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Does Pocahontas Count?
Sites of Engaged Process for Critical Literacy

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Abstract

This paper details my involvement as director of a media literacy program that brought together American And Nicaraguan youth to produce media about social issues. Grounded in civic engagement, youth leadership and media literacy, the program provided youth with media equipment and a series of workshops on digital literacy. Youth decided for their final project to re-create the colonial narrative Pocahontas. To me, this signaled a failure of critical media literacy programming to guide young people to tell critical stories. On further examination, I came to relate to this occurrence in a deeper way, wondering how they came to tell this story and discovering something rich and creative underneath the final product. In this paper, I explore the production process for this video, pushing at the boundaries of what constitutes both media literacy and civic engagement, and asking questions about how we understand what constitutes critical media literacy. Instead, I propose that when we focus on the product as what evidences critical literacy or civic engagement, we lose sight of the method. In this case, method was the home of powerful processes of literacy engagement around issues of class and race that were obscured by the use of the colonial narrative. This paper explores this tension, in order to both examine the challenges around producing a final product inextricably tied to colonial patterns of gender inequality and to give voice to the rich practices of critical literacy that the production process initiated.

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Introduction: Method as Process and Process as a Method

> *Youth gathered together outside a tiny school building, many of them holding flip cameras. As they gathered, the energy grew- they had just won a video-production contest for a short music video they made, and they were proud. They lived in a small rural community off the pan-American highway, and were enrolled in a media literacy and civic engagement program.*
>
> *This group of youth had won a program contest, and their prize was a chunk of money which they could invest in a community development project. The energy was palpable, and the conversation shifted back and forth between conversations about what project they would do and what their next video would be. Once most of the youth had arrived, they settled into a big semi-circle to begin planning their next projects.*

Figure 1 (left). Four young women - two from the US and two from Nicaragua- wait for their peers to arrive at a group planning session. *Figure 2 (right).* A group of young people gather round a shared laptop computer as they begin contemplating their stories.

From 2009-2012, I was the Director of a media literacy program in rural Nicaragua. The program, funded by two nonprofits – one a major international development agency (henceforth referred to as IDA) and the other a smaller international youth leadership organization (henceforth referred to as IYA) – brought American and Nicaraguan youth together to produce media about social issues. Grounded in civic engagement, youth leadership and media literacy, the program provided youth with media equipment and a series of workshops on digital literacy. For eight weeks participants lived together and made media pieces like radio shows, short films, and photo installations.

The group of youth hanging in the shade and lounging in red plastic chairs – the group that had won a chunk of money because of their use of media for social justice – went on to remix the Disney movie Pocahontas for one of their videos. They came up with the idea in a big youth group meeting, and they were so excited. When they finished, they held a big screening, and they invited everyone from the community. When I saw the film for the first time, I immediately became concerned that remixing a colonial narrative like *Pocahontas,* as told by Disney, signaled a failure of critical media literacy programming to guide young people to tell critical stories. On further examination, I came to relate to this occurrence in a deeper way, wondering how they came to tell this story and discovering something rich and creative underneath the final product, which signaled little more than colonialism and a failure of critical media literacy to me the first time I watched it. In this paper, I explore the production process for this video, pushing at the boundaries of what constitutes both media literacy and civic engagement, and asking questions about how we understand what constitutes critical media literacy. Instead, I propose that when we focus on the product as what *evidences* critical literacy or civic engagement, we lose sight of the method – the home, in this case, of powerful processes of literacy engagement around issues of class and race that were obscured by the use of a colonial narrative, *Pocahontas.* This paper explores this tension, in order to both examine the challenges around producing a final product inextricably tied to colonial patterns of gender inequality *and* to give voice to the rich practices of critical literacy that the production process initiated.

