



CENTER *for*
COMMUNITY CHANGE

Persuading the Public On Poverty

Economic Justice Messaging Research

**Findings from an online dial survey of
1000 registered voters, 400 people
earning less than 200% FPL, 100 African
Americans, 100 Latinos, 100 voters
under 30, and 100 poverty advocates.**

June 2014

Anat Shenker-Osorio

Celinda Lake
Alysia Snell
Jonathan Voss
Flora Lethbridge-Cejku

Methodology

Lake Research Partners and ASO Communications designed and administered this survey which was conducted online April 19-30, 2014. The survey reached a total of 1726 adults including a base of 1023 registered voters with oversamples of 404 people under 200% of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL), 100 African American voters, 100 Latino voters, 100 voters under age 30, and 100 progressive activists on poverty. The people at or below 200% FPL, African Americans, Latinos and under 30 oversamples were weighed down to reflect their proportion of the population. 100 policy activists on the issue of poverty also took the survey, and are treated as a separate sample throughout.

The samples for the base survey and oversamples were drawn from an online panel. The data was weighted slightly by gender, region, race, party identification, and income level to reflect the attributes of the actual population. The sample for the poverty activist oversample was drawn from a client supplied sample.

The margin of error for the total survey is +/-2.3%. For the voters under 200% FPL, the margin of error is +/- 6.9%. For the African American, Hispanic, voters under 30 samples, and poverty activists, the margin of error is +/-9.8% for each individually.

Defining Base, Persuasion, and Opposition Targets

Throughout this report we refer to Base, Opposition, and Persuasion (or Persuadables). Below explains how we define each group, along with demographic subgroups that are more likely to be Base and Opposition voters.

Base (15%)

- | | |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Believe wealthy Americans achieved their success because they were born into wealthy families or had more opportunities than others, AND • Agree: If we had the right policies in place almost no one would be poor in America, AND • Disagree: The wealthy in America help create jobs, prosperity, and a higher standard of living for everyone else. | <p>Demographics:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 59% Women (+7) • 63% Democrat (+23) • 20% Under 30 (+4) • 31% College women (+6) • 55% Under 200% FPL (+15) • 24% African American (+10) • 13% Hispanic (+4) • 47% Urban (+10) |
|--|---|

(The number in parenthesis reflects the difference from the overall sample) 

Opposition (15%)

- | | |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Believe wealthy Americans achieved their success because they worked harder than most others to be successful, AND • Disagree: If we had the right policies in place almost no one would be poor in America, AND • Agree: The wealthy in America help create jobs, prosperity, and a higher standard of living for everyone else. | <p>Demographics:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 63% Men (+15) • 77% Republican (+41) • 34% Over 65 (+11) • 36% College men (+14) • 73% Over 200% FPL (+13) • 86% White (+16) • 45% Suburban (+8) |
|--|--|

Persuadable (69%)

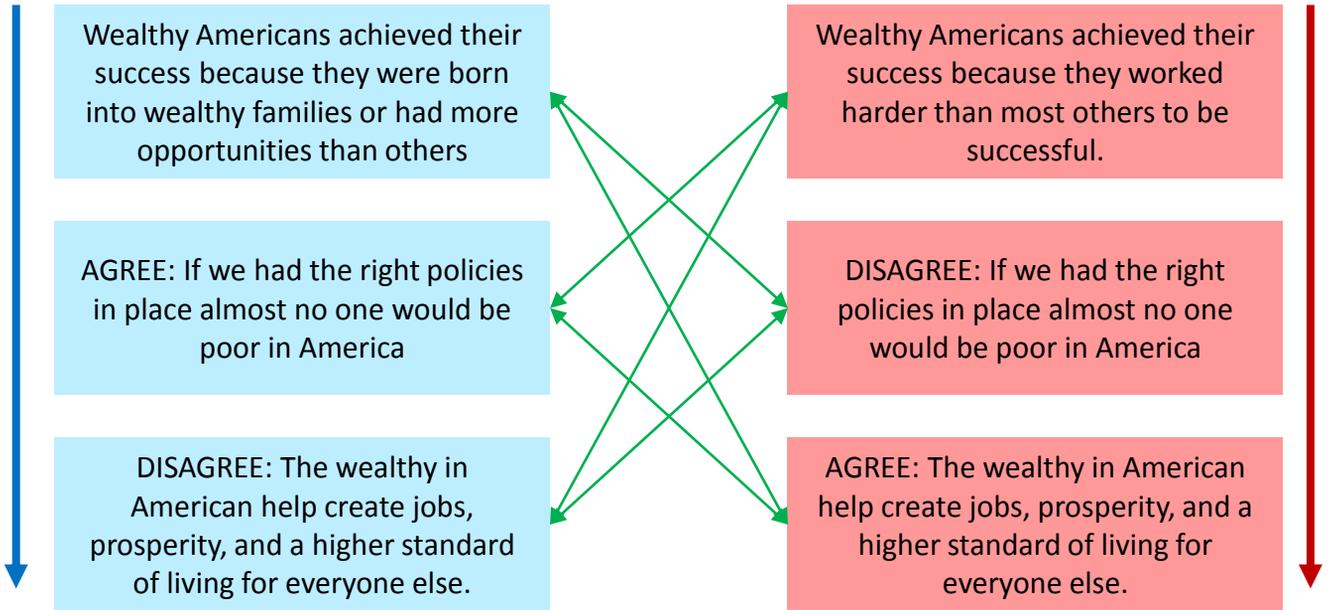
- | | |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Everybody Else (meaning they agree with some base positions and some opposition positions as defined by these three value statements.) | <p>Demographics:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • These voters more closely resemble the overall population |
|--|---|

Defining Base, Persuasion, and Opposition Targets

BASE

PERSUADABLE

OPPOSITION



Persuadable Demographics (69%)

- | | |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 46% Men (-2) • 54% Women (+2) • 43% Under 50 (+2) • 57% Over 50 (-2) • 69% White (-1) • 15% African American (+1) • 10% Latino (+1) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 43% Democrat (+3) • 17% Pure Independent (+1) • 32% Republican (-4) • 55% Non-college (+3) • 45% College grad (-3) • 40% Under 200% FPL (same) • 60% Over 200% FPL (same) |
|---|---|

Executive Summary

Progressive efforts to generate support for programs that help working Americans have typically been crafted by seeking messaging that resonates across demographics. Building off of an extensive language analysis, and following listening sessions with economically struggling Americans (both conducted by Anat Shenker), we sought in this study to identify messages that resonate strongly with core supporters and find agreement with persuadable voters. However we departed from past efforts by looking for messages that alienate core opponents.

Traditional messaging research looks for messages that appeal to everyone. It does not worry about whether or not the “base” will carry the message as their own, and just assumes that it will because it resonates across demographics. It tries to find messages that do not turn off the opposition. Often times the resulting messaging ends up sounding similar to opposition messaging (*i.e.* “*We must focus on the middle class.*”). In this research, a “winning message” resonated with the “base” and activists, so that they will amplify the message by easily using it on their own. It also resonated with persuadable voters. Lastly, the winning messages turned off opposition voters and in doing so, it differentiates us from their messaging (*i.e.* “*The economic rules in this country unfairly favor the rich.*”).

As mentioned on the previous page, we defined base and opposition voters on their values: how one becomes rich, whether or not we would have any poor people if we had the right policies, and whether or not the wealthy help create jobs, prosperity, and a higher standard of living for everyone else.

The results show core values of populism and fairness emerge, encapsulated by a narrative that holds that the economic rules today favor the wealthy few at the expense of everyone else. Middle class values are strong, but do little to differentiate between conservative and progressive narratives. Rather, a populist contrast that highlights how the wealthy benefit from a rigged system helps more clearly define the problem and provide space for a solution.

Family emerges as an important starting point to build the progressive case. The reason we endure the challenges and struggles of work is to provide for our families. Grounding a discussion in family, in terms of who a rigged system harms and who benefits from positive change establishes an important foundation. Wages and work are a means toward the end of providing for family.

Appeals to broader abstractions are less powerful than those that describe lived experiences. For example base and persuadable voters believe that “can’t make ends meet” is a better description of people at or below the poverty level than “underserved by society.” Throughout the messages, systemic explanations dial weaker than specifics that relate to what people experience: seeking a secure retirement, caring for a family, and ensuring that every worker is paid enough to achieve both.

Calling out gender inequality works more strongly than calling out racial equality. African Americans respond equally strong when our narrative mentions race and when it omits race. However other racial groups appear racially sensitive; more reluctant to acknowledge the reality of racial inequality but otherwise in agreement with our messages. However, focusing on gender inequality isolates opposition voters, who dial down phrases referencing working women.

Opposition messaging works best when it stays aspirational and advances a vision of the American Dream grounded in entrepreneurialism. These values resonate with persuadable voters and even some base voters. Yet we win these persuadable voters by positing that a greedy few have rigged the game. Overcoming the oppositions strength requires a populist contrast that highlights how the economic rules unfairly favor the wealthy at the expense of everybody else.

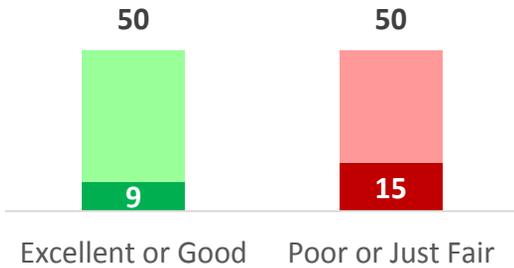


Values Context

Economic Context

Americans divide evenly on their economic situation

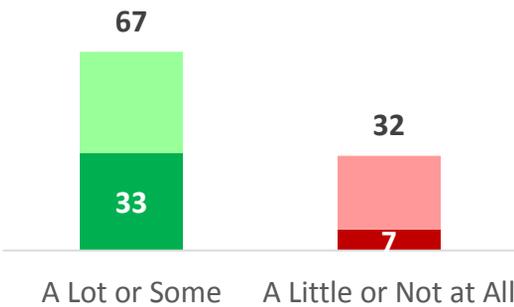
How would you describe your own economic situation today?



More than 5 years after the Great Recession, half of Americans describe their economic situation positively. Yet ratings remain weak. Just 9 percent describe their situation as excellent (7% of persuadable voters).

Believing you have control over your own and your family's economic situation correlates with economic perceptions. Among those who rate their situation as excellent or good, 89 percent say they have a lot or some control over their economic situation. Among those who rate their situation as just fair or poor, just 45 percent say they have a lot or some control, while 55 percent say they have a little or no control at all.

How much control do you feel you have over you and your family's economic situation?



Self perceptions differ across age, education, income level, and urbanicity:

Older voters, post graduates, households earning more than 200% FPL, and voters in suburban areas are more likely to say they have control and rate their situation positively.

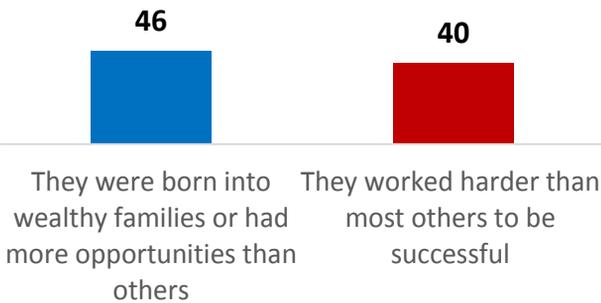
Younger voters, Hispanics, those with a high school education or less, households earning less than 200% FPL, and people who live in small towns are more likely to say they have no control and rate their situation negatively.

	Total	Gender		Age		Race				200% FPL		Targets		
		M	W	<30	65+	W	AA	L	API	<	>	B	O	P
Have Control + Positive Situation	44	46	43	28	58	48	41	28	46	21	60	30	59	44
Lack Control + Negative Situation	28	27	29	38	23	27	27	37	22	43	18	37	20	28

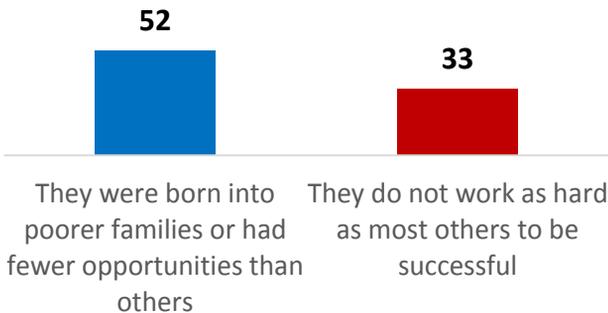
Perceptions of Causality

More divided on cause of wealth than cause for poverty

In your opinion which of the following is the primary reason **wealthy Americans** have achieved financial success?



In your opinion which of the following is the primary reason poor Americans have not achieved financial success?



Perceptions on how wealthy Americans became that way differ on racial, generational, and partisan lines. This is a key distinction between our side and the opposition.

Younger voters, African Americans and Latinos are more likely to believe that both the wealthy and poor were born into wealthy and poor families respectively.

Older voters, whites, and Asian Pacific Islanders are more likely to believe that wealthy Americans worked harder to be successful. Older voters and whites however are more likely to believe that poor Americans were born into poor families, while Asian Pacific Islanders believe that they do not work as hard as others to be successful.

Party affiliation strongly correlates with perceptions of the reasons how people become rich and poor. Republicans believe in both cases causality is the work ethic of the individual. Democrats and African Americans believe the causality is the family one is born into.

	Total	Gender		Age		Race				200% FPL		Targets		
		M	W	<30	65+	W	AA	L	API	<	>	B	O	P
Wealthy born into wealthy families	46	44	49	54	32	41	65	60	31	53	41	100	0	45
Wealthy worked harder	40	43	37	33	55	44	22	28	60	32	45	0	100	34
Poor born into poorer families	52	49	55	53	50	50	71	51	34	54	50	83	21	52
Poor do not work as hard	33	36	30	29	39	36	14	29	57	28	36	8	71	30

Support for Government Programs

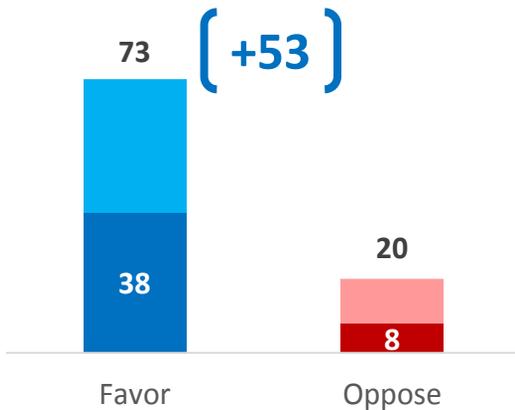
Tax Sensitivity Emerges

As seen on many other issues explored outside the context of this survey, a familiar pattern emerges of tax sensitivity. Nearly three quarters of voters favor government programs geared toward bringing people out of poverty, including 38 percent who strongly favor programs. However when asked “if it increased your taxes,” support erodes considerably, and in fact a majority oppose government programs in that context. Erosion is across the board with the strongest intensity among Latinos and Asian and Pacific Islanders.

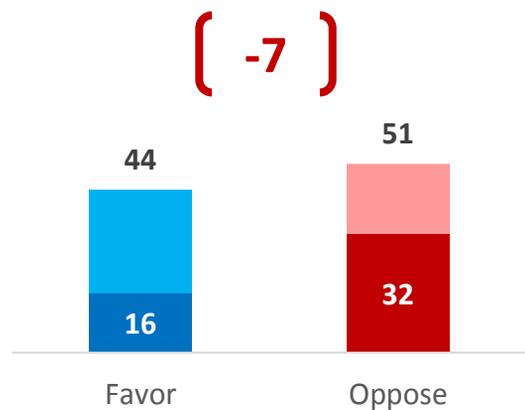
This erosion on taxes helps explain the salience of the opposition statement “How one becomes rich.” Persuadable voters who dial up on the phrase “*And when you do work hard and get ahead, the government should not take your earnings and just give them to people who don’t.*” These voters favor government programs by 76 percent to 16 percent who oppose. When these programs are tied to an increase in their taxes, persuadable voters divide evenly with 46 percent who favor and 48 percent who oppose.

