

A Manhattan information needs snapshot

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A REPORT

submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree

MASTER OF SCIENCE

A.Q. Miller School of Media and Communication
College of Arts and Sciences

KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY
Manhattan, Kansas

2023

Approved by:

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Executive Summary

The author conducted the following information ecosystem snapshot in the City of Manhattan, Kansas over a nearly 14-month period starting in Spring 2021 and concluding in Summer 2022. The aim was to get a preliminary understanding of how well local news and information meets residents of African, Asian, and Hispanic/Latin descent where they are; find out how well community participants believed local storytellers and information sources served their interests; whether they believed their communities were understood and reflected in the stories and images of Manhattan as presented by local communicators; and in what ways they believed local news and information flows could be improved in order to better serve Manhattan in its entirety.

This qualitative, exploratory study is informed by an understanding of storytelling as central to health and thriving communities. Community stories help people cultivate identity and a sense of place or community (Anderson, 1991), with access to information and networks of discourse serving to empower individuals and communities to take collective action in their own interest as well as uplift one another in times of need. The study employs Communication Infrastructure Theory as its guiding lens (Ball-Rokeach, Kim & Matei, 2001), positing that communities are built around systems of communication that are made up of varying levels of storytelling networks within a unique local infrastructure that directly impacts access to and interplay between networks. This interplays well with the Listening Post Collective's concept of an information ecosystem, and the study further made use of the LPC Playbook of strategies (Listening Post Collective) for community assessment to help inform its methods of engagement and outreach for this snapshot report.

While Manhattan has fared better than many communities in the nation, with more than a fourth of U.S. newspapers going defunct since 2005 (Abernathy et al., 2022), findings from the 2020 Riley County Community Needs Assessment (Gregory et al., 2020) indicating a need for better access to community information and news as well as changing racial and ethnic demographics over the last 10 years locally (U.S. Census Bureau, 2021a) warrants inquiry into how well Manhattan's storytellers are prepared to serve its proportionally increasing historical minority populations. To begin to get an answer to that question, the study sought a purposive sample of residents of African, Asian, and Hispanic/Latin descent to share their perspective on how well they've done thus far. The author spoke with 9 participants through 8 separate interviews – each coming from different backgrounds, working, or leading in different fields, and representing different segments of their respective communities. Participant responses were then analyzed for emergent themes in addition to recommendations for improvement. Some highlights:

Residents of African, Asian, and Hispanic/Latin descent face barriers in Manhattan's storytelling networks. Conversations raised a trio of different barrier subthemes. Participants of Chinese and Hispanic/Latin descent noted that there can be varied access to translated information among local government and community service organizations in Manhattan, effectively closing a door to those residents who only speak languages other than English or speak those languages far better than they do English. Social or interpersonal division was also noted across demographic groups. African American as well as Hispanic/Latin participants told the author about a lack of connective tissue in their communities outside of Kansas State University. Regional and class differences also proved potential sources of

interpersonal conflict, which a participant of Chinese descent says impacted her engagement and information sharing in local storytelling networks.

Reputation matters. The stories told by local journalistic organizations as well as the accuracy of those stories are remembered by people in the community. When an error is made, it can be hard to move past. Additionally, local media at times has cultivated a reputation for sensation and a focus on issues and voices that often does not include Manhattan's historical minority communities.

Low investment and a lack of understanding is how participants described Manhattan storytellers' performance in communicating with the city's minority populaces. Lack of coverage as well as episodic, parachute or shallow reporting was how local news was described to the author across demographics. The same was said for government and community organization outreach, which to varying degrees were described as missing the mark.

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Acknowledgements

First, my deepest thanks to the participants whose words made this report. Without their time commitment, honest input, and open conversation none of this project would have been possible. Thank you to Dr. Mwangi, Dr. Smethers and Dr. Shaffer for their patient guidance and encouragement amid difficult times. Further thanks to Dr. Cozma for her work to foster a welcoming environment for the cohort.

Thanks to my cohort for their friendship, companionship, and support through the years and for the continued bonds that tie us together. Thanks to Dr. Punnett for his personal commitment to my professional development and for his unyielding willingness to forward me opportunities and ideas. Thanks to Dr. Hallaq and Mr. Smith for their mentorship and friendship within the walls of Dole Hall. And thank you to all my students and professors, meeting you made this experience what it was.

Thank you to my partner, Dr. Lauren White, for her loving presence and understanding. Nothing I do would be possible without you. Thank you to my mom and dad, my brother, and all my family – though from afar, your support was never in question. Thank you to my cats for being my furry friends and lap-warmer during long work sessions. And thank you to all my friends back home in California. Finally, honor to those who wander and to those who seek. For it is the quest for understanding that makes life, *life*.

Introduction

Manhattan, Kansas, in 2020 was the ninth most populous city in the State (*Kansas cities*) with a population of 55,045 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2021a), up from 52,281 recorded 10 years prior. The city is relatively similar to Kansas overall in terms of demographics, though not identical. Manhattan and Kansas are majority White, making up 76.9 percent of the city's overall population. Including those White identifying residents of Hispanic/Latin descent, that number surpasses 81 percent of the city population. Hispanic/Latin residents make up the next largest ethnic population at 6.8 percent of the city, with 4.5 percent of the city identifying as being of White Hispanic/Latin descent. Additionally, 1.15 percent of Manhattan residents identified as Hispanic/Latin and of two or more races, nearly 0.9 percent of Manhattan residents as Hispanic/Latin of some other race, 0.18 percent as Hispanic/Latin of Asian descent, and just 0.08 percent of Manhattan residents identifying as Afro-Hispanic/Latin descent.

Residents of Asian descent make up 5.7 percent of Manhattan residents, or 5.9 percent including those of Hispanic/Latin heritage, while Manhattan residents of Black or African descent constitute 5.5 percent of the city or 5.6 percent when including Afro-Latin residents. Additionally, multi-racial residents totaled 4.19 percent of residents or 5.35 percent when including those of Hispanic/Latin descent. All other census groups amounted to less than half a percent of the city population and included fewer than 200 residents per racial or ethnic group as of 2020.

Since 2010, these population groups have seen varying levels of growth in relation to the non-Hispanic White majority in Manhattan – which was the only group that saw its population decrease among counted city residents from 43,645 residents (U.S. Census Bureau, 2021b) to 42,357 as of 2020. The Hispanic/Latin populace saw the largest bump, growing from 3,053

residents or 5.8 percent of the city in 2010 to 3,766 residents or 6.8 percent of the city in 2020.

The Asian-only resident population saw its numbers increase from 2,689 people or 5.1 percent of the city in 2010 to 3,151 people or 5.7 percent of the city in 2020. The non-Hispanic Black or African American population also saw a rise from its 2,886 residents in 2010 to 3,046 residents in 2020 – proportionally flat at around 5.5 percent of Manhattan’s overall population.

