

Outside Your Door: Young Producers Bridge the Divide between Urban Youth and Public Lands

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Abstract

In 2013, the USFS contracted with an interdisciplinary research team at San Francisco State University (SFSU) to study the question of how the USFS could effectively use media to encourage young people living in urban areas to increase their use of forests, parks and other public lands. Over a period of five months, 24 predominantly ethnic minority youth participated in a media training program creating media about what outdoor spaces and nature mean to them. The videos were then shown to other urban who participated in two listening sessions, where they shared their perspectives about the videos' effectiveness and persuasiveness, and discussed the overall messages they gleaned from them. The findings suggest parks and other outdoor spaces may be perceived by young people as more relevant to urban youths' lives when messages are produced by relatable sources. In addition, we focus on youth responses about inspiration and the value of outdoors, as well as a variety of barriers to outdoor activities including fear of crime and lack of access.

Recent studies (Betz, 2012; Larson, Green, & Cordell, 2011; Outdoor Foundation, 2012) suggest young people are spending more time outdoors. Unfortunately, despite this increase in participation, research (Breaking Barriers, 2012) also suggests urban youth are not enjoying public lands and outdoor spaces as frequently, or utilizing them in the same way, as their rural and suburban counterparts. Evidence suggests race, ethnicity, income and other cultural factors influence constraints on visits to parks and open spaces (Gomez, Johnson, Selva, & Sallis, 2004, Outdoor Foundation, 2012; Zanon, Doucouliagos, Hall & Lockstone-Binney, 2013).

Media messages may inform urban youth about outdoor opportunities and encourage them to take advantage of new experiences, but when they perceive the messages to be unappealing, irrelevant, or too “preachy,” youth disregard them. On the other hand, if youth are involved in the message-creation process, media messages may be more influential. Training youth to be media producers, showing them how media communication is an important technique for increasing public awareness, and providing them with outdoor recreation experiences, all intersects in extraordinary ways. When young media producers engage their own creativity, they are more likely to become inspired. They may develop critical thinking skills and a new found appreciation for the outdoors. Furthermore, when young people view media produced by their peers, they may be more likely to find the messages engaging, relevant, and persuasive.

In 2013, the United States Forest Service (USFS) contracted an interdisciplinary research team of San Francisco State University (SFSU) faculty to study the question how can the USFS effectively use media to reduce constraints and encourage young people living in urban areas to increase their use of forests, parks and other public lands? The research was conducted in collaboration with Bayview Hunters Point Center for Arts and Technology (BAYCAT), a non-profit academy that provides digital media arts training for youth and young adults from historically under-resourced neighborhoods in the San Francisco region. Over a period of 14 weeks during spring 2014, 24 predominantly ethnic minority youth participated in a BAYCAT program to create 13 videos about what outdoor spaces and nature mean to them. The videos produced by the BAYCAT youth were then shown to 50 other young people from two other local urban areas, inner-city Richmond and Oakland.

Three primary goals drove the direction, methodology and analysis for this study:

1. Understand how to effectively reach diverse urban youth by identifying appropriate media including social media forums;
2. Develop sample key messages for diverse urban youth regarding urban and rural forests on topics of interest to adolescents;
3. Evaluate the effectiveness of these media messages with a variety of other urban youth from San Francisco, Inner city Oakland and Richmond.

This paper summarizes the results of the study and interprets findings through the theories of framing and identification. We highlight the varied experiences of the youth who produced the videos, as well as the reactions of the urban youth who watched the videos. The findings suggest parks and other outdoor spaces may be perceived by young people as more relevant to urban youths' lives when messages are produced by relatable sources. In addition, we focus on youth responses about inspiration and the value of outdoors, as well as a variety of barriers to outdoor activities including fear of crime and lack of access.

Literature Review

Youth and the Outdoors

While there was a period in the mid-2000's where young people immersed in nature was on the decline, recent studies indicate youth participation in the outdoors has since been on the rise. Two national studies with large samples are positive indicators that youth are getting outdoors; however, findings also suggest the definition of outdoor recreation is expanding to include activities not typically thought of as ways to spend time in natural settings. For example, young people are increasingly drawn to engage with technology in outdoor spaces and report listening to music, watching videos and enjoying other electronic media while outside (Chavez, 2009; Larson et al., 2011, Outdoor Foundation, 2012).

