



MODULE 4

Building Positive Narratives

This resource is licensed under CCBY 4.0



Co-funded by
the European Union

What do you think a narrative is?

Give your definitions or opinions



A FAIRY TALE

Aurora is a beautiful young princess who lives in a castle. A witch curses her so that she will one day prick her finger on a spindle of a spinning wheel and sleep for many years. When she is 16 she pricks her finger on a spindle and falls asleep. After 100 years, a brave prince finds her, falls in love with her and kisses her, breaking the spell. They marry and live happily ever after.

What are the narratives in this fairytale?

Discuss in pairs

A FAIRY TALE

Aurora is a beautiful young princess who lives in a castle. A witch curses her so that she will one day prick her finger on a spindle of a spinning wheel and sleep for many years. When she is 16 she pricks her finger on a spindle and falls asleep. After 100 years, a brave prince finds her, falls in love with her and kisses her, breaking the spell. They marry and live happily ever after.

Narratives related to gender: princesses are rescued by brave princes. Women and men marry and live happily ever after.

Narratives related to political organisation: countries are ruled by wise and noble kings and queens who inherit power from their parents (monarchy).

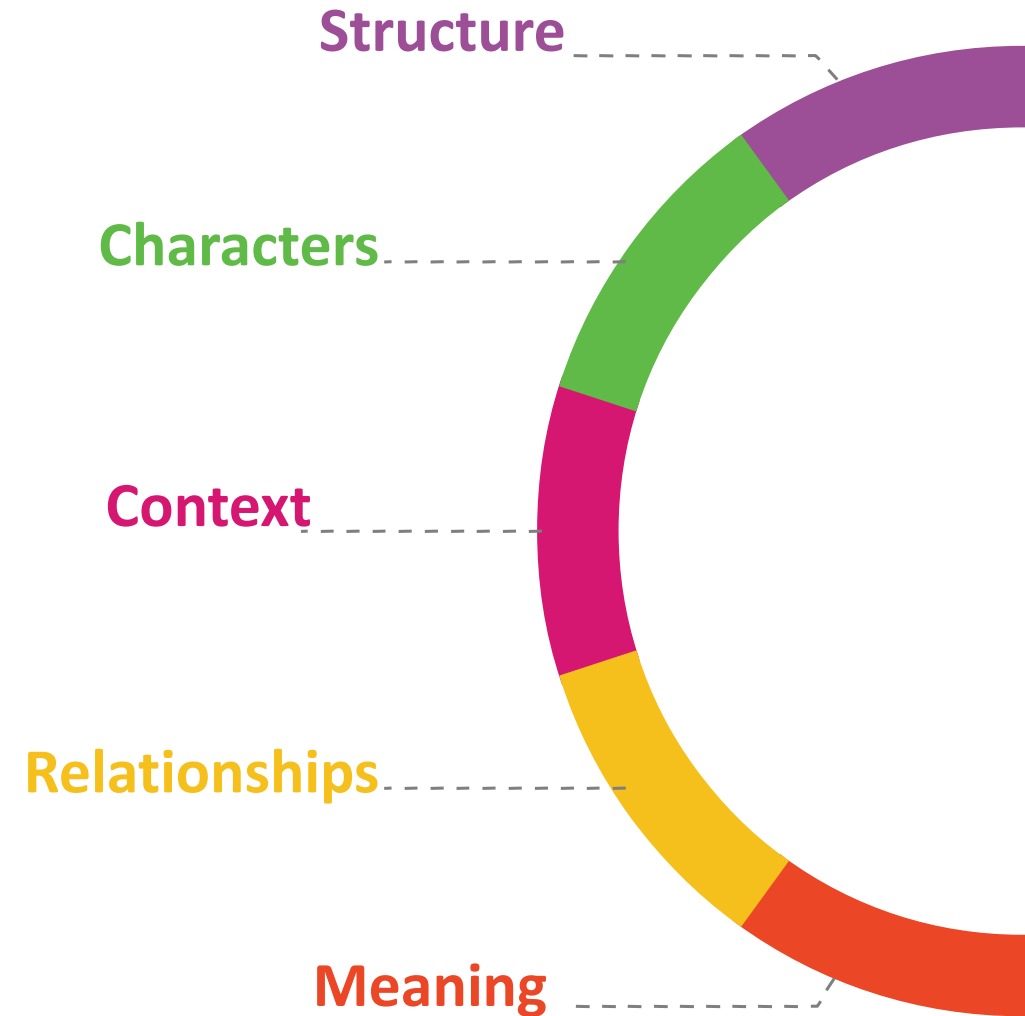
A BASIC DEFINITION OF NARRATIVE

A narrative is a logical, internally coherent report and interpretation of connected events or pieces of information that makes sense to the reader or listener.



ELEMENTS OF THE NARRATIVE

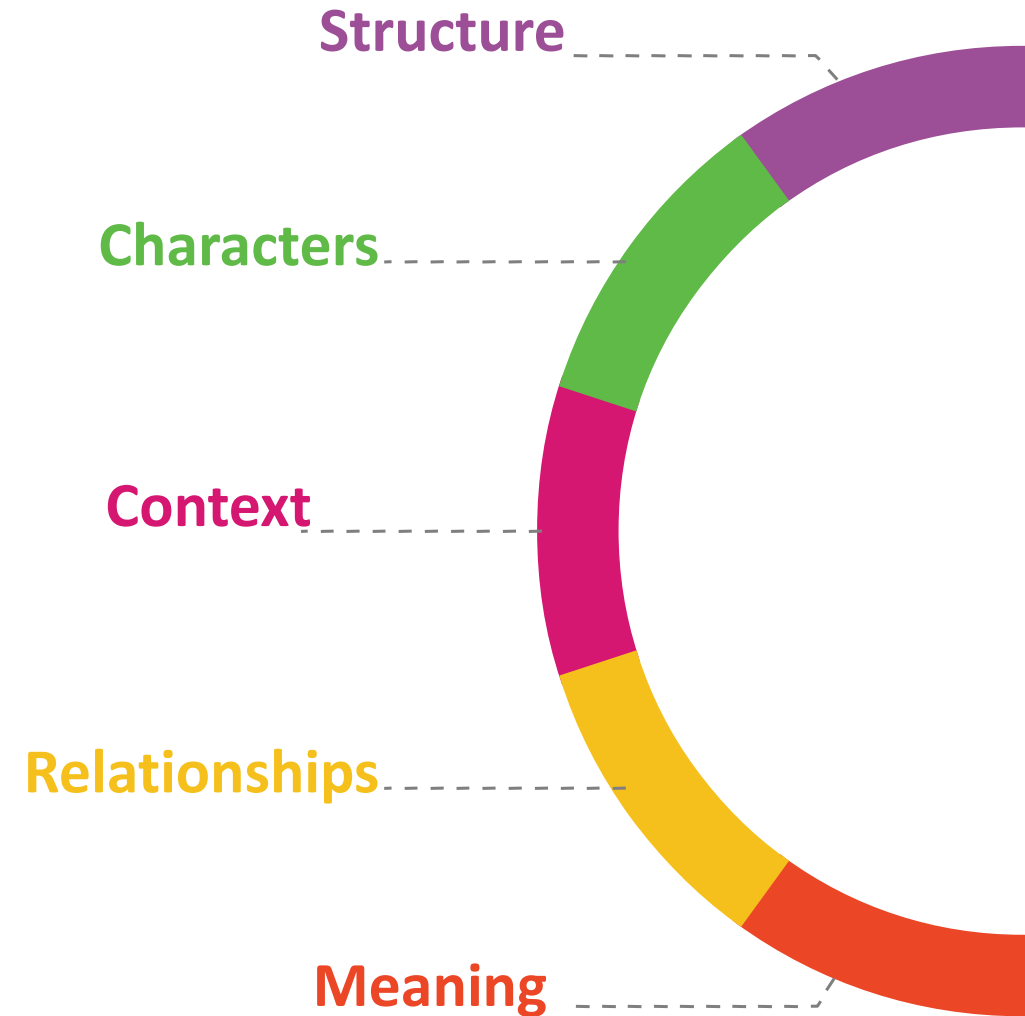
- **Structure:** A narrative presents 1) an initial situation, 2) a disrupt moment, conflict or dilemma which changes that situation and sets events in motion, and 3) at the end, the conflict is resolved or transformed. Characters choose one way of overcoming the conflict. There is thus a 'before' and an 'after'.
- **Characters:** The main characters are often heroes or heroines, the protagonists. Very often, they are accompanied by antagonists, villains or enemies.
- **Context:** Narratives acquire a meaning in a broader cultural, social, and historical context, with defined rules and mechanisms.
- **Relationships:** a narrative is not simply a flow of unrelated events, but is about the connections between characters. Two characters can be linked by positive or negative relationships.
- **Meaning:** Differently from plot, story and chronicle, a narrative presents a connection between the main characters, their behaviour and their actions (an individual story) to the general context and the bigger picture (collective story).



