

Does the Messenger Matter for Improving the Rule of Law in Post-Conflict Countries?

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ABSTRACT

A post-conflict context causes uncertainty around the rule of law both in terms of knowledge about the law and acceptance of it. The uncertainty requires that messengers of the law provide information about the law to the public. Yet, who the messenger is and in what form the message is delivered affects the success of message delivery. I argue that messengers who are credible are most likely to be effective in persuading people to accept the law. Specifically, I argue that male police officers are most likely to persuade citizens that certain laws are laws over female police officers, and over civilian enumerators due to stereotypes about women and civilians. I test this proposition using one field experiment and one survey experiment in rural Liberia. While the experimental results suggest that police officers are only slightly able to increase acceptance of certain laws, gender does matter when it comes to accepting the message, as female officers were less successful than male officers in persuading citizens about some laws. The survey experiments show that Liberians are less likely to accept the law when it is embedded as information during survey implementation. The results have strong implications for how governments in post-conflict countries improve their rule of law.

1 INTRODUCTION

In the aftermath of civil conflict, there may be confusion about what constitutes the formal laws of the land. This is because the civil conflict may have rendered laws obsolete as violence became a legitimate means for resolving conflict. Moreover, gross violations of human rights may have led to a disintegration of norms. In the absence of rule of law by the state, informal practices such as customary law or traditional laws may have filled the vacuum (Grenfell 2013). In such an environment, re-establishing the formal rule of law or establishing a set of formal laws for the state, ones that the state has the authority to enforce, becomes a challenge. Under what conditions do citizens accept the formal rule of law?

State agencies find various ways to teach citizens about the formal legal structure. They may engage in various forms of information campaigns to change norms. For example, scholars have found that radio and television campaigns in rural Rwanda change perceptions of social norms and also change individuals' behaviors toward intermarriage, open dissent, trust, empathy, cooperation, and trauma healing (Paluck 2009, Paluck and Green 2009). Additionally, face to face interactions by individuals helped to increase approval of potentially controversial laws (Broockman and Kalla 2016). At the same time, scholars have found that information campaigns sent via text in Colombia actually had a negative effect on government satisfaction or no effect (Nussio et al. 2019). With different sources leading to different outcomes in different contexts, it is important to understand the various ways that information about laws may be transmitted and if one of these ways is more successful than others in ensuring that citizens accept formal laws.

This paper explores how heterogeneity in message delivery affects citizens' ability to accept the formal rule of law. The literature in social psychology suggests that the most successful messengers are those who have source credibility, which means that they are perceived as experts, trustworthy, and authoritative (Petty and Wegener 1998). I posit that at least two factors conditions who is perceived as a credible messenger: messengers' sex and links to the state. First, like others that use social psychology theory and experimental methods to understand the influence of sex on outcomes,¹ I assess whether sex matters in determining whether or not a male or female

¹See for example, (Johnson et al. 2006, McDermott 2015, Williams, Elizabeth and Spencer-Rodgers 2010)

messenger will be successful in delivering a message (about the law). Citizens may view messengers along gendered lines, whether consciously or subconsciously due to implicit biases. These gendered views of the messenger affect his or her ability to persuade citizens about the message (about the law). Due to gender stereotypes and a rigidity in gender norms, female police officers that are messengers may be less likely to be perceived as experts, are less likely to be trustworthy because they are engaging in gender transgression, and they are less likely to be perceived as authoritative. This means that they may not be as “credible” as messengers as male police officers. To assess this claim, I randomized male and female police officers visits to household in rural Liberia in which they spoke to citizens about four laws—domestic violence, child rape, mob justice, and sassywood (trial by ordeal). The results of a survey three weeks later show that police provision of information about laws increased acceptance of some laws, but more strongly when the messenger was a male police officer.

Second, citizens may only accept laws when the messenger has links to the state. Because the law is fundamentally tied to the state, only messengers that represent the state might be successful in delivering messages. I test this proposition through a survey experiment in different villages in the same county, but in different villages. The civilian enumerators provided the exact same messaging to civilians as the police officers in the aforementioned experiment did. However, there was either no effect or even a negative treatment effect when enumerators read the information about the laws. I attribute this to citizens feeling like they could ask questions to an authority figure whereas the same discussions that occurred with police officers did not occur with the enumerators. This points to an important mechanism for acceptance of laws—a deliberative process in which citizens need a dialogue with experts. The implication from these two studies is that the messenger does matter when it comes to peoples’ acceptance of the law, but so does a deliberation about the law.

This paper makes several novel contributions to the rule of law literature. First, it assesses how heterogeneity with respect to in-person messengers affects acceptance of and perceptions about the rule of law. It is one of the first to develop how theories of messengers’ sex might affect messengers’ source credibility in delivering messages about the law in the context of a rural, post-conflict setting. It also demonstrates how important credibility of the messenger is for peoples’ acceptance of the law because it leads to dialogue and conversation about the law in which citizens have their questions answered. Survey experiments that include educational components may not

be effective, and even harmful to spreading information about the law as enumerators are not seen as credible messengers. Methodologically, it uses original field experiments and survey experiments to test the claims. The approach is rigorous and allows for causal claims to be made.

2 THE RULE OF LAW IN POST-CONFLICT COUNTRIES

While there are varying definitions of the rule of law,² it has traditionally meant that those in a position of authority in government exercise power within a framework that ensures constraint, accountability, and impartiality, and it also means that citizens living within the stated territory of the authority comply to legal norms even when they disagree with them (Raz 2013). Everyone should have access to the law’s protection, which means that citizens have knowledge about the law as well as access to legal institutions (Raz 2013). It does not refer to a situation where there is more than one system of law operating and where state law must compete with other forms of law. In the late 1990s and 2000’s, these principles were adopted by international actors as a part of state building efforts in weak and failing states.³ For example, in 2002, the Legal Vice-Presidency of the World Bank proposed that one of the four conditions for the rule of law be “access to justice” (Grenfell 2013). In general, state builders, like the World Bank or the United Nations, argue that the rule of law is necessary for economic development, democratization, and peace (Bates 2008, Call and Cousens 2008, Fukuyama 2010, Haggard, MacIntyre and Tiede 2008).

Post-conflict states face a decline in rule of law in the aftermath of war for several reasons. First, all parties that used violence to resolve the conflict broke the law. As a result, there may be confusion about whether violence is appropriate or not for conflict resolution in the aftermath of the war. The civil conflict may have rendered laws obsolete as violence became a legitimate avenue for resolving conflict. Such confusion may be compounded by the absence of accountability during and after the war, as many actors during a civil war receive amnesty (Olsen, Payne and Reiter 2010*a,b*). If those that perpetrated violence and violated the law are not held accountable,

²See, for example, Haggard, MacIntyre and Tiede (2008).

