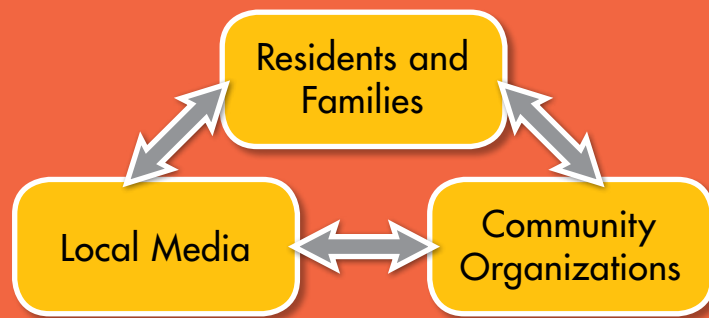


Storytelling Strategies for Reaching Your Target Community

Every community has a *storytelling network* that can help you to reach and serve families and children. You can uncover this storytelling network by learning about its parts: the residents, community organizations, and local media in the community where your target population lives.

The storytelling network is a great diagnostic tool for understanding what is going on in a community. We conceive of a storytelling network as three interrelated nodes, like the diagram below:



This diagram represents the ideal storytelling network. In a community like this:

- Community organizations are connected to local media, and these media provide coverage of community organizations' services and of special events;
- Residents are connected to local media covering news and community information that residents need; and
- Residents are connected with community organizations that provide services residents need and trust.

In Metamorphosis Project research, we have learned from studying 11 major communities in Los Angeles County that *each community has its own distinctive storytelling network*. Although we draw on examples from our research in Los Angeles, we believe that the same principles would apply easily to other urban areas.

As an organization, your challenge is to mobilize the whole storytelling network in a conversation about your issues and initiatives. This is the most cost-effective way to reach residents with information and resources.

But there is no one size that fits all! Customize your efforts to the concrete features of the target community.



How do I discover the storytelling network?

Best Practice: Customize your efforts to the concrete features of the storytelling network in your target community.

Best Practice: Let the residents of your target community direct you to their storytellers. On page 5, we illustrate how this can be done.

You need to be able to answer **THREE KEY QUESTIONS:**

QUESTION 1: Which *media* are most important in the residents' lives — mainstream, local, Internet?

Best Practice: Use the media that your target population use.

For example, new immigrants often rely upon *geo-ethnic* local media; that is, media targeted to an ethnic group and/or a geographic area.

Best Practice: Get to know these media producers and have them get to know you and your organization. This will be easiest with geo-ethnic media that have the same target population as you do.

QUESTION 2: Which *specific community organizations* (religious, sports/recreation, neighborhood, cultural) are most important in residents' lives?

Best Practice: Establish a working relationship with the specific organizations that your target population identifies as most important to them.

QUESTION 3: Which *personal networks* are most important — neighbors, family, friends at work, friends with similar hobbies or interests — to residents?

Best Practice: Think of ways you can reach your target community through these networks — e.g., posting bulletins in a church or at a park.

How can I answer these three questions for my outreach effort to my target community?

Best Practice: Look for a research project that has surveyed your target community and see if it can provide you with answers to the three key questions.

The Metamorphosis Project at USC is an example of a research project that provides answers to these questions for many Los Angeles communities. Please read Metamorphosis Brief #1, "Communication Maps to a Multiethnic Community" available at http://www.metamorph.org/our_research_findings/

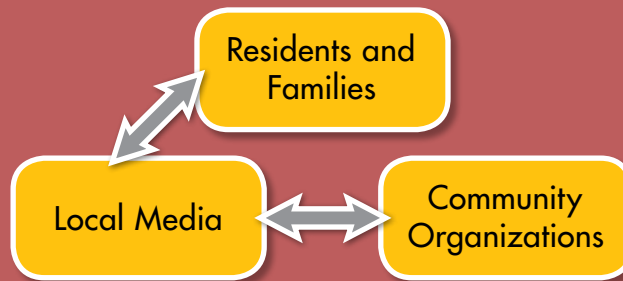
Best Practice: If there is no research project with the answers you need, then you will have to find a way to answer the three key questions with your own resources.