Studies indicate there are differences in participation based on various factors including race and ethnicity, gender, geography and income. Research shows racially and ethnically diverse youth, for instance, are under-represented in outdoor recreation with participation remaining lowest amongst youth who identify as African American. Additionally, while rates of participation across gender have become more equal over the years, males still engage in outdoor activities more frequently than females. And, geographically, youth in the Western and Mountain states are more likely to spend time in the outdoors than their counterparts in other parts of the U.S. (Larson et al., 2011; Metz & Weigel, 2011; Outdoor Foundation, 2012). Furthermore, evidence suggests outdoor participation is highest amongst youth from households with higher annual incomes, defined by the Outdoor Foundation as \$75,000 or above (Mowen, Payne, & Scott 2005; Outdoor Foundation, 2012).

A growing body of knowledge offers valuable information about youth experiences with the outdoors. The literature captures a variety of youth perspectives about what it means to spend quality time outside and offers a diversity of opinions about constraints to participation (see *Breaking Barriers*, 2012). This work also offers a greater understanding about the benefits, interests, and motivations to spend time in the outdoors. Communication theories, like framing and identification, can help agencies like the USFS and other public land managers to build on this knowledge, so they can create messages and images to inspire urban youth to spend more time outside.

Framing Theory and Media Messages for Urban Youth

Framing theory is based on the premise that people cannot possibly absorb all the information associated with any given event. Frames filter experience and provide people with pictures that seem complete, but which, in fact, present a limited view. They help people organize and prioritize ideas relating to a topic. New information that is incompatible with existing frames is likely to be rejected or ignored. Goffman (1974) compares them to a picture frame that both ties elements in the picture together and limits connections between outside material and the picture. Entman (1993) argues that frames define problems, diagnose causes, make moral judgments, and suggest remedies. Thus, they have great power in influencing our views of what we can and should do.

There are several different branches of framing theory. While much framing research focuses on the influence of media frames on audience understanding and attitudes towards issues, Lakoff & Wehling (2012) examine frames as "*structures of ideas we use to understand the world*," (p. 12). They argue that frames are represented in the brain's neural circuitry and contend that frames are organized in linked hierarchical networks called cascades. Their research suggests that a reference to a concept in one part of the cascade activates the rest of the cascade and reinforces patterns in the associated

neurons. From this perspective, media messages contesting elements of an established frame run the risk of reinforcing that frame, rather than weakening it, because the messages activate and strengthen the neural cascade associated with the viewers' preexisting frames (pp. 37-43). Framing theorists (Lakoff, 2010; Nisbet, 2010; Rademaekers & Johnson-Sheehan, 2014) have noted that environmental communication often does this. Lakoff & Whelung (2012) purport that persuasive communicators should never use their opponents' language, repeat their ideas, or even to refute them. Instead they encourage authentic, positive, and simple language that activates visual imagery (pp. 37-43).

From this perspective, media messages designed to motivate urban youth to spend more time outdoors should activate frames that are compatible with the youth's preexisting frames. Ideally, these messages would also present the frame that urban youth are connected to the outdoors, without activating and reinforcing the negative frame that the outdoors are distant and not relevant to their lives. One of the goals of this study was to analyze urban youth's communication about the outdoors to attempt to identify some of the frames that are salient for them. Another important consideration was whether the source of those messages was credible and relatable.

Identification Theory

Identification theory suggests people respond more positively to, and are more likely to be influenced by, sources they perceive to be similar to themselves (Spence, Lachlan, Westerman, & Spates (2013); Flanagan, Hocevar & Samahito (2014); Adams & Gynnild (2013). According to Burke (1962), *"identification ranges from the politician who, addressing an audience of farmers, says, I was a farm boy myself, through the mysteries of social status, to the mystic's devout identification with the source of all being"* (p. 522). He argues that, *"You persuade a man (sic) only insofar as you can talk his language by speech, gesture, tonality, order, image, attitude, idea, identifying your ways with his"* (p. 579). In a study with clear implications for USFS goals, Joyce and Harwood (2014) tested student responses to a public service video. Those who were told the video was a user generated viral video scored higher on group identification and were more persuaded by the video than those who were told it was a government PSA.

