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Story at Scale

# BUILDING A CREATIVE STRATEGY

## VIDEO TESTING

by Riki Conrey

# Table of Contents

Author's Preface . . . . . 1

Building a Creative Strategy for Storytellers . . . . . 2

Results and Story at Scale Strategy . . . . . 6

So Much We Don't Know: Future Directions . . . . . 13

Appendix A: Video Production . . . . . 14

Appendix B: Audience Micro Influencers . . . . . 16

Acknowledgements and Key Terms . . . . . 18

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# Author's Preface

I've been doing research for a long time, but I've seen my products go unused time and again. That's because data scientists have it backwards. In data science, we write job descriptions seeking people who can "explain technical concepts to non-experts" as though our own audiences are primarily characterized by their ignorance of what we do.

Our stakeholders do not fail to use what we make because we have failed to explain what we did; they don't use what we make because we too often fail to make anything useful.

To be useful to culture makers and storytellers, data science needs to be statistically precise and reliable so that what we say is "true," but good science is the easy part. The road test for Story at Scale used reliable, valid science, such as randomized controlled trials, to answer some concrete questions.

But, more importantly, data science needs to create an idea—an intuition—in the stakeholder audience about how these tools and ideas can become part of the process of telling stories, of making culture. That's why the road test for Story at Scale is not primarily a statistical test (although I promise there are many, many statistics here), it is a demonstration.

We made some tools and then we worked with organizers, artists, and culture makers to put them into practice, and we learned a lot about how those tools are useful. Ostensibly, the central question of this test is: does having a story strategy work better than not having one? Spoiler alert: yes. But the real questions of this test were: what is easy, what is hard, and how can the field use these tools to tell better stories and reach more people? That's why we offer the findings in the form of the steps you can take to start using Story at Scale based on our experience of where it worked, and where we missed the mark but created new ideas for how to move forward.

For me this process has been tremendously liberating, and it has increased my faith that artists and organizers can use these tools to create the narrative consistency and story variety we need to advance toward a gender-just future.

Riki

Riki

Riki Conrey (she/her), co-director of Story at Scale, is a social data scientist: she does math about people. She combines expertise in social psychology with big data to describe complex human actions like expressing racism, voting for a candidate, or choosing a healthcare plan. She uses statistical simplification to help activists and organizers understand where people are and to craft and measure programs that move them toward a shared progressive vision.

# Building a Creative Strategy for Storytellers

Story at Scale covered a lot of ground, and if you haven't already read about the two research-based tools: **audience research** and the movement-created **story platform**, feel free to review summaries of those on our website, **storyatscale.org**. We conducted a road test in which we combined these tools with partner brands and messaging best practices to learn what worked: what was easy, what was hard, and what sparked enthusiasm for gender justice in persuadable audiences. This report briefly describes what we did and what we measured and then details what we learned about how best to tell and to scale these stories.

## Making Content

Story at Scale produced and tested twelve videos based on the **story platform**—the core narrative that will help us change the culture and achieve gender justice—using the six story pillars that arose out of the platform to support particular areas of storytelling. Our goal was to create content that worked for Kids First and For the Win, two persuadable audiences identified through the Story at Scale **audience segmentation** process. (You can learn more about the story platform and pillars in the **story platform report**. You can learn more about the video production process and partners in **Appendix A**.)

Any of the pillars can reach any of the audiences, so storytellers should feel free to mix and match them as needed, but some pillars might provide more accessible on-ramps to connect with different audience groups (these are marked with a ★ in the chart below). We used these on-ramps to connect with the audience segments indicated.

| | | Justice Rising | Force for Good | Kids First | For the Win | No Special Treatment | Religious Traditionalists |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| STORY PLATFORM | YOU BELONG. WELCOME HOME. | ★ | ★ | ★ | ★ | ★ | |
| STORY PILLARS | JOYFUL, PLEASURABLE, FUN | | | | ★ | | |
| | ABUNDANT, NOT SCARCE | ★ | | | ★ | ★ | |
| | SAFETY IN COMMUNITY | ★ | | ★ | | | |
| | DIFFERENT, EQUALLY VALUED | | ★ | | | | |
| | SUSTAINING FOREVER | | ★ | | | ★ | |
| | CURIOSITY, KIDS, & THE FUTURE | | | ★ | | | |

## Measurement Methods and Measures

The video testing aimed to determine whether the story strategy works. Here, the story strategy "works" if it

- makes it possible to create several pieces of content that tell separate stories with a common authentically progressive narrative, that
- attracts base and persuadable audiences, and
- persuades them to believe in a just future for people of all genders.

Measurement is always comparative, so we want the story strategy not just to make us feel successful but to make us actually more successful than we would be if not using the story strategy.

The two specific questions we asked were:

- Does content made with the strategy perform better (attracting and persuading) than other content made by the same organizations without the strategy?
- Does content that uses the strategy targeted at specific persuadable audiences work better with those audiences than other content?

The purpose of the test was partly to see if all this "works," but more important, to learn about how it works: what is easy, what is hard, and how can we use these new tools to grow our skills in communicating with the audiences beyond our base.

This test used short-form video because the medium is relatively easy to create and quite easy to subject to testing that yields meaningful measures; however the tools and the steps here generally apply to all forms of culture change work, especially those that are much harder to measure.