Media, Literacy, and Civic Engagement

Literacy scholars have long been invested in the intersections between civic participation and the ability to read and write. The link between narration and public participation could be traced to a Frierian approach to that foregrounded writing as central for marginalized populations working towards claiming power in their communities (Freire & Horton, 1990). Working in this tradition, critical literacies emerged as the framework for those collaborating with people in order to combat marginalization and break down structural inequities (McLaren & Hammer, 1996; Peters & Lankshear, 1996). Shifts in communication networks related to the increasing entanglement of modern life with digital media networks have centralized concerns about the movement of literacies into networked spaces and how it is that learners attain agency in these spaces, with a major branch of this work highlighting the participatory nature of digital media (Jenkins, 2006; New London Group, 1996; Rheingold, 2008). Working within a context that is increasingly digital, scholars have linked the ability to engage widespread communities through participatory media to civic engagement and notions of agency and empowerment (Bennett, 2007; Martens & Hobbs, 2015; Rheingold, 2008; see also Mack & Newberry in this volume).

Following this constructivist approach to literacy that highlights the possibility of agency, I have found that it often dovetails with what international youth programmers (like those at IDA/IYA) term *civic engagement*, or how and when people work within their communities in order to effect change. Within this context, I understand civic engagement as inextricably tied to practices of literacy, which James Gee (2012) defines as "being able to use academic language connected to institutional and public sphere knowledge-building and argumentation" (p. 419). Building on this definition, I understand digital literacy to mean the competencies necessary to participate fully in a society where knowledge is largely mediated through networks. Media literacy programs themselves are often conceptualized as social justice programming, many of which centralize media literacy as one avenue to amplify youth voice which will in turn, affect young peoples' ability to access power in their communities and carry out civic engagement work (Goodman, 2003; Soep, 2006, 2012). Digital and media literacy and programming are terms that I use somewhat interchangeably throughout this paper, both pointing to how young people engage with and make use of digital networks, mediated information, and visual storytelling.

Civic engagement is commonly understood as the capacity to enact and support progressive changes in one's own life and community (Mohamed, Inca, & Wheeler, 2001). It involves the sharing of values such that youth can build projects based in those values (Levin & Higgins-D'Alessandro, 2010). In most youth civic engagement programs these values stem from the belief that participation is fundamental to a functioning civic society and that youth should participate in public life (Camino & Zeldin, 2002). Most civic engagement programs take a positive youth development approach, highlighting the assets youth bring to collective well-being and the mutually beneficial relationship between youth and their communities (Levin & Higgins-D'Alessandro, 2010; Mohamed, Inca, Wheeler, 2001). Like in the program I ran, civic engagement is understood to reinforce social relationships and public participation, which are often linked to high levels of community health, happiness and safety (Martens & Hobbs, 2013).

The goal of the IYA/IDA program was to support young people's civic engagement by reinforcing digital literacy skills and fostering global connections among youth. However, participation in digital media programming doesn't always map onto civic engagement or media literacy ideals: in this article, I explore an instance in which youth reproduced *Pocahontas* without critically examining its colonial roots. I argue that youth are actually critically engaged with challenging issues of race, community, and collaboration at various sites of participation, however their engagement is obscured by our understanding of the final production. When critical media literacy or civic engagement depends on the production of an end product like a video, these moments of engagement may be easily missed even though they contain important learning about the very issues critical media literacy and civic engagement programs seek to address. For this reason, I argue that the media-making *process*, as opposed to the media product, is the home of (media) literacy engagement and a site of methodological inquiry that requires significant attention in order to understand how youth do civic engagement.

International Development and Civic Engagement

International development agencies have been the subject of much debate over the last several decades; in both practice-oriented spaces and in theoretical conversations challenges like how to deal with historically colonial North-South relationships have been dominant. In response to critiques of development that damages communities through imposition and needs-focused models, many development agencies have turned to civic engagement as a driving force for their work. This kind of focus relies on structures like participatory development, popular democracy, and community-based change (Manzoyo, 2013). International development agencies often clearly delineate what constitutes civic engagement and how it maps onto their community work. This focus is described in a publication on children's civic engagement by a group of organizations called the Inter-Agency Working Group on Children's Participation, which includes multiple major development agencies:

> Children's competencies for citizenship can be developed at home, in school, in youth groups and in the community. Schools are not the only place where citizenship skills can be built. Parents and communities also have roles to play. Civic engagement teaches children to use their potential for positive action. It can help prevent risky behaviours, and re-engages children who are out of school or are unemployed. This includes programmes that rehabilitate young offenders. Civic engagement prepares children to take constructive approaches to problems. Children need to be involved actively rather than just being told what to do. Children whose experiences are grounded in their own actions are able to speak with confidence. Civic engagement provides opportunities for leadership. (*Children as active citizens: Commitments and obligations for children's civil rights and civic engagement in east Asia and the Pacific*, 2007, p. 17)

This framing about what it means to be civically engaged goes on to impact and structure how youth participate in programming. Here, civic engagement is teaching “children to use their potential for **positive** action.” Likewise, it can “help prevent **risky behaviors** and reengage children who are **out of school or are unemployed**” and it does so by encouraging a “**constructive approach** to problems” (emphases added). A particular relationship to action is valued here: This relationship employs constructive problem solving. Clearly, for many of these agencies civic engagement is the transmission of values and beliefs so that youth build a society around those values (Levin & Higgins, 2010). Young people in the IDA/IYA media program quickly learned what kind of participation constituted success as per their relationship with IDA/IYA. This is evidenced in the vast majority of their short videos, many of which focused on issues like how to provide support to girls attending school and creative recycling programs -- all issues that were clearly and thematically aligned with the civic engagement charge. However, short pieces like *Pocahontas* also popped in the portfolios of work they created, which require further examination regarding how they understood and participated in civic endeavours.

Communication for social change is one orientation popular among those doing media alongside development, which assumes “that by communicating in particular ways the group or organization behind the communication intervention can orchestrate a particular change process” (Tufte, 2013, p. 19). NGO-led civic media programs tend towards the practices of public debate, social change, advocacy, public deliberation, and participation (Tufte & Wildermuth, 2013). The desire for youth to do civic engagement as defined by non-profit agencies does not always leave enough space to understand young peoples’ complex storytelling practices (Mack & Newberry; Spring & Fox, this collection). This article looks at one instance in which youth produced a re-mix of Disney’s Pocahontas as part of a civic engagement program that did not map onto the way the organizing non-profits understood civic engagement. I posit that while uncritically reproducing this colonial narrative may have clashed with civic engagement ideals, the youth were drawing on narratives from popular culture and knitting them together in order to attempt production of a video about race. Civic engagement can be identified in the media production process as opposed to evidenced in the final product. I focus on youths' production process, and on how popular culture is implicated in their stories and important in understanding how- and why- they tell certain stories.

Youth, Media and Civic Engagement

How to inspire youth to become involved in civic engagement initiatives is a topic of debate among educators, researchers and development leaders. Often, this generation of youth is positioned as "at the forefront of falling rates of civic engagement and political participation" (Xenos & Foot, 2008) and there is a persistent hope that civic engagement can be "a viable means for young people to develop and exercise leadership while effecting concrete changes in their communities" (Mohamed, Inca, & Wheeler, 2001, p. 3). The belief here is that participation is fundamental to a functioning civil society and that youth need more opportunities for civic engagement (Camino & Zeldin, 2002). Given the recent rise in access to participatory media, digital participation is one way to facilitate civic engagement and to "help students communicate in their public voices about issues they care about (Rheingold, 2008, p. 97). While some scholars believe that all youth digital participation constitutes civic engagement, most agree that youth who receive training in media literacy are more capable of participation in networked life (Martens & Hobbs, 2013). Media literacy programming moves beyond everyday digital participation, as Rheingold describes:

> [A]lthough a willingness to learn new media by point and click exploration might come naturally to today's student cohort, there's nothing innate about knowing how to apply

> their skills to the process of democracy. Internet media are not offered here as the solution to young people's disengagement from political life, but as a possibly powerful tool to be deployed toward helping them engage. (Rheingold, 2008, p. 99)

