



**Online Participation
in a Community Context:
Civic Engagement and Connections
to Local Communication Resources**

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The City of Alhambra



Location:

A city in L.A. County, 8 miles east of downtown

Population:

83.000
Residents

Diversity:

10% Anglo,
34% Latino,
53% Asian

Media:

Little local coverage, no common local news outlet

Citizenship:

Low levels of civic engagement



www.AlhambraSource.org

The screenshot shows the homepage of Alhambra Source, a community news website. At the top, the logo "ALHAMBRA SOURCE" is displayed in large orange letters, with the tagline "community news and voices • 社區新聞與論壇 • noticias y voces de la comunidad" below it. Navigation links for "SCHOOLS", "CITY GOVERNMENT", "POLICE / FIRE", "ARTS", "FOOD", "BUSINESS", "HISTORY", and "YOUTH FEED" are visible. A search bar and a "SEARCH" button are also present. The main content area is divided into three columns: "STORIES", "NEWS/VIEWS", and "NEWSLETTER SIGNUP". The "STORIES" column features a large image of a hallway with colorful posters and a headline "A flare of ethnic tensions - and push for change - at Alhambra High". The "NEWS/VIEWS" column lists several articles, including "Peaches and plums aplenty" and "Despite losing use of arms, CSULA student achieves bachelor's degree in graphic design". The "NEWSLETTER SIGNUP" column includes a "SIGNUP" button and a section titled "IN THE NEWS" with a list of recent news items.

A research-driven, community-based local news website
launched in September 2010



Project Evaluation Design

A two-wave, tri-lingual survey of Alhambra residents

Focus groups with community contributors, residents, businesses

Interviews with representatives of local organizations

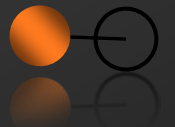
Media monitoring, content analysis, tracking shifts in story topics