³International state building actors originally emphasized the importance of property rights, specifically an independent judiciary capable of protecting property and enforcing contracts Grenfell (2013, pg.25).

citizens may lose faith in the law (Brannigan and Jones 2009, Lessa et al. 2014). Moreover, state weakness also contributes to a decline in the rule of law after war because the war disintegrates the central authority of the state, including its capacity to enforce laws (Goldstone 2008). As formal state institutions deteriorate during conflicts, the space may be filled by informal or customary or traditional laws and institutions. To give an example, in parts of Afghanistan that are no longer under the control of the Taliban, many women still wear the burka even though it is no longer the law. Despite changes in the law, citizens may be confused about whether to comply with old laws or new ones. In general, there may be a proliferation of institutions that compete with the state, and citizens have little information about what laws exist and will be enforced, causing confusion about the rule of law more generally. In particular, in rural peripheries, access to information about laws is much more difficult than in urban settings, because of the lack of formal state institutions.⁴

For the above reasons, many state and international actors have engaged in state building directed at strengthening rule of law programming to ensure that the laws governing society are ones created and enforced by the state (Call 2003, Call and Cousens 2008). Indeed, the aftermath of civil wars provides a unique opportunity to address the rule of law (Chen, Loayza and Reynal-Querol 2008). Scholars have found that there may be improvements in civil liberties, judicial independence, and restraints on executive authority as states transition to peace (Haggard and Tiede 2014). Yet one of the main struggles for post-conflict countries may be the lack of information about laws. To address these concerns, international programming on the rule of law sometimes focuses on the individual, teaching individuals about formal laws and working to change individuals' norms and practices to be consistent with formal laws.⁵ For example, the Carter Center implemented an "Access to Justice" program in Liberia starting in 2006, whereby they partnered with local organizations to implement a civic education program about laws in Liberia.⁶

Information campaigns about the law can take the form of the government sending direct messages to the public via emails, text messages, phone calls, or in person. Scholars have found

⁴See, for example World Bank (2008).

⁵Despite attempts at "hybrid" justice mechanisms or "legal plurality," programmatic efforts remain focused on transitioning to state-based models of rule of law (Fukuyama 2010, Grenfell 2013).

⁶See "Access to Justice in Liberia," https://www.cartercenter.org/peace/conflict_resolution/access-to-justice/index.html.

text messages as an inefficient way to teach people about government reforms (Nussio et al. 2019). Radio campaigns and television programs have been more successful, as scholars have found that such programs change perceptions of social norms and also change individuals' behaviors toward intermarriage, open dissent, trust, empathy, cooperation, and trauma healing (Paluck 2009, Paluck and Green 2009).⁷ Additionally, face to face interactions by individuals have helped to increase approval of potentially controversial laws (Broockman and Kalla 2016). The diversity in programming on information delivery and the diverse findings from the research requires more evaluations of the different ways governments provide information to the public in terms of direct messages about the law or indirect messages disguised within stories (i.e. (Paluck 2009, Paluck and Green 2009)); in terms of the technology involved, whether in-person (i.e. (Broockman and Kalla 2016)), via a media platform (radio, TV) (i.e. (Paluck 2009, Paluck and Green 2009)), or via communication technology (text, telephone) (i.e. (Nussio et al. 2019)); and in terms of heterogeneity of the technology involved. For example, Nussio et al. (2019) explore heterogeneity within text messaging by assessing the effect of participatory texts compared to non-participatory texts. They find different results, with a negative effect on government satisfaction from normal texts and no effect for participatory texts. Similarly, not all face to face interactions are expected to be successful. The remainder of this paper serves to explore the effect of heterogeneity within face to face interactions on information transmission about the rule of law.

3 FORMAL LAW AND PERSUASION: THE ROLE OF CREDIBLE MESSENGERS

A key assumption mentioned above is that in post-conflict societies, people's compliance with the law may be based on their knowledge about the law and by being persuaded about the law's validity. These two factors—recall and persuasion—should increase compliance. Citizens cannot comply with laws of which they are unaware and they may not comply with laws if they do not believe they are laws. Research has shown a correlation between recall and persuasion (Haugtvedt, Petty and Cacioppo 1992, Mackie and Asuncion 1990), indicating that recall is not sufficient for compliance, but that individuals must be *persuaded* by the message. If they are persuaded, they

⁷The studies did not find an effect for the radio programming affecting perceptions.

can also recall the message. The question moving forward, then, is how a messenger of the law can teach people about the law and get them to believe what they are saying.

The messenger is most likely to have an impact on persuasion when the messenger is perceived as credible. When a credible source provides information about the law, individuals are more likely to accept it. In social psychology, this is referred to as source credibility, whereby change in perception is a result of aspects of the person presenting the persuasive appeal (Cialdini and Goldstein 2004, Eagly and Chaiken 1993, Rhine and Severance 1970). A source qualifies as credible of an “expert” when he or she is “skillful or highly trained or informed in some special field (Callaghan and Schnell 2009, 14)” They are able to influence the direction and strength of an attitude about the topic (law) (Callaghan and Schnell 2009).

At least four factors increase someone’s source credibility (Petty and Wegener 1998). Credible sources are perceived as knowledgeable about the topic experts, trustworthy, likability/attractive, and perceived to be an authority figure (Hass 1981, Petty and Wegener 1998, Petty 2018, Priester and Petty 2003). First, persuasive appeal is based on expertise—the idea that people will believe the information from someone who is assumed to have a lot of relevant knowledge (French, Raven and Cartwright 1959). Early research found that source expertise has an impact on persuasion even when distraction levels are high (Kiesler and Mathog 1968), and when the existing knowledge base of receivers is low (Wood and Kallgren 1988). Additionally neurological tests have also found that expertise can trigger responses in the brain related to persuasion (Klucharev, Smidts and Fernández 2008).

Second, Eagly, Wood and Chaiken (1978) found that sources regarded as trustworthy were more persuasive than sources perceived as untrustworthy. Petty and Wegener (1998) found that people are likely to accept messages they do not fully understand or agree with even if it comes from a source that they trust. Moreover, both early and later scholarship has found that both attractiveness and likability increase the likelihood of persuasion, though likability sometimes conditions the effect of attractiveness on persuasion (Chaiken 1986, Kahle and Homer 1985, Petty and Cacioppo 1983, Reinhard, Messner and Sporer 2006).

