Overview of Main Metamorphosis Project Databases
as of Fall 2005

Prepared for the Planning and Development Division
First 5 LA

By

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A Research Partner of First 5 LA

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The Metamorphosis databases were constructed with a rich variety of quantitative and qualitative methods of data collection: telephone surveys, focus group studies, interviews, content analysis, case study analysis, and geo-spatial analysis (see Figure 1).

*Figure 1:* *The Metamorphosis Research Design*
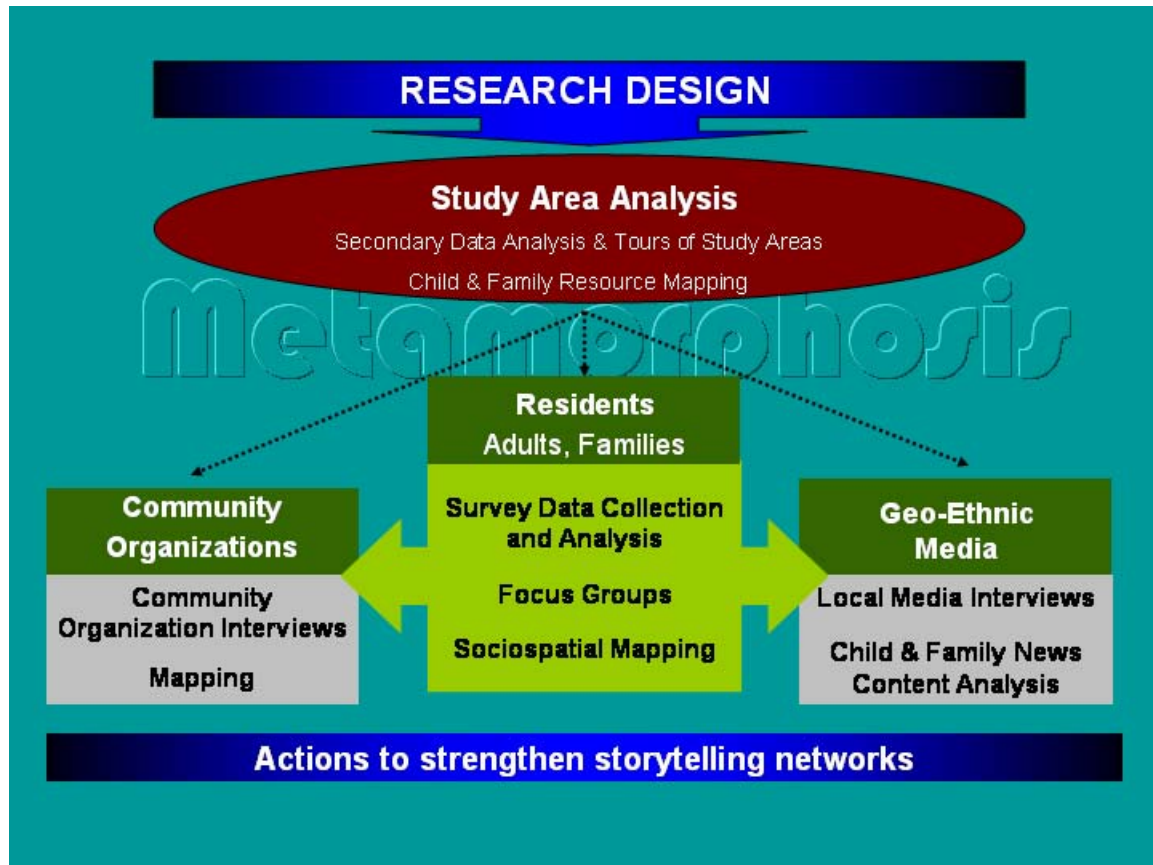
It is easy to "lose sight of the forest for the trees" by over-specification of the possible analyses that may be pursued with this combination of datasets. Thus, we use our primary conceptual tools to guide us in selecting the datasets that we believe to have the widest and deepest applicability to First 5 programs and initiatives.

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Our in-depth datasets are products of inquiry into 10 geo-ethnic study areas in Los Angeles County (see Figure 2).

