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# MISINFORMATION ON WHATSAPP:
## INSIGHTS FROM THE CARIBBEAN DIASPORA

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## SUMMARY

WhatsApp has become a dominant platform for communication, entertainment, and news sharing among diaspora communities. It has also emerged as a significant source of misinformation. This paper from the Center for Media Engagement explores the phenomenon with a focus on the Caribbean diaspora and their exposure and responses to misinformation on the platform.

Interviews with members of the Caribbean diaspora living in New York reveal that they mostly encountered health misinformation, rumors, and political misinformation on the app. However, exposure levels for these users were generally low since they mainly use WhatsApp for social communication and overwhelmingly reserve it for their close contacts.

The interviews also showed that chat size, type, and function affect behavior patterns and responses to false information. Key demographic characteristics, including age and gender, are also associated with the spread of misinformation. Additionally, cultural factors influence exposure to and content of misinformation. Overall, the findings provide valuable insights into the dynamics of misinformation on WhatsApp and reinforce the importance of understanding its impact on diasporic communities.

## KEY TAKEAWAYS

- WhatsApp is used more for social communication than for information or news sharing.
- Participation in public groups is rare. Only one participant reported being a member of a public group.
- Group size and group type affect exposure risk levels. Larger groups experience higher levels of misinformation. Purpose-driven chats — those created to share particular interests — are less prone to misinformation spreading.
- Corrections to misinformation are more likely to occur in one-on-one communication than in group chats and in smaller groups than in larger groups. Regardless of chat size, trust between contacts is an important predictor of the tendency to correct false information.
- The popularity of health misinformation, gossip, and religious conspiracies is connected to culture — specifically the West Indian traditions of storytelling — which leads to embellishment, the prominence of natural remedies for the treatment of illnesses and ailments, and high levels of religious diversity and religiosity in the region.
- The misinformation encountered by respondents does not appear to be specifically targeted to the Caribbean diaspora.

## INTRODUCTION

### Problem Background

With 65 billion messages sent on the app per day, WhatsApp is one the most popular smartphone apps in the world and is the second most popular messaging service, only behind generic messaging.[1] Its many draws include a secure end-to-end encrypted system, affordability, and relative ease of use. It is especially popular among diaspora communities[2] who rely on WhatsApp not only for communication but also for entertainment and news. Several studies have found WhatsApp to be a major source of misinformation[3] that has precipitated real-world effects and, in some instances, had fatal consequences.[4] In past studies, health misinformation was found to be particularly rampant, especially during the pandemic, but nontrivial amounts of government propaganda, rumors, fake news, and religious conspiracies were also observed.[5]

The dynamics of the misinformation process on WhatsApp are still little understood. Not every user is a producer of misinformation — there are some demographics more involved in the spread — and not every fabricated or false story goes unchallenged. With over two billion users,[6] it is important to understand people's exposure to misinformation on the app

as well as their responses to it. It is even more pertinent to understand the phenomenon among diaspora communities whose political influence stretches across geographic boundaries and who are some of the heaviest users of the messaging service and may be at greater risk.

## The Caribbean Diaspora

The Caribbean diaspora, understudied and under-observed, is one of the largest in the world with a near one-to-one ratio of nationals to diaspora members.[7] Historically, diaspora was used to describe a people dispersed because of a historical ordeal but it is now more widely applied to members of an ethnic group who live in a country where their ancestors are not indigenous.[8]

The Caribbean diaspora is unique in many ways, foremost is that it is a transnational group connected by culture and history.[9] The Caribbean itself can be defined based on "language, identity, geography, history and culture, geopolitics, geoeconomics, or organization."[10] For manageability, this study adopted a restrictive definition of the Caribbean to include only English-speaking West Indian[11] countries that are members of CARICOM.[12]

Statistics indicate that there are approximately eight million people of Caribbean ancestry living in the U.S., which also hosts the largest fraction of West Indian people internationally.[13] Compared to other non-natives, Caribbean immigrants are older, have a lower level of education, and occupy a lower income bracket.[14] However, this data is not specific to West Indians and applies to immigrants from the entire Caribbean region.[15]