When we talk about what works in storytelling—in this particular case, short-form online videos—we mean what works to engage and move our audience.

| | WHAT WE MEASURED | HOW WE MEASURED IT |
|---|---|---|
| **ENGAGEMENT** | **ATTRACT**. Does the content lead the audience to pay attention initially? | Engagement on YouTube: The percent of impressions (views) where viewers watched past the first ten seconds (five seconds after they have the opportunity to skip past the video to the content they want to see) |
| | **CONNECT**. Does the content draw the audience through the story? | Engagement on YouTube: The percent of impressions on which the viewer watched all the way to the end of the story. For apples-to-apples comparisons, we used statistics to estimate what this metric would have been if all the videos had been exactly 60 seconds long. |
| **PERSUASION** | **AFFECT**. Does the content change how the audience thinks about gender justice? | Gender justice "lift" on Swayable, a video testing platform: The percentage of viewers who watched the video during a survey and then responded to a question about changes happening in the United States around gender by saying that they were a "good" thing compared to the percentage of viewers who watched a control video (about texting while driving) and responded the same way. |

The metrics we used to operationalize "engagement" and "persuasion" were appropriate to the short-form video medium of this test, but these are by no means an exhaustive list of metrics of audience movement,[1] let alone narrative change.[2] What is generalizable from this test to any other cultural product, however, is that, to succeed, content (art, music, television shows, films, food, fashion, sports, games, or anything else) must achieve both engagement and persuasion. By "engagement," we mean that audiences should want to consume our cultural content. By "persuasion," we mean something broader than the conventional definition in politics, which is usually concerned with persuading an audience to support an issue or to vote in a particular way. We simply mean that our content has to move the audience toward us so that their vision of the future is closer to ours and to our story platform.

In a world where all cultural consumption is voluntary, we must attract, connect, and affect in everything we do.[3]

## Measuring Engagement

We tested for engagement on YouTube and for persuasion on Swayable. We used Youtube for engagement rather than on Facebook or another platform because YouTube is easy to work with and gives us detailed data back. Of course, YouTube is not the only platform on which we can engage audiences in our "real world" work.

We used zip code, age, and music preference[4] (which we measured on the survey and which relates to category membership) to specify the audiences that Youtube served the videos to. That means the audiences in the YouTube test are not "representative"; there is no way to get a random sample of people on YouTube at all, much less to draw randomly from an audience segment. Instead, the YouTube audiences represent the most typical members of the audiences. That is, they come from the densest communities of each audience, have the most characteristic age, and listen to the most typical music.

Of course, age, gender, geography, and music preference are far from perfect predictors of audience membership. That means the engagement data contain a lot of variations. We did some statistical adjustment to weight the YouTube data to be more similar to the audiences by age, gender, and parental status (the only features available to us in the data from YouTube) to help control for this.

All the tests included Kids First and For the Win. On YouTube, we also added other audiences for comparison. For the national test, we included Justice Rising, Force for Good, and No Special Treatment. For the California-only test, our partner chose to add Justice Rising and No Special Treatment to the core audiences.

Though all of the videos were about 60 seconds long, they differed slightly in length, so we used statistical models[5] to create apples-to-apples comparisons of audience retention at 10 seconds (Attract) and 60 seconds (Connect).

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[1] Here, we do not offer a detailed analysis of social media metrics and their meanings because our use of social media to test the videos was a convenience rather than central to the purpose of Story at Scale (which is intended for culture makers and artists as much as for digital media makers). However, we have spent a good deal of time and statistical effort constructing meaningful metrics out of social media, and we encourage you to contact us at **hello@storyatscale.org** if you do plan to use and measure Story at Scale in paid digital campaigns.

[2] Measuring changing narratives in the data that flow through our culture is even harder than measuring whether our promoted content works on social media, but the field is working on solutions even to this measurement problem. Reach out to us at **hello@storyatscale.org** if you're curious about long-term work on narrative measurement that could complement Story at Scale's efforts.

[3] In social media, this is especially important. Vanity metrics such as the number of impressions (or views) can be big numbers, xbut they rarely reflect true content "success."

[4] We explicitly excluded gender from our targeting because we wanted audiences of all genders. However, adding gender to target Justice Rising and Kids First—both groups where the majority are women—could help hone in on these audiences more precisely.

[5] Specifically, we used survival regression to interpolate audience retention between the different points in time that YouTube reports (25 percent, 50 percent, 30 seconds, 75 percent, and 100 percent).

## Measuring Persuasion

We tested for persuasion (whether the videos affected the audiences) on **Swayable**, a survey platform that asked survey panelists to answer questions about gender after they watched one of our videos or after control audiences watched a video about texting while driving.

For this test, we chose this question as the key measure of "moving" audience beliefs:

> *A lot is changing around gender in the US today. There are more ways for kids today to be "boys," "girls," or anyone they want to be. Is that:*
>
> - A good thing
> - A bad thing
> - Both good and bad
> - Neither good nor bad

We chose this question because the audiences of interest for this test—Kids First and For the Win—are farthest from the base on this issue. The majority of our base thinks these changes are good and looks forward to a gender-just future. Kids First and For the Win are more likely than the base to think the changes are "bad" or "both good and bad." If we can move these audiences toward being excited about the future, we may be able to activate them for gender justice.

