CHAPTER ELEVEN

The Alhambra Project

A Prototype for Using Communication Infrastructure Theory to Construct and Evaluate a Community News Site

NIEN-TSU NANCY CHEN
Assistant Professor, California State University Channel Islands

WENLIN LIU
Assistant Professor, University of Houston

KATHERINE (KATYA) OGNYANOVA
Assistant Professor, Rutgers University

EVELYN MORENO
Project Manager of Metamorphosis Project,
University of Southern California

Introduction

Local communities across the United States have experienced a recent decline in civic life due to social changes that diminish the opportunities and motivation for individuals to have face-to-face interaction with neighbors (Putnam, 2000). For example, rising ethnic heterogeneity in many neighborhoods may hinder civic engagement because residents need to make a greater effort to see beyond their differences to identify shared interests (Kim & Ball-Rokeach, 2006b). Timely circulation of local news that enables informed participation in collective decision-making has also become increasingly rare, as many legacy media scale back their local coverage due to changing financial realities brought about by the Internet (The Pew Research Center, 2013; Waldman, 2011). These contemporary

forces call for innovative approaches to reinvigorating local civic vitality. It was against this backdrop that scholars from the Metamorphosis Project and Local News Initiative at the University of Southern California began their quest to address two interrelated questions: Can communication theory and research guide the revitalization of local news to meet the challenges to democracy posed by increasing population diversity? If so, how?

This chapter describes a theory-driven online community news website, the *Alhambra Source*, which shows promise in promoting civic engagement in a multiethnic community. Following a brief overview of the residential area served by this website, we demonstrate how communication infrastructure theory guided the development of *Alhambra Source*, and how formative research and multistage evaluation have shaped production and outreach practices. We conclude by summarizing the lessons learned and presenting a model that can be adapted for enhancing participation in collective life in other diverse communities.

The City of Alhambra: Demographics and Media Landscape

Alhambra is an incorporated city located in the San Gabriel Valley region of Los Angeles (L.A.) County. By Californian standards, it is a medium size, medium income community (Espinoza, 2012). Reflective of the minority-majority status of L.A. County and the state of California (Southern California Association of Governments, 2012), Alhambra's current population consists of 10% Whites, 34% Latinos and 53% Asians (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). Once a predominantly White suburb, Alhambra's demographics began to shift with Mexican immigrants moving into the area in the 1960s, followed by Asian settlers in the 1980s (Southern California Association of Governments, 2012). Given the different immigration histories of Alhambra's residents, most of its Latino population is native born, whereas the majority of its Asian population is foreign born (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010).

As the ethnic composition of Alhambra changed, so did its media landscape. In the 1970s, the *Alhambra Post Advocate*, the only news outlet dedicated to covering the city on a daily basis ceased operation. While Alhambra is within the areas covered by various legacy news media (e.g., the *Pasadena Star-News*, *Los Angeles Times*, KTLA TV, KPCC public radio), the city rarely receives attention from these regional or metropolitan outlets. Research indicates that among the established media, Chinese-language ethnic newspapers provide the highest volume of information about Alhambra on a daily basis (Ball-Rokeach et al., 2009). However, the linguistic and cultural orientations of these publications limit their readership. These newspapers also tend to focus on issues important to their

ethnic community (e.g., immigration regulations) but not necessarily issues that are place-based (e.g., building local parks) (Chen et al., 2017).

While there exists in Alhambra a monthly English language newspaper delivered to all residents and local businesses for free, this paper is published by the local Chamber of Commerce. Consequently, it functions more as a cheerleader of the local government and an advertising mechanism rather than an independent journalistic enterprise (Chen, Dong, Ball-Rokeach, Parks, & Huang, 2012; Chen et al., 2017). In other words, there has been a scarcity of media outlets that tell locally relevant stories, provide critical perspectives, and at the same time bridge across diverse residents in Alhambra. This scarcity presents a barrier to informed citizenship and civic life in Alhambra, as illustrated by research findings on the city's relatively low levels of neighborhood belonging (Ball-Rokeach, 2001) and civic participation (Chen et al., 2013).

