation.

The pre-election survey contained questions about political efficacy and participation, the framing experiment, and demographic information. The post-election survey simply re-measured efficacy and participation after the election to detect any shifts in attitudes over time. I am only including results from the pre-election survey in this chapter. The pre-election survey was distributed in two waves (on October 9 and 16) to 10,342 individual email addresses, yielding 433 complete responses and 255 partial responses, a response rate of about 6%.[13] The pre-election survey was in the field from Oct 9- 26, 2020. Respondents were sent an initial email inviting them to take the survey and a reminder on October 21st.

[13] This low response rate could be due to individuals forgetting that they had signed up for Impactive, signing up for Impactive through a CCA partner organization and not recognizing it as a part of the CCA umbrella, or deletion of an email from an unfamiliar address.

**Figure 5.1 Experimental Research Design**




After agreeing to the informed consent form, respondents first answered questions intended to measure their sense of political efficacy and their participation in relational organizing. Respondents were then randomly and equally assigned to one of three groups via Qualtrics. These conditions are also balanced across covariates. The first group (Group 1, N= 149) was presented with the diagnostic frame, with a statistic on police violence in 2019.[14] They were then asked the extent to which they agreed that police violence was a major problem in the United States, from "Strongly disagree," "Somewhat disagree," "Somewhat agree," to "Strongly agree."

> "In the United States, police killed 1,099 people in 2019. African Americans represented 25% of those killed despite being only 13% of the US population.
>
> Do you agree that police violence against African Americans is a big problem in the United States?"

[14]Jones, Alexi and Wendy Sawyer. "Not just "a few bad apples": U.S. police kill civilians at much higher rates than other countries." Prison Policy Initiative. <https://www.prisonpolicy.org/blog/2020/06/05/policekillings/>.

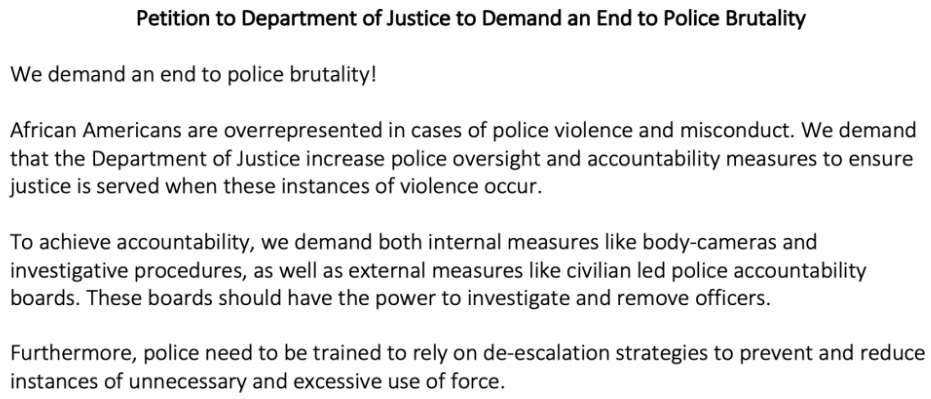
This statement taps into police violence as a core issue, disproportionately felt by Black Americans. This treatment attempts to evoke how people think about police violence as a pressing problem to be addressed.

Group 2 (N=147) was presented with the motivational, values rooted frame, a sentence gleaned from the BLM website. Respondents could answer that they "Strongly disagree," "Somewhat disagree," "Somewhat agree," or "Strongly agree" that the statement matches their values.

> "Here is a statement from an anti-police violence organization. *"We work to end state sanctioned violence, to liberate Black people, and end white supremacy."*
>
> Do you agree that this statement matches your values?"

This statement is much more ideological than the first. Rather than naming the specifics of police violence, that is, the ongoing and disproportionate use of force against Black people, this statement links the fight against police violence to a state issue, names Black people in need of liberation and rejects white supremacy specifically. Then, the statement asks respondents whether it speaks to their own values, or whether they adhere to such ideas and language. Group 3 (N=146), a control group, was not presented with a police violence frame. Groups 1, 2, and 3 were asked if they would like to add their names to two petitions to the Justice Department. One was a police reform petition.

**Figure 5.2 Reformist Petition.**



Petition to Department of Justice to Demand an End to Police Brutality

We demand an end to police brutality!

African Americans are overrepresented in cases of police violence and misconduct. We demand that the Department of Justice increase police oversight and accountability measures to ensure justice is served when these instances of violence occur.

To achieve accountability, we demand both internal measures like body-cameras and investigative procedures, as well as external measures like civilian led police accountability boards. These boards should have the power to investigate and remove officers.

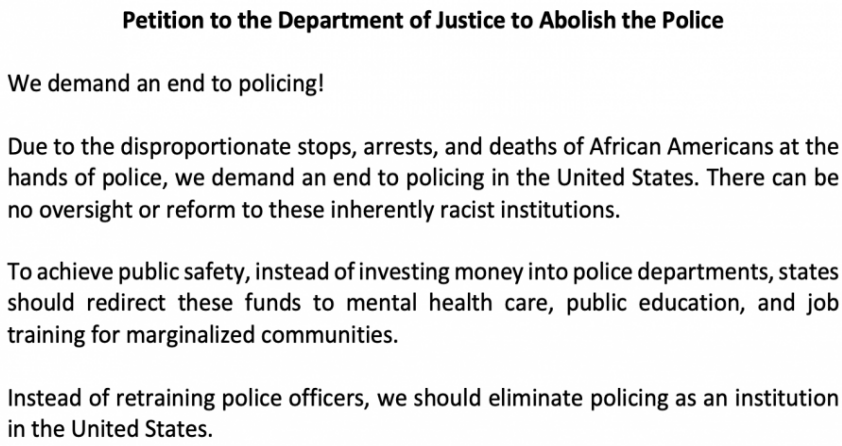
Furthermore, police need to be trained to rely on de-escalation strategies to prevent and reduce instances of unnecessary and excessive use of force.

This petition advocates for solutions rooted in accountability and power over the police, like body cameras and civilian-led accountability boards. Fundamentally, this petition demands a reformist approach to policing: rather than doing away with the institution, this petition calls for doing away with the insular nature of the policing process and training to call attention and correct for misuse of force. The movement for "community control" emanates from the Black Power Movement wherein some sectors emphasized the need for autonomy and Black "economic, educational, and political" power (Van Deburg 1992, 4-5, 112). This solution has been extended to include police by organizations like Chicago Alliance Against Racist and Political Repression, which fights for a Civilian Police Accountability Council in Chicago (Chapman 2019).[15] Campaign Zero, an organization formed in the wake of the Ferguson Uprisings in 2014, foregrounds police reforms and oversight as strategies to end and reduce police violence.[16]

[15] "Stop Police Crimes - Enact CPAC for Community Control." Chicago Alliance Against Racist and Political Repression. <https://www.caarpr.org/stop-police-crimes>.
[16] "Community Oversight." Join Campaign Zero. <https://www.joincampaignzero.org/solutions#oversight>.

The second petition to address the problem of police violence called for police abolition:

**Figure 5.3 Abolitionist Petition.**



**Petition to the Department of Justice to Abolish the Police**

We demand an end to policing!

Due to the disproportionate stops, arrests, and deaths of African Americans at the hands of police, we demand an end to policing in the United States. There can be no oversight or reform to these inherently racist institutions.

To achieve public safety, instead of investing money into police departments, states should redirect these funds to mental health care, public education, and job training for marginalized communities.

Instead of retraining police officers, we should eliminate policing as an institution in the United States.

This petition poses a bold solution, an appeal to abolish the police as a result of inherent, systemic racism ingrained and inextricable from the police as an institution. The petition calls attention to overrepresentation of Black Americans in stops, arrests, and deaths at the hands of police. The petition then calls for a redirection of public funds into other types of care and safety, including mental health, public education, and job training for those on the margins. Finally, it rejects attempts to "retrain" officers and calls for the elimination of policing altogether. This petition draws upon sentiments from anti-carceral and abolitionist organizers who argue that public safety is a broader endeavor that should be pursued outside of the carceral system. These activists and advocates call for "non-reformist reforms" which reduce the power, authority, scope, and funding of police and prisons.[17] Police abolition, then, calls for something *other than,* a reorientation to how we understand public safety and a holistic approach to dealing with harm. This demand, of course, is a tall order.

[17]"Reformist Reforms vs. abolitionist Steps in Policing." Critical Resistance. <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/59ead8f9692ebee25b72f17f/t/5b65cd58758d46d34254f22c/1533398363539/CR_NoCops_reform_vs_abolition_CRside.pdf>.

After the experiment, each respondent was asked if they had participated in BLM protests since the killing of George Floyd in May 2020,[18]demographic questions about their ethnicity, race, age, gender, education, income and who they planned to vote for in the 2020 election. The survey was offered in English and Spanish (5 responses were in Spanish) and respondents were promised to be entered into a drawing to win a $20 Target gift card if they completed the survey. Respondents were debriefed at the end of the survey, informed that the petitions were not real but to contact the researchers if they wanted more information about participating in political activism.

**Demographics and Distributions**

This sample is largely made up of women, with a slight overrepresentation of people of color compared to the general population, particularly Black Americans. By race, 16% of respondents identify as Black (N=65), 58% white (N=235), 6% Asian/South Asian/ Pacific Islander (N=26), and 18% (N=80) of all respondents are Hispanic.[19] The sample is majority female, at 78% (N=325), and 22% male (92).[20] Respondents skew slightly younger, with 50% of respondents 35 or younger: 23% are between 18-25, 27% between 26-35, 15% are 36-45, 10%

[18] On May 25, 2020, George Floyd, a black man, was killed by Minneapolis police officers after allegedly using a counterfeit $20 bill. Since the death of George Floyd, Black Lives Matter protests, marches, and uprisings have occurred around the nation.
Have you attended a Black Lives Matter protest since the killing of George Floyd on May 25th of this year? 1) Yes 0) No

[19] These are Non-Hispanic Black, White, and Asian respondents. The total sample also included 11 American Indian/ Native respondents, 30 respondents from two or more races, and 35 "Others." When asked to specify, "Others" put: Middle Eastern/ Iranian American/ Arab (4), Ashkenazi Jewish/ Jewish (2), 13 Hispanic/Latinx/ Brown/ White & Hispanic (some refusing to simply couple the"white" racial category and the Hispanic "ethnic" category), white/ indigenous (1) and white/ First Nations (1), Mestiza (1), Greek (1), and three refused "race" as a category.

[20] 15 respondents shared that they were nonbinary and 2 that they were transgender. Three selected "other" writing "I use she/they," that they were "Gender fluid," and another wrote " Male and female are sexes. Gender is represented as men and women. I am a woman."

are 56-65, and 12% are 65 and older. This makes sense as our pool of respondents is gleaned from a texting app campaign. Respondents are highly educated: 12% have professional or doctorate degrees, 26% have a master's degree, 35% of respondents are college graduates, 21% have some college education, 4% have a high school diploma, less than 2% have less than a high school diploma. About 38% of respondents are making less than $50,000 per year, 35% between $50,000 and $99,999, and 26% $100k or more. Respondents were widely distributed across a number of organizations, a list of which is included in Appendix C. Most responses were from community organization partners in Michigan (65), Colorado (44), Ohio (28), Maine (25), and from Community Change Action (46) members.[21] These were the areas and activists targeted by CCA for 2020 electoral mobilization. About 43% of respondents did not specify an affiliation with an organization but had opted-in to the texting campaign.

Respondents were highly politically efficacious, with 91% strongly or somewhat agreeing that they have the skills to participate in politics in their community. Fifty-nine percent of respondents reported participating in a BLM protest since the killing of George Floyd, which makes sense as this is an activated group of respondents and the summer mobilizations were widespread. In addition, 90% of respondents said they planned to vote for Joe Biden and about 4% said they planned to vote for someone else. Only 1 person said they planned to vote for Donald Trump. Two percent said they do not plan to vote, and 3% said they did not know what they would do. Given these demographics, this sample is not generalizable to the broader

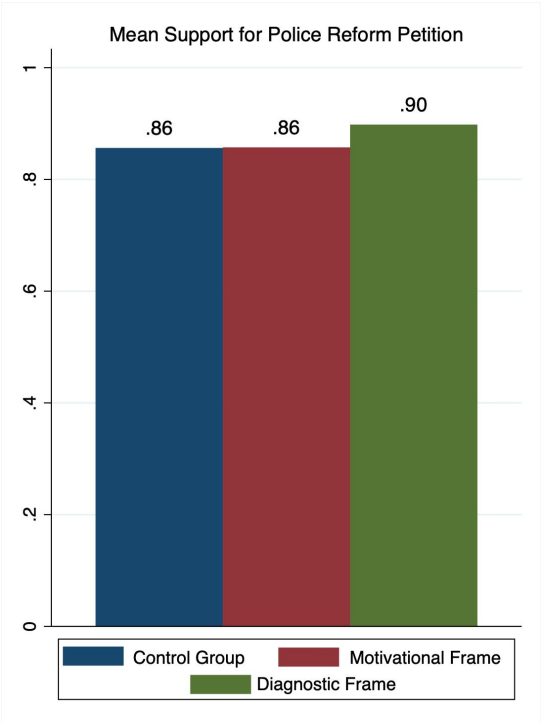
[21] I had also shared our plans to field the survey to Community Change members and partners on a zoom call on October 2nd, entitled "Community Change Power- Sharing Lessons and Brainstorming Session." Community Change Action managers encouraged members on this call to expect the survey in their emails and encourage their fellow organizers to take the survey.

population but can help us understand how politically active, Democratic voters affiliated with progressive mobilization might respond to police violence frames.

***Dependent Variables***

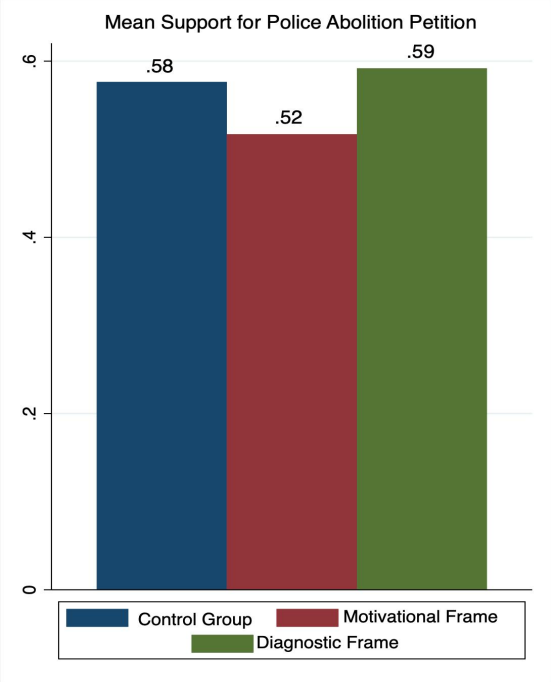
The dependent variables in this study include agreeing to add one's name to a petition to the Justice Department for police reform or police abolition. Eighty-seven percent of all respondents, regardless of treatment group, agreed to add their name to the reformist petition and 56% of all respondents agreed to sign their name to the abolitionist petition. Around 51% of all respondents signed both the reformist and abolitionist petitions. Thirty-six percent of respondents agreed to the reform petition but not the abolitionist petition and 5% agreed to abolition but not reform.

**Figure 5.4 Mean Support for Reformist Petition**




As for the experiment, very slight differences emerge between the treatment and control groups. Eighty-six percent of respondents in *both* the control and motivational frame groups supported the police reform petition (Figure 5.4, Total N=441), suggesting no treatment effect from this frame. Slightly more respondents that received the diagnostic frame were willing to add their name to the police reform petition, at 90%.

**Figure 5.5 Mean Support for Abolitionist Petition**




In addition, a majority of respondents supported the abolitionist petition and these were slightly different depending upon the frame received. Fifty-eight percent of the control group supported the abolitionist petition, as did 59% of the diagnostic frame group. Fifty-two percent of the motivational frame subset, however, supported the abolitionist petition (Figure 5.5, Total N=439). By race and gender, support for reform is relatively stable: 88% of white (N=234), 92% of Black (N=65), 83% of Hispanic (N=80) and 85% of Asian (N=26) respondents agree to sign the reformist petition. Eighty-four percent of men (92) and 89% of women (324) support the reformist petition. As for abolition, important differences emerge across race: white respondents are split relatively evenly for support and opposition with 49% of white respondents supporting the abolitionist petition and 51% refusing. The majority support for the abolitionist petition, then, is carried forth by people of color: 63% of African Americans, 65% of Hispanics, and 65% of Asian American respondents agree to sign the abolitionist petition. Women are slightly more supportive (as in the case of reform), with 57% of women agreeing to sign the abolitionist petition compared to 52% of men.