This part of the study included members of all six audiences because we didn't know who belonged in which sample until they arrived at the survey and answered questions that classified them. The Swayable sample for all tests was national, although we limited it to zip codes with relatively high Kids First and For the Win membership so that we could be sure of obtaining large samples of those key groups. The engagement tests on YouTube, on the other hand, included our partners' target geographies: national and California-only.

# Results and Story at Scale Strategy

Academic reports present the "results" in a series of numbers, statistics, and tables and then interpret those results in a final section. Here, we collapse those sections into one and offer the strategy we recommend. With each step, we include evidence from our creative process or the statistical analysis that show how and why it can work.

We put the research findings right here in the research-informed plan for future strategies for two reasons. First, most of you reading this report are not statisticians, but you are strategists. And, second, some of the most important findings from the process weren't statistical at all—they concerned how we can think about and do the work in ways that fit into the programs we already run.

### Step 1: Start with the Story Platform

The biggest challenge in producing audience-driven creative content based on the story platform is that the effort swiftly becomes a game of multi-dimensional chess. We were challenged to meet standards for digital-first video content while simultaneously pursuing specific audiences and story pillars and addressing the needs of the specific partner brand or campaign. Some of this complexity is unavoidable; indeed, one of the goals of Story at Scale is to *reduce* the daunting complexity of many possible demographic combinations and messages to a tractable set of audiences and stories.

We found that we could further reduce the complexity of the task by aligning the organizations' brand with the story platform *before* we began. For reference, the story platform is:

**JOY IN ABUNDANCE,**

**FREE TO LOVE AND BE LOVED.**

**BECAUSE DIFFERENCE IS SEEN AND SAFE**
**WHEN ALL LIFE IS EQUALLY VALUED**

**AND SUSTAINED.**

**THIS IS OUR CO-CREATION.**

**WELCOME HOME.**

Story at Scale researchers did not create this platform; co-creators from the movement did. More than seventy activists, organizers, artists, and advocates came together and built this vision for the future. The platform is the foundation of a brand—it articulates how the movement wants to show up in the world.

"Aligning" an organization's or campaign's brand with the story platform means finding points of intersection. Points of intersection are opportunities to extend our current strategies. Many of our brands already center safety and accepting differences. That made it easy for our national partner to connect its focus on young people and diverse communities with the core narrative and to identify a cast that resonated with the target audiences.

### Step 2: Try Things that Feel Uncomfortable. Use the Platform to Stay Grounded.

But aligning movement brands with the story platform also means identifying places where our (explicit or implicit) brands conflict with the platform and challenging ourselves to tell stories that incorporate the platform's vision for the future. In our current stories, are we centering anger and fear or passing through those emotions on our way to joyful, pleasurable, fun? Can we draw attention to the injustice of today while also envisioning a future of abundance rather than scarcity and conflict?

The process of challenging ourselves can feel uncomfortable. Before we deployed the videos on social media, one partner wondered whether emphasizing the joyful, pleasurable, fun pillar in narratives designed to reach For the Win audiences would potentially alienate their base. We can lean into the uncomfortable, but hold our base by always telling stories based on the platform. In fact, that's why we use a story platform. Tying all our stories back to one unwavering vision for the future means we can change the perspectives, the details, and the themes without wandering far from our core values.

Practically speaking, this means that we can check whether we're headed in the right direction (toward moving persuadables) by assuming that our feelings are the best reflection of our own base and by asking and addressing two questions:

1. Does our team feel naturally at home with this concept? If the answer is yes, try to push a little more toward an audience outside the base. If the answer is no, double-check that the story is consistent with the story platform, and send it out to see whether it works.
2. Does this concept directly relate to the story platform through one or more story pillars? If the answer is no, you've gone too far! If the answer is yes, give it a try.

▶ watch: Favianna's "Embrace Your Pleasure" video

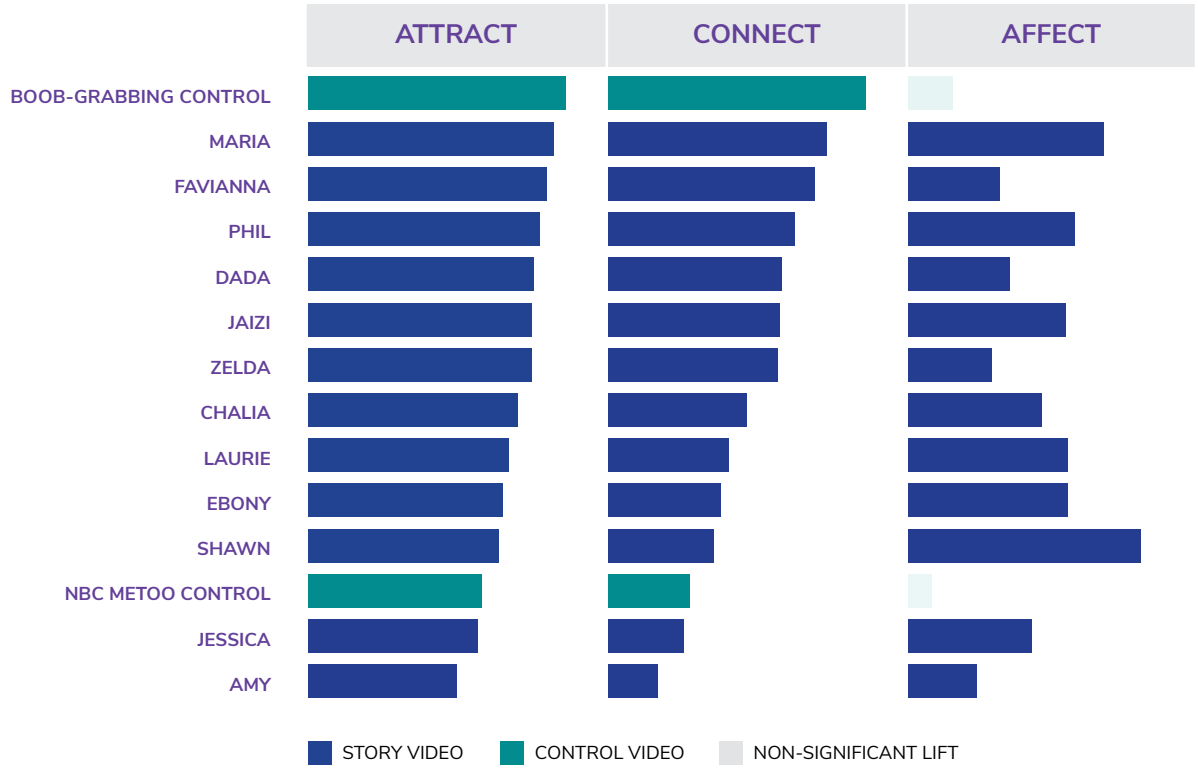
Practically speaking, we found it much easier to cast and create content for Kids First than for For the Win. The Kids First perspective feels closer to the base (and therefore closer to our own perspectives), and all our partners found it easy to tell stories that resonated with this audience. Creating content for For the Win, where the audience perspective was farther from our own, had to be more intentional and made us all a bit more uncomfortable.