Finally, peoples’ perceptions of the messenger’s authority is likely to have an effect on the success of persuasion. Authority means when the messenger is perceived as having control over positive or negative sanctions, concern over whether the recipient complies with the request, and

the ability to monitor whether or not the recipient accepts the messenger’s position or not (McGuire 1969). Each of these elements have been found to have an effect on persuasion (Petty and Wegener 1998).

All the characteristics associated with credibility—expertise, trust, likability, and power—serve as a heuristic for those in a low-information environment, because they are able to take a cue from the messenger despite the message. In other words, even if the message is difficult to understand or controversial, if individuals find the messenger to be an expert, trust him or her, like him or her, or see him or her as a powerful person, then they are more likely to accept the message.

3.1 WHEN THE MESSENGER IS A POLICE OFFICER

Experts of the law are usually those who have experience with the law, whether by making the law (politicians), being students of the law and practicing it (lawyers) or enforcers of the law (police). Each of these messengers could be perceived as experts of the law, perceived as trustworthy, and perceived to have authority.⁸ Police officers however, are more likely to actually teach people about the laws on a more regular basis through community policing programs (Cordner 2014). Citizens might view police officers as experts of the law because they are enforcers of the law and because they work on behalf of the state. Police officers are expected to be experts of the law because they enforce them and learning the laws is a major part of their professional training (Cordner 2014). Citizens perceive police officers as trustworthy based on their prior experiences with the police. In general, in post-conflict countries, trust in the police is likely to be low, but it can be earned through relationship building (Karim 2019). Moreover, at least in post-conflict countries in sub-Saharan Africa, they appear to be as trustworthy as law makers and judges.⁹

Finally, of the the potential experts of the law, police officers are most likely to be perceived as authoritative because they are charged to enforce the law. They have control over negative sanctions—writing a ticket, fining, or arresting when citizens fail to comply with their requests. And, they have the ability to monitor the actions of citizens. Given that police officers are experts

⁸It is not possible to assess whether politicians, lawyers/judges, or police officers are more attractive or likable, because it depends on the individual person. It is held constant in the experiment below.

⁹See Appendix.

in the law, are perceived to be somewhat trustworthy, and are in a position of authority, they may be credible messengers for communicating law to citizens. This leads to the following hypothesis, that police officers will be able to persuade citizens about formal laws.

H1: Delivery of information about laws by police officers will lead to more acceptance of formal laws.

3.2 WHEN THE MESSENGER IS A FEMALE POLICE OFFICER

A growing number of police departments, especially in post-conflict countries, have increased the diversity of the people that they hire to be police officers. This includes hiring more minorities as well as more women. In post-conflict societies that receive help from UN peacekeeping missions and international state builders, there has been an increased push to increase the number of female police officers (Huber and Karim 2018). These changes also affect who the messenger is and how the messenger's message is received by citizens in post-conflict countries. In particular, gender could play a key role in how citizens receive messages from either female or male police officers.

Gender stereotypes about women would suggest that they are less likely to be perceived as experts. Research has found that men are more likely to be viewed as an expert on issues that are deemed masculine (H, Burford and David 1975). This notion has consistently been backed by experimental research. For example Goldberg (1968) found that scientific content of an article labeled as written by "John McKay" was rated more favorably than when the same article was attributed to "Joan McKay." Goldberg (1968) posted that the male or female label acted as a simple persuasion cue—triggering a more favorable opinion of the article written by a *male* expert. This article was more believable because a male author wrote it. Similar to the domain of science, the domain of security and the domain of law are traditionally considered to be masculine spaces, where men have dominated and become experts historically. Women were late to be included in security and legal professions, meaning that they may be less likely to be perceived as experts in the area. Women were only allowed to join the police forces and become lawyers around the world in the early 19th century. Implicit biases about women's ability and performance in these areas still exist today (Moss-Racusin et al. 2012). Moreover, because of beliefs that women are not experts

in “male domains,” they may also not be perceived as experts on issues that are more masculine such as violence and security.

At a first glance, women may be judged to be more trustworthy than men because of certain gender stereotypes about women. According to Ashmore and Del Boca (1979, pg.222) gender stereotypes are a “set of beliefs about the personal attributes of a group of people (men and women).” They are commonly held beliefs, sometimes implicit, as individuals may not always be cognizant of these beliefs (Del Boca, Ashmore and McManus 1986) and they start to develop very early on as one of the more salient (Weisman, Johnson and Shutts 2015). One of the more common beliefs about women is that they are more caring, compassionate, trustworthy, and sensitive (Prentice and Carranza 2002, Six and Eckes 1991). These stereotypes often carry to many different contexts and societies (Diekmann and Eagly 2000, Goldstein 2003). As such, *female* police officers may be perceived as more trustworthy than male police officers if gender stereotypes about women hold.

There is reason to believe, however, that female police officers will not be perceived as more trusting than male police officers because they are engaged in transgressing their gender role when they join the police force. Role congruity theory proposes that perceived incongruity between the women and their gender role can lead to prejudice against the female (Eagly and Karau 2002). Violating stereotypes can result in a backlash effect or social and economic reprisals (Rudman and Glick 2001). When women engage in roles that contradict traditional ideas about what women are supposed to do, they may be punished for it (Manne 2017, Rudman and Glick 2001). Women who enter into the security forces may not improve trust for this reason, because they are transgressing their gender role. Moreover, to fit into the male dominated space, women may actually behave in a more masculine way. Female police officers often engage in masculine behavior to show that they belong to the group (Rabe-Hemp 2009). This means that female police officers may not be accepted by some societies, because the accepted roles for policing are for men, and because women may behave in a masculine way when they do participate in policing, which society may not accept.

Finally, gender stereotypes extend to men as well; they are expected to be more aggressive, authoritative, tough, and stoic (Prentice and Carranza 2002, Six and Eckes 1991). Compared to women, they are more likely to be perceived in these ways. Because law enforcement, as an institution, is a male dominated arena, those that self-select into them are more likely to embody these characteristics especially as because these qualities are more highly valued in those spaces (Karim

and Beardsley 2017).¹⁰ Even though all recruits will attempt to embody these characteristics because they may be more highly valued in a police department, *male* police officers are more likely to be perceived as aggressive, authoritative, tough, and stoic because they are not transgressing their gender role. In short, female police officers are less likely to be perceived as credible messengers because they are less likely to be perceived as experts and as authoritative, and because they may be perceived as transgressing their gender roles, meaning they may actually be perceived as *less* trustworthy.