Taxes remain a powerful villain used by opponents of government action, and a strong motivator against us for older voters (particularly older men) and Republicans.

Do you favor or oppose government programs geared toward bringing people out of poverty?



Do you favor or oppose government programs geared toward bringing people out of poverty if it increased your taxes?



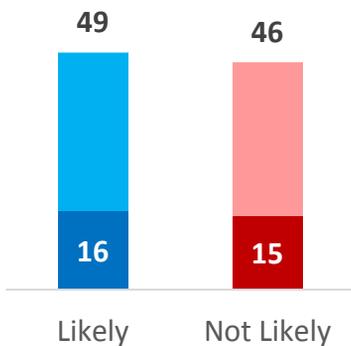
	Total	Gender		Age		Race				200% FPL		Targets		
		M	W	<30	65+	W	AA	L	API	<	>	B	O	P
Favor – Oppose (w/OUT Taxes)	+53	+44	+62	+62	+45	+44	+90	+63	+63	+64	+46	+93	-15	+61
Favor – Oppose (WITH TAXES)	-7	-10	-3	+1	-13	-17	+51	-8	-22	+5	-14	+46	-73	-2

Likelihood to Take Action

Voters Tepid Toward Taking Action

Voters divide evenly on their willingness to personally take action to help people get out of poverty. Younger women, post grads, African Americans, Latinos, and Democrats are among those most likely to say they are very or somewhat likely. This is a case where our base is more active than theirs.

How likely are you to take an action to help people get out of poverty?



Frequent church goers emerge as a constituency who are more likely to say they will take personal action, yet are less likely to support the *government* taking action, indicating a desire to help the poor but apprehension toward government action.

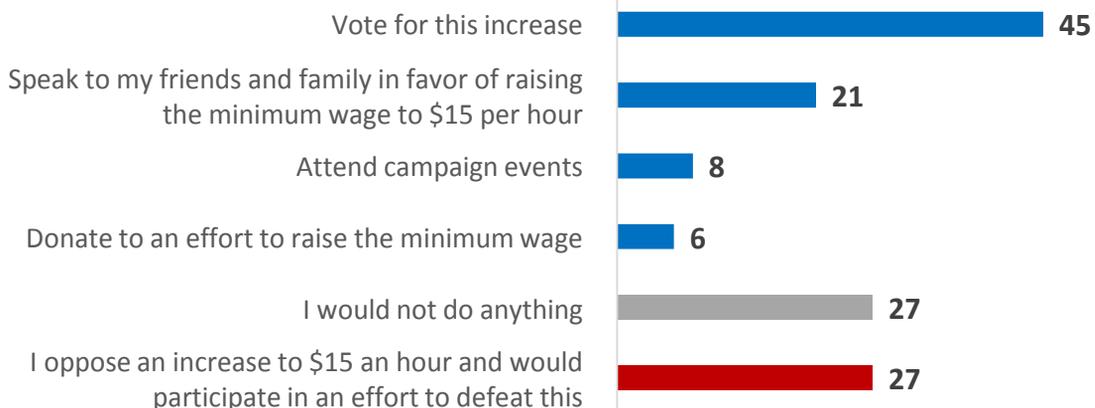
Support and opposition for raising the minimum wage falls along traditional partisan lines and disproportionately partisan leaning constituencies.

Younger voters, African Americans, Latinos, those earning less than 200% FPL, and Democrats are among those who are more likely to favor raising the minimum wage to \$15 per hour.

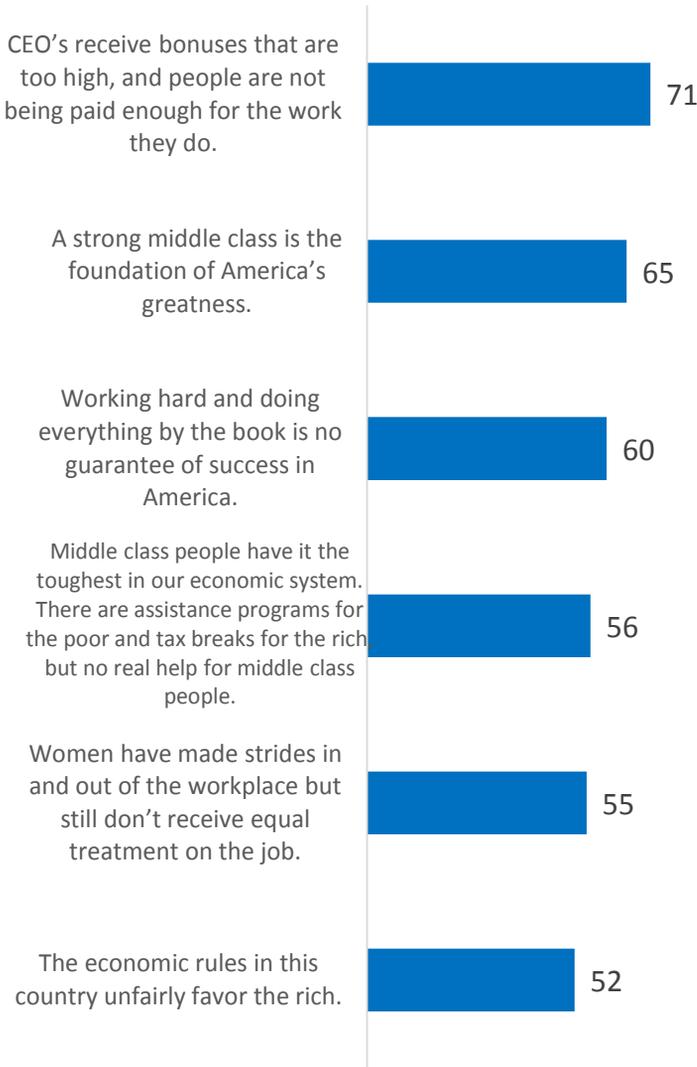
Older men and Republicans are the strongest opponents of raising the wage.

	Total	Gender		Age		Race				200% FPL		Targets		
		M	W	<30	65+	W	AA	L	API	<	>	B	O	P
Total Likely – Total Not Likely	+3	-4	+9	+1	-5	-8	+51	+16	-4	+8	+0	+46	-25	+0
Vote for this increase	45	42	49	53	37	38	75	59	40	51	41	78	7	48
Oppose this increase	27	34	21	21	36	32	6	18	26	23	30	7	64	23

There is an effort now to raise the minimum wage to \$15 per hour. Which, if any of the following would you be willing to do as part of this effort? (Mark all that apply)



Value Statements – 1st Tier



Calling out the wealthy and CEO's emerges as an important way to galvanize support among persuadable and base voters while at the same time isolating opponents.

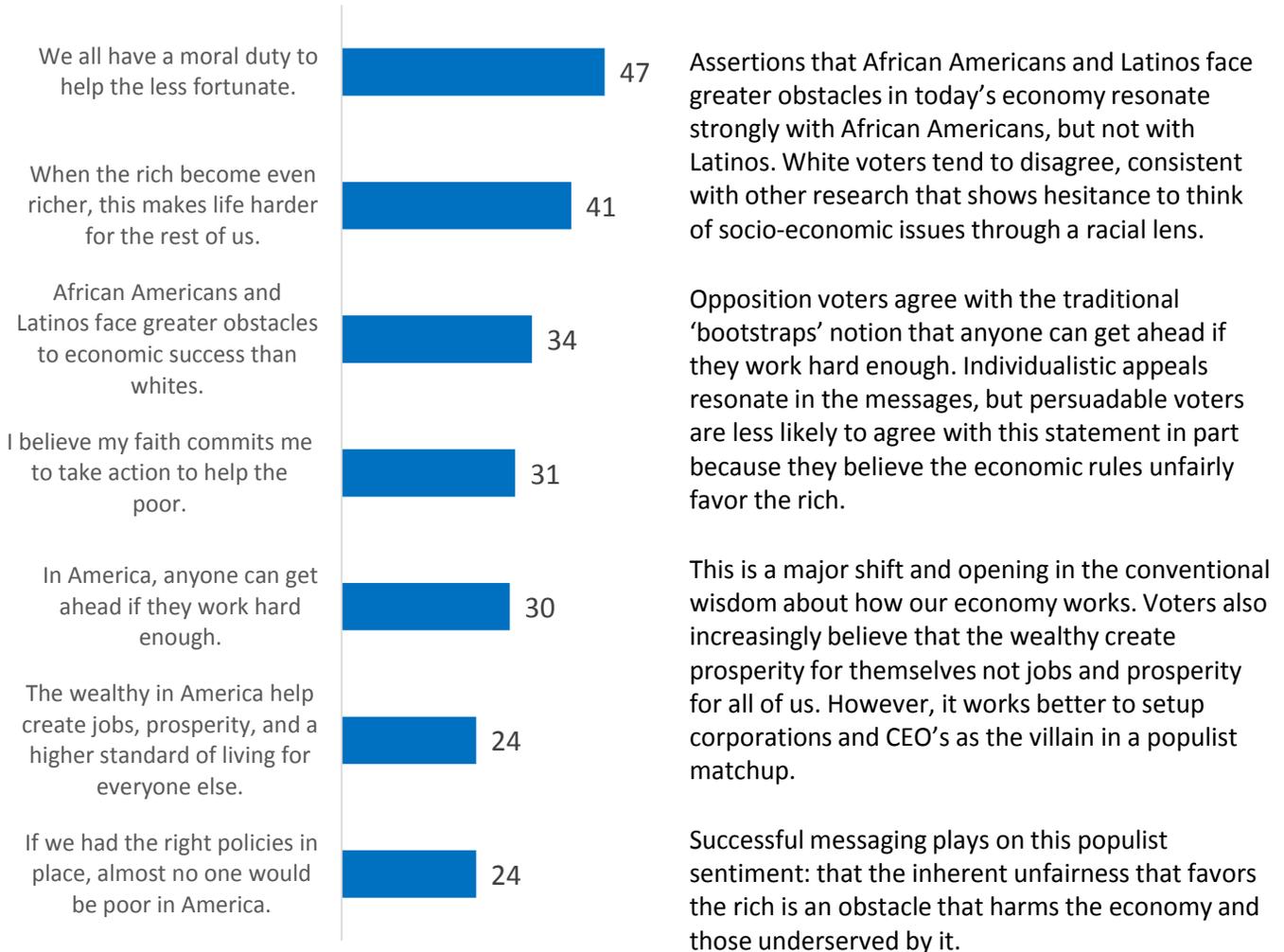
The value of a strong middle class, while universally strong, strategically holds less value because fails to differentiate among base and opposition voters. However, Americans are willing to start questioning some premises about how the economy works; Base and persuasion voters question the basic premise that hard work is a guarantee of success.

Persuadable voters respond more strongly to inequality when expressed in terms of gender than they do when expressed in terms of racial fairness.

Gender equality irks the opposition, who reject the notion of women working outside the home – they disagree with the value statement shown to the right, and consistently dial down messages referencing equal pay and the struggles of a working mother.

% Total 8-10, Agree Strongly	Total	Gender		Age		Race				200% FPL		Targets		
		M	W	<30	65+	W	AA	L	API	<	>	B	O	P
CEO's receive bonuses that are too high	71	64	77	59	71	68	82	76	74	76	68	95	32	75
A strong middle class is the foundation	65	68	62	43	78	66	65	60	50	64	66	71	70	62
Working hard & by the book is no guarantee of success	60	55	64	54	56	58	70	63	49	64	57	84	36	60
Women made strides but still don't receive equal treatment	55	38	70	44	58	51	75	56	47	58	53	81	24	57
The economic rules in this country unfairly favor the rich.	52	47	56	49	49	48	66	57	43	55	49	90	13	53
Middle class have it toughest in assistance programs for the poor and tax breaks for the rich	56	48	63	43	56	55	54	56	58	56	56	61	49	56

Value Statements – 2nd Tier

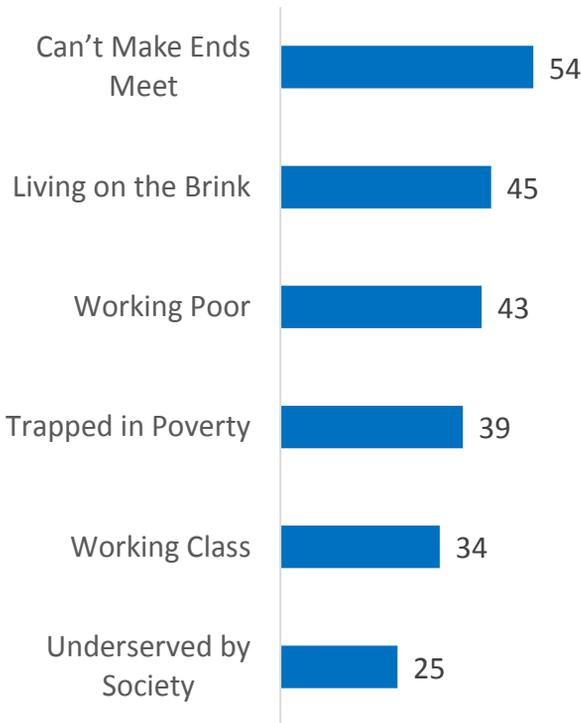


% Total 8-10, Agree Strongly	Total	Gender		Age		Race				200% FPL		Targets		
		M	W	<30	65+	W	AA	L	API	<	>	B	O	P
We all have a moral duty to help the less fortunate.	47	44	50	47	45	44	64	48	31	51	44	72	34	44
When the rich become richer, life harder for the rest of us.	41	37	45	40	36	38	54	49	42	49	36	81	8	40
AA/Latinos face more obstacles to econ. success than whites.	34	34	34	37	33	25	75	49	29	41	30	59	10	35
I believe my faith commits me to take action to help the poor.	31	28	34	29	29	28	53	33	13	37	28	43	27	30
In America, anyone can get ahead if they work hard enough.	30	36	25	29	38	31	22	30	42	28	32	11	66	26
If right policies, almost no one would be poor in America.	24	21	27	24	21	20	40	33	12	33	18	66	*	21
The wealthy create jobs, prosperity, and higher standard of living for everyone else.	24	29	20	15	36	28	8	16	24	20	26	*	69	19

Negative Labels

Shared Experiences Trumps Collective Associations

How well does this describe people living at or below the Federal Poverty Level?
(Negative Labels)



Negative labels outperform positive labels overall even though the aspirational messages test more strongly throughout.

Labels that describe shared experiences of daily life – cant make ends meet, living on the brink – resonate more strongly than attempts to connect to a broader collective label – working poor, working class.

For those earning less than 200% of the Federal Poverty Level, “cant make ends meet” and “working to provide for family” are the strongest descriptors of people earning at or below the poverty level.

