

Colliding Crises: Using Persuasive Narratives to Tell the Story of Food Insecurity During COVID-19

Mike Miller & Paula Hamilton
Brown Miller Communications
September 17, 9:10 – 10:10AM



AGENDA

- Apex of two competing crises
- How to break through the clutter
- Using a persuasive narrative
- Putting it all together
- Comments and discussion

Learning Objectives

- Understanding how shifting initiatives (COVID-19) can impact your narrative
- Develop stories that break through the clutter
- Understanding the power of persuasive narratives
- How to use a persuasive narrative

POLL QUESTION

Rank the extent to which COVID-19 has impacted your work using a scale of 1 to 5 (*1 not at all to 5 completely changed our priorities*)

The Power of a Human Narrative



Painting a Vivid Picture

- High unemployment, especially in low-paying service sector jobs
- Lower-income families are struggling to pay rent, utilities and other essential bills
- Without reliable access to affordable, nutritious food, many people are food insecure for the first time
- School closures mean no breakfast and lunch to thousands of children; many districts set up feeding sites, but it may be student's only meal of the day
- During these stressful times many families are buying the cheapest foods requiring little preparation, which can sometimes be the most unhealthy.
- An increase of 2.1 million Californians are food insecure for a total of 6.4 million people due to COVID-19
- Food banks and pantries report dramatic increases in people needing food

Why Would the Media Care?



