



The Butterfly Lab for Immigrant Narrative Strategy

**A Future For Us All:
Narrative Strategy Basics
for the Immigrant Movement**

The Butterfly Lab Team



**Jeff
Chang**



**Nayantara
Sen**



**Janelle
Treibitz**



**sára
abdullah**



**Kana
Hammon**



**Angelica
Babay
Tolentino**

Contents

- Session Goals
- Introduction to Narrative Strategy
- The Narrative Pyramid Tool
- Building Narrative Power
- The Narrative System
- The Narrative Design Star
- Movement-Wide Research Findings
- What Does This Add Up To?
- Resources

Learning Goals

In this deck, we will....

- Orient you to three tools for narrative project design and narrative strategy
- Help you distinguish between strategic communications and narrative strategy
- Offer the narrative pyramid as a tool of analysis, alignment, and strategy
- Introduce the narrative system as a tool of alignment
- Explain how to align elements of narrative design using the narrative design star

Introduction to Narrative Strategy

What is Culture?

Culture: the prevailing beliefs, values, and customs of a group; a group's way of life. Culture is immersive and it's always changing. It's where narratives do battle..

Culture moves before politics + policy

Culture: the prevailing beliefs, values, and customs of a group; a group's way of life. Culture is immersive and it's always changing. It's where narratives do battle.

Culture is where most of the people are, most of the time.

Politics: where some of the people are, some of the time

Politics is *part* of culture. To pass a bill, we need to first need to imagine it. Policy is the fruit of an idea planted in the culture.

Defining Narrative + Narrative Strategy

Narrative is the level at which society moves. All of our narrative work is about enlarging the social imagination.

Narrative Strategy is the praxis of using stories, messages, and narratives intentionally to win a consensus to build a world we all want.

Our goal is to build narrative power...

So often, we hear the need for narrative “shift” or “change.” Shifting and changing is the natural state of things in culture. We can imagine something bigger. We can aim for enduring change. To do that, we need to think beyond change and shift as the goal.

Instead, our goal is to build power for our narratives. This is part of building power for our communities, and the world we want to see.

...to achieve **Racial Justice, Gender Justice, Environmental Justice, Media Justice *and* Cultural Justice**

Cultural Justice is the **healing and remedying** of the erasure, suppression and marginalization of people's artistic and cultural practices and expressions.

Cultural Justice restores and creates for communities of color **ways of living, being, and sense-making**, allows all of us to **express ourselves** and **be recognized** in our full complex humanity, and moves us all toward a richer, more vibrant **multiracial democracy**.

Strategic Comms & Cultural Strategy Offer Slightly Different Approaches for Similar Goals

Strategic Communications Strategy



Arts / Culture-Based Strategy



Narrative Work Exists on a Spectrum from Strategic Comms to Cultural Strategy

Strategic Comms



What **messages** lead my base or persuadable audience to **support, act** or **vote** with me on my campaign?
Audience may encounter ideas through media or ads in a political or policy context.

Cultural Strategy



What **values**, stories and experiences help my audience **think, feel** or **believe** differently about my topic, now and in the future?
Audience may encounter ideas through culture or media in an everyday context.

Strategic Communications

Movement Building

Cognitive & Social Science

Pop Culture & Entertainment

Creatives & Cultural Strategists

Journalism & Media

Research

Narrative Strategists

Artists & Performers

Ads

Organizing

The Narrative Pyramid Tool

The Pyramid Tool





Message

Most strategic comms work uses messages

They're a shortcut, usually used in campaign mode, for particular audience segments. There can be numerous messages within a campaign or a topic

They're ephemeral

They only make sense in the context of a narrative



Story

Stories are the basic unit of change

Most have a beginning, middle and end

They contain protagonists and antagonists, cause and effect

They embed values, ethics and worldviews



Narrative

Narratives are the aggregation of stories and messages

They offer a point of view about an issue or question

They direct us to how we should feel

They direct us to how we should think by embedding an analysis

They show us how we should act

Distinctions Between Narrative & Message

A **message** is a shorthand for a larger narrative. It only makes sense in the context of a narrative. It can sometimes serve the opposition's narrative.