ELEMENTS OF THE NARRATIVE

Working in pairs, find all the narrative elements in the fairytale

Aurora is a beautiful young princess who lives in a castle. A witch curses her so that she will one day prick her finger on a spindle of a spinning wheel and sleep for many years. When she is 16 she pricks her finger on a spindle and falls asleep. After 100 years, a brave prince finds her, falls in love with her and kisses her, breaking the spell. They marry and live happily ever after.



A FAIRY TALE

When one narrative is presented as the only right or normal one, denying alternatives or, in extreme cases, inciting violence against anyone who questions it, the fundamentals of a pluralistic and diverse society are at stake, starting with the right to freedom of thought, freedom of religion and belief, and so on. The problem becomes more serious in the case of violent and extremist narratives, including hate speech.



Let's look at an
example of
hate speech
in football



ASSESS THE OPPRESSIVE NARRATIVE

- ☐ CHARACTERS
- ☐ STRUCTURE
- ☐ RELATIONSHIPS
- ☐ EMOTIONS
- ☐ CONTEXT
- ☐ EXCLUSIONARY DYNAMICS
- ☐ A NARRATIVE PUT IN MOTION



Photo by [Isaac N.](#) on [Unsplash](#)

CASE: HOMOPHOBIA IN FOOTBALL

CHARACTERS

Football players are usually portrayed only as heterosexual men with strong masculinity.

Gay players are not presented, they don't feel comfortable enough to come out as being openly gay.

Football fans use homophobic statements toward the opposite team and referees as assault.

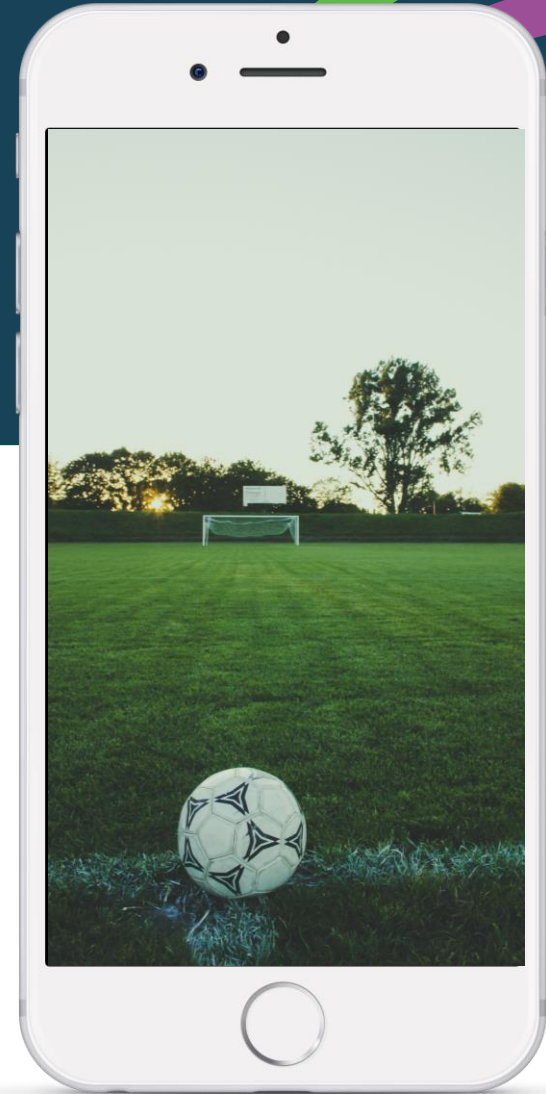


Photo by [Markus Spiske](#) on [Unsplash](#)

