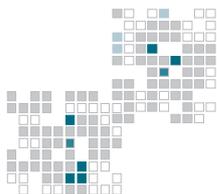


# THE FORGOTTEN BORDER: DISCRIMINATION AND YOUTH CIVIC ENGAGEMENT OF YOUNG LATINA/ OS THROUGH MEDIA LITERACY AND DIGITAL PRODUCTION

LA FRONTERA OLVIDADA: DISCRIMINACIÓN Y PARTICIPACIÓN  
CÍVICA DE LOS JÓVENES DE JÓVENES LATINA / OS A TRAVÉS DE LA  
ALFABETIZACIÓN DE LOS MEDIOS DE COMUNICACIÓN Y LA PRO-  
DUCCIÓN DIGITAL

*A FRONTEIRA ESQUECIDA: DISCRIMINAÇÃO E O ENVOLVIMENTO  
CÍVICO DA JUVENTUDE DA LATINA / OS JOVENS ATRAVÉS DA AL-  
FABETIZAÇÃO MEDIA E DA PRODUÇÃO DIGITAL*

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## ABSTRACT

This article discusses youth civic engagement through media participation in the context of media literacy and production workshop initiative. Embracing practical production in media education which emphasizes the participatory opportunities inherent in communication media, I discuss different modes of civic engagement from young Latina/os living along the U.S.-Mexico border. An examination of participatory dynamics surrounding one video production is presented to address issues of discrimination by corporate news media in their representation of the Latina/o community and to challenge the usual portrayal of young audiences as positively disenfranchised from politics.

KEYWORDS: MEDIA LITERACY, YOUNG LATINA/O AUDIENCES, U.S.-MEXICO BORDER

## RESUMEN

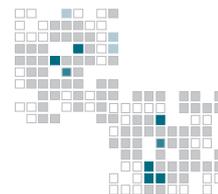
Este artículo analiza el compromiso cívico de los jóvenes a través de la participación en el contexto alfabetización y producción de medios. Implicando la producción práctica en la educación para medios, misma que enfatiza las oportunidades de participación inherentes a los medios de comunicación, discuto diferentes modos de participación cívica de jóvenes latina/os que viven a lo largo de la frontera de Estados Unidos y México. El texto examina las dinámicas participativas que rodean una producción de video para abordar temas de discriminación por parte de los medios noticiosos en su representación de la comunidad latina y cuestiona la descripción habitual de las audiencias juveniles como personas desvinculadas de la política.

PALABRAS CLAVE: ALFABETIZACIÓN DE MEDIOS, AUDIENCIAS JÓVENES LATINA/OS, FRONTERA MÉXICO-ESTADOS UNIDOS

## RESUMO

Este artigo discute o engajamento cívico dos jovens através da participação por meio da mídia no contexto da alfabetização midiática e da iniciativa de oficinas de produção. Abraçando a produção prática em educação midiática, que enfatiza as oportunidades participativas inerentes aos meios de comunicação, discuto diferentes modos de engajamento cívico da juventude Latina que vive ao longo da fronteira entre os EUA e o México. Um exame da dinâmica participativa em torno de uma produção de vídeo é apresentado para abordar questões de discriminação por meios de comunicação corporativos em sua representação da comunidade Latina e para desafiar o retrato habitual de audiências jovens como positivamente desprivilegiado da política.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: ALFABETIZAÇÃO DE MÍDIA, UDIÊNCIAS JOVEM LATINA, FRONTEIRA EUA-MÉXICO



## Introduction

This article tries to bring cultural and critical studies of media literacy into the realm of media participation, while it contributes to our understanding of what civic engagement and power means in the age of “new media convergence”. Certainly, the notion that participation in media gives a sense of “agency” that comes from a capability of being in control of the production process –and of being able to represent one’s own experiences has deep roots in cultural and media studies traditions (Burn, 2007). It should not be surprising then, that participation in media literacy programs would be widely considered beneficial to the youth involved.

In this work, I provide a narrative account of my experience as an instructor in a media literacy and media production workshop at a San Ysidro social service and community center, where the media process of production led to a shifting perspective for all the members involved in the media production of “San Ysidro: The forgotten Border / La Frontera Olvidada”.<sup>1</sup> Through a detailed analysis of the media production choices made by the group, I illustrate how each of the three young media producers changed in their dispositions toward media and the city administration in ways they had not expected. I consider two specific contested representations that emerged in production over the U.S.-Mexico border region: the contention between San Ysidro youth and news media corporations, both from San Diego and Tijuana; and the contention between inclusion and exclusion (discrimination) to the U.S. from young Latina/os due to their Mexican roots. In this sense, this article tries to map a range of responses to the “misrepresentation” of traditional coverage and the expansion of exclusion narratives into many parts of their everyday lives.