Media theory and research verify the potential for a communication campaign produced by urban youth for urban youth that features messages promoting outdoor activities and visiting parks. Research suggests that media messages are most effective when their frames are compatible with those already held by the audience and feature spokespeople who share common ground with the audience. Young producers are likely to be good at selecting and creating material that meets these criteria for other youth with similar backgrounds. A campaign such as the one described here has the potential of being seen as more credible and appealing if it produced by messengers with whom the target audience can identify.

Methods

Producing *Outside Your Door*

BAYCAT is a nonprofit academy that confronts the digital divide by empowering and inspiring underserved young people to create media. They provide media classes in production, post-production, motion graphics, and music production. Priority for enrollment is given to low-income applicants. Each semester students work together to produce videos around a specific theme. In early 2014, over the course of 14 weeks, a cohort of 24 BAYCAT, ages 11 to 17, produced 13 separate videos linked to the theme *Outside Your Door*. The work was funded by the USFS, whereby

the youth were challenged to produce material to encourage other young people to spend more time outdoors. The videos were written, filmed, edited, and produced by the youth enrolled in BAYCAT. Throughout this time, the SFSU research team met with BAYCAT staff to discuss the process. They also met occasionally with the students and attended the production premier. The BAYCAT staff recorded a significant portion of the students' activities throughout the production process.

Audience Response

Listening sessions. The videos developed by BAYCAT youth were tested among a different cohort of racially diverse urban youth. The goals were to evaluate other young viewers' perceptions of the videos and to determine what lessons and key messages they gleaned from viewing them. Two youth serving organizations from inner-city Richmond and Oakland, Youth Uprising and RYSE, assisted with recruitment. Each organization hosted one listening session (n=25 each) for a total of 50 participants. The youth participants from these two organizations are culturally and socio-economically representative of various neighborhoods in both of these East Bay cities. Cash incentives of \$50 per person were offered for participation.

The SFSU research team and BAYCAT staff shared the responsibility of facilitating the listening sessions. Each listening session began with catered social time. This was followed by an introduction to the project, including information about how the videos were produced and the overarching USFS goals. Participants viewed the videos together in two fifteen-minute segments, separated by an ice-breaker. Immediately after the viewing, the project PI led a brief discussion about the videos with the full group. The group was then divided into three small breakout discussion groups. Although the listening sessions were not systematically audio recorded, three note takers observed the full process. One note taker participated in each of the breakout groups. This yielded six sets of handwritten field notes. In addition, all the participants were given "thought cards" to use to jot down their reactions and observations while watching the videos. They used these cards to prompt their memories during the discussions, but they turned them in to the research team at the end.

SFSU online survey. In addition to the formal listening sessions, a survey was conducted among mixed-major university students taking a summer 2014 online communication class. Out of the 47 students enrolled in the class, 44 watched the *Outside Your Door* videos online. The students responded to similar questions as those posed in the listening sessions. They also analyzed the persuasive strategies used in the videos and responded to questions about the quality and effectiveness of the videos. Because this was an online class, demographic information about the participants is not available, but college students are typically older than the rest of the subjects of this study.

Analysis

In addition to the viewer data, we collected an array of data about the BAYCAT production process. Upon completion we had gathered:

- ❖ 13 videos about the outdoors produced by youth
- ❖ 25 pre/post questionnaires
- ❖ 11 videotaped exit interviews
- ❖ 2 audio taped interviews
- ❖ 22 hours of video of the youth production process
- ❖ 6 sets of field notes
- ❖ 50 thought cards

Due to the disparate nature of the data collected, we opted to use Dedoose as our primary tool for organizing and analyzing data. Dedoose is a cross-platform, Internet-based application useful for working with multi-media data such as videos, photos, and text based documents. Data analysis took place from May 2014 to December 2014.

We began by having our research team review a subset of the data, which included small portions from each source. For example, we each watched 10 minutes of video, read through a sampling of thought cards and read two sets of field notes. Next, we developed a coding structure, coded the data, and discussed our coding decisions. Codes were then reviewed, categories were created and compared across the data set. Finally, we brought our preliminary findings to BAYCAT and solicited feedback about our conclusions. This kind of respondent validation was important because it ruled out the possibility of us misinterpreting youth perspectives and led to valuable insights about how we were interpreting the data. Our coding structure consisted of 18 codes, 12 free/parent codes, and 6 tree codes. Three members of the research team coded data independently. We identified themes and patterns within the codes and then looked across the data to develop evidence to support existence of categories.