## Research Methodology

New York contains the second largest number of Caribbean immigrants in the U.S., second only to Florida,[16] so it is an appropriate location for this study. Twenty-three members of the Caribbean diaspora — both first- and second-generation — were recruited via snowball sampling. Interviewees were affiliated with Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, Grenada, Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago, and Saint Lucia and covered a wide age range. Eighteen participants were college graduates, half of whom held advanced degrees. Their occupations included receptionist, actor, teacher, and scientist. Interviews were semi-structured, open-ended, and typically averaged around thirty-five minutes.

# THE "WHAT" OF MISINFORMATION

## WhatsApp is for Family and Friends

The overwhelming view of those who participated in the study was that WhatsApp was mainly for social communication with people both within the diaspora and back home. Though a majority admitted to encountering misinformation on the app at least once, a review of the responses suggests that it is not a pervasive issue because WhatsApp "is less an information sharing platform and more of a communication platform" for most. Expanding on this, the participant added:

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> I also think for my age group and maybe younger, I don't think we really use WhatsApp in that way, to share serious information, unless you're in a group chat that is meant to discuss a specific topic. I feel like I, often, and the people that I know, use WhatsApp to just remain in contact with people close to us, you know checking in on people.

Interestingly, the same contacts are often found on multiple apps, which affects conversation selection on WhatsApp. As one participant explained, "the same people I'm speaking to on WhatsApp, I'm speaking to on other social platforms. So, if they're sending an article on Facebook, they will just send it on Facebook or you know, Instagram."

Additionally, only one interviewee was a member of a public WhatsApp group, which are known to increase users' exposure to false information on the platform.[17] Furthermore, misinformation experienced on WhatsApp by those interviewed was declared to be less aggressive than what they experienced on other digital platforms.

## Trends in Misinformation Content

Of the various categories of false information observed, misinformation related to health and wellness was by far the most pervasive. People reported seeing messages about diet fads, new products for physical ailments, and warnings against food manufactured in select countries. For many, health misinformation during the pandemic was particularly prevalent but has waned in the last year. On this topic, respondents recalled messages speculating on unverified side effects of the COVID vaccine, unproven home remedies to fight off the infection, and improbable theories about the origin of COVID.

Conspiracies about the virus were also observed — for instance, that the virus was designed "by the government to rid Black people of the world" and that "black people [are] getting different COVID vaccines compared to white people meant to harm [their] bodies." A niche

aspect of this was an observation of religious conspiracies related to COVID which labeled the vaccine as "the mark of the beast" and related the virus to the "coming of Christ."

Rumors and gossip followed health as the second most popular category of misinformation. Fake news about celebrity deaths and scandals related to public figures were the most common. One participant noted that "It's [typically] based on someone that everybody knows…maybe a political figure or just someone in the spotlight, but this is very much just to ole talk."[18]

Lastly, political misinformation was the third most experienced misinformation category by the Caribbean people who were interviewed. Examples of this type of misinformation include falsely attributed statements, memes, and unsupported accusations of corruption. Related to this are inaccurate stories about crime and social issues. It should, however, be noted that political misinformation, in all its forms, was experienced at low levels for those who were interviewed.

Across all categories, the misinformation was typically emotive — funny, tragic, sad, or scary — and constructed to grab attention. Additionally, time spent in the U.S. seemed to correlate with the topic themes encountered. Immigrants who have been living longer in the U.S. received content related to events both in the States and in the Caribbean while those newer to the country, residents of less than ten years, received and sent information primarily about the Caribbean and their home country. One participant explained, "…anytime you see something trending on Trini Twitter or any other of the other local platforms or local groupings like that, it will definitely be shared in some group that I'm in."

Importantly, the misinformation encountered — particularly the types under investigation — is not targeted towards the Caribbean diaspora specifically but their proximity to two cultures, with ties and connections to both, influences their exposure.