Communication Infrastructure Theory

The barriers to civic engagement confronting Alhambra are not unique. In fact, research conducted in diverse urban communities in the United States since the late 1990s has revealed similar patterns and shed light on potential resources that can be utilized to tackle this challenge (Ball-Rokeach, Kim, & Matei, 2001; see also, Ball-Rokeach, Prologue). Such research has given rise to communication infrastructure theory (CIT), which considers the neighborhood storytelling network (STN) as a hub of resources for enabling resident participation in collective life (Kim & Ball-Rokeach, 2006a, 2006b; Kim & Jung, Chapter 1). The STN consists of the storytelling agents of residents, community organizations, and geo-ethnic media (i.e., media outlets tailored for a geographical area and/or certain ethnic groups within it). Compared to other social actors (e.g., metropolitan media, federal government agencies), these agents have the greatest capabilities and interest in telling local stories on a regular basis. These stories, in turn, provide individuals with the resources necessary to develop a community identity, understand and interpret collective issues, and construct appropriate action strategies (Ball-Rokeach et al., 2001).

CIT research has found that civic engagement is most likely to be sustained in an area where residents have a high level of integrated connectedness to the storytelling network (ICSN), meaning that they simultaneously link up with neighbors, community organizations and geo-ethnic media (Kim & Ball-Rokeach, 2006b; Kim, Chapter 3). Greater ICSN among individuals is an indication that the key storytelling agents may be interconnected in such a way that the local stories told by one storyteller can be picked up and retold by the others. As a corollary,

organizational outreach to the residents by community groups and geo-ethnic media may be effective strategies to strengthen residents' ICSN (Wilkin, 2013; Wilkin & Ball-Rokeach, 2006). As the latter half of this chapter will illustrate, these strategies have been deployed in the development of the *Alhambra Source*, a local news website that actively invites residents, community organizations and legacy media to share community stories and connect with one another through the online and offline resources it offers (see Ognyanova & Jung, Chapter 8, for more about the role of new media within CIT research).

Recent work by Matsaganis, Golden, and Scott (2014) shows that an additional avenue to facilitate integration among local storytellers is to identify and foster the activity of "interstitial actors." These actors are "residents with friends and family networks in the community (micro level), but at the same time, these residents were members of an organized initiative with a recognizable identity and an official point of contact" (Matsaganis et al., 2014, p. 1510). For example, they could be peer educators recruited by a local health organization or content contributors trained by a local news outlet to serve their own residential community. As such, these interstitial agents are well positioned to broker relationships between the micro-level storytellers of residents and meso-level storytellers of community organizations or geo-ethnic media.

These findings from CIT research have informed the design and evaluation of a number of interventions aimed at enhancing individual and community health (Wilkin, 2013; Wilkin, Matsaganis, & Golden, Chapter 10). Such insights are also translatable for interventions aimed at promoting civic engagement in multiethnic communities by highlighting the importance of:

(1) strengthening the information-sharing capabilities of individual storytellers;
(2) developing connections among storytellers where such connections are missing or weak; and
(3) capitalizing upon interstitial actors to bridge across key storytellers.

With these guiding principles in mind, we discuss how the CIT framework has informed the formative research, the community intervention model, and the outreach evaluation of a local news website launched to promote civic engagement in Alhambra.

Multilevel and Multimethod Formative Research

Guided by CIT, mixed methods formative research was carried out between March 2008 and May 2009 (see Table 11.1) to assess:

(1) existing communication practices by micro- and meso-level storytellers in Alhambra;
(2) connections among these storytellers; and
(3) levels of and barriers to civic engagement among residents.

Table 11.1. Summary of Formative Research Components.

	Residents		Geo-ethnic Media		Community Organizations
Research Method(s)	Focus groups in English, Spanish and Mandarin Chinese	Fear and comfort mapping of Alhambra	Media census	Media monitoring and content analysis	Phone interviews
Research Period	May 2009	May 2009	March 2008	October 2008–March 2009	November 2008
Sample Size	*n* = 91 (residents)	*n* = 91 (residents)	*n* = 102 (media outlets)	*n* = 252 (stories)	*n* = 11 (organizations)

Given the diverse population of Alhambra, the formative research team consisted of individuals proficient in English, Mandarin-Chinese, and Spanish so that various research components, including interviews, focus groups, and community surveys, could be conducted in the three primary languages of Alhambra residents (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). In addition, field trips and informal meetings with local politicians took place throughout 2008 so that the research team could learn more about the physical, social, and institutional conditions that facilitated or constrained civic engagement in Alhambra.

Key findings from these research activities have been summarized in various publications. While a comprehensive recount of these findings is beyond the scope of the current chapter, it is important to note the following observations, as they informed our intervention design:

(1) There were multiple ethnically bounded STNs in Alhambra, meaning that residents tended to turn to neighbors of similar cultural backgrounds, media that speak their language, and community organizations serving their ethnic group when seeking local news and information (Chen et al., 2012).
(2) Integration into an ethnically bounded STN did not necessarily enhance civic engagement, as stories circulating within such a network might

strengthen identification with an ethnic group, but not the local community (An et al., 2014; Chen et al., 2013; Ognyanova et al., 2013).
(3) The lack of regular access to local news and information was a major barrier to civic engagement (Chen et al., 2012).
(4) The Internet was considered a preferred channel for residents to obtain local information (Chen et al., 2012).