<sup>1</sup> Casa Familiar (2012, August 8) *San Ysidro: Frontera Olvidada / A forgotten border* [video file] Retrieved from: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2YiaSW91rUA>

On the one hand, these participants are striking back against media representations, reasserting the idea of media “discrimination” in the face of more relevant and profound social information about their community. On the other hand, these young participants embrace the interests of a social service institution (Casa Familiar) fostering a distinctive approach to media literacy education and encouraging participation through the knowledge of the local community issues.

I argue that these contentions and new dispositions toward news media challenge the typical representation of young people as positively disenfranchised (Bhavnani, quoted by Buckingham, 2000) or uninterested in politics and in the responsibilities of being active citizens in a democracy. David Buckingham examined this issue in his study of news media and youth, “young people’s alienation from the domain of politics should not be interpreted merely as a form of apathy or ignorance. On the contrary, I would see it as a result of their positive exclusion from that domain” (Buckingham, 2000, p. 218). In this case, an investigation of the city budget cuts toward their community shifted from what participants perceived as typical news information to a learning experience.

Media participation through production practices is key to civic engagement. There is a growing body of research about how the experience of production can enable young people to reflect upon their emotional investments in media –in ways that are more difficult to achieve through critical analysis alone (De Block et al., 2005). As scholars David Buckingham, Jenny Grahame and Julian Sefton-Green (1995) instruct in their study of practical production in media education, it is essential to offer the participants a high degree of control over their video production to enable them to engage with the work in very close detail. Also, they encourage participants to explore many themes and to consider how the output might be appealing for different audiences.

## 1. Media literacy, media production and civic engagement

I agree with media literacy advocates who point to the importance of media literacy programs during the past several decades. Jenkins, for example, writes, “students also must acquire a basic understanding of the ways media representations structure our perceptions of the world; the economic and cultural contexts within which mass media is produced and circulated; the motives and goals that shape the media they consume; and alternative practices that operate outside the commercial mainstream” (Jenkins et al., 2009, p. 20). However, most of the studies on this matter show generalizations about learning skills or “participatory culture” that tends to obscure the nuances of participation and civic engagement.

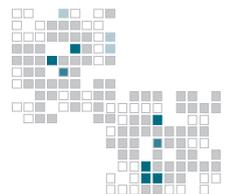
In the digital media era, media education does not begin “from the view that the media are necessarily and inevitably harmful, or that young people are simply passive victims of media influence. On the contrary, it begins from students existing knowledge and experience of media, rather than from the instructional imperatives of the teacher... Rather than seeking to protect children from media, it aims to develop their understanding of, and participation in, the media culture that surrounds them” (Buckingham, p. 146; following Bazalgette, 1989). The Buckingham model emphasizes the centrality of the socio-historical context and the resulting impact on expectations for youth participation in civic life.

At the same time, Twenty-First Century media literacy is thought to be remarkably participatory when compared to past generations. However, media production or practical media production traditionally have been left outside of the field of media literacy, and even outside the field of media studies in general. Buckingham (2003) suggests that this happened because of two things: a) the pervasive belief that student media work lacked scholarly merit, mainly because it was

seen as reproductions or imitations of dominant media ideologies; and b) the “technicist” emphasis on production skills that overlooks the process and meanings of media makings. Kafai and Peppler (2007) have pointed out that today media educators still seem to emphasize in their critical research analyses overproduction: reading over writing. They follow Buckingham (2003) when arguing that even with the acknowledgment of convergence culture by media educators, there has been no proper understanding of what this might mean for media production in general, more specifically on how we can discuss the numerous dimensions that are involved in coherently producing new media artifacts.

Media educator Sefton-Green (2006) observed that the dialogue in media education and education research shifted in the last twenty years; from one focusing on media effects on audiences, to one emphasizing the empowerment of participants because of the potential of non-professional media producers, especially youth. Jenkins (2006) states that media production and creative writing are more commonplace in the age of participatory culture.