## Sources of Misinformation

It is almost impossible to isolate the source of all the misinformation on WhatsApp given the transnational nature of data flows.[19] However, participants of the study found social media, traditional media, and government bodies to be culpable. Social media, unsurprisingly, was the most frequently mentioned given its ability to connect a seemingly unlimited stream of content producers directly to the public, "bypassing the traditional structures of power"[20] and verification. Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, YouTube, and TikTok were specifically named.

Following the national trend,[21] trust in traditional media appears to be low. Even for those who acknowledged still relying on those sources for news, many labeled traditional media as partisan and watched multiple channels "to try to figure out what the truth is between them." Significantly, this perception was specific to American news outlets.

Also on trend,[22] this mistrust in institutions extended to the government — and by extension international governance organizations such as the World Health Organization[23] — whom several participants accused of "having an agenda" and lacking transparency. Whether intentional or not, missteps during the pandemic and prolonged uncertainty have significantly impacted people's perception of the government's credibility.

## THE "WHO" OF MISINFORMATION
### Demographic Characteristics of Misinformation Broadcasters

Though misinformation on WhatsApp is seemingly not a ubiquitous or pervasive problem for most people interviewed, responses point to key demographics associated with the spread of misinformation. Almost universally, respondents suggested that older family members were the main culprits of forwarding false information on the app. Several explanations were given for this including older people "just taking things at face value," not being "tech-savvy," having "more time on their hands," and "just post[ing] so much more." Speaking about her mother, one participant explained:

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> People send her all kinds of things and she just sends it off all day. She's 73 years old. She's retired, she has nothing better to do...now she learned how to use WhatsApp, everybody sends her everything. She is sending [messages to] everybody, all her kids...

Like the participant's mother, female family members were particularly singled out. The "WhatsApp aunties" was a familiar reprise, echoed with both exasperation and fondness. The occasional grandmother and mother-in-law were also mentioned. This is in keeping with other studies that showed gender impacts messaging behavior on WhatsApp.[24]

When correlated with age, education level was observed to have an impact on the propensity to forward inaccurate information as the participants' older contacts typically had lower educational attainment. However, as a factor by itself, the link between education and misinformation is less clear. Describing her experience on the app, one participant explained:

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> I think most of the people I have been talking about are educated where they're literally nurses and physician assistants and professors and teachers and so forth, which was surprising because some people are working in the health field and sharing misinformation.

This was supported by another participant who said:

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> [Previously], I would have said...as you increase your education you would...decrease misinformation you absorb, but...post COVID that just went out the window. So, I don't know...

Another demographic not significantly explored in past literature is the immigrant generation. Here, it was found that second-generation immigrants[25] were substantially less exposed to misinformation than first-generation immigrants. This is exemplified by the experiences described by a mother-daughter duo interviewed individually. When asked about their different levels of exposure, the daughter responded, "Well, we are talking to different people."

## Group Size and Type Affects Misinformation Levels

Respondents admitted to receiving misinformation both through one-on-one messages and through group chats, but for those who belonged to groups chats, a sizable portion indicated that their exposure to misinformation was higher in group chats. However, not every group chat was guilty of spreading misinformation. Younger interviewees felt that their friend groups were relatively free of misinformation while other respondents noted low to non-existent levels of misinformation in their purpose-driven chats, for instance those created for their prayer group or for their football club. Family group chats, on the other hand, were particularly notorious. One participant described her experience:

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> I have an extended family chat so every single day they will communicate. All my relatives are there, a lot of relatives I didn't even know I had, they have this huge family chat and people are like in constant [contact], everybody knows everything that's happening like in real time, it's just how they communicate...It's like they live through WhatsApp. They are all over the U.S., everything, in Trinidad, all over, so everything that happens...they take a picture of it...that kind of thing. I think just because of the frequency, you will tend to find misinformation coming over.