Tracking of content reproduced in other media outlets

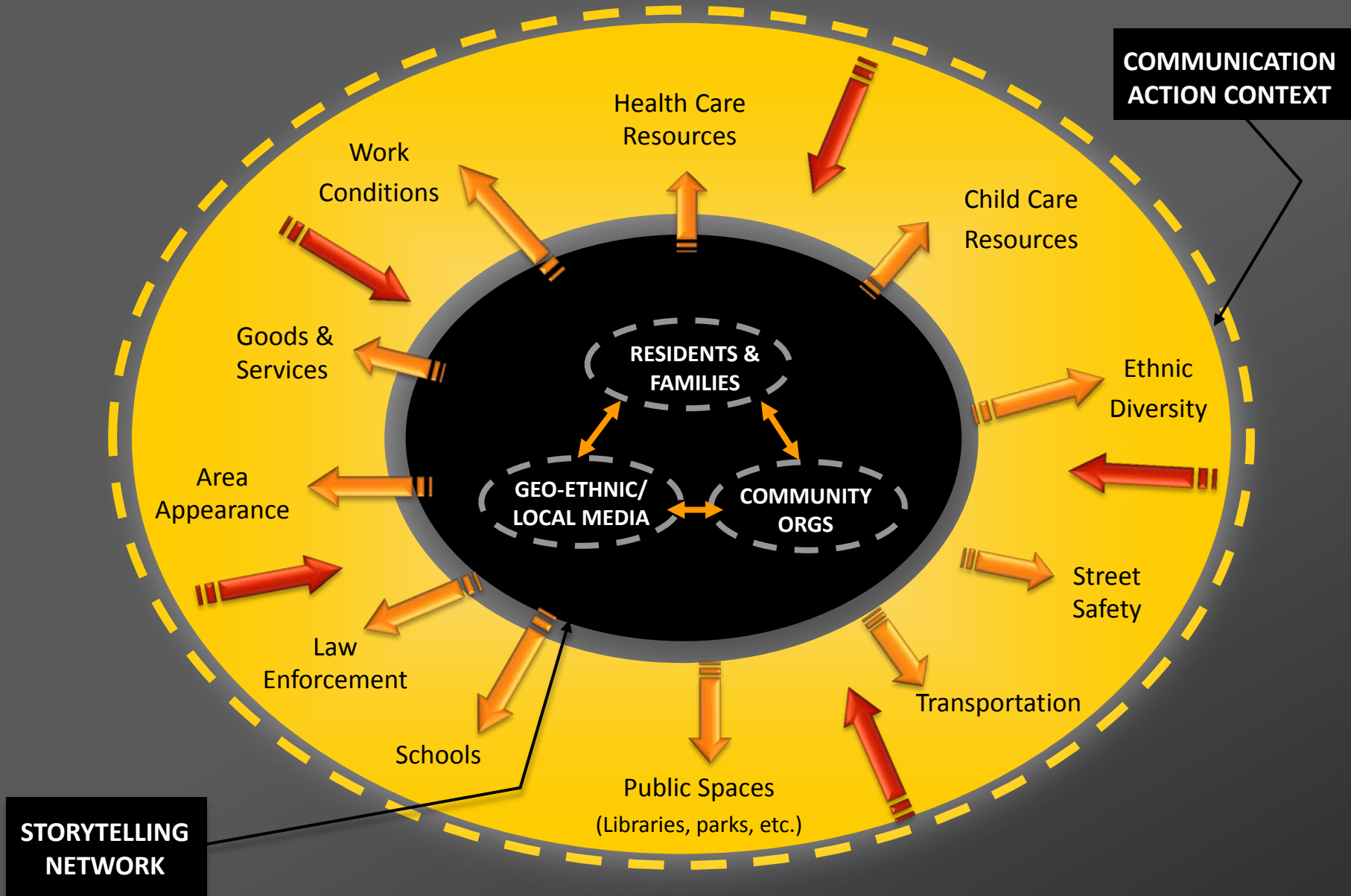
Monitoring of visitors' comments on the website