Limitations

Subject Media Experience. Most of the youth who were the subjects of this research were somewhat atypical, generally, because they already had some interest or experience in media. The BAYCAT students dedicated many hours to learning media skills while they worked on this project. Many of the youth who participated in the listening sessions also had significant exposure to video and audio production as part of their activities at their youth centers. This meant that viewer evaluations of the videos might be very different from the responses of viewers who are less media savvy.

BAYCAT Influence. Inevitably, the leadership of the BAYCAT staff influenced the behavior of the youth producing the videos. Some ideas, such as the one that nature is a place to be “*away from*” electronics was initially introduced by the instructors at BAYCAT during the brainstorming sessions. We do not know how the youth might have interpreted or made meaning of electronics in the outdoors without this influence. Furthermore, the BAYCAT staff, not the research team, was responsible for determining which aspects of the production and listening session processes would be recorded. This reduced the risk of contrived behavior that might be precipitated by the presence of a researcher

during the *Outside Your Door* production process, but it also meant the staff might have failed to record events that would have been relevant to the research. Additionally, the audio in some of the video tapes was unintelligible and had to be discarded.

Social Desirability. The group communication nature of listening sessions means the ideas expressed by participants may be influenced by peer pressure. Some of the viewers knew each other, yet none of the participants knew anyone from the research team or BAYCAT staff who led the discussions. Furthermore, the questions asked during the listening sessions did not explicitly address race. All of the leaders of the discussion groups were older than the participants, and some of them were from different races.

Mixed Method. The mixed approach used produced a rich dataset, but it also meant that statistical analyses were impractical. The messages analyzed were produced in strikingly different contexts, so we did not calculate frequencies. While we are confident the messages and messenger attributes discussed were significant, we cannot quantify their relative prevalence.

Results

Urban Youth Frame the Outdoors

The analysis of youth statements about the outdoors revealed some patterns in their perspectives. The frames we offer demonstrate how youth participants made connections among concepts and reveal how youth grappled with complex and often competing ideas.

“The ocean is free.” This quote reflects the idea that spending time in the outdoors, or feeling connected to nature, does not have to cost money. The quote was introduced in one of the videos, in which a high school teacher shares his passion for surfing with students:

I am hoping that they will know that the beach is here for them, that it is their beach, that it is in their backyard, and that they can come to it whenever they want. My students come from situations that are difficult and they may not know that the ocean in out there for them as an outlet. You have to pay to go skiing, you have to pay to do a lot of different sports, but the ocean is free and anyone can access it.

This captured the attention of youth participants. They reflected that the video had helped them recognize that they could “*feel close to nature*” or “*just be in the outdoors*” without having to pay a fee. Other youth made comments such as “*It’s TRUE, all people do have access to the free outdoors*” and “*It IS free.*” The quote, “*the ocean is free*” framed the outdoors in two ways that were relevant to the youth in this study. First, it highlighted that money or income does not have to be a barrier. Second, it positioned the ocean as a public natural resource available for their use; a place they could claim as their own.

It calms, soothes, and relaxes. Youth in this study conveyed a strong value of the outdoors because it provides space to de-stress. They described naturally beautiful places and “*just being outside*” as beneficial for mental and emotional well-being, as well as an opportunity to “*unclutter*” their minds. Quotes such as “*nature brings release from stress,*” “*it’s calming to me, it relaxes body and mind,*” and “*going outdoors is peaceful and relaxing*” were ubiquitous across the data. One young person explained,

It frees your mind and relieves your stress. Like if you are having a bad day at school or if you are having a bad day at work, I promise you if you go outdoors you will not be angry anymore.

But while this frame—the outdoors is a place youth can practice self-care, heal, and recharge—was an important one, youth also discussed instances when being in outdoor places could create stress because of negative encounters with other people. For example, many youth reflected on their experiences in parks and described “*feeling out of place*” or unwelcome. One youth told us, “*I felt like I did not belong there and I wasn’t accepted in the area because the white people [who were also in the park] were not really a fan of people of color.*” Other youth expressed not wanting to go outside because there are “*too many people*” and, in some cases, individuals who may cause harm or harass the youth.