CASE: HOMOPHOBIA IN FOOTBALL

STRUCTURE

As with all other narratives, oppressive narratives present the typical 1-2-3 structure: an initial status, a disrupt moment, and the search for a solution. In this case, however, disruption is caused by an agent (antagonist) marked by negative traits.

- the protagonist is “us”, “real men”, “true heterosexual football players”, “true heterosexual football fans”
- the antagonist, or the enemy, is the “gays”, “spoiling” the image of the traditional sports man.

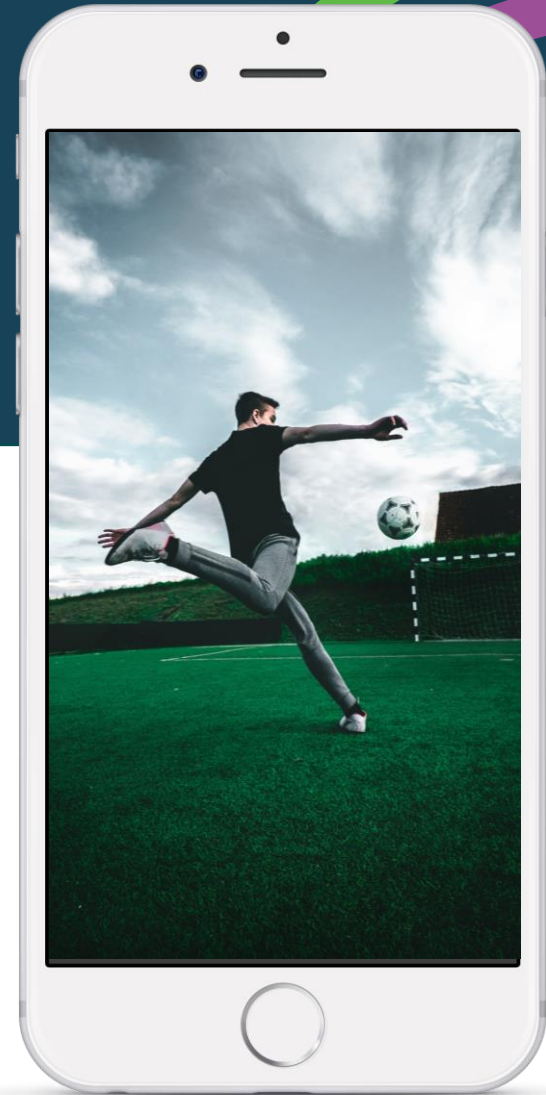


Photo by [Sven Kucinic](#) on [Unsplash](#)

CASE: HOMOPHOBIA IN FOOTBALL

RELATIONSHIPS

The relationship between protagonist and antagonist is made explicitly negative through the choice of the verb (spoil) used to define the antagonists' actions.

The transformational dimension is defined by the goal of the narrative: if only heterosexual players will be engaged (the protagonists) in the future, we will be winning again (which is our aim as football fans).