Web analytics: Website, Facebook & Twitter

Testimonials: from contributors, residents, local officials

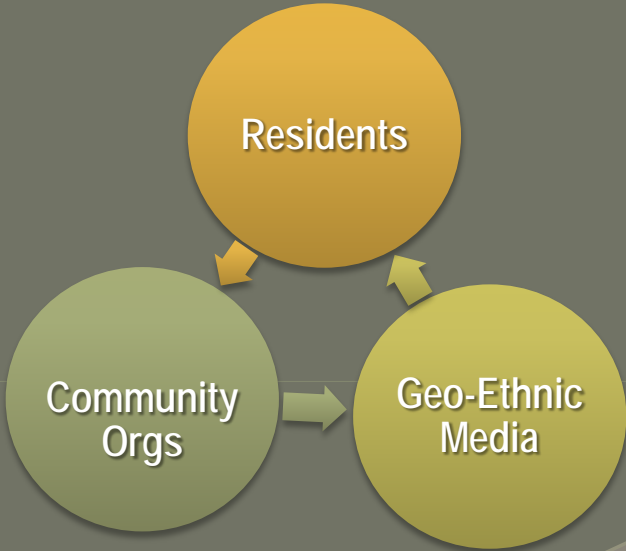


Communication Infrastructure Approach

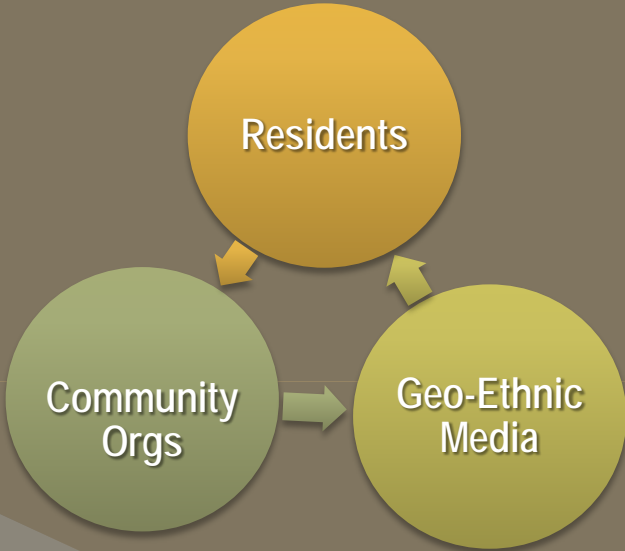


Bridging the Storytelling Networks

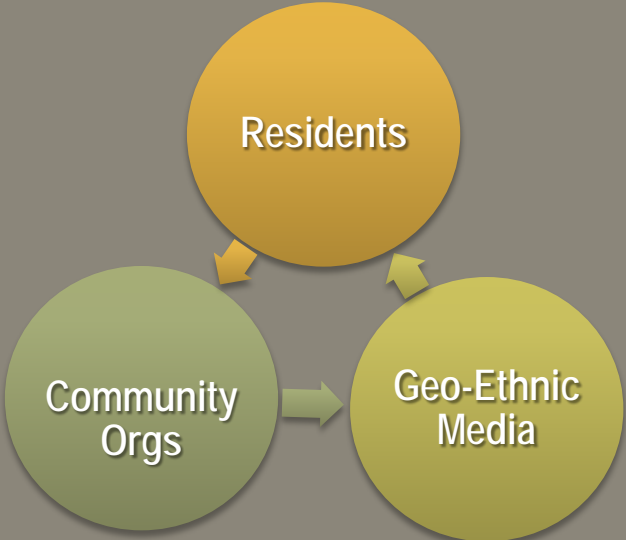
Ethnic Chinese Storytelling Network