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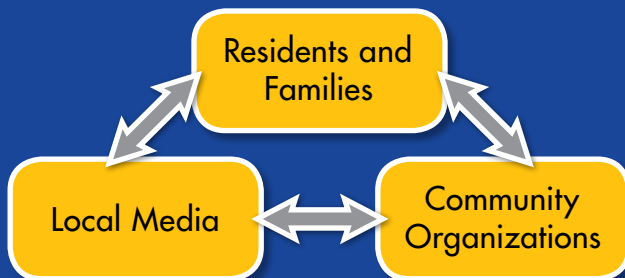


Our 11 study areas in Los Angeles County all have unique characteristics, and the ways of entering each community are different. Here, we highlight

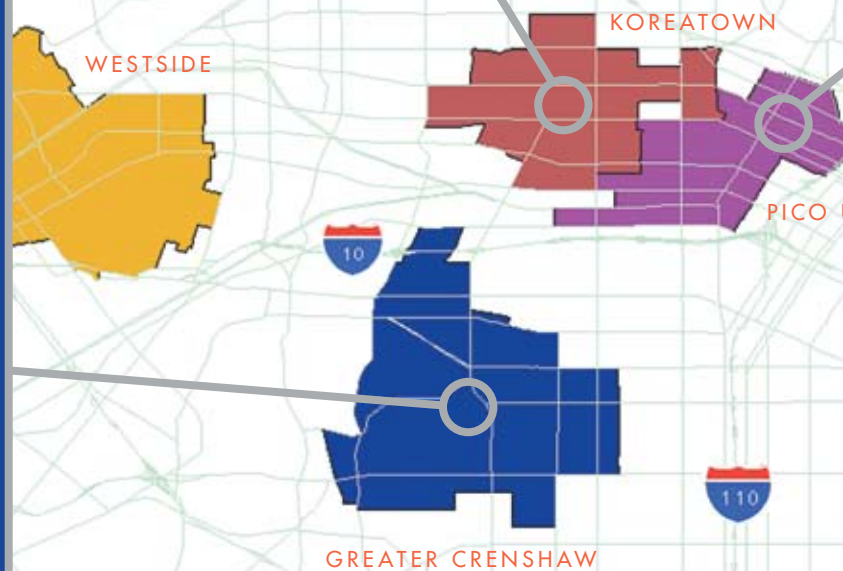
In the Korean-origin community of Koreatown, the local media have good connections to the residents and to community organizations, but the residents and community organizations are not well connected to each other. This means that local media are telling stories about community organizations' activities and services, but that residents may not be utilizing these resources. To increase the effectiveness of provider outreach, the resident-community organization connection would be a good place to focus energy in this community.



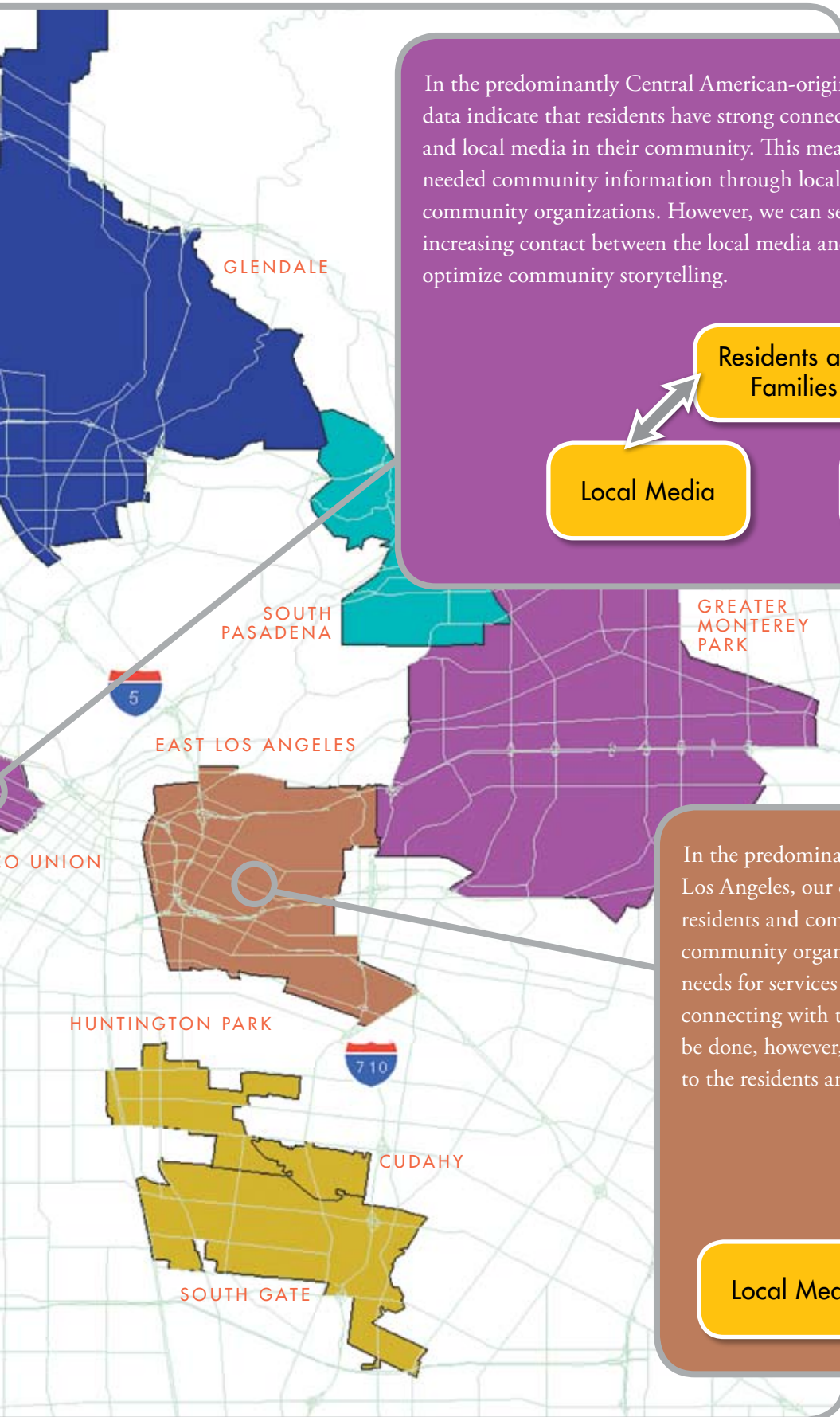
African Americans in Greater Crenshaw have higher levels of community belonging than our other study areas, and their storytelling network gives a clue as to why. As you can see, there are connections between all three nodes of the storytelling network, which would be a great help to a new community organization setting up in the neighborhood.