Many youth civic engagement programs are founded on the belief that public has ameliorative potential for marginalized youth (Broughton, 2012). This often results in the production of documentaries and socially oriented pieces. For example, The Educational Video Center in New York City provides disadvantaged youth the opportunity to make media because taking a video camera "into the community as a regular method for teaching and learning gives kids a critical lens through which they can explore the world around them" (Goodman, 2003, p. 3). A group of Canadian academics recently created a mobile media civic engagement program in Montreal, with the explicit goal of community betterment for at-risk youth (Pariser, Castro, & Lalonde, 2016). Another project, grounded in participatory development provided young people in Tazmania with the opportunity to produce community radio, which was found to be an empowering experience of civic engagement (Yarde, 2013). While there are some examples of civic media outside of the Western world, most of these programs - and especially, those documented by researchers - are situated in a Western context (Mbure, 2013). This article explores these concerns surrounding civic engagement and media in the context of rural communities and youth in Nicaragua.

Methods

International Youth Agency (IYA) is a non-profit that facilitates youth leadership programming. North and Latin American youth partner with development agencies to do leadership projects in rural communities. In Nicaragua, IYA partners with International Development Agency (IDA) on a children's rights and media program. As the Director of this program and I created a civic media curriculum in partnership with Nicaraguan youth. Los

Limones was one participating community. In 2010, two American and one urban Nicaraguan volunteers worked with three youth leaders (and their peers) from Los Limones on this project. They produced *Pocahontas,* based on the popular telenovela *Ojo por Ojo* mixed together with the Disney film *Pocahontas.* This article focuses on their process and examines whether the reproduction of a Disney narrative can be understood as constitutive of civic engagement in this program. This case study was part of a larger two-year ethnographic study on the youth media program, and my role as Director of the program definitively shapes my knowledge and perspective regarding the program. Data collected includes participant observation, semi-structured interviews, and video of the media production process (Pink, 2001, 2009; Stake, 2005; Yin, 2009). The production process included participation in workshops, meetings, and trainings. I participated in these activities as both a trainer and a researcher.

During data collection and analysis of the research, I focused on the media production process as it manifested in three interrelated sites- the site of production, the site of the artifact, and the site of audiencing (Rose, 2001). Following Gillian Rose's work on the geographic distribution of media, differentiating activity at each of these sites allowed me to focus on the production process as well as the artifact. At the site of production, I addressed how youth came together to form an idea, their processes of production and how they managed challenges as they arose. At the site of the artifact I looked at narrative, influences and production quality. Finally, at the site of audiencing I attended to the reception of the artifact by community members and organizational leaders. This approach was generative given my complex relationship with the program and my initial concern about the production of *Pocahontas,* allowing me to differentiate modes of interaction and meaning making practices across the media sites. Table 1 outlines the main youth participants from the community of Los Limones (all names are pseudonyms).

Table 1. Youth Participants from the Community of Los Limones (pseudonyms)

Leila	16 years old	IYA volunteer form Texas
Marcus	16 years old	IYA volunteer from California
Maya	17 years old	IYA volunteer from urban Nicaragua
Elian	19 years old	IDA youth from Los Limones
Andres	19 years old	IDA youth from Los Limones
Kia	15 years old	IDA youth from Los Limones

Pocahontas at the Site of Planning and Production

A rowdy group of youth came together in Los Limones on a hot afternoon. They were excited, eager to get to know the American youth and to try out the video equipment. As they began brainstorming for their very first video, someone suggested interracial friendships as a theme. *Ojo por Ojo,* a popular soap opera about a biracial couple and their struggles related to race and class was airing. The youth recognized that, like in the soap opera, their friendship with with Leila, Marcus and Maya presented race and class differences. Leila and Marcus were both white and from the United States, and Maya – Nicaraguan herself – was from the capital city. Excitement grew as they talked about how they could work with this story, considering the addition of new elements. Elian elicited ideas from the group. Marcus, an American volunteer thoughtfully offered that it sounded like a story he knew, *Pocahontas.* The Nicaraguan youth didn't know *Pochaontas,* but Marcus recounted Disney's version and they settled easily on this framing of their idea about race, class, and friendship. When the American volunteer framed his peers' ideas from his own cultural reference point it steered the entire process.