Thus, while police officers as agents of the state may be perceived as credible, and hence they should be able to influence citizen's acceptance of formal law, because female police officers are less likely to be perceived as credible than male police officers, they may be less successful at getting the message across than their male counterparts. This leads to a second hypothesis:

H2: Compared to male police officers, delivery of information about laws by female police officers will lead to less acceptance of formal laws.

3.3 WHEN THE MESSENGER IS A SURVEY ENUMERATOR

Finally, while police officers may be perceived as credible messengers, regular civilians are unlikely to be perceived as credible messengers. In particular enumerators, who maybe representative of door-to-door canvassers for different campaigns lack expertise. How do we know, for example, that someone who volunteers for Green Peace is actually an expert on global warming? While NGO workers might have some credibility due to their affiliation with the NGO, but enumerators lack this benefit that affiliation might bring. Enumerators definitely lack expertise in the law. Even if they were politicians, lawyers, or police previously, their affiliation as survey enumerator signals that they are not experts. Moreover, canvassers or enumerators may not be trusted in communities if they are strangers to the community. For this reason, it is highly unlikely that enumerators will be considered credible sources of law. They will be unlikely to persuade civilians in rural Liberia to accept the law.

H3: Delivery of information about laws by survey enumerators will lead to less acceptance of

¹⁰See Chapter 3.

formal laws.

4 CASE SELECTION: GRAND KRU, LIBERIA

The scope conditions for this article require that the hypotheses be tested in a weak, post-conflict country. This is the context in which there is most uncertainty about formal laws. The studies are conducted in rural Liberia, which represents a hard test to the theory because a members of rural, post-conflict areas are less likely to have knowledge about the formal law and may show more resistance to it. In particular, the studies were conducted in Grand Kru County, Liberia.¹¹ Liberia is a weak, post-conflict state. The civil war in Liberia lasted nearly two decades and ended in 2003, after nearly two decades of fighting that killed over 250,000 people. The UN Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) arrived in 2003, and there has been peace since the mission's arrival. However, Liberia is currently one of the poorest post-conflict countries in the world and its rule of law was dysfunctional at the end of the war (Friedman and MacAulay 2011). Grand Kru county has been historically ignored both in terms of research and by the government, which means that those living their may have less access to information about the law than other parts of the country.¹² The types of questions that respondents in the studies asked reflect this concern. The respondents asked the police officers during the household visits,¹³ it becomes clear that there is a lot of confusion about the rule of law. Many asked about what happens when they call the police. For example “what if I call and there is no response, what will become of that report? Or, “so if someone wrong you and you take them to the station how many days will it take before going to court?” “Should we pay them for arresting someone?” Some asked about the formal law intruding on customary law, “is your age and rape talk not in conflict with the traditional laws?” They were concerned about involving formal institutions in local disputes, “when we call the police for our friends you don't think the community will blame us?” There was also uncertainty about when to call the police. One respondent stated ‘if your child cannot respect you, can you call the police?’ Or, “if

¹¹A county is the country sub-unit much like individual states in the U.S.

¹²See “More aid needed for ‘forgotten’ Grand Kru county, <http://www.irinnews.org/report/54819/liberia-more-aid-needed-forgotten-grand-kru-county>.

¹³The enumerator that accompanied the police officer recorded all the questions that the citizens asked.

your child does not want to go to school, can you call the police?”¹⁴

Liberia (and Grand Kru county) is not unlike other post-conflict countries or territories. Many other post-conflict countries contain territories where the state has little presence. Thus, the theory here could apply to other post-conflict contexts as well.

5 RESEARCH DESIGN

In order to test H1, H2, and H3, I conducted a field experiment in fifteen counties in Grand Kru and a separate survey experiment in another ten counties in 2015. The experiment and survey experiment occurred at different times, but with the same enumerators.¹⁵ The survey experiment cannot be treated as a separate arm of the experiment survey because randomization was done at different levels. For the experiment, the randomization occurred at the neighborhood level and for the survey experiment, it occurred at the individual level. As such, they are treated as different studies and I do not compare the results across studies. Table 1 and Figure 1 show the research design for the experiment. The treatments in both studies use an intend-to-treat design.

Using the 2008 census, I selected fifteen villages for the experiment from forty-three villages that included eighty households or more. For the experiment, within each village, I randomized visits at the neighborhood level. When each team (four police officers and three enumerators) arrived in the village, they asked for a list of the neighborhoods in the village. On average in the fifteen villages selected for treatment, each village included four neighborhoods, and each neighborhood contained about 56 households. Neighborhoods were randomly assigned to the female police officer treatment, male police officer treatment, and the control group. The pairs of officers and one enumerator then used a random walk method to randomly select twenty-five households in each neighborhood. The total sample size consisted of 750 households, 375 visits by male officers and 375 visits by female officers.

For the survey, I randomly selected ten villages that were not a part of the experiment. The same process to choose neighborhoods and household was used by the enumerators in these villages. They made a list of neighborhoods, randomly selected two, and conducted a random walk of the two neighborhoods, visiting twenty-five households. Enumeration teams were the same as

¹⁴For a full description of the questions asked, see the Appendix.

¹⁵The survey experiment happened later.

the ones who conducted the survey for the experiment and composed of teams to two male and female enumerators.

Table 1: Research Design for Treatment

Group	Number of Villages	Households per village	Total Households
Experiment Treatment 1: Visit by Male Police	15	25	375
Experiment Treatment 2: Visit by Female Police	15	25	375
Experiment Control: No Visit	15	15	225
Total	45	65	975
Survey Experiment Treatment: Information	10	25	250
Survey Experiment Control: No Visit	10	25	250
Total	20	50	500

While the study received IRB approval,¹⁶ scholars have recently called on those engaging in fieldwork to go beyond IRB in thinking about research ethics (Cronin-Furman and Lake 2018, Michelson 2016). As such, the ethics of doing fieldwork with the police are discussed more thoroughly in (AUTHOR).

5.1 TREATMENT: FIELD EXPERIMENT (H1 AND H2)

The field experiment in Grand Kru County was used to test H1 and H2. There are two treatments in the field experiment. The main treatment is a thirty minute household visit by male Liberian National Police officers in which they provided information to members of randomly selected households about police reform and about four Liberian laws. The second hypothesis requires testing the difference between male and female police officers as messengers. As such, I also randomized the household visits by officer’s sex. Two female officers and two male officers visited randomly selected households. They all memorized the same script, which included information about police reforms and laws.¹⁷ At the end of the visit, the officers gave the household cards with phone numbers of the local police. These cards were later used to identify whether individuals within the households had been treated. Police officers who were selected for the experiment were chosen from the professionalized pool of new recruits, had similar personalities with one another,¹⁸ and were all from the same ethnic group as community members from Grand Kru County. The officers spent between 1-3 days in each village.