Figure 2: *Geo-Ethnic Study Areas*
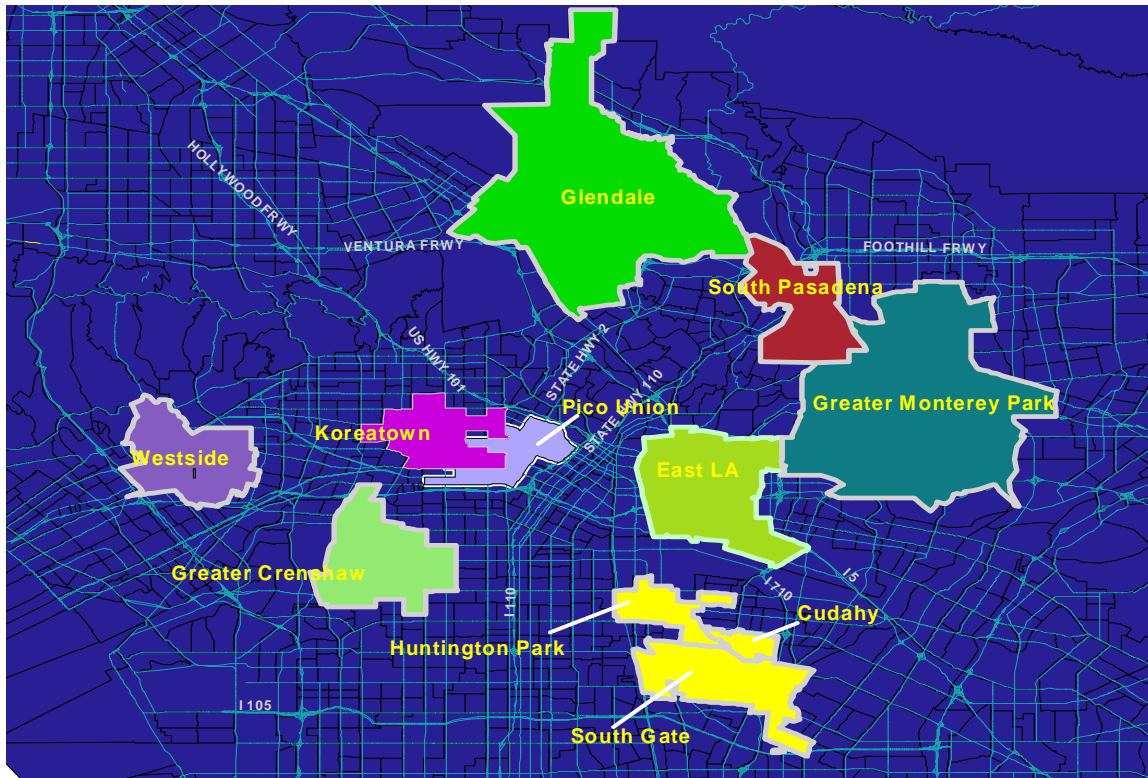
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The ethnic communities we study and engage are:

- African American residents of Greater Crenshaw (N = 252)
- Armenian (N= 211), Latino (N = 159), and Anglo (N = 191) residents of Glendale
- Central American residents of Pico Union (N = 250, 1998; N = 301, 2002)
- Ethnic Chinese residents of Greater Monterey Park/Alhambra from:
    - China (N = 176)
    - Taiwan (N = 72)
    - Hong Kong (N = 48)
    - Other Asian (N=25)
- Korean residents of Koreatown (N = 173)
- Mexican residents:
    - East Los Angeles (N = 250)
    - Huntington Park (N = 115)
    - South Gate (N = 126)
    - Cudahy (N = 197)
- White and largely Jewish residents of the Westside (N = 250)
- White and largely Protestant residents of South Pasadena (N = 251)

The African American and White study samples are long-term residents of the United States, while the Armenian, Central American, Korean, and Mexican study samples include largely first and second-generation immigrants to the United States.