Interviews with community organizations and a "media census"[1] highlighted the linguistic diversity of the city and the importance of multilingual capabilities in any effort to communicate with the public. Furthermore, focus group discussions provided insights into community concerns shared by residents from diverse backgrounds, suggesting a foundation for building collective identity and action.

Participatory Online News Website as Community Intervention

The formative research demonstrated a pressing need for more regular and critical local coverage in Alhambra that would reach its multiethnic residents. Furthermore, it appeared crucial to ensure that there is a mechanism for bridging the ethnically bounded STNs in Alhambra so that residents would have the resources necessary to develop a collective "Alhambran" identity and participate in community decision-making that influences everyone. This offered the impetus for the creation of a multilingual local news website, the *Alhambra Source* (alhambrasource.org), as a hub for connecting the separate STNs and as a way of promoting civic dialogue. In addition to the main website, the *Alhambra Source* was supplemented with an e-newsletter that provided weekly summaries of key community stories as well as presence on Facebook and Twitter.

To optimize the bridging capacity of the *Alhambra Source,* care was taken to present all static information on the website in English, Chinese, and Spanish, the three major languages of the community (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). Google Translate plugins for Chinese and Spanish were incorporated into the homepage of the *Alhambra Source*. For major news and feature stories, human translation was performed regularly by community volunteers. In addition, collaboration with existing regional and ethnic media outlets was established from the get-go. Launched in September 2010, the *Alhambra Source* has been supplying daily roundups of news pertaining to Alhambra from a range of metropolitan, regional, and ethnic media by electronically aggregating Alhambra-related headlines from these media and summarizing in English stories deemed relevant to local residents by the website editor. Based on informal feedback from city officials, these daily

English roundups have enabled them to understand the concerns of their Chinese constituency for the first time, as they now have regular access to translated information from the Chinese-language media through the *Alhambra Source*.

In terms of content, attention is focused on issues identified by diverse residents as shared concerns during formative research (e.g., education, redevelopment). Furthermore, the website relies on residents and community organizations as contributors for the majority of its content. Utilizing a hybrid professional-citizen journalism model in content production and community outreach, a professional journalist serves as the editor of the website and oversees the aggregation of news from other media outlets. The editor plays an especially important role in connecting various storytellers in the community. The editor is also in charge of recruiting and training a diverse group of community members to generate original content for the website. This hybrid professional-citizen journalism model thus facilitates the building of interpersonal connections between residents, which would have been hard to develop otherwise. Additionally, the editor takes an active role in outreaching to local organizations and schools, which further strengthens the connection between individual residents and meso-level organizations in the community.

Building on a reciprocal partnership, community contributors are able to receive professional journalism training and institutional support in producing stories on topics that they are passionate about. These contributors are invited to attend a series of workshops and biweekly meetings, during which the editor works with each contributor to develop story ideas, craft their stories according to the conventions of professional writing, and create a multimedia version of the story when appropriate. While the stories created by the community contributors tend to be longer features, the editor also works with youth interns from the local area to cover breaking news mainly pertaining to crime and safety.

In the first five years following the website's launch, more than 100 community members—ranging from high school students, through retired professionals, to community activists—had been recruited to cover local stories and participate in the website's outreach events. Coming from different walks of life, these contributors represented a group of individuals who had relatively long residential tenure, were personally invested in the betterment of community, and tended to exhibit a high level of interest in local affairs. The ethnic composition of the group was largely reflective of the local demographics: around 20% White, 30% Latino, and 50% Asian.

Overall, the purpose of utilizing the hybrid journalism model consisting of a professional editor and community contributors is two-fold: First, they constitute a reliable group of content producers who are not only familiar with the community, but are genuinely motivated to advance the well-being of the community.

Second, in terms of promoting website readership and civic engagement, both the editor and community contributors play the role of "interstitial actors." With the editor and community contributors being the "early adaptors" of the website, and through "word-of-mouth" and various diffusion mechanisms associated with these individuals' social networks (Valente, 1995), they have become the key intermediaries in connecting diverse residents with the *Alhambra Source*. By leveraging their existing networks in the community, both online via social media connections and offline through their family, friends, and neighbors, the editor and community contributors serve to not only diffuse a new media innovation but also bridge between micro- and meso-level local storytellers (i.e., residents and their community organizations and media).