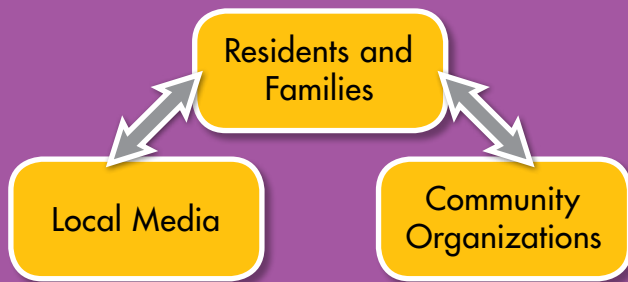
As an example, let's say that local media, such as *The Sentinel* newspaper, report that one of the local churches is giving away turkeys for Thanksgiving. If residents come to the event because they read the story and trust the church as an organization, then this is an example of an integrated storytelling event.



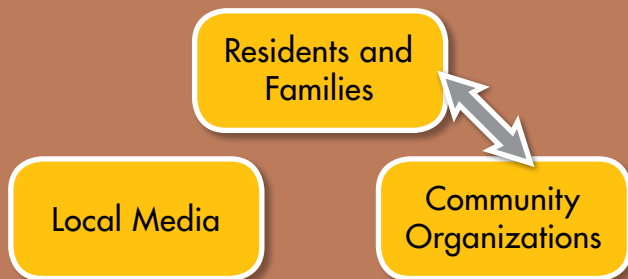
Use storytelling networks, meaning that the challenges for highlight the differences between some of our study areas:



In the predominantly Central American-origin community of Pico Union, our data indicate that residents have strong connections to community organizations and local media in their community. This means that residents are accessing needed community information through local media and services through community organizations. However, we can see that attention should be given to increasing contact between the local media and the community organizations to optimize community storytelling.



In the predominantly Mexican-origin community of East Los Angeles, our data show a strong connection between residents and community organizations. This means that community organizations are responsive to residents' needs for services and resources, and that residents are connecting with those opportunities. There is still work to be done, however, to strengthen local media's connections to the residents and to community organizations.



How to Do Your Own Research on a Limited Budget

An Illustrative Case: *Para Salud and Their 'Eat Lean' Campaign*

Sandra is the executive director of a non-profit organization called Para Salud.

Their goal is to reduce obesity among first and second-generation Central American residents of First Town. They want to launch their Eat Lean campaign, but they have limited financial and staff resources.

Sandra cannot locate prior research on her target population, so she designs a '*learning from the residents*' plan that can be done within her budget.

STEP ONE Finding the target audience:

Para Salud staff go into First Town to locate their "meeting and greeting places."

- Suggested locations include parks, churches, bus stops, grocery stores and libraries, and any other location where residents congregate.

STEP TWO Develop a survey: Sandra and her staff develop a short survey with questions that identify the storytelling network. For example:

- Do you or anyone in your household participate in any clubs or organizations? Can you name them for me? (*Note: these may be religious, cultural, sports/recreation, political, educational, neighborhood watch*)?
- What are the main ways that you find out what is going on in your community? If through media (television, newspaper, radio), are these media geo-ethnic or mainstream? Can you name them?
- How often do you talk to your neighbors? What kinds of things do you discuss most often?