These statements resonate with traditional focus of educational researchers and practitioners on youths’ critical understanding of new media as one key aspect of media and digital literacy (Buckingham, 2011, Ito et al., 2010). Media education scholars have pushed for the integration of media literacy and production to educate youth about the construction of media and meaning making. To Buckingham (1995, 2003), Sefton-Green, (1994, 2006), Jenkins (2006, 2009), Orozco (2010) and Kafai and Peppler (2011), media production as participation is a crucial component in new media education. These scholars have been interested in how individuals use audiovisual technologies to represent themselves, how they communicate with others and produce meaning.



The use of technical media in-group activity generally presupposes a process of participation; that is, it involves collaboration and procedures. In considering the kind of involvement and partnership, it is essential to distinguish between those aimed at learning, and those activities addressing issues of public concern. In practice, the later actions may go together or overlap to a considerable extent to civic engagement. In past twenty years, a movement has emerged to promote greater civic engagement among young adults in order to study the “ways in which citizens participate in the life of a community in order to improve conditions for others or to help shape the community’s future” (Adler and Goggin, 2005, p. 236). When media participants encode/encode and produce representations, they employ not only the skills and competencies required by practical media production but also various forms of knowledge about media and political concerns (in this case, U.S. immigration). The video “The Forgotten Border” and its online circulation (Youtube.com) shape the ways they understand the representations, how they relate to them, and how they can contribute a discussion in their community.

## 2. The setting: South San Diego San Ysidro, California

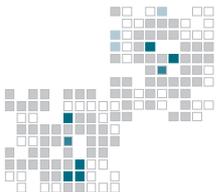
Located immediately north of the U.S.-Mexico border and 20 miles south of downtown San Diego, San Ysidro suffered for several decades of social and economic hardships. San Ysidro developed as a farming and residential community during the first half of the past century (Lee, 1975). Because of the shortage of United States labor toward the end of the World War II, Mexican nationals were allowed to work in southern California legally thanks to the Bracero Program –which continued through 1964- without obtaining permanent residency. Many of these workers eventually settled, and San Ysidro experienced ongoing residential development due to the growth in border

traffic and regional population.

A substantial Latino component characterizes the San Ysidro population. According to the San Diego Association of Governments (SANDAG) Census in 2010 over 90 percent of residents are Hispanic, compared to 28 percent of San Diego City residents –only 2 percent are Non-Hispanic Whites compared to 45 percent of County residents. However, San Ysidro comprises a small portion of the City’s total population, estimated at 28,707 representing just 2.1 percent of the City’s total. Even with large average household size (4.21 compared to 2.80 for the city overall) and a larger share of households with children under age 18 (58.6 percent) than the City (30.7 percent), San Ysidro lacks ample public facilities such as parks, libraries, and recreational spaces. In addition, even with this high proportion of families, this border town has a relatively low rate of home ownership: less than 40 percent of households are owners (compared to ownership rates of over 50 percent citywide).

The lack of development in the district left the area severely deficient in resources. As with many marginalized urban settings, crime rates and gang activity were high, and levels of educational attainment are the lowest in San Diego: almost 47 percent of residents 25 or older do not have a high school diploma (15 percent citywide). Similarly, San Ysidro has lower levels of household incomes compared to the City. The median household income is around \$22,000 year. 64.2 percent of the population is with incomes below \$50,000 (40.8 percent for the City). Besides, the area has a higher percentage of individuals in poverty (26 percent) than the City (13.1 percent).

San Ysidro has numerous subsidized housing complexes for low-income families. One can find money exchange business, liquor stores, retail stores, and fast food restaurants (these outnumber grocery stores and healthy eating establishments). To stand even a remote chance to face



these border town problems, Casa Familiar addresses some of the social and economic issues.

As mentioned earlier, members of Casa Familiar worked to create better conditions through which residents can access housing, education, arts, and social services. Casa Familiar addresses many local needs and seeks to engage residents in demanding better services from the local government. The UCSD Community Stations and the Laboratory of Comparative Human Cognition (LCHC)<sup>2</sup> collaborated by trying to create new social practices that people could find beneficial using this “optiportable” technology.

This initiative was especially challenging because the UCSD Communities Stations was conceived not only as a practicum course where undergraduates could participate, but as a three-year-long program on designing learning and cultivating responsible citizenship as a part of the experience, to make the community and undergraduate participants familiar with the technology, and the production of knowledge.