Evaluation of Reader Engagement and Website Outreach

As part of the evaluation plan to assess outreach effectiveness and reader engagement, we launched a tri-lingual web-based survey in April 2014. We emailed invitations in English, Mandarin-Chinese, and Spanish to 1,409 individuals who had signed up to receive the *Alhambra Source's* weekly e-newsletters. In the survey, we asked about respondents' involvement with the website, including the average time they spent on each visit, and if and how they have contributed to the website. Out of the 214 responses received, the average frequency of website visits was "once a week", and the average time spent on the website per week was "one to two hours". These findings suggested that the e-newsletters containing headlines of major weekly stories might function as an effective tool to remind residents to regularly check back with the *Alhambra Source*.

In addition, respondents indicated that they also accessed stories through the *Alhambra Source*'s Facebook and Twitter feeds. With official presence on Twitter and Facebook, the *Alhambra Source* promotes stories on these platforms about twice a week, and these social media provide hyperlinks for interested readers to visit the main website. The average frequency for readers accessing stories through the *Alhambra Source*'s Facebook and Twitter feeds was similar at about "once a week".

Going beyond website visits, about 22% of the respondents indicated that they had commented on a story on the *Alhambra Source*. Eighteen percent had contributed to the website's content through writing a story, submitting a photo, sending a news tip, or providing event calendar announcements. Regarding offline engagement, 18% of the respondents indicated that they had taken part in a community event hosted or sponsored by the *Alhambra Source*. These responses suggested that cyberspace in this case might provide an arena to initially establish

social ties online, and these ties are subsequently fortified through physical interactions among residents during community outreach events. As a matter of fact, the research team has more systematically explored the connection between online and offline civic engagement by using the baseline community survey data collected in 2011 (Ognyanova et al., 2013). Consistent with how respondents are engaged both online and offline with the *Alhambra Source,* Ognyanova et al. found that online civic participation can further stimulate offline civic participation among Alhambra residents.

To identify the most effective ways of website outreach, the 2014 survey further asked respondents to identify how they first learned about the *Alhambra Source* (see Figure 11.1). Out of a variety of outreach channels, one noteworthy finding was that interpersonal networks, including family, friends, and neighbors, acted as the most effective channel in spreading the word about the *Alhambra Source*. In terms of the role of meso-level storytellers, while community organizations were a widely identified source in facilitating website outreach, only 3% of the respondents indicated that they connected with the *Alhambra Source* through geo-ethnic media. Finally, in parallel with the website's success in using offline social connections, social media platforms, such as Facebook and Twitter, stood out as a promising channel to get the website on residents' radar. Altogether, the results of the survey reaffirmed the potential of utilizing existing connections within the STN, especially community contributors' personal networks and community organizations, to promote reader engagement and community outreach for a novel local news initiative.

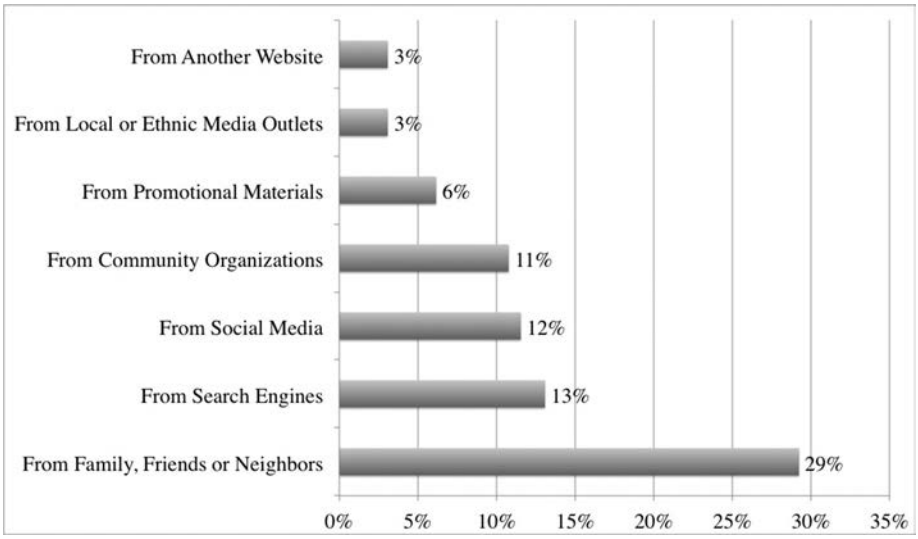

Figure 11.1. Channels through which Residents Heard about the Alhambra Source.