A **narrative** is often a message that gains the power to receive people's messages and stories. It then accumulates power.

#BlackLivesMatter is an example of both a message and a narrative



Deep Narrative

Deep Narratives embed worldviews and cosmovisions

They reflect our deepest values

Sometimes they're called "frames"

They offer a vision for where we want to head, how we want to be or how we want to act

Distinctions Deep Narrative & Narrative

Narrative: Immigrants are essential

Narrative is the accumulation of stories and messages that point us toward values, analysis, affect, and action around a particular issue.

Deep Narratives: Dignity, Safety, Freedom to Thrive

Deep Narrative is what needs to be true for the narrative to function. It answers the question—why? It works at the level of epistemology or worldview.

Narrative Strategy Creates Alignment



Case Study: Marriage Equality

The Marriage Equality Movement Demonstrates Narrative Strategy at Work

The Marriage Equality movement is one example of how effective narrative strategy can build public support for a policy and change the status quo.*

In 1996, President Clinton signed the Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA), defining marriage as between a man and a woman. At the time, only 27% of Americans believed marriage benefits should extend to same-sex couples. To win, the Gay Rights movement needed to build a new majority that included people who were not yet supportive of same-sex marriage. In narrative strategy, we call these unsupportive audiences “stretch audiences.”

**We realize that, in practice, the process of moving toward marriage equality wasn't always as inclusive as possible, and not all same-sex couples aspire to traditional marriage. However, it is a useful example to demonstrate narrative strategy at work, especially as it relates to developing positive, aligned narratives and converting stretch audiences.*

The Gay Rights Movement Started with Narratives that Opposed the Worldview of Stretch Audiences

Gay Rights Movement

**Equality, Power,
Rights**

**Marriage is an institution
that confers equal rights**

**Gay people are denied
rights**

**End marriage
discrimination
Equal rights for all**

Those in favor of same-sex marriage believed gay people deserved equal rights. They shared tragic stories of gay people being denied rights because their unions were not recognized, including health benefits, wealth transfer, hospital visits and more. They advocated to end marriage discrimination.

Deep canvassing work showed that the target audiences *knew* gay people wanted marriage rights. It just wasn't resonating.

The Opposition Highlighted Stories of Love & Commitment To Activate Their Deep Narratives

Those opposed to same-sex marriage said they needed to defend traditional marriage. They emphasized that the right to marriage isn't just handed out (scarcity). And they told stories highlighting "traditional marriage" featuring heterosexual, nuclear families with one father and one mother as the heroes.

Anti-Gay Rights

**Tradition, Commitment,
Scarcity**

**Marriage is a lifetime
individual commitment**

**Stories of love and
commitment**

**Marriage is between man
and woman**

Rights aren't just handed out

Love is Love Situated Same-Sex Marriage Within the Opposition's Stories of Love and Commitment

Love is Love

Equality, Inclusion
Love

Love is Love
Marriage Equality

Stories of love and
commitment

Love is Love

Anti-Gay Rights

Tradition, Commitment,
Scarcity

Marriage is a lifetime
individual commitment

Stories of love and
commitment

Marriage is between man
and woman

Rights aren't just handed out

Love is Love Helped Build Public Support and, Eventually, Policy Change

“Love is Love”, a narrative that originated in popular culture, made room for stories of love and commitment for same-sex couples, too. Organic stories, images, articles, songs TV characters and more that showed same-sex love and commitment further proliferated in the culture.

This move outflanked the opposition. It energized the base and was taken up by organizers, advocates, movement leaders and ordinary people alike.

When the Supreme Court overturned the Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA) in 2015, 67% of Americans expressed their approval for same-sex marriage.

Review: Narrative Strategy & The Narrative Pyramid Tool

Review: The Narrative Pyramid Tool

What values and beliefs must be activated in people?

What narratives will move people?