¹⁶On May 12, 2015, the Emory University IRB approved the project. The IRB is filed under IRB00073869.

¹⁷The script can be found in the Online Appendix.

¹⁸See Appendix for details.

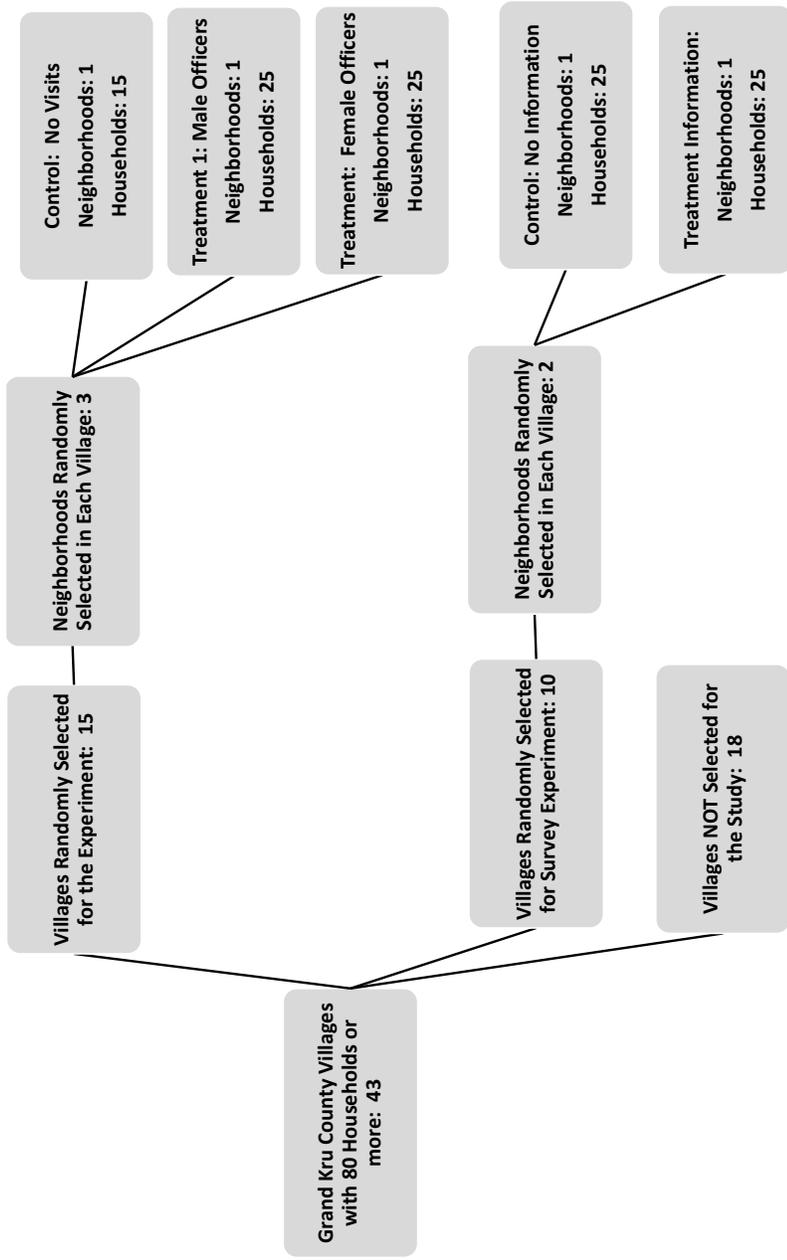


Figure 1: Research Design

The laws that the officers provided information about included a law about domestic violence, child rape, mob violence, and sassywood (trial by ordeal). Importantly, I do not include information about child support in the information delivery. However, the information that enumerators gathered about the visits show that there was a lot of interest about child support and custody issues. As such, the endline survey, conducted three weeks later, included a question about child support. All these laws are considered to be somewhat controversial laws, as customary law does not necessarily prohibit them. Child rape is prohibited under the Rape Law of 2005 and the Children’s Law of 2011. Domestic Violence is prohibited by an executive order in 2018, but it is also prohibited under the the 1978 Penal Code. Mob Justice is illegal under the 1978 Penal Code. Child support is required by the Domestic Relations Law of 1973 and the Penal Law of 1976. Sassywood is illegal under the 1986 (current) Constitution Article 5. While some of these laws are older than others, there has been a concerted effort to convince people of these laws, through programs such as the Carter Center’s Access to Justice program.

It is also worth noting that since 2005, the Liberian National Police (LNP) have undergone a massive professionalization scheme, where they replaced nearly their entire pre-war police force with new recruits who were vetted and who were required to meet certain standards.¹⁹ They also underwent significant training at the Liberian National Police Training Academy (LNPTA) by UNMIL.

The Center for Applied Research and Training surveyed the treated households that were visited by police officers three weeks later.²⁰ Importantly, the control group survey was conducted at the same time as the police visits in order to avoid spillover. In small, rural communities, information travels fast, so conducting a survey of a control group would not have been possible because many of the control group members would likely have known about the police visits.

¹⁹Around 80% of the police force was replaced (Karim and Gorman 2016). For more extensive, detail, see (Friedman and MacAulay 2011, ?).

²⁰The enumerators presented themselves as independent researchers assessing the health and security of the county. They were able to recognize the households based on maps that were drawn by the enumerators that were part of the police team and by a code that was written discreetly adjacent to the household. This practice of coding houses for the census and other nationwide surveys is common in Liberia. All treated households were located.

5.2 TREATMENT: SURVEY EXPERIMENT (H3)

The treatment for the survey experiment and the test for H3, was information about police professionalization and laws delivered by the survey enumerators from CART. Importantly, the survey enumerator used the exact same script that the police officers used in the experiment. The script contained information about the four laws: beating wives, child rape, mob justice, and sassywood. Again, it did not contain information about child support.

The information treatment is different from the police officers' visits in a number of ways. Most obviously, the messenger is different. Another important difference is that the enumerators did not engage in lengthy dialogue or relationship building with civilians. They simply provided information and moved on to the next module. Finally, unlike the police visits, which were randomized at the neighborhood level and the treatment was implemented to households, the information treatment embedded in the surveys was implemented at the individual level and double blind. Neither the enumerators nor the respondent knew that information was being provided to the respondent. When the enumerator got to a particular section, either the treatment was there or it was not. The enumerators simply followed instructions on the survey that appeared.