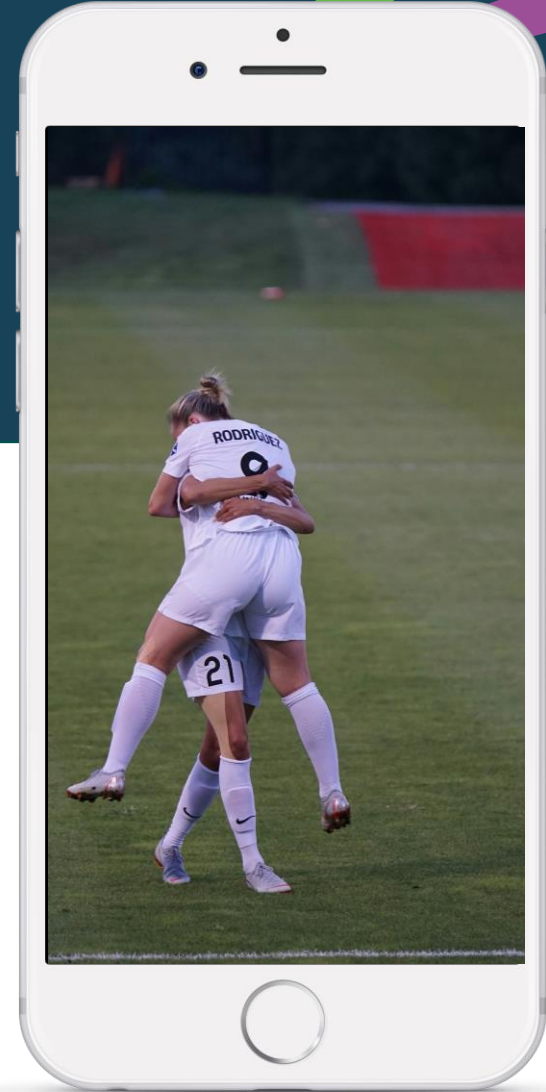


Photo by [Jeffrey F Lin](#) on [Unsplash](#)

CASE: HOMOPHOBIA IN FOOTBALL

EMOTIONS

In this narrative, the most powerful negative feeling is **shame**.

The “common sense” created by the cultural frame says that, the one we are ashamed of should be hidden and not shown to avoid losing the image of successful team/man/fun club.

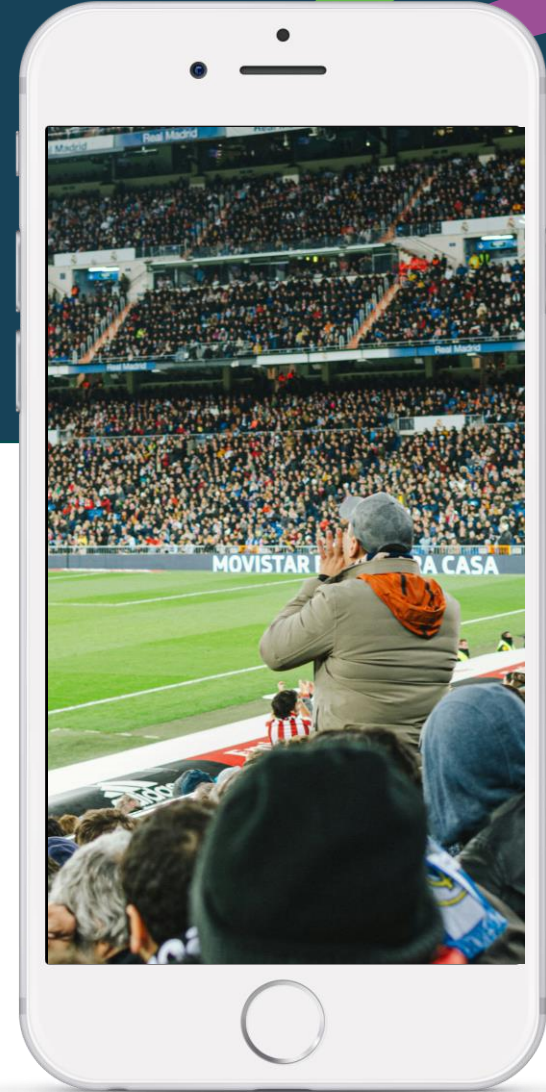


Photo by [Victoria Prymak](#) on [Unsplash](#)

CASE: HOMOPHOBIA IN FOOTBALL

CONTEXT

For centuries football was exclusively male sport that became a commercialized global entertainment. National, regional and world competitions are not seen as sports game anymore, but turned to be “peaceful fight” for recognition. States are using different means to involve successful players to ensure their win and image benefits.