- Newsworthy
- Current
- Trending
- Crisis
- Community Impact
- HUMAN

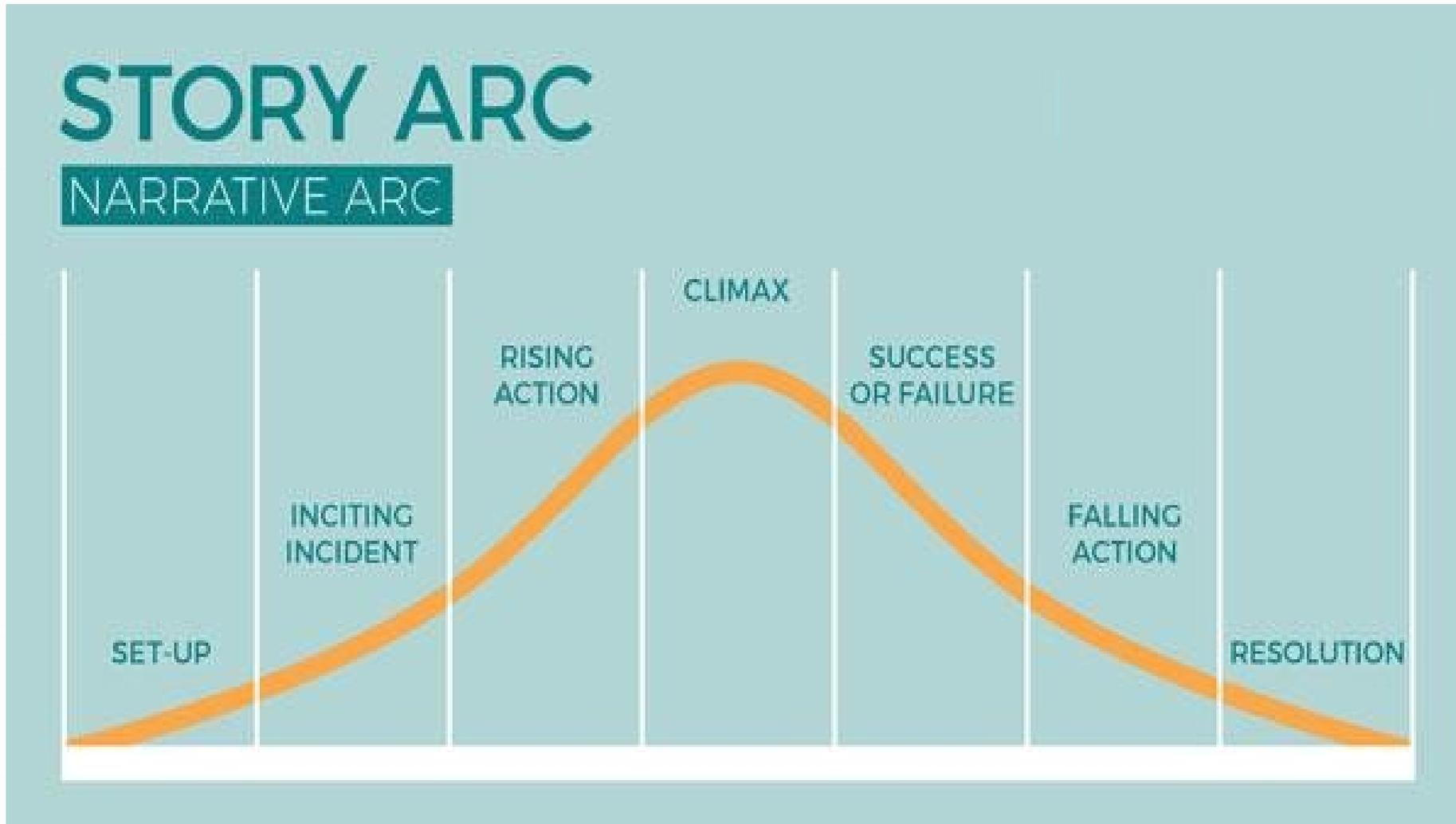
POLL QUESTION

Are you currently using storytelling to further your work?

a.) Yes

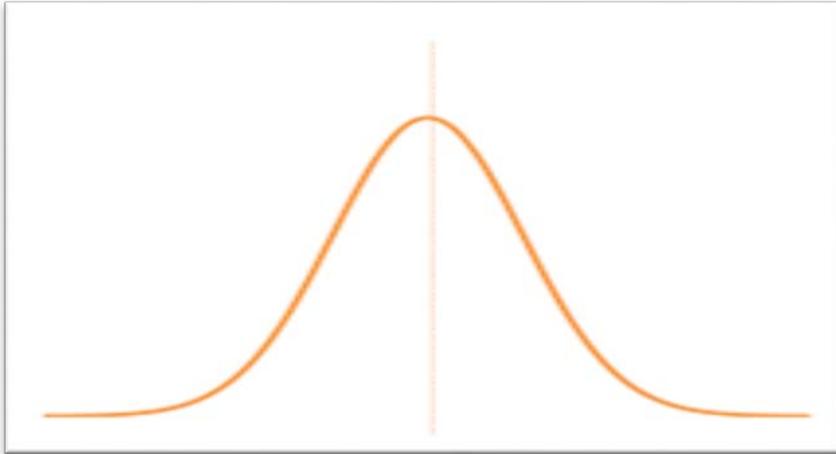
b.) No

Understanding the Story Arc



Following Your Story Arc

- **Setup:** Families living on the edge
- **Inciting Incident:** COVID-19
- **Rising Action:** Unemployment, Reduced Income, Poverty, School Closures, Stress, Anxiety, Poor Diet, Limited Physical Activity
- **Climax:** Weight gain, sickness
- **Success or Failure:** Access CalFresh, food pantries, Market Match at farmers markets
- **Falling Action:** Less hunger, better habits
- **Resolution:** Improved health





When the Arc Falls Flat

- Story is too sterile
- Facts and figures dominate
- Exhaustive detail
- Resolution doesn't feel concrete
- Audience doesn't connect



Taking It a Step Further—Persuasive Narratives . . .

Includes all the elements of a story arc, **but:**

- Adds a soul
- Provides a human perspective
- Includes emotion
- Offers a solution
- Invites audience to move in a decisive direction

Example of a Persuasive Narrative



Did It Work?

- Put a face on the crisis?
- Help people understand the situation?
- Make it real and relevant?
- Create empathy?
- Identify with the character?
- Memorable and re-tellable?
- Offer a realistic first step?
- Invite action?

TIME FOR DISCUSSION

Putting the Persuasive Narrative to Work

- Where does it fit?
- How do you introduce it?
- Remember, this is the first step to building a relationship
- Know your audience, what matters to them, and tailor appropriately
- Different audiences may want to receive information in different ways
- Pilot your stories with your target audience
- Value of using composite characters

Comments and Discussion

Upcoming Opportunity

For those who are interested in honing their storytelling skills, the Champion Provider Fellowship will host a three-part series on persuasive narratives in the new year.

Keep the Conversation Going

Michael Miller

mike@brownmillerpr.com

Paula Hamilton

paula@brownmillerpr.com

(925) 370-9777