**Figure 5.6 Support for Reformist Petition by Race**

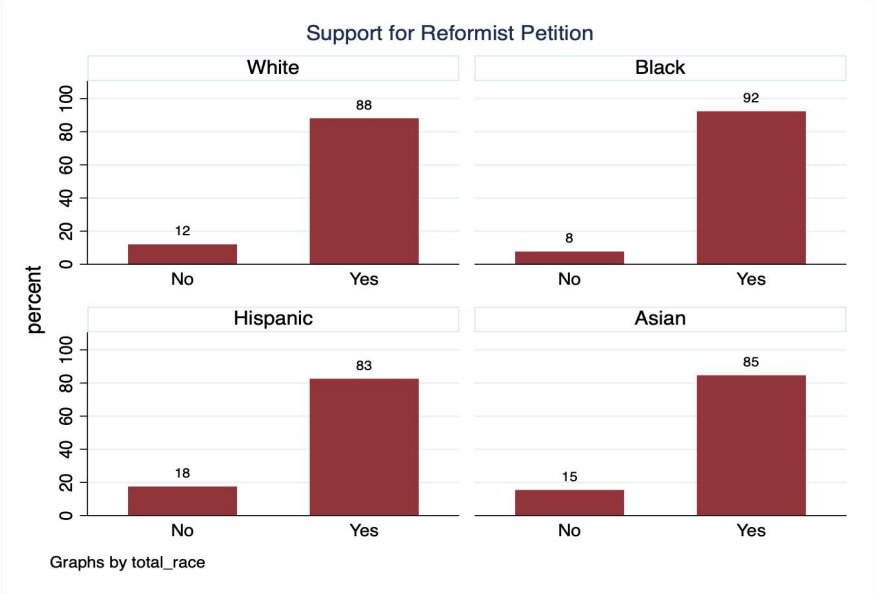
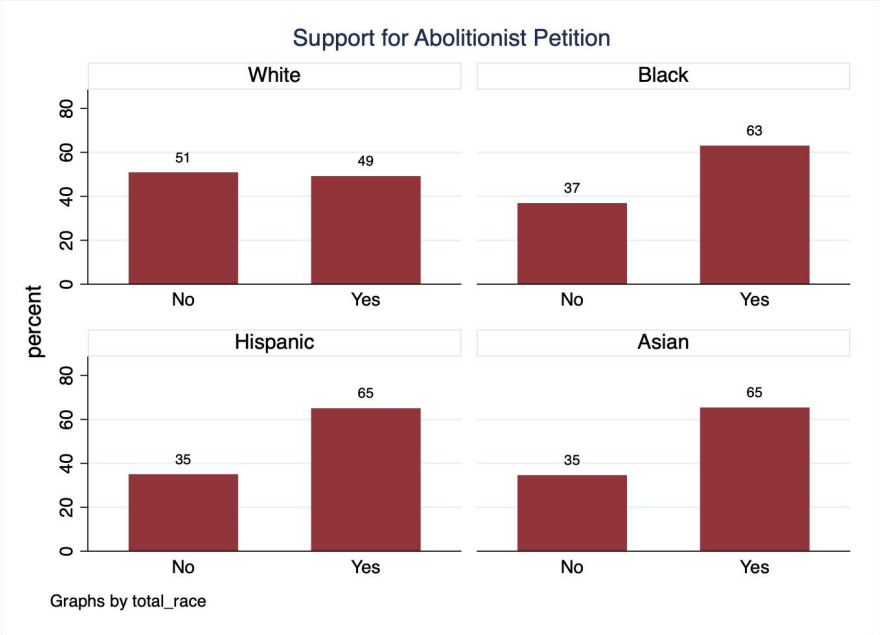



**Figure 5.7 Support for Abolitionist Petition By Race**



***Independent Variables***

The independent variables of interest in this study include racial background, type of organization, gender identity, feelings of internal efficacy, age, education, income, and whether one reports having participated in a protest for George Floyd, of which 59% said they had attended a Floyd protest. I also control for whether a respondent reported being involved in an "Identity Organization;" that is, an organization that advocates around a politicized identity like race or ethnicity, ability, gender, and/or immigration status. I am interested in two treatments. First is the diagnostic frame explaining the rate of police violence against Black Americans and the following question "Do you agree that police violence against African Americans is a big problem?" Ninety-three percent of diagnostic frame respondents strongly agreed that police violence against African Americans is a big problem. Second is the motivational frame treatment, measured by asking respondents if they agree that the statement "We work to end state sanctioned violence, to liberate Black people, and end white supremacy," matches their values. Eighty-two percent of the treated respondents strongly agreed that this statement matches their values.

**Data Analysis**

*Support for Reform and Abolition Across Demographics*

I utilize ordinary least squares models with robust standard errors to assess support for the reformist and abolitionist petitions (Table 5.1 in Appendix C). Though the dependent variables are binary, by using OLS we can interpret the coefficients as percent changes in mean agreement to sign the petitions.[22] Model 1 (N=381) assesses respondent support for the reformist

[22] I also assessed logistic regression models as a robustness check.

petition across demographics. In Model 1, I find very little variation across demographic groups in support of the reformist petition. There are no statistically significant variables in this model, suggesting support is widespread across respondents for police reform. As for Model 2 (N=381), I find that both age and having participated in a BLM protest since the death of George Floyd influences support for the abolitionist petition. As respondents increase in age, they are less supportive of the abolitionist petition by -.10 points ($p<.001$). This indicates that younger respondents are driving support for the abolitionist petition. Respondents who say they have attended a BLM protest increase support for the abolitionist petition by .15 points ($p<.01$). It is unclear whether respondents supported abolition before or after attending the BLM protests, but we can conclude that having attended them correlates with support for the abolitionist petition.

*Continued Analysis of Abolition Support by Demographics*

I conducted additional assessments of support for the abolitionist petition across demographic groups (Table 5.2 in Appendix C). In Model 3 and Model 4, I break respondents out by gender. The sample skews heavily towards women, so the male model has less power with 85 respondents. Even so, in Model 3, it is evident that age is the most important factor differentiating male support for the abolitionist petition, with older men supporting abolition less by -.11 ($p<.001$). In Model 4, age is also a significant factor for women, with older women supporting the abolition petition less by -.10 ($p<.001$). In addition, having attended a BLM protest increases support for the abolitionist petition among women by .16 ($p<.01$).

Across racial groups (Models 5, 6 & 7), I find that age is the only statistically significant factor differentiating group support for the abolitionist petition. Again, this sample is predominantly white, rendering the Black and Hispanic models less powerful. Yet, as age is a

consistent finding we can glean that it is a meaningful difference in respondents' support for abolition. Older white respondents decrease support for the abolitionist petition by -.11 ($p<.001$), older Black respondents by -.13 ($p<.01$), and older Hispanic respondents by -.09 ($p<.05$).

*Experimental T-Tests*

I conducted four t-tests to assess the impact of the diagnostic vs. motivational frames in eliciting respondent support for the reformist and abolitionist petitions. I do not find evidence that the differences in treatment are very different from receiving no treatment at all. Thus, it is not evident from this dataset that receiving more problem centered, diagnostic frames or more ideological motivational frames elicits more or less support for either petition. Substantively, it seems that the diagnostic treatment increases support for both the reformist and abolitionist petitions by about 4 points (Table 5.3 & Table 5.5 in Appendix C). On the other hand, the motivational frame seems to decrease support for the abolitionist petition (Table 5.6), by about 7 points.

*Experiment by Gender*

Though the groups are balanced across the covariates, I test the differences in treatment effects across gender using OLS regression models to understand how the treatments might impact demographics within this sample differently (Table 5.7). I focus on abolition, as that is where I am likely to find variation, since support for the reformist petition revealed little variation. I do not find, however, that either the diagnostic or motivational frames significantly impact men or women's support for the abolitionist petition. I conducted an additional t-test and did not find that men are significantly less likely to support abolition overall, though substantively, they support abolition at about 5 percentage points less than women (mean 52%,

whereas women are at 57%). I do find in these models, however, that age is once again a significant factor, reducing men and women's support for the abolitionist petition by -.11 ($p<.001$) and -.10 ($p<.001$), respectively. Once again, attending a BLM protest in support of George Floyd increases support for the abolitionist petition by .16 ($p<.01$) points for women.

**Description of Reform and Abolition Support Across Organizations**

In this section, I consider support for the reformist and abolitionist petitions across organizations. The respondents from these organizations are not a representative sample, but they may offer ground to build coalitions around anti-police violence and abolitionist work. Of those who responded to the reformist petition question, about 178 had signed up for the texting campaign and were unaffiliated with an organization, while 263 were affiliated with Community Change Action or its partner organizations. These organizations varied, including state and local grassroots organizations and networks like the Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights Los Angeles Action, the Mothering Justice Action Fund, and Comunidades Unidas. These organizations were linked with Community Change Action to strengthen their mobilization efforts around the fall 2020 election, wherein activists were working to elect Democratic Presidential nominee Joe Biden and remove President Trump from office. This survey provides the chance to understand how the wider progressive community thinks about police reform and abolition. I have divided the organizations into 3 groups by focus area, including 1) Voter Mobilization and Advocacy Organizations (162 responses), 2) Issue Focused Organizations and Progressive Networks (39 responses), and 3) Identity Focused Organizations (With Various Causes) (62 responses).

Each group of organizations expressed high support for the reformist petition, with each group expressing about the same amount of support, with Identity Focused organizations at 85%, then Issue Focused Orgs and Progressive Networks at 85%, and Voter Mobilization slightly higher at 86%. Respondents from identity focused organizations express the most support for the abolitionist (69%) petition. This includes members from Latinx and Korean organizations advocating for immigrant communities, like Casa in Action or National Korean American Service & Education Consortium, as well as Black liberation organizations like BlackRoots Alliance. These bases of support show that issues of police violence and abolition could be an opportunity for cross-racial solidarity building. Next are Voter Mobilization (56% support) and Issue Focused Orgs and Progressive Networks (46%). This could suggest that abolitionists have inroads to make with faith based organizations and networks, especially, who are highly supportive of reform but may need to learn more about abolition as a transformative solution. The small majority of support, however, among voter mobilization groups is a promising sign that abolition has made an impact among those in these electorally focused groups.

**Discussion**

This chapter offers a depiction of a moment in time in the Black Lives Matter movement, just after protests across the country demanded something different: a response beyond simple reform and a revolutionary demand to "defund the police." As prior chapters have shown, abolition as a concept, a goal, and a strategy had been percolating within Black movement for years prior to this moment of possibility at the death of George Floyd. Floyd's murder had arrived at a moment of pronounced government neglect amidst the COVID-19 crisis where the broader public could see that our institutions for public safety had failed and would continue to

do so without intervention. This is a transformative moment in BLM as an Alienated Activist movement.

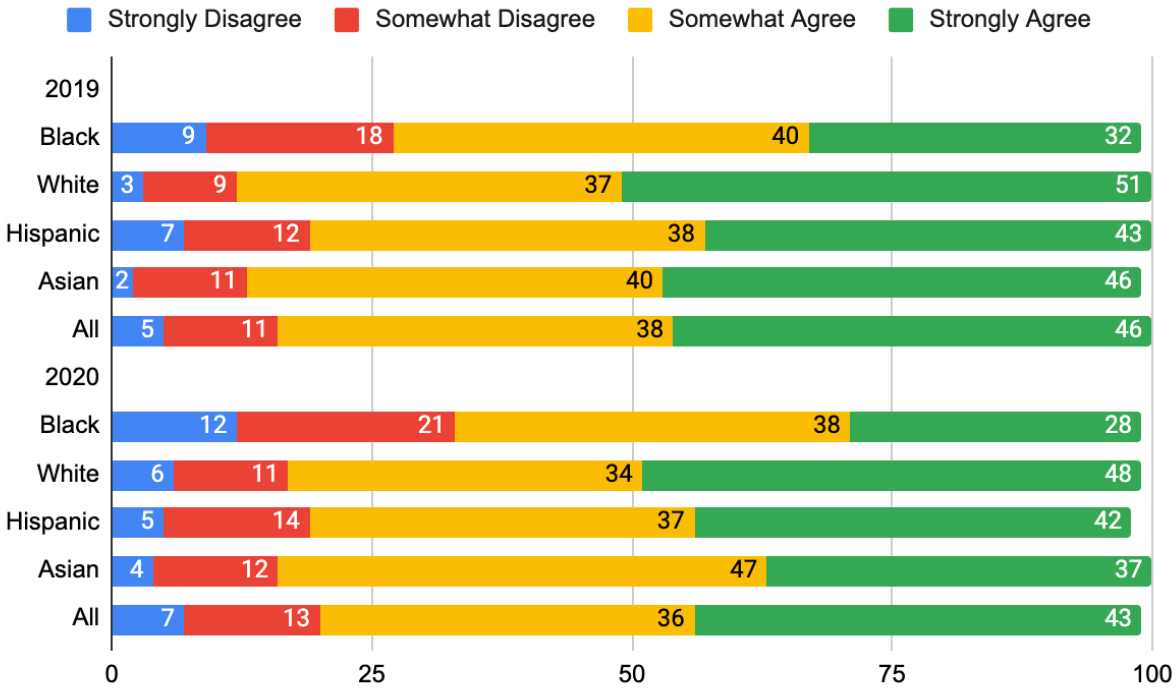
In a survey of progressive activists in the months following the protests, I found a broad base of support for both the reformist petition and the abolitionist petitions, though there is more support for reform, affirming Hypothesis 1. There is little variation in willingness to sign a police reform petition, suggesting that this is a policy widely supported among the respondents and progressives in general. Progressives and progressive organizers see a problem in policing as usual and concede that reform is one solution to the problem of police violence. As for the abolitionist petition, I consistently find that older respondents are more opposed, while respondents who say they attended a BLM protest after the death of George Floyd are more likely to support the petition. Thus, we can conclude that abolition carries more purchase with younger respondents, across both race and gender. Though abolition has a long history and many more recent antecedents in pro-Black advocacy and organizing, particularly in the anti-mass incarceration movements, it is clear that older generations, even among progressives, are less comfortable with the idea of abolishing the police altogether. These findings imply that older people are important audiences for police abolitionists to spend time educating and informing about the strategy of police abolition and what it means for the future of safety and Black liberation.

This is not to say that young people outside of this progressive sample necessarily believe in abolishing the police. According to a 2019 GenForward Survey, a majority of young adults

somewhat or strongly agree that police are necessary for safe communities.[23] A 2020 GenForward survey asks the same question, after the summer of protests for George Floyd. While in the previous year in July 2019 (N=3427), 16% of all young adults strongly or somewhat disagreed that police are necessary for safe communities, 20% somewhat or strongly disagreed by August 2020 (N=3115). At a 4% increase, this is not a large change, but it suggests that over the year more young people began to decouple policing and safety. We could potentially point to the BLM protests in the wake of the murder of George Floyd as an important influence on this shift in thinking. Though this study cannot directly credit the Floyd protests with increasing support for police abolition, I do consistently find that saying one attended protests increases support for the abolition petition, and this is especially important for women in the sample. Furthermore, I do not find that Black respondents are significantly more likely to support the abolitionist petition than other racial groups, suggesting that I should reject Hypothesis 2. However, this finding should be further studied with larger samples of Black progressives. These preliminary findings suggest that Black Americans and *progressive* Black Americans, may need further political education and discussion about how police abolition might work, even as young Black radicals lead this work in the United States. I do find that age makes a difference amongst Black people, suggesting that younger Black Americans progressives are more supportive of police and prison abolition than older Black progressives.

[23] "Search the Data." GenForward Survey. <https://genforwardsurvey.com/survey-search/?query=police+are+necessary&survey=75&question=Q27>.