As the Project Director, when I first heard about this video I was concerned the youth misunderstood their training on participatory youth development and critical literacy. In opting for *Pocahontas*, they seemed to turn away from the organizational ideologies. A reproduction of a colonial Disney film hardly appeared participatory, and nor did it map onto IYA civic engagement ideals. However, before the artifact takes center stage it is worth noting that at the site of production, the youth turned *toward* the ideologies presented to them as part of the media civic engagement program: they wanted to make something about race and class difference. The negotiation of narrative between the youth demonstrates that they were all drawing on the stories they knew from popular culture about race and class in order to tell their own story. The point of reference for the American youth was Disney's movie *Pocahontas.* Their framing of the world significantly influenced the production process. Andres explains:

> Chelsey: And how did you pick *Pocahontas?*
>
> Andres: Well, I don't know, I've never seen it.
>
> Chelsey: Really, how, then!?!
>
> Andres: I don't know, it came to mind that idea, gringo and Indian. As I was saying, there's a soap opera right now about a dark boy who falls in love with a white girl, and it is forbidden. A white woman and an Indian. And in the soap opera, it is a city person and a rural person. And so we decided to do a video like this, and then they [the AMIGOS Volunteers] were saying, it's like *Pocahontas,* why don't we do that? I asked them what Pocahontas was, and they told me, and they told me how the story was and I told the kids what to do.

Andres explains their desire to make a story about race and class difference, and the way they build on mainstream media from each of their cultural contexts – *Ojo por Ojo* and *Pocahontas* – which both configure race in the context of amorous relationships. In both stories, white people are afforded privilege to move into other spaces, while indigenous people and people of color face imperiled movement. The white people in both *Ojo por Ojo* and *Pocahontas* are positioned as friendly, helpful and benevolent.

The six youth who led the initial meeting led the production process. Andres directed the videos, while Isodora, Marcus, Leila and Kia took turns filming. Maya, the AMIGOS volunteer from urban Nicaragua, played the lead role. The white volunteers played the settlers, and the youth participants from Los Limones, plus a host of local children, played the indigenous tribe. At the site of production, there was much excitement, and lots of community involvement. Seamstresses were recruited to sew costumes from old potato bags, and children showed up in droves to learn the dances and to perform in the video.

Later in the editing process, Marcus, the most skilled editor in the group, sat at the computer and did most of the work. He was surrounded by youth drinking soda and giving input, but Marcus did most of the arranging of clips into a coherent narrative. It is easy to understand why – despite training about power and sharing technology – they chose to have Marcus do most of the editing. It was the fastest way to an end product. It was *almost* participatory with everyone gathered around as the video was pulled together. It's quite challenging to use video editing software, and Marcus' speed was an asset. When he turned the keyboard and mouse over to Andres for a spell, Marcus had to tell Andres exactly what to do- including mouse clicks and keyboard shortcuts- and haltingly, Andres could pull clips into the timeline. However, they were anxious to see the piece, and Andres quickly returned the equipment to Marcus to finish.

Pocahontas at the Site of the Artifact

Pocahontas is grainy but it is also well done for being produced on a flip camera – and the pride the youth felt was enormous. They closely followed the Disney storyline, with settlers arriving to an indigenous village to search for gold. The settlers are met by indigenous people dancing in circles. One of them falls in love with the local princess, Pocahontas. They broker a peace deal with the indigenous community that allows for the settler and Pocahontas to continue their relationship. However, the settler is accidentally shot and returns home for medical care. Before leaving he promises to return to court Pocahontas. This is the end of the short remix.