The city is influenced by the presence of the nearby U.S. Army base Fort Riley as well as institutions of higher learning including Kansas State University Manhattan Area Technical College and Manhattan Christian College – not to mention numerous nearby community colleges within the region. The median age in the city in 2020 was 24.6 years old, up about a year from 2010. Manhattan also reports a median household income of nearly \$51,000 per year as well as a 26.9 percent poverty rate; that’s compared to a statewide median household income of more than \$61,000 per year and a 11.7 percent poverty rate. Homeownership in Manhattan also lagged behind state figures, in 2020 coming in at a 39.7 percent rate compared with Kansas’ 66.2 percent rate.

Manhattan is also far from a news desert. While communities across the U.S., especially those in rural areas, are seeing their local newspapers disappear (Abernathy et al., 2022) that is not the case here. Manhattan is a relative media hub in the region, with multiple journalistic organizations calling the city home as well as a multitude of government and community service organizations containing public engagement arms. Newspaper coverage is provided by the Manhattan Mercury, with radio broadcast news-talk provided by Manhattan Broadcasting Company’s News Radio KMAN, both joined in serving the city and surrounding region with digital news online by Eagle Communication’s Little Apple Post and K-State student-run media in the Collegian Newspaper, Channel 8 News as well as Wildcat 91.9. Manhattan also receives

attention from regional television stations and is rife with specialty newsletters, email listservs, and social media groups that help serve up community information on a variety of subjects.

As the picture of the Manhattan community changes, this study sought to take a preliminary snapshot of Manhattan's storytelling networks and communication infrastructure and learn how well they serve the city's growing population of residents of African, Asian, and Hispanic/Latin descent. Leaning on communication infrastructure theory (Kim & Ball-Rokeach, 2006), which posits the existence of unique multi-level communication infrastructures – referred to as storytelling networks that are made up of community organizations, local and geo-ethnic media and neighborhood residents – this report will assess the local communication infrastructure and employ strategies developed for the Listening Post Collective's information ecosystem assessments (Hardman, 2015). The goal is to identify which sources of community information are most salient among Manhattan's historical minority populaces and begin to assess how well they serve these communities. The following section lays out the study's theoretical foundations in CIT before moving into an explanation of the methods employed in conducting the study. Findings are then reported and recommendations for potential improvements and changes sourced from resident participants.

Background

Storytelling serves a foundational purpose in a community. Scholars like Bruner (1991) argue the narrative serves as the primary form in which people organize experience and memory, with other researchers exploring the role the construction and sharing of personal narratives plays in the forming of identity (Shaw, 1997). Collective storytelling from the local to the national scale fosters the formation of ‘imagined’ communities centered around things such as shared language, history, or place of origin among others (Anderson, 1991). Jurgen Habermas (1987) describes society as derived of two parts – made up of the ‘system,’ entities making up market and government structures, and the ‘lifeworld,’ a web of relationships and social networks situated in a particular cultural context that’s maintained through communicative action or sharing narratives in mutual understanding. He posits storytelling as such “serves to transmit and renew cultural knowledge; under the aspect of coordinating action, it serves social integration and the establishment of solidarity,” (p. 137).

It’s in this grounding that CIT is situated. The theory identifies a community’s communication infrastructure as “the basic communication system relied upon by a community for the information needed in residents’ everyday lives,” (Wilkin & Ball-Rokeach, 2006, p. 303). These are the discourse networks and resources around which a community is built (Kim & Ball-Rokeach, 2006). More specifically, a community’s communication infrastructure by definition contains “a storytelling system set in its communication action context,” (Ball-Rokeach, Kim & Matei, 2001, p. 396). CIT also refers to those storytelling systems as neighborhood storytelling networks (NSN) which are further divided into micro and meso-levels, with the theory acknowledging though not incorporating into the scope of the NSN macro-level storytelling agents typically focused on non-local stories or those agents with fewer direct local ties. Instead,

CIT centers micro and meso-level agents for researchers to examine their interaction in a specific local context. Micro-level agents refer to local residents sharing information about their community among their networks of neighbors, friends and family. This generally refers to interpersonal discourse in a community and can include conversations from the mundane to the political. Meso-level agents are those local and geo-ethnic media and other community organizations serving information to a specific geographic or identity-based community. This includes traditional media like your local newspaper or broadcast station, as well as digitally native publications, newsletters and other community organizations or non-profits that act in a storytelling role. Scholars have argued the ideal NSN is one that is highly integrated, meaning there exists a healthy interaction between the different storytelling levels with each having influence on one another. However, if there's disintegrating factors or meso-level storytelling agents are more focused on what's happening outside of the community than within it then "the potentially dynamic relation between local media and residents as neighborhood storytellers cannot be realized," (Kim & Ball-Rokeach, 2006, p. 181). That poses a barrier to community-focused conversation by local residents that can foster the type of coordination, community building and understanding envisioned by Habermas.

There are a variety of factors in a community that can hinder NSN integration, and CIT positions the community NSN in something called the communication action context or CAC (Ball-Rokeach, Kim & Matei, 2001). Derived from yet differing from its use by Habermas (1984), this can be understood as the structural conditions in which storytelling networks are situated – be they the physical condition of a community, its economic status, the types and breadth of cultural and social organizations, crime rates, internet infrastructure and level of adoption, access to quality schools and public spaces and beyond. These variables all play a

potential role in fostering or hindering the community’s NSN through how they impact the ability of community members to, for example, engage in discourse or stay up to date on the latest update by local information brokers and storytellers. Past research has referred to CAC as open or closed, depending on their level of integration (Ball-Rokeach, Kim & Matei, 2001). When the CAC trends toward the open side of the spectrum and the NSN is well-integrated, communities are more civically engaged and have a greater sense of neighborhood belonging (Ball-Rokeach, Kim & Matei, 2001; Kim & Ball-Rokeach, 2006) with access to communication resources also argued to play a role in facilitating community health awareness and improving outcomes as well (Wilkin & Ball-Rokeach, 2006; Kim et al., 2011). And as identified in those two Los Angeles based studies in health communication, the gaps or disintegrating factors in a community NSN can vary across different cultural or ethnic communities.

Figure 1. Communication infrastructure theory theoretical model (from [University of Southern California Annenberg School for Communication Metamorphosis Project](#))



Considering the identified benefits of integrated connection to neighborhood storytelling networks (or ICSN), it’s important to note that not all populations have that in their communities.