5.3 OUTCOMES

Broadly, the survey implemented in both studies (three weeks after the police visits for the experiment) included a range of questions, including questions testing the respondents about the five laws mentioned above. The laws were chosen by the LNP as laws that they wanted to promote in rural counties. Thus, the outcome variables were the same for both the experiment and survey experiment. The survey included questions about acceptance of five different laws. The five questions about the laws were accompanied by a question about whether or not respondents believed the formal institutions could better settle disputes than informal institutions. In Liberia, especially rural Liberia, it is common for community elders or traditional leaders to resolve conflicts. A shift in norms about the formal rule of law would see respondents preferences about dispute resolution change from the use of these informal mechanisms to formal ones. Below are the list of questions and the appendix shows the summary statistics of the outcome variables from the survey.

Rule of Law

- Is beating your wife or woman a crime? (Domestic Violence)
- Is it a crime to do man/woman business [rape] with someone under the age of 18? (Child Rape)
- Is it a crime for everyone to beat/jump on a person that commits a crime (mob justice/violence)? (Mob Justice)
- Is it a crime if a man does not support his outside child? (Child Support)
- Is giving people sassywood (trial by ordeal) a crime? (Sassywood)

To get at perceptions of the rule of law, I ask a question about perceptions of the formal law. I ask whether they agree or disagree with this statement: “People from Liberian formal law side like the courts in this district and county or the County Commissioner can settle a palava [dispute] better than the elders from the community.”

5.4 MODELS

For both the experiment and survey experiment, I use standard regression analysis and provide logistic and count models in the appendix to show non-experimental relationships between other variables e.g. sex, age, minority, etc) and acceptance of the law. Because the outcomes for the five laws included more than one question on the survey or clusters of thematically similar questions, I also estimated the Average Effect Size (AES).²¹ This mitigates the possibility of Type I and Type II errors (Clingingsmith, Khwaja and Kremer 2009, Kling, Liebman and Katz 2007). All models are presented using co-variates on which there was no balance.

²¹The AES across J related dependent variables is given by $\tau = \sum_{j=1}^J \frac{\pi_j}{\sigma_j}$, where π_j is the average treatment effect on each dependent variable and σ_j is the standard deviation of dependent variable j in the control group. To test the null hypothesis of no average effect, the effects π_j are jointly estimated using seemingly unrelated regression. The J dependent variables are stacked to compute a variance-covariance matrix for testing the statistical significance of τ , the AES. For further details see Clingingsmith, Khwaja and Kremer (2009), Kling, Liebman and Katz (2007).

5.5 THREATS TO INFERENCE

There are two important threats to inference that occurred. First, the balance table below demonstrates that there was some imbalance, especially between the neighborhoods that were visited by male officers and female officers. Neighborhoods visited by female officers were more likely to be less Christian, have more traditional leaders, have more people born in town, and more people own land. Compared to the control group neighborhoods, those visited by female officers were less likely to be Christian, more likely to own land, and have a higher number of people living in the household. Compared to control group neighborhoods, those visited by male officers were less likely to have a traditional leader. The imbalance is due to the randomization being conducted at the neighborhood level. Unfortunately, data was not available at the neighborhood level to account for variation and the variation was unknown at the time of the study. As such, it was not possible to block on neighborhood characteristics. To account for the imbalance, the models control for Christianity, traditional leaders, born in town, land ownership, and household number. I also include whether or not respondent knew a police officer in the models below.

5.5.1 SPILLOVER

The second threat to inference occurred only in the experimental analysis. There was a violation of the stable unit treatment value assumption (SUTVA). Even though I took precautions to try to avoid spillover, including conducting the control group survey at the time of the police visits and randomizing at the neighborhood level, there were forty-five respondents in the control group who knew about the police visits in other parts of the village. Knowledge of the visits likely occurred because of the novelty of strangers visiting a village. Despite only spending two to three nights in certain neighborhoods of the village, word spread about the police officers' visits. To account for bias, I provide provide the complier average causal effect (CACE) estimates in the appendix.

6 RESULTS

The results are split up into two sets of analyses. First, I look at the treatment effect from the visits by male and female officers. Second, I explore the results from the survey experiment. Table

2 shows the average effect sizes of the pooled (T v. C), disaggregated treatments (F v. C and M v. C), and the comparison of the female treatment compared to the male treatment. The table shows that there is treatment effect for the pooled treatment, female treatment and the male treatment. The pooled treatment moved the average number of laws by only 0.18 standard deviations. The male treatment moved the average number of laws by 0.23 standard deviations. The female treatment moved the average by 0.14 standard deviations. The table shows that the treatment effect size is largest for the male treatment. That is, male police officer visits were perhaps most persuasive. But, the difference does not appear to be statistically significant. Thus, despite the possible stronger treatment effect by male police officers, female police officers have a positive effect. That is, they are still successful in being persuasive. This results did not change based on the sex of the respondents (see appendix). There is support for H1 and some support for H2.

It is important to note that the visits did not lead to support for laws for all the different types of laws. There is less support that the visits persuaded citizens about sassywood and mob justice. In the case of female police visits, they did not seem to persuade people about domestic violence. There could be several reasons for this. First, it is possible that peoples' opinions about those laws are more inelastic because informal norms about them are strong. Another explanation is that citizens engaged in a dialogue about the other laws—domestic violence, child rape, and child support. There is some evidence for this explanation (discussed below).

Table 3 Models 1-3 show the OLS estimates for changed perceptions in the formal rule of law. Here, again we see that the pooled, male, and female visits enhanced perceptions of the formal rule of law. Again, male officers appear to have a stronger effect in changing perceptions, although Model 3 shows that the difference between male and female visits was not statistically significant. We can conclude that male and female visits equally enhanced perceptions of the formal rule of law.