Several other interviewees gave similar accounts and linked the misinformation levels in their family groups to the work of some of their older relatives. Notably, unlike other diasporas studied for misinformation, people in the Caribbean diaspora restrict

their WhatsApp use to known acquaintances. Barring one exception where the interviewee relayed being a member of a public broadcast group for news updates, all other respondents only participated in groups where they knew most, if not all, of the participants. Misinformation, therefore, within the Caribbean diaspora community, is a community-level issue.

## RESPONSES TO MISINFORMATION
### Sharing is Caring

Sixteen respondents confessed to sharing misinformation at least once, but no one confessed to doing so maliciously. In fact, many only admitted to the possibility of sharing misinformation unintentionally as a matter of probability. Others suggested that the label might only be warranted retrospectively in light of new information. In these cases, inaccurate information was shared simply because it was the information available at the time. Furthermore, sometimes unverified information was shared in case it happened to be right, for example as a warning driven by fear or a need to protect. As one participant said, "If it's something, let's say, regarding crime in an area, if I have friends who live in the same area, I will forward that." This was particularly true during the pandemic, where according to one participant, "everybody was trying to figure out what was true. And so more people were just sharing whatever they were getting, as a way of sharing information."

For others, the information was shared because it might be beneficial:

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> [I send] a lot of stuff basically about health because I'm a vegan so if I see something that I think is worthy, I will share it with people to make sure in case they need information. A lot of people look up to me to share vegan information with them… some of it I know it's not really on the up and up so to speak, or copacetic, but you know, I share it because there's some little things in some of the information that is worthy, so I try to share it with my friends.

The non-maleficent nature of misinformation sharing within the target group is further exemplified by the attachment of disclaimers to unverified information, alerting recipients to the questionable quality of the forwarded message, and notification when new information is acquired.

## Sharing Misinformation to Joke or Discuss

When misinformation is shared intentionally, it is for one of two, often linked, purposes: to joke or to discuss. Sometimes, the information is deemed to be so preposterous that it becomes humorous, in which case it is shared between contacts with the knowledge that recipient parties understand it to be fake and it is thus presented as a punchline:

> **"**
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> They're sharing the information, but it's just to laugh about it. It's not really to pass on as a message like, 'plenty alcohol is good for the COVID, you should try that.' No. Not in that kind of way. They will pass on stuff...and we would just laugh about it you know

In other cases, information is shared because "it opens the conversation…it's really to have a dialogue about it." At times, the two responses converge. One participant described how she would take a screenshot and say to her cousin, "Did you get this nonsense? What do you think?" This was a recurring response when respondents did not want to directly confront wrongdoers, but still wanted to address the issue, often to release frustration and exasperation.  In this way, messages are shared and humorous discussion follows. Importantly, both response types require the ability to recognize misinformation.

## Intracommunal Verification

Several interviewees mentioned using their network to verify the veracity of information or described themselves as being used as a resource for this purpose. Some questions that accompanied these types of messages included: "is this is real thing?" "has anybody heard this, can anybody fact check this?" "what do you think about this video?" and so forth. In almost every case where fact-checking occurred, the messages were being forwarded to contacts whom the sender believed to be qualified to confirm or refute the information. Qualification may mean they have a certain academic background, are assumed to be more competent at research due to age, have first-hand experience with the topic being discussed, or are closer to the source, either because they know the person the messages are about — which is entirely possible due to the small country populations — or they were in closer proximity when the event took place.

This intracommunity verification process is possible because, for this group, almost all contacts on WhatsApp are close connections. They are sharing information with people "who [they] can trust who [they] feel maybe won't judge." Significantly, this verification process can occur via messages or through phone calls — which the app also allows — depending on the severity of the situation such as when someone has potentially died.

### Investigate Further, Ignore, or Challenge?

In addition to the community-centered verification process, external resources are also utilized to scrutinize potentially dubious information. The most referenced resource was Google, followed by traditional news media.