**Figure 5.8 GenForward 2019 & 2020 Surveys: Are Police Necessary for Safe Communities?**




As for the experimental findings, it is not clear that diagnostic or motivational frames impact willingness to sign either petition. An important question remains, however, concerning gender. The men in the study express slightly less substantive support for both the reformist and abolitionist petitions than women. In their study of BLM framing, Bonilla and Tillery (2020) find that Black men are less responsive to LGBTQ and feminist framing of the Black Lives Matter movement. Though the frames I tested were not rooted in identity framing, policing is often a masculinized occupation, and though men are at risk the most from the carceral system, additional studies might consider the intertwined nature of masculinity and policing and how this influences their support or opposition towards abolition. Further work should pursue how both gendered and ideological frames of policing impact men's support for abolition; in any case, I

must reject Hypothesis 3 and open ground for future studies. I must also reject Hypothesis 4, since the diagnostic frame did not motivate differential support for reform or abolition.

**Conclusion**

This study opens an important path to understanding how those in coalition with the BLM mass movement feel about the monumental task of addressing police violence. As the movement enters its 8th year of existence, more radical solutions have come forth not only to address police violence against Black people, but to promote flourishing, safety, and thriving of those who are marginalized. The contrast between incorporation or transformation runs deep within the movement, and questions of police reform and/ or abolition is a key site for this fight. Scholars should take seriously activists' calls to defund police and take part in imagining and considering what that vision entails. Future research on policing and Black movement should ensure that it is divested from carceral logics, wherein policing is necessarily a part of the proposed solution (Davies, Jackson, Streeter, forthcoming). Additional work should also consider how prognostic frames resonate beyond progressives, and whether diagnostic or motivational frames of police violence are more effective at eliciting support for police reform and abolition. We can recognize and assess the ways that the BLM movement is in a moment of transition, as activists are calling for their boldest solutions and acting to bring them to fruition.

*"They dreamed dreams that no one knew—not even themselves, in any coherent fashion—and saw visions no one could understand."*- Alice Walker, "In Search of Our Mother's Gardens"[1]

## Chapter Discussion and Conclusion

This dissertation has produced several important conclusions and contributions. I first demonstrate Black Lives Matter's lineage in Black politics, a crisis in legitimation in response to the nationalization of Black politics and the persistence of Black death. I draw upon the alienation from national Black politics and the repetition of Black death to theorize "Alienated Activism," a social movement type occurring in the early 2010s in response to worldwide legitimation crises and social inequality, including Occupy and the Arab Spring. I delineate the features of BLM as an Alienated Activist movement in the following empirical chapters. I first consider the role of identity and anti-Blackness in motivating and dampening movement support nationally, across generations, and racial groups. Second, I re-center activism and its practices as important forms of political behavior, especially as they occur outside of political institutions and in activist communities. I also provide in this chapter a case study of Chicago racial justice activism. Lastly, I demonstrate the division and progress concerning support for police reform and police abolition in a national survey of progressives. In this final chapter, I will focus on the main themes of the dissertation, discussing the implications of these findings and contributions for political science and social movement studies, as well as how they contribute to thought and the historical record of the Black Lives Matter movement. I will conclude this chapter with suggestions for future research.

[1] Walker, Alice. 1984. *In search of our mothers' gardens: womanist prose*. San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.

***Alienated Activism: A Social Movement Theory***

The theory of Alienated Activism makes two important contributions. First, I contribute to the social movements literature by characterizing BLM, Occupy Wall Street, and the Arab Spring as mass movements in response to crises in neoliberalism and legitimation. I provide a new paradigm through which to understand and characterize early 2010 movements and the resulting practices and activism associated with them. Alienated Activism brings in Black Lives Matter, in particular, as a contemporary movement with Occupy and the Arab Spring, levying structural critiques at regimes enabling deep economic, social, and political inequality, performing dramatic uprisings and occupations, and mobilizing the public via social media. Alienated activism situates BLM, which is often left out of early 2010s social movement analysis, within the same paradigm as these movements, providing the character and nature of Black politics and movement and demonstrating its influence alongside other uprisings.

Second, I break down how *alienation* from, rather than pushing for incorporation into, political institutions is an important grounding motivator for political activism. BLM, for example, mobilizes politicized identities, non-institutional political activism, and fights for transformative political possibilities, in particular, police and prison abolition. I assert that Alienated Activist movement practices that mobilize politicized, marginal identities make them an offshoot of New Social Movements, but also politically distinct in that they levy structural critiques of political systems. I identify political education, occuring online and offline, as an important mechanism in these movements, highlighting the more expansive opportunities for learning about systemic, institutional failures and entering into movements. Furthermore, the Alienated Activist paradigm attends deeply to practices of these movements external to political

institutions, though the extent to which they engage with institutions can answer to their survival and demise, their possibilities to achieve movement "wins," support, and continuity.

As Alienated Activist movements advance transformative possibilities, do or can they strategically engage with existing political institutions? This ability, as well as the emergence of new political crises, from the COVID-19 crises to ongoing crises in Black death, may determine the longevity of Alienated Activist movements. Occupy, for example, was dampened by its apolitical stance, or its refusal to participate in institutional politics, as well as its inability to reach the broader public (Ehrenberg 2017). The Arab Spring was largely put down by authoritarian governments, with the Tunisian uprising being the only one to successfully transition to democracy (El-Haddad 2020). Black Lives Matter has continued due to, first, the steady repetition of Black death at the hands of police, as well as its injection into the political sphere where it is an important issue for politicians to attend to and talk about.

***Identity and Movements***

This study has demonstrated the role in identity in motivating public support for and mobilizing individuals in social movements, particularly BLM. How can we understand the role of identity in BLM? This study offers three main conclusions: first, public support for BLM is motivated by racial group membership, attitudes towards Black Americans, gender and political party (with largely Democratic support and Republican opposition). Anti-Black affect drives cross racial support or opposition for BLM. Adherence to the movement is largely driven by people of color, particularly Black Americans. Within racial groups, women are consistently stronger supporters of the movement than men. This distribution of support locates the BLM movement's adherents and constituents, or, those who support and may benefit from the success

of the BLM agenda. These are the publics the movement speaks for and those who will most likely be active participants and movement activists. Furthermore, attitudes regarding police and discrimination *specifically* are important determinants of support and opposition to BLM.

We know from prior literature that identity is a key component of social movement activism, especially New Social Movements (NSMs) (Polletta and Jasper 2001). BLM mobilizes an identity that values those on the margins, especially Black women, queer, and gender non-conforming Americans. Marginal identities and experiences, as we learn in the Alienated Activism chapter, are important grounding mobilizers for individuals, particularly for joining movements that emphasize and value those identities and experiences. These movements are able to speak to and organize around these particular standpoints, rather than pushing them to the side and papering over differences for the sake of unity. Rather, we find that Alienated Activist movements bring marginal identities to the forefront of their movements, not only for the sake of social inclusion but as a larger challenge and critique to the social and economic order.

Common identity does not always indicate unity, however. Some movement adherents and activists across the spectrum, though they may share a racial identity, gender identity, or political party, will not all agree on appropriate solutions or goals of a movement. Some activists in Chicago, for example, felt that police accountability was an important goal, while others emphasized that their work focused on police abolition. Most of the progressive respondents affiliated with Community Change Action were highly supportive of police reform (87%), while fewer supported the prospect of police abolition (56%). These variations in opinion and practice demonstrate that, even within a social movement and within shared politicized identities, various

factions are coming together to solve social problems and there is no guarantee that one solution will be championed by the entire movement.

***Political Behavior Beyond Institutions***

The term "Alienated Activism" suggests that one can be skeptical, alienated from, and divested from current political formations, while also being politically active and participatory. Alienated Activism as a practice suggests that individuals do not need to buy into or believe in the political system in order to be participatory in politics and working to make a better community. In addition, Alienated Activism calls attention to what activists do together, away from institutions, and how they prepare themselves to engage and advocate in their own best interests. Sometimes, this means filling in the gap where the government has failed, like asking those in neglected communities (the *dude on the block that everyone's afraid of*) about the issues that are important to them. Sometimes this means advocating in a dramatic fashion to draw public attention to crises, like blocking the entrance to a luxury store on Michigan Avenue on the busiest shopping day of the year. Excitingly, this means that politics is not just something that happens in relation to institutions, but happens among people, in study groups, in community meetings, and in the streets. Alienated activism locates politics first with individuals and organizations, and then asks, what do they bring to the public? To politicians and institutions?

Political education provides the mechanism moving members of the public from alienated to activists. I find that some individuals seek this education out themselves, on the Internet, on YouTube or social media. Sometimes, this education happens in college classrooms or on campuses, with professors or with student organizers. In any case, at its best, political education places individuals in community with other alienated activists and helps individuals

*collectivize* their fight and place it in a broader historical context. Political education can lead individuals to conceive of creative solutions to persistent social problems.

This work attends to the mobilizing strategies of activists, how they seek to activate members of the public by bridging the movement to the thing that makes them angry, the *spark* that gets them to join in the movement. The political organizing conversation comes to the fore as an important method of bridging activist causes to members of the public, emphasizing the relationship building aspects of movement. I also discuss how activists build relationships with each other in order to sustain their political work, providing a saf(er) space for the expression of marginal identities.

***Transformative Possibilities***

This study attempts to bring "utopia back in" or explore the transformative possibilities of movements like Black Lives Matter (Langman 2013). These movements envision what is possible and orient themselves towards achieving a future that is beyond the scope of the present. For BLM, this includes a world without police or prisons, and, more broadly, a world where Black people can thrive and flourish. What is the use of transformation in social movement politics? Beyond inclusion or seeking out rights, social movements have the opportunity to fundamentally change politics and culture, changing common sense understandings about how things are, or ought to be. The study of social movement politics must look beyond whether movements are "successful" or "unsuccessful," and consider what they *hope to achieve,* asking: How do these larger goals guide social movement politics on a day to day basis? How do these goals change behaviors or guide relationship building in movement? Given, for example, the anti-carceral goals of the BLM mass movement, sectors of the movement advocates for police

and prison abolition, like the Chicago Community Bond Fund, who bond individuals out of jail, resisting notions of "guilt" or "innocence" and reconfiguring how to deal with harm.

Though their visions may be transformative, there is certainly hard work to do to face the everyday challenges and issues facing Black communities. The BLM movement works against the reality of anti-Blackness and cannot ignore everyday problems for dreams of the end of capitalism or the end of police. Activists pursue strategies that gesture towards this world, but are also mindful of the tangible wins achievable along the way. For example, in Chicago, BYP100 must interface with the Chicago City Council in order to end the Chicago Gang Database. Members may desire a new political world and may disagree with city council members who see a value to police and prisons, but in order to achieve the abolishment of the Gang Database, they must engage with power and authority, nonetheless.

The aim for social and political transformation makes Alienated Activist movements distinct from prior NSMs. These identity-driven movements, certainly rooted in visions of a better world, focused on achieving concessions from the state and mobilizing public support for their cause. While BLM also engages in these practices and even appeals to human rights language, the movement is clear about its abolitionist goals and visions. This was not always the case: though some in the movement had espoused a commitment to abolition all along, some advocates, activists, and families sought (and still seek) redress in reforms like body cameras and accountability measures.[2] In addition, as we can see from the Community Change Action survey research results, progressives are supportive of aims to reform the police but many may need to be brought along, educated into, or convinced that police abolition is a worthwhile path to

[2] Sanburn, Josh. 2014. "Ferguson: Police Adopt Body Worn Cameras Around U.S." *Time Magazine.* <https://time.com/3606376/police-cameras-ferguson-evidence/>.

solving police violence. A year since the death of George Floyd, it remains to be seen exactly how the defund movement will accomplish its goals. Some legislation has occurred in some localities that curbs the power of the police, such as in Austin, Texas, while other cities, like New York and Los Angeles invest *more* money into policing, ignoring the movement's demanded strategy.[3]

***Black Lives Matter***

It is currently eight years after the inception of Black Lives Matter, and observers and activists might be tempted to think about where the movement is going, when it will accomplish its goals and finally, *finally,* be done. But it is perhaps not useful to think about social movements in this way. Interestingly for BLM, there is no single recognizable pinnacle of success but multiple areas for resistance and a reimagining of how things are and how they could be. We cannot say how long the rallying cry #BlackLivesMatter will carry cultural and political purchase, or how long this will be an organizing identity and overall strategy carrying forth Black politics. New avenues for Black politics will likely emerge: Black women have been inching closer and closer to political executive offices, including the Presidency, with Vice President Kamala Harris. Yet, what we have learned from this dissertation is that Black Lives Matter has produced a different mode of *doing* Black politics that Black elected officials will have to contend with.

Black Lives Matter's identity appeals are meaningful, in that the movement has become folded and adopted into the Democratic Party, even as affiliated and unaffiliated racial justice

[3] Holder, Sarah, Fola Akinnibi and Christopher Cannon. "'We Have Not Defunded Anything': Big Cities Boost Police Budgets." *Bloomberg News.* <https://www.bloomberg.com/graphics/2020-city-budget-police-defunding/>.

activists levy sharp critiques and even reject the Democratic Party and Democratic Party leadership. Majorities of Democrats support Black Lives Matter and the Party remains the primary established and ideologically acceptable avenue through which this movement may address the state. Some BLM activists have run for office, the most high profile being Cori Bush, an activist from the Ferguson uprisings, who ran and won office in the House of Representatives. [4] We will see how activists that cross over from BLM to the political mainstream fold into institutional environments. Will they face the same constraints as Civil Rights activists when they first went from protest to politics? Or is this a type of *new* new Black politician, unafraid to appeal to Black liberation and social movements? Bush's use of Twitter to perform her politics directly for her constituents suggests new modes for political posturing as a Black elected official, in any case. Moreover, is it possible for Black Lives Matter to avoid co-optation, or, is co-optation desirable in some way to achieve recognition? It does not seem that *co-optation* of movement symbols is very important to BLM and racial justice activists; but what does matter is the extent to which legislative officials heed their demands and move their agendas forward. Though relationships between people on the ground and political representation is fraught, as Black Americans learned with President Barack Obama, the political stakes get higher as the threat of the political right's white grievance politics becomes more overt, as was the case with President Trump who actively mobilized racist and xenophobic tropes against people of color during his campaign and presidency. Despite activists' alienation from the state, the visionary but practical elements of the movement will likely continue to deal with the reality of politics-as-usual and not leave possible avenues for justice and representation unconsidered.

[4] "Biography." *Cori Bush.* <https://bush.house.gov/about>.

What also remains is the reality of Black death. Part of the reason Black Lives Matter emerges and re-emerges into the public sphere is the persistent fact of viral videos and images of police violence. These images will always re-energize and revitalize this fight: Floyd, in fact, mobilized a new generation of young people in the name of Black Lives Matter, as did Trayvon Martin, Michael Brown, Eric Garner, and Sandra Bland at the times of their deaths. This dark cycle will likely continue. Even so, new activists, organizers, and organizations will enter the fight as old ones move on, and it is clear that there will be no return to *silences* around Black death in general given its ubiquity in American life and on social media. The movement will need to continue to push for more attention around violence against Black women and gender-non conforming individuals, however, given patterns of silence around these groups in particular.

As the movement attempts to get its message out, many will continue to critique from the outside about how messages should be *framed* or sold to the wider public to build support among Democrats and progressives, perhaps even try to get movement activists to appeal to Republicans. But it seems to me the movement's espousal of its commitments for visionary and transformative change has the possibility to bring on more people with further political education and advocacy. Since a little over half (56%) of progressives in the "Framing Police Violence" chapter were willing to sign on to the abolitionist petition, it seems that "defunding" and abolition are now a part of political discourse, ideas that have built an understanding in some areas of the public sphere. The movement can embrace its big ideas and be bold in its solutions, as movements have the capacity to *lead* the public with commitment to their fights and dedication to political education.