Turning to the survey experiment, we see that when enumerators provided the exactly same information to citizens, the effect was negative or null. The Table 2 column (Information Treatment v. C) shows that the average decreased by 0.14 standard deviations if individuals had been told about the laws by enumerators. The negative effect was strongest for child support, which is driving most of the negative results for the overall pooled effect. Recall that this was the law that was not

Table 2: Average Effect Size: Agreeing to Liberian Laws

	(T v. C)	(F v. C)	(M v. C)	(F v. M)	(Information Treatment v. C)
All Laws	0.18 (0.05)**	0.14 (0.06)*	0.23 (0.05)***	-0.14 (0.07)	-0.14 (0.05)**
Beat Wife	0.07 (0.03)*	0.05 (0.04)	0.09 (0.03)**	-0.04 (0.03)	0.05 (0.03) ⁺
Child Rape	0.10 (0.03)***	0.09 (0.03)*	0.12 (0.03)***	-0.03 (0.02)	-0.07 (0.03)*
Mob Justice	-0.02 (0.32)	-0.05 (0.04)	0.01 (0.04)	-0.07 (0.05)	-0.03 (0.04)
Child Support	0.16 (0.05)***	0.17 (0.05)**	0.17 (0.05)***	-0.01 (0.02)	-0.17 (0.04)***
Sassywood	0.04 (0.06)	0.02 (0.06)	0.08 (0.06)	-0.05 (0.04)	-0.07 (0.04)
Observations	968	596	594	746	500

Note:

⁺; *p<0.05; **p<0.01; ***p<0.001
Std. Err. adjusted for 15 clusters (villages)
(T= Combined (M and F) Treatment, F = Female Officers, M = Male Officers, C = Control)
Spillover group included as a part of the treatment

Table 3: Perceptions of Rule of Law

	Belief in Formal Law			
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Male Police Officer	0.21** (0.07)			
Female Police Officer	0.13 ⁺ (0.07)			
Traditional Leadership	0.11 ⁺ (0.06)	0.10 ⁺ (0.06)	0.06 (0.07)	-0.08 (0.06)
Land	-0.07* (0.03)	-0.09* (0.037)	-0.06 (0.038)	-0.03 (0.05)
Christian	0.09 (0.09)	0.12 (0.08)	0.11 (0.09)	
Household Number	-0.00 (0.01)	-0.00 (0.01)	-0.00 (0.01)	-0.00 (0.01)
Pooled Treatment		0.17** (0.06)		
Female Police Officer Compared to Male Police Officer			-0.08 (0.05)	
Information Treatment				-0.00 (0.05)
Constant	0.43*** (0.11)	0.40*** (0.11)	0.62*** (0.11)	
<i>N</i>	921	921	721	
<i>R</i> ²	0.03	0.03	0.02	
<i>BIC</i>	1305.9	1303.9	1009.8	

Standard errors in parentheses

⁺ $p < 0.10$, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

included in the paragraph. It is possible that respondents might have assumed that child support was not a law because the enumerators did not mention them. In other words, the absence of its mention led people to think that any question related to laws that were not mentioned were not actually laws. Below, I provide some evidence for why this might be the case.

Finally, Table 3 Model 4 shows that the information treatment did not have an effect on citizens' attitudes about the formal rule of law. This is expected because enumerators are not necessary credible sources for information about the formal rule of law. As such, there is support for H3.

7 DISCUSSION

The results point to a few puzzles. First, why were people persuaded about child support laws when it was not a part of the original script? And why were citizens who received the information treatment less likely to be persuaded about this law? In the debrief sessions with both police officers and enumerators, I asked about whether or not citizens asked questions about the laws during their visits. The enumerators from the survey experiments reported that no one asked questions after they read the paragraphs. This is reflected in the data. Citizens asked the police officer questions. The enumerators who accompanied the police officers recorded data about each visit. They recorded the number of questions as well as the exact questions that citizens asked. Figure 2 reflects the number of questions asked about each topic area. Most citizens asked the police about procedures related to reporting crime and how reliable this process really is given where they live. Citizens also asked a lot of questions about how to join the police. Then, community members had questions about child rape, domestic violence, child support/discipline and criminals. Of the four areas that were mentioned by the police, people asked questions about domestic violence and domestic violence, not mob violence or sassywood. This means the questions and *conversation* about the topics likely led to the change. There was no change in the two areas for which people did not ask questions—sassywood and mob violence. Moreover, a number of people asked questions about children—even though it was not a part of the original topic area—and there was changed perceptions with regards to child support. This means that the messenger mattered, but so did a dialogue about the topic area. Only in those topic areas where there was dialogue with police officers were people persuaded about the law. This also explains why there was a negative result for the survey experiment. The null results are indicative the lack of course credibility among the enumerators. The negative result for child support could be due to its complete absence as a law.

A second question relates to whether or not female police officers are less credible or not. There is suggestive evidence that women have less source credibility than men when it comes to expertise about the law. I turn to data from the actual visits to get a better sense about behavioral differences among citizens and visits by male versus female officers. Figure 3 shows that female officers received more questions than male officers. This could be interpreted in two ways. Citizens might have felt more comfortable asking questions to female police officers or citizens did not trust

