



## **Choosing Belonging**

**Public Service Announcement / Get Out the Vote Project  
Fall 2016**

### **Introduction:**

Through a grant from Open Society the Haas Institute was granted a unique opportunity to work with the Perception Institute and other key collaborators to create content designed to confront and counteract the growing anxiety, anger and fear that was strategically stoked for political gain during the 2016 Presidential election. The resulting project led to the creation of three 90-second PSA videos targeting specific audiences with messages that named out loud the tensions and anxieties gripping these groups and offered alternative narratives of inclusivity while promoting civic engagement through voter participation.

### **Background:**

In the US and Europe, demagogues have been increasingly successful in promoting fears and anxieties of the “other.” Growing diversity, economic insecurity and inequality and demographic changes have been deeply polarizing. This was further compounded by a growing constituent of disenfranchised voters, particularly millennials and people of color, and swaths of progressives feeling unheard and unrepresented by an out of touch central government.

This project sought to confront both the uncertainty of progressives, moderates and people of color and contest demagogic rhetoric, both of the dog whistle variety, and more explicit forms by presenting inclusive messages that draw upon deeper humanist values and seek to inoculate more conservative individuals from fearful perspectives of the “other”.

### **Product:**

Drawing off the experience of John Powell and Rachel Godsil with applying leading social and mind science research on racial anxiety and implicit bias and research on white anxiety by Robb Willer three videos were developed. The narratives produced attempt to create space for bridging across and within racial and ethnic lines by “wrestling out loud” with the nuanced conversations being had within families, organizations, movements, political parties, and even within individuals internally.

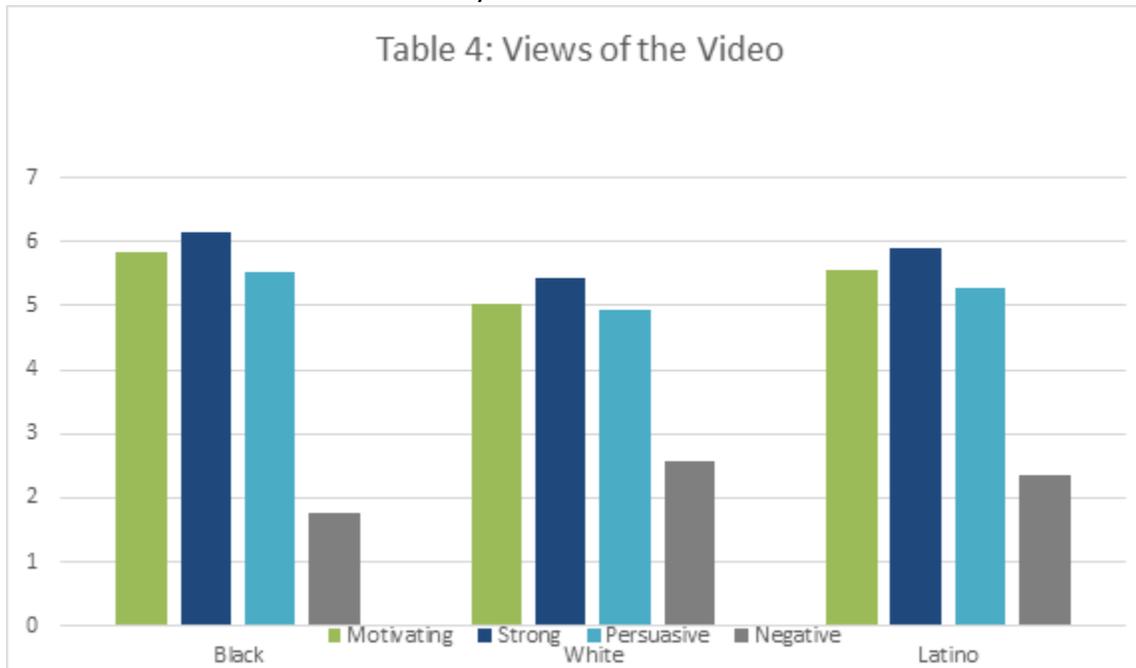
1. [Being a Man is Hard Sometimes](#) (Masculinity Video): Produced by filmmaker Jennifer Dworkin and writers Dan Trujillo and Issac Butler, this PSA aimed at addressing gender bias toward women in leadership. In the video a white male protagonist wrestles with a changing America and his feelings around his stature as a man being challenged as values change in his country. Ultimately, he decides that being a man doesn't require linking himself to hostility.
2. Immigration Video: Produced by filmmaker Jennifer Dworkin and writers Dan Trujillo and Issac Butler, this PSA aimed at addressing the othering across racial, ethnic and religious communities especially as it pertains to Immigrant communities. In the video a white male protagonist speaks directly to the camera and contemplates the possibility of blaming immigrants and those who do not "look like us or sound like us" for the problems he grapples with today--stagnating wages and skyrocketing costs of living. Ultimately he realizes this is the easy way out, he recalls the story of his grandparents coming to this country to pave a better way and finds resolve in the parallels between their story, the principals this country is founded upon and the stories of the "so-called" outsiders who are only seeking to do the same for themselves and their families.
3. [#Vote4BlackFutures](#), (Black Millennials Video): Produced by Whalerock Industries, this PSA used a dynamic presentation of spoken word, music, protest footage and beautiful black imagery to highlight the issues that stand to impact the black community. The goal of the video was to extend black activism on issues like structural racism and the criminal justice system to the ballot box through voter participation and civic engagement.

