

**DEFINE
AMERICAN**

**HARMONY
LABS**

Move Them

or

Lose Them

**Strategies for deepening engagement
with moveable audiences**

Findings from a 2023-2024 research partnership between Define American and Harmony Labs to understand the patterns of people who are moderate and open to change on issues concerning immigrants and immigration policy.

About the Research

Define American wanted to better understand people in the U.S. who are in the moderate middle and have the potential for pro-immigrant attitudes and actions.

Harmony Labs used a year of media consumption data to analyze how this “middle” engaged with media in their daily lives and to identify potential opportunities for future intervention.

Across news, TV, film and social media, we examined four core inquiries:

- 1 Who is the moveable, moderate middle that we are trying to reach?
- 2 How do immigrants and immigration show up in these ecosystems, and what does it say about audiences' perceptions of immigrants?
- 3 What media content ecosystems about immigrants activate the audience?
- 4 How might narrative exposure affect their beliefs, values and attitudes regarding immigrants and immigration policy?



Target Narrative

An audience was considered “moveable” if we saw a shift in attitudes around immigrant belonging in these central narrative points.

Current

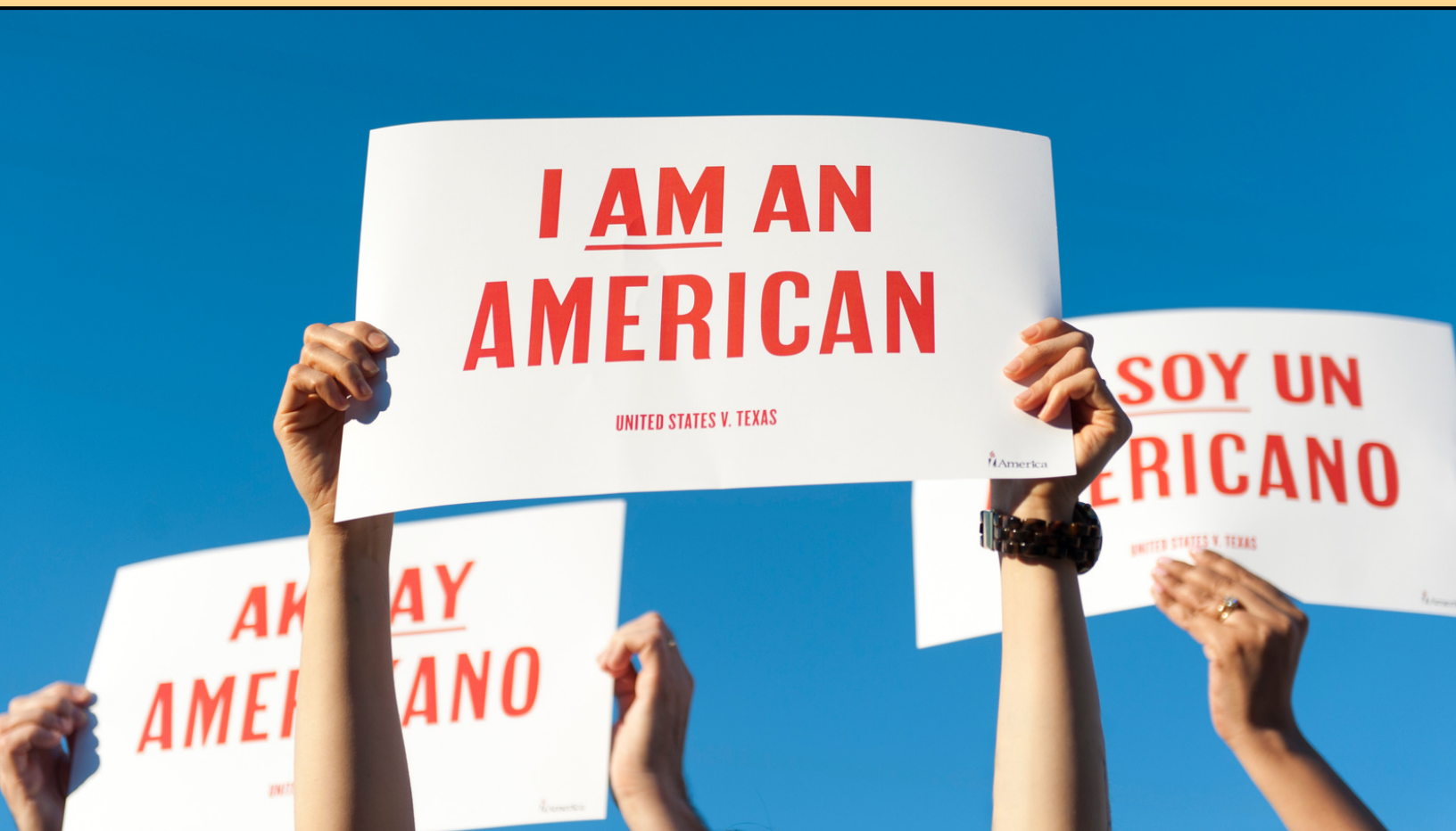
Immigrants do not fully belong and cannot lead fulfilling lives in the United States.

Shift

We must ensure every immigrant fully belongs and can choose their own path in the United States.

Outcome

All citizens in the United States will feel a deep sense of belonging and benefit from a fuller, richer society.



Part One:

Knowing the Audience

We believe that powerful storytelling can shift perspectives and create lasting change. Understanding who we are speaking to, where they spend their time, and what resonates with them is essential to building narratives that make an impact.

In this first installment of our research findings with Harmony Labs, we dive deep into the media habits of the "moveable middle"—those in the moderate middle who have the potential to shift toward pro-immigrant attitudes and actions. This foundation allows us to design narratives that resonate and persuade, meeting people where they are in their media landscapes.