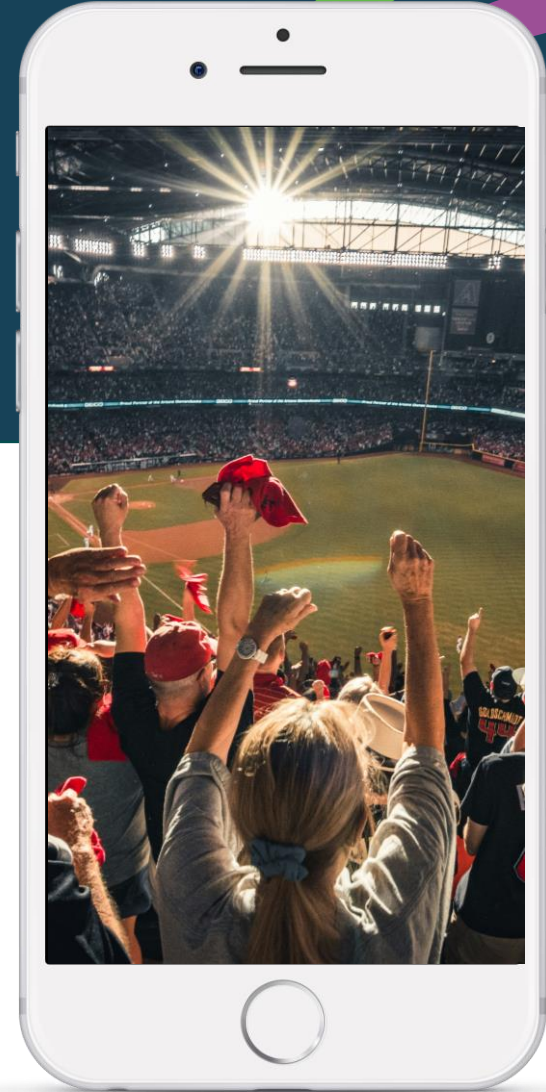


Photo by [Jimmy Conover](#) on [Unsplash](#)

CASE: HOMOPHOBIA IN FOOTBALL

EXCLUSIONARY DYNAMICS

Shame and fear to be seen less successful and powerful contribute to defining the boundaries of the in-group (we) based on gender and power grounds (“we were the true players/fans”).

Exclusion is one of the main traits of this narrative: members of the out-group are excluded from the narrative in principle – or are “accepted” only under certain circumstances (“they can stay / play, if won’t manifest their identity”).

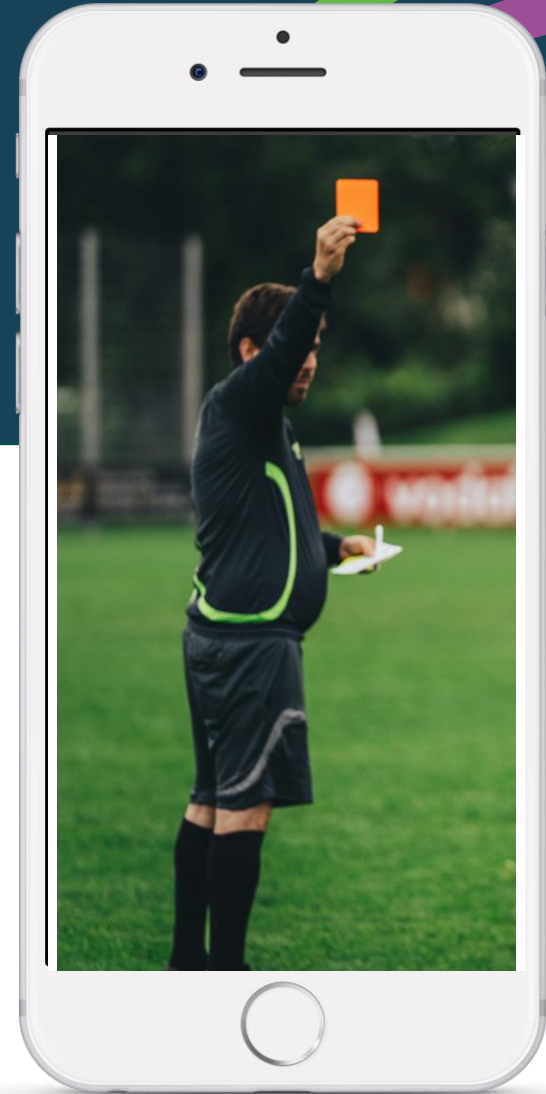


Photo by [Omar Ram](#) on [Unsplash](#)