Favianna Rodriguez's story is a good example of a case where the concept pushes the boundaries of conventional progressive communications. In this video, she starts with "I want to talk about pleasure. We have a serious orgasm gap!" That is not how most of our stories about reproductive rights, health, and justice start, but it was just the content that For the Win needed in order to see how our vision of the future connects to them. You can see details of which videos worked best for the audiences in **Step 5** on page 9.

## Step 3: Use Story to Connect.

One of the reasons stretching past our comfort zones works is that the story platform is not an issue or a "message frame"; it is the foundation of story, and story works to connect audiences where facts cannot. Our first research question was whether we could do better with a story strategy than without. To address this question, we compared Attract, Connect, and Affect on all the videos to the same metrics on content that our partners had produced without the story strategy.

The answer was Yes: a story strategy does produce better content in a specific way. As the chart below shows, the previously produced videos (called "controls" in the chart) were among the highest *and* the lowest performers on engagement. However, neither control video actually moved the audiences. *All* of the story strategy-based videos affected the audiences' belief in a "good" gender-just future.



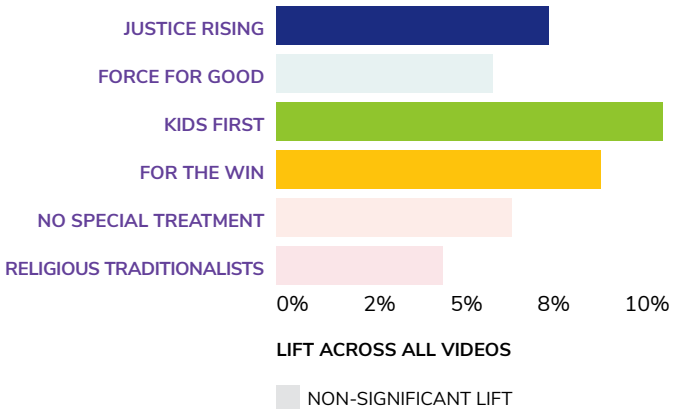

Especially striking here is the comparison between Favianna's pleasure-centered video "Embrace Your Pleasure" and the Equal Rights Advocates existing video with the provocative theme: "Should Boob Grabbing Count as Sexual Harassment?" Both videos were highly engaging on YouTube, but unlike the control video, Favianna's story significantly moved the audiences.

Story works because it takes audiences on a journey, from the hook—which is often anger, fear, or loss—toward the joy, welcome, and home expressed in our story platform. A single story strategy meant that (as the chart above shows) all our story content moved (Affected) audiences in the *same* direction—toward a belief in the goodness of a gender-just future while more conventional video content had the potential to Attract audiences but did not Affect them.

## Step 4: Take Aim at an Audience.

When we don't take aim at an audience, we tend to produce content that feels good to us. Choosing one audience for each piece challenges us to deeply understand who we are speaking with; to face the conflicts that exist within our base head-on or to address topics that are not always central to how we typically think

about the problem at hand. Without audience profiles, we often create many copies of the same ideas and stories; with them, we write more diverse stories for different audiences that all communicate the same core *narrative*.




Aiming for two specific audiences in the "persuadable" middle—Kids First and For the Win—did generate concepts that affected those audiences. As the chart to the right shows, we didn't deliver significant lift overall in No Special Treatment (most likely because we didn't create videos with that particular audience in mind) or in Force for Good (since that part of the base is already committed to gender justice and has less room for upside growth than more persuadable audiences). However, we *did* see lift in Justice Rising, an audience already very open to gender justice, with this content. This demonstrates that using a single story platform to tell the connected stories meant that we were able to reach out to "persuadables" (in this case Kids First and For the Win) using themes important to them without losing the base.