In all instances, we employ the language preferred by participants. To date, we have collected data in the following languages:
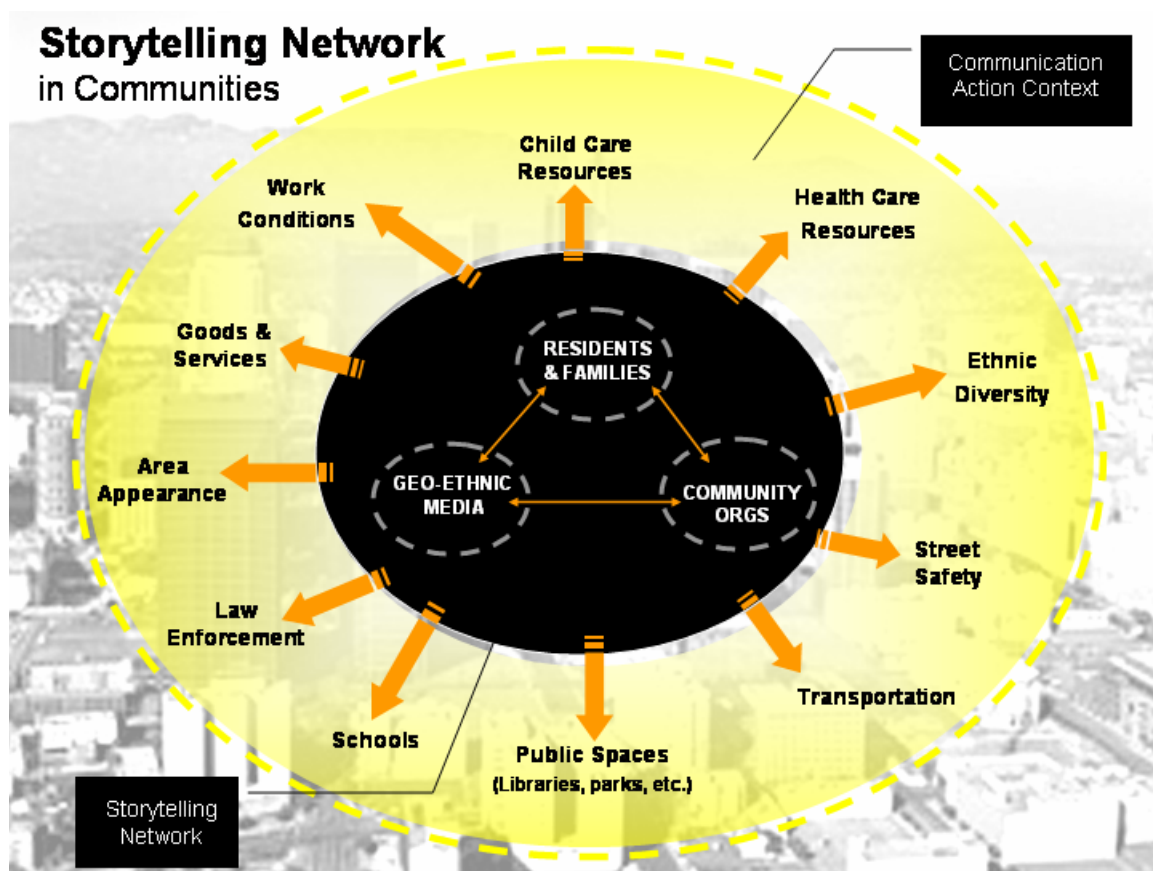
- Armenian
- Cantonese
- English
- Korean
- Mandarin
- Spanish

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The **Communication Infrastructure** perspective guides the Metamorphosis Project research. A communication infrastructure is defined as *a storytelling network set in its communication action context* (see Figure 3).

We organize this overview of our databases around the major actors and elements in the communication infrastructures of our study areas; specifically:

1) The three key storytellers that make up the neighborhood storytelling network
    a) the residents
    b) non-profit/community organizations
    c) geo-ethnic media

2) The characteristics of the *geo-ethnic* residential environments (communication action contexts) in which these storytelling networks operate. Geo-ethnic is a term that we employ to capture the peculiar interaction of ethnicity and place.

Figure 3: *The Communication Infrastructure Model*

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At the time that The Metamorphosis-First 5 LA Research Partnership began in 2002, we altered our telephone survey and focus group procedures to make them more fully responsive to First 5 concerns. While many of the main variables listed in the summary that follows are available for all study samples, those that pertain most directly to family and child issues are available only for the two areas studied since 2002 – the SPA 7 areas of Huntington Park, South Gate and Cudahy and the Pico Union area. We have noted these variables with an asterisk.