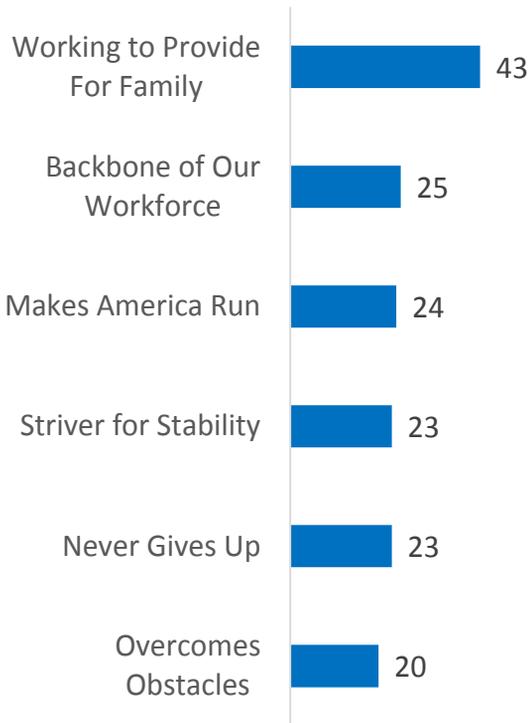
Base voters respond strongly to “working poor” compared to “working class.” For opponents, these terms elicit the same response. Persuadable voters also respond more to “working poor” than to “working class.”

% Total 8-10, Describes Well	Total	Gender		Age		Race				200% FPL		Targets		
		M	W	<30	65+	W	AA	L	API	<	>	B	O	P
Can't Make Ends Meet	54	49	58	50	54	50	69	61	45	61	48	74	36	53
Living on the Brink	45	44	47	38	46	42	64	47	31	53	40	69	24	45
Working Poor	43	37	48	36	41	38	62	47	33	51	37	70	19	42
Trapped in Poverty	39	35	43	40	38	34	54	49	36	49	32	66	16	39
Working Class	34	31	38	36	33	30	51	44	28	45	27	58	16	34
Underserved by Society	25	22	28	23	22	21	46	28	19	34	20	55	4	24

Positive Labels

We Work for Our Family

How well does this describe people living at or below the Federal Poverty Level?
(Positive Labels)

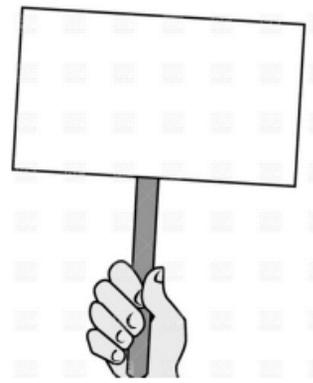


By far the strongest positive label across demographics is “working to provide for family.”

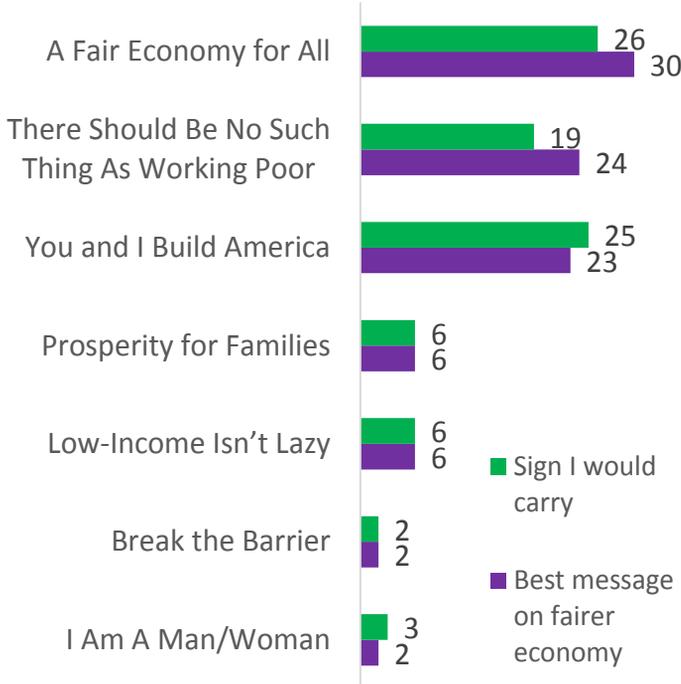
Family emerges here and in the messages as an important organizing symbol. Too often this debate has referred to wages and workplaces. But the data suggests that a more powerful backdrop for this debate is the reason people go to work: to provide for their family.

% Total 8-10, Describes Well	Total	Gender		Age		Race				200% FPL		Targets		
		M	W	<30	65+	W	AA	L	API	<	>	B	O	P
Working to Provide For Family	43	38	48	45	41	37	64	60	43	56	35	66	24	42
Backbone of Our Workforce	25	22	29	29	18	19	47	40	25	36	18	49	6	25
Makes America Run	24	21	26	27	21	18	43	35	24	33	18	44	8	23
Striver for Stability	23	19	26	30	17	17	44	32	25	32	16	42	11	22
Never Gives Up	23	19	26	28	21	17	40	38	25	33	16	37	11	23
Overcomes Obstacles	20	17	23	24	17	15	40	33	21	29	15	37	8	20

Key Value: Fairness



Imagine you are at an event promoting a fairer economy:
 (purple) What's the best message to promote a fairer economy?
 (green) Which sign would you want to personally carry?



“A Fair Economy for All” best encapsulates promotion of a fair economy, perhaps not surprisingly.

Base and persuadable voters also indicated they'd carry a sign saying there should be no such thing as working poor. Considering the values displayed elsewhere, this is still about fairness and correcting the fact that the economic rules favor the rich.

Opposition voters lean toward the individualistic “you and I build America.”

% Believe Best Captures Message to Promote Fairer Economy	Total	Gender		Age		Race				200% FPL		Targets		
		M	W	<30	65+	W	AA	L	API	<	>	B	O	P
		A Fair Economy for All	30	29	31	32	30	28	39	33	46	33	28	35
There Should Be No Such Thing As Working Poor	24	22	26	25	17	24	29	19	12	26	23	37	7	25
You and I Build America	23	25	20	14	31	25	12	22	15	17	26	8	35	23

% Who Would Carry At An Event	Total	Gender		Age		Race				200% FPL		Targets		
		M	W	<30	65+	W	AA	L	API	<	>	B	O	P
		A Fair Economy for All	26	25	27	28	26	24	35	28	30	30	24	34
There Should Be No Such Thing As Working Poor	19	18	21	20	14	19	26	18	11	20	19	28	4	21
You and I Build America	25	27	22	15	35	27	18	20	20	21	27	12	36	25



Dial Messages

Summary Table of Message Ratings

Convincing Ratings (80-100) After Reading Messages & Mean Dial Rating

	80-100 Convincing				Mean Dial Rating			
	Total	Targets			Total	Targets		
		B	O	P		B	O	P
Family Comes First (Woman of Color)	57	83	20	60	70.7	77.9	59.6	71.5
Family Comes First (White Man)	58	84	28	60	71.2	78.7	64.5	71.5
Community (White Woman)	51	72	21	55	67.1	75.2	60.5	67.2
Community (White Man)	50	74	22	51	67.5	73.8	62.1	67.3
Breaking Out of Container w/Gender (White Woman)	48	78	13	48	60.8	70.3	43.2	62.5
Breaking Out of Container (White Man)	46	78	9	49	59.6	72.6	42.3	61.0
We Can Do It (Man of Color)	49	71	10	54	64.8	73.3	54.3	65.6
We Can Do It (White Man)	47	73	15	48	64.9	69.9	57.6	65.4
Two Americas w/o Race (White Man)	45	75	11	47	61.0	73.4	41.1	63.3
Two Americas w/Race (Man of Color)	40	65	9	41	56.2	68.1	31.2	59.2
Capitalism (White Man)	44	74	12	44	56.8	65.7	40.2	58.6
Capitalism (White Woman)	44	73	8	47	56.2	66.1	40.2	58.1
How One Becomes Rich (White Man)	47	27	80	44	65.6	57.3	75.9	65.0
Government Keeps People Poor (White Man)	46	25	76	43	56.9	42.5	72.7	56.2
Faith (White Man)	39	60	16	38	57.1	62.7	46.1	58.3
RFK/Materialism (White Man)	36	71	8	36	56.9	72.0	38.5	58.4

Nearly all of our messages resonate more strongly both consciously (convincing ratings) and unconsciously (mean dial ratings) than the oppositions best messages.

The top messages on our side are “Family Comes First,” “Community,” and “Breaking Out of Container.”

Messengers matter. Opposition voters respond more positively when a white man reads the messages.

Our base voters respond strongly regardless of the messenger. For “We Can Do It” base voters react more favorably to a man of color, while for “Two Americas” they react more favorably to a white man.

Persuasion voters like a man of color for “We Can Do It” and “Two Americas.” Women messengers work well with persuasion voters throughout.

Summary Table of Message Ratings

Convincing Ratings (80-100) After Reading Messages Across Demographics

%80-100, Very Convincing	Total	Gender		Age		Race			200% FPL		Targets		
		M	W	<30	65+	W	AA	L	<	>	B	O	P
Family Comes First (Woman of Color)	57	47	66	50	48	52	81	70	65	52	83	20	60
Family Comes First (White Man)	58	53	63	63	53	52	81	70	65	53	84	28	60
Community (White Woman)	51	46	56	56	52	46	77	61	61	45	72	21	55
Community (White Man)	50	46	54	44	44	46	67	59	58	45	74	22	51
Breaking Out of Container w/Gender (White Woman)	48	37	57	42	43	41	73	65	60	40	78	13	48
Breaking Out of Container (White Man)	46	38	53	50	37	38	75	64	60	37	78	9	49
We Can Do It (Man of Color)	49	41	57	54	43	42	80	58	59	42	71	10	54
We Can Do It (White Man)	47	44	50	37	42	41	68	59	57	40	73	15	48
Two Americas w/o Race (White Man)	45	37	52	49	40	36	74	63	57	37	75	11	47
Two Americas w/Race (Man of Color)	40	35	45	36	37	31	73	62	50	34	65	9	41
Capitalism (White Man)	44	39	49	38	33	40	61	58	54	38	74	12	44
Capitalism (White Woman)	44	35	52	48	35	37	69	56	52	39	73	8	47
How One Becomes Rich (White Man)	47	49	45	37	56	50	32	45	43	50	27	80	44
Government Keeps People Poor (White Man)	46	47	44	37	49	50	27	45	39	50	25	76	43
Faith (White Man)	39	35	42	38	33	34	59	43	45	34	60	16	38
RFK/Materialism (White Man)	36	30	42	39	28	30	61	45	43	31	71	8	36

Opponent Messages



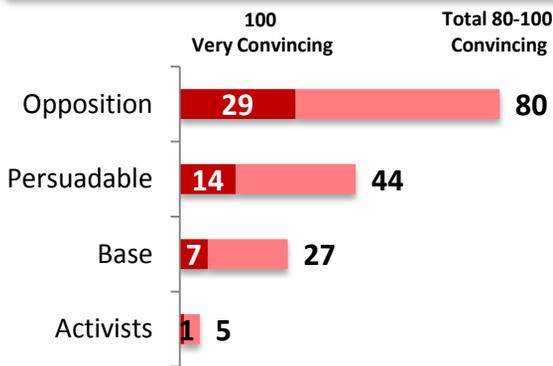
WHAT WORKS

- ✓ Compelling vision of rewarding hard work, as an American promise, that even resonates with activists
- ✓ Puts programs in an effective tax frame
- ✓ Effective use of American Dream
- ✓ Some pull on our base, but isolates activists

WHAT FALLS SHORT

- ✗ Slow take off
- ✗ Only mildly persuasive

Convincing Rating

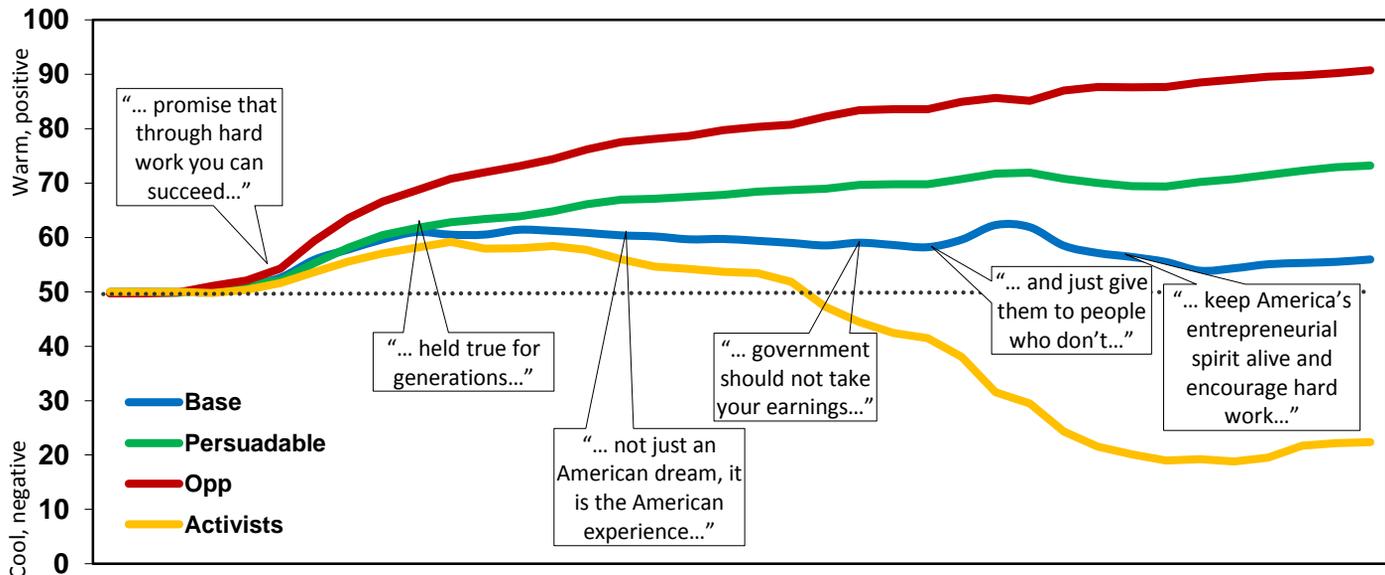


Opponents have a fairly strong message that provides a positive vision for the American Dream as defined by an entrepreneurial spirit. This message resonates more strongly with persuadable voters than messages focused on making the case of government fostering dependence.

This message works in part because it provides an aspirational vision of success (“someone can come here with nothing, work hard, and become a success”), taps into the effective value of rewarding hard work (“promise that through hard work you can succeed”), and promotes a strongly held individual sentiment (“so that people who want to succeed and prosper have the opportunity to do so”).

Here and elsewhere, opposition voters dial up on references to entrepreneurs.

Since our founding, people have come to America because it provides freedom and the promise that through hard work you can succeed. This has held true for generations. Only in America can someone come here with nothing, work hard, and become a success. This is not just an American Dream; it is the American experience. It is up to the individual. And when you do work hard and get ahead, the government should not take your earnings and just give them to people who don't. We need to do everything we can do to keep America's entrepreneurial spirit alive and encourage hard work so that people who want to succeed and prosper have the opportunity to do so.