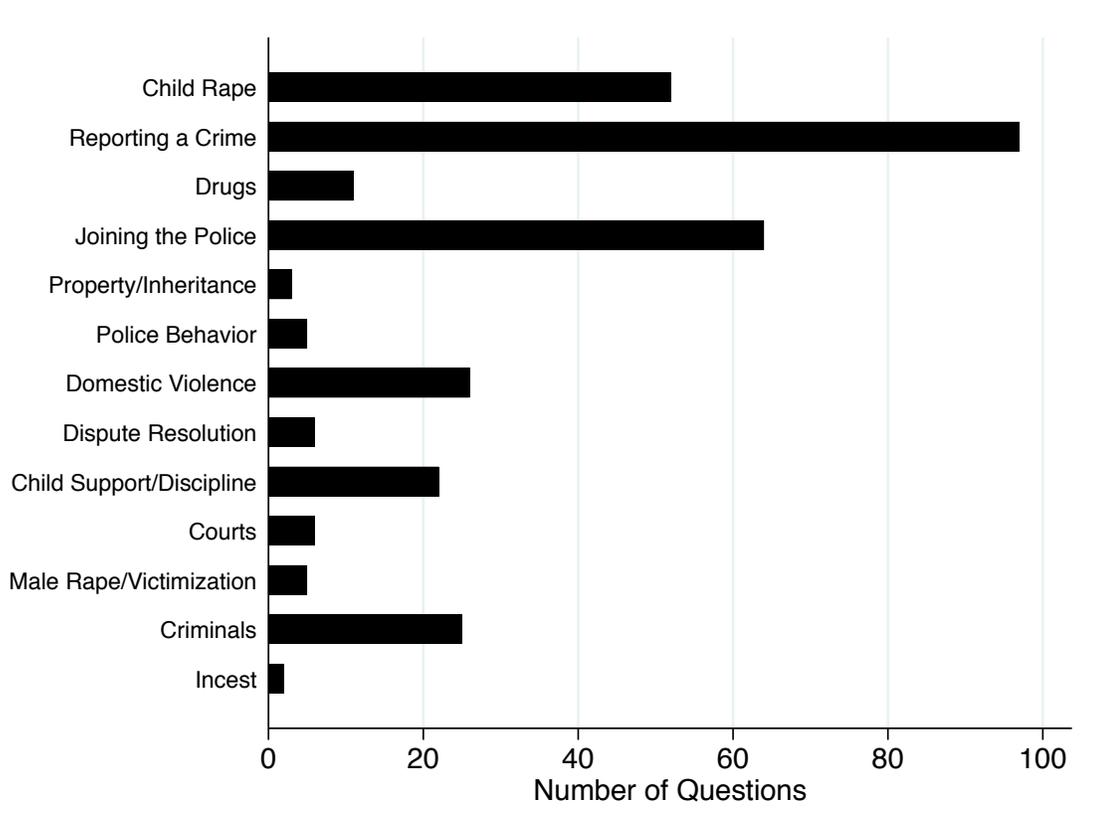
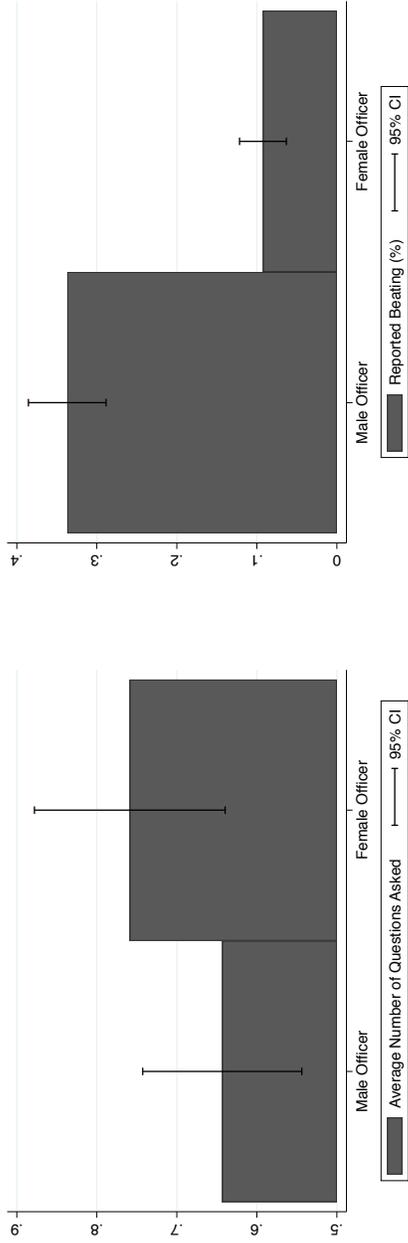
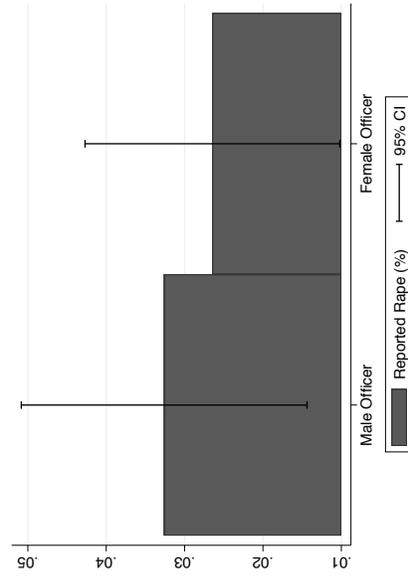


Figure 2: Type of Questions



(a) Have any question to ask? (Number of Questions)

(b) Have you witnessed beating among your neighbors in the last six months? Did they tell you?



(c) Do you know of any rape cases in the community in the last six months? Did they tell you?.

Figure 3: Household Interactions with Police

the message of the female officers and asked questions to test their knowledge. They may not have trusted women because they were transgressing their gender identity. Indeed there is some evidence that gender transgression occurred because respondents who were visited by female officers were more afraid of the women at the beginning of the visit by 24% (See Appendix), but by the end of the visit, they were just as appreciative of the visit as those that were visited by male officers. However, from the data it is not clear which explanation is correct, although there is no indication that the women were less trusted than the male officers after the visit (AUTHOR).

I also asked the police officers to inquire about different low-level crimes in the neighborhood. Citizens were more likely to provide information about beatings to male police officers, and citizens were equally likely to report rape to male and female officers. Again, this is indicative of citizens believing in gender stereotypes about women. They may not have told female police officers about beatings because they did not think that women were capable of handling the situation. The data from the actual visits again suggests that there could be a gender difference with respect to how citizens perceive female police officers, but it is inconclusive.

8 CONCLUSION

Promoting the rule of law in war-torn countries is important for long-term stability. Yet, in such contexts, convincing people about the formal rule of law remains a challenge as there are competing legal institutions. State agencies find various ways to teach citizens about the formal legal structure. There are a variety of ways that the states can send messages, and this paper explores how heterogeneity in message delivery affects citizens' ability to accept the formal rule of law. The results of the experiment and survey experiment show that the messenger matters for source credibility in delivering messages. Police officers are better messengers about the rule of law than enumerators. Both male and female officers are credible messengers, but male police officers may still have a slight advantage in credibility due to rigid gender stereotypes about women.

The study also points to a possible, important mechanism for persuasion—that it is a deliberative process in which citizens need a dialogue with experts. While studying whether dialogue matters was not the focus of the study, I found that the laws over which there was a dialogue seemed to see more movement. This was the case for laws that were not originally mentioned by the police.

More research should be done to better understand the importance of dialogue in persuasion.

The findings have implications for policymakers. First, the results suggest that community policing program with both male and female police officers are an effective way to teach and persuade people about laws. Programs that stick messages in door to door canvassing may not be as effective. This is perhaps because the messenger is not a credible source on the subject matter, and the lack of credibility does not trigger a conversation about the topic. Second, while both male and female police officers should engage in community policing, female police officers may still face gender stereotypes when they are working in the field. Most literature on discrimination in policing focuses on the discrimination that women face in the police institution, not when they are engaged in their job. As such, the study reveals that gender norms and stereotypes are prominent in rural Liberia and that more should be done to spread gender equality in those areas.

The findings in the paper may apply more broadly to individuals who live in the rural periphery of post-conflict countries. In such places, gender stereotypes are more likely to be rigid and there are more competing rule of law institutions. Thus, it is in these contexts, in territories like Grand Kru County, where the messenger might matter when it comes to delivering information about the rule of law, international state builders and governments should be careful about who they send to deliver messages. While this study joins the literature on better understanding how people change norms, more work needs to be done to how heterogeneity in in-person message delivery affects outcomes, especially in the contexts of weak, post-conflict countries, where the stakes for improving the rule of law are high.

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