Multistage Evaluation

Besides being a trilingual local news website informed by communication theory, the *Alhambra Source* stands out in that it has been systematically evaluated since the beginning. In addition to tracking its web and social media analytics, researchers affiliated with the website have sought to investigate its reception by and influence on residents, geo-ethnic media, and community organizations (see Table 11.2). One important evaluation component that extends beyond the traditional CIT framework is the face-to-face interviews conducted with city officials to understand the political elite's perception of and response to this new media venture. In terms of how the *Alhambra Source* has shifted the power-dependency relationship[2] between local residents and the political elite, these interviews revealed that the website has enabled residents' voices to be heard by politicians, thereby challenging the top-down approach of decision-making that has long been adopted by the city council (Chen et al., 2017).

Evaluation research has also illuminated the agenda-setting function of the *Alhambra Source,* such that the website's content is associated with the topics of interpersonal conversations between neighbors and the agenda of the established geo-ethnic media (An et al., 2014). Furthermore, readers of the *Alhambra Source* are found to be more connected with other micro- and meso-level storytellers and more civically engaged. In other words, these individuals may bring in already established social connections, thereby helping to integrate the *Alhambra Source* into the existing neighborhood storytelling network. It is also possible that connection with the *Alhambra Source* has provided residents access to existing organizational and media resources in their community, as this website was designed to bridge and strengthen links among key local storytellers. Either of these explanations should lead to the same outcome according to CIT—individuals connected with the *Alhambra Source* are more likely to be civically engaged because they are more integrated into their STN.

To empirically confirm this, one of the evaluation studies used structural equation modeling and identified a mutual influence between residents' civic participation level and their connection to the local news website (Liu, Chen, Ognyanova, Ball-Rokeach, & Parks, 2016). That is, individuals with greater levels of civic interest and involvement are more likely to seek out traditional and new media sources of local information and connect with community organizations, and these connections in turn facilitate even greater levels of participation. This reciprocal influence suggests that the *Alhambra Source* has forged a virtuous cycle and contributed to civic vitality in this multiethnic community.

Table 11.2. Summary of Multistage Evaluation.

	Residents		Community Contributors	Geo-ethnic Media		Community Organizations	City Officials
Research Method(s)	Two waves of trilingual phone surveys	Focus groups in English and Mandarin Chinese; fear and comfort mapping	Online survey with members of the website's listserv	Interviews with media producers	Media monitoring and content analysis	Face-to-face interviews	Face-to-face interviews
Research Period(s)	November–December, 2010; February–April, 2014	March 2015	April–May, 2014	June 2013–March 2014	June–August 2011	February–May, 2011	August–September, 2013
Sample Size(s)	n = 405; n = 400 (residents)	n = 31 (residents)	n = 214 (residents)	n = 8 (media producers)	n = 279 (stories)	n = 10 (organizations)	n = 5 (officials)

Conclusion

In this chapter, we have presented a framework informed by CIT to develop, operate and evaluate a community news website. Guided by this framework, the *Alhambra Source* has developed as a hybrid professional-citizen journalism that combines indigenous storytelling practices and theory-driven research to enhance community vitality. It takes a bottom-up approach from inception, with both website operation and its surrounding program of research directly informed by community input. At each step of the way, our effort has focused on understanding and strengthening the communication capabilities of micro- and meso-level storytellers in Alhambra, as well as on bridging between storytellers and across ethnically bounded STN's. Through multilevel and multilingual storytelling, the *Alhambra Source* project provides a model for developing communication-based interventions to address the decline of civic engagement in communities with growing ethnocultural diversity, which are increasingly common in urban and suburban places around the United States and beyond (Putnam, 2007).

Building on a hybrid model of news production, the *Alhambra Source* has evolved to become an integrated part of the city's local communication infrastructure. Its impact has manifested in a number of areas. First, as a geo-ethnic media outlet that aims to target a broad spectrum of community members, its focus on Alhambra as the primary storytelling referent has successfully engaged certain segments of the community and become one of residents' main sources of local information. With a penetration rate at 16%,[3] the *Alhambra Source* has reached a readership level comparable with the digital versions of national print media, as well as hyperlocal media of similar forms (Chyi & Lasorsa, 2002).[4] The steady website traffic also suggests that the *Alhambra Source* has retained a sizable community of readers.