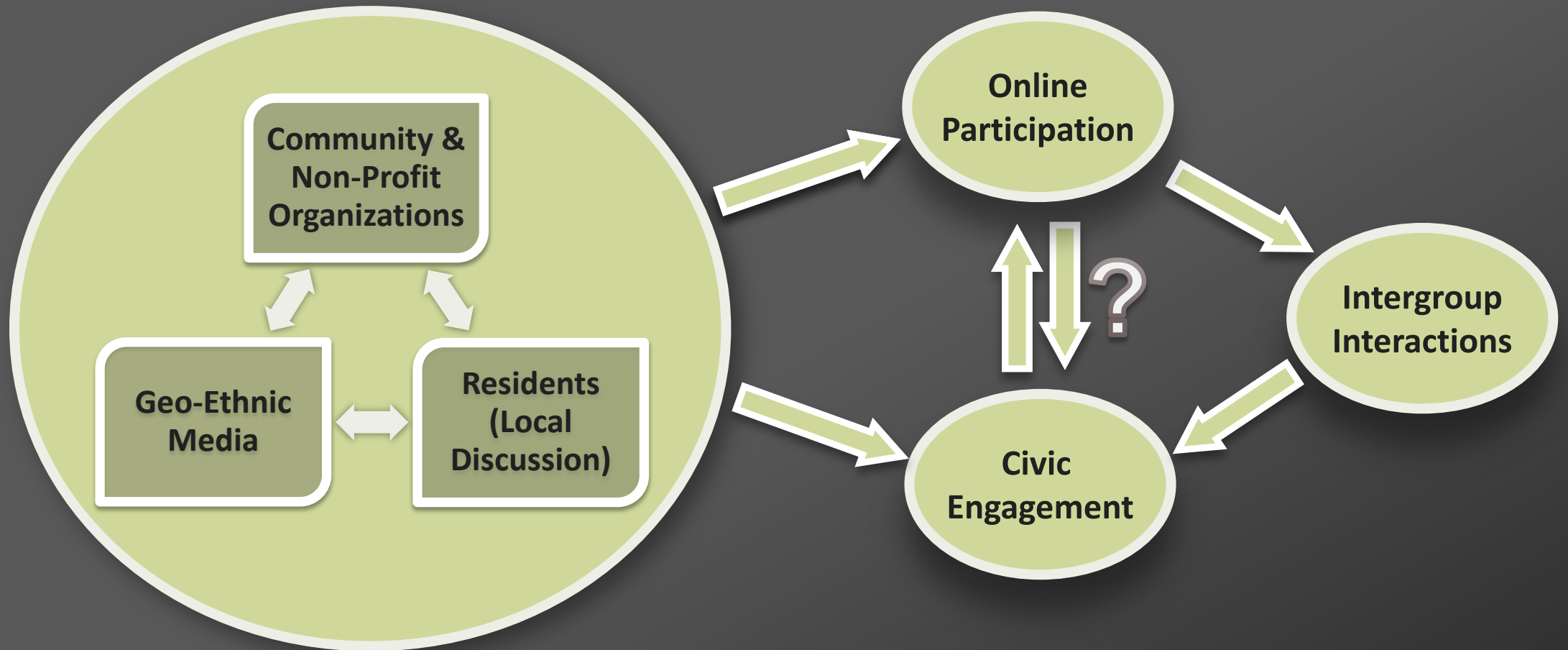
Latino Storytelling Network



Anglo Storytelling Network



Storytelling Networks and Civic Engagement



Community-Oriented Online Participation (COIP)

Have you used the Internet to:

Read news stories about your neighborhood

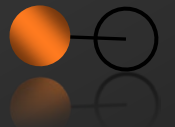
Find information about your neighborhood