WHAT WORKS

- ✓ Isolates our base
- ✓ “Culture of dependency” is ‘red meat’ for opposition

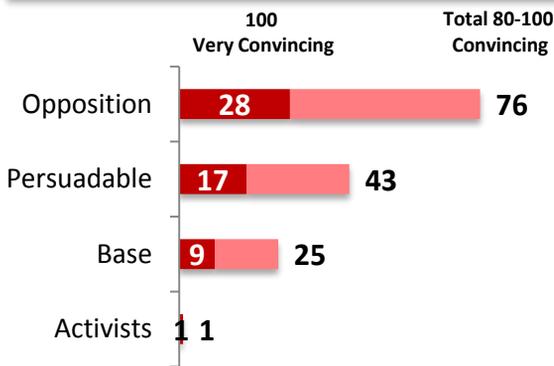
WHAT FALLS SHORT

- ✗ Less persuasive to persuadable voters than other opposition message
- ✗ Persuadable voters flat line on more accusatory language

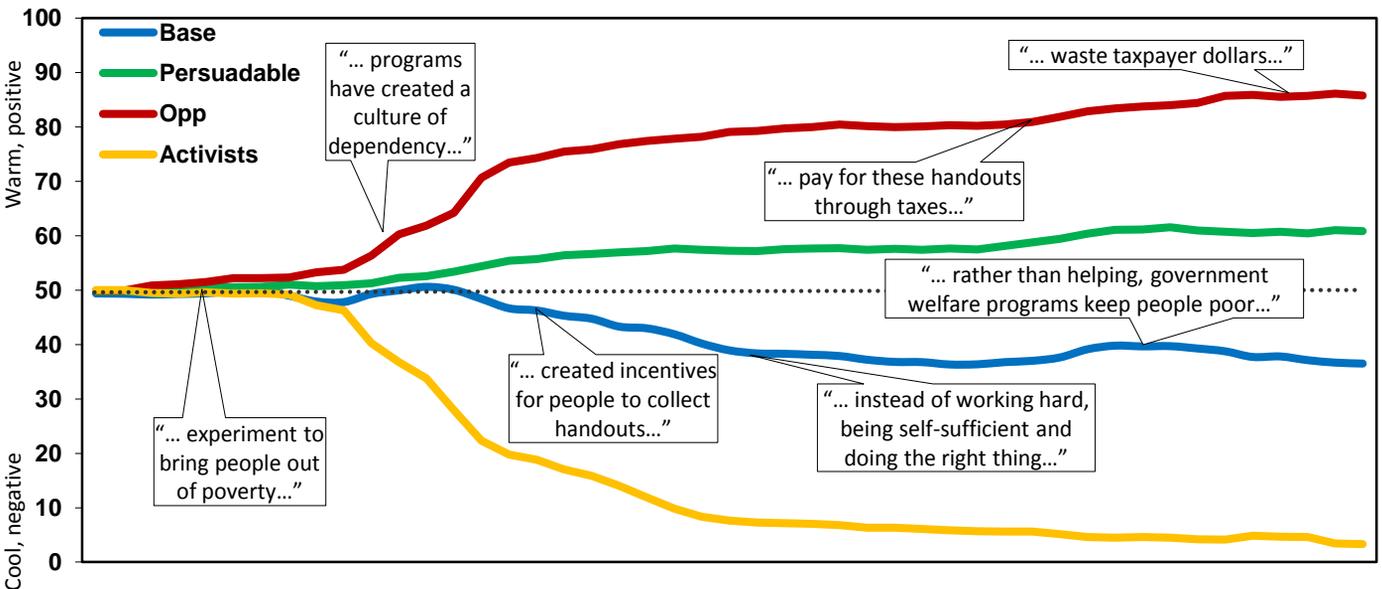
Positioning government as the villain that keeps people locked in a culture of dependency resonates very strongly for opposition voters while base voters and activists reject this and dial down significantly.

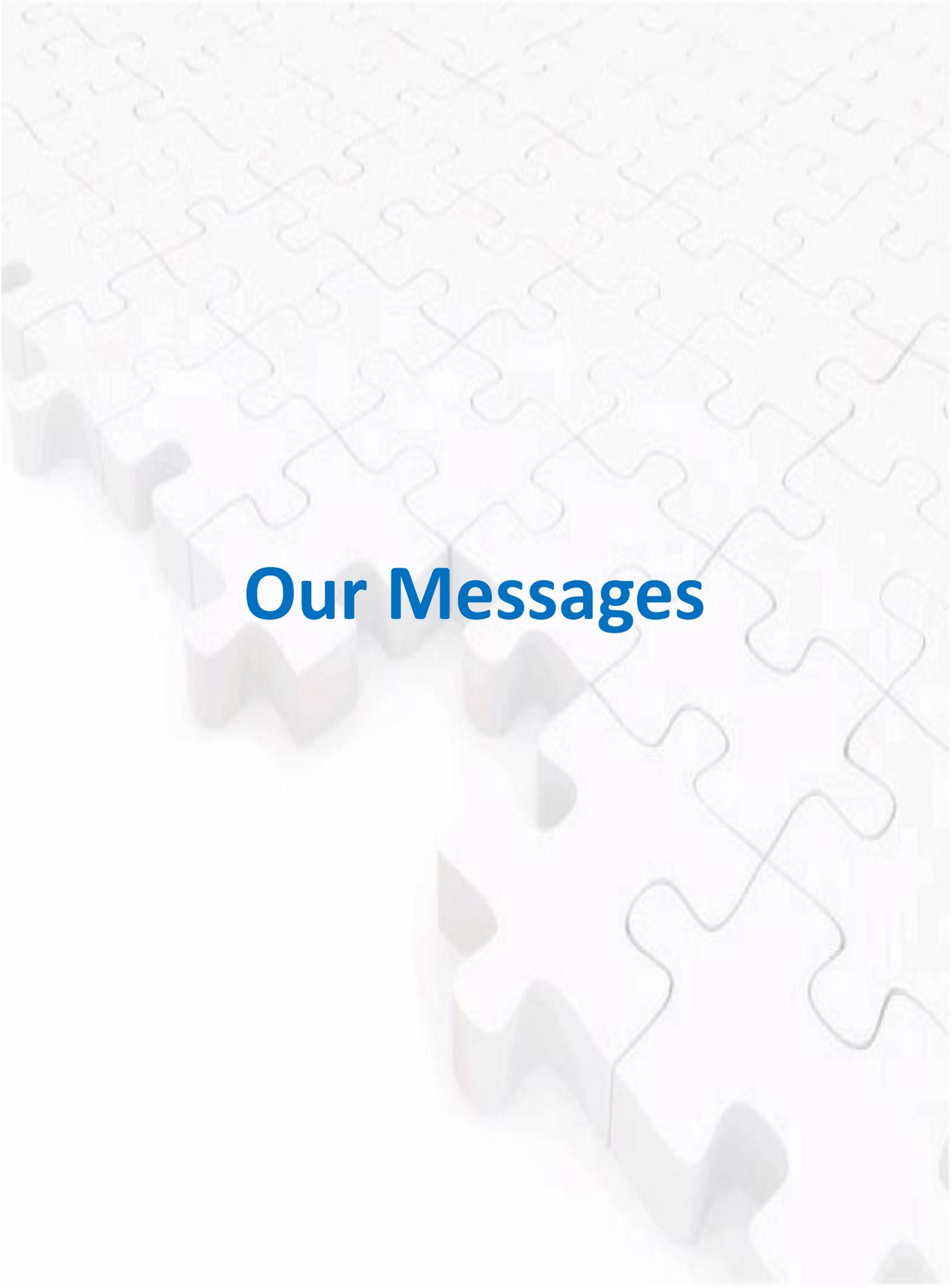
Persuadable voters stay dialed above 50, but they largely remain flat throughout. This frame of government as the problem does not resonate strongly but persuadable voters stop short of rejection. They are more likely to dial up in other messages that cast blame on the wealthy few than accusations of collecting “handouts...instead of working hard, being self-sufficient and doing the right thing.”

Convincing Rating



For the past 50 years, our government has tried a grand social experiment to bring people out of poverty. Results are in and this experiment has failed. Government programs have created a culture of dependency handed down from generation to generation. We’ve created incentives for people to collect handouts and have babies out of wedlock instead of working hard, being self-sufficient and doing the right thing. That has led to problems like drugs, crime, and teen-age pregnancy. And, unfortunately, hard-working middle-class families and small business owners pay for these handouts through taxes. Rather than helping, government welfare programs keep people poor and dependent on more aid. And in the process, waste taxpayer dollars and shackle our children with enormous debt.





Our Messages



WHAT WORKS

- ✓ Quick take off
- ✓ Details pop
- ✓ Strong with target demographic groups
- ✓ Alienates the opposition, particularly with woman of color messenger

WHAT FALLS SHORT

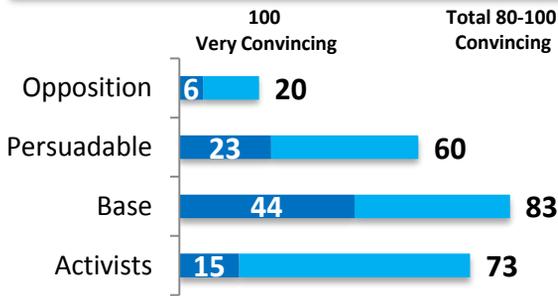
- ✗ Activists dial up slowly, less clear whether family being used by our side or theirs.

Our strongest message taps into the value of family and includes specifics that have multi-generational appeal. In particular, language including a newborn and the elderly appeals across generations.

“Everyone knows, family comes first” is very strong framing. “We work in order to make the future brighter” taps into people’s concerns about future generations.

“If politicians want to talk “family values”, it’s time to start valuing families” taps into people’s discontent with the current political atmosphere without being too cynical.

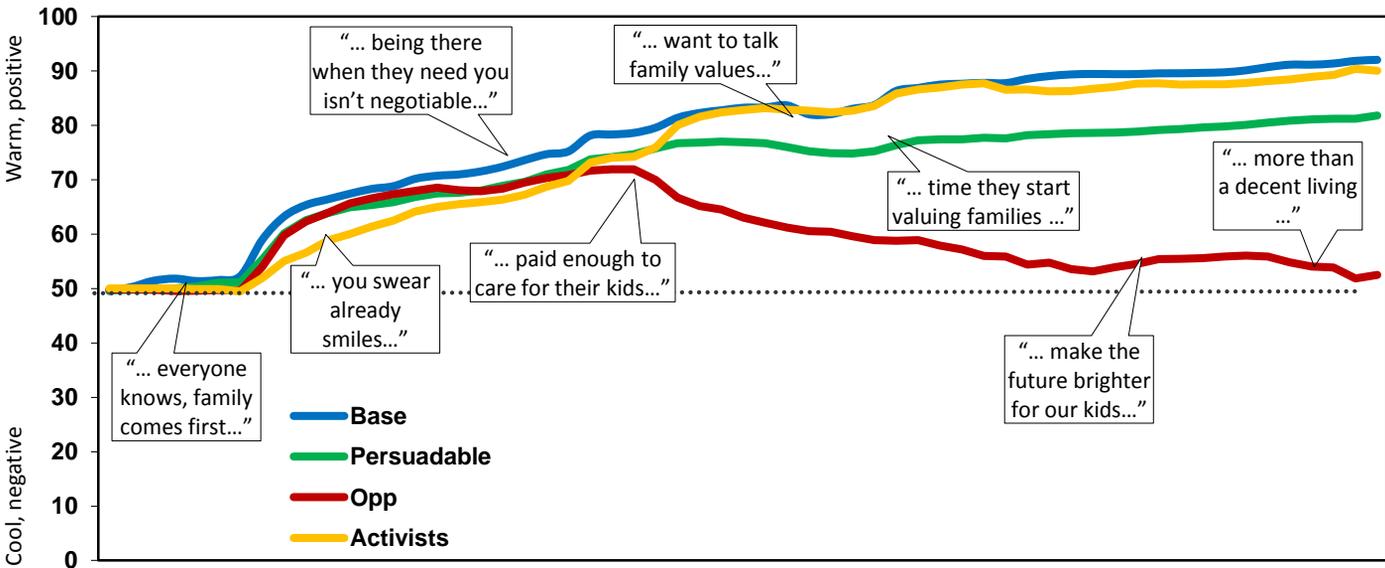
Convincing Rating



Activists dial up slowly at first, unsure if the initial reference to family is code for opposition messaging or ours. They dial up once the message connects this value to being “paid enough to care for their kids.”

Opposition voters have lower unconscious ratings (mean dial ratings) with a woman of color messenger (mean 59.6) than with a white man (64.5)

They may drive you crazy but everyone knows, family comes first. Whether it’s for that newborn you swear already smiles, your elderly mom or your spouse who got laid off, providing for your family and being there when they need you isn’t negotiable. Every working parent should get paid enough to care for their kids and set them off toward a great future. If politicians want to talk “family values”, it’s time they start valuing families – and that means making sure America’s dedicated strivers and builders make ends meet. We work in order to make the future brighter for our kids and more secure for our families. Hard working Americans deserve to make more than a decent living -- they deserve to have a decent life.





WHAT WORKS

- ✓ Quick take off
- ✓ Details pop
- ✓ Strong with target demographic groups
- ✓ Alienates the opposition

WHAT FALLS SHORT

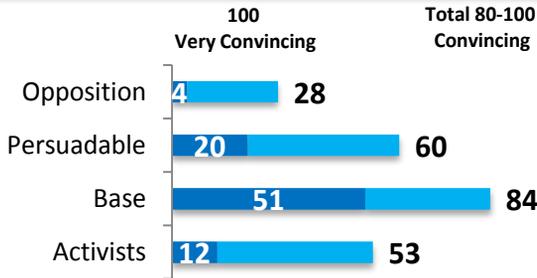
- ✗ Activists dial up slowly

For both the white male and woman of color messenger, the opposition dials down on “working parent should get paid enough to care for their kids and set them off to a bright future” but then dials back up on “we work in order to make the future brighter for our kids.” Working parent might be acting as code for “working moms” and the notion of wage standards is a turn off to them.

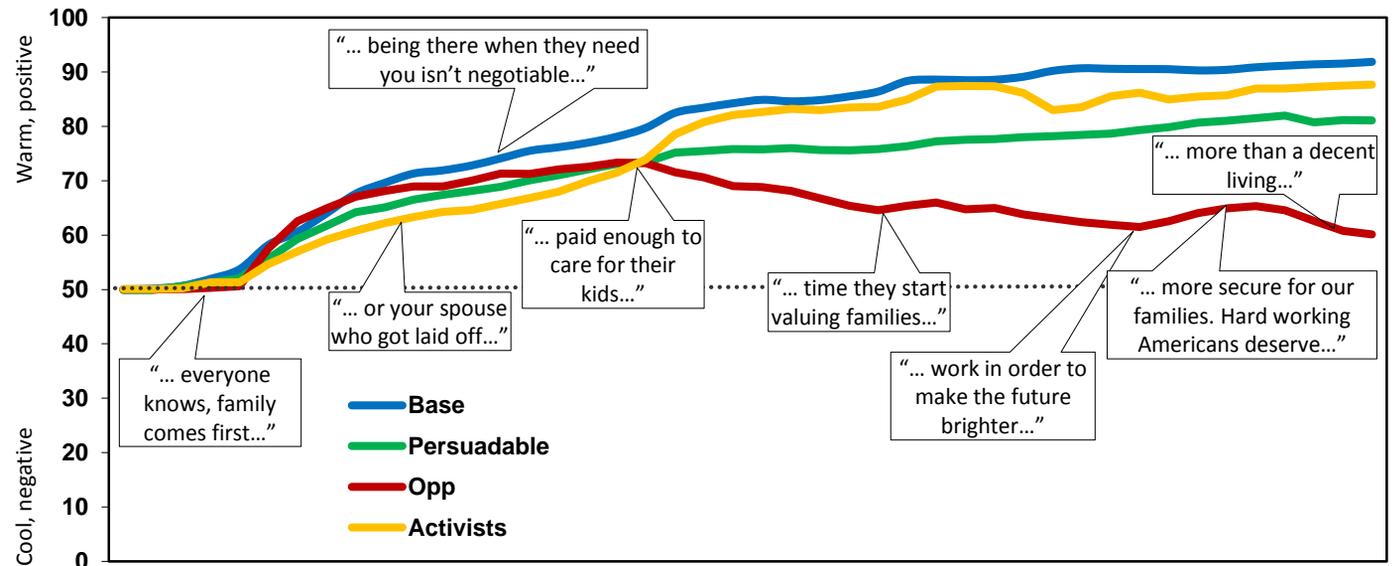
For the opposition, it’s fine to have vague positive statements about a brighter future as long as there is no accountability to act for improvements – that’s what separates opposition from persuadable voters.