What stories will move people?

What messages will move people?

Review: Narrative Strategy & the Pyramid Tool

- Narrative work is long-term work. It is more than messaging; it's about enlarging the social imagination.
- Messages battle for air space. Narratives battle for the culture.
- Stories are the basic unit of change.
- Narratives advance values, analysis, and action.
- Deep narratives are about values, visions, and worldviews.
- Messages are interpreted through narrative.
- We need to build long-term narrative infrastructure to spark and to meet cultural inflection points.

Building Narrative Power: Our Theory of Change

How Do We Build Narrative Power?

- Our narratives work together to **create an environment** (build a world)...
- Through the **ideas we advance** (stories, messages, narratives)...
- That encourage people to **make choices** (befriend, protect, vote, stand up)...
- That establish a culture that **advances a set of worldviews** (deep narratives)...
- This is the process of building power for a **narrative system** (alignment)

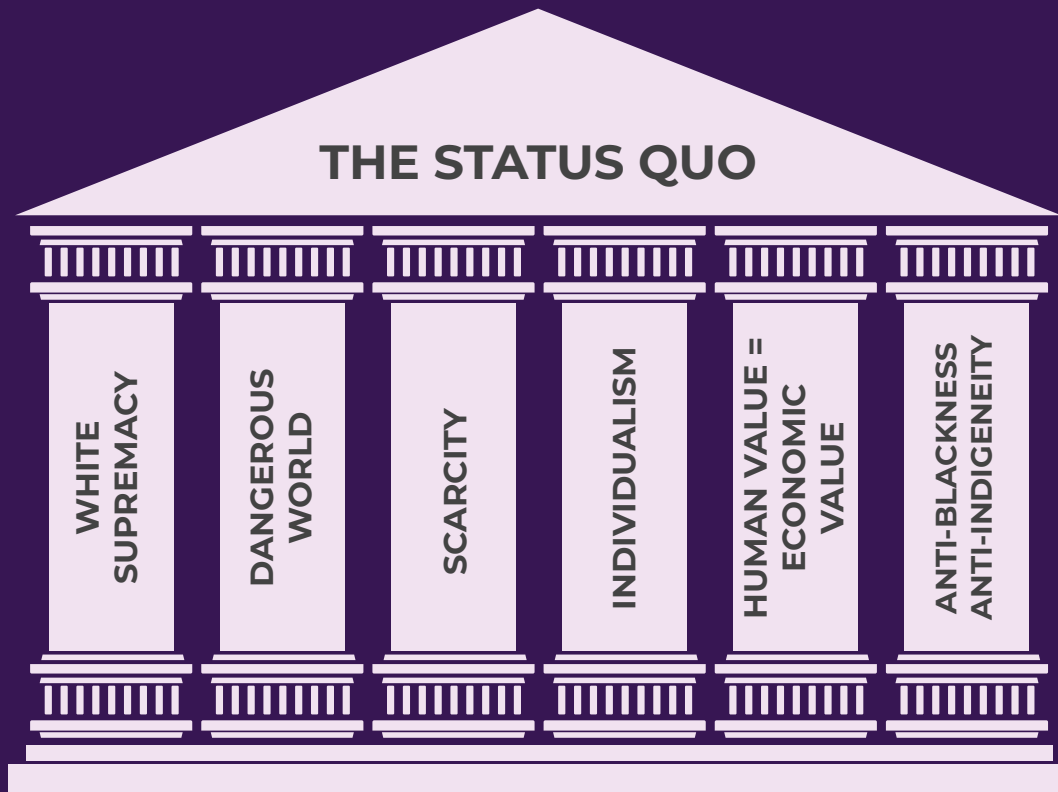
The Narrative System

What is a Narrative System?