Pew Research in 2020 (Gottfried & Barthel) reported that 59 percent of African American, Hispanic/Latin and White respondents to a national poll believed news media did not understand them – but reasons for those feelings differed by demographic. Of those reporting misunderstanding by the media, African American respondents were more likely to perceive that misunderstanding as stemming from race or personal characteristics (34 percent). Hispanic/Latin respondents were more likely as a group to feel personal interests were misunderstood by the media (26 percent). White Americans were more focused on a perceived political disconnect (39 percent). Not included in Pew’s study, Cropp (2003) notes underrepresentation of Asian Americans in U.S. media and news coverage is commonplace. Oh and Katz (2009) explored whether that’s rectified in communities with larger Asian populations – finding evidence that the frequency of news coverage of Asian Americans did rise in those locales, though did not feature significantly less reliance on stereotypes and in some cases was found to employ more stereotyped coverage of Asian residents as “foreign and as a threat,” (Oh & Katz, 2009, p. 235). These characterizations stalk historical minority populations in media coverage. A study by Chiricos and Escholz (2002) into local television news coverage in Orlando, Florida found that while African Americans were not overrepresented in the media as crime suspects relative to their population and the Hispanic/Latin population was only slightly so, when they were represented both demographics were more likely to be associated with violent crimes – with Hispanic/Latin populations most overrepresented. Past research has also found African Americans in violent crime news coverage overrepresented by 14 percent compared to actual crime statistics (Gilliam et al., 1996).

Scholars have presented numerous causes for these findings. Romer, Jamieson and deCoteau (1998) argue the largely White owned mass communication networks enable them the power to

influence coverage, present White people in positive lights while blaming historical minority populations for societal ills. Others argue news directors and advertisers believe the approach to coverage appeals to their largely White audiences, adding an economic incentive to the practice (Heider, 2000). This is supported by Gentzkow and Shapiro's (2006) findings that media may slant coverage to fit the prior beliefs of their communities in hopes of achieving higher profit. Heider, though, speculates that advertisers and news directors may be incognizant of the biases influencing their coverage decisions. Even if such coverage decisions may be unconscious, the repercussions of their choices are salient. Majority group members often do not interact with minority group members frequently, leaving them to rely on indirect information sources including news reports to build opinions of minorities (Meeusen & Jacobs, 2017). This has been found to increase public hostility toward racial minority groups (Chiricos & Eschholz, 2002; Dixon & Linz, 2000; Entman, 1992; Russell, 1998). And further, it provides a barrier for historical minority populations to engage with local media sources. This is exemplified in Awad's (2011) study into Hispanic/Latin perception of the Mercury News in San Jose, California. Even though the paper has an overt commitment to diversity within its staff dating back decades, the local Hispanic/Latin populace recalls a time before that initiative and continued to perceive coverage to be mistreating the community and opposing its interests – disjoining a possible connection that could strengthen San Jose's neighborhood storytelling network and community.

Though much attention is paid to news media, this study seeks to explore both local perceptions of journalistic communicators as well as storytelling agents and information brokers more broadly from those community organizations and agencies identified as potentially influential within CIT literature (Ball-Rokeach, Kim & Matei, 2001; Kim & Ball-Rokeach, 2006;

Lin & Song, 2006; Wilkin & Ball-Rokeach, 2006; Kim et al., 2011). As such the author centers the perspectives of historical minorities in a preliminary examination of Manhattan's storytelling networks, taking a high-level snapshot of the local information ecosystem with a focus on residents of African, Asian, and Hispanic/Latin descent. The goal of this research is to identify the organizations and individuals that serve as storytellers for Manhattan's historical minority communities, better understand how members of these communities perceive the quality of their services and begin to assess where gaps exist and how they may be addressed. This set of four overarching research questions guided this study.

RQ1: What individuals or organizations make up communication infrastructure among Manhattan's three largest historical minority census groups (African American, Hispanic/Latin American, and Asian residents)?

RQ2: What is the perception of the representation of Manhattan's historical minority communities' interests in coverage by local storytellers?

RQ3: Are storytelling networks among Manhattan's three largest historical minority census groups integrated?

RQ4: What improvements to communication infrastructure in Manhattan's historical minority community do members believe will improve integration and information access?

Methodology

To begin to better understand how information and news flows in Manhattan’s populations of African, Asian, and Hispanic/Latin descent, starting in 2021 the author engaged in an adaptation of the Listening Post Collective’s Information Ecosystem Assessment (Poole & DeVigal, 2018; Henry & Hardman, 2019; Green-Barber & Stonebraker, 2021). The Listening Post Collective was launched in 2013, a community-focused media project of international NGO Internews that provides strategies and support for fostering more healthy media ecosystems. While LPO holds a largely U.S. footprint, Internews has conducted assessments globally in collaboration with various local community partners to examine place-based communication networks as well as the community’s trust in them to improve connectivity and collective efficacy – often in underserved areas.

This study was inspired by 2018 and 2019 applications of the method in La Pine, Oregon (Poole & DeVigal, 2018) and Fresno, California (Henry & Hardman, 2019) and followed the LPC Playbook, as published on both LPC and Internews’ website (Listening Post Collective), after an early-stage engagement on the process with U.S. Programs Director Caroline Powers. The playbook includes a toolbox of recommendations on approaching the project as well as a set of seven strategies geared toward conducting a study as well as following up the research with content production to meet emergent information wants, needs and gaps identified through the process. The study was very much impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic and the approach was modified and restricted in the interest of public safety as well as considering reduced public engagement. As such, this study homed in on the initial two strategies listed in the playbook and focused on qualitative interviews and focus groups with leaders and professionals within Manhattan’s populations of African, Asian, and Hispanic/Latin descent. While such data cannot

be said to be a conclusive or generalizable overview of all Black, Indigenous, and Persons of Color living in Manhattan, the public positioning of participants gives them a unique snapshot and first look into local storytelling networks and provides rich insights on its performance in serving those outside the local White majority.

The approach to the assessment was largely exploratory. Unlike conclusive studies, which often identify final or authoritative solutions to extant research problems, exploratory studies seek to better understand various causes and contexts as well as potential solutions to a specific problem (Sandhursen, 2000). Exploratory researchers are encouraged to be flexible and open to change as emergent ideas and information arise (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2012), utilizing unstructured interviews as their primary mode of data collection. Receiving a couple rounds of approval from Kansas State University's Institutional Review Board, a wide corpus of residents of African, Asian, and Hispanic/Latin descent were invited to participate in an interview on the topic. The researcher also digitally reached out to every listed campus-based multicultural organization that served these populations to make them aware of and invite them to engage with the project. The study purposively sampled potential participants based on ethnic identity and their roles in various community organizations, agencies, and companies, positioning them prominently in Manhattan's storytelling networks (Kim & Ball-Rokeach, 2006) or giving them a critical vantage point from which it may be assessed. Participants also provided recommendations for additional potential participants at the time of their interviews.

Ultimately, 9 individuals participated in 8 separate, formal semi-structured interviews conducted between April 21, 2021, and July 13, 2022 – three of whom were of Asian descent, four of African descent, and two of Hispanic/Latin descent. Participants also represented a swath of life stages and different professions, from business owners and lawyers to those involved in

government and social services as well as a K-State student and community advocate.

