

INTRODUCTION TO NARRATIVE

KEY TERMS

Narrative

Narratives are big stories rooted in **shared values** and **underlying beliefs** that help explain ways that the world works. Narratives give context to seemingly independent stories to give them a larger meaning that explains why an issue exists in its' current form. Narratives can also be harmful and supportive. While harmful narratives can hinder movements and prevent transformative change, **liberatory narratives** have the potential to reshape the public's perception on a certain issue.

In the webinar we discussed the **bootstraps narrative** – i.e. the belief that success is determined solely by how hard people work. This narrative is rooted in underlying beliefs that the world is inherently competition based and is an equal playing field. This narrative shows up in our news headlines, our interpersonal conversations, and the dominant political rhetoric of our current moment.

Strategic Communications

This refers to the ways that we use communications tactics strategically to achieve our **short-term goals**. This refers to the specific messages, messengers, and campaigns utilized to achieve a specific policy or community win.

Narrative Change

Narrative Change is the **long-term work** of changing narratives to better align with the strategic goals of our movements. The shifting of narratives takes place over long periods of time and requires a diverse set of messengers and storytellers to help shape the narrative ecosystem of your issue. In this process, the goal is to **normalize values** that are key to your movement, and **uplift underlying beliefs** that align folks with your **messaging, culture and policy campaigns**. Once narratives have been changed they also must be maintained and strengthened so they can endure.

Key Takeaways

Narrative Change is a long-term fight

Changing narrative takes a long period of time. It also requires a diverse set of messengers and messages that activate people's deeply held beliefs and values. Narrative change is about normalizing the values that we hold dear and that can advance support for our movements.

Strategic communications and narrative can complement each other

Strategic communications are the effort to use communications to achieve short- and long-term goals for your movement. Narrative change is focused on the long-term narrative arc of an issue – looking to find durable and sustainable shifts in public opinion and dominant narratives.

Using culture to your advantage is key

Culture is one of the main ways that we experience and understand narratives. Culture, as opposed to listing facts or discussing policy, can often be a good way to shape people's thinking and core values.

Contact

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