**Conclusion: Limits of this Dissertation and Areas for Future Research**

In future iterations of this work, it will be important to consider how BLM support has changed over time, since the 2016 ANES and 2019 GenForward surveys. Future studies may track support more broadly, as "support for Black Lives Matter" has begun to show up more consistently on national public opinion surveys. In addition, future case studies of progressive and racial justice activism should include other urban, suburban, and rural sites in order to consider how and if the frameworks of alienated activism carries across localities. Scholars should also consider the BLM *ecosystem* in other cities and states: that is, the collection of organizations and activists fighting for racial justice. Lastly, studies of framing of police reform and abolition might also include "defund" language specifically, and consider how it resonates beyond progressives, across party lines, as well as larger samples across race and gender. A more robust sample would allow stronger claims for this experimental test.

To conclude, the Black Lives Matter movement has heralded a new era of Black politics, a new era of political socialization for Black people and Americans writ large. Millennials and Generation Z know Black politics to include a Black President, but they also know it to include social movement activism, protest, power building via community and social media, mass uprisings and leadership from multiple corners of class, status, gender, and sexuality in the Black community. Though unity or singular forms of representation do not have to guide Black movement, BLM has importantly re-emphasized the importance of political discourse and community among all *kinds* of Black people. As Black politics looks towards the future, Black Americans will continue to search for gardens unknown and will continue to fight for visions unseen.

## Appendix A: Appendix to Chapter 3

### Table 3.1 ANES Regression Table

| | Full Sample | | Black | | White | | Hispanic | | Asian American | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Coef. | SE | Coef | SE | Coef | SE | Coef | SE | Coef | SE |
| Republican | **-7.71*** ** | 1.81 | -2.85 | 13.12 | **-8.53*** ** | 2.11 | 3.22 | 5.44 | 1.42 | 8.12 |
| Democrat | **7.57*** ** | 1.70 | **15.52** ** | 5.85 | **6.41** ** | 2.08 | 5.49 | 4.21 | 9.45 | 9.85 |
| Gender | **5.70*** ** | 1.07 | **7.27*** | 3.10 | **5.75*** ** | 1.21 | 3.32 | 3.53 | 6.79 | 5.87 |
| Income | -0.34 | 0.27 | -0.83 | 0.73 | -0.26 | 0.29 | 0.77 | 0.97 | -1.04 | 1.15 |
| Age | -0.10 | 0.32 | **-3.01*** | 1.14 | .58 | 0.36 | -1.42 | 1.17 | -1.44 | 1.72 |
| Education | **-1.97*** ** | 0.53 | **-3.37*** | -1.68 | **-1.25*** | 0.57 | **-6.23*** ** | 1.90 | -0.07 | 2.48 |
| Favorability towards Police | 0.01 | 0.03 | 0.06 | 0.06 | 0.01 | 0.04 | -0.04 | 0.09 | 0.30 | 0.16 |
| Police Treat White People Better than Black People | **5.14*** ** | 1.32 | -2.10 | 4.47 | **5.72*** ** | 1.49 | 2.92 | 3.86 | 5.44 | 5.74 |
| Asian | **5.44*** | 2.73 | | | | | | | | |
| Black | **17.82*** ** | 2.07 | | | | | | | | |
| Hispanic | **9.30*** ** | 2.09 | | | | | | | | |
| Racial Resentment | **-47.75*** ** | 2.44 | | | **-51.24*** ** | 2.88 | **-48.50*** ** | 6.87 | **-47.31*** ** | 12.16 |
| Linked Fate | | | 10.57 | 5.90 | | | 10.31 | 6.07 | 14.55 | 8.91 |
| Constant | **73.50*** ** | 3.70 | **76.81*** ** | 9.70 | **70.59*** ** | 4.67 | **90.79*** ** | 10 | **45.19*** | 19.74 |
| Prob > F | 0.0000 | | 0.0000 | | 0.0000 | | 0.0000 | | 0.0000 | |
| R2 | 0.47 | | 0.17 | | 0.43 | | 0.27 | | 0.42 | |
| N | 3,259 | | 312 | | 2,405 | | 317 | | 87 | |

* p<0.05, ** p<0.01, *** p<0.001

*Note: Data are weighted to be nationally representative*

**Table 3.2 GenForward Regression Table**

| | Full Sample | | Black | | White | | Hispanic | | Asian American | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Coef. | SE | Coef | SE | Coef | SE | Coef | SE | Coef | SE |
| Republican | 0.02 | 0.22 | **0.83*** | 0.35 | -0.26 | 0.35 | -0.19 | 0.37 | 0.33 | 0.37 |
| Democrat | **0.62**** | 0.21 | **1.35***** | 0.30 | 0.07 | 0.36 | **1.18***** | 0.35 | **0.84*** | 0.41 |
| Gender | **0.57***** | 0.14 | **0.47*** | 0.23 | 0.40 | 0.22 | **0.94***** | 0.24 | 0.41 | 0.34 |
| Income | -0.07 | 0.07 | 0.11 | 0.13 | -0.15 | 0.11 | -0.08 | 0.15 | 0.30 | 0.16 |
| Age | -0.03 | 0.01 | -0.03 | 0.02 | -0.01 | 0.02 | -0.03 | 0.02 | -0.00 | 0.03 |
| Education | -0.13 | 0.09 | 0.02 | 0.15 | -0.17 | 0.14 | -0.09 | 0.13 | -0.11 | 0.22 |
| Police Favorability | 0.17 | 0.11 | -0.26 | 0.16 | 0.31 | 0.18 | -0.08 | 0.17 | 0.23 | 0.23 |
| Police Treat Black People Worse | **0.52***** | 0.15 | **0.48*** | 0.21 | **0.79**** | 0.25 | 0.14 | 0.20 | 0.13 | 0.37 |
| Racial Resentment | **-3.17***** | 0.32 | | | **-3.65***** | 0.53 | **-2.68***** | 0.52 | **-4.09***** | 0.88 |
| Asian | 0.07 | 0.18 | | | | | | | | |
| Black | **0.83***** | 0.20 | | | | | | | | |
| Hispanic | **0.35*** | 0.17 | | | | | | | | |
| /cut 1 | **-3.51***** | (0.61) | **-2.36*** | 0.94 | **-3.62***** | 0.96 | **-4.34***** | 0.98 | -2.49 | 1.29 |
| /cut 2 | **-2.05***** | (0.59) | -1.44 | 0.87 | **-2.04*** | 0.92 | **-2.85**** | 0.93 | -0.81 | 1.29 |
| /cut 3 | -0.14 | (0.59) | 0.26 | 0.86 | -0.12 | 0.91 | -0.74 | 0.92 | 1.38 | 1.31 |
| Log Pseudo Likelihood | -1769.88 | | -245.24 | | -995.85 | | -371.11 | | -130.30 | |
| Prob > chi2 | 0.0000 | | 0.0000 | | 0.0000 | | 0.0000 | | 0.0000 | |
| Pseudo R2 | 0.15 | | 0.06 | | 0.16 | | 0.13 | | 0.15 | |
| N | 1555 | | 432 | | 429 | | 444 | | 255 | |

* p<0.05, ** p<0.01, *** p<0.001

*Note: Data are weighted to be nationally representative*

**Table 3.3 Variable Distributions**

| ANES Variables | Mean | Standard Deviation | N | Min | Max |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| blm (feeling thermometer) | 48.35 | 32.12 | 3,590 | 0 | 100 |
| black | 0.09 | 0.29 | 4,211 | 0 | 1 |
| asian | 0.04 | 0.18 | 4,211 | 0 | 1 |
| hispanic | 0.1 | 0.31 | 4,211 | 0 | 1 |
| republican | 0.4 | 0.49 | 4,248 | 0 | 1 |
| democrat | 0.45 | 0.49 | 4,248 | 0 | 1 |
| income | 5.39 | 2.48 | 4,069 | 1 | 9 |
| education | 3.22 | 1.13 | 4,227 | 1 | 5 |
| age | 2.43 | 0.85 | 4,150 | 1 | 4 |
| gender (male/ female) | 0.53 | 0.5 | 4,219 | 0 | 1 |
| linked fate (black) | 0.71 | 0.32 | 401 | 0 | 1 |
| linked fate (hispanic) | 0.58 | 0.33 | 372 | 0 | 1 |
| linked fate (asian) | 0.64 | 0.32 | 132 | 0 | 1 |
| racial resentment scale | 0.51 | 0.19 | 3,619 | 0 | 1 |
| police attitudes (feeling thermometer) | 75.47 | 22.48 | 3,632 | 0 | 100 |
| police treat whites better | 2.55 | 0.52 | 3,581 | 1 | 3 |
| **GenForward Variables** | **Mean** | **Standard Deviation** | **N** | **Min** | **Max** |
| supportblm | 2.97 | 0.99 | 3,382 | 1 | 4 |
| black | 0.27 | 0.44 | 3,293 | 0 | 1 |
| asian | 0.16 | 0.37 | 3,293 | 0 | 1 |
| hispanic | 0.29 | 0.45 | 3,293 | 0 | 1 |
| republican | 0.34 | 0.47 | 3,404 | 0 | 1 |
| democrat | 0.47 | 0.49 | 3,404 | 0 | 1 |
| education | 3.03 | 0.929 | 3,427 | 1 | 4 |
| gender | 0.51 | 0.499 | 3,427 | 0 | 1 |
| age | 27.3 | 5.27 | 3,427 | 18 | 36 |
| income | 2.36 | 1.07 | 3,427 | 1 | 4 |
| police treat blacks worse | 0.57 | 0.64 | 1,683 | -1 | 1 |
| favorable towards police | 2.82 | 0.86 | 3,400 | 1 | 4 |
| racial resentment scale | 0.27 | 0.42 | 3,352 | 0 | 1 |

**Table 3.4 Variable Names, Labels, and Question Wording**

| ANES Variable Name | Label | Question Wording/ Coding |
|---|---|---|
| blm (feeling thermometer) | V162113 | How would you rate: Black Lives Matter movement? (feeling thermometer 1-100) |
| black | V161310X | Summary of self-identified race, 0) Nonblack, 1) Black |
| asian | V161310X | Summary of self-identified race, 0) Nonasian, 1) Asian |
| hispanic | V161310X | Summary of self-identified race, 0) Nonhispanic, 1) Hispanic |
| republican | V161158X | Summary of party ID, 0) Other Party 1) Republican |
| democrat | V161158X | Summary of party ID, 0) Other Party 1) Republican |
| income | V161361X | Income summary variable, 1) Under 10k, 2) 10-19,999k 3) 20-29,999k 4) 30-39,999k 5) 40-49,999k 6) 50-74,999k 7) 75-100k 8) 100-150k 9) Over 150K |
| education | V161270 | What is the highest level of school you have completed or the highest degree you have received? 1) Less than high school 2) High school diploma 3) Less than a BA 4) BA 5) Master's, Professional Degree, or PhD. |
| age | V161267 | respondent age, 1) 18-30, 2) 31-40 3) 41-50 4) 51-60 5) 61-70 6) 71-80 7) 81-90+ |
| gender | V161342 | self identified gender (0 male/ 1 female) |
| racial resentment scale | V162211 | Irish, Italians, Jewish and many other minorities overcame prejudice and worked their way up. Blacks should do the same without any special favors. Do you 1) disagree strongly, 2) disagree somewhat, 3) neither agree nor disagree, 4) agree somewhat, or 5) agree strongly with this statement? |
| | V162212 | Generations of slavery and discrimination have created conditions that make it difficult for blacks to work their way out of the lower class.' Do you 1) agree strongly, 2) agree somewhat, 3) neither agree nor disagree, 4) disagree somewhat, or 5) disagree strongly with this statement? |
| | V162213 | Over the past few years, blacks have gotten less than they deserve.' Do you 1) agree strongly, 2) agree somewhat, 3) neither agree nor disagree, 4) disagree somewhat, or 5) disagree strongly with this statement? |
| | V162214 | It's really a matter of some people not trying hard enough; if blacks would only try harder they could be just as well off as whites.' Do you 1) disagree strongly, 2) disagree somewhat, 3) neither agree nor disagree, 4) agree somewhat, or 5) agree strongly with this statement? |
| police attitudes (feeling thermometer) | V162110 | How would you rate: the police? (feeling thermometer 1-100) |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| police treatment | V162320 | In general, do the police [treat whites better than blacks, treat them both<br>same, or treat blacks better than whites]? -1) Treat Blacks Better 0) Treat them both the same 1) Treat whites better |
| linked_fate_black | V162225 | How much do you think that what happens generally to Black people in this<br>country will affect what happens in your life.<br>[A lot, some, not very much, or not at all / Not at all, not very much, some, or a lot]? |
| linked_fate_hispanic | V162224 | How much do you think that what happens generally to Hispanic people in this country will affect what happens in your life. [A lot, some, not very much, or not at all / Not at all, not very much, some, or a lot]? |
| linked_fate_asian | V162226 | How much do you think that what happens generally to Asian-American people in this<br>country will affect what happens in your life.<br>[A lot, some, not very much, or not at all / Not at all, not very much, some, or a lot] |

| GenForward Variable Name | Label | Question Wording/ Coding |
|---|---|---|
| supportblm | Q52A | From what you have heard or read about the movement called #BlackLivesMatter, do you...1) strongly oppose, 2) somewhat oppose, 3) somewhat support or 4) strongly support the movement? |
| black | GENFRACE | GenForward race variable, 0) Nonblack, 1) Black |
| asian | GENFRACE | GenForward race variable, 0) Nonasian, 1) Asian |
| hispanic | GENFRACE | GenForward race variable, 0) Nonhispanic, 1) Hispanic |
| republican | PartyID5 | Computed 5 level Party ID 0) other party, 1) Republican |
| democrat | PartyID5 | Computed 5 level Party ID 0) other party, 1) Democrat |
| education | EDUC4 | 4 level education, 1) "No HS diploma" 2 "HS graduate or equivalent" 3 "Some college" 4 "BA or above" |
| gender | GENDER | respondent gender, 0) male, 1) female |
| age | AGE | respondent age, 18-36 |
| income | INCOME | household income, 1 "Less than $25,000" 2 "Between $25,000 and $50,000" 3 "Between $50,000 and $99,000" 4 "$100,000 and above" |
| favorable towards police | Q28 | How favorable do you feel towards your local police department? 1) Very unfavorable, 2) mostly unfavorable, 3) mostly favorable, or 4) very favorable? |
| police treatment | Q30A | Do you think the police treat Black individuals better, worse, or about the same as white individuals? -1) Treat Black individuals better than white individuals 0) Treat Black individuals about the same as white individuals 1) Treat Black individuals worse than white individuals |
| racial resentment scale | Q14 | Please tell us how strongly you agree or disagree with the following statements. Irish, Italian, Jewish, and many other minorities overcame prejudice and worked their way up. Blacks |

| | |
|---|---|
| | should do the same without any special favors. 1) Strongly disagree 2) Somewhat disagree 3) Somewhat agree 4) Strongly agree |
| Q15 | Please tell us how strongly you agree or disagree with the following statements. Generations of slavery and discrimination have created conditions that make it difficult for Blacks to work their way out of the lower class. 1) Strongly agree 2) Somewhat agree 3) Somewhat disagree 4) strongly disagree |

**Table 3.5 Favorability Towards BLM by Race (Women, ANES)**

| Favorability Rating | Black Women % | White Women % | Hispanic Women % | Asian Women % |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 0-25 | 1 | 28 | 12 | 8 |
| 26-50 | 7 | 32 | 24 | 39 |
| 51-75 | 25 | 21 | 28 | 26 |
| 76-100 | 67 | 18 | 36 | 27 |
| **Total N** | **237** | **1591** | **216** | **66** |

**Table 3.6 Favorability Towards BLM by Race (Men, ANES)**

| Favorability Rating | Black Men % | White Men % | Hispanic Men % | Asian Men % |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 0-25 | 8 | 37 | 13 | 25 |
| 26-50 | 8 | 33 | 31 | 34 |
| 51-75 | 21 | 18 | 29 | 28 |
| 76-100 | 62 | 12 | 26 | 13 |
| **Total N** | **158** | **1421** | **228** | **81** |

**ANES BLM Support Figures**

Figure 3.4 Distribution of BLM Favorability Ratings by Race (ANES)