Identifying information was removed from stored interview data as well as from this final report to afford for full honesty and reflection by participants. Due to the pandemic, the bulk of these conversations occurred remotely and via Zoom Video Conferencing. Only two of the sessions near the end of the data collection period were conducted in-person out of caution. Participants were asked a series of interview queries adapted from those recommended by the Listening Post Collective though interviewees had the freedom to discuss any topic they desired to raise during the meeting. Conversation length varied by participant, with the shortest interview lasting about half an hour and the longest surpassing an hour and a half. Participants spoke with researchers during that time about how they pick up local news and information as well as how well they trust in local storytellers, whether they encounter barriers to those sources, and what recommendations they believe could better integrate the local storytelling networks better with residents of African, Asian, and/or Hispanic/Latin descent. Audio recordings of all interviews were processed through an audio transcription service, used for data analysis in tandem with audio data. Interview transcripts and audio data were analyzed through exploratory thematic analysis (Guest, MacQueen & Namey, 2012). This approach follows participant responses in driving analysis rather than a researcher identified hypothesis. Following inductive coding, exploratory thematic analysis categorizes participants' response data to identify notable patterns and, thus, themes. In context, each of the interview transcripts was annotated with emergent keywords and phrases following repeated readings and review of the audio. Each interview's memos were then cross compared, with commonalities highlighted and consolidated into a roundup of notable media and information networks as well as a set of four emergent themes across the three demographics of focus.

Findings

Storytellers: Sources and platforms

To address RQ1, participants were asked to identify where they hear about things going on in their respective personal networks and communities and social media proved ubiquitous among all participants. While not all participants placed the same onus on it, social media still played a part in how they stayed informed. A roundup of noted sources includes some of the largest social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. The largest differences emerged by age group rather than demographic, with the three youngest participants (two of whom were of Asian descent while another was of Hispanic/Latin descent) noting social and online communication as the primary way they hear about news or other happenings among the different storytelling networks that make up Manhattan's infrastructure.

- *“I get most of my information from social media... Whatever article it is, it's not from the Manhattan Mercury themselves, it's usually shared. So the Manhattan Mercury posts it, and then it's re-shared by someone I trust.”*
- *“If anything happens in Manhattan, I find it out from social media. Somebody that I know or will share something from the Manhattan Mercury or KSNT if they have reported on it. And sometimes I follow these news agencies on social media as well.”*
- *“There's a World News App that I have, and it has I want to say [...] about eight channels on it that just goes through-out different states or different areas of the country. So, you could select which region you want to watch. I'm constantly looking to see what's going on in different states, different countries, everything.”*

Groups on Facebook were also noted in multiple interviews. The group “EAT. DRINK. SHOP. MANHATTAN” was noted as an effective way to share information locally. As of October, the group boasts 13,000 members. Also raised was the “Manhattan Area Buy/Sell/Trade” group, as well including 13,000 members, while one participant says the “Manhattan Kansas Police Scanners” is a place they frequently go to learn about happenings in the community with a reported 12,000-member count. Additional notable groups include “You Know You’re From Manhattan If...”, a group with membership surpassing 20,000, as well as the 5,000-member strong “Manhattan, KS-The Little Apple.” Collectively, these groups serve as numerous aggregators of information on Manhattan-area news, crime, events, businesses, services, issues, and complaints - digital water coolers in the proverbial community breakroom. Though multiple participants told the author they keep sources such as those groups or social media at arm’s length.

- *“I am not a member of those groups. Even if I am, I don't follow them because they're not always from Manhattan and they're just, they don't have all the information and most of the information is not fact based.”*
- *“I don't like algorithms following me on some of that stuff, because then they continue to ping you forever... I try to stay away from Facebook.”*

Outside of those three social media platforms mentioned by multiple participants, there were also a few platforms noted each by just one participant. The youngest participant also mentioned Snapchat as a primary source of local information. A participant of Indian descent mentioned that the chatting application *WhatsApp* served as an important channel of communication in the Indian community in Manhattan, while a participant of Chinese descent mentioned that a portion

of Manhattan's Chinese-language speaking population has a notable presence on *WeChat*, specifically in a group for Chinese professionals generally drawing members from the Kansas State University faculty. Though not a group, the "Junction City-Geary County Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Committee" Facebook page was also pointed to as a valuable communicator on social media by one participant from the African American populace.

Legacy media is also prominent across demographics, with most participants reporting they are tuned into local news organizations in Manhattan – even if through their social media accounts. The Manhattan Mercury, the local paper-of-record, and News Radio KMAN, broadcasting on AM/FM/online, were explicitly mentioned in most conversations as sources participants looked to for local information. One resident told the researcher *"I wake up with the radio and I end my day with the newspaper."* Another, though, says she's not in the habit of listening to radio outside of the car making KMAN not a regular part of her news agenda. *"For me, it would be the Manhattan Mercury, [...] and usually there is a picture; and then that's how for, even me, to know that it is an African American that was involved in something."* Less prominently mentioned was the Manhattan Free Press, a free publication that reports a circulation of 2,000. Student media at Kansas State University was noted by a couple participants, specifically the K-State Collegian. *"I personally haven't seen, apart from the Kansas State Collegian, I haven't seen anyone else come attend Indian events or publish about it the next day in the news,"* one resident told the researcher in 2021. Not mentioned though of note is the presence of Eagle Communications' Little Apple Post. Their reporter Becky Goff was noted as an important source of local information prior to her transition to the Post from the Topeka-based TV station WIBW. They and competitor KSNT were raised in a few interviews as staples of the local news diet. *"I love watching TV news for some reason. I've always been that*

way. *My father used to do it growing up – we get home from work, and he turns on the news – so it's just become a habit for me.*” One participant told the author she avoids local news sources, instead preferring regional or national sources such as those associated with National Public Radio (which broadcasts under Kansas Public Radio in Manhattan). *“I don't read Manhattan Mercury, because sometimes I feel like it's not necessarily giving information, it's AP so I could pick up AP anywhere.”* One resident told the researcher they stay apprised of work by the Community Voice out of Wichita, a multi-platform publication with a focus on the Kansas African American populace. At the national level, sources noted included CNN and MSNBC, the Washington Post and New York Times. International newspapers also play an important role for those who have moved to Manhattan for work or education in keeping them informed of issues that matter to them and their families – even from afar.

Every participant also noted how central interpersonal communication was to stay informed. Especially amid the pandemic prior to the public availability of vaccines, a significant amount of that interaction was occurring digitally. *“We've been Zooming a lot,”* says one participant who had really taken to video conferencing. Other residents say interactions through work are a notable way they receive and pass on news and information. *“If I have clients that share that information with me, that's another other way that I'll learn things.”* Those involved in local organizations and committees around the community and campus also say those connections ensure they hear about important issues or controversies quickly. *“Being in the Manhattan DEI Committee, connected with a lot of people in the community, word of mouth spreads fast. So, there would be some incident happening and we'll immediately get a text message about it.”* Multiple African American residents told the author the Douglass Community Center provides a key link to community information as well. *“I usually drop a flier down to Douglass Center,”*

one participant says about advertising local events. Additionally, area religious institutions should be considered when thinking about existing centers of communication in Manhattan's African American populace. "*Mount Zion and Pilgrim [Baptist Church] and Bethel [AME Church] on Yuma Street*" were noted alongside Fellowship Temple and Agape Family Church as historically serving as storytellers for and to the African American community. Mama Fang's International Market serves the Asian community broadly with a host of posted fliers and information, alongside Yi's Oriental Market. Additionally, conversations via telephone remain a mainstay for keeping up channels of community and communication among Indian residents. "*Most of us, we call. It's rude to just send an email. They do send emails and e-invites, but most often you have to make a phone call or invite them personally.*" Though universally valued, factors hindering interpersonal communication were also noted and will be further explored in the section on emergent themes.