Communicate with other residents of the area

Discuss local issues online

Post comments about the community

Receive e-mails from political orgs or neighborhood associations



2010 Survey in Alhambra

Sample & Procedures

405 respondents: 152 Chinese, 154 Latino, 99 Anglo

79% of the sample through RDD, 21% through postcards

Interviews (English, Spanish, Chinese): average length 27 minutes

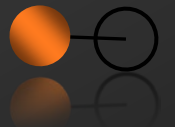
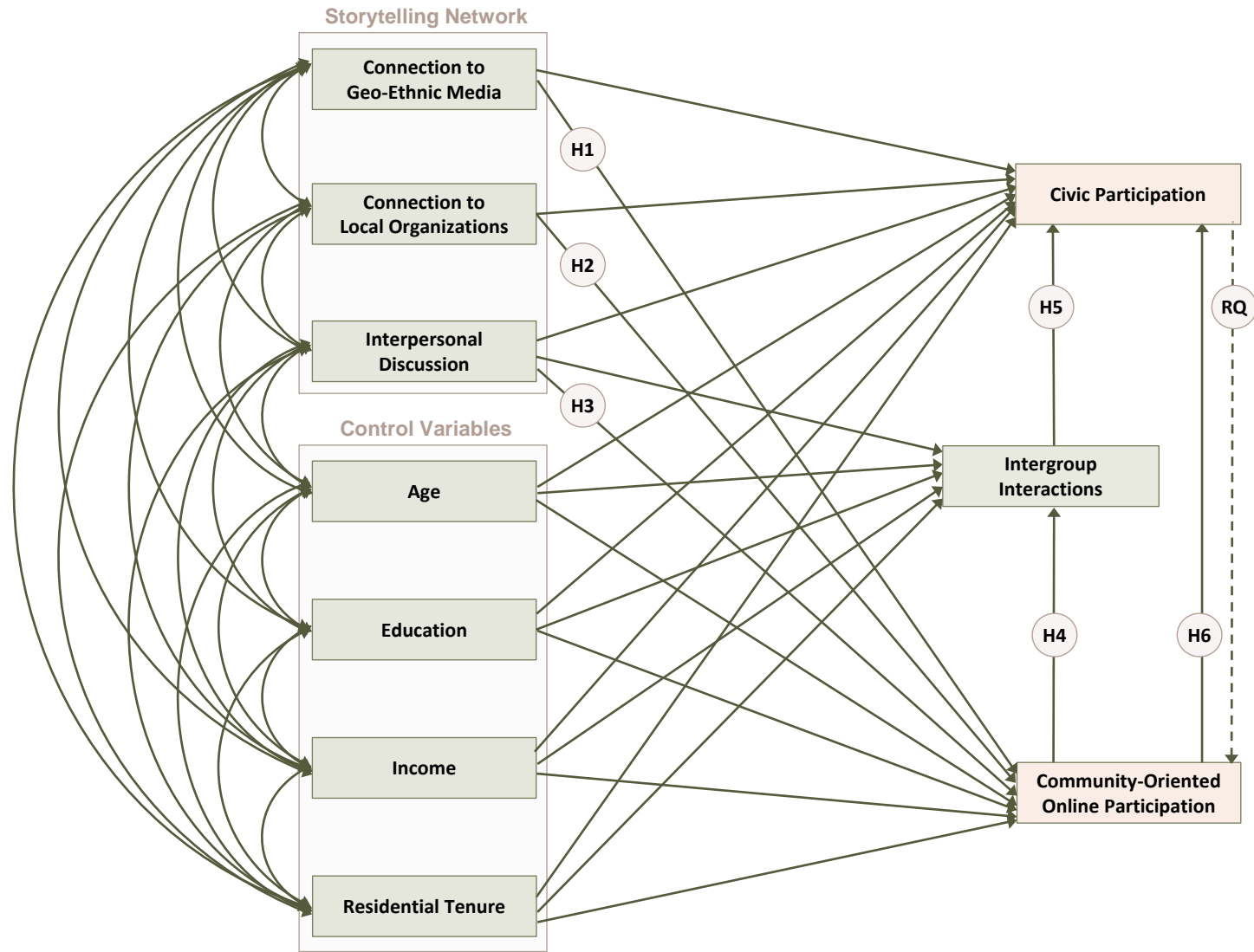
Incentive: \$20 supermarket certificate or donation to charity