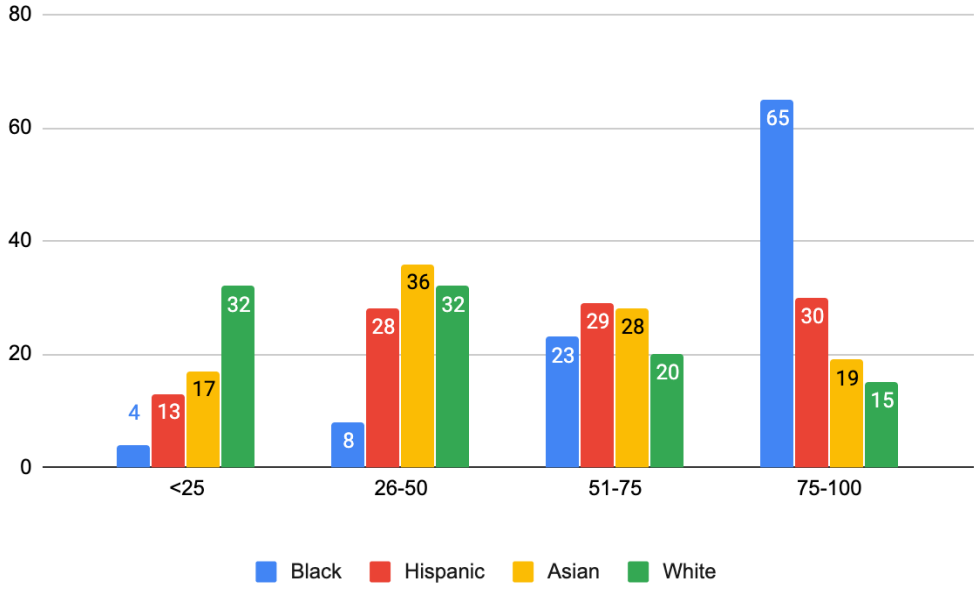



Figure 3.5 Distribution of BLM Favorability Ratings by Gender (ANES)

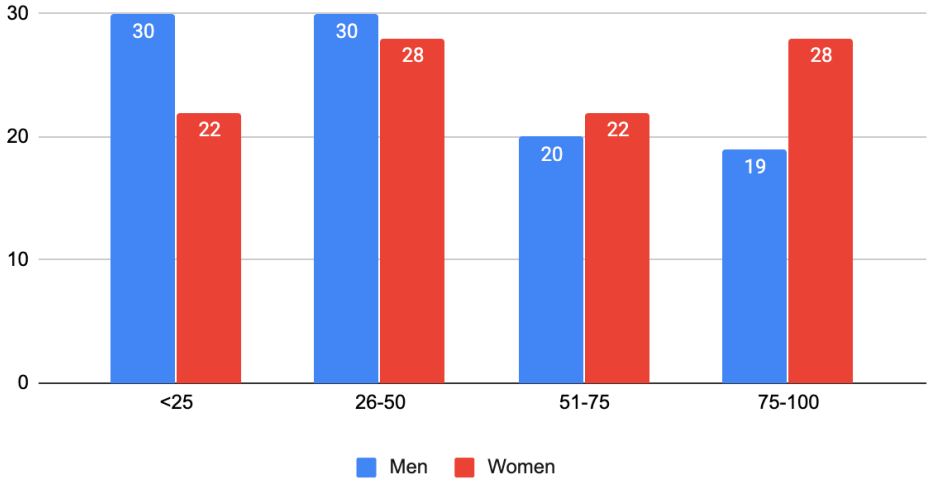
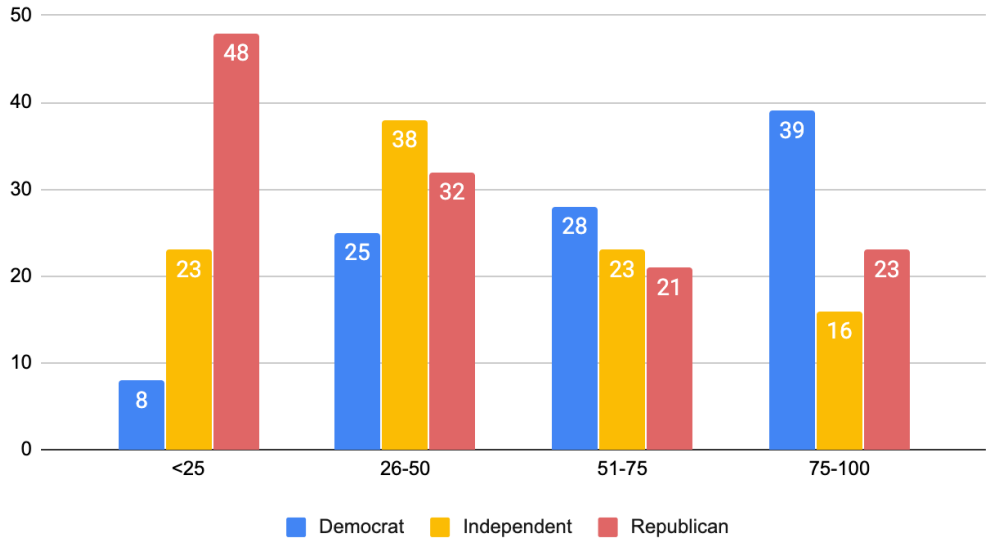


Figure 3.6 Distribution of BLM Favorability Ratings by Party (ANES)




**GenForward Figures**

Figure 3.7 Distribution of BLM Support by Race (GenForward)

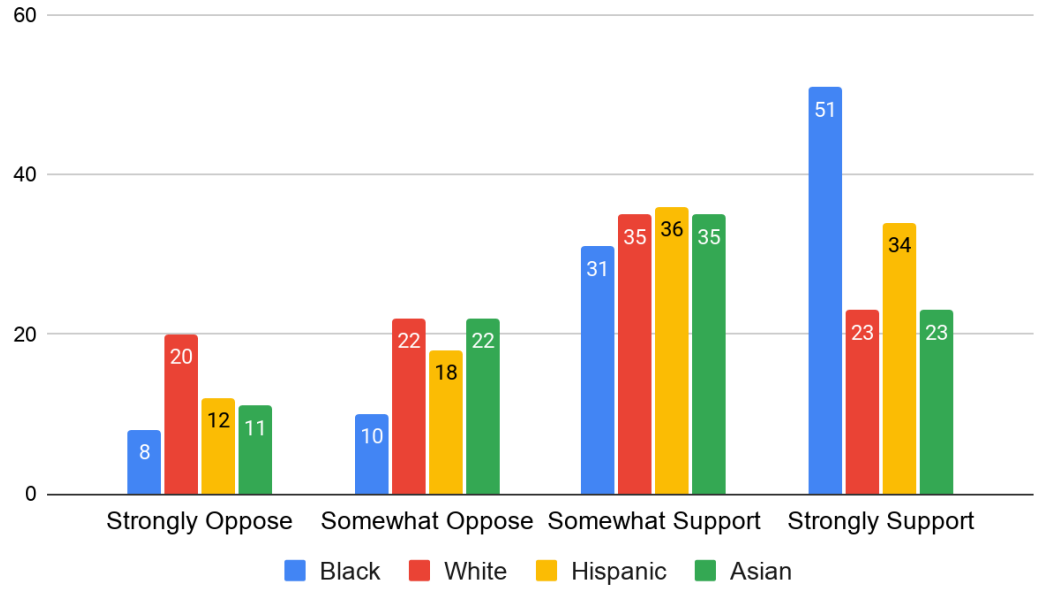


Figure 3.8 Distribution of BLM Support by Gender (GenForward)

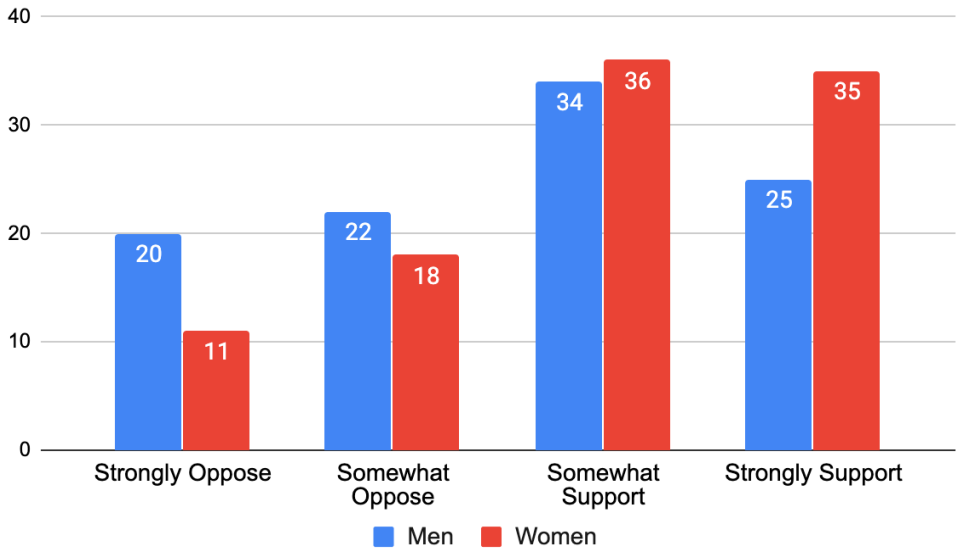
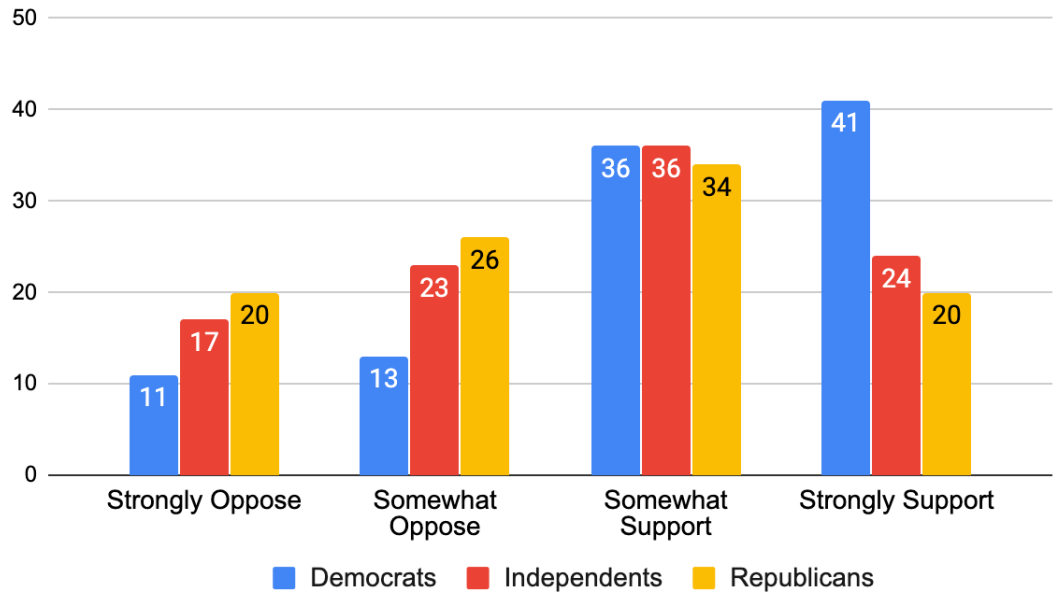



Figure 3.9 Distribution of BLM Support by Party (GenForward)



## Appendix B: Appendix to Chapter 4

### Interview Guide

I will introduce myself and briefly describe the project, offering a consent form to sign and asking participants to write down an email address and consent to being contacted after the study. I will then ask if respondents have any clarifying questions, and then begin recording. I will permit the interviews to last up to an hour. The interview may go longer if participants feel like talking, but I will let them know at the hour mark. After our discussion, I will ask respondents a few demographic questions. I will give the participant a $10 Target gift card at the end of the interview.

The questions below will serve as a guide for the interview. I will ask for answers to each of these questions and I will permit and prompt the interviewees to offer additional thoughts or go deeper on questions they seem compelled to think or talk more about.[1]

1. Tell me a little about yourself. Where are you from?
2. What do you do? Are you a student?
3. Please explain how you came to be involved in this organization.
4. What would you say are your political values? What ideas or principles matter to you most in politics? †
5. Does this organization align with those values? If so, how? If not, how? †
6. What is important to you about the work that this organization does?*
7. What aspects of this organization are you involved with? Do you think of these activities as being "political" activities? Do you think of yourself as being a politically active person?*
8. Would you call yourself politically active? What are some political activities you have participated in? †
9. How do you get your job in this organization done?*
10. What would you say are the goals of this organization?
11. What would you say are your political goals?
12. How do your politics align with those of the larger (Movement for Black Lives? Labor Movement? Environmental Justice Movement?)

Ending Ask
Is there anyone else I should contact for an interview?

[1] I began this project intending to make distinctions between movement "participants" and movement "activists," with two sets of questions to guide the conversation— all the same except for the questions marked by an ( † ) which denotes "participant" questions and a (*) which denotes "activist" questions. After interview #5, I decided that this distinction was not useful, pulling 10-12 of these questions from both the "participant" and "activist" sets for the interviews. After Interview #19, I more systematically asked the first "political values" question from the participant set and dropped the other two "participant" questions ("Does this organization align with those values? If so, how? If not, how?" and "Would you call yourself politically active? What are some political activities you have participated in?").

Demographic Questions

1. What is the highest level of education you have completed?
2. How would you describe your racial or ethnic background?
3. What is your gender identity?
4. What is your age?
5. What is your employment status?
6. What was your total household income before taxes during the past 12 months?

   Less than $25,000
   $25,000 to $34,999
   $35,000 to $49,999
   $50,000 to $74,999
   $75,000 to $99,999
   $100,000 to $149,999
   $150,000 or more

Recruitment and Payment

1. Recruit interviewees over email, phone, social media, and organization meetings and actions
2. Offer a $10 gift cards for time

**Table 4.1 Organizations and Descriptions**

| Organization[2] | Organization Description (from organization websites) | Interviewees |
|---|---|---|
| Black Youth Project 100 | Founded in 2013, BYP100 (Black Youth Project 100) is a member-based organization of Black youth activists creating justice and freedom for all Black people. | 8 |
| Chicago Alliance Against Racist and Political Oppression | Since 1973, when it was born from the movement to free Angela Davis and all political prisoners, the Chicago Alliance Against Racist and Political Repression has defended the rights of oppressed people in Illinois and around the world. We defend the civil liberties of workers, activists, and prisoners. We struggle against white supremacy, the prison-industrial complex, and state violence. We demand community control of the police and full representation for Black people and other poor and oppressed people at all levels of government. | 6 |
| Black Lives Matter Chicago | Black Lives Matter Chicago is an intersectional vehicle that values Black people and our right to self-determination. We fight for justice with families most impacted, while working to create just and equitable systems. | 1 |
| Black Lives Matter: Justice for Families Working Group | Justice for Families (JFF) is a working group of Black Lives Matter: Chicago. We are 100% volunteer run and are committed to working with families impacted by police and state violence. JFF designs campaigns, strategies, and direct actions with families so they can fight for justice for their loved ones. We provide safe healing spaces for families to talk about their experiences and console each other. | 1 |
| Women's All Points Bulletin | The WAPB seeks to expose and end police violence against women including: battery; sexual abuse, harassment and assault; fatalities and murders. Although difficult to imagine, these tragedies are real. The only way to end this type of violence against women is to bring it to light.<br>(From organization Facebook) | 2 |
| UChicago United | Coalition of UChicago's POC students + orgs working to build student power through #CulturalCentersNow, #EthnicStudiesNow. Collaborating on @care_not_cops | 2 |
| Chicago Teachers Union | The Chicago Teachers Union is an organization of educators dedicated to advancing and promoting quality public education, improving teaching and learning conditions, and protecting members' rights. | 2 |
| IfNotNow | We are organizing every day to expose the occupation as a moral crisis to American Jews, end the weaponization of antisemitism in our political debate over Israel, and create political space for leaders to stand up for the freedom and dignity for all Israelis and Palestinians. | 2 |
| Chicago Community Bond | The Chicago Community Bond Fund (CCBF) pays bond for people charged with crimes in Cook County, Illinois. Through a revolving | 1 |