Theme 1 - Barriers

It became apparent through conversations that there exist numerous barriers in Manhattan's storytelling networks, with language and interpersonal barriers emerging as sub-themes. The following findings will address RQ2 and RQ3.

Language

Numerous participants spoke to the researcher about the lack of access to information in languages other than English as a significant barrier. There are no existing news sources that consistently serve the local area with coverage outside of English. The issue was highlighted by both participants of Hispanic/Latin descent, who could think of no community-based or

government organizations that consistently provide bilingual information. *“There's also a lot of people that only speak Spanish or that speak Spanish significantly better than they speak English, and I don't know of any place that provides information in Spanish to local community members,”* one Latina resident told us. In addition to making access to financial resources and services, another Latino resident tells the author he believes it dissuades some residents from seeking assistance altogether in some cases. *“That's probably a part of the reason why that's such a big problem, because why am I going to go – if I'm Spanish speaking – why am I going to go waste my time trying to ask for help if 99 percent of the population doesn't understand me?”* Participants also say the quality of interpreter services can be hit or miss; in the rare places they are provided. *“Whether it's translating some of our documents, having somebody who speaks Spanish once in a while, maybe even closed captioning most of our things – whatever it is, we have not done an adequate job and we have a long, long, long way to go.”*

A resident of Chinese descent raised similar concerns. *“I think that this community has failed in large part in making sure that people [are informed], especially when it comes to very crucial information like health, like public safety and even government.”* Ascension Via Christi Hospital, Stormont Vail, as well as the Riley County Police Department were highlighted as those showing initiative in providing documentation in multiple languages as well as interpreter services, but even with interpretation there still remains a fear that information may get lost in translation. *“These services are available through phone, so [...] you can't see how attentive they are. You can't see what the reaction is. And so, I think even though these services are available through phone, [...] I would say that the trustworthiness of it is pretty low.”* When it came to government communication, she said the effort to translate information into Mandarin or other Asian languages appeared non-existent. *“The Riley County Health Department does try to*

translate documents and I've seen COVID information in Spanish, but it's not consistent.” She pointed to this lack of accessible communication as one impetus for people choosing to leave the city, noting it hinders networking and the ability to access wealth-building resources. “I've had people say, ‘I would love to open up a Vietnamese restaurant here,’ but I could clearly tell that English is their second language and they say no; because they don't feel like there's a community here that would support them.”

Interpersonal

Social or interpersonal division was also noted to pose barriers across demographics in Manhattan. *“People want to say ‘oh, people just don't want to help their self’ and stuff like that – people aren't given the opportunity because they're not at the table when those opportunities are happening,”* one African American resident tells us. She pointed to what she called a ‘cliquish’ nature to Manhattan, in which who you know matters. *“You're not on the golf course with so and so who's making the decisions, if so and so is not your investment person or your banker – friend – they're not having that conversation with you.”* A Latino resident echoed that sentiment, saying *“it is hard to get information when the White community has its own circles, and they like to keep their information to themselves in their circles.”*

Other participants highlighted a lack of connective tissue within their community tying it together. A pair of African American participants with long roots in Manhattan says the local Black community has frayed over time, no longer resembling what it once did. *“You don't find out things nearly as fast as we did back in time.”* One resident pointed to the federal Urban Renewal program and the construction of Fort Riley Boulevard as pivotal points leading residents of the historically Black community South of Poyntz Avenue in Manhattan to begin

fanning out within the city or leaving altogether. *“It's gone. The community that I knew is gone.”* He pointed to area church congregations as *“the only other group of people here that, you know, you could say is a Black community”* outside of student and faculty organizations at K-State such as the Black Student Union or Black Faculty and Staff Alliance. *“Once you cross Anderson on the K-State campus, you're like in another town, in another world.”*

Residents of Hispanic/Latin descent made similar comments. One Latino participant expressed that though interpersonal communication is important in spreading information, there just don't exist the avenues locally for that to happen widely in Manhattan among Latin American residents. *“I still wouldn't even know how to get information to the Latin community besides, you know, going door to door.”* A Latina resident also noted that the positioning from which she accesses information and her network as a white-collar professional can vary greatly from those working in service or blue-collar professions and those that are primarily Spanish speakers.

A Chinese resident also told the researcher of interpersonal barriers that exist within the Chinese community in Manhattan. She noted that differences along regional or class lines can lead to division, saying it's impacted their decision to join the Chinese Professionals Association. *“There is kind of this barrier to entry into these groups for service workers. There are these barriers that have kept me from feeling comfortable even reaching out to these groups – and it's gotten better over the years.”* She says such divisions kept her from being fully engaged with the whole Chinese community in Manhattan, leading to internal conflict as to whether she could have done more to help Chinese community members with less access to information amid COVID.

Perception

This sub-theme is somewhat of an outlier in participant interviews as it was mentioned by only one participant, but felt relevant to report nonetheless. A Latino resident spoke to the researcher of perception as a barrier to communication in Manhattan. *“Most people have to be a certain way when they're in their nine-to-five, you know? But I have to, I found that I have to be that way a little bit more often than who I really am.”* This was described as a prerequisite to access and communal acceptance that went beyond just appearances. *“My talk, my verbiage, anything like that – everything has to change, you know? I have to use more whitewashed speaking.”* While this topic was only mentioned in one interview, it raised questions of a possible overlooked line of query with past participants and warrants inclusion in this report and possible future exploration.

Theme 2 - Reputation

Contrarily, the importance of how storytellers are perceived by the community was a prominent theme in conversation. Like the previous section, the following finding will address RQ2 and RQ3. Reputation of information brokers, be they news journalists or other forms of local communicators, was mentioned by multiple residents as a central factor that influences their ability to serve the entirety of the Manhattan community. Especially for those who have lived in the area longer, memories of missteps or mischaracterizations are not quickly forgotten. *“People that don't trust the media, it may be because it rubbed them the wrong way. It could be just because of one article, even if they've been here for 20 years, but then one article [...] left just a really a bad taste in their mouth and that ruins the trust real quickly,”* says one resident of Indian descent. Once the damage is done, it is also hard to walk it back. A resident of

African American descent tells the author *“it's hard to pull the fishing line back on stuff because you've already thrown the bait out there for people, whether you're trying to get them worked up to read it or whatever the reason is – you know, hype sells.”* While perceptions of generic trust in news organizations and other storytellers varied from person to person, as it came to covering historical minority communities it became apparent the reputation of local storytellers doesn't foster confidence within those populaces. *“I mean, of course I think if everybody all of a sudden made a commitment to provide information and resources to the Latino community, that would be excellent. But I don't see that happening.”* When asking participants about their perception of storytellers in Manhattan, across demographics responses highlighted feelings that information providers weren't invested in minority communities, nor did they truly understand them. The study expands on this sentiment in the next two emergent themes.