CASE: HOMOPHOBIA IN FOOTBALL

A NARRATIVE PUT IN MOTION

An oppressive narrative can be recognised because the main group is mainly defined through the competition against an external group (the antagonist): the “other” is invested of the role of “enemy” in the protagonist’s story and scapegoated for its problems. Once the roles are clear, the narrative can be set in motion. A sense of shame, generates the intention to point out the “enemy” and get rid of them. An oppressive narrative provides for a justification of real life actions, which “naturally” aim at a “positive” conclusion: the defeat of the disrupting agent.



Photo by [Omar Ram](#) on [Unsplash](#)

A BASIC DEFINITION OF COUNTER AND ALTERNATIVE NARRATIVES

An alternative narrative is a human rights-based narrative which combats hate speech by **putting forward a non-exclusionary narrative** based on democratic values such as openness, respect for difference, freedom and equality. This means providing a different account and interpretation of reality.

A counter narrative is a human-based narrative which combats hate speech by **discrediting, and deconstructing violent narratives** that justify it. They refer more or less explicitly to alternative narratives, that is, non-exclusionary narratives based on democratic values such as openness, respect for difference, freedom and equality.

The division between the two terms is often blurred in practice as a counter narrative presupposes or implicitly refers to an alternative narrative.

COMPARING ALTERNATIVE AND COUNTER- NARRATIVES

	Counter Narrative	Alternative Narrative
How?	Directly confronting an oppressive narrative	Aiming at creating an alternative vision of society
What?	Undermine authority and myths that oppression relies on	Offer a “what we are for” as a different perspective to look at the issue from
Where and when?	Small scale, shorter period of time	Wide project, long-term
For example?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Debunking of discriminatory myths about a certain group in society through a public information campaign.• Former haters testimonies about the negative impacts of extremist movements on their lives.• Painting a mural celebrating diversity over racist comments on walls.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• All Different – All Equal campaign, a campaign promoting human rights• Reports on inter-faith dialogue youth meetings• Documentaries about the lives of refugees depicting them as human beings and not as criminals• Series of posters showing how fathers can also enjoy paternity leave and take care of children (a role often taken by mothers).

USING NARRATIVES TO ADDRESS HATE SPEECH

Counter narratives and alternative narratives aim to reach various target audiences depending on the context.

Counter narratives aim to reach:

- a) those who may or already sympathise with extremist views, preventing their further involvement
- b) those who already hold extremist views, supporting individuals in changing their views and behaviour

Alternative narratives strengthen positive, inclusive and constructive ideas and aim to reach the whole population, including producers of hate speech who may be able to become acquainted with a new narrative altogether. Different types of responses are needed for different groups.

ALTERNATIVE AND COUNTER-NARRATIVES

Any counter or alternative narrative should be based on two central ideas:

- Human rights are the basis of narratives combating hate speech.
- Human rights-based narratives play an important role in emancipatory and transformative strategies for young people, even more so for those who have been direct targets, or agents of hate speech.