### Testing

This project provided the opportunity to test the three videos through [large-scale studies led by Professor Robb Willer](#), Stanford University Department of Sociology. The first study tested the effects of the Masculinity and Immigration videos on conservative attitudes toward: presidential candidates, Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump, immigrants, immigration, women and minorities, desirable characteristics of leaders, and the implicit association test of nonconscious views of black Americans among other things. The testing led to important conclusions, decisions around target audience strategy and distribution decisions for both the Immigration and Masculinity videos.

[The testing revealed stronger, more reliable findings in the masculinity video](#), which resonated more with conservative women more than any other demographic. The masculinity video led women in the study to support Clinton significantly more and Donald Trump significantly less. It should also be noted that the study was conducted specifically amongst conservative moderates. The results of the testing allowed for more strategic distribution and more focused messaging

around the release of the masculinity focused video.



The immigration video revealed a more complex effect, it led to less negative views of immigration and undocumented immigrants specifically, but significantly “colder” views of “Hispanics”. The conflicting testing results informed the decision to ultimately withhold release of the immigration focused video.

Testing for the Black Millennials video included white and Latino samples, but the study was particularly focused on the possible effects of exposure to the video on intentions to turnout to vote among young (18 to 35 years of age) black Americans, though other key outcome variables included: support for Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton and intentions to be politically active in the future.

Testing revealed small effects overall leading those who saw it to be somewhat more likely to report intending to vote, intending to encourage others to vote, and more opposed to Donald Trump. Among specific racial/ethnic groups, these effects were generally most pronounced among Latinos. Additionally testing showed the video led to more positive views of African Americans as more powerful and competent, but not less warm. Here we found stronger effects in the full sample, but again found most pronounced effects among Latinos. In general, the led Latinos to more racially progressive views of African Americans, while having less effect on African Americans and whites. Nonetheless, African Americans reported very positive views of the video and did report a greater interest in political activism.



## Takeaways

The production of the videos fit seamlessly into the broader Haas framework involving analysis of structural inequity in the economy and government and the impact that anxiety and fear can have in our interaction with such institutions. The project effectively engaged dozens of community, advocacy and labor organizations as well as built upon frameworks around fashioning a meta-narrative that reflects a set of humane values and shared vision of inclusion and equality for all. The project represents a promising framework delivering effective, research informed, intentional tools to confront the dynamics that other and polarize communities. With that focus, the Haas Institute bolstered its vision and values for belonging and inclusion by providing a necessary alternative narrative during a divisive and caustic election season through the dissemination of two noteworthy PSAs.