Theme 3 - Low Investment

Also, to address RQ2 and RQ3, we asked residents of African, Asian, and Hispanic/Latin descent their perspective on how well storytellers in Manhattan communicate with their heterogeneous networks of learning and sharing local information, each citing perceptions of low investment by information brokers. When asked to recollect news coverage of the local Asian community, participants of Indian and Chinese descent told the author it's episodic and not given the same attention as the larger majority White community.

- *“There isn't anything that connects specifically to the Asian American community.”*
- *“We don't get a lot of coverage in terms of the Asian American community.”*
- *“I don't feel like we get a lot of coverage outside of K-State.”*

- *“[Coverage of] any other issues specific about the Indian community is very limited unless it's some big event that is happening, or maybe they want to do a food critique of Globe Indian Cuisine.”*

These comments were reflective of those shared by residents of Hispanic/Latin descent. Neither of the participants couldn't recall a time the community received news coverage.

- *“I've been here for, gosh, almost eight years now. I've seen white marches, I've seen the African American marches, but I can't really say I've ever seen anything that had to do with Latinos.”*
- *“It may be attributed again largely to just not noticing, not paying attention to it, but I can't think of a time for sure.”*

African American residents felt similarly to other participants, sharing with the researcher perceptions that news coverage of Black organizations, individuals and affairs is harder to come by and often superficial.

- *“As far as addressing like, specific Black problems, it doesn't happen very often unless it's an event”*
- *“We've gotten really good coverage the last few years on Juneteenth, those are predominantly African American. But other than that, there's nothing else out there in the paper of anything going on with the African American community whatsoever.”*
- *“I think that a lot of times, when you are a person of color, they tend to not give you the same opportunity as other places do.”*

While much attention was given to news organizations, storytelling agents for public organizations such as area governments, school districts and other community groups were also reported as largely unengaged with residents of African, Asian, or Hispanic/Latin descent. An African American resident told the author that *“I don't think they do”* outreach specifically targeted toward residents of color in local government. Other participants say even those initiatives that aim to identify and address issues of diversity, equity and inclusion aren't well-communicated and circulated with Manhattan's minority communities. *“They put out little things that, you know, say this committee's meeting, but it's so buried it's ridiculous. The diversity and inclusion report, you have to dig, you have to take a shovel, maybe a forklift and lift up some stuff after that to find it.”* Multiple residents also pointed to the lack of information provided in languages other than English or the accessibility of translation services within public entities also tells a tale regarding their investment. A Latina resident says those that care about reaching Spanish-speaking communities *“find a way”* to employ fluent employees, though a Chinese resident says they haven't seen a motivated interest in that reflected by those in local government. *“I also think there is this very toxic attitude of, well, they can just learn English, or they're here to learn English, so they will figure it out.”* Multiple African American residents, though, pointed to the Riley County Police Department as one public entity that has seen improvement in its community engagement. *“Thank goodness [Dennis] Butler got here, came at the right time,”* one man told us. Another participant echoed similar sentiments, saying Director Butler's engagement and open communication helped alter *“the perception and the relationship of the citizens in this town with the police department.”*

Theme 4 - Lack of understanding

We asked residents of African, Asian, and Hispanic/Latin descent their perspective on how well storytellers in Manhattan understood them and their information needs and interests to address RQ2 and RQ3. Participants were united in feeling misunderstood by Manhattan area storytellers. *“Understanding me, my culture, understanding where I’m from, why I am the way I am, you know, is mind blowing to them,”* one Latino resident told us. Other participants told the author that lack of understanding turned literal when considering those with language barriers in Manhattan. *“It is very difficult if you don’t have people that speak Spanish to connect with that community.”* A participant of Chinese descent tells the researcher that there are groups and organizations out there engaging and trying to provide multilingual information, though it often presents as performative and burdensome. *“I think for those that it is a priority, I feel that they may have either had pressure not necessarily from within the community, but maybe from their own industry or associations that they may be a part of.”* Similar thoughts were shared by African American participants, who said some of those individuals and predominantly White groups that try to get involved in the Black community do so in the interest of attention. *“They want to connect to the Black community, and they want to be seen as connected to the Black community, but they don’t have the tapestry or the connectivity or the understanding of what it takes to keep people’s trust [and] wanting to keep programming and community going.”* An Indian student resident also recalled instances when words were mispronounced or misspelled in print, indicating poor cultural understanding. *“Makes you think that maybe they did not do their homework very well. It could sometimes be hurtful to members of the community.”*

Additionally, these misunderstandings can lead to mistakes in news coverage that impact an organization's reputation with a particular community or individual as well as missed opportunities for residents to be informed of topics and events of importance to them. An African American resident shared with the researcher a memory of a Manhattan Mercury story that reported a shooting occurred near the Douglass Center near the intersection of Yuma and 9th Streets, when it had occurred on 10th Street closer to Fort Riley Boulevard – a misunderstanding that led to a retraction, though not without adding to a negative perception of the historically Black Southeast Manhattan community according to the participant. *“It makes you have less faith in what you read when you know the truth and you see what's printed and it's not the truth.”*

Another story shared with the author centered on coverage of a Stop AAPI Hate Vigil held in 2021 amid heightened tensions, in which a participant noted News Radio KMAN's use of identifiers for organizers that connected them to their places of employment. *“They clearly do not understand how unsafe people of color feel... I felt like they put a target on my back.”* Another story shared with the researcher by a participant of Chinese descent highlighted local newspaper coverage of an hour and a half long panel discussion on race and inclusivity after the murder of George Floyd in 2020. *“Instead of focusing on what the Black community members were surfacing – the issues, the challenges they were surfacing – what was published ended up being focused on what the mayor at the time Usha Reddi said, which was she would love to one day see a city commission just of people of color. Of course, you know, people of color were very offended that that's what they focused on.”* The story ran in print and online in June amid a summer of racial justice activity by groups locally and nationally and caught a lot of community attention. Lastly, participants also shared with the author an example of a misunderstanding of importance that led to a missed opportunity. An African American resident shared with the researcher a memory of

the ribbon cutting for the new Oliver Brown Elementary School in the Manhattan-Ogden Unified School District 383. The ceremony was held in August of 2021 with a visit from Cheryl Brown Henderson – the daughter of Oliver Brown, plaintiff in the landmark Brown V. Board of Education case that found segregation in U.S. schools unconstitutional – though no deliberate attempt to reach out to the local African American community was noted. *“I started getting phone calls when the night news came on, and people from the Black community were appalled. How in the world did we have Cheryl Brown Henderson and family in this town and black people were not invited? It was not put out in the newspaper. It was not sent to Black Faculty [and] Staff to be disseminated. It was not sent to the other affinity groups of color to be disseminated. How in the world did we miss that opportunity in this community?”*

Discussion

Our inquiry into Manhattan's storytelling networks sought to better understand how they are perceived by residents of African, Asian, or Hispanic/Latin descent; where, if any, gaps exist in Manhattan's communication infrastructure as expressed by members of those populaces; as well as what improvements could be prioritized to bolster and better serve Manhattan's communities of color. The resulting series of interviews highlighted salient platforms and sources for community information as well as notable themes that emerged in common between participants. In this section, the study will apply the findings of the previous section to the guiding research questions before moving into recommendations and possible improvements as proposed in the interviews.