The opposition does not dial down as heavily with a white male messenger as when a woman of color narrates, though the language tends to work the same regardless of messenger.

Convincing Rating



They may drive you crazy but everyone knows, family comes first. Whether it's for that newborn you swear already smiles, your elderly mom or your spouse who got laid off, providing for your family and being there when they need you isn't negotiable. Every working parent should get paid enough to care for their kids and set them off toward a great future. If politicians want to talk "family values", it's time they start valuing families – and that means making sure America's dedicated strivers and builders make ends meet. We work in order to make the future brighter for our kids and more secure for our families. Hard working Americans deserve to make more than a decent living -- they deserve to have a decent life.





WHAT WORKS

- ✓ Quick take off
- ✓ High convincing ratings from base and persuadable voters
- ✓ Shows opposition’s true colors as they dial down on “every worker is paid enough”

WHAT FALLS SHORT

- ✗ Distances but does not alienate opposition
- ✗ Persuadable voters dial strongly but are not as enthusiastic in their conscious reaction.

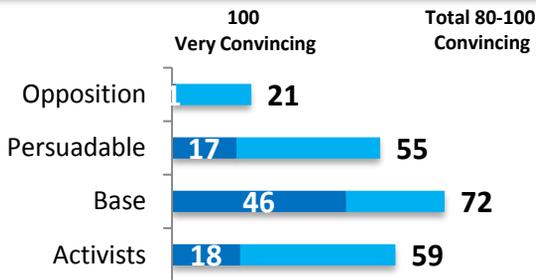
The “Community” message shows who the opposition truly values: they dial down on “every worker is paid enough” and then dial right back up on “entrepreneur can make their vision a reality.”

People like the language “look out for each other and work together.”

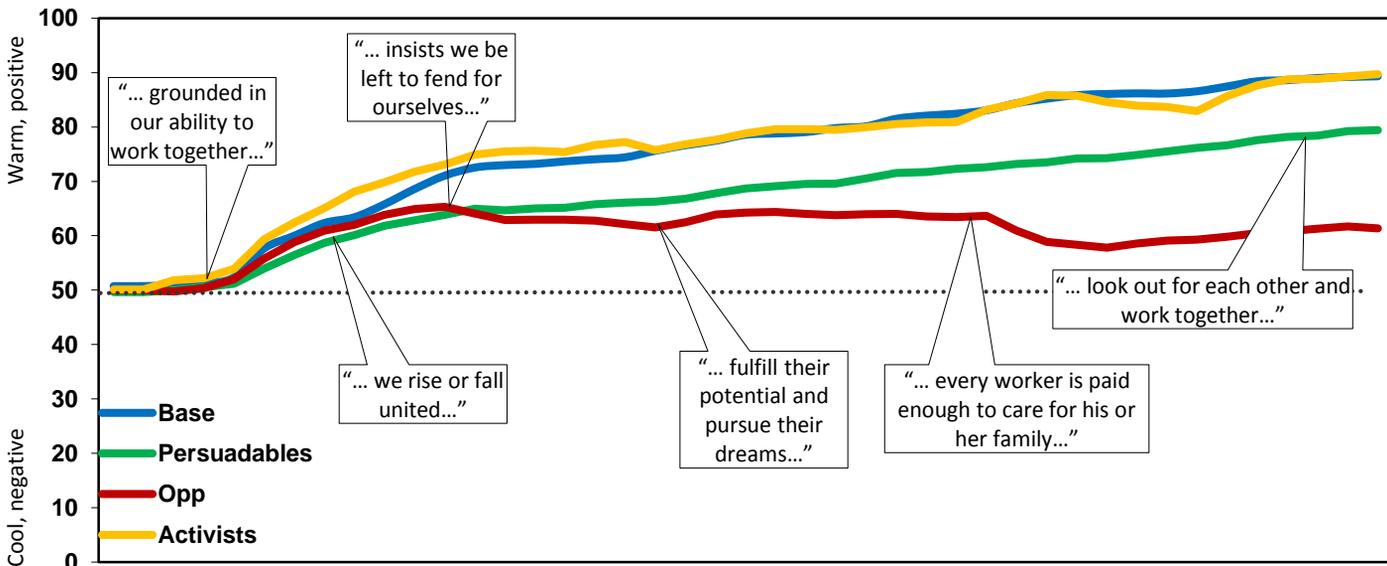
Mentioning retirement buttresses base and persuasion support. Other research shows that it is voters’ top economic concern.

Highlighting how greed leads people to fend for themselves unites our base and persuasion and alienates opposition.

Convincing Rating



Our country's strength is grounded in our ability to work together. We are stronger when we recognize we rise or fall united, and are weaker when greed insists we be left to fend for ourselves. You and I know, our society is at its best when we grant every striver the opportunity to fulfill their potential and pursue their dreams. The USA cannot stand for You Stand Alone, but must stand for “us”. America succeeds when every worker is paid enough to care for his or her family, when every entrepreneur has the tools to make their vision a reality, and when every American can retire in dignity. America works best when we look out for each other and work together as one nation, indivisible.





WHAT WORKS

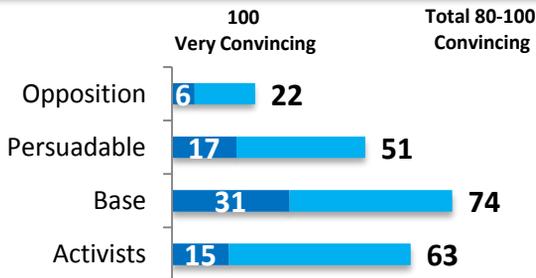
- ✓ Quick take off
- ✓ High convincing ratings from base and persuadable voters
- ✓ Shows opposition’s true colors as they dial down on “every worker is paid enough”

WHAT FALLS SHORT

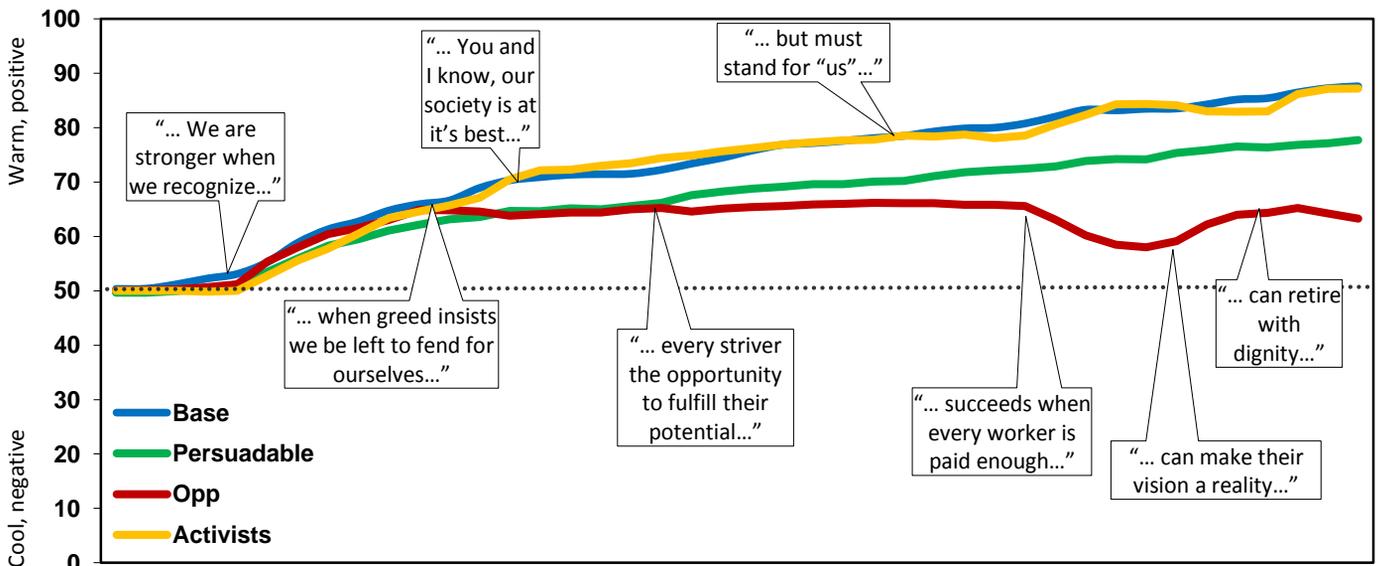
- ✗ Distances but does not alienate opposition
- ✗ Persuadable voters not enthusiastic

The community message with a white male messenger shows a similar dynamic as with a white female messenger, unlike other messages in which the opposition dials more positively with a white male messenger.

Convincing Rating



Our country's strength is grounded in our ability to work together. We are stronger when we recognize we rise or fall united, and are weaker when greed insists we be left to fend for ourselves. You and I know, our society is at its best when we grant every striver the opportunity to fulfill their potential and pursue their dreams. The USA cannot stand for You Stand Alone, but must stand for “us”. America succeeds when every worker is paid enough to care for his or her family, when every entrepreneur has the tools to make their vision a reality, and when every American can retire in dignity. America works best when we look out for each other and work together as one nation, indivisible.



WHAT WORKS

- ✓ Alienates opposition
- ✓ Overt reference to gender works
- ✓ Activists approve
- ✓ Base and persuadable voters find it convincing

WHAT FALLS SHORT

- ✗ Only mildly persuasive
- ✗ Not as strong with base as others
- ✗ Slow start

Corporations taking advantage of people increases ratings with base and persuadable voters. It appeals to people personally and fits with their notion that the economic rules favor corporations.

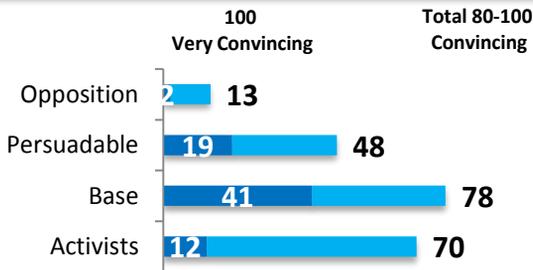
The corporate reference energizes the activists, base, and persuadable voters while alienating the opposition.

“Skipping meals you can’t afford and getting home after the kids are asleep” resonates with people, particularly women, and connects with an important shared everyday experience.

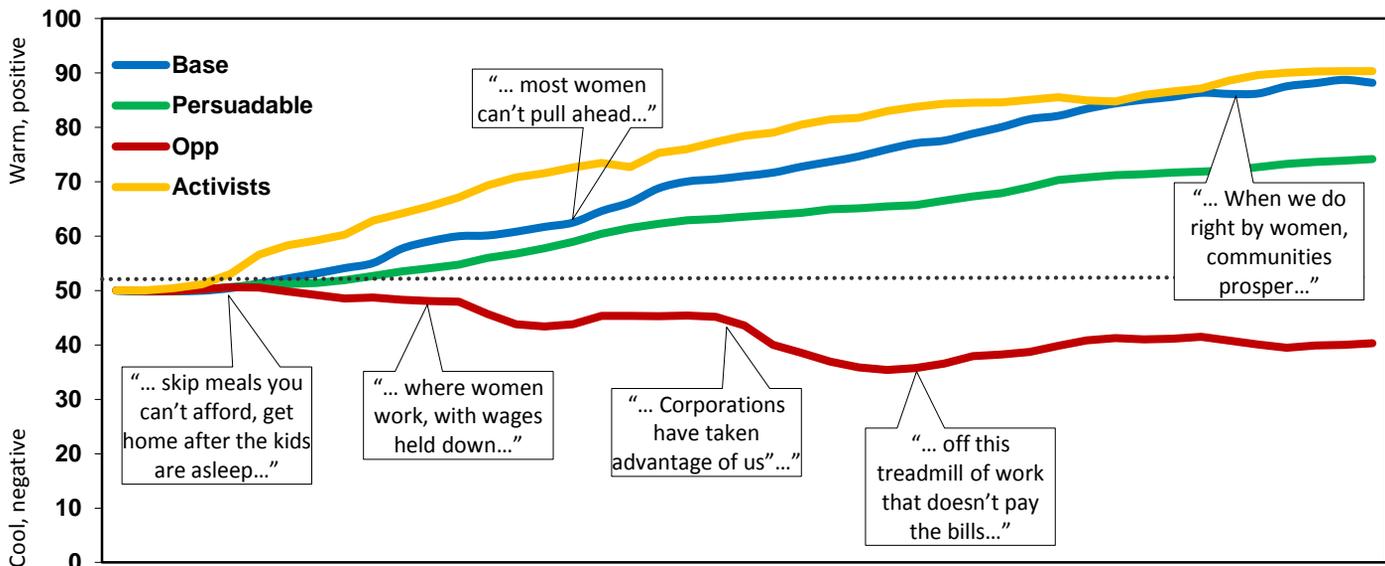
Opposition shows more sensitivity to working women, dialing flat on “especially in industries where women work.”

Opposition declines when we identify a role for government that reinforces values of fairness and prosperity, and “changing the rules about work and wages.”

Convincing Rating



You wake up at 4:30, take two buses to work, skip meals you can't afford, get home after the kids are asleep – to come up short at the end of the month. Especially in industries where women work, with wages held down, irregular schedules and childcare that costs a paycheck, most women can't pull ahead – no matter how hard we try. Corporations have taken advantage of us, raking in profits by cutting everything our families need to survive. We need to get women off this treadmill of work that doesn't pay the bills so moms can see their kids, customers have money to spend in our stores and all of us can come together to build stronger communities. When we do right by women, communities prosper. It's time we got America back on track by changing the rules about work and wages.