Because Sandra's organization deals with health issues, she might also ask these sorts of questions:

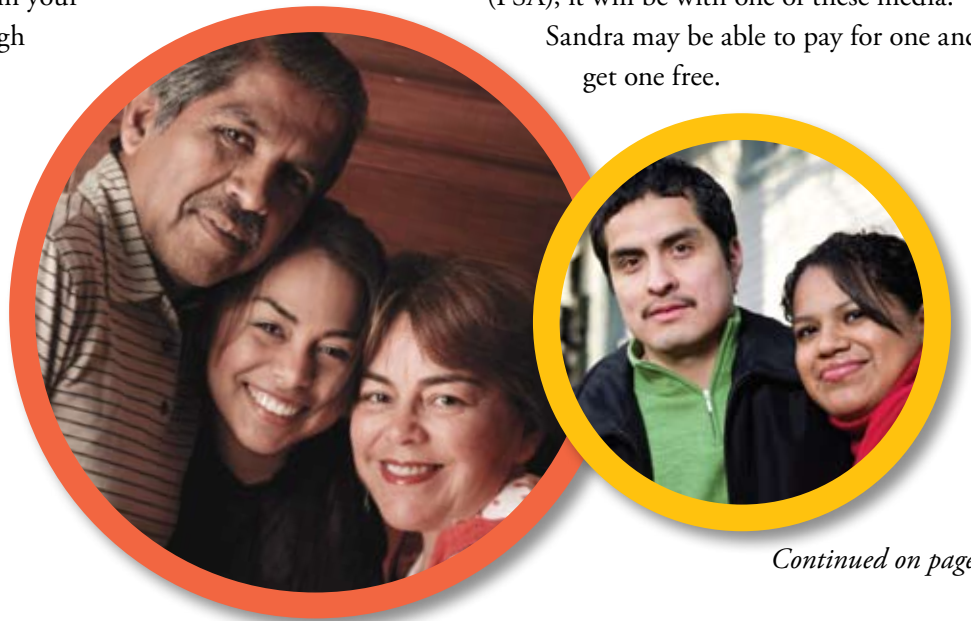
- Thinking specifically about times when you need information or advice about health concerns:
- Are there people in your community that you connect with for information?
- Are there community organizations you connect with?
- What media are most useful to you when you need health information?

STEP THREE Conduct Research: Bilingual staff go to the residents' meeting and greeting places to collect answers to these questions.

STEP FOUR Meeting the Storytellers: Once they have determined how this community gets their information, Sandra and her staff reach out to their storytelling network:

CONTACTING THE MEDIA

- Set up informational meetings with appropriate media outlets to tell them about Para Salud and the Eat Lean campaign. Making personal contacts can pay off. The media may be more receptive to a press release or may recall Sandra's organization when they want a source for a story on obesity.
- If Para Salud places a public service announcement (PSA), it will be with one of these media. Sandra may be able to pay for one and get one free.



Continued on page 6

CONTACTING COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS

- Sandra and her staff meet with community organizations residents identified as important to them. They can interview these service providers to learn lessons about the best ways to connect with residents in this community. These community organizations may also be happy to pass out materials or inform their clients about the Para Salud program.

CONNECTING TO PERSONAL NETWORKS

- Probably the best way to connect with the residents' friends, family, and neighbors is to post bulletins and leave brochures at the residents' meeting and greeting places.
- Sandra and her staff could also plan an event at one of these places.

STEP FIVE **Achieving Results:** See the storytelling network work for you.

If Sandra and her staff succeed:

- The media outlets most appropriate to their target audience will run stories about the Eat Lean campaign and the issues of obesity among Central Americans.
- The media stories will prompt people to talk about obesity, Para Salud, and the Eat Lean program.
- The community organizations that your target population actually connects with will know about Para Salud and they may suggest that their members or clients read the Eat Lean literature you left with them.
- You will have made your Eat Lean campaign visible by posting bulletins or leaving campaign materials in places where your target population meet and greets each other.

You will have met the challenge of mobilizing the whole storytelling network in a conversation about your issues and initiatives.

WHAT IS the Metamorphosis Project?

The Metamorphosis Project was born in 1992, in large part as a result of the uprisings that shook Los Angeles. Dr. Sandra J. Ball-Rokeach, the developer of Metamorphosis, knew that as a communication researcher, she should have something to contribute to policymakers and practitioners trying to bring about social change that enables stronger communities.

The Metamorphosis Project—Transforming the Ties that Bind, was officially launched in 1998 at the Annenberg School for Communication, University of Southern California (USC). Metamorphosis has conducted research on African Americans and Latinos in Greater Crenshaw; Anglos on the Westside and in Pasadena; ethnic Chinese groups in Greater Monterey Park; Koreans in Koreatown; Latinos in East LA, Pico Union, Huntington Park, Cudahy, and Southgate; and Anglos, Latinos, and Armenians in Glendale.

Metamorphosis



For more information on what Metamorphosis has been doing and the projects we are currently engaged in, please visit our Web site:
<http://www.metamorph.org>.

If you have questions or comments, please contact
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