The Disney rendition of *Pocahontas* is based on an encounter between the Native American girl Pocahontas and Englishman John Smith. Pocahontas and the settler have a forbidden affair while the group of settlers are at odds with Pocahontas' tribe. John Smith is sentenced to die. Pocahontas saves him; however, he ends up being shot by friendly fire and has to return home for medical care. This narrative stands in stark contrast to Native American accounts of the story, in which a white settler raped a girl of twelve (Buecher & Ono, 1996). Disney's *Pocahontas* has been critiqued as a Western account of assimilation, colonialism and misogyny. The real Pocahontas was a child and any sexual interaction with an adult was rape (Buecher & Ono, 1996; Edgerton & Jackson, 1996; Edwards, 1999). The pedagogical work being done in Disney's retelling of *Pocahontas* transforms this violent encounter into a multicultural narrative marketed to children as friendly race relations. Disney effectively resituated meaning such that this story of assimilation and the rape became a cultural reference point for negotiating race. This was the reference for the AMIGOS youth who suggested Disney as a framework for the remix about interracial friendship.

Ojo por Ojo was the first piece of popular culture referenced in the production process. It was produced in the United States by Telemundo and RTI Columbia, and tells the story of a racialized couple. It is based on a novel, *El Leopardo al Sol,* and reminiscent of *Romeo and Juliet*. *Ojo por Ojo* was religiously watched by most youth participants in the IYA program, and became a bonding point for the participants. The Nicaraguan youth saw their friendship with the IYA youth reflected in the young biracial couple in the *telenovela.* The shaping of ideas by the American youth, from their own perspective, is clear in the artifact. It is clear again in the editing process that yielded the remix: Nicaraguan youth participate by giving ideas which are then given form by the IYA volunteer sitting at the computer.

Pocahontas at the Site of Audiencing

Pocahontas was saved on DVDs that circulated through Los Limones. Though the story is a remix, there wasn't conversation about where it came from- instead, the community focused on the likeness to the popular soap opera *Ojo por Ojo*. The video was shared and bragged about, and the youth were proud. As the Project Director, when I first heard about the video I was quite horrified. I shared my concerns about the reproduction of the Disney narrative with my Nicaraguan colleagues, who encouraged me to celebrate the youth's engagement with the media equipment and the excitement they generated. Even so, I wanted the youth to deconstruct colonial narratives about race, and gender- not reproduce them! It wasn't until much time had passed that I decided to write about this video to explore what happened in what I perceived to be failure. What was missing in my own assessment of the production of *Pocahontas* as a failure was a closer assessment of the various relationships and events surrounding the desire to make a video about race and class difference.

Discussion

The story of the group of youth who made *Pocahontas* illustrates the various challenges of attempting to identify programmatic success across the span of civic media production. Like IYA and IDA, most civic engagement initiatives value participation in community building and leadership activities (Levin & Higgins-D'Alessandro, 2010; Mohamed, Inca, & Wheeler, 2001). The production of a Disney story in this context can be cast as a failure because the reproduction of Disney's colonial narrative fits awkwardly within programmatic discourses. However, dismissing this video obscures the interest in making a story about racial difference. Gillian Rose's (2001) methodological structure, in which the media event is understood to occur at various sites, makes more of this process visible. When we read *Pocahontas* as a failure, the focus is too narrowly on the site of the artifact, where colonial relationships are narrated. In order to foreground process as the site of civic engagement over product as *evidence* of engagement, I argue that civic engagement is more a series of discrete events resulting in the artifact that are not consistently visible in the media artifact.

The Site of Production: Participatory Development and Participatory Media

The *challenges* of negotiating equal access to computers among youth has been well documented: girls, young women and people of color tend to take a backseat role to boys, young men, and white peers (Fleetwood, 2005; Jenson & de Castell, 2011; Jenson, de Castell, & Bryson, 2003). These issues manifest in familiar ways in the AMIGOS program: the white youth frame their peers' ideas, the boys manage most of the directing, a single white teenage boy does the majority of the editing. The youth set out to make a piece about multiracial friendships. Interrogating race and class in friendships maps well onto the organizational ideologies. Civic engagement initiatives tend to celebrate successful, productive solutions to community building.