We discovered four moveable audiences:

1

Taking Responsibility

Social rule-followers, interested in culture and invested in their local communities.

2

Following The Plan

Church-goers who respect authority and are interested in helping others.

3

Doing My Own Thing

Autonomous pleasure-seekers interested in fun, play, relaxation, personal growth, and fandoms.

4

Getting It Done

DIY go-getters, interested in action and practical solutions.

*Over a quarter of this audience are immigrants themselves.



"Bridgerton," courtesy of Netflix

Taking Responsibility

Social rule-followers, interested in culture and invested in their local communities.

VALUES

Order and Equity

ATTITUDE

Neighborly and Conversational

TONE

Light-hearted, Dramatic, Aspirational

MORE LIKELY TO BE

Ages 35-50 and 65+, Black, Latine, Asian American Pacific Islander (AAPI), Women

DO

- Lean into culture
- Be personal and conversational
- Empower and inspire to action
- Use multiple presenters

DON'T

- Lecture them or take an authoritative tone
- Ignore their need for order and stability
- Assume that they agree with the base on immigration

ACTIONS

Their heroes take lead on solving personal and family-centered dilemmas.

PLATFORMS

Facebook
YouTube

GENRES

Business News, Political Comedy, Informative, Prestige Entertainment, Skeptical Takes, Fun with Celebrities

MEDIA

Yahoo Finance, The View, Kelly Clarkson Show, Real Time with Bill Maher, Workin' Moms, Bridgerton, Snowfall, Insecure



"Bob hearts Abishola," courtesy of CBS

Following the Plan

Church-goers who respect authority and are interested in helping others.

VALUES

Order and Helping

TONE

Heartwarming, Clear "Good" vs. "Bad"

DO

- State the problem and the solution
- Show who is in charge and how they bring order and safety
- Feature families, groups and communities

ACTIONS

Their heroes take charge, protect the community, resolve conflict and restore safety.

GENRES

Left & Right News, Got Talent, Practical (Ensemble Cast), Seeking Deals, Safety in Dangerous World

ATTITUDE

Predictable and Comfortable

MORE LIKELY TO BE

Ages 50+, Women

DON'T

- Leave things open-ended or unresolved
- Feature distrust in leaders or broken systems
- Forget about the importance of spirituality

PLATFORMS

Facebook

MEDIA

Chicago Med, Law and Order: SVU, Grace and Frankie, America's Got Talent, Mrs. Harris Goes to Paris, Heartland, The Chosen



“Black Panther,” courtesy of Walt Disney Studios Motion Pictures

Doing My Own Thing

Autonomous pleasure-seekers interested in fun, play, relaxation, personal growth and fandoms.

VALUES

Adventure and Isolation

TONE

Aspirational, Satirical, Off-beat

DO

- Give a vision of a fun and free future
- Feature international appeal
- Show creating change as rebellion against the status quo

ACTIONS

Their heroes are rebels who challenge conformity and forge their own paths.

GENRES

Business and Alt News, Skeptical Takes, Fun with Celebrities, Informative, Futuristic, Gaming

ATTITUDE

Irreverent and Fun

MORE LIKELY TO BE

Ages 18-50, Women

DON'T

- Expect them to be motivated by community goals
- Tell them what to do or think

PLATFORMS

Instagram, TikTok, YouTube, X

MEDIA

Mr. Beat, Vice News, The Kardashians, Rick and Morty, Avengers: Infinity War, Euphoria



"Mayor of Kingstown," courtesy of Paramount+

Getting It Done

DIY go-getters, interested in action and practical solutions.

VALUES

Achievement and Order

ATTITUDE

Loyal and Protective

TO NE

Suspenseful, Gritty, Action-Packed

MORE LIKELY TO BE

Ages 18-34, Black, Latine, AAPI and Indigenous*, Immigrants

DO

- Use messengers with a Maverick vibe
- Give practical actions
- Lean into individual action = greater respect and acknowledgement

DON'T

- Talk to them like they are part of a crowd
- Forget about their need to lead
- Underestimate their interest in morally complex characters or storylines

ACTIONS

Their heroes are jack-of-all trades that use common sense to restore order and safety.

PLATFORMS

Instagram, YouTube, Facebook

GENRES

Business and Alt News, Skeptical Takes, Fun with Celebrities, Informative, Futuristic, Gaming

MEDIA

Forbes, Breaking News, TopGun: Maverick, Shotgun Wedding, Ride Along, Tex Mex Motors, FUBAR, Mayor of Kingstown

*Small sample size for Indigenous people



"National Treasure: Edge of History," courtesy of Disney+

Where They Get Their Stories

Our research reveals that national news is less important for these audiences than it is for Base and Opposition audiences. Instead, social media platforms like Facebook, YouTube, X, TikTok, and Instagram are shaping their worldviews along with entertainment television and programming of streaming services like Netflix and Disney+.

WHAT'S NEXT?

Part One is just the beginning. In future installments of the Move Them or Lose Them series, we'll explore how to craft narratives that move the needle on immigration issues and share strategies for reaching these audiences effectively across different platforms.

For now, understanding the media behaviors and values of the moveable middle is the first step toward calibrating our narrative strategies for more effective narrative change.

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ABOUT

Define American

Define American empowers diverse and nuanced storytelling about immigrant experiences across mediums and industries through research, partnerships, and storyteller engagement. Founded in 2011 by Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist and Tony-nominated producer Jose Antonio Vargas, our work is helping audiences see all immigrants with their full humanity.

Harmony Labs

Harmony Labs is a media research lab, using science, data, and creativity to research and reshape our relationship with media. For more than a decade, our work has helped storytellers and strategists, decision makers and dreamers, harness the immense power of media to shape a positive, pluralistic future.

CONTACT

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