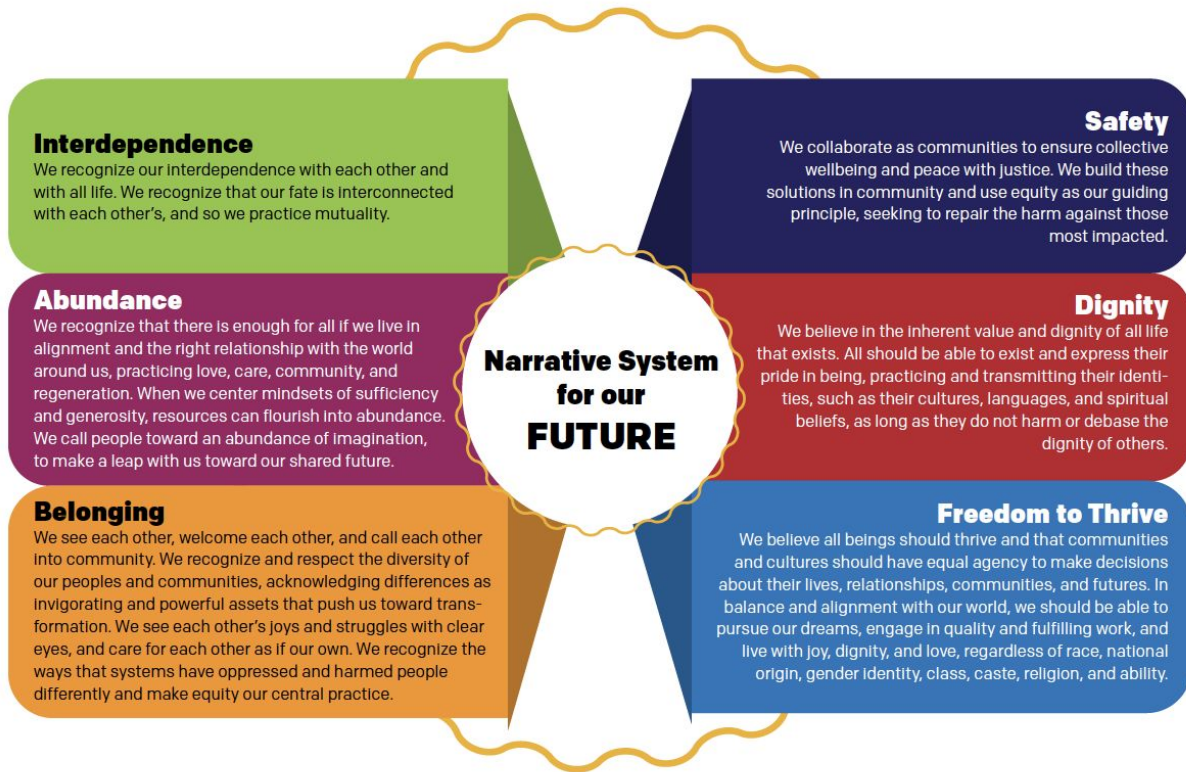
A Narrative System is **a set of deep narratives that together describe a worldview**. It provides a “destination” for narrative work from rapid-response and policy campaigns to cultural strategies & longer-term narrative work. It sets our values, helps us to find alignment and consensus across projects and timelines, and allows us to connect our work with other social movements.

Narrative Systems help us build alignment **between** narratives.