[2] A (*) indicates an interviewee with duplicate current or former memberships.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Fund | fund, CCBF supports individuals whose communities cannot afford to pay the bonds themselves and who have been impacted by structural violence. | |
| Tenants United Hyde Park and Woodlawn | Our mission is to build neighborhood justice and grassroots democracy by developing autonomous tenants unions that are welcoming for all. | 1 |
| Mutual Aid Disaster Relief | Mutual Aid Disaster Relief is a grassroots disaster relief network based on the principles of solidarity, mutual aid, and autonomous direct action. | 1 |
| Invisible to Invincible | Founded in 2005, Invisible to Invincible ("i2i") is a community-based organization that celebrates and affirms Asians & Pacific Islanders who identify as Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Questioning, and Queer in the Chicago area. We organize monthly social events, educational programs, and community activism. i2i welcomes East Asians, South Asians, Southeast Asians, & Pacific Islanders of all sexual orientations and gender identities & expressions. | 1 |
| Arab American Action Network | The Arab American Action Network (AAAN) strives to strengthen the Arab community in the Chicago area by building its capacity to be an active agent for positive social change. As a grassroots nonprofit, our strategies include community organizing, advocacy, education, providing social services, leadership development, cultural outreach and forging productive relationships with other communities. | 1 |
| Graduate Students United | We are Graduate Students United at the University of Chicago. We've been organizing since 2007 to improve the lives of graduate students and gain recognition for the work we do at this university. Together, we've won dramatic pay increases, better healthcare, improved parental leave policies, stipends for childcare, and a freeze in Advanced Residency tuition. We have joined with our peers at public and private universities across the country in calling for the abolition of all tuition and fees for graduate students, and in seeking the right to organize and bargain collectively for our wages and benefits. | 1 |
| GoodKids Mad City* | We are Black and Brown youth united in fighting to end violence in our cities. We call for more resources for our communities and not police! #GoodKidsMadCity<br>(from organization Twitter) | 1 |
| For the People Artists Collective* | For the People Artists Collective is a radical squad of Black artists and artists of color in Chicago. As artists who organize, it is our duty to create work that uplifts and projects struggle, resistance, liberation, and survival within and for our marginalized communities and movements in our city and our world. Our collective strives to make the radical power of art accessible to organizations and efforts that want to build visibly stronger and more irresistible movements for liberation. | 1 |
| Care Not Cops* | We demand that UChicago spend its $$ on caring for our communities, not policing them. #DISBANDUCPD. Fighting for a #FreedomCampus w/ @UChiUnited<br>(from organization Twitter) | 1 |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Freedom Road Socialist Organization* | Freedom Road Socialist Organization (FRSO) is a national organization of revolutionaries fighting for socialism in the United States. Our home is in the working class. FRSO members are rooted in the mass movements for justice, particularly in the labor movement and the movements of oppressed nations and nationalities– especially African-Americans and Chicanos. We are also active in the immigrant rights, anti-war, student and youth movements. | 1 |
| Chicago Democratic Socialists of America* | Our mission is to create a more equitable world by establishing socialism as a political force at the city, state, national, and international levels. We believe that Chicago, as well as local and national governments and economies, should operate through social ownership: for the benefit of all instead of for a select few. Chicago DSA is an intersectional—feminist, anti-capitalist, anti-racist, etc.—organization that both educates Chicagoans about socialist values and policies and trains and mobilizes grassroots activists to build coalitions that move Chicago, the U.S. and the world toward a socialist future. | 1 |
| Never Again Action* | In June 2019, 10 Jews from across the country got on the phone to talk about organizing a Jewish response to the concentration camps at the border and ICE's daily violence against our immigrant neighbors. We knew from our own history what happens when a government targets, dehumanizes and strips an entire group of people of all their civil and human rights. We recognized the signs, and we could feel it in our guts — the words that we learned in our communities and from our grandparents: "Never Again." We knew that we needed to act. It turned out that tens of thousands of other people were ready to act with us. Jews, allies, and our immigrant partners like Movimiento Cosecha took to the streets around the country, and Never Again Action went from a hashtag to a movement. | 1 |

**Note:** Two activists were not currently members of organizations. One I met at a labor education workshop held by Graduate Students United. She was in the early stages of organizing her workplace. The other was an anarchist and did political work but did not belong to an organization. Three activists did not wish to share their organizations. One did women's advocacy, environmental work, and elder organizing; one was a Black radical/ progressive organizer; and one was a labor organizer.

**A note on building rapport with interviewees:** In some cases, I needed to build or rely on relationships with interviewees. To connect with the Chicago Alliance, I attended 3 meetings, 2 tabling and 1 court packing event. I knew one member of BYP100 through writing for the Black Youth Project website and she connected me with other members. I am a member of and formerly an organizer with Graduate Students United at the University of Chicago, and, as such, I knew interviewees or attended their organizations' events as a member or representative of GSU.

**Table 4.2 Code Names, Descriptions, and References**

| Code Name | Description | Files | References |
|---|---|---|---|
| Alternatives | Political alternatives to present conditions | 9 | 28 |
| Abolition | Prison or police abolition | 17 | 47 |
| BLM | Black lives matter movement | 25 | 51 |
| Ferguson | Discussion of Ferguson Uprising or Michael Brown | 7 | 10 |
| Laquan McDonald | Mention of Laquan McDonald killing or protests | 7 | 8 |
| Chicago | Discussion of Chicago politics | 13 | 36 |
| Citizenship— Belonging | Attitudes about citizenship in US | 6 | 13 |
| Immigrants | Experiences with immigration or immigration centered political action | 7 | 12 |
| Community | Discussion of community/ in neighborhood/ in organizing | 20 | 59 |
| Education | Formal and informal education experiences | 19 | 38 |
| Environmental Politics | Advocacy and organizing concerning environmental justice | 5 | 12 |
| Faith-Religion | Experiences with faith/ religion | 9 | 17 |
| Gender- Feminism | Thoughts/ experiences/ advocacy work regarding gender and feminism | 10 | 24 |
| Generational | Thoughts about age/ generations | 8 | 10 |
| Goals | Political goals and ideas | 32 | 88 |
| Housing | Experiences with housing | 7 | 9 |
| Ideology | Political ideologies | 11 | 24 |
| Blackness | Thoughts/ ideologies around Blackness | 6 | 12 |
| Revolution | Discussion of revolution | 4 | 5 |
| Involved early | Early political experiences | 8 | 9 |
| Campus Organizer | Experiences organizing on college campuses | 9 | 16 |
| Labor | Labor advocacy/ organizing | 11 | 43 |
| Leadership | Discussion of leadership in political organizing, leadership experiences | 9 | 23 |
| Mass Incarceration | Thoughts/ experiences with mass incarceration | 11 | 20 |
| Carceral Contact | Personal or proximate contact with prisons or police | 6 | 14 |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Mistrust, Disappointment | Negative experiences or feelings about the government/ politics/ authorities | 8 | 12 |
| Accountability-Representation | Express need for accountability for those in power. | 5 | 9 |
| Capitalism | Thoughts/ attitudes regarding capitalism | 7 | 8 |
| Contradictions | Notice of contradictions in expressed values and reality | 8 | 13 |
| Police Violence | Experiences/ attitudes about police violence | 17 | 61 |
| Segregation | Experiences/ attitudes about segregation | 6 | 8 |
| State | Thoughts about the state/ government | 7 | 15 |
| Parents Politics | Parents political ideas/ attitudes/ values learned from parents | 22 | 34 |
| Participation | Political participation/ activism/ organizing | 24 | 88 |
| Art | Political art | 7 | 18 |
| Escalation Tactics | protests/ occupations | 18 | 48 |
| Organizations and Coalitions | Organizations and political coalitions | 28 | 94 |
| Organizing | Mentions political organizing/ advocacy | 27 | 80 |
| Relationships | Organizing relationships/ importance of relationships in organizing | 12 | 20 |
| Police | Experiences/ thoughts/ attitudes about police | 18 | 36 |
| Surveillance | Surveillance from police/ law enforcement | 5 | 6 |
| Political Education | Formal/ informal political education or learning | 19 | 36 |
| Politicized | Activating experiences | 13 | 28 |
| Politics | Thoughts and attitudes about local or national politics | 9 | 19 |
| Power | Thoughts and attitudes about power | 22 | 46 |
| Privilege | Discussion of experiences with/ without privilege | 11 | 18 |
| Queer or Queer Politics | Discussion of queerness/ queer politics/ advocacy | 8 | 21 |
| Race | Discussions thoughts/ experiences regarding race | 23 | 70 |
| Safety | Discussion of safety | 9 | 21 |
| Social Media | Discussion of/ use of social media | 10 | 21 |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Solidarity | Discussion of political solidarity/ actions in solidarity | 8 | 17 |
| Struggles | Differences/ struggles within an organization | 13 | 25 |
| Violence | Violent experiences, interpersonally/ state violence | 5 | 8 |
| Voting- Electoral Politics | Thoughts/ attitudes regarding voting or electoral politics | 36 | 155 |
| Win | Discussion of/ thoughts about political and organizing wins | 7 | 9 |

## Appendix C: Appendix to Chapter 5

### Community Change Action Partner Survey

1. What is the name of your organization? Please select your primary/ first organization from the list below.

   Names are listed in alphabetical order.

- Alabama Coalition for Immigrant Justice (ACIJ)
- Arizona Center for Empowerment
- Arkansas United
- BlackRoots Alliance
- CASA in Action (CASAiA)
- Causa Oregon
- Center for Racial and Gender Equity
- Central Florida Jobs with Justice (CFJWJ)
- Childcare Changemakers
- Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights Los Angeles Action (CHIRLA Action)
- Colorado Cross-Disability Coalition (CCDC)
- Colorado Immigrant Rights Coalition Action (CIRC Action)
- Colorado Organization for Latina Opportunity and Reproductive Rights (COLOR)
- Colorado People's Action/ Colorado People's Alliance
- Communities Creating Opportunity (CCO)
- Community Change Action/ Community Change Power
- Comunidades Unidas
- El Centro de Igualidad y Derechos
- Family Forward Oregon
- Florida Immigrant Coalition Votes (FLIC Votes)
- Granite State Organizing Project
- Greater Cincinnati Homeless Coalition
- Hoosier Action
- Illinois Coalition for Immigrant & Refugee Rights (ICIRR/ ICIRR Action)
- ISAIAH / Faith in Action Minnesota
- Living United for Change in Arizona (LUCHA)
- Maine People's Alliance (MPA)
- Make It Work Nevada
- Make the Road Action Nevada (MTRA-NV)
- Make the Road Action Pennsylvania (MTRA-PA)
- Metropolitan Organizing Strategy Enabling Strength Action (MOSES Action)
- Michigan Liberation
- Michigan People's Campaign (MPC)
- Mothering Justice/ Mothering Justice Action Fund
- Movement of Immigrant Leaders in Pennsylvania (MILPA)
- National Korean American Service & Education Consortium (NAKASEC)
- Nebraska Appleseed
- New Florida Majority (NFM)
- New Georgia Project Action Fund (NGP Action Fund)
- New Hampshire Interfaith Action Fund
- New Jersey Organizing Project (NJOP)

- Ohio Organizing Collaborative (OOC)/ Stand Up For Ohio/ All In For Ohio
- OneAmerica Votes
- Organize Florida
- Organizers in the Land of Enchantment (OLE)
- Our Future West Virginia
- Parent Voices Oakland
- Pineros y Campesinos Unidos del Noroeste (PCUN)
- Progressive Leadership Alliance of Nevada Action (PLAN Action)
- Promise Arizona (PAZ)
- Safe Places for the Advancement of Community and Equity in Action (SPACEs in Action)
- Tennessee Immigrant & Refugee Rights Coalition Votes (TIRRC Votes)
- Texas Organizing Project (TOP)
- United for a New Economy (UNE)
- Voces de La Frontera Action
- Washington Housing Alliance Action Fund (RAP/RUN)
- Washington Interfaith Network (WIN)
- Other/ None of these

2. Have you done any of the following in the last year? Check all that apply.
    - Attended a meeting to pressure for city or county policy change
    - Had a face-to-face conversation with another person about politics or an issue affecting your community
    - Attended a meeting about a community issue
    - Texted, emailed, called, or messaged another person about politics or an issue affecting your community
    - Worked on a local or national political campaign

3. Please indicate the extent to which you agree with these statements about working in your community:

    I have the skills necessary to participate in politics in my community.

    - Strongly disagree
    - Somewhat disagree
    - Somewhat agree
    - Strongly agree

    To improve my community, it is more effective to work with a group than as an individual.

    - Strongly disagree
    - Somewhat disagree
    - Somewhat agree
    - Strongly agree

    It is important to me that I actively participate in local issues.

- Strongly disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Somewhat agree
- Strongly agree

4. Please indicate the extent to which you agree with these statements about working in your organization:

   Generally speaking, I am very satisfied with my organization

   - Strongly disagree
   - Somewhat disagree
   - Somewhat agree
   - Strongly agree

   Working with my organization stretches my personal knowledge and skills.

   - Strongly disagree
   - Somewhat disagree
   - Somewhat agree
   - Strongly agree

   Working with my organization is frustrating.

   - Strongly disagree
   - Somewhat disagree
   - Somewhat agree
   - Strongly agree

   I would take on greater leadership in my organization if I were asked.

   - Strongly disagree
   - Somewhat disagree
   - Somewhat agree
   - Strongly agree

5. Please indicate the extent to which you agree with these statements about working in your community and with your organization:

   I believe my vote has an impact on local government.

   - Strongly disagree
   - Somewhat disagree
   - Somewhat agree

- Strongly agree

My organization is able to influence elected officials.

- Strongly disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Somewhat agree
- Strongly agree

My organization will be able to influence the 2020 Presidential election.

- Strongly disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Somewhat agree
- Strongly agree

6. Reflecting on your civic engagement work in the past year, indicate the degree to which you agree with the following statements:

   Civic engagement work built our organization's power.

   - Strongly disagree
   - Somewhat disagree
   - Somewhat agree
   - Strongly agree

   I am excited about future work with my organization.

   - Strongly disagree
   - Somewhat disagree
   - Somewhat agree
   - Strongly agree

   Through my civic engagement work I feel more powerful.

   - Strongly disagree
   - Somewhat disagree
   - Somewhat agree
   - Strongly agree

[Randomized Treatment or Control Assignment]

7. Diagnostic Frame

   “In the United States, police killed 1,099 people in 2019. African Americans represented 25% of those killed despite being only 13% of the US population.

   Do you agree that police violence against African Americans is a big problem in the United States?”

- Strongly disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Somewhat agree
- Strongly agree

7. Motivational Frame

> "Here is a statement from an anti-police violence organization. *"We work to end state sanctioned violence, to liberate Black people, and end white supremacy."*
>
> Do you agree that this statement matches your values?"

- Strongly disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Somewhat agree
- Strongly agree

7. [No Treatment]

**Petition to Department of Justice to Demand an End to Police Brutality**

We demand an end to police brutality!

African Americans are overrepresented in cases of police violence and misconduct. We demand that the Department of Justice increase police oversight and accountability measures to ensure justice is served when these instances of violence occur.

To achieve accountability, we demand both internal measures like body-cameras and investigative procedures, as well as external measures like civilian led police accountability boards. These boards should have the power to investigate and remove officers.

Furthermore, police need to be trained to rely on de-escalation strategies to prevent and reduce instances of unnecessary and excessive use of force.

8. Would you like to add your name to this petition?

- Yes
- No

**Petition to the Department of Justice to Abolish the Police**

We demand an end to policing!

Due to the disproportionate stops, arrests, and deaths of African Americans at the hands of police, we demand an end to policing in the United States. There can be no oversight or reform to these inherently racist institutions.

To achieve public safety, instead of investing money into police departments, states should redirect these funds to mental health care, public education, and job training for marginalized communities.

Instead of retraining police officers, we should eliminate policing as an institution in the United States.