The Residents

Major Variable Database from the Telephone Survey

1) Socio-demographic profiles
2) Strength of connection to the neighborhood storytelling network
      a) to other residents
      b) to non-profit/community organizations
      c) to geo-ethnic media
3) Total communication profile
      a) mainstream media
      b) geo-ethnic media
      c) telephone
      d) new communication technologies including the Internet
4) Types of non-profit/community organizations memberships
5) Level of neighborhood belonging
6) Civic participation
7) Perceived collective efficacy
8) Family-child interaction*
9) Mode and location of childcare*
10) Mode and location of healthcare*
11) Availability and Type of Health Insurance for adults and children
12) Reasons for being the neighborhood 5 years from now (NYA – not yet analyzed)
13) Reasons for not being in the neighborhood 5 years from now (NYA)
14) Most frequent areas outside neighborhood traveled to and why (NYA)
15) Areas residents avoid and why (NYA)
16) Utilization of public and commercial spaces in residential area (NYA)
17) Internet Connectedness Index (NYA in First 5 areas)
18) Work conditions (NYA)

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The Residents (continued)

<u>Major Variable Database from the Focus Group Studies</u>

    1) Most important community issues
    2) Most important family issues*
    3) Obstacles to childcare*
    4) Obstacles to healthcare*
    5) Fear and comfort areas of Los Angeles County
    6) Word associations with other Metamorphosis study areas

    Note: In most cases, focus group participants are also telephone respondents.

<u>Major Variable Database from Socio-Spatial Mapping Studies</u>

    1) Fear and comfort map analyses (NYA for First 5 study areas)
    2) Travel patterns in and out of neighborhood (In preparation)

Non-Profit/Community Organizations

<u>Major Databases from the Telephone Survey</u>

1) Lists of different types of organizations identified by respondents

   Respondents to the telephone survey were asked if they belonged to any of 4 different types of organizations:
   a) neighborhood/homeowner
   b) sport/recreational
   c) cultural/ethnic/religious
   d) political/educational

   If they belonged, they were asked to name 2 specific organizations for each type.

2) Extent to which organizational membership is encouraged by geo-ethnic media and vice versa as indicated by responses to the telephone survey

3) Other resident-organization connections (see **The Residents** section, page 8)

<u>Interview Databases (Not yet conducted for First 5 study areas)</u>

On-site interviews were conducted with the executive staff of at least 8 non-profit/community organizations in each study area, 2 per each type of organization. Organizations were selected on the basis of telephone respondents' responses and on the suggestions of other grassroots organizations.

The interviews helped to determine the following:

1) Organizational profile (type, goals, size, resources, member profiles, issue orientation—local, regional, national, age, etc.)
2) Quality of neighborhood storytelling
3) Primary modes of communication with residents
4) Extent of contact/coalition formation with other organizations in the area
5) Major obstacles to attainment of organizational goals
6) Degree of contact with geo-ethnic media

<u>Best Practices Database</u>

Working from the communication infrastructure perspective proposition that non-profit/community organizations are key storytellers of the neighborhood and informed by the on-site organization interviews, a set of best practices was developed and applied to evaluate areas of strength and weakness.

Non-Profit/Community Organizations (continued)

<u>Community Organization Census Database</u>

For each study area, secondary data sources (e.g., *The Rainbow Directory*) were searched to locate non-profit/community organizations in each study area and these entries are combined with the organizations identified by telephone respondents.

Geo-Ethnic Media (Print and Electronic)

Databases From Telephone Survey
    See **The Residents** section (page 8).

Census of Geo-Ethnic Media Available in Study Areas

    Members of the research team go into each study area to pick up copies of print media targeted to the ethnic group we are studying in the area. Many of these media are not listed in major media directories (e.g., freebies and tabloids). We consult directories for electronic media that may be received in a study area.

Media Producer Interviews Database

    To date, telephone interviews have been conducted with the producers of print media in each study area, a total of 156 interviews. The primary types of information that we obtain from these interviews are:

1) Media Profile (type, history, circulation, frequency of publication, readership, staff size, reach, sources of revenue, distribution, subscription base, etc.)
2) Production and editorial goals
3) Commitment to coverage of local or neighborhood news
4) Perceived roles in the community

Content Analysis of Geo-Ethnic Print Media: New Immigrant Areas (In Progress)

    The major variables that will be assessed in this content analysis are:

1) Profile (type, size, topics, sources, significance, and ethnic relevance of news stories, etc)
2) Coverage of local neighborhood news relative to coverage of larger geographic spaces, including the country of origin
3) Health news coverage (extent, type, etc.)
4) Child and domestic abuse (not traditionally associated with health concerns)
5) Thoroughness of coverage and quality of information

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The Neighborhood Storytelling Network

1) The Neighborhood Storytelling Network Indicator (STN)

We have developed a neighborhood storytelling network indicator (STN) that assesses the overall strength of connections between residents, non-profit/community organizations, and geo-ethnic media.