WHAT WORKS

- ✓ Alienates opposition
- ✓ Overt reference to gender works
- ✓ Activists approve
- ✓ Base and persuadable voters find it convincing

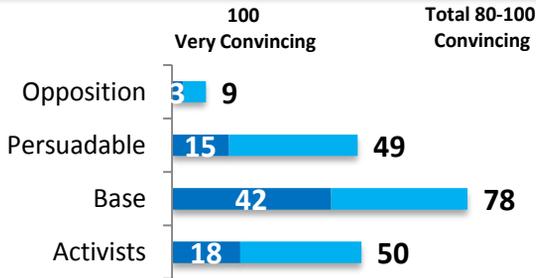
WHAT FALLS SHORT

- ✗ Only mildly persuasive
- ✗ Not as strong with base as others
- ✗ Slow start

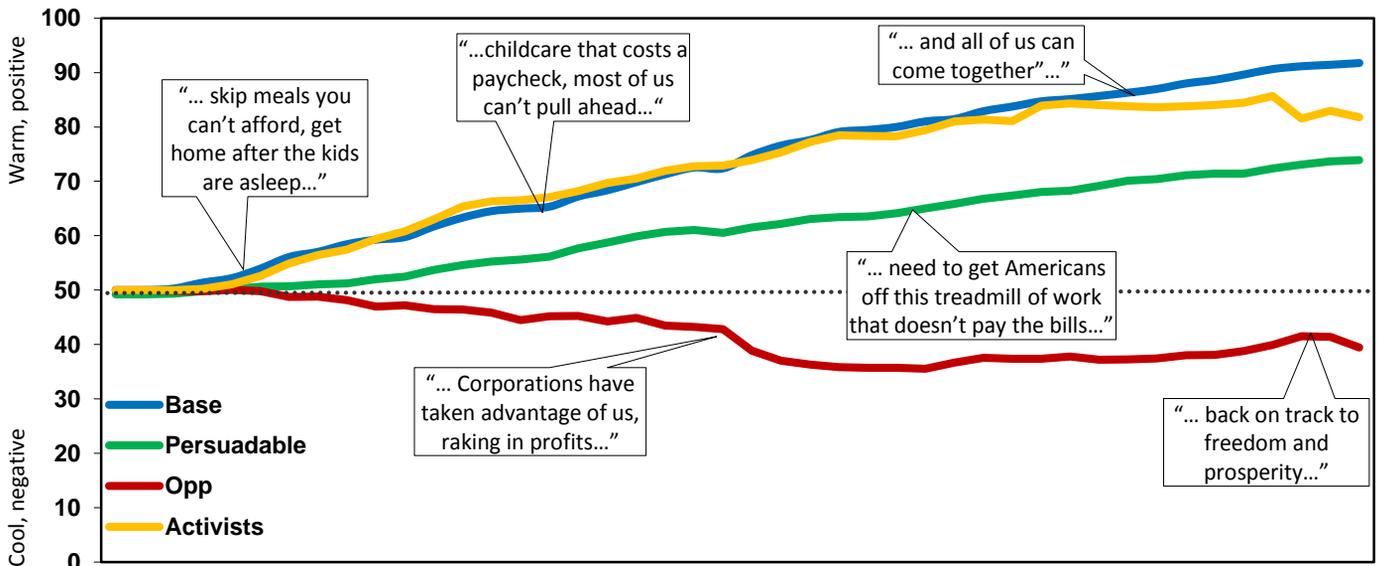
Dial dynamics remain similar between messengers but activists have marginally higher convincing ratings with a white male messenger.

In terms of unconscious ratings, base voters have a higher rating for the white male voice (72.6) than a white woman (70.3). Persuadable voters have a higher rating with a white woman voice (62.5) than a white man (61.0).

Convincing Rating



You wake up at 4:30, take two buses to work, skip meals you can't afford, get home after the kids are asleep – to come up short at the end of the month. With wages held down, irregular schedules, and childcare that costs a paycheck, most of us can't pull ahead – no matter how hard we try. Corporations have taken advantage of us, raking in profits by cutting everything our families need to survive. We need to get Americans off this treadmill of work that doesn't pay the bills so parents can see their kids, customers have money to spend in our stores, and all of us can come together to build stronger communities. It's time we got America back on track to freedom and prosperity for all by changing the rules about work and wages.





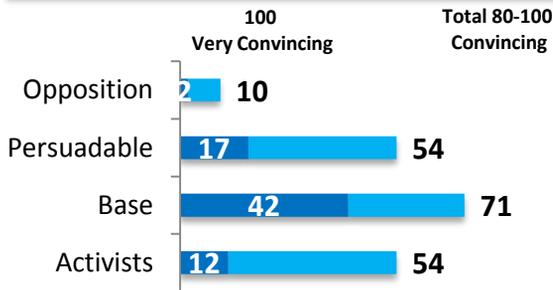
WHAT WORKS

- ✓ Strong advocate favorability, especially with man of color voice
- ✓ Key base words: opportunity, dreams, freedom
- ✓ “Greedy few rigged game”
- ✓ Opposition messenger sensitive
- ✓ “Adequate pay for our work” and “time to be with family” is powerful combination

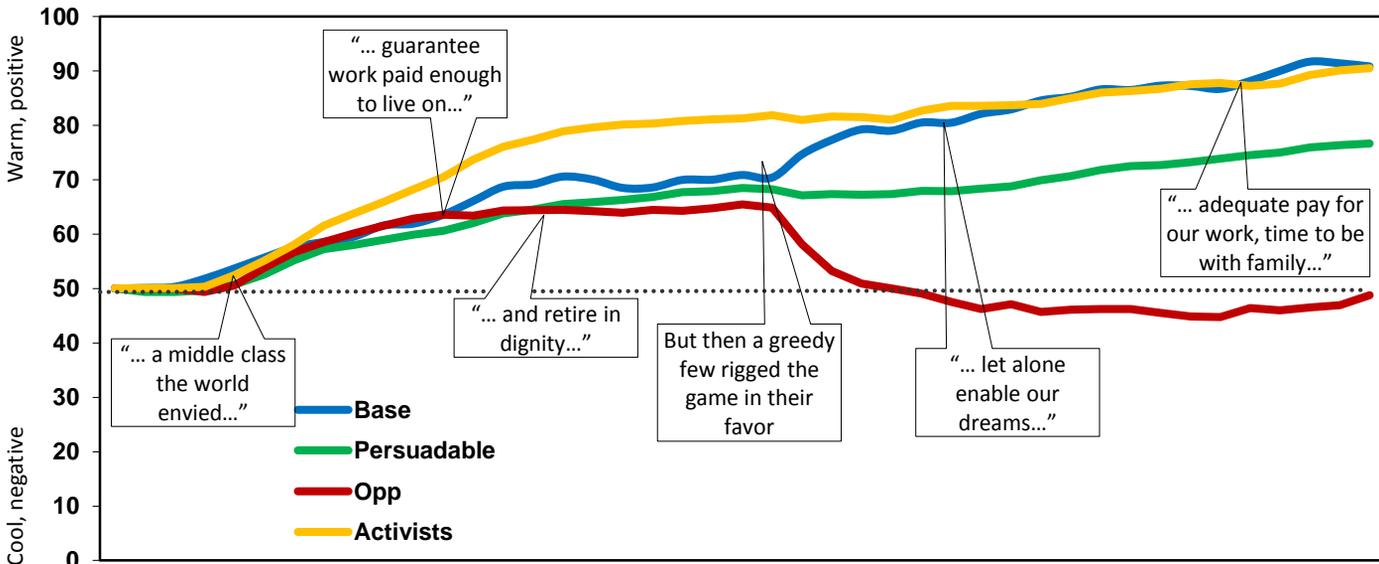
WHAT FALLS SHORT

- ✗ Populist sentiment should come sooner
- ✗ Stalls out in middle for persuadable voters, stalling our momentum

Convincing Rating



America’s gone through tough times before and came back to build a middle class the world envied. After the Great Depression, we banded together through government to build roads, open schools and guarantee work paid enough to live on and retire in dignity. We unleashed opportunity for most Americans and became a better country for it. But then a greedy few rigged the game in their favor. Today, many jobs don’t cover our needs – let alone enable our dreams. It’s time to do right by those who clock in and out everyday to keep America working. If we value everyone’s freedom, we need adequate pay for our work, time to be with family and a secure foundation on which to build a good life.



“Greedy few rigged the game” is the most polarizing phrase in the entire survey.

For our base the greedy few are the true villain, and persuadable dials stay flat. They stay at 67 through this phrase (in contrast, they stay at 69 during the opposition statement “government should not take your earnings.”)



WHAT WORKS

- ✓ Heavy advocate favorability, especially with MOC voice
- ✓ Key base words: opportunity, dreams, freedom
- ✓ “Greedy few rigged game”
- ✓ Opposition messenger sensitive
- ✓ “Adequate pay for our work” and “time to be with family” is a powerful combination

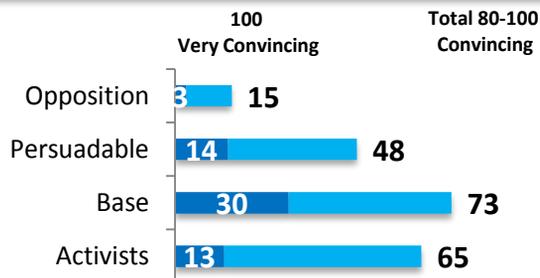
WHAT FALLS SHORT

- ✗ Populist sentiment should come sooner
- ✗ Stalls out in middle for persuadable voters

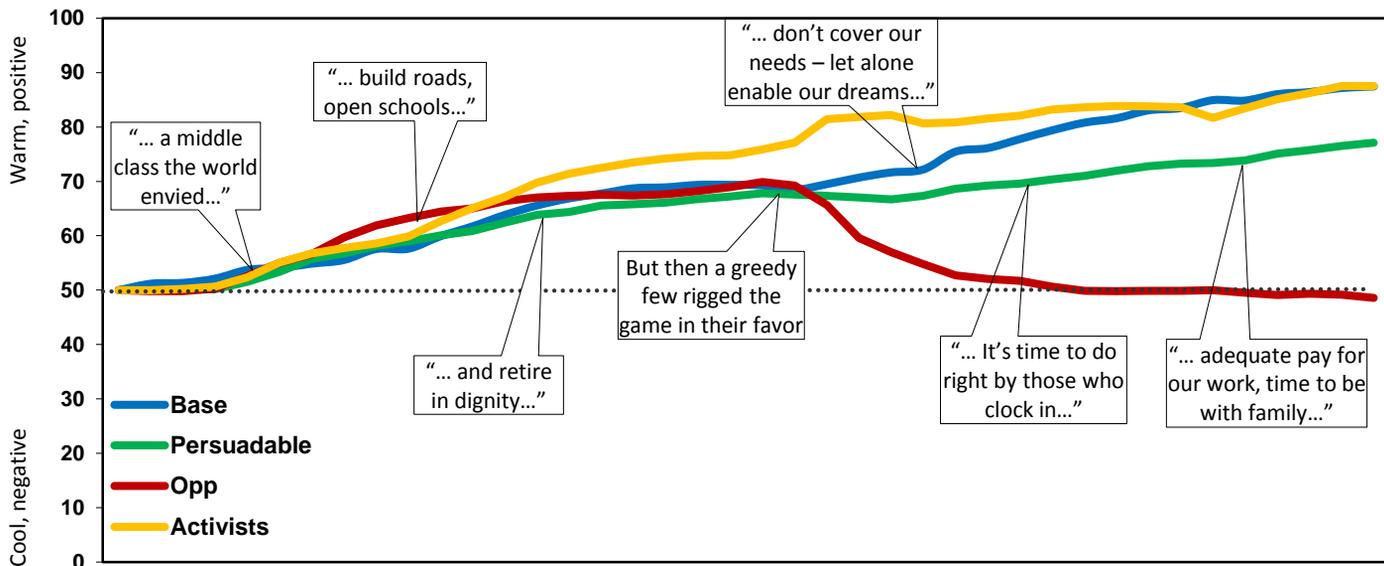
Opposition voters dial down strongly regardless of messenger at the notion of a greedy few rigging the game, but they are not as negative as when the messenger is a man of color.

At the same time the overall convincing ratings are lower for a man of color voice among the opposition.

Convincing Rating



America’s gone through tough times before and came back to build a middle class the world envied. After the Great Depression, we banded together through government to build roads, open schools and guarantee work paid enough to live on and retire in dignity. We unleashed opportunity for most Americans and became a better country for it. But then a greedy few rigged the game in their favor. Today, many jobs don’t cover our needs – let alone enable our dreams. It’s time to do right by those who clock in and out everyday to keep America working. If we value everyone’s freedom, we need adequate pay for our work, time to be with family and a secure foundation on which to build a good life.





WHAT WORKS

- ✓ Base dial up quickly
- ✓ Persuadable stay positive throughout.
- ✓ Resonates strongly with Activists
- ✓ Framing of “wealthy America” with mention of race isolates opposition even more

WHAT FALLS SHORT

- ✗ Addition of race blunts the message with persuadable voters somewhat

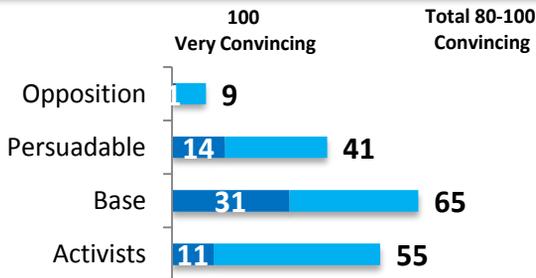
The racial focus of the Two Americas message alienates opposition voters immediately.

Though this is a second tier narrative for base and persuasion voters, activists react favorably throughout and dial up quickly.

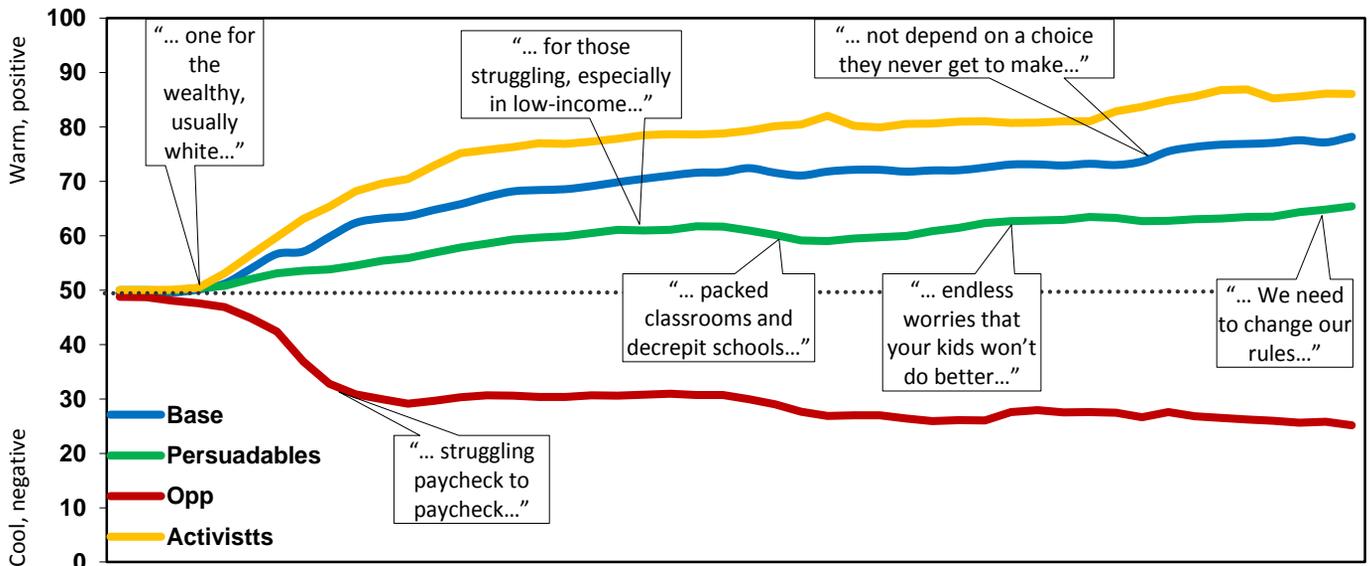
Base and activists alike dial up on “a choice they never get to make, the family they are born into.”

Base and persuasion voters dial up at the call to action to “change our rules so that we can be one America, united and strong.”

Convincing Rating



Today there are two Americas; one for the wealthy, usually white, and one for the rest of us, struggling paycheck to paycheck. In the wealthy America there are desirable schools, easy access to healthcare, banks eager to lend for new ventures, gated communities and the comfort of knowing your kids can dream big and achieve success. For those struggling, especially in low-income communities of color, there are packed classrooms in decrepit schools, wages that stay the same or barely rise, pay day lenders and pawn shops charging triple digit interest and endless worries your kids won't do better. The fate of children of color should not depend on a choice they never get to make: the family they're born into. We need to change our rules so we can be one America, united and strong.





WHAT WORKS

- ✓ Base dial up quickly
- ✓ Persuadable stay positive throughout.
- ✓ Resonates strongly with Activists
- ✓ Framing of “wealthy America” isolates opposition.