Second, as an alternative civic space, the *Alhambra Source* empowers local residents through citizen journalism practices. By producing stories of local salience and relevance, the website has begun to influence the agenda of the legacy media (An et al., 2014), shift the power-dependency relation between the average resident and the local political elite (Chen et al., 2017), and afford a discursive space for the local citizenry to express alternative viewpoints. In addition, by regularly translating ethnic media news into English, the site has introduced the issues and concerns of local ethnic groups into the mainstream media and public agenda, which would not have been possible without such effort.

Next, our evaluation has identified a positive association between residents' connection with the *Alhambra Source* and civic engagement. However, statistical modeling has revealed some causal relation questions that call for further scholarly attention. While CIT posits that greater connection with local storytelling agents

would motivate and enable civic engagement, we found that reciprocal influence—the mutually reinforcing effect between one's connection to the *Alhambra Source* and his or her civic outlook—is also likely. Under such circumstances, the entry of a local news website might contribute to a virtuous cycle where engaged residents' civic interest and connection with local storytelling agents are already feeding into each other. However, this new media outlet might also widen the gap between the engaged and disengaged, conforming to the "knowledge gap hypothesis" in the sense that the information rich get richer (Kim, Moran, Wilkin, & Ball-Rokeach, 2011; Wei & Hindman, 2011; Wilkin & Ball-Rokeach, 2006). The theoretical and practical implications of this research finding are many, and more inquiries are warranted to tease them out.

Although the *Alhambra Source* was dedicated to engaging the diverse spectrum of community members through its tri-lingual operation, the evaluation suggests that its reach is more limited within the Asian population who constitutes over a half of Alhambra's residents, but barely 22% of the readership of the *Alhambra Source*. What hinders the website's outreach effort could be the long-term presence of Chinese-language media in the local area. Our two waves of resident surveys reveal that Chinese-language ethnic media outlets, especially TV channels (e.g. LA18 KSCI-TV) and daily newspapers (e.g. *World Journal*), are preferred by most Chinese immigrant residents as their primary source of local information. While ethnic media play a critical role in informing people with limited English proficiency, they also tend to steer the audience's gaze away from their local community and instead focus attention on news within a particular ethnic group or from the home country, thus insulating immigrants from more general participation outside of their ethnic community (Jeffres, 2000; Lin & Song, 2006; Seo, 2011). This could in turn have negative consequences when it comes to the health of local democracy.

In order to better promote connection with the *Alhambra Source* among Chinese residents, especially the newer immigrants, the website needs to create more linguistically accessible and culturally relevant content in addition to raising awareness about the Chinese content that already exists on the platform. To accomplish this, and true to the participatory nature of the *Alhambra Source*, would mean involving more first-generation immigrant residents as content contributors so that their language and perspectives are visible on the website. Furthermore, they will serve as the "innovators," "early adopters" or "interstitial actors" who can capitalize upon their organizational and interpersonal networks to introduce this media initiative to others in their ethnic community and create buy-ins for the website's vision of promoting civic engagement across diversity. As revealed by our research, tapping into these contributors' social networks, both online and offline, is one of the most effective ways to enhance the website's outreach to potential

readers and content contributors. This insight can inform other communication interventions seeking to promote civic vitality in diverse communities.

Last but not the least, collaboration with ethnic media would be a viable strategy to better reach and serve the immigrant population. The current outreach evaluation identified a weak linkage between the *Alhambra Source* and major ethnic media outlets in the area, both in terms of shared readership (Chen et al., 2013) and the degree to which they influence one another in news content (An et al., 2014). While the research and editorial teams behind the *Alhambra Source* have arranged meetings with ethnic producers from the get-go to express a strong desire to partner with them, these conversations seem to have led to limited collaboration. At present, the *Alhambra Source* serves as a source of local news leads for ethnic media producers—even though these producers often do not credit the local news website in their work—whereas ethnic media offer a regular supply of stories about Alhambra that are summarized in one line or two in English in the daily news roundup on the *Alhambra Source* (Chen et al., 2017). These no doubt represent progress in the way that ethnic and general audience local media cooperate with each other rather than functioning as isolated entities. However, more substantive partnership is needed.

For example, there have been a few instances where ethnic media reporters and community contributors of the *Alhambra Source* worked together to produce a bilingual feature story that was subsequently published both on the website and by an ethnic media outlet. These stories focused on issues that were relevant to both the local and the ethnic community and were thus conducive to strengthening the local knowledge and involvement of new immigrants. More of this type of stories are needed. In order for this to happen, the *Alhambra Source* should intensify its outreach to ethnic media outlets and develop strategies for more substantive partnerships while being mindful of the limited production resources they each have.