2) Diagnosis of STN strengths and weaknesses
   a) Survey data: direction and intensity of links between storytellers
   b) Interpretation from interview findings
      1. non-profit/community organizations
      2. geo-ethnic media
   c) Historical and demographic knowledge
   d) The communication action context (see below)
3) Outcomes at the community level: Civic
   a) Belonging
   b) Collective efficacy
   c) Civic participation
4) Outcomes at the community level: Family and First 5 children
   a) Metamorphosis indicators of accessibility of family, child and health resources as a function of the community communication infrastructure— storytelling network and the communication action context (see below)
   b) Effective utilization of LA County Department of Health, FANS, and other databases where we can overlay our data with their indicators of family and child well being is planned in future analysis.
5) An evaluation tool for the future: For example, STN increases as a function of First 5 program and initiatives

Communication Action Contexts of Storytelling Networks

<u>Socio-Spatial Mapping</u>

1) Overlay of census and other secondary database for socio-demographic profiles
2) Fear as a constraint on storytelling network development and effectiveness (NYA First 5areas)
   a) do residents fear their own residential area?
   b) do non-residents fear the area?
3) Public spaces, storytelling places (NYA First 5 areas)
4) Residents' travel flows in/out of residential area (NYA)
   a) commercial locations
   b) recreational locations
   c) healthcare*
   d) childcare*
5) Geographic distribution of non-profit/community organizations in relation to
   a) bus routes (NYA)
   b) intensity of fear (NYA)
6) Community technology centers (NYA)

<u>Case Studies</u>

1) Radio Neighborhood Storytellers: A comparative study of one commercial (the Beat) and one public radio station (KPCC) is nearly complete. The central research question is how and why these stations incorporated the role of neighborhood storytellers in their larger program formats.
2) South Gate, A Case of Change through Storytelling Networks: Initial inquiries have been made to lay the groundwork for a study of South Gate's success in increasing its public school resources and in initiating political reform.

<u>Community Technology Center (CTC) Interviews (NYA, First 5 areas)</u>

Community technology centers (N = 28) located in our study areas were identified and interviewed on-site. We view CTCs not only as technology training resources, but also as potential storytellers of the neighborhood.

The major issues addressed in the interviews are:

1) Basic organizational profile (e.g., staff and technology resources)
2) Goals and target groups
3) Degree of integration into the neighborhood storytelling network
   a) links to other CTCs
   b) links to other non-profit/community organizations

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Communication Action Contexts of Storytelling Networks (continued)

<u>Content Analysis of "the Westside" and "South Central LA" as Portrayed in the *Los Angeles Times*</u>

Our study participants tell us that how mainstream media portray their residential areas affects their level of neighborhood pride; particularly when that portrayal is negative. In this sense, mainstream media are part of the communication action context. This content analysis identified profound differences in the portrayal of the White and relatively high socio-economic status Westside and the African American/Latino lower SES South Central LA area. For example, the vast majority of stories about South Central appear in the California (old Metro) section, while stories about the Westside are distributed throughout sections of the paper.

Conclusion: Convergence of Datasets

Each dataset has added value when it is combined with one or more other datasets to afford more textured analyses. For example:

- Telephone surveys have great breadth, but are complemented by the depth of focus group discussion where residents can elaborate upon issues that were raised in the survey;
- Community organization interviews are guided by the responses of survey respondents and by the issues raised in focus groups, thus being able to include community organizations that are important to neighborhood residents but may not be included on official community organization rosters;
- All of these methods in concert afford an in-depth understanding of:
  - Where and why the storytelling network is strong or weak. A strong storytelling network is essential to creating effective reach, outreach, and mobilization of residents, community organizations and geo-ethnic media.
  - How the communication action context can enable or constrain the functioning of an effective storytelling network. Our hope is that residents, community organizations and geo-ethnic media in strong storytelling networks can mobilize to change the communication environment to better serve the residents' needs.

We gain a holistic picture of the grounded communication infrastructure that advantages and/or disadvantages residents and those seeking to make things better.

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