### 3. Media literacy workshop in South San Diego: Participatory action research

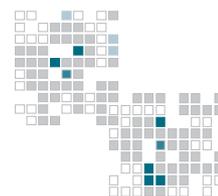
For this study, I utilized participatory action research. The methodology of the workshop on media literacy was inspired in an overall research program for the study of education and human development in the context of community. Overall, this type of approach involves various phases of involvement of the investigator with the community of individuals who constitute the subject of the research. Participatory action research involves working collaboratively with the community to identify issues that are problem-

atic for the community and for which we jointly determine strategies to change social practices needed to overcome the problem (Brown and Cole, 2001). For McIntyre (2008), participatory action research aims to promote the active involvement of researchers and participants in the co-construction of local knowledge, self, and critical awareness. The goal is to foster individual and collective social change and partnerships between researchers and participants in the planning, implementation, and dissemination of the research process and its products.

From June to August 2012, I instructed the media literacy and workshop production two times a week. The group met regularly every Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday from 4 to 6 pm at the Casa Familiar youth center. When I initially started to instruct the workshop, there were four participants in attendance. By the end of the first week of the project, I had three participants. The adolescents came from different places around San Ysidro. Most of their families arrived as undocumented immigrants. Some of them lived with their nuclear family in one house. Most families had relatives in Tijuana, Mexico with whom they were in contact. Thus, the adolescents had generally experienced some degree of a border-crossing life between Tijuana and San Diego.

The context in which the media workshop took place was of crucial importance for the resulting media productions. The social context of the institution (Casa Familiar) was also the base for the ethnographic fieldwork. I acted as an extra resource during the production sessions, but my role was primarily to observe and take notes on relevant processes and actions going on in the workshop. The setting was an arena for rich and intense discussions between adolescents, program coordinators, interviewees, and me. It provided an excellent opportunity to study young people negotiations and development of stories; their editing as well as their knowledge of audiences.

<sup>2</sup> The *Community Stations* at the University of California, San Diego are field-based hubs in underserved neighborhoods on both sides of the San Diego-Tijuana border, where experiential learning, research and teaching are conducted collaboratively with community-based non-profits, advancing a new model of community-university partnership and reciprocal knowledge production. Web-page <http://blum.ucsd.edu/comsta.html>



### 3.1. Pre-production

The group of focus was composed of three adolescents, two males and one female: Pablo, a third-year middle school student, and two juniors in high school, Juanita and Miguel. The pre-production process can be outlined as follows: the young media producers had the common idea that the production should deal with the topic of “San Ysidro.” To make sense of this task, the young people were asked to think about their community. They initiated the task with a brainstorming session where the adolescents could discuss what “San Ysidro” really meant to them. The topic also stimulated extensive group discussion and gave rise to plenty of points of views and ideas about media.

The group quickly arrived at a consensus as to the general focus of their video: how the city budget cuts are affecting their community, specifically Casa Familiar, the social services institution; and how news media is covering the San Ysidro community. While they all agreed that the budget cuts topic would be worthwhile to pursue, the specifics of their argument were still undecided. As a group, they discussed the possibility of having their video explore and reveal the impacts of impending budget cuts that would limit the everyday life of their community and the services provided by Casa Familiar. This focus on budget cuts helped the group to get started with the process of researching the topic through gathering, selecting, and handling related media.

The selecting of a topic was the beginning of the pre-production process, taking the first steps into a continual process of negotiation and reconciliation of knowing. While this phase only lasted a few days, this initial step helped frame the whole idea of the video. As the group began their research, however, their focus shifted away from budget cuts toward exploring the struggles of San Ysidro and discrimination.

For their pre-production research, all three-

group members ask their relatives and friends if they had suffered some discrimination in their everyday life. Manuel and Pablo completed their task together since they are cousins. Juanita completed her work by herself and wrote a small script. Before the start of the media literacy program, Juanita went to the community meeting described earlier. Inspired by the reports that local members published about budgets cuts, she wanted to do her part to promote awareness or “enseñar.”

She brought a bilingual local newspaper called “Borders-Fronteras” printed by Casa Familiar. With the budget cuts affecting the agency, the “BordersFronteras” reporter Eleazar López highlighted the news story “They leave Casa Familiar without Funds.” López framed the situation because of San Ysidro’s agencies disadvantage competition, namely, losing to other social services providers located in high-income districts.

Less than a week later, she wrote a draft, a script for the video production. Juanita managed the script; she edited the whole story, getting it ready for production. She encouraged Miguel to closely compare her original draft with the news reports from Casa Familiar and consulted with them on issues of style and grammar as needed. Miguel initially checked the script in minutes until Pablo suggested a careful read-through where they as participants could contribute. From that point on, she was in charge of the media production and drew on the contributions from other peer participants. With a draft of the storyboard completed on target, Juanita congratulates everyone, as though she is accepting the role of the director. This then leads into a discussion of the shooting schedule: the others increasingly see Juanita as the leader.