Between ignoring received misinformation or challenging it, ignoring it was the most adopted response. Ignoring fake news can take a variety of forms. Respondents said they "brush it off," "delete it and keep moving," "archive it" to not see any notifications, "don't respond to it," and "dismiss it and move on."

Confronting misinformation spreaders is a stickier endeavor but fifteen people claimed to have done it at least once. Tactics included presenting alternative evidence, labeling the messages as fake, asking for proof to substantiate claims, or probing the sender further about their beliefs. Altogether, factors influencing response type include the topic discussed, the relationship between contacts, and the potential for behavior change.

## RESPONSE TYPE: CAUSES AND CONSEQUENCES

### Topic-Driven Responses

Topic was the most significant factor affecting the decision to challenge misinformation or not. For several respondents, interest in the topic determined whether they further investigated the information they received or if they ignored it. As one participant said, "If it's for something I'm not very passionate about, I won't get involved, I just won't spread it. If it's something that, that I care about, then I research just by Googling or by looking at the source of the article…"

Another factor affecting engagement was an individual's perception of their expertise and competency in a particular topic:

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> If it's something science-related, yes, I would follow up on it because I don't want [my dad] spreading things that are not particularly true that are science-related because that is my field, because I'm a scientist. So, I would try to sort of disarm any sort of pseudoscience…I would try to follow up and be like 'Well you know that's not actually true.' But beyond that no, anything else that's related to some[thing] random, probably not.

Controversial topics or those that have "nothing to do with you" were also avoided.

## Trust and Group Dynamics Important for Challenging Misinformation

WhatsApp by its intimate nature facilitates greater correction than other platforms,[26] but group dynamics also affect behavior.  Responses indicate that corrections are more likely to occur in one-on-one communication than in group chats, and in smaller groups than in larger groups. Several reasons account for this.

In groups, what happens can be likened to a free-rider problem,[27] where the propensity to rely on other individuals to make corrections increases with group size. In one-to-one messaging, there is no one else to do it. Another factor is group dynamics and group function. In larger, more heterogeneous groups, where the message frequency is high, people are more likely to ignore misinformation because the overall messaging is incessant. For example, one participant feels like "people don't even really read the groups when people are just forwarding things every day." Another participant echoed this: "…if it's the group chat I don't study it because they will be talking all day…it's too much."

Trust is also an important consideration regardless of the chat type. Greater trust is associated with a greater tendency to correct others. For contacts where less trust is built, fear of offending them is a disincentive to speak up. Additionally, a few people suggested that generational barriers also affected how comfortable they felt challenging false information. This is significant considering the correlation between misinformation spreading and age.

## Correction Can Cause Behavior Change

Evidence suggests that positive behavior change can follow challenges to inaccurate information. It can happen immediately, where subjects will go back and make corrections to previous posts, or it can affect messaging habits in the future. Some respondents reported this change in themselves:

> "
> I've been burned by that before, by people checking me to say, 'Hey this is fake.' So, since then I've been more careful about sharing things or believing anything that I see online without verifying it.

Others observed it in their contacts. Said one respondent, "I think my aunt, for example, used to be one who would send a lot of stuff and I'm always like, 'Aunty, that doesn't make sense or that's not real…' you know…she's now critical of things…"

This is not foolproof as respondents reported mixed success. The same factors that increase the likelihood of making a challenge — trust, group dynamics, and group size — also

affect the likelihood that the information will be impactful. Speaking of her family group, one participant said:

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> …it doesn't make a difference because they will still come up with a new story that they find. And you know, everybody doesn't respond to everything, there's also that. So sometimes something is posted, and nobody says anything.

## ROLE OF CULTURE AND COMMUNITY
### WhatsApp Narratives and Caribbean Culture

Previous studies have demonstrated how social structures — for instance race, religion, and social class — shape misinformation and how communities adapt misinformation to their experiences.[28] A similar process is observed here.

