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Presentation Title: Political Message Matching And High-Impact Green Behaviors: Context-Specific Considerations And Limitations

Abstract: Climate change is arguably the largest problem faced by humanity, and the effects of anthropogenic climate change are predicted to have catastrophic consequences in the near- and long-term future (IPCC, 2018). However, there are still large numbers of people who believe either that climate change is not real or not important or that pro-environmental policies will do more harm than good; these people overwhelmingly hold conservative political beliefs (Dunlap et al., 2001). Thus, targeting conservatives in pro-environmental persuasion efforts is a potentially impactful way to increase sustainability behaviors because conservatives have room for improvement in this domain. In four studies, we tested the efficacy of matching persuasive pro-environmental messages containing moral arguments that appeal to either liberals or conservatives (e.g., Graham et al., 2009) to the political orientation of participants in an effort to elicit pro-environmental attitudes and behaviors. Study 1 targeted broad environmental concern, Study 2 advocated for voting for a fictional pro-environmental candidate, Study 3 promoted protesting and contacting political representatives about a proposed policy that would have detrimental environmental impacts, and Study 4 encouraged participants to decrease their meat consumption in order to cut greenhouse gas emissions. Generally, we found that matched persuasive messages targeting specific attitudes and behaviors were effective in increasing participants' relevant attitudes/behavioral intentions; however, there was no evidence of spillover into other related attitudinal domains. In Study 1, participants expressed greater environmental concern, but not intentions to vote for pro-environmental candidates; the reverse was true in Study 2. Study 3 showed marginal effects for intentions to contact representatives, but no effects for general pro-environmental attitudes. In Study 4 there were significant effects for meal choice but not attitudes. When crafting messages, care must be taken to target specific attitudes/behaviors in order for persuasion to take place.