Furthermore, more research should take place to understand any hesitation that ethnic media might have in developing a substantive partnership with the *Alhambra Source*. Although the majority of ethnic media serving the neighborhood are part of a larger media enterprise headquartered overseas, local partnership such as sharing content or readership can still benefit both parties. However, for that to happen, it should be clearly communicated to ethnic media that the website is not their competitor. Rather, it seeks to complement and collaborate with the legacy media, through initiatives such as content and readership sharing. Fundamentally, the *Alhambra Source* and ethnic media share the goal of facilitating immigrant participation in American society. However, this participatory website is built upon the conviction that locally-based participation is essential to ensuring that the everyday interests of diverse populations are accounted for in collective decision-making.

Acknowledgements

This chapter documents an ongoing project, the Alhambra Project, conducted under the auspices of the Metamorphosis Project and Local News Initiative funded by the Annenberg School for Communication and Journalism at the University of Southern California. Additional funds have been provided by the McCormick Foundation, Southern California Edison and Shannon Foundation to support the operation of the *Alhambra Source* website.

Notes

1. This is a research method that involves visiting public and commercial spaces in a local area and collecting copies of print media targeted to residents, and potentially residents of a particular ethnicity, within this area. This method provides a fuller picture of the media to which residents in a particular area have access, compared to information in media directories that tends to focus on larger media outlets only. For more information, see http://www.metamorph.org/research/geo_ethnic_media_print_and_electronic.
2. The power-dependency relationship refers to the relational dependence of one party (e.g., individual citizens) on another (e.g., government, news sources) in order to obtain resources and achieve goals. The term originates from media system dependency theory (for details, see Ball-Rokeach, 1998), which focuses on the dynamic dependence relationship forged between individuals and the media system.
3. This rate was calculated as the percentage of individuals reported having connected to the *Alhambra Source* among the 400 respondents to the second wave survey conducted in 2014.
4. According to Chyi and Lasorsa's (2002) survey of 818 residents in Austin, Texas, the online penetration rate of national newspapers, such as the *Wall Street Journal* and *USA Today*, ranged from 10% to 14%. The online penetration rate of a local newspaper, *Austin American-Statesman*, was at 18%.

References

An, Z., Chen, N.-T. N., Ball-Rokeach, S. J., Liu, W., Zhao, N., & Parks, M. (2014). *Agenda setting of media, public, and a local news website: Matches and mismatches*. Paper presented at the the annual conference of the International Communication Association, Seattle, WA.

Ball-Rokeach, S. J. (1998). A theory of media power and a theory of media use: Different stories, questions, and ways of thinking. *Mass Communication & Society, 1*(1/2), 5. doi:10.1080/15205436.1998.9676398

Ball-Rokeach, S. J. (2001). *Metamorphosis white paper series: White paper #1, community storytelling, storytelling community*. Retrieved from http://www.metamorph.org/images/uploads/The_challenge_of_belonging_in_the_21st_century.pdf

Ball-Rokeach, S. J., Kim, Y.-C., & Matei, S. (2001). Storytelling neighborhood: Paths to belonging in diverse urban environments. *Communication Research, 28*(4), 392–428. doi:10.1177/009365001028004003

Ball-Rokeach, S. J., Parks, M., Chen, N.-T., Usher, N., Dong, F., Huang, J., & Carrillo, W. (2009). *The potential and challenges for trilingual local journalism: A community-based approach*. Paper presented at the Centres and Peripheries Conference, Glasgow, Scotland.

Chen, N.-T. N., Dong, F., Ball-Rokeach, S. J., Parks, M., & Huang, J. (2012). Building a new media platform for local storytelling and civic engagement in ethnically diverse neighborhoods. *New Media & Society, 14*(6), 931–950. doi:10.1177/1461444811435640

Chen, N.-T. N., Ognyanova, K., Zhang, C., Wang, C., Ball-Rokeach, S. J., & Parks, M. (2017). Causing ripples in local power relations: The meso-level influence of a hyperlocal news website. *Journalism Studies, 18*(6), 710–731. doi:10.1080/1461670X.2015.1078738

Chen, N.-T. N., Ognyanova, K., Zhao, N., Liu, W., Gerson, D., Ball-Rokeach, S., & Parks, M. (2013). Communication and socio-demographic forces shaping civic engagement patterns in a multiethnic city. In P. Moy (Ed.), *Communication and community* (pp. 207–232). New York, NY: Hampton Press.