Many countries in the Caribbean have strong storytelling traditions[29] where stories are related with humorous anecdotes[30] and add-ons to supplement a narrative. This cultural framework provides fertile ground for falsehoods to flourish:

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> We talk a lot, and we love storytelling. So, it's always like, you know, 'I hear from this person…' and then it goes on and it goes on. You see it in physical interactions. It's not new to us. It's just now we have it on the phone.

Another respondent shared:

> "
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> There's a lot of colloquial gossip going on about different politicians about who have baby with who and who sleeping with who, who get stove and fridge…it's in the same vein of what we're already experiencing, it just ramps it up to eleven. It exploits the same weaknesses we have in our own politics in the Caribbean.

These traditions are not only about bacchanal[31] and commess.[32] Trini ole talk — and other West Indian variants — are used to pose questions and answers. It is a "sensemaking" endeavor that helps Caribbean people understand "the unfolding lives and perspectives of each other."[33] It is in this context that the communal sharing of information for verification and discussion is taking place on WhatsApp.

The high presence of health and wellness misinformation can also be explained by cultural factors. The region has "a long history of using herbal medicine for disease management and maintenance of health."[34] Due to the multi-ethnic composition of the islands, a range of traditions — African, Asian, and indigenous[35] — are incorporated.[36] It is used for general health and wellness, as well as in the treatment of common ailments and chronic conditions.[37] Herbal medicine is also widely viewed as effective for specific ailments.[38] It is therefore unsurprising that health information is routinely shared between Caribbean people, but this increases the risk of false information infiltrating these messages.

Also unsurprising is the presence of religious conspiracies. "If you are Christian or you believe in witchcraft, Obeah, or Santería or anything like that, you're going to hold to your beliefs." The Caribbean region has huge religious diversity[39] and a majority of the CARICOM population is affiliated with a religion. Again, it is within this cultural environment that conversations on the app are taking place.

## Digital Diasporas and Reconstructed Identities

The Caribbean diaspora is a "highly engaged population" with strong ties to home countries in the region.[40] WhatsApp is used to maintain these ties. These enhanced linkages affect the dynamics of the diaspora and ensure that topics and modes of communication for individuals in this group remain influenced by the homeland despite their geographical distance.

Findings indicate that WhatsApp is mainly used for Caribbean contacts, both back home and within the diaspora. This affects the content of the misinformation that the target population is exposed to[41] and explains their lower vulnerability to misinformation experienced by other diaspora communities.[42]

WhatsApp is also used to maintain direct connections between Caribbean migrants and their descendants. The diaspora is reconstructed in cyberspace[43] as an extension of the physical diaspora, where "cultural identity is created and maintained through the process of sharing collective knowledge…"[44]

The use of WhatsApp specifically for Caribbean people is both a passive and an active process. Active, because several respondents admitted to strategically distributing contacts across different apps based on nationality:

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> …It's so funny. Once you kind of identify or you think that person is Trinidadian, I would message them on WhatsApp…I really should be using iMessage for my Trini friends who live in the Trini New York Community, but we just use WhatsApp.

And passive because like in other countries in the Global South,[45] WhatsApp plays an important role in keeping Caribbean communities connected:[46]

> **"**
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> [It's for] people back home and people in the Caribbean diaspora in the U.S. People who are from here I realize more use iMessage or text.

As WhatsApp becomes more mainstream,[47] this may change the dynamics of WhatsApp use for Caribbean immigrants in the U.S. and their vulnerability to misinformation on the app.

## Culture as a Strength and Weakness

While every respondent recognized the potential threat of health misinformation, the propensity to share gossip was viewed as more innocuous. Fake news for entertainment purposes, however, does not preclude the negative effects of misinformation.[48] For instance, one participant described how misinformation affected her family after they were contacted by a stranger on Facebook to discuss a rumor circulating about her brother:

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> She then goes, 'No, [there's] this rumor going around on WhatsApp, people texting, talking about…he was sick.' I said, 'I'll pause you right there.' Literally I just paused her…I said, 'You know what, whatever information you have or whatever information you think you have, you keep that because that's for you.' Somebody who don't know this man, they hear, 'Oh yeah he committed….' [They think] 'But what you mean? He committed suicide? He was such a loved man…' No such thing. The man died from sleep apnea…But to them they're saying that he had this, he had…No, nothing like that.