Miguel later agreed to include the Casa Familiar story, yet he suggested that the story would work best if they show some “testimonials” from its affected members, a focus on the human interest of the situation.

From the start, Juanita framed the project with

explicit pedagogical goals (Image 22) that she used to help parents understand their community. In a group discussion with the other two participants, Juanita described her goals.

Miguel: People who live close to the border get discriminated by the “gringos.”

Juanita: The district, they discriminate. We have to inform the community about the budget cuts.

Pablo: That is a good theme. We’re not going to get bored.

In the conversation above, the group engages with a discussion about discrimination that reveals that each group member has a similar story living along the U.S.-Mexico border. Juanita knows what to write, and she tells her group that they have to inform their community. Of interest in this exchange, and overall discussion is the power among group members. In most cases, it has been Juanita and sometimes Miguel, who has exercised power in the group. As a high school student, Juanita has voiced most authority in the group related to the topic focus and script ideas. Pablo has deferred to the other participants in most cases. In this instance, Pablo interjects as a collaborator who does not want to get bored.

Pablo’s direct reference to having fun cannot be avoided but instead must be addressed. Juanita affirms the importance of racial discrimination, yet Juanita qualifies it stating that it is the government, which discriminates and cuts the funding to institutions functioning close to the border. Pablo further dilutes the comment by projecting “we’re not going to get bored.” To Pablo, the fact that the topic was budget cuts did not interfere with finding a sense a purposeful pleasure. This was one of the most positive features of the project. Of course, teenagers want to have fun; but in this context, Pablo was saying that they were going to have fun with “this” theme, which of-

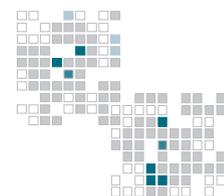
ten yielded sensible truths – such as the group discovery that San Ysidro was far more impoverished than other districts.

Juanita was so good at reproducing Casa Familiar interests that one could forget that she’s just a site volunteer and not a social worker. For example, she provides information about how budget cuts are affecting the whole community. Juanita was anxious to see her work recognized by the site coordinators, community, parents, and her fellow peers. She included detailed information about how Casa Familiar was affected.

Juanita tried to enable peer participants to immerse themselves into the local situation and to feel a real sense of connection to an actual community of people around San Ysidro who were working together “para salir adelante” (“to move forward in life”). The video they were creating together (building on the foundations of local newspapers) could not have been more different from the news reports they had viewed on television about San Ysidro or the U.S.-Mexico border. Here, people interviewed of different backgrounds and ages formed the San Ysidro community where individual contributions were accepted and where learning was appreciated.

The point of entry into this video production was the interpretation of a border town, San Ysidro, and subsequently, these accounts were woven into a series of “news stories” reporting on the consequences of budget cuts and media coverage events at the U.S-Mexico border.

As the group members moved through the script process, there was an oscillation of topic focus back and forth between three themes. First, presenting the budget cuts that are affecting the San Ysidro. Second, talking about Casa Familiar as an essential social service institution to the community. Third, exploring news media representations. This focus and intent are highly evident in the final video product, which will be discussed in more detail later in this chapter. For



now, however, the focus will remain on the participants' decision-making and interactions during the production process, since it is via these interactions that critical media participation dispositions were initiated.

This critical notion of participation was more evident in the third phase (editing or post-production) when contentions emerged. They were further refined in the post-production phase through a close discussion of the video interviews and tracked analysis of YouTube videos. Next, I describe certain vital events to illustrate moments of important critical thinking in the process of production and editing, moments that shape both the individual perspectives and their group focus for the video project.

### 3.2. Production

A critical aim of the video production project was to create a space in which young people felt free and comfortable to express their views using digital media technology. My role as a media educator and researcher was to listen and encourage young people's initiatives. In general, the different themes appeared to be trying to separate, as the adolescents or media producers often focused on mixed topics such as discrimination in media and budget cuts.

One week later the group was conducting interviews with residents. I checked with the group asking them how the interviews were coming. Juanita responded abruptly that because they could not find a parent willing to appear on camera, the project seemed to have stagnated. This quick response reveals to me that Juanita expresses some exasperation at the way people denied several interviews. She was still unsure of how to proceed with their video when they are unable to get interviewees –other than Casa Familiar members- to appear in front of the camera.