Favianna's content was aimed at For the Win, and sex is particularly important to For the Win. Family is important to Kids First, and Jaizi's video "Dear Pops" aimed squarely at this audience.

Having a video that centering a relationship between parent and child helped some viewers overcome their discomfort with the subject matter. For example, one participant in the research on the Swayable platform said:

> *"At first, I couldn't tell the gender of the person speaking. But after a few seconds, I started to hear the message said and not be so much concerned as to who was delivering the message. Towards the end, I didn't care 'who' but more 'what' was being communicated."*

The key is to use just one story platform. Because we used a single core narrative, the diverse stories we made carried the same emotional core: you belong, welcome home.

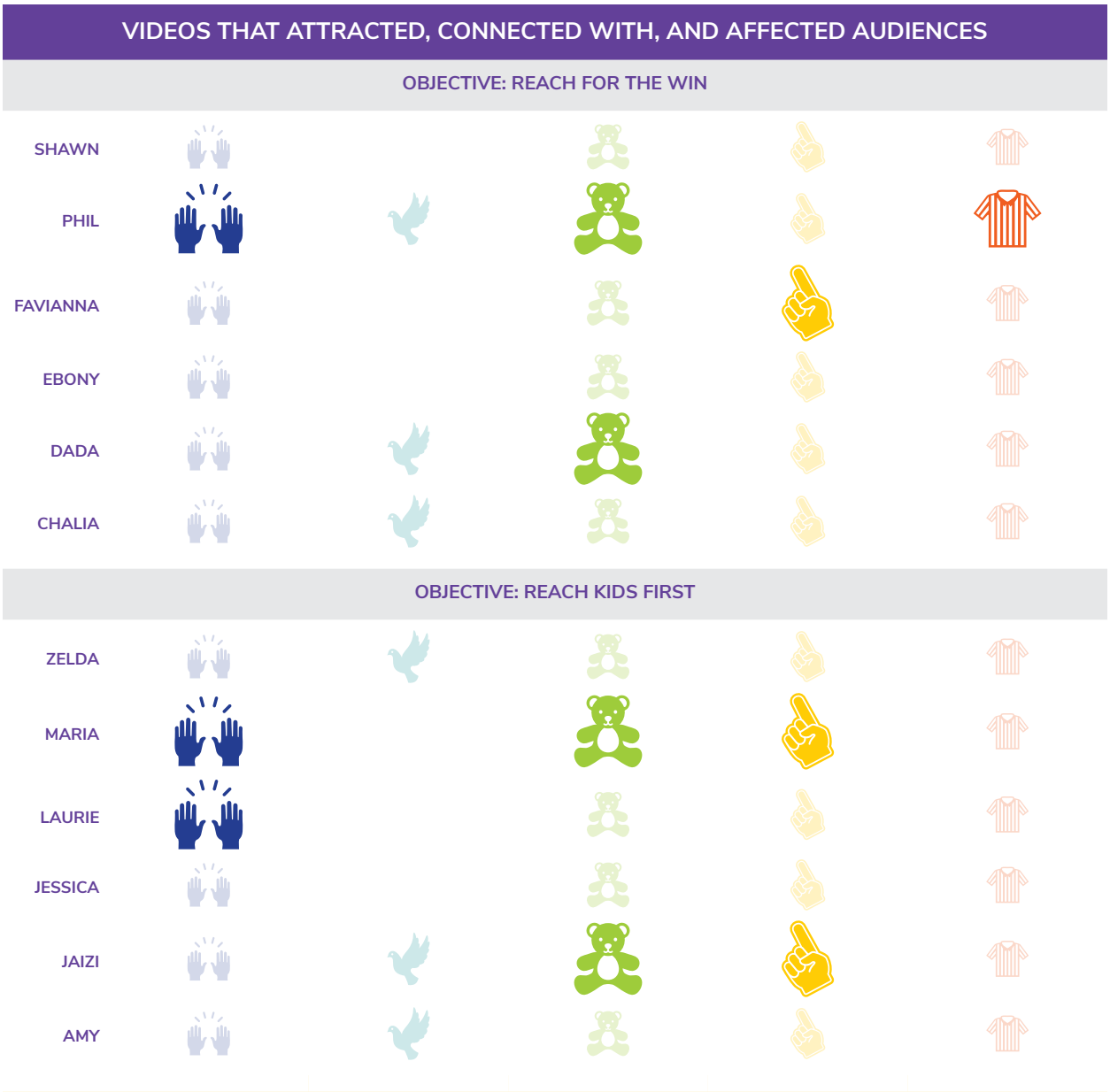
## Step 5: Don't Be Afraid to Miss; That's How You Learn.

Engaging in authentic conversation with an audience takes practice. We learn a little about the audiences every time we communicate with them. (Just like in real-life conversations with new people; over time they become a lot more familiar.) The chart below shows how the Story at Scale videos succeeded with goal audiences. Icons only mark the video/audience combinations with good performance[6] across all three

[6] Here, we counted Connect and Attract successes as videos where the watch rates were higher than average for the audience and Affect successes as videos with persuasion effects significant at alpha 0.05.

different metrics: attracting the audience through the first 10 seconds of the video (Attract), connecting with the audience over the course of a whole (60 second) story (Connect), and affecting the audience by actually changing their perception of a gender-just future (Affect).