Hope and possibility. Another frame we identified as relevant to youth is that the outdoors offers a sense of hope and possibility for a variety of positive outcomes and influences. For example, data suggest youth believe spending time in outdoor spaces (e.g., parks, forests, oceans, lakes, trails, playgrounds) can lead to feelings of happiness, freedom, and empowerment as well as shifts in perception—a sentiment that was reflected in the lyrics of one of the music videos:

Close your eyes make a wish, you’ll be surprised, you’re outside

Take a look at the city

Why don’t you come with me?

We can go and be free, free from everything

Aren’t you happy you came with me?

Just to get away for the day

Oh yeah, sunny skies open up your eyes

Too good to be true

I find it too....

In addition, youth expressed ideas that demonstrated they felt drawn to the outdoors because it held possibilities for learning and discovery; and for finding, connecting or reconnecting to themselves, to others; or to the natural world:

- ❖ *I am not really used to being outside that much. I like being outside, it's fun. Outside is a place where you can learn and see new stuff.*
- ❖ *You can find yourself on the beach because you could actually say stuff that you can't say inside and other people wouldn't be able to hear you. But you can say it at the beach because people won't really notice you and because the wind and the waves can take it away.... I would encourage others to go to the beach because it's just a place where you can just go to have your own time and find yourself again.*
- ❖ *Without nature a piece of me is incomplete.*
- ❖ *What I like about the outdoors is you can run, jump and there are not many rules. No one can really tell you stop running, or don't throw that ball or don't climb that tree. So, its freedom.*

The outdoors and technology. While some youth described the outdoors as a place where they would go to “disconnect” from technology, others maintained that being in the natural world inspired them to engage with electronics in creative ways; for example, to pursue photography or create music and videos. For example, one youth said, “*When I am with my friends and we go hiking we always take pictures with our cameras and its fun. We also make movies.*” And another said, “*The outdoors inspires me to want to use technology to be creative.*”

Also present in this frame, is a common experience that youth describe as a fatigue fueled by the pressure to always be “connected” to social relationships via electronic devices. According to youth, the outdoors offers a way to “get away” from social media, which they described as an effective strategy to mitigate stress caused by personal relationships that take place in these spaces. One youth explained, “*No electronics is no drama.*” Also relevant to this frame, are youth perceptions that the constant use of electronics can “pull you away” or create obstacles for a young person who is trying to achieve a chosen identity; or as youth explained: “*Sometimes people just need to put their phone away and be free to be themselves*” and “*Don't let technology ruin you.*”

Viewer Response to *Outside Your Door*

Feedback among the young viewers was generally very positive. Not surprisingly, music and humor were the most relatable content. The music videos received the highest number of compliments. They loved the rap music, indicating this is music they listen to and would want to make themselves. They liked the messages in the songs and some also commented that they appreciated the lack of cursing.

Several viewers observed that they like the references to the beach. Some comments related to the previously discussed frame, the ocean is free, while others referred to a story about a girl whose mother had passed away, but she still felt connected to her when she visited the beach. The young viewers also liked and related to the young people they saw in the videos. The fact that the messengers were other kids like them, made them pay more attention to the content and take it more seriously.

The messenger matters. In the analysis of the audience comments about *Outside Your Door* videos, this concept was, by far, the most insightful. The fact that the videos were produced by youth and featured young spokespersons resonated with the adolescent viewers. They liked the teamwork and how the BAYCAT youth worked together to create the videos. Viewer comments demonstrated appreciation for the “connection” the students had with each other. Viewers also remarked that they related to several other messenger attributes, including race and personal experiences they shared. For this analysis, the messenger refers to the BAYCAT students who produced the videos and are physically represented in them. The research team identified and analyzed messenger attributes in the language the viewers used to describe the messenger. Once the initial analysis of the codes was completed, the thought cards and listening session data sets were examined for further evidence of attributes that led the audience to identify with the messenger. The primary attributes follow.

Youth. Although our data are not precise enough to suggest a specific number, viewers mentioned this messenger attribute far more often than any others. They expressed appreciation for the fact that they were watching messages produced by young people. Although many of the viewers did not explicitly connect the age of the messenger to their own age, the fact that the viewers were also relatively young suggests that positive observations indicates the influence of identification on their response to the videos.