9. Would you like to add your name to this petition?
- Yes
- No

10. On May 25, 2020, George Floyd, a black man, was killed by Minneapolis police officers after allegedly using a counterfeit $20 bill. Since the death of George Floyd, Black Lives Matter protests, marches, and uprisings have occurred around the nation.
11. Have you attended a Black Lives Matter protest since the killing of George Floyd on May 25th of this year?
- Yes
- No

12. Are you of Spanish, Hispanic, or Latina/o descent?
- No, I am not Spanish, Hispanic, or Latina/o
- Yes, I am Mexican
- Yes, I am Puerto Rican
- Yes, I am Cuban
- Yes, I am Central American
- Yes, I am Caribbean
- Yes, I am South American
- Yes, I am Spanish
- Yes, other Spanish/ Hispanic/ Latino

13. What is your race or ethnicity?
- Black or African American
- White
- American Indian/ Native
- Asian/ Pacific Islander
- South Asian
- Two or more races
- Other, please specify

14. What is your gender identity?
- Male
- Female
- Transgender
- Non-binary
- Other, please specify

15. What is your age?
- 18-25
- 26-35
- 36-45
- 46-55
- 56-65
- 65+

16. What is the highest level of education you have completed?
- Less than a high school diploma
- High School diploma
- Some college
- College graduate
- Master's degree
- Professional or Doctorate degree

17. What is your total household income before taxes, including you plus all members living in your household?
- Under $10,000
- Between $10,000 and $19,999
- Between $20,000 and $29,999
- Between $30,000 and $39,999
- Between $40,000 and $49,999
- Between $50,000 and $59,999
- Between $60,000 and $69,999

- Between $70,000 and $79,999
- Between $80,000 and $89,999
- Between $90,000 and $99,999
- $100,000 or above

18. Do you plan to vote for the Republican nominee for president, Donald Trump, the Democratic nominee, Joe Biden, or some other presidential candidate in the 2020 Presidential Election?

- I plan to vote for Donald Trump
- I plan to vote for Joe Biden
- I'll vote for someone else
- I do not plan to vote
- I don't know

**Table 5.1 Support for Police Reform and Police Abolition**

| | Model 1 (Reform Support) | Model 2 (Abolition Support) |
|---|---|---|
| Income | 0 (0.01) | -0.00 (0.01) |
| Education | -0.03 (0.02) | -0.02 (0.03) |
| Age | -0.00 (0.01) | **-0.10*** (0.02)** |
| White | 0.01 (0.05) | 0.02 (0.10) |
| Black | 0.06 (0.07) | 0.18 (0.11) |
| Hispanic | -0.06 (0.08) | 0.05 (0.11) |
| gender | 0.06 (0.04) | 0.09 (0.06) |
| Attend BLM protest? | 0.00 (0.03) | **0.15** (0.05)** |
| Internal efficacy | 0.03 (0.05) | 0.01 (0.03) |
| Identity Organization | 0.02 (0.04) | 0.07 (0.07) |
| constant | **0.79*** (0.14)** | **0.71*** (0.18)** |
| N | 381 | 381 |
| F (10, 393) | 1.16 | 14.45 |
| Prob > F | 0.31 | 0 |
| R- Squared | 0.03 | 0.20 |
| Root MSE | 0.33 | 0.45 |

**Table 5.2 Support for Police Abolition Across Race and Gender**

| | **Model 3 Abolition Support (Men)** | **Model 4 Abolition Support (Women)** | **Model 5 Abolition Support (White)** | **Model 6 Abolition Support (Black)** | **Model 6 Abolition Support (Hispanic)** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Income | -0.02 (0.02) | 0.00 (0.01) | -0.01 (0.01) | 0.02 (0.02) | 0.03 (0.02) |
| Education | -0.04 (0.06) | -0.23 (0.03) | -0.03 (0.04) | -0.06 (0.06) | -0.02 (0.06) |
| Age | **-0.11*** (0.03)** | **-0.10*** (0.02)** | **-0.11*** (0.02)** | **-0.13** (0.04)** | **-0.09* (0.04)** |
| White | 0.19 (0.32) | -0.03 (0.11) | | | |
| Black | 0.08 (0.37) | 0.19 (0.12) | | | |
| Hispanic | 0.11 (0.34) | 0.03 (0.11) | | | |
| gender | | | 0.03 (0.07) | 0.34 (0.17) | 0.06 (0.14) |
| Attend BLM protest? | 0.09 (0.11) | **0.16** (0.06)** | 0.07 (0.07) | 0.23 (0.12) | 0.16 (0.13) |
| Internal efficacy | 0.05 (0.08) | -0.01 (0.04) | -0.04 (0.05) | -0.04 (0.08) | 0.06 (0.07) |
| Identity Organization | 0.16 (0.15) | 0.04 (0.08) | 0.13 (0.12) | 0.08 (0.17) | -0.06 (0.11) |
| constant | 0.72 (0.42) | **0.83*** (0.20)** | **1.12*** (0.23)** | **0.95* (0.41)** | 0.45 (0.31) |
| N | 85 | 296 | 218 | 62 | 76 |
| F (10, 393) | 5.65 | 11.89 | 11.62 | 5.1 | 2.98 |
| Prob > F | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0.0002 | 0.0087 |
| R- Squared | 0.26 | 0.20 | 0.21 | 0.31 | 0.18 |
| Root MSE | 0.46 | 0.45 | 0.45 | 0.43 | 0.45 |

**Table 5.3 Support for reform with diagnostic treatment**

| Two-sample t test with equal variances | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Group | Obvs | Mean | St. Error | Std. Deviation | [95% Confidence Interval] |
| 0 | 292 | 0.86 | 0.02 | 0.35 | [0.82, .90] |
| 1 | 147 | 0.90 | 0.02 | 0.3 | [.85, .95] |
| combined | 439 | 0.87 | 0.02 | 0.34 | [.84, .90] |
| diff | | -0.04 | 0.03 | | [ -.11, .03] |
| diff=mean(0)-mean(1) | | | | | t = -1.21 |
| Ho=diff=0 | | | | | degrees of freedom = 437 |
| | | | | | |
| Ha: diff < 0 | | Ha: diff != 0 | | | Ha: diff > 0 |
| Pr(T < t) = 0.11 | | Pr(\|T\| > \|t\|) = 0.22 | | | Pr(T > t) = 0.89 |

**Table 5.4: Support for reform with motivational treatment**

| Two-sample t test with equal variances | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Group | Obvs | Mean | St. Error | Std. Deviation | [95% Confidence Interval] |
| 0 | 292 | 0.88 | 0.02 | 0.33 | [0.84, .91] |
| 1 | 147 | 0.86 | 0.03 | 0.35 | [0.80, .91] |
| combined | 439 | 0.87 | 0.02 | 0.34 | [.84, .90] |
| diff | | 0.02 | 0.03 | | [-0.05, .09] |
| diff=mean(0)-mean(1) | | | | | t = 0.58 |
| Ho=diff=0 | | | | | degrees of freedom = 437 |
| | | | | | |
| Ha: diff < 0 | | Ha: diff != 0 | | | Ha: diff > 0 |
| Pr(T < t) = 0.72 | | Pr(\|T\| > \|t\|) = 0.57 | | | Pr(T > t) = 0.29 |

**Table 5.5: Support for abolition with diagnostic treatment**

| Two-sample t test with equal variances | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Group | Obvs | Mean | St. Error | Std. Deviation | [95% Confidence Interval] |
| 0 | 292 | 0.55 | 0.03 | 0.50 | [.49, .61] |
| 1 | 147 | 0.59 | 0.04 | 0.49 | [.51, .67] |
| combined | 439 | 0.56 | 0.02 | 0.50 | [.52, .61] |
| diff | | -0.04 | 0.05 | | [-.14, .05] |
| diff=mean(0)-mean(1) | | | | | t = -0.9 |
| Ho=diff=0 | | | | | degrees of freedom = 437 |
| | | | | | |
| Ha: diff < 0 | | Ha: diff != 0 | | | Ha: diff > 0 |
| Pr(T < t) = 0.19 | | Pr(\|T\| > \|t\|) = 0.38 | | | Pr(T > t) = 0.81 |

**Table 5.6: Support for abolition with motivational treatment**

| Two-sample t test with equal variances | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Group | Obvs | Mean | St. Error | Std. Deviation | [95% Confidence Interval] |
| 0 | 292 | 0.59 | 0.03 | 0.49 | [.53, .64] |
| 1 | 147 | 0.52 | 0.04 | 0.5 | [.44, .60] |
| combined | 439 | 0.56 | 0.02 | 0.50 | [.51, .61] |
| diff | | 0.07 | 0.05 | | [-.03, .17] |
| diff=mean(0)-mean(1) | | | | | t = 1.34 |
| Ho=diff=0 | | | | | degrees of freedom = 437 |
| | | | | | |
| Ha: diff < 0 | | Ha: diff != 0 | | | Ha: diff > 0 |
| Pr(T < t) = 0.91 | | Pr(\|T\| > \|t\|) = 0.18 | | | Pr(T > t) = 0.09 |

**Table 5.7 Support for Abolition, Influence of Diagnostic and Motivational Frames Across Gender**

| | **Support for Abolitionist Petition** | |
|---|---|---|
| | **Model 8 (Men)** | **Model 9 (Women)** |
| Diagnostic Frame Treatment | -0.07 (0.12) | 0.06 (0.06) |
| Motivational Frame Treatment | -0.14 (0.13) | -0.02 (0.07) |
| Income | -0.02 (0.02) | 0.00 (0.01) |
| Education | -0.04 (0.07) | -0.02 (0.03) |
| Age | **-0.11*** (0.03)** | **-0.10*** (0.02)** |
| White | 0.17 (0.35) | -0.04 (0.11) |
| Black | 0.07 (0.40) | 0.17 (0.12) |
| Hispanic | 0.11 (0.38) | 0.03 (0.12) |
| Attend BLM protest? | 0.07 (0.11) | **0.16** (0.06)** |
| Identity org? | 0.13 (0.15) | 0.03 (0.08) |
| internal efficacy | 0.06 (0.08) | -0.01 (0.04) |
| constant | .80 (0.46) | **0.82*** (0.20)** |
| N | 85 | 296 |
| F (10, 393) | 5.81 | 10.27 |
| Prob > F | 0 | 0 |
| R- Squared | 0.35 | 0.21 |
| Root MSE | 0.43 | 0.45 |

**Table 5.8 Variables**

| | Mean | Std. Deviation | N | Minimum | Maximum |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Income | 6.99 | 3.26 | 426 | 1 | 11 |
| Education | 4.18 | 1.1 | 436 | 1 | 6 |
| Age | 2.98 | 1.69 | 435 | 1 | 6 |
| White (NonHispanic) | 0.58 | 0.5 | 406 | 0 | 1 |
| Black (NonHispanic) | 0.16 | 0.37 | 406 | 0 | 1 |
| Hispanic | 0.20 | 0.40 | 409 | 0 | 1 |
| Gender | 0.78 | 0.42 | 417 | 0 | 1 |
| Attend Floyd Protest? | 0.59 | 0.5 | 437 | 0 | 1 |
| Internal Efficacy | 3.4 | 0.75 | 529 | 1 | 4 |
| Identity Organization | 0.13 | 0.33 | 572 | 0 | 1 |
| AbolitionSupport | 0.56 | 0.50 | 439 | 0 | 1 |
| ReformSupport | 0.87 | 0.34 | 441 | 0 | 1 |