As you can see, we achieved our primary objective—to reach the For the Win and Kids First audiences—but our content didn't always land precisely with the people we expected, and Kids First was easier for us to reach with all our content.




Of the 12 videos, we crafted six to appeal to For the Win and six for Kids First. In the above chart, we can see how these videos succeeded in reaching these goal audiences—sometimes even successfully reaching other audience groups—across three different metrics: attracting the audience, connecting with the audience over the whole story, and affecting the audience by actually changing their perception of a gender-just future.

As the chart shows, Favianna's video ("Embrace Your Pleasure") reached For the Win just as we thought it would. Jaizi's video ("Dear Pops") reached Kids First, but was unexpectedly successful with both audiences. In fact, the videos by both Jaizi and Maria, who told a story about overcoming adversity for her family, resonated with For the Win.

Unexpected patterns like this are opportunities: they are the source of new hypotheses. Maybe Kids First is open to stories of self-actualization like the one that Dada tells ("Self-exploration, in mind, body and soul, generates a deep sense of knowing and even gratitude."). Maybe stories of family that center "winning" or overcoming, like Jaizi's and Maria's stories, can resonate with For the Win.

Jaizi's and Maria's stories, along with Phil's story "I'm Here for You," each succeeded with more than one audience. Ironically, we think this is because these were among the least polished cast members. Finding and surfacing their stories was hard! But when we did, they were authentic, emotional, and humble; their warmth and humanity drew viewers in. If this is true (and someone should test it), the lesson would be that we should tell stories featuring unlikely subjects, experiment with documentary-style production, allow room for improvisation, and understand that the creative process may take a bit more time and patience in these types of videos than in videos with more practiced performers.

The process of growing an understanding of the audience is a matter of iteration. The key is to cast a wide net—no more "micro-targeting." Instead of assuming that we know what works for whom and pointing stories directly at audiences, we create a variety of story platform-driven ideas and show them to everyone. That means that we grow the audience profiles not by micro-targeting but by "micro-listening."

### Step 6: Grow Your Understanding about the Audience through Micro-listening.

The original audience profiles were based on a survey and on broad research using tools like Audiense and Facebook Insights. These tools don't tell us everything we want to know about our audiences, though. They are missing elements, especially people who set the culture for these audiences and the social justice voices that resonate the best.

The richer our understanding of the audiences, the better our conversation can be. Further, the better your understanding of *your* audiences—these audiences as they exist in your community—the more personal and authentic you can be in speaking with and engaging them.

To learn more, we need to "micro-listen"—which means distributing to everyone but recording audience responses tagged by audience membership so we can go back and build a strong sense of the differences and similarities between the groups. That allows the profiles themselves to be ongoing stories.

The video testing allowed us to add three layers to the "voices" that we recorded in the segmentation survey: the places on YouTube where these audiences spend their time (exported from the Youtube ad testing and further detailed in **Appendix B**), their verbatim responses to the videos that worked for them, and their verbatim responses to the videos that didn't work (collected on the Swayable surveys). Key observations from these new data appear in the figure on **page 12**.

| Justice Rising | Force for Good | Kids First | For the Win | No Special Treatment |
|---|---|---|---|---|

## Where we found them

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Esports, esports, esports | True crime<br>Celebrity gossip | Movies<br>Mainstream news<br>Daytime TV<br>Black culture, news, and consciousness | Hip hop<br>Latin music<br>Makeup | Riding dirt bikes, four wheelers, hunting, fishing and truck stuff! |

## What they said about our videos that performed the best

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| "It shows that it's not only women [who face] the hardships that social injustice and government negligence place on anyone who is a minority in any shape or form." | "It was very informative." | "It was real to me...if you are [brought] up with values and morals that have been instilled in you throughout your life, then you should [live] to be a productive citizen." | "I liked the statement that [women] of color need to empower [themselves]." | "It was a good video but if you prefer to be a man or a woman that is your right and no one should judge." |

## What they said about our videos that performed the worst

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| "Wasn't clear where the info came from." | "I didn't really feel an emotional pull to take action from it." | "I think it's controversial." | "Black feminism is an oxymoron. Black men don't have the power to discriminate on black women." | "Pushing for equality is important but not overdoing it is also the key." |

For the specific micro-influencers from YouTube who popped for each group, see **Appendix B**. To continue to add information like this to our profiles of the groups, all we need to do is follow and "listen" to our audiences separately whether that is serving ads to audiences separately or conducting a survey to learn which audiences our members are in. Even if everyone engages with the same content, we can know what worked for whom. When we get information back—whether it's hard, quantitative information or just informal feedback like you might get from canvassing or YouTube comments—we can add it to the growing body of knowledge about who our audiences are, where they are, and how they see their world and our future.

## So Much We Don't Know: Future Directions

The Story at Scale research team is done here, but Story at Scale is intended to live on as a framework for integrating additional learning. The idea is that activists, organizers, advocates, and artists won't need research consultants to make sense of what they're seeing.[7] These tools establish a common vocabulary for the movement to communicate internally about who they are reaching and what they are saying. You can add to the body of knowledge about what works and what works for which audiences by simply learning from the work you are already doing.