While they participate in the imaginative process, the mostly North American AMIGOS volunteers justify their absence from the screen by explaining that these stories belong to the Nicaraguan youth, and that they want to make space for their Nicaraguan peers by staying off screen. Their refusal to play significant roles in the videos is reflective of an attitude has been documented in development workers who, wary of being part of the neo-colonial development project, focus on participatory approaches in attempt to show they are not practicing colonialism (Mckinnon, 2006). Here participatory development emerges as a key ideology in digital storytelling. Acknowledging the collaboration between the youth by putting their bodies on screen would leave little discursive space for what evidences programmatic success: participatory practice that centralizes Nicaraguan youth. At the site of production there are multiple moments in which the youth encounter and *do* civic engagement and also where they parrot development agency ideologies, however these moments are ephemeral and not evidenced in the material artifact they produced. It is in the imaginative process that proceeds the artifact that rich civic collaboration and negotiation of meaning between the youth occurs.

The Site of the Artifact: Global Networks and Relationships in Storytelling

The stories that circulate in mainstream media offer narratives that explain the world: ways to make sense of how people come together and models for understanding society (Appadurai, 1996). Some of these stories inform colonial and racialized relationships in their present form, as is the case with Disney's Pocahontas (Buecher & Ono, 1996; Edgerton & Jackson, 1996; Edwards, 1999). These stories circulate through transnational media networks, and appear in media when youth draw on them to make sense of and share their own stories. That young people draw on available discourses to narrate their own stories is well documented (Soep, 2006), and what I suggest here is that the issue is in the stories available in public media, as opposed to the stories youth create. Youth are encouraged to "communicate in their public voices about issues they care about" (Rheingold, 2008, p. 97), however, the focus on *their public voices* obscures how the collage of knowledge remixed from popular culture as it appears in their pieces. It is a complex literacy practice for youth to remix stories from popular culture into video narratives about issues they care about. In this process, various histories shape their choices – at times, youth may remix stories that they have not yet critically considered. It is not the case that these youth set out to make racist, misogynistic or colonial narratives; rather, that these are the stories available to them in popular culture and, working independently, they did not have the frameworks to critically engage. Youth media programs hope to give youth both the tools and the voice to deconstruct their own stories and stories they know through popular media, however youth may frequently remix popular culture because *that is what, and how* they know. What is troubling about missing the process of production is that youth-produced stories drawn from popular culture are read as youth voice in the name of civic engagement, where civic engagement pedagogy places high value on ownership over and the telling of one's own story. At initial viewing, the reproduction of *Pocahontas* is problematic because it reproduces colonial relationships, however upon further inspection it becomes clear that youth were engaging race and class through the remix of popular media.

The Site of Audiencing: Reflecting on the Pedagogy of CE

When IDA/IYA leaders viewed the video, some spoke of how it evidenced empowerment. *Pocahontas* was cast in this light so that it was intelligible within broader IDA/IYA goals. Organizational goals shape how we qualify media artifacts: read as participatory media, where excitement, collaboration and participation are valued, *Pocahontas* was successful: it produced all of these feelings among the youth. Read from my lens as a feminist scholar of critical literacies, misogyny and colonialism point to critical programmatic challenges. However, upon examining the entire media event using Rose's sites of engagement as a framework (2001), it became clear that focusing on the product as evidencing our goals obscured other moments of engagement. In fact, global relationships of power- based in popular media- shaped how youth crafted a coherent narrative about inter-racial friendships.

As youth become involved in public processes, a key mode of participation is critical inquiry into issues important to them: part of this is being able to access, make sense of, and even remix stories and narratives that might inform their experience. While media programming is of significant importance in the lives of young people, it is the stories they tell and how they are draw on public media to make sense of their own lives through storytelling that will be an important site for further inquiry. In order to pursue this inquiry, a focus on process over product is paramount: the story of the youth who remixed *Pocahontas* is a story about the available discourses for understanding race, and the very real need to provide opportunities for youth to carefully consider issues of power and inequity, and how- through their own processes- they can intervene in making the world a more just place.

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