Starting with RQ1, which asked what individuals or organizations make up communication infrastructure among Manhattan's three largest historical minority census groups, participants pointed to micro and meso-level storytelling agents in their Neighborhood Storytelling Networks or NSN that one might expect when peering through a Communication Infrastructure Theory lens (Ball-Rokeach, Kim & Matei, 2001; Wilkin & Ball-Rokeach, 2006). Interpersonal networks, online and off-line, featured prominently in participant conversations; as did local and regional news companies such as the Manhattan Mercury and News Radio KMAN, KSNT-TV and KPR. But notably absent in Manhattan on the meso-level were media organizations that spoke directly and specifically to local residents of African, Asian or Hispanic/Latin descent. While some participants noted out-of-market publications that fit the bill of what CIT refers to as ethnic or geo-ethnic media – such as the African American focused Community Voice out of Wichita and micro-level storytelling networks on social media for such groups as local Chinese professionals – no participants could point to a journalistic news source with a mission to center the concerns

and voices of local minority residents. Such storytellers can be important links in a community, providing bridges between immigrants and their home country or information in ethnically or culturally relevant frames and approaches (Lin & Song, 2006) in ways that foster a sense of place and belonging – strengthening attachment and commitment to the local neighborhood or city (Ball-Rokeach, Kim & Matei, 2001). Responses by participants of Hispanic/Latin descent also began to highlight disconnectedness within more individual, micro-level storytelling networks as well some African American residents reporting similar neighborhood changes, posing further hurdles for community building, collective efficacy, and access to important resources and information. Of course, this wasn't universal; residents of Indian descent informed the author of a robust social network between members of their community, though it is not always one with which the broader majority White community engages or recognizes.

Turning now to RQ2, which asked what the perception is of the representation of Manhattan's historical minority communities' interests in coverage by local meso-level storytellers, the previously noted lack of media companies with a specific focus on Manhattan residents of African, Asian and Hispanic/Latin descent is compounded by perceived misunderstanding, detachment, and barriers to access within the existing information brokers and media outlets that was predictable based on Pew Research's findings (Gottfried & Barthel, 2020). This can be situated within CIT as elements of Manhattan's Communication Action Context, or CAC, variables in a community that can help or hurt NSN effectiveness and connectedness to residents. While news and information sources are relatively plentiful compared to many communities around the State of Kansas or even the nation, if they exist in a context in which those at the storytelling helm do not or cannot understand local people of color and are not seen to be engaged in a way that is relevant to them and without barrier then that may

point to the existence of an arid information microclimate in an otherwise non-news desert community. A broader assessment of Manhattan's communication infrastructure in continuation of this study would be appropriate to shed greater light on the scope of CAC variables and their influence on local NSN.

As for RQ3, which questions whether storytelling networks among Manhattan's three largest historical minority census groups are integrated, further inquiry is necessary to give a definitive response. Though responses have begun to point toward an unintegrated NSN as it pertains to Manhattan's residents of color and there is significant overlap in perspectives among participants crossing life-stage, ethnicity and profession, this study still only includes the perspectives of a small corpus of individuals of African, Asian, and Hispanic/Latin descent. The study employed a purposive sample and invited participants that were situated prominently in one way or another in the community and whose experience was involved or lengthy enough to provide meaningful insight into local information flows; as such, it is possible the participants' perspectives are not fully representative of the broader community and that these findings cannot be applied to Manhattan residents of African, Asian, and Hispanic/Latin descent in general. Additionally, there are many residents of ethnicities and nationalities that fit in those census groups yet are not included in this report. It is possible their inclusion as well as greater student participation could have led to different emergent themes and perspectives. As such, these findings could serve as a launching point for more focused investigation as well as a broader mapping of Manhattan's communication infrastructure. For now, though, RQ3 remains inconclusive.

In the concluding section the author will lay out possible next steps and recommendations sourced from participants and satisfy RQ4, which asked what improvements to communication

infrastructure in Manhattan's historical minority community members believe will improve integration and information access.

Recommendations

This study sought to both better understand how local storytellers and information brokers serve Manhattan residents of African, Asian, and Hispanic/Latin descent as well as to begin to cultivate possible improvements or changes that could better inform and empower the community in a relevant and accessible manner as stated in the study's RQ4. Through dialogue with the 9 participants, the author collated recommendations into a set of 5 overarching possible practical next steps for Manhattan organizations that wish to better invest in and engage with local residents of color.

- 1. Public agencies and service organizations in Manhattan should consider more earnest investment in language accessibility to broaden information reach locally.**

This is becoming a greater and greater priority as the City of Manhattan undergoes demographic change, presuming recent gains within the Hispanic/Latin and Asian populaces do not regress. Responses in the study's findings noted inconsistency in availability of information in languages other than English and poor trust in translation services should they be available at all. Participants reported a cooling effect in seeking information and services among those who do not speak English or speak a language other than English more fluently. Increased attention in this area by public and service organizations, as well as those with economic development or business growth interests, is necessary to provide better service to portions of the local BIPOC populace that experience language barriers in Manhattan. This will look different depending on the government entity or community service group and the ways they interact with the public, but more earnest investment in language accessibility has potential implications

on local health, collective efficacy, and even private commercial growth among residents of African, Asian, and Hispanic/Latin descent.

- 2. Media managers, editors and news directors should more intentionally seek sources of African, Asian, and Hispanic/Latin descent and include their stories and interests in their news agendas.** Every participant in this study reported perceptions of them and their community largely not being included in the picture of Manhattan as depicted in local news coverage. It should be a priority for storytellers to change that. Participants shared numerous suggestions on new approaches media managers and news directors could consider in their news planning efforts. Residents want to hear more ‘everyday’ perspectives from their communities on topics of importance to balance elite voices and government or organizational leaders. Additionally, they asked news professionals to pass the mic and provide more opportunities to BIPOC residents to tell their stories in a first-person or editorial format. One participant pointed to the Players Tribune as a potential model to explore for such stories, a publication known for ‘ghost-written’ first person stories by notable athletes. Participants further encouraged greater spotlights on local acts of racism and discrimination, including how that impacts minority-owned businesses and organizations serving historical minorities in Manhattan. While events and holidays celebrated predominantly by African, Asian, and Hispanic/Latin residents were noted as receiving periodic coverage by newsmakers, this was not uniform and noted by particularly Indian participants as an area needing more attention. Nepotism within the ‘cliquish’ City of Manhattan was also forwarded as a topic that largely doesn’t often make it into local news. Lastly, coverage of staple issues in the city such as housing

suitability and affordability and mental health service accessibility as well as highlighting extant social services in Manhattan remains important as reported by participants.