And you will need to because there is much we cannot know from the research here. Big questions we still have include:

1. How long do the engagement and persuasion effects we detected last? Are these effects short-term only or do they persist?
2. Do positive changes in attitudes about gender justice influence behaviors related to civic engagement and advocacy, such as information seeking, increased dialogue with family and friends, joining a campaign or organization, or taking action?
3. Do the effects we detected in these results differ by subgroups within each audience segment?
4. How can we integrate the Story at Scale platform into offline tactics like door-to-door canvassing, phonebanking, and text messaging?
5. What are the best ways to merge Story at Scale with other strategies like relational organizing?
6. To what extent is targeting using Story at Scale audience segments more effective than targeting with traditional models and demographics?
7. To what extent can the Story at Scale creative strategy and content production process be utilized in other advocacy areas beyond gender justice, such as racial justice, voting reform, and environmental justice?

[7] But feel free to contact us at **hello@storyatscale.org** if you need help determining who belongs in which group, thinking through whether the voter file tools are for you, or finding the audiences online.

# Appendix A: Video Production

In the Fall of 2019, over the course of three rounds of production, Story at Scale produced fourteen videos based on the story platform. In order to keep them affordable and limit the number of test variables, the videos were all simple, straight-to-camera productions featuring a single person, and all were approximately one minute in length.

The scripts and videos were developed keeping five key approaches in mind:

1. **Targeting specific audience segments.** We wanted to try and see if we could create videos that would intentionally engage and persuade one of two key persuadable audience segments, For the Win or Kids First, without losing our base audiences.
2. **Using the story platform and story pillars**. These videos provided an opportunity for creatives to test-drive the story platform by using the platform and at least one particular story pillar as a foundation for each video.
3. **Ensuring authentic storytelling.** As a general matter of content best practice—as well as to live the radical inclusivity of the story platform—the scripts were crafted using the real-life stories and real words of the people who appeared in the videos. Each was an authentic, first-person story that addressed a different gender-related issue or concern that the subjects themselves cared about.
4. **Building the partners' brands**. Following the test period, the ownership and rights to all of the videos (i.e., the intellectual property) were transferred free of cost to the partners for them to use as they wish. The organizations' and individuals' longer-term goals for the videos impacted the scripts and calls-to-action. For example, rather than using the opportunity to drive a particular campaign's call to action, UltraViolet's preference was to develop a suite of videos that could potentially be usable for general image building over the long term—in other words, to drive general awareness and engagement about UltraViolet and its brand. A Stronger California, on the other hand, wanted videos they could employ directly in their 2020 campaign work to secure economic opportunity for working families.
5. **Optimizing for YouTube.** We employed YouTube's recommended ABCD framework[8] (Attract, Brand, Connect, Direct) to ensure all videos were optimized for high performance and engagement. Each form of storytelling (in this case, short videos) and each channel of distribution (in this case, YouTube) will have different implications for creative content.

| | ROUND 1 | ROUND 2 | ROUND 3 |
|---|---|---|---|
| MOVEMENT / BRAND PARTNER | UltraViolet | A Stronger California<br>Favianna.com | Amber Abundance |
| PRODUCTION PARTNER | joeyandgloria | Art Not War | Art Not War |
| CAST | 6 young people who represent the UltraViolet brand | 6 California-based advocacy & movement professionals | Amber J. Phillips |
| SHOOT | October 31, 2019<br>New York City | November 11, 2019<br>Oakland, CA | December 16, 2019<br>Los Angeles, CA |
| TESTING COMMENCED | November 18, 2019 | December 9, 2019 | N/A[9] |

[8] Learn more about the ABCD framework and producing great creative for YouTube at https://www.thinkwithgoogle.com/features/youtube-playbook/topic/great-creative/.

[9] Round 3 was a bonus round. The videos were not originally planned or budgeted, but were made possible by savings in earlier phases of the project. These videos were not tested due to timing and budget constraints, but they provided an opportunity for an independent creative operating outside of an organization or campaign context to road-test the story platform and audience segments with greater creative latitude.

Our creative development and production methodology involved the following steps:

- The writer/director interviewed the person who was going to be in the video;
- The writer/director wrote a script based on the interview, integrating verbatim quotes from the interview;
- During the production shoot, the person in the video used a teleprompter which had the script on it, but we made adjustments to the script in real time to make sure the words felt authentic and made sense and also allowed for improvisation;
- The editor (overseen by the writer/director) edited the videos using the script as a guideline but sometimes adjusting the exact order, sometimes making cuts, and sometimes adding on-screen text.

The movement and brand partners provided feedback at every stage of the process.

The main changes following learnings from the first round of creative were:

1. We sharpened the first ten seconds of each video, ensuring a hook that would be as resonant as possible with each video's intended audience.
2. Our music choices were more deliberate and emphatic in order to underscore a video's specific emotional point and to connect more deliberately with the target audience.
3. We added still photos in post-production to personalize each video, adding warmth, characters, and visual scope while still keeping production costs low.

All of the test videos can be viewed at **https://storyatscale.org/videos**.

# Appendix B: Audience Micro-influencers

The survey data tells us plenty about the beliefs and experiences of our audiences, but data about their cultural homes—what they love to engage with and the stories they encounter there—are harder to come by. One cool source of insights like these is the YouTube placements (the pages on which our ads appeared). To create the below lists of micro-influencers, we analyzed the placement data to identify the YouTube pages that served each audience—and *only* each audience. In other words, we removed the influencers who reached multiple groups to highlight the unique cultural environment of each audience.