Chyi, H., & Lasorsa, D. L. (2002). An explorative study on the market relation between online and print newspapers. *Journal of Media Economics, 15*(2), 91–106. doi:10.1207/S15327736ME1502_2

Espinoza, P. (2012). *City of Alhambra, California: Comprehensive annual financial report for the year ended June 30, 2012.* Retrieved from http://www.cityofalhambra.org/imagesfile/file/201311/alhambracafr12.pdf

Jeffres, L. W. (2000). Ethnicity and ethnic media use: A panel study. *Communication Research, 27*(4), 496–535. doi:10.1177/009365000027004004

Kim, Y.-C., & Ball-Rokeach, S. J. (2006a). Civic engagement from a communication infrastructure perspective. *Communication Theory, 16*(2), 173–197. doi:10.1111/j.1468-2885.2006.00267.x

Kim, Y.-C., & Ball-Rokeach, S. J. (2006b). Community storytelling network, neighborhood context, and civic engagement: A multilevel approach. *Human Communication Research, 32*(4), 411–439. doi:10.1111/j.1468-2958.2006.00282.x

Kim, Y.-C., Moran, M. B., Wilkin, H. A., & Ball-Rokeach, S. J. (2011). Effects of integrated connection to a neighborhood storytelling network (ICSN) and education on chronic disease knowledge gaps among African Americans and Latinos in Los Angeles. *Journal of Health Communication, 16*(4), 393–415. doi:10.1080/10810730.2010.546483

Lin, W.-Y., & Song, H. (2006). Geo-ethnic storytelling: An examination of ethnic media content in contemporary immigrant communities. *Journalism, 7*(3), 362–388. doi:10.1177/1464884906065518

Liu, W., Chen, N.-T. N., Ognyanova, K., Ball-Rokeach, S., & Parks, M. (2016). *Paths of influence between a hyperlocal news website and civic engagement in a multiethnic community*. Paper presented at the the Annual Conference of the International Communication Association, Fukuoka, Japan.

Matsaganis, M. D., Golden, A. G., & Scott, M. E. (2014). Communication infrastructure theory and reproductive health disparities: Enhancing storytelling network integration by

developing interstitial actors. *International Journal of Communication, 8*(21). http://ijoc.org/index.php/ijoc/article/view/2566

Ognyanova, K., Chen, N. T. N., Ball-Rokeach, S. J., An, Z., Son, M., Parks, M., & Gerson, D. (2013). Online participation in a community context: Civic engagement and connections to local communication resources. *International Journal of Communication, 7*, 2433–2456. http://ijoc.org/index.php/ijoc/article/viewFile/2287/1018

Putnam, R. D. (2000). *Bowling alone: The collapse and revival of American community*. New York, NY: Simon & Schuster.

Putnam, R. D. (2007). E pluribus unum: Diversity and community in the twenty-first century. *Scandinavian Political Studies, 30*(2), 137–174. doi:10.1111/j.1467-9477.2007.00176.x

Seo, M. (2011). Beyond coethnic boundaries: Coethnic residential context, communication, and Asian Americans' political participation. *International Journal of Public Opinion Research, 23*(3), 338–360. doi:10.1093/ijpor/edr019

Southern California Association of Governments. (2012). *City of Alhambra community profile.* Retrieved from http://sustain.scag.ca.gov/Documents/Alhambra%20Community%20Profile%20FINAL.pdf

The Pew Research Center. (2013). *The state of the news media 2013: An annual report on American journalism*. Retrieved from http://stateofthemedia.org/

U.S. Census Bureau. (2010). *United States Census 2010*. http://www.census.gov/2010census/

Valente, T. W. (1995). *Network models of the diffusion of innovations*. Cresskill, NJ: Hampton Press.

Waldman, Steven. (2011). *The information needs of communities: The changing media landscape in a broadband age*. Washington, DC: Federal Communications Commission.

Wei, L., & Hindman, D. B. (2011). Does the digital divide matter more? Comparing the effects of new media and old media use on the education-based knowledge gap. *Mass Communication and Society, 14*(2), 216–235. doi:10.1080/15205431003642707

Wilkin, H. A. (2013). Exploring the potential of communication infrastructure theory for informing efforts to reduce health disparities. *Journal of Communication, 63*(1), 181–200. doi:10.1111/jcom.12006

Wilkin, H. A., & Ball-Rokeach, S. J. (2006). Reaching at risk groups: The importance of health storytelling in Los Angeles Latino media. *Journalism, 7*(3), 299–320. doi:10.1177/1464884906065513