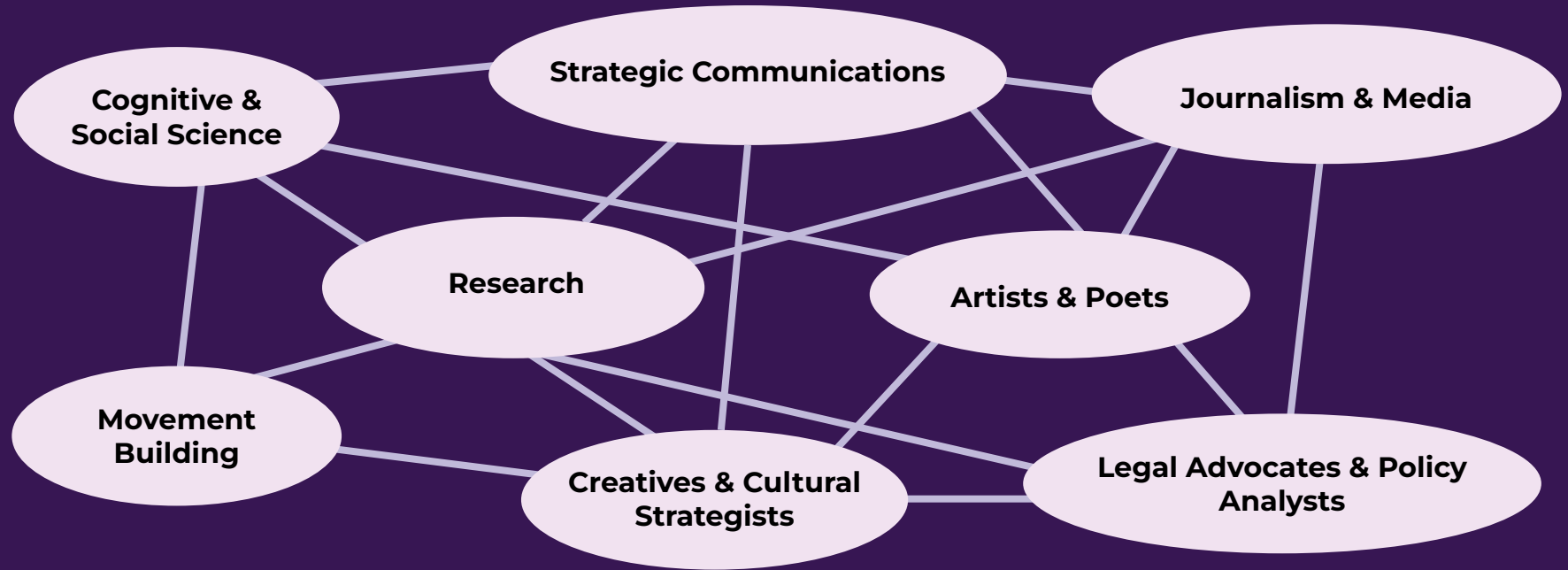
The Narrative System of the Status Quo



The Butterfly Lab Narrative System



A Narrative System Activates A Narrative Ecosystem.



Narrative System: Strategic Check Questions

As you're working through the narrative design process, ask yourself these questions:

- What is the narrative system that describes the world we want to see?
- Where do my campaigns and projects fit within the narrative system? Are they aligned?
- Do my individual projects and narrative pyramids reinforce my narrative system? How might I strengthen them to do so?

The Narrative Design Star

The Narrative Design Star shows the key elements you need for a narrative project. You can start from any point on the star.



Deep Narratives & Narrative

Deep Narratives

Root Narratives

Mindsets

Value Frames

Narrative

Create meaning and context, transmit values, suggest action

Deep Narratives & Narrative

Narrative Goal

What is the narrative for which you want to build power?

This typically sounds like, “Our narrative goal is to advance [your narrative].”

Project Goal

What do you want your specific project to accomplish?

Audience

Which audience do you need to target to accomplish your project goal and advance your narrative goal?

Core Audiences

The audiences already in agreement with you. The goal is typically to activate them to act in ways you need.

Stretch Audiences

The audiences you need to have on your side to win. You likely need to flex new muscles to understand, reach and convert them.

Opposition Audiences

The audiences who are staunchly opposed to your position and/or are advancing narratives that we are trying to counter.

Form

Forms are project ideas or tactics.

It could be a YouTube video, a book, a film, a mixtape or a Tik Tok challenge, a rally, a lobby day, a fashion show, a fellowship, a protest demonstration, or any other vehicle to advance narratives.

Example: The Humans Who Feed Us

The Humans Who Feed Us was prototyped by Mónica Ramirez and the team at Justice for Migrant Women during the Butterfly Lab's Phase 1 cohort. It profiled workers across the food supply chain, including farmworkers, restaurant workers and more. They hoped to show the interdependence among businesses, the workers they employ and consumers; and to foster a sense of belonging.