Response rate for the survey: 24%

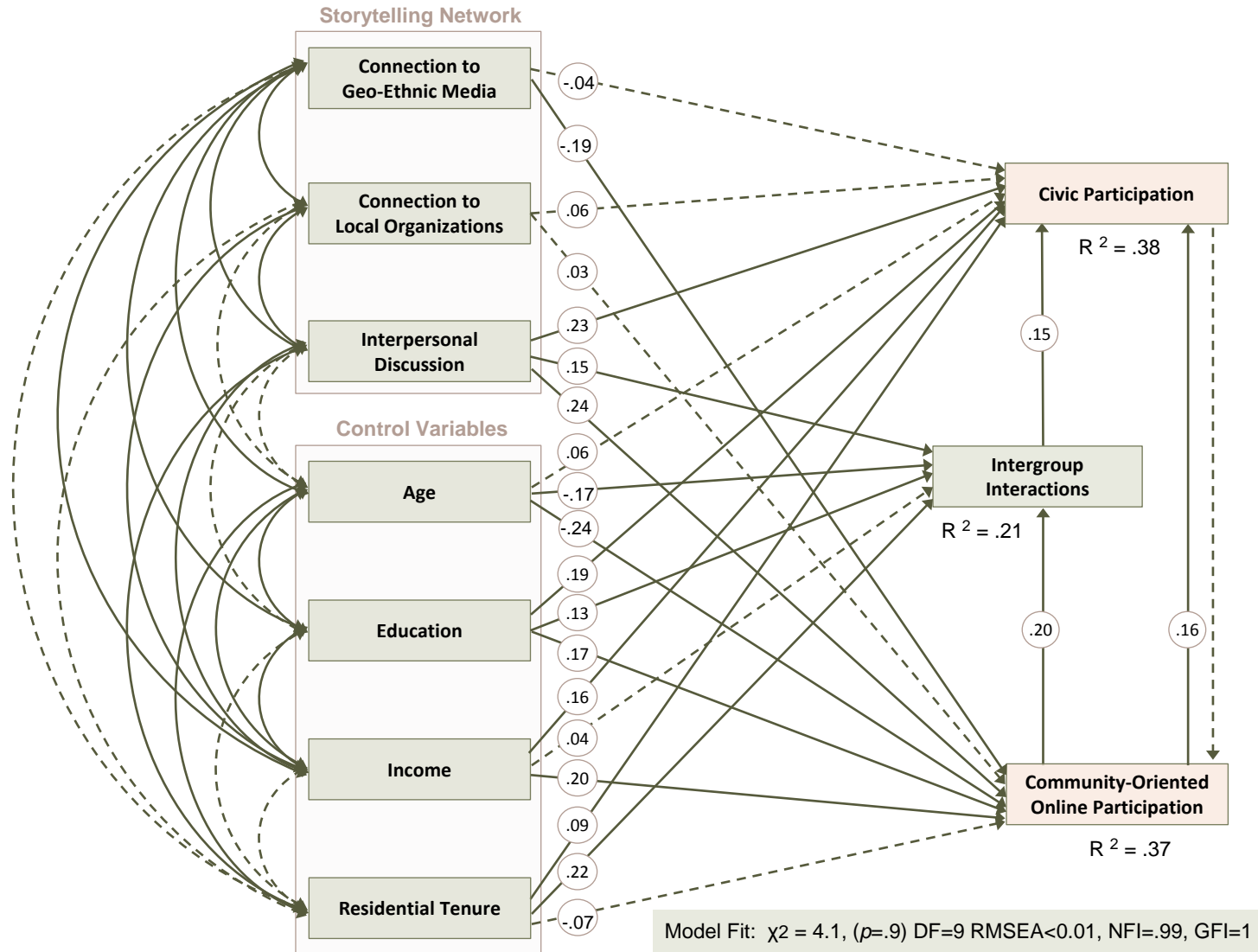
Sample skews older than census data; post-stratification weighting



Theoretical Model



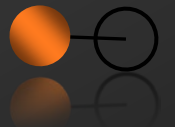
Structural Model



Direct, Indirect and Total Effects

Variable	Direct effect on COIP	Direct effect on Civic Participation	Direct Effect Intergroup Interaction	Indirect Effect on Civic Participation	Total Effect on Civic Participation
C-O Online Participation	-	.16 **	.20 **	.03 *	.19 **
Intergroup Interaction	-	.15 **	-	-	.15 **
Interpersonal Discussion	.24 **	.23 **	.15 **	.07 **	.30 **
Geo-ethnic Media Use	-.19 **	-.04	-	-.04 **	-.08
Community Organizations	.03	.06	-	.01	.06
Respondent Age	-.24 **	.06	-.17 **	-.07 **	-.01
Respondent Education	.17 **	.19 **	.13 *	.05 **	.24 **
Respondent Income	.20 **	.16 **	.04	.04 **	.20 **
Residential Tenure	-.07	.09	.22 **	.02	.11 *

* $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$



Conclusions: Online Participation and Civic Engagement



Local media and organizations play little to no role in promoting civic engagement.



The main factor driving both online and offline participation in the community is interpersonal discussion.



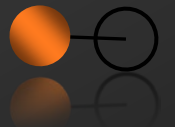
Online participation predicts civic engagement directly – and indirectly through intergroup interaction.



Individuals who communicate across ethnic barriers are more likely to be civically engaged.



Social groups that are already disconnected from social civic practices may remain isolated from online participation too.



Thank You!

www.alhambrasource.org

www.metamorph.org