## Justice Rising

Esports, esports, esports

- **https://www.youtube.com/user/MaskedGamer**
- **https://www.youtube.com/user/TheGamingTerroriser**
- **https://www.youtube.com/user/liquidmetall711**
- **https://www.youtube.com/user/AlphaSquadHD**

## Force for Good

True Crime

- **https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCL44k-cLrlsdr7PYuMU4yIw**

Celebrity Gossip

- **https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC1Ydgfp2x8oLYG66KZHXs1g/videos**

Curiosity, psychic, and occult content

- **https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCOnnmKlDZItHAqJLz-XIpGA**

## Kids First

Movies, including independent and international films (at least six of the top sites were movie sites)

- **https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCzhazBf15PLDLLBGfscQp_w**
- **https://www.youtube.com/user/ViewsterTV**

Mainstream News

- **https://www.youtube.com/user/msnbcleanforward**

Daytime television, including Paternity Court

- **https://www.youtube.com/user/TheMauryShowOfficial**
- **https://www.youtube.com/user/PaternityCourt**

Black Culture, News, and Consciousness

- **https://www.youtube.com/user/reelblack**
- **https://www.youtube.com/user/BETNetworks**
- **https://www.youtube.com/user/TheAdviseShowTV**
- **https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCXwUNaEQ_qJCBC87g3Akc0Q**

Celebrity Gossip

- https://www.youtube.com/user/realrealitygossip/about

Progressive Media

- https://www.youtube.com/user/TheYoungTurks

Hip Hop

- https://www.youtube.com/user/PopALotMusic
- https://www.youtube.com/user/mrecktv/about

## For The Win

Hip Hop

- https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCyHUTSdOQKDkBukScZZ5BMA
- https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC47kJWRBD-NREBvmBg5kWeA
- https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCm7gu9KfQ6oAg0Z1haIgEnA
- https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC9_50I6nJatovUz5ml77P9A

Makeup

- https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCDSJCBYqL7VQrlXfhr1RtwA

Spanish-language Latin Culture, News, and Consciousness

- https://www.youtube.com/user/Alofokeradioshow

Comedy

- https://www.youtube.com/user/JustKiddingNews

## No Special Treatment

Relaxing Music

- https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCjzHeG1KWoonmf9d5KBvSiw/about

Silly Family Videos

- https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCrXcatz6wlNHjuqgf-tgIOA
- https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCxzJt2_zN9_mnIWg0A0tnRA

Riding dirt bikes, four wheelers, hunting, fishing and truck stuff!

- https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCOxoGn23BBHWghJeIrqGkhg/about
- https://www.youtube.com/user/outlawdipper

Scary stuff

- https://www.youtube.com/user/SlappedHamTV

Country rap

- https://www.youtube.com/user/UpchurchtheRedneck

# Acknowledgements & Key Terms

Please see **storyatscale.org/about** for a complete list of all the contributors to Story at Scale: our research team members, advisory council members, partners, co-creators, and funders.

**We acknowledge and appreciate you all!**

## About Story at Scale

Story at Scale (**storyatscale.org**) is a year-long collaboration of researchers, data scientists, artists, advocates, and organizers to develop and test a new cultural strategy to advance gender justice. Using big data and a collaborative, creative process, Story at Scale delivers audience research and a narrative foundation to guide artists and campaigners in telling stories that reflect the world we seek: a joy-filled life in a gender-just future. Story at Scale's tools are designed for practical use by those working on issues ranging from reproductive justice to sex- and gender-based violence to LGBTQ+ rights and more.

Story at Scale is funded by The Culture Change Fund.

## About The Culture Change Fund

Housed at the Women's Foundation of California, The Culture Change Fund is a collaborative fund focused on using culture to advance and transform gender justice by changing how the public thinks about wide-ranging issues, including economic security, income inequality, violence against women, sexual assault, maternal health, abortion, contraception, and broader reproductive justice and gender justice issues, among others. Learn more at **womensfoundca.org/culture-change-fund**.

## Key Terms

**Gender justice** is a framework used to bring about the fair and equitable treatment of people of all genders, with the goal of achieving dignity for all. It serves all those directly impacted by gender-based oppression, including transgender and cisgender women, genderqueer and non-binary people, and transgender men. True gender justice is intersectional and incorporates the needs and perspectives of those working towards racial justice, immigrant rights, LGBTQ+ liberation, and disability justice, among other struggles, recognizing that each of these is required in order for people of all genders to experience full dignity, equality, and liberation.

**Intersectionality**, a term first used in 1989 by legal scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw, is a mode of analysis that examines discrimination experienced by people who face multiple lines of identity-based exclusion. Intersectional gender justice examines the overlapping systems of oppression and discrimination that people face, based not just on gender but on race, class, sexual orientation, and a number of other axes. As such, as we work toward gender justice, we do so through the lens of multiple, simultaneous identities—for instance, as a poor, cisgender woman or an Asian, transgender man—not gender identity alone.

**Cultural Strategy** is a field of practice that centers artists, storytellers, media makers, and cultural influencers as agents of social change. Over the long term, cultural strategy cracks open, reimagines and rewrites fiercely-held narratives, transforming the shared spaces and norms that make up culture. In near-term campaigns, it helps to shape opinions, beliefs, and behaviors that lead to electoral, legislative, and policy wins. (source: Jeff Chang, Liz Manne, Erin Potts, **A Conversation About Cultural Strategy**).

## Contact

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