The Humans Who Feed Us

GOALS

Narrative & Project Impact

NARRATIVE: Advance a narrative that farmers, farmworkers, and consumers are interdependent and that farmworkers are important members of a community.

PROJECT: Uplift the lives and experiences of immigrant farmworkers in rural Ohio, helping audiences feel a personal connection to the lives and work of farmworkers, and helping farmworkers feel like valued members of the community.

NARRATIVE

Farmers, farmworkers, and consumers are interdependent.

Farmworkers are important and valued members of our community.

DEEP NARRATIVE

Interdependence, Belonging,
Dignity

AUDIENCE

Residents of Sandusky
County, Ohio

FORM

Narrative Design Star: Strategic Check Questions

- Are your Design Star points **aligned**?
 - Does your narrative grow naturally out of your deep narrative?
 - Does your narrative goal advance your narrative?
 - Does your project goal describe the impact that you want your project form to have?
 - Does your project form make sense for who your audience is and offer an opportunity to advance your narrative?
- Will your project actually **reach your audience**?
- Why do you believe your project will **work on your audiences**?
- Put yourself in your audience's shoes as they encounter/experience your project. **Is your narrative clear**?
- How might you **measure** that your project reached and impacted your audiences and achieved its goals?

Review: Narrative Design Star

- The narrative design star is a **framework for designing (or analyzing) a narrative project you're working on** to advance your narrative strategy.
- You can **start at any point on the star** and work your way around to generate or check for alignment for your narrative project.
- Use this tool as a compass to ensure the work **ties back to the deep narrative**. This is what makes a project part of a narrative strategy.

Moving Stretch Audiences on Immigrants & Immigration

Research Offers Clues for How to Move Stretch Audiences

We recently partnered with [The Opportunity Agenda](#) to commission Gretchen Barton of the Worthy Strategy group to conduct movement-wide immigration research.

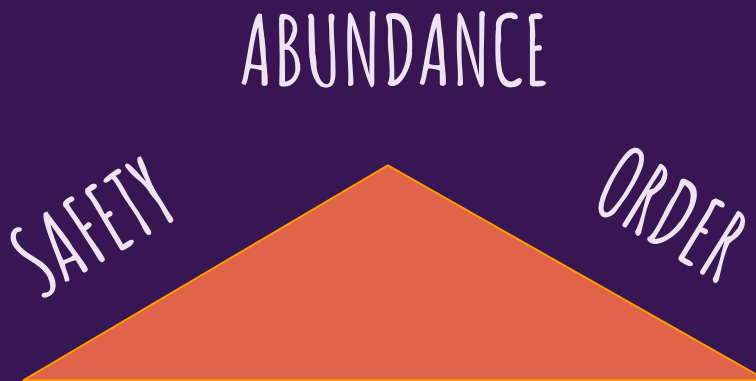
Barton researched opportunities to move Americans toward a pro-immigrant worldview by challenging the appeal of false anti-immigrant narratives with our own deep narratives of interdependence, belonging, and abundance. In particular, we wanted to find out how we could move people toward our deep narratives, articulated in our narrative system.

These are: abundance, interdependence, belonging, safety, dignity, freedom to thrive.

Research Findings

Barton found that even through this period of anxiety and fear, Americans overwhelmingly express positive views about immigrants. At the same time, they are negative about immigration.

The key to key to creating a different paradigm on immigration is moving people to an abundance mindset. In order to reach and maintain an abundance mindset, people's perceptions of safety and order need to be satisfied.



Learn More About Our Research

Report

<https://bit.ly/BelongingStudyPreview1>

Research Overview + Video

<https://bit.ly/BLabTOAResearch>

What Does Narrative Strategy Add Up To?

Culture and Narrative

Deep Narratives and Narratives set cultural norms.

We all maintain norms and also push to reset norms. We are all recipients and agents of **narrative power**.