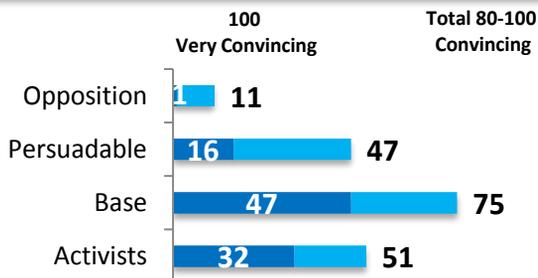
WHAT FALLS SHORT

- ✗ Persuadable voters dial up slowly

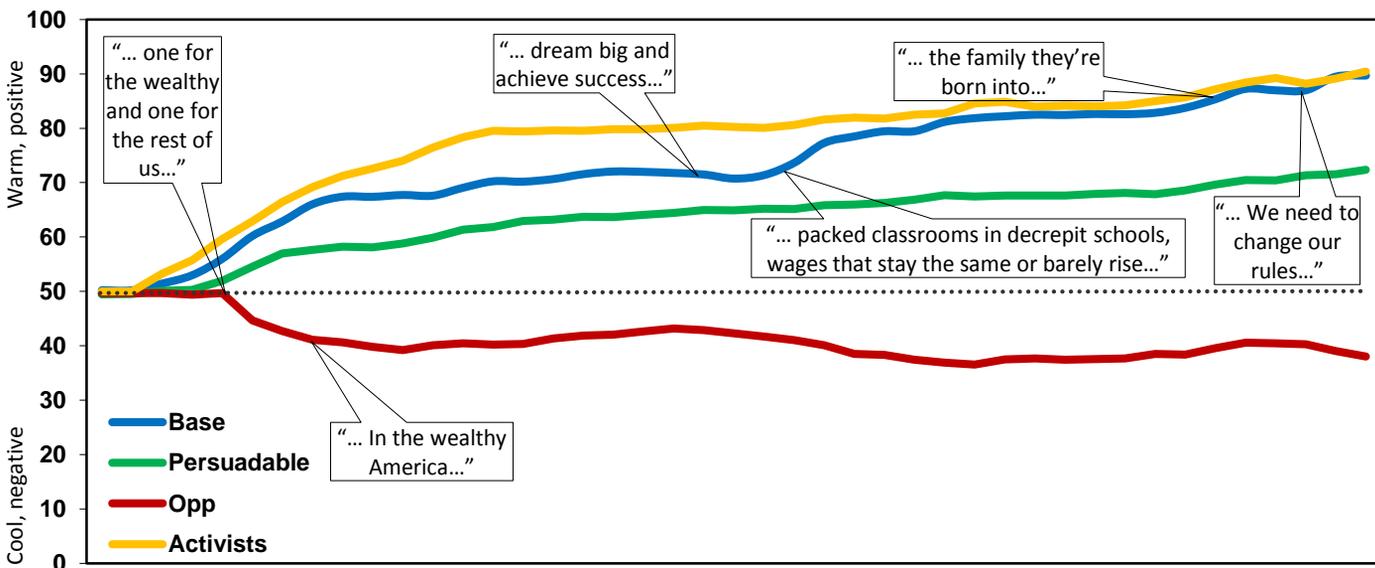
Opposition voters remain alienated regardless of messenger with the Two Americas narrative, but dial down less strongly in the version that does not mention race.

Base and persuasion voters have higher convincing ratings with a white male messenger.

Convincing Rating



Today there are two Americas; one for the wealthy and one for the rest of us, struggling paycheck to paycheck. In the wealthy America, there are desirable schools, easy access to healthcare, banks eager to lend for new ventures, gated communities and the comfort of knowing your kids can dream big and achieve success. For those struggling, there are packed classrooms in decrepit schools, wages that stay the same or barely rise, pay day lenders and pawn shops charging triple digit interest and endless worries your kids won't do better. The fate of our children should not depend on a choice they never get to make: the family they're born into. We need to change our rules so we can be one America, united and strong.





WHAT WORKS

- ✓ Isolates opposition
- ✓ Base and persuadable voters dial up aspirational call to action

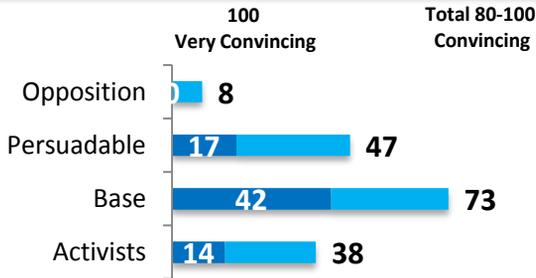
WHAT FALLS SHORT

- ✗ Framing for capitalism is not as powerful as call to action

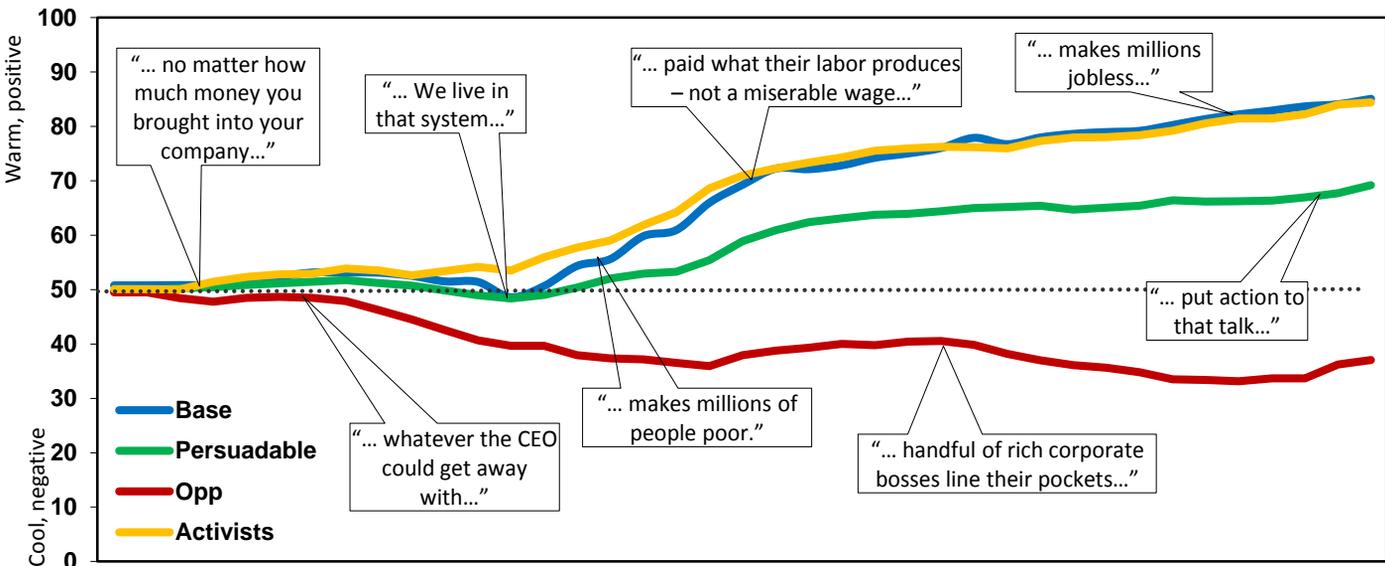
The capitalism message, an abstract description of inequality, produces little movement even when calling out CEO’s early in the message. However when we articulate our values by saying “everyone who works should get paid what their labor produces,” base and persuasion voters alike dial up strongly.

There is fast acceleration on “we live in that system and it makes millions of people poor. Everyone who works should get paid what their labor produces.”

Convincing Rating



Imagine a system where, no matter how much money you brought into your company, you got paid whatever the CEO could get away with while he or she kept the difference plus a bonus for driving down costs. We live in that system. And it makes millions of people poor. Everyone who works should get paid what their labor produces – not a miserable wage with irregular hours and no paid time off, no matter how productive your work. Letting a handful of rich corporate bosses line their pockets with the wealth our labor produces throws the economy out of balance and makes millions jobless. We say we value “hard work” in this country – it’s time we put action to that talk.





WHAT WORKS

- ✓ Isolates opposition
- ✓ Base and persuadable voters dial up aspirational call to action

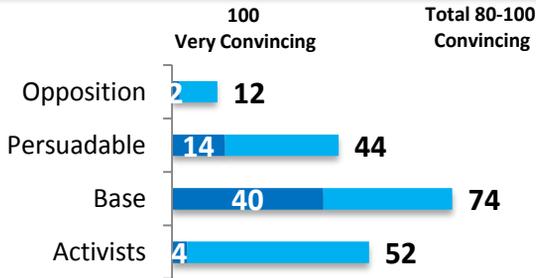
WHAT FALLS SHORT

- ✗ Framing for capitalism is not as powerful as call to action

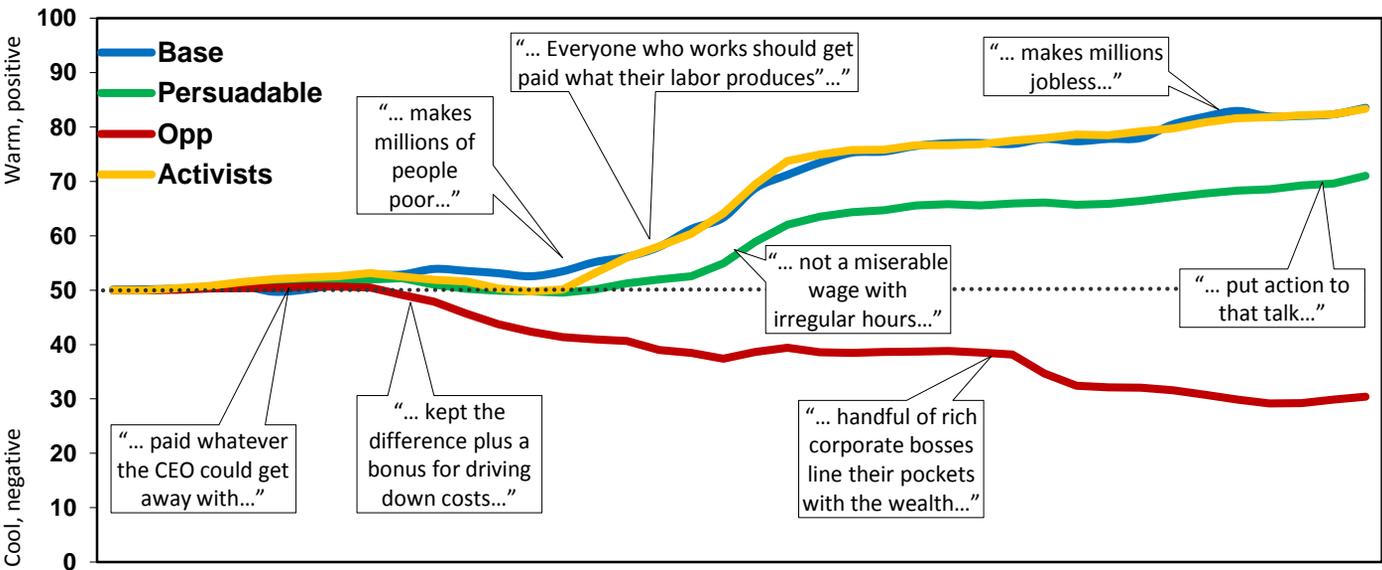
Again the opposition is marginally less negative when the messenger is a white man.

Activists react more strongly with a white male messenger.

Convincing Rating



Imagine a system where, no matter how much money you brought into your company, you got paid whatever the CEO could get away with while he or she kept the difference plus a bonus for driving down costs. We live in that system. And it makes millions of people poor. Everyone who works should get paid what their labor produces – not a miserable wage with irregular hours and no paid time off, no matter how productive your work. Letting a handful of rich corporate bosses line their pockets with the wealth our labor produces throws the economy out of balance and makes millions jobless. We say we value “hard work” in this country – it’s time we put action to that talk.





WHAT WORKS

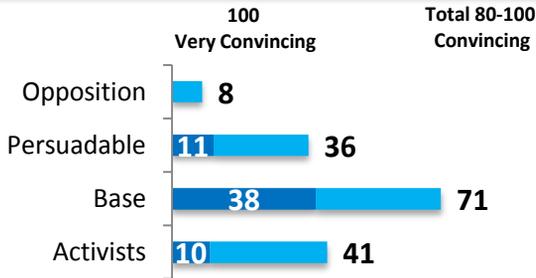
- ✓ Isolates opposition

WHAT FALLS SHORT

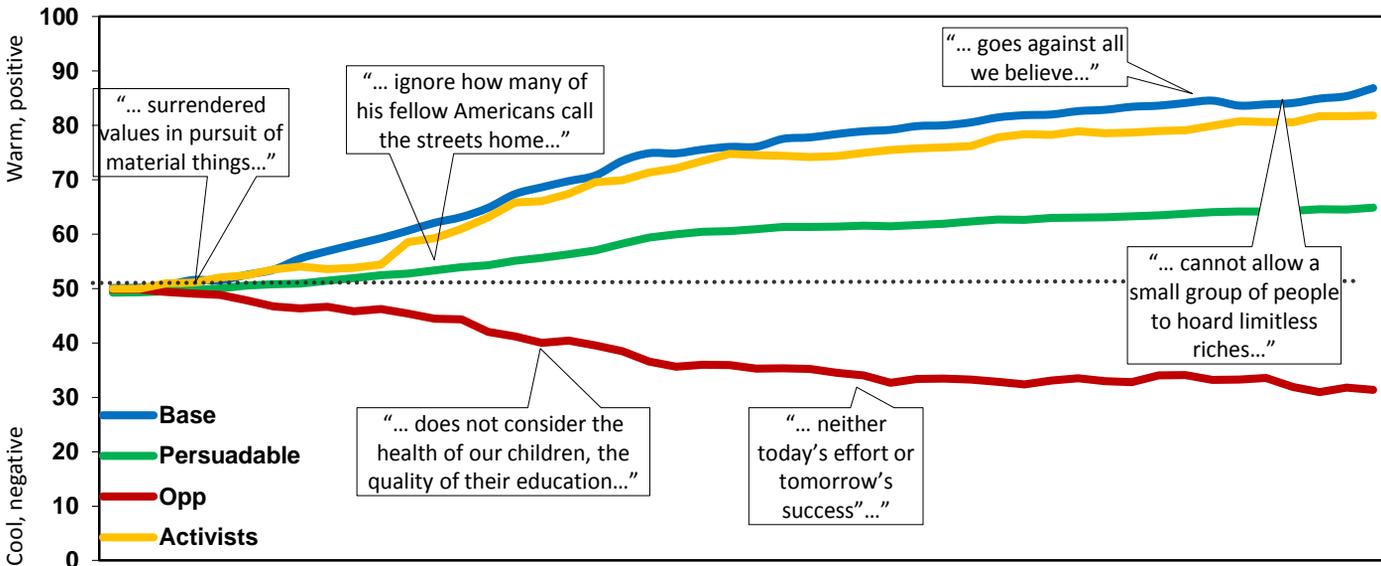
- ✗ Base respond slowly
- ✗ Weak with persuadable voters

The materialism that borrows and paraphrases from Robert Kennedy isolates the opposition and resonates strongly with base voters but starts slowly.

Convincing Rating



For too long, a powerful minority surrendered values in pursuit of material things. We marvel at how many houses one billionaire has and ignore how many of his fellow Americans call the streets home. Letting the wealthy put profits before people does not consider the health of our children, the quality of their education, or the joy of their play. It contributes to neither our courage nor our society's security; neither today's effort nor tomorrow's success. It provides a few people every material thing and the vast majority only great hardship. In a country with so much, that anyone struggles to make it goes against all we believe. We cannot allow a small group of people to hoard limitless riches no matter what that demands of the rest of us.