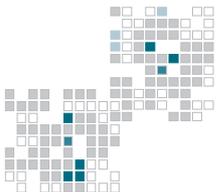
The rest of this session and the next are Juanita and Miguel with questions about pragmatics for

completion. Although Pablo waives participation in this discussion, he does express his willingness to continue with the digital video production about how people are affected by budget cuts.

All members start wading and searching on the Internet for audiovisual material. In this event there is much exchange of ideas; however, the sharing relies less on language and instead relies heavily on the shared knowledge of the YouTube video clips. The shared site of engagement is focused on various computer screens, which are located in front of them. Some clips related to San Ysidro were linked to the U.S.-Mexico border, especially the border-crossing situation. At one point, this audiovisual material led to a discussion about "forgottenness," San Ysidro as being consigned to oblivion. One reason why this theme raised such a debate was that the young media producers perceived a vulnerable situation.

Unlike the other districts in San Diego with better infrastructure and social services, San Ysidro was located at the end of the road. They referred to the closeness of Tijuana, Mexico and to the feeling of exclusion and the difficulties of "belonging." It seems that support and inclusion were highly valued in their mind. Also, there were references to English Language news media that they had viewed on television and the Internet in their lives and whom they often called "gringo media." For example, they agreed to include one Youtube video clip as an example: one clip from ABC news on how they cover traffic in San Ysidro.

In this case, the planning of scenes followed a schedule set up by Juanita and Miguel. It extended over one week in different settings, outdoors and indoors, with some interviewees: Casa Familiar youth coordinators and residents. The video uses these scenes to some extent, such as the trolley crossing the street when the light is on red, some shots of the local high school and neighborhood, and the U.S.-Mexico border, all recorded with flip



cameras and cell phones in some cases. The participants making this production were also demonstrating their knowledge of the “poor” neighborhood, as they were anxious that outsiders should have an inside look. For example, they recorded an altar of the Virgen of Guadalupe located in front of a house. The setting should look like a Latina/o community, Juanita and Miguel thought.

For Pablo, the Internet was crucial for him to get involved and participate in video production. In collecting material for the video, he found music that could express the sense of community. In this event, Youtube made new resources available, whereas the interaction with Juanita aided him in selecting the most useful resources for the purposes at hand (resources about songs referring to a “Come together” by the Beatles. Pablo’s intuition led him to eventually select another song called “Back in time” by Pitbull, which served as an empowering message for the beginning of the video dedicated to Latina/os and San Ysidro. In this song, Pitbull raps, “To understand the future we have to go back in time... Stop the movement, they can try if they want to, ignoring the Latino, yes, they can try if they want to”. The song serves as a reference, according to Pablo, to San Ysidro’s resilience to be forgotten. Although Pablo did not immediately have a say on the final cut of the video, his anticipation for doing so framed the narrative at the beginning and the end fundamentally. Again, even before working on the editing process, his intentions for including these songs anticipated the decision-making, reflecting the collaborative and dialogic character of this production process in the use of various media.

### 3.3. Post-production

Multiple objects and activities organized the post-production phase: the general storyboard, the interviews and audiovisual materials (video clips, and songs); the single laptop, and the Final Cut Pro interface. At this point, there is some di-

alogue among the group members. Instead, the Final Cut Program and audiovisual material are threaded together through repeated finger point gestures, communicating each other’s wishes.

This plurality and diversity of objects and actions allow for distancing from the sensitivity of the topic to a focus on task completion.

Juanita: We need to record a voice to my

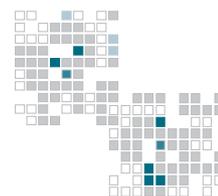
script Miguel: I can do it

Pablo: How about both of you do it?

Juanita: Then we need to include my interview

Of interest in this excerpt above is how much Juanita participates in the production. Similar to other moments where she has joined verbally, the conversation is heavily mediated by the interview she did, she frequently interjects that she thinks they should include the idea of San Ysidro as “forgotten” (an idea expressed by an interviewee). Unique to this situation, is that she is sitting on the computer and manipulating the Final Cut Program. In essence, she is shaping the editing process and has much control, at this moment, over the video production in its “raw” state. This suggests that for Juanita there was an idea that resonated with her after the interview with a local resident: the emergence of a framework to learn about U.S. politics -in this case, the perceived exclusion of the San Ysidro community.