Our work is to move the social imagination to adopt and maintain norms rooted in the deep narratives and narratives we want to advance, in order to make the world we want.

So Much Movement Work Happens in Siloes. What Kinds of Work Do You Want to Develop Moving Forward?

Strategic Communications Strategy

Intended Campaign



Polling / Focus Groups / Dials



Base / Persuadables /
Opposition



Ad/Image/Story/Campaign



Implemented
Messages

Economic Interest
Subconscious Desires

Arts / Culture-Based Strategy

Inquiry



Study / Organizing / Collaboration



Producers /
Audiences



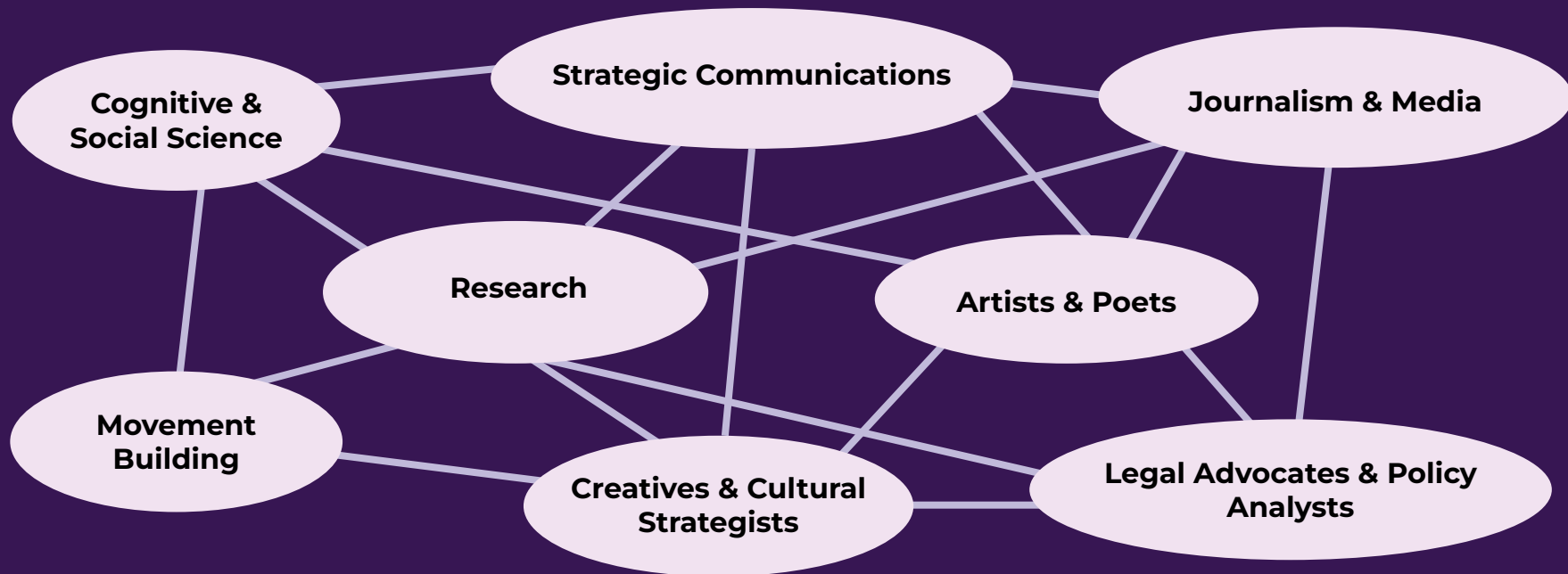
Work / Performance / Installation



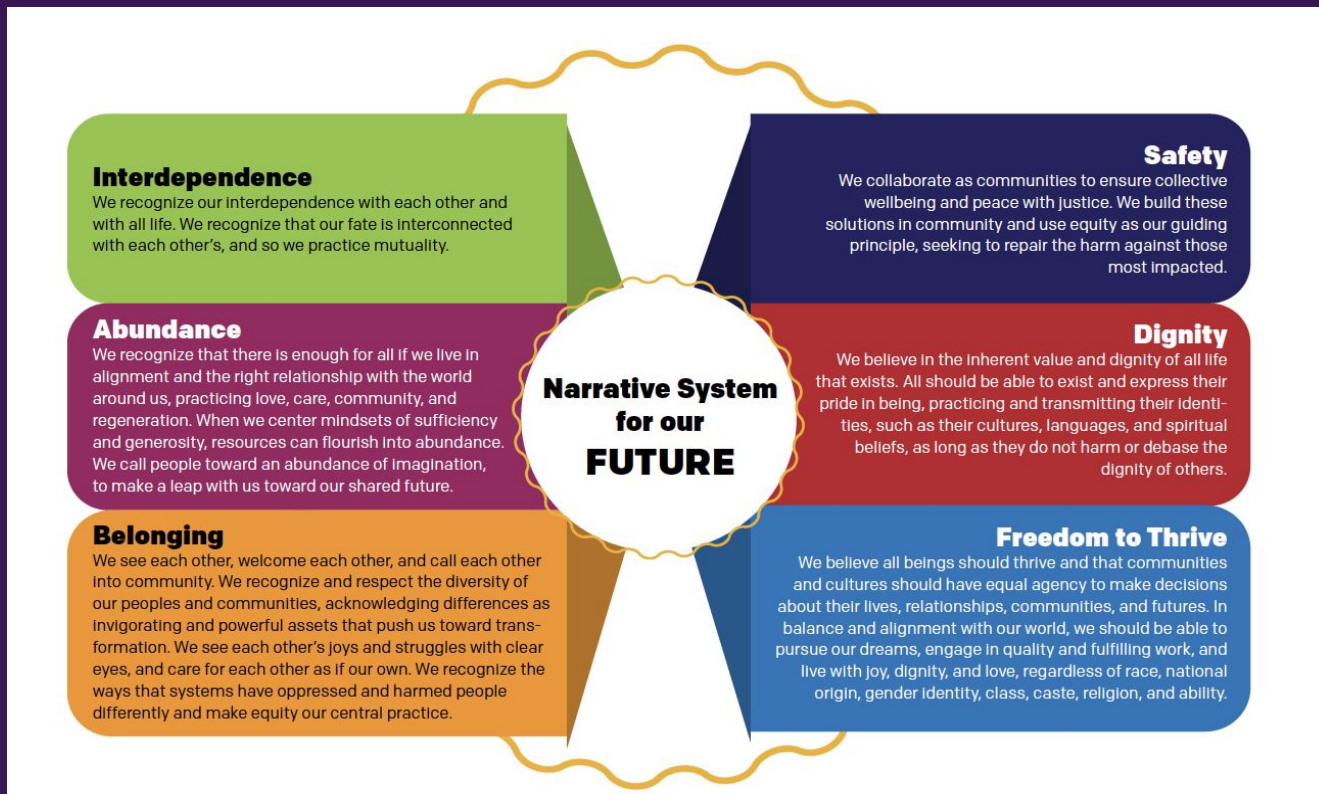
Stories and
Experiences

Awareness / Consciousness /
Experience

Extend the Narrative Possibilities of Your Work by Building a Larger Ecosystem



Lastly, Remember That We Have a Shared Destination For Our Work Together



Building a Movement-Wide Narrative Strategy

- How does the narrative system help you think about my campaigns and projects in relation to other work in the movement?
- Are there existing or new relationships that you can deepen to expand reach and engagement?
- How might we build more alignment and strategy across our movement?

RESOURCES

- Butterfly Lab Report + Toolkit
 - <https://bit.ly/BLabReport>
- Butterfly Lab Tools + Resources
 - <https://bit.ly/BLabNarrativeResources>
- Butterfly Lab and Opportunity Agenda's Research
 - <https://bit.ly/BLabTOAResearch>

STAYING CONNECTED

- Email List
 - <https://bit.ly/AboutBLab>



Thank You!