WHAT WORKS

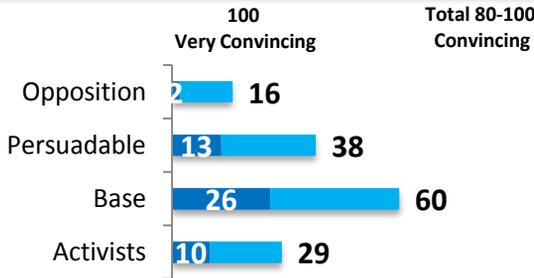
- ✓ Base and persuadables dial up on connection of profits to golden rule

WHAT FALLS SHORT

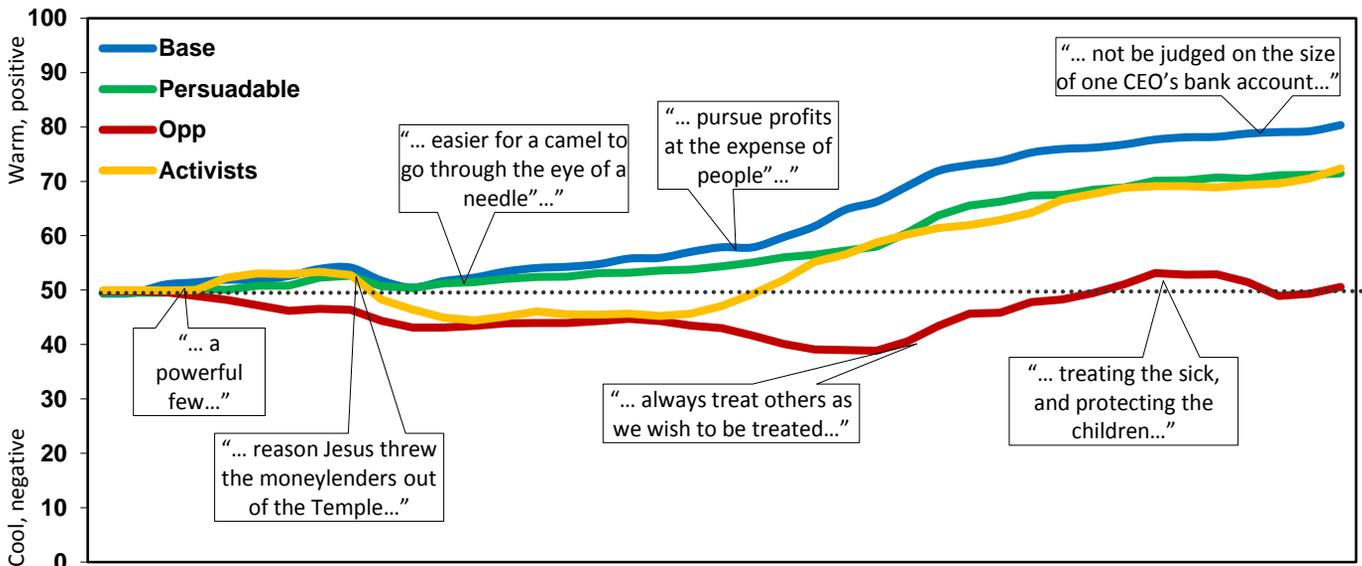
- ✗ Activists dial down on religious citations

The faith message largely misses the mark. All voters dial up at the notion of the golden rule, but religious citations on inequality fail to generate movement across demographics, including those who frequently attend religious

Convincing Rating



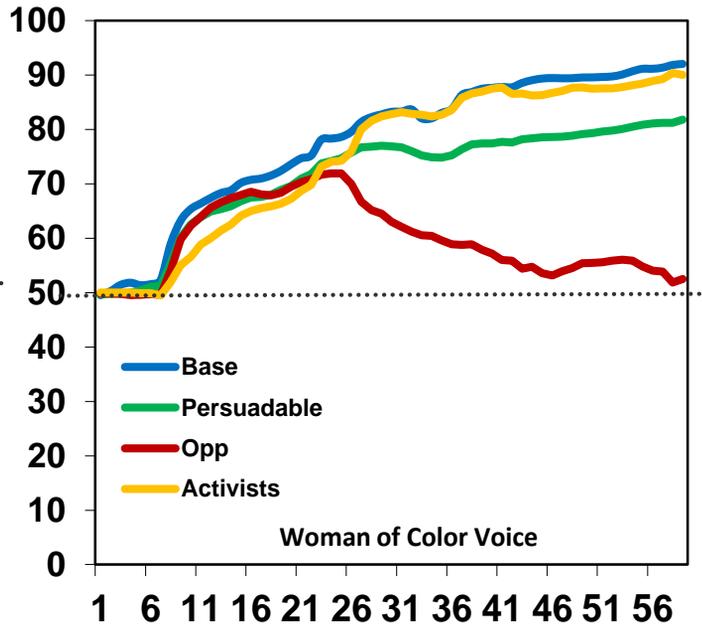
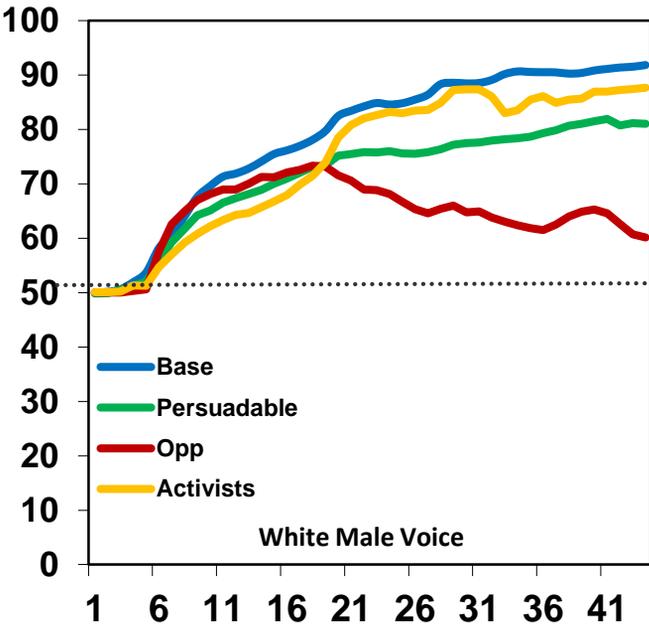
For too long, a powerful few wandered from the true path to chase the almighty dollar. There is a reason Jesus threw the moneylenders out of the Temple. As he said, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of God. Allowing an elite handful to pursue profits at the expense of people has made us forget the golden rule; that we must always treat others as we wish to be treated. This means feeding the hungry, welcoming the stranger, treating the sick, and protecting the children. We shall not be judged on the size of one CEO's bank account but rather on how we care for those with the least among us.



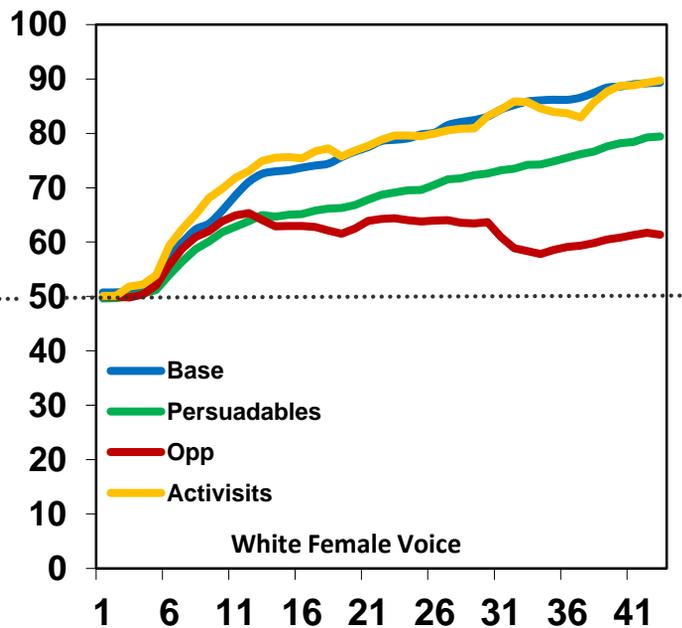
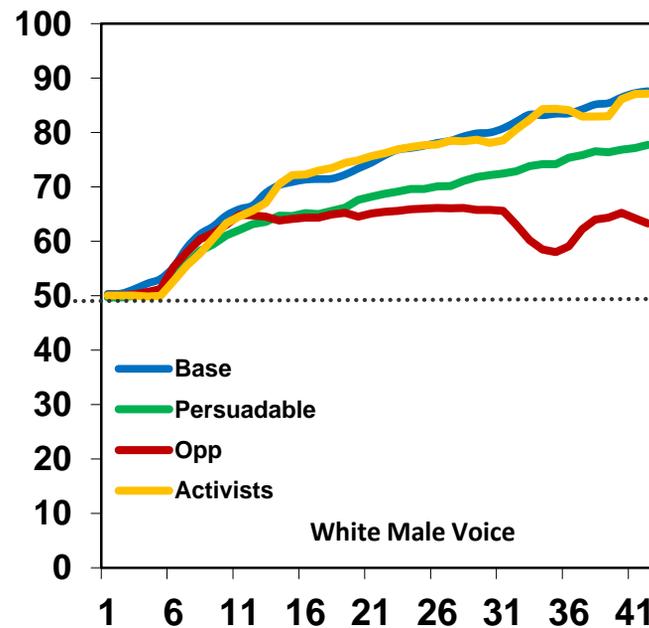
Messenger Impacts Opposition

Opposition dials down more when messenger is a woman or man of color.

"Family Comes First"



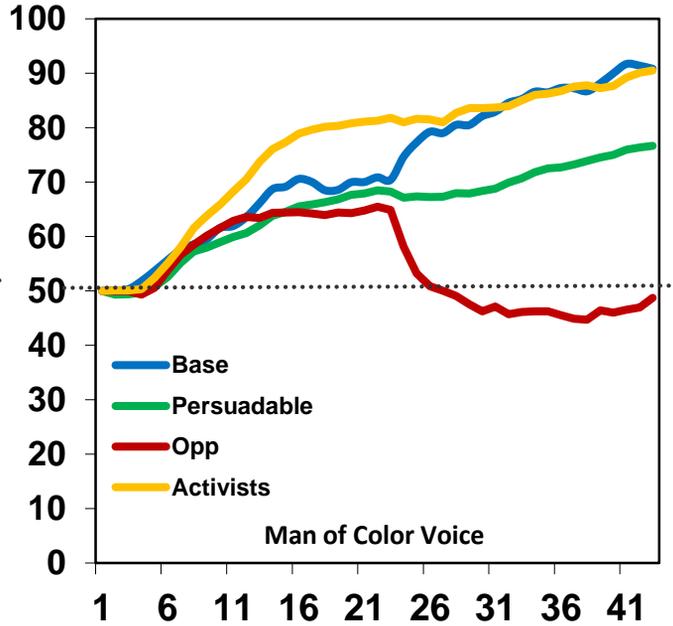
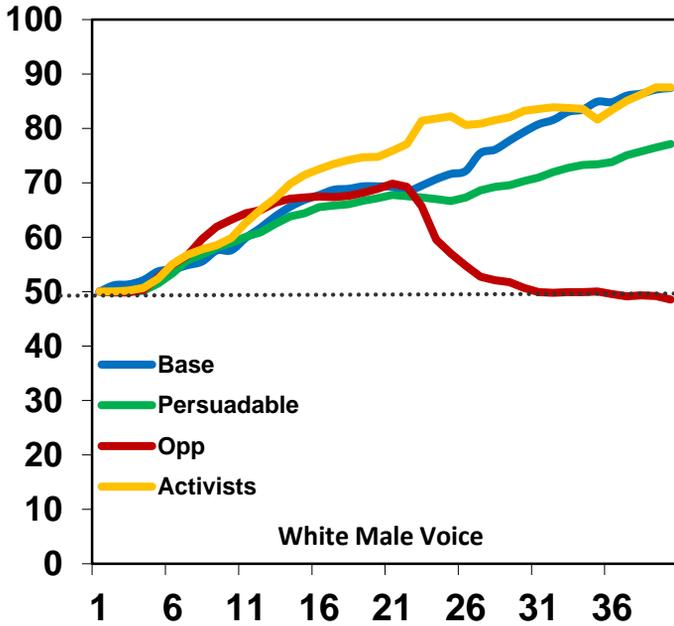
"Breaking out of Container"



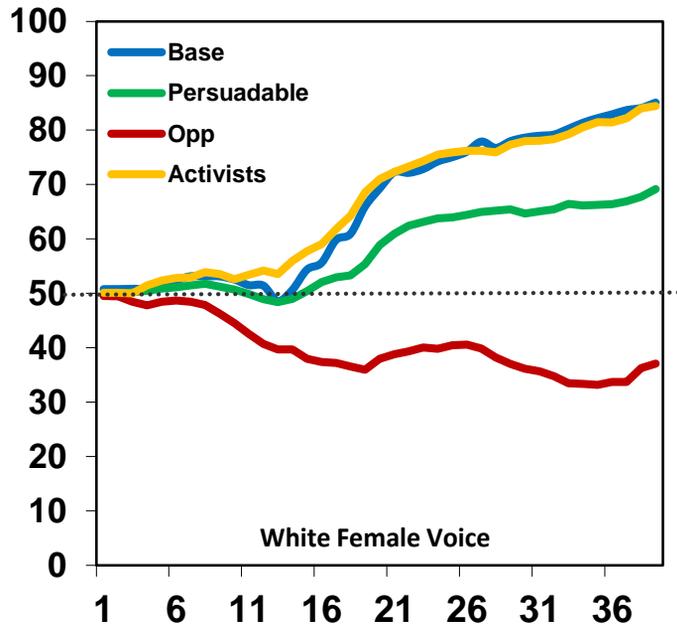
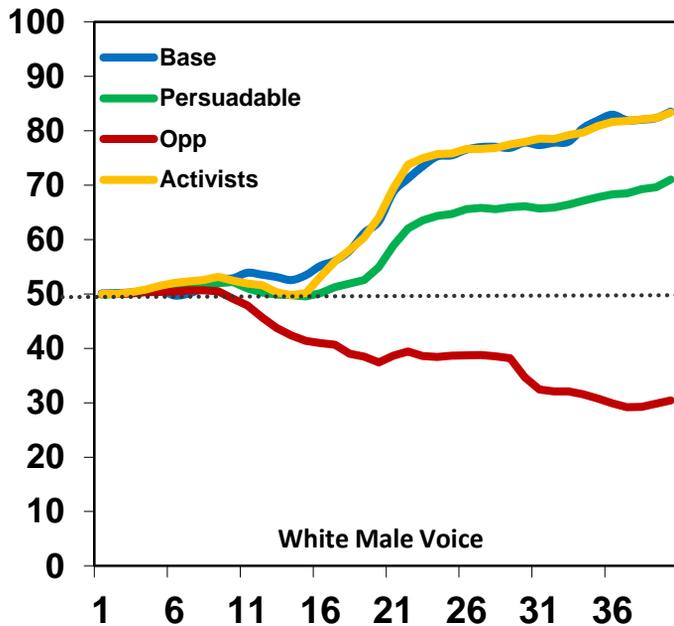
Messenger Impacts Opposition

Opposition dials down more when messenger is a woman or man of color.

“We can do it”



“Capitalism”





Celinda Lake
Alysia Snell
Jonathan Voss
Flora Lethbridge-Cejku



Anat Shenker-Osorio