**Figure 5.9 Sample Distribution across Race (N=406)**

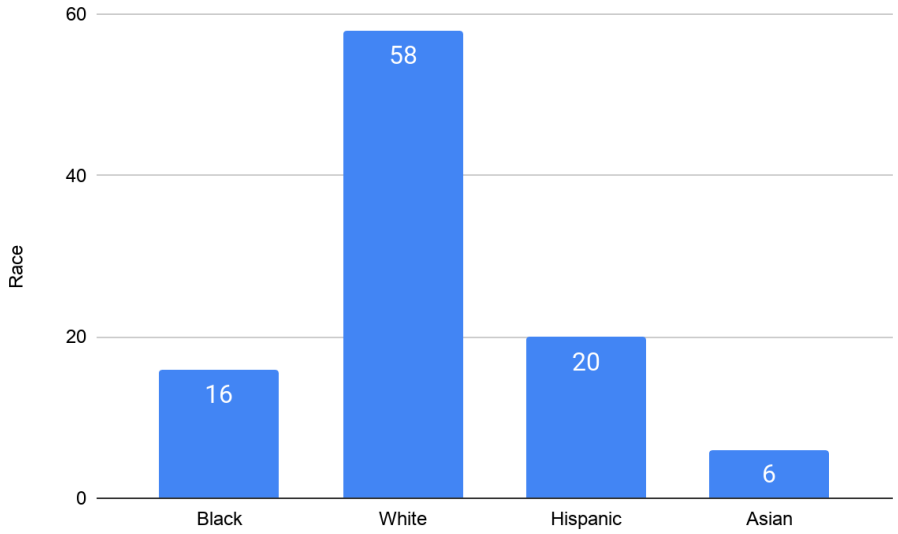


**Figure 5.10 Sample Distribution by Gender (N=417)**

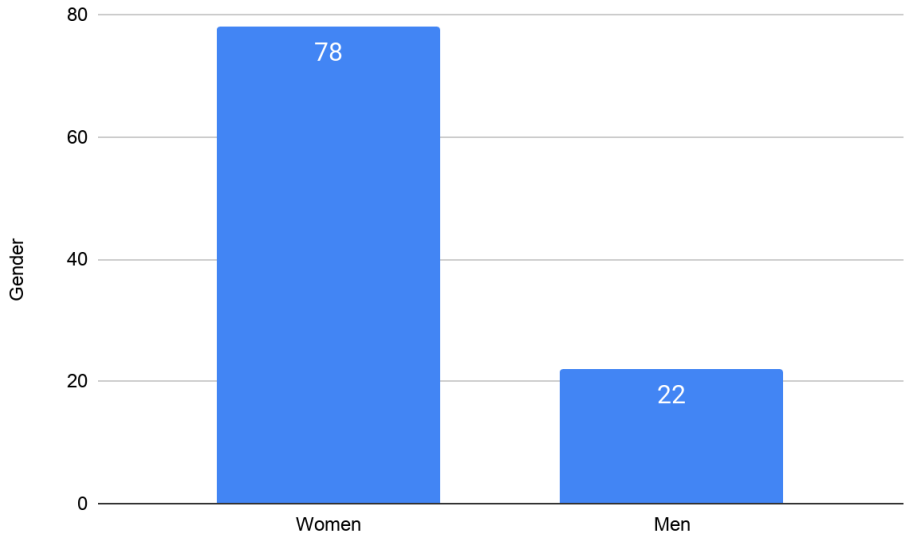



**Figure 5.11 Sample Distribution by Age (N=435)**

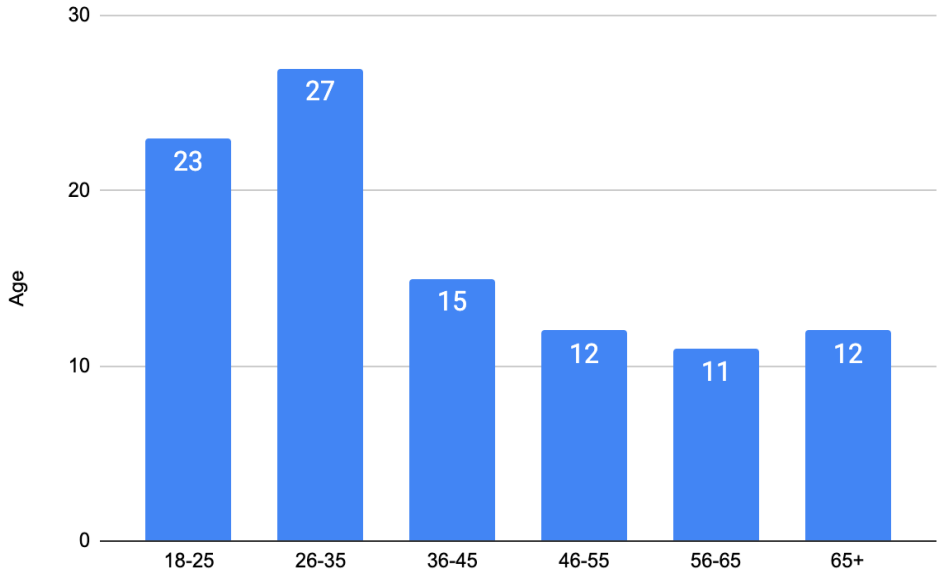


**Figure 5.12. Sample Income Distribution (N=426)**

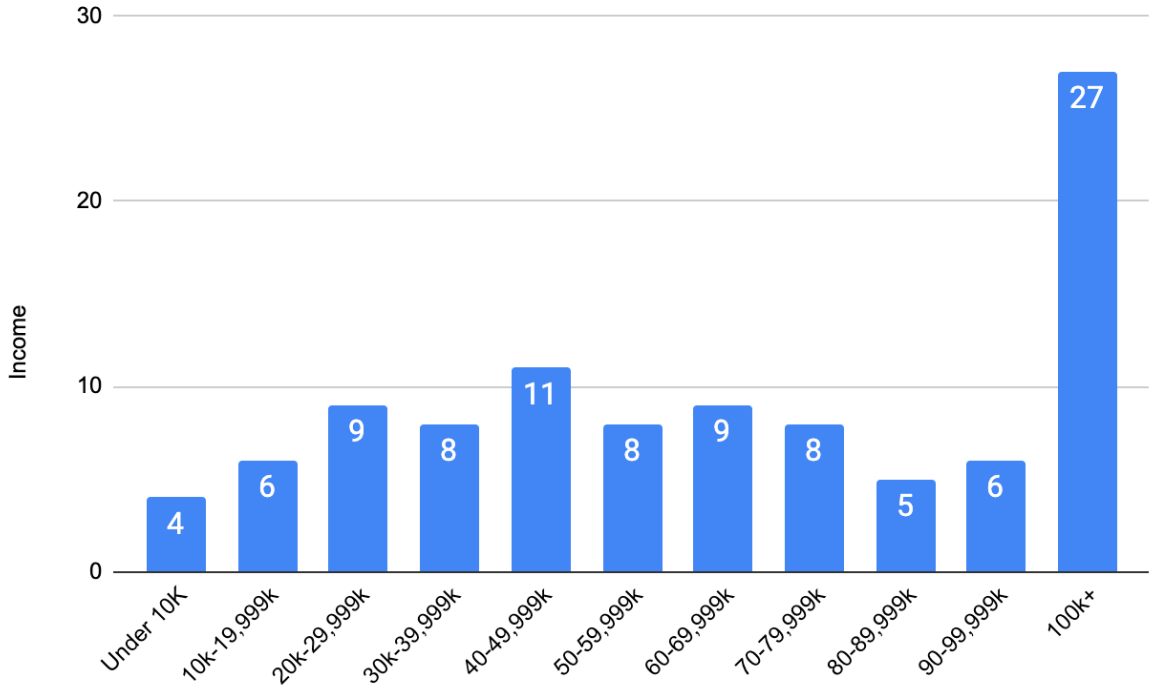



**Figure 5.13: Internal Efficacy: *"I have the skills necessary to participate in politics in my community."* (N=529)**

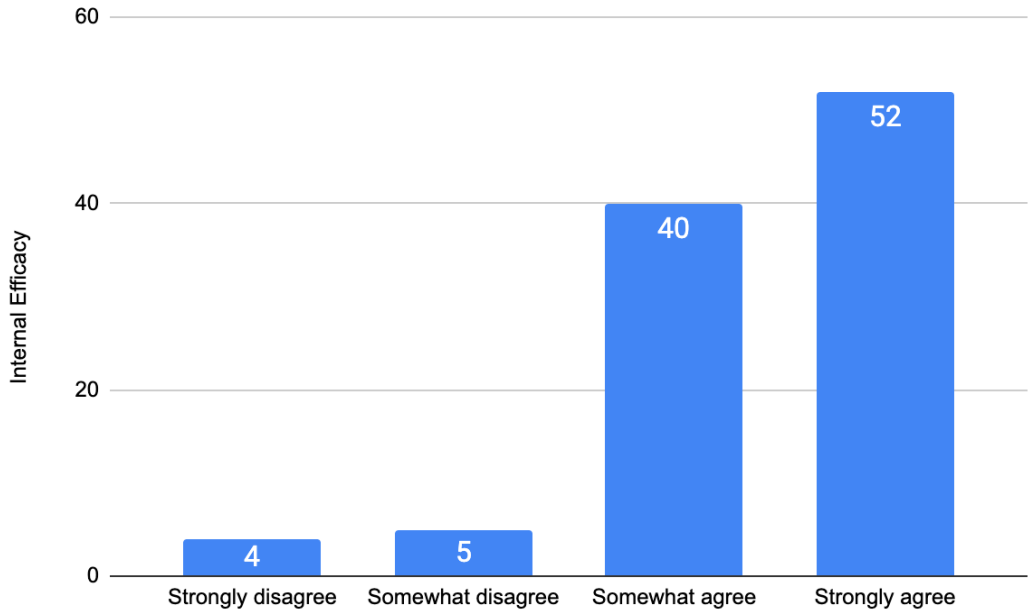


**Figure 5.14**

**On May 25, 2020, George Floyd, a black man, was killed by Minneapolis police officers after allegedly using a counterfeit $20 bill. Since the death of George Floyd, Black Lives Matter protests, marches, and uprisings have occurred around the nation. Have you attended a Black Lives Matter protest since the killing of George Floyd on May 25th of this year? (N=437)**

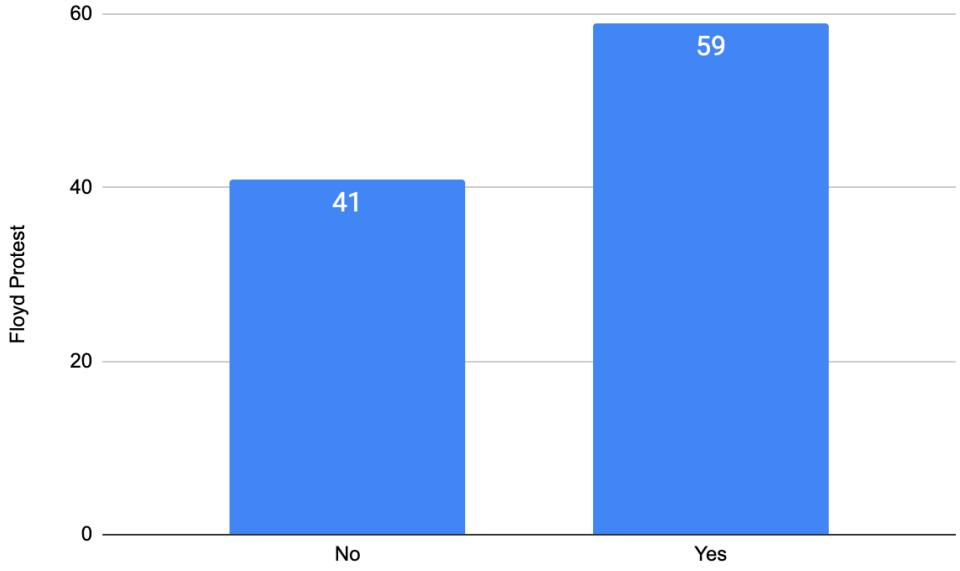



**Figure 5.15: Support for Abolition by Age**

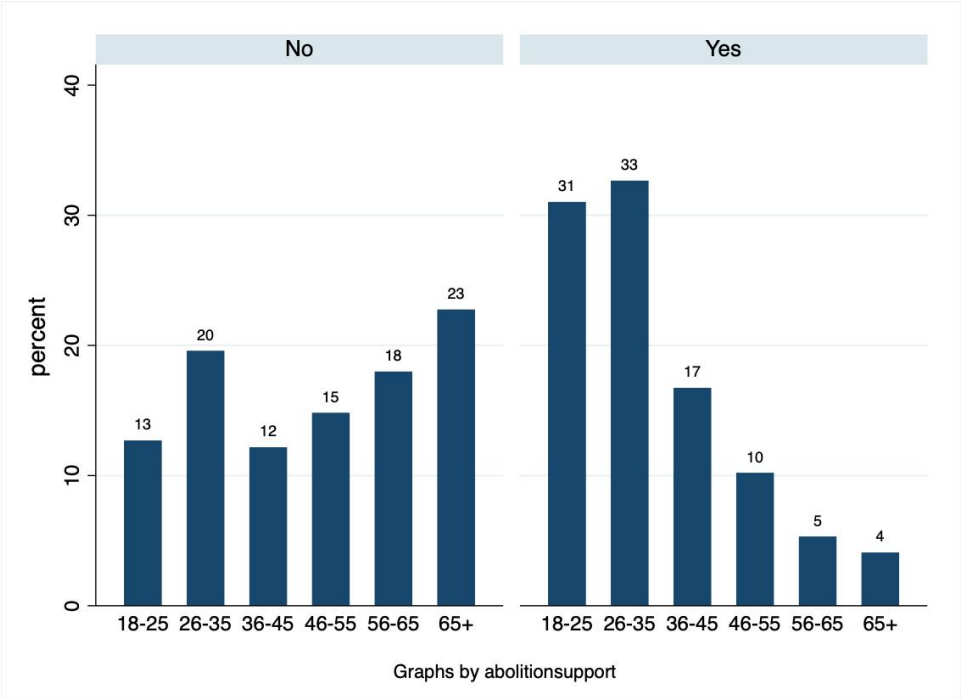


**Figure 5.16 Attended a George Floyd Protest by Abolition Support**

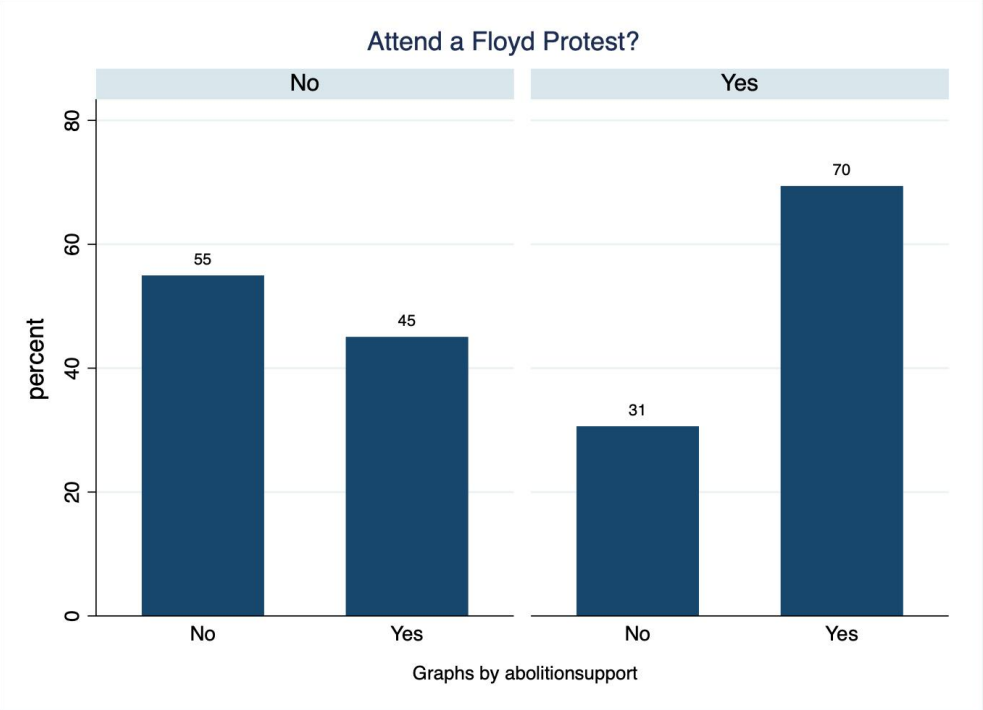


**Table 5.9. Support for Reform and Abolition by Organization**

| Organization | Support for Reform | | | Support for Abolition | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | No | Yes | Total Responses | No | Yes | Total Responses |
| ***Voter Mobilization/ Advocacy Org*** | | | | | | |
| Arizona Center for Empowerment | 1 | 1 | 2 | 0 | 2 | 2 |
| Colorado People's Action/ Colorado People's Alliance | 1 | 12 | 13 | 2 | 11 | 13 |
| Community Change Action/ Community Change Power | 7 | 25 | 32 | 17 | 13 | 30 |
| Hoosier Action | 1 | 4 | 5 | 3 | 2 | 5 |
| Maine People's Alliance (MPA) | 2 | 19 | 21 | 8 | 13 | 21 |
| Michigan People's Campaign (MPC) | 4 | 33 | 37 | 19 | 18 | 37 |
| New Florida Majority (NFM) | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| New Georgia Project Action Fund (NGP Action Fund) | 0 | 2 | 2 | 0 | 2 | 2 |
| New Jersey Organizing Project (NJOP) | 0 | 8 | 8 | 8 | 0 | 8 |
| Ohio Organizing Collaborative (OOC)/ Stand Up For Ohio/ All In For Ohio | 3 | 22 | 25 | 10 | 15 | 25 |
| OneAmerica Votes | 2 | 2 | 4 | 0 | 4 | 4 |
| Our Future West Virginia | 1 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 2 |
| Progressive Leadership Alliance of Nevada Action (PLAN Action) | 0 | 4 | 4 | 0 | 4 | 4 |
| Texas Organizing Project (TOP) | 0 | 4 | 4 | 3 | 1 | 4 |
| United for a New Economy (UNE) | 0 | 2 | 2 | 0 | 2 | 2 |
| | 22 | 140 | 162 | 71 | 89 | 160 |
| | **14%** | **86%** | **100%** | **44%** | **56%** | **100%** |
| ***Issue Focused Orgs, Faith Based, and Progressive Networks*** | No | Yes | Total Responses | No | Yes | Total Responses |
| Greater Cincinnati Homeless Coalition | 1 | 2 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 3 |
| Michigan Liberation | 1 | 14 | 15 | 7 | 8 | 15 |

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Washington Housing Alliance Action Fund (RAP/RUN) | 1 | 3 | 4 | 3 | 1 | 4 |
| Childcare Changemakers | 1 | 2 | 3 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| Mothering Justice/ Mothering Justice Action Fund | 0 | 4 | 4 | 1 | 3 | 4 |
| Parent Voices Oakland | 1 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 2 |
| Communities Creating Opportunity (CCO) | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| Granite State Organizing Project | 0 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 0 | 2 |
| Metropolitan Organizing Strategy Enabling Strength Action (MOSES Action) | 0 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 0 | 3 |
| Washington Interfaith Network (WIN) | 1 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 2 |
| | 6 | 33 | 39 | 21 | 18 | 39 |
| | **15%** | **85%** | **100%** | **54%** | **46%** | **100%** |
| ***Identity Focused (Various Causes)*** | No | Yes | Total Responses | No | Yes | Total Responses |
| BlackRoots Alliance | 0 | 2 | 2 | 0 | 2 | 2 |
| CASA in Action (CASAiA) | 1 | 4 | 5 | 0 | 2 | 2 |
| Center for Racial and Gender Equity | 0 | 4 | 4 | 1 | 3 | 4 |
| Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights Los Angeles Action (CHIRLA Action) | 0 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 2 |
| Colorado Cross-Disability Coalition (CCDC) | 0 | 5 | 5 | 2 | 3 | 5 |
| Colorado Immigrant Rights Coalition Action (CIRC Action) | 1 | 16 | 17 | 3 | 14 | 17 |
| Colorado Organization for Latina Opportunity and Reproductive Rights (COLOR) | 1 | 3 | 4 | 0 | 4 | 4 |
| Comunidades Unidas | 0 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 2 |
| Florida Immigrant Coalition Votes (FLIC Votes) | 2 | 3 | 5 | 4 | 1 | 5 |
| Illinois Coalition for Immigrant & Refugee Rights (ICIRR/ ICIRR Action) | 1 | 4 | 5 | 2 | 3 | 5 |
| Make the Road Action Nevada (MTRA-NV) | 1 | 1 | 2 | 0 | 2 | 2 |
| National Korean American Service | 1 | 2 | 3 | 0 | 3 | 3 |

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| & Education Consortium (NAKASEC) | | | | | | |
| Promise Arizona (PAZ) | 1 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 0 | 2 |
| Tennessee Immigrant & Refugee Rights Coalition Votes (TIRRC Votes) | 0 | 3 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 3 |
| Voces de La Frontera Action | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| | 9 | 53 | 62 | 18 | 41 | 59 |
| | **15%** | **85%** | **100%** | **31%** | **69%** | **100%** |

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