Juanita was satisfied with the direction of the video content. She enjoyed learning the tools of video expression that being in an editor role allowed. In many ways, this reveals engaged participation for Juanita. Rather than experiencing video production as a vehicle to explore her expression as a youth female, it becomes a medium to further her “communal” identity. From the start, Juanita convinced the other participants about the path of the collective “discrimination” position rather than just “another video” posi-



tion. She recalled the educational purposes of the video production for the potential audiences: the San Ysidro community.

While working on their “sound off” narration of the video, she felt that Pablo’s Spanish reading and pronunciation was not very “clear” and offered to help on the “messy” sections.

In the final days of post-production, there is much editing. The editing is done in two steps that I described as the “rough cut” and “final cut.” Participants complete these events but in purpose for the whole. Miguel completed the rough cut by himself using Juanita’s script and basic storyboard. When I talked to him during the editing first phase process, Miguel explains to me that he has been selecting the material on the computer with some guidance of the group. He goes on to describe that, while Juanita created most of the script, he is excited about how he has edited some of the clips together. He shares an example of where one interview clips lead smoothly into another of the clip with a different person.

On the last day of editing, I talk with Pablo who is completing what he describes as the final touch. Pablo describes his contribution to the video as the “sound task.” He included the Pit Bull song at the start of the video. Taken together these two editing phases are a collaborative effort to accomplish a single task for a similar outcome: their video has become a calling for inclusion, and an potential learning experience “whenever people are engaged in activities with each other... the practice of participating—that is, being a youth media producer or a student— gives youth a chance to learn in a way that would be difficult to achieve in a classroom” (Goldman, Booker, and McDermott, 2008, 186).

#### 4. Conclusion

Media literacy participants think about video production in terms of creating openings for community representation. At the same time,

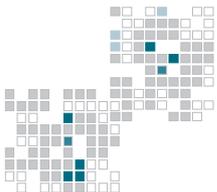
they are skilled in using new media technologies to engage with old media content, seeing the Internet, or in this case, Youtube as a vehicle for circulation of information about their community. Indeed, I have suggested that it is the interplay and tension between mainstream media and the force of media interaction/consumption that is driving many of the video production participation.

At every level, the notion of participation has emerged as a crucial concept, albeit surrounded by expectations. As consumers of media, they are asserting the right to participate in the culture, on their terms, when and where they wish. However, this empowered Latina/o citizen faces a series of struggles to preserve and broaden this perceived right to participate. All of these issues surfaced very visibly through two sets of contentions surrounding San Ysidro, CA as a border town.

I previously noted that this case challenged Buckingham’s notion of youth disenfranchised from institutional politics. However, it must be emphasized that Buckingham “argues, first of all, not that a politics is already there to be recognized but that it must be developed” (Richards, 2011, 151), finding ways of establishing its relevance and connection to personal experience.

This workshop is a case in point. First, if we think of institutional politics in terms of exclusion, then it is not surprising that this group complicated the notion of budget cuts as well as translating this topic into other more public forums (video exhibitions) and online platforms such as Youtube.com. This qualification of “politics must be developed” happened in the course of the workshop, encouraging young people critical media participation as cultural producers in their own right.

Another observation related to the finding that Latina/o participants are interested in institutional politics is that crucial parts of the video content that frame their message may not have resulted solely from the workshop itself. The most obvi-



ous motivation for their interest had to do with Casa Familiar being left out of the distribution of funds. Casa Familiar, as an institutional context is set in the heart of the San Ysidro community, located in across sites of the border town. These participants had every reason to be close to political concerns related to their volunteer work at Casa Familiar; at least Juanita had that reason. As a young Latina teen living in a low-income community, perhaps she could hardly see otherwise. Moreover, this is why Buckingham's argument is quite striking today, sixteen years later, precisely because of its generalization of individual young people interests: the interests of the young upper-middle-class, white, young people.

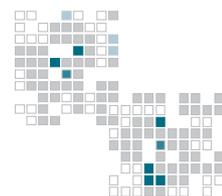
All of the above suggest that inclusion is at heart a struggle over what rights we have to represent ourselves. As I already stated, media literacy is understood here as not only what we can learn about media and through media but also what we can do or produce with media. Who has the right to participate in "American" culture and on what terms? "Latinidad" and the U.S.-Mexico border are particularly rich focal points for studying current media literacy programs and media participation because they deal so explicitly with issues of learning and identity and because media literacy programs have been praised for inciting young people to develop their skills.