Providing a lens into how these issues are impacting residents of African, Asian, and Hispanic/Latin descent can shed light on the unique experiences of these individuals and their communities and better inform residents such that they can take collective action in their interests.

- 3. Likewise, media organizations and public communicators should explore ways to boost engagement and outreach to find ways to improve or create more reciprocal relationships with Manhattan's BIPOC residents and communities.** Participants reported coverage of their communities can be episodic or event-driven, with attention from local storytellers lacking outside of notable events such as Juneteenth or Lunar New Year celebrations on the K-State campus. Media managers, news directors, but also communication specialists for educational or government entities as well should consider how in their professional contexts to improve these bonds and build bridges. Participants forwarded numerous proposals for how to do this, one being making it a priority to have a diverse staff and leadership. Connections, while important, cannot always replace the value of having individuals of African, Asian and/or Hispanic/Latin descent in the room where decisions are made in terms of what stories to cover and how to engage with the Manhattan community. Hiring or assigning engagement editors or community liaisons with a job description that centers this activity and devotes one or more individuals to this work can also go a long way in creating better bonds, fostering a more integrated communication infrastructure, and ensuring messages and information of importance to

the local BIPOC populace reach the people who want or need it. From a news professional perspective, this is also possible to achieve with beat reporters devoted to covering and engaging with Manhattan's residents of African, Asian, and Hispanic/Latin descent. Whatever the approach, ultimately it must be done in a genuine manner and with commitment. One-and-done stories come off as extractive or even performative, and if no one is accountable to follow-up on a story or issue of importance then that will be noticed and shape the reputation of the organization in question.

- 4. Manhattan needs more opportunities for interpersonal discussion and conversation about topics of importance or issues within BIPOC communities.** It's important to note that there is not a complete lack of this in Manhattan as-is. There exist organizations such as the Huck Boyd Center for Community Media as well as the Institute for Civic Discourse and Democracy at K-State that help foster broad community conversations on a variety of topics. African American participants noted numerous churches as well as Greek organizations as providing these opportunities. Asian participants reported robust social networks among Indian residents, but also through information trading posts such as local markets for East Asian participants – notably the Chinese populace. Additionally, many people continue to have fence-talk with neighbors and maintain micro-level networks with those in close proximity. But these networks are not uniform. Hispanic/Latin participants reported a general dearth of avenues for interpersonal conversation within the populace in Manhattan and had difficulty identifying how one might even engage with a broad segment of Hispanic/Latin residents without going door-to-door. African American participants pointed to a breakdown in community over the

years amid changes in Manhattan and the nation at-large that led to the population spreading out rather than remaining largely centered in the Yuma Street neighborhood. To address this will require a coalition of individuals and organizations across the city making the organization and facilitation of such conversations a priority. That includes newspapers and broadcast organizations, K-State-based engagement groups like the Huck Boyd Center and ICDD, educational and government entities, as well as – of course – BIPOC residents, leaders and community or faith organizations centrally positioned in the African, Asian, and Hispanic/Latin populace. Such a partnership would not transform the community overnight but lay the groundwork for community building necessary to bolster the communication infrastructure and ensure Manhattan is a thriving place for all residents. The goal isn't simply generating stories that can be sold back to the community, but to improve storytelling networks in a way that can benefit residents and better inform storytellers and communicators on the perspectives of their neighbors of African, Asian, and Hispanic/Latin descent.

5. **There is an untapped opportunity in Manhattan for a new geo-ethnic media**

publication in Manhattan. There is a clear lack of news media with a specific focus on Manhattan residents of African, Asian, or Hispanic/Latin descent. While existing media can and should work to fill news and information gaps informed by their mission of community service, an outlet owned and/or operated – by and for – local residents of color can provide a voice in ways that other news outlets may not. Noted in the sources and platforms findings, the Community Voice out of Wichita with a focus on the African American populace is an example of just such a publication. Wichita, though, with a

population approaching 400,000 – 10 percent of which is Black – is quite different from Manhattan and its approximately 55,000 residents. Tens of thousands of BIPOC residents live in Wichita compared to the approximately 12,000 living in Manhattan. This poses some challenges for such a new company, particularly as it comes to funding. Audience or community support may be limited if the scope of coverage is too narrow, presenting more of a challenge for commercial start-up ventures in Manhattan. Even so, there may be angel investment and other start-up funds in the State that can help make this more viable. That may make a not-for-profit approach more tenable, with numerous existing grant programs for new non-profit news organizations seeking to provide BIPOC-focused coverage in communities that lack it. Organizations like the Listening Post Collective also provide an assortment of strategies and support that can help those interested in stepping into the picture and have a track record of work in similar projects around the nation.

Finally, this report also warrants further study to follow up on the responses and findings included in this preliminary snapshot of information needs to assess Manhattan's communication infrastructure more comprehensively and to continue down the Listening Post Collective Playbook's list of strategies. This study only employed the first couple strategies in LPC's playbook, making a logical next step to continue down the list starting with community surveys. A trio of surveys has already been crafted for each of the three demographics in this study's focus and translated into Spanish, Chinese, Vietnamese and Korean. If funding for incentives can be secured, the surveys could see better engagement numbers necessary to provide more robust quantitative data on local news and information flows. More comprehensive surveying of Manhattan could also provide a better understanding of the influencers – both on and offline –

that are prominent in NSN and important with which to make connections to improve information access and reach into BIPOC communities. Once identified, online or offline influencers can be engaged depending on the age demographics of the intended information or message recipients. Additionally, further interviews and focus groups should be considered to ensure the perspectives shared by the 9 individuals in this study are not outliers in one way or another. Thought should be put into an all-Manhattan assessment as well to identify how participants of African, Asian, and Hispanic/Latin descent differ or agree with the White majority's perspectives on local communication infrastructure. Whether included in that study or as a separate study, there also is a need to place a focus on the needs and perspectives of students and military-affiliated residents in Manhattan. One student was included in this study, and no current military personnel. There may be notable conditions or barriers not reported in this study that could be highlighted by greater engagement with these groups. There may also be new themes as well as sub-themes associated with existing themes that emerge as part of this possible inquiry. Special attention should also be given to the relatively recent arrival of Afghan refugees in Manhattan, who arrived following the launch of this study. These more than 70 individuals face unique challenges to acclimate to Manhattan and its communication infrastructure. With more than three dozen additional refugees anticipated to arrive at some point in the future, understanding their needs and supporting those reported will become a greater and greater priority for scholars and storytellers in the Manhattan area.

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