Tackling this from a cultural standpoint may be difficult, given that embellishment is a feature of Caribbean storytelling. "People love the bacchanal, the drama…" Nonetheless, it is worth confronting.

Positively, strong community bonds mean Caribbean communities already possess a framework to counteract the negative effects of intra-network misinformation. This should be the starting point for any future initiatives to combat the spread of misinformation within this diaspora.

# CONCLUSION

This study is not without limitations. It relies on self-reported data, so it reflects people's reports on misinformation content and their own perceptions of misinformation levels.[49] The sample group is also unbalanced in terms of gender,[50] education,[51] and country distribution.[52] Nevertheless, this study is the first of its kind with this demographic and provides valuable insight into the ways in which people in the Caribbean diaspora experience misinformation and how they respond to it. The analysis revealed that misinformation was experienced at low levels but trends in content and demographics were observed. Culture was also found to influence sharing and response patterns. In tackling the issue of fake news on the app for Caribbean people, this can be a strength or a hindrance. Culturally sensitive, community-centered initiatives should take the forefront in solution planning; however, more research needs to be conducted to better understand this diaspora group and its behaviors for more general conclusions to be drawn.

# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

# ENDNOTES

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10 Girvan, N. (2001). Reinterpreting the Caribbean. *New Caribbean Thought: A Reader*, 3–23. p, 3.

11 The West Indies Federation is a now-defunct political union consisting of ten formal members (Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, Dominica, Grenada, Jamaica, Montserrat, the then St Kitts-Nevis-Anguilla, Saint Lucia, St Vincent, and Trinidad and Tobago), all part of the British Caribbean and two observer members, Guyana and Honduras. In modern parlance, West Indies is often used interchangeably with the Caribbean but for this report, it will refer only to the English-speaking territories, that is all aforementioned countries minus Honduras. Smith, M. G. (1965). *The Plural Society in the British West Indies*. University of California Press.

12 The Caribbean Community (CARICOM) is an intergovernmental organization established with the signing of the Treaty of Chaguaramas to support regional integration amongst its member states. Caribbean Community Secretariat. (2023, June 20). Member States and Associate Members [2023]. *CARICOM Blog*. https://caricom.org/our-community/who-we-are/our-governance/member-states-and-associate-members/; Open Democracy. (2018, July 8). *Migratory patterns in the Caribbean: Impacts and perspectives for Caribbean countries*. Migratory patterns in the Caribbean: impacts and perspectives for Caribbean countries. https://www.open-diplomacy.eu/blog/migratory-patterns-in-the-caribbean-impacts-and-perspectives-for-caribbean

13 This includes Caribbean people who migrated to the U.S., as well as their descendants. Hosein et al., 2006.

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16 Batalova, 2019.

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26 Rossini, P., Stromer-Galley, J., Baptista, E. A., & Veiga de Oliveira, V. (2021). Dysfunctional information sharing on WhatsApp and Facebook: The role of political talk, cross-cutting exposure and social corrections. *New Media & Society*, *23*(8), 2430–2451. https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444820928059

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[42] Trauthig & Woolley, 2022. Namely political propaganda produced by malevolent disinformation agents.

[43] The concept of digital diasporas refers to the virtual community created by members of an immigrant group who engage in online interactional transactions. Everett, A. (2009). *Digital diaspora: A race for cyberspace*. State University of New York Press; Laguerre, M. S. (2010). Digital diaspora: Definition and models. *Diasporas in the New Media Age: Identity, Politics, and Community*, 49–64.

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[52] Though there are many unifying factors that connect West Indian countries, individual territories remain unique; generalizing can therefore be thorny, especially when every country is not equally represented.