After finishing the video, which they have entitled *San Ysidro: Frontera Olvidada/A Forgotten Border*, the group shared it with the Casa Familiar staff and volunteers. Months later, in March of 2013, they presented their video at a Border Film Festival Week at the University of San Diego. At the festival, during the 20 minutes Q&A with the young media producers, one audience viewer asked them to explain to the public why they chose the topic of budget cuts and discrimination. At first, no one steps forward to speak, but then Pablo, the youngest participant, replied, "We wanted to learn why San Ysidro was forgot-

ten. San Ysidro is a very important city, you cross from Tijuana to the United States, people don't recognized that, just pass by our city, and we have the ugliest and oldest trolleys."

The mention of their video focus being that of a "learning experience" was first mentioned here at this moment. That said, the pedagogical, oscillation of focus is evident in the final cut as well. In breaking down the video by the thematic scenes, it is clear to see the shifts that occur throughout the video. For example, the video opens with two scenes presenting San Ysidro as an important border town. The video then shifts to one scene of interview footage of Casa Familiar staff presenting the various budget cuts on the region. The presentation of the budget cuts continues to shift back and forth throughout the video, from Casa Familiar to transportation quality. The video continues presenting the news media discrimination of San Ysidro. The video then ends with one scene focusing on the "coming together" of the community. While not directly related to the previous scenes focusing on budget cuts and news media, this scene is presented as relating to San Ysidro in that they claim rights and thus provide a future improvement to the border town. With so many representations of San Ysidro in a single video, it is difficult to identify a central argument about the budget cuts beyond perhaps the region being a "needing" place and an important strategic region. Further conversations with the group members in both class and post-production interviews, reveal that while their final media product may not show it, their views have changed significantly and continue to improve as the participation extends beyond the composition of the video.

As the young media producers developed their video about life at San Ysidro, they drew from each other experiences into their video, trying to preserve what each of them sees at its unique place within San Ysidro. The result is a jointly



produced “pedagogical” video –somewhere between a news report and documentary. The intertwining of short stories and interviews becomes a key element of bonding for these young producers, who come to care about one another through interacting with these situations.

With this case study, I want to suggest that media participation develops critical dispositions as producers: role-playing both as means of exploring a social realm and as mean of developing a richer understanding of themselves and the community around them. These teens came to understand discrimination by participating in media production practices, participating in such project helped them to map more fully the situation and the roles that various institutions played within the San Ysidro community. Much as a media professionals produce content by editing video clips registered through research with things learned through personal introspection and group collaboration, these young people were drawing on their own experiences to flesh out various aspects of their community. Other media education scholars worry that these productions are “imitating” pre-existing media content rather than creating their original works. Instead, one should think about their appropriation as learning. This is a kind of critical learning that comes through active participation. At the same time, the role of producers was inspiring for them to expand other types of literacy skills – those already acknowledged within education.

What is interesting about this media production process, though, is that it takes place beyond any formal learning. More and more, educators

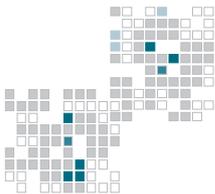
are coming to value the learning that occurs in these informal spaces (Jenkins, 2009; Cole et al., 2015), especially as they confront the constraints imposed on learning via an educational system (Cole, 1996) that standardizes content. They learned about their community problems and issues through involvement in activities such as interviewing or editing the video, things that teachers and parents can regard as essential pursuits.

The video was honest but with technical and aesthetical difficulties. During the Border Film Festival Week at USD, the video raised questions about the Latina/o community and the profound challenges of engaging youth in the video production process. One audience member noticed the representation of San Ysidro as a “Mexican community... is that bad?” she asked.

Pablo: No

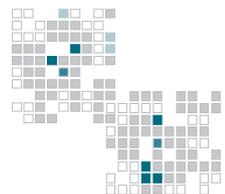
Juanita: Well, of course, it’s not bad because it shows how much culture you have and what could be done to improve this because it’s not where you come from... its how you confront situations.

Some media educators had stated the possibilities of making media could enable youth to discover the power of their voices when they name and imagine how they might change their worlds. This video production was a medium through which young people developed critical literacy and recognized their potentials for leadership and social change. This example illustrated how important it is to create an environment where youth can participate, dialogue and learn in critical ways.



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**Source (Video)**

Casa Familiar (2012, August 8) *San Ysidro: Frontera Olvidada / A forgotten border* [video file] Retrieved from: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2YiaSW91rUA>