WAYS OF IMPLEMENTATION

- PROVIDING MORE INFORMATION OR FACTS
- USING HUMOUR
- PERSONAL TESTIMONIES AND FICTION



FOUR PHASES OF DEVELOPING THE COUNTER NARRATIVE

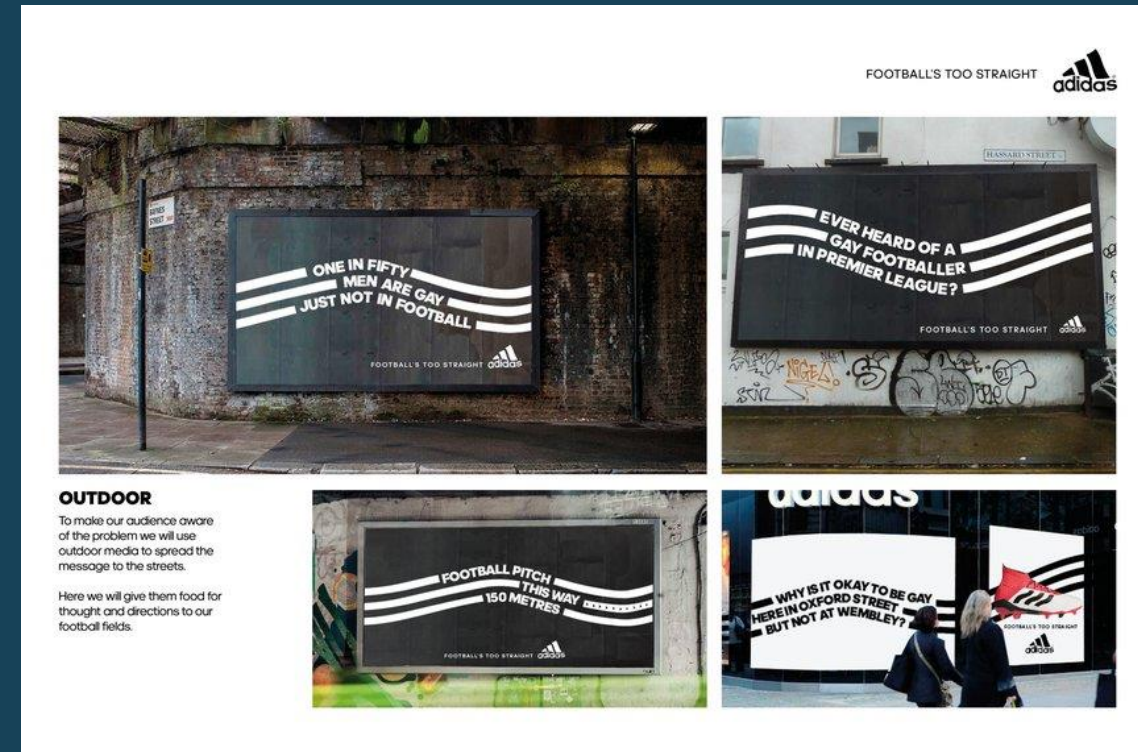
1. **Assess the oppressive narrative** you want to counter. Examining the oppressive narrative in detail helps you understand its dynamics inside, but also the context under which it is happening, its outreach and its media distribution.
2. **Designing** the counter narrative is the phase where you make strategic decisions, pick up techniques, tactics and arguments you want to use, and choose the media platforms.
3. **Implementing** the counter narrative is the moment where you put into action the intervention you designed during the second phase.
4. **Monitoring and evaluating** the counter narrative helps you see the fruits of your work, which is how your counter narrative is performing and what the impact of it is. This phase will also help to reflect on the work you have done and how to further adjust it, if necessary, through another iteration.

CASE: FOOTBALL'S TOO STRAIGHT

A lot of footballers in Premier League and Championship are gay. Secretly.

Being gay in football is a massive taboo, and young LGBT footballers have no role models to look up to.

So on the day of the London Pride, Adidas changed their three straight stripes to support and empower LGBT footballers in England.



Credits: D&AD Impact



A FAIRY TALE

We will work in groups based on the project partner countries. Recall a folk fairytale with narratives based on gender. Come up with a counter or alternative narrative for it. You have 15 minutes to complete the task.

At the end of the time, be ready to tell:

- 1) the original fairytale
- 2) a counter or alternative ending to the fairytale





проблеми одностатевих стосунків

In the centre:

The problem of same-sex relationships

On the left:

Who will cook us borsch?

On the right:

Why did we cook so much borsch?



We will work in groups based on the project partner countries. Think about the negative narratives that exist in your country about LGBT people. Come up with a counter or alternative narrative to each of them. Represent them in the form of memes. For example, using this resource: <https://imgflip.com/>

You have 20 minutes to complete the task.



Pride
month

D-DAY
MONTH



Co-funded by
the European Union