Many of these comments focused on the youth as creators of the videos as shown below:

- ❖ *I like how it was all youth talking*
- ❖ *Youth side of the story, adults we've heard your voice*
- ❖ *Youth expressing themselves was really great*
- ❖ *It feels like bringing our generation back to the older generation*
- ❖ *(Responding to do you want to share the videos?) [Yes], with people in my school because it features people my age*
- ❖ *I like how the kids were so confident . . . I like how the kids are so open with their life.*

Some of these comments explicitly addressed both youth and the messages they communicated through their videos.

- ❖ *I really like how it wasn't adults doing it. Youth going outside instead of staying on their phones. Empowering.*
- ❖ *Love the connection the kids have w/ each other. Enjoying nature.*
- ❖ *Meeting other youth in the woods sound fun.*

While the majority of the age related comments emphasized youth, one viewer did remark that some of the videos showed adults interacting with the youth and introducing them to different aspects of the outdoors, such as sailing and surfing. Results show the young people in the listening session at RYSE liked the older people setting an example for the kids to be more active in nature.

Diversity of race and language. Although it was not mentioned nearly as often as age, several of the viewers did comment favorably about the portrayal of race in the videos. One interesting aspect of the discussion about race was that most of the comments focused more on the variety of races present in the video, rather than on the presence of specific racial groups. This means that, while this attribute does not contradict the theory of identification, it does not necessarily add support to the theory either. The viewers neither explicitly stated they observed their own race in the video, nor did they comment that their own living situation reflected the racial diversity that were described in the videos. A couple of viewers in the listening sessions also remarked that the videos portrayed the outdoors in a way that differed from the stereotypes that nature is primarily for whites. Examples of these comments include:

- ❖ *Multicultural groups I like to see*
- ❖ *There were different races in the video which was good*
- ❖ *Multiracial groups*
- ❖ *There were so many races in the videos - it was surprising because you usually don't see people of different races together*
- ❖ *Different races in the video*
- ❖ *I like how there's multiple languages in the song*

Given the public nature of the group discussions and the political landscape of conversations about race today, it is quite possible that more viewers would have brought this up if they were more comfortable with how their comments would be used; however, there is no way to know this for certain.

Cooperation and connection. A number of the viewers commented on the cooperation and community they saw in the messengers of the videos. Some specifically commented about the youth working together:

- ❖ *The kids who made the videos worked together - great teamwork*
- ❖ *Much teamwork shown in the young people. I see kids practicing professional*
- ❖ *...Youth are empowering and encouraging each other.*

Other observations about the cooperation evident throughout the videos suggest that viewers consider this an important attribute of the messengers they saw in the videos, but do not necessarily indicate it is something the viewers experienced themselves. For this theme, identification would only be demonstrated if viewers either directly stated that they found this level of cooperation in their own life or if they described other indicators of identification. Although the data suggest that some of the young viewers appreciated the portrayals of cooperation, no clear evidence was found that they identified with the concept of cooperation itself. However, a couple of comments suggested that some viewers identified with the young messengers and were inspired by the sight of them working cooperatively. In these cases, the identification inspired by other attributes may work as a motivator.

Unique shared experiences. Several of the comments focused on more personal attributes that the viewers felt they had in common with the youth they saw in the videos. These comments directly suggested the influence of identification. A few of these comments were fairly general such as, “*My favorite video was the last one because it's almost the same things I do when I'm outside.*” Other comments focused on attributes that were unique to specific videos or user experiences (i.e., “*Made me miss canoeing & [being] outdoors*”). Comments indicated that some viewers responded to the videos because they felt they could relate to the experiences they saw portrayed.

The two videos that seemed to evoke the most comments about personal life issues focused on very different topics. The first described how the producer felt more connected to her dead mother when she went to the beach. Viewers commented that they either had that experience of losing a parent themselves (i.e., “*it relates to me & my Mom*”) or they knew people who had lost parents, (i.e., “*Many students lost parents at a very young age, too*”). The other commonly mentioned experiential video in this category dealt with the connection the producer felt for his dog. This evoked recognition from other dog owners (“*Other people share relationships with dogs just like me*”).

Place. Although it was not as commonly mentioned as messenger attributes, viewers also responded positively to videos that were set in places they recognized or had visited (i.e., “*Liked the fact that it was in my hometown, San Francisco*”). On the other hand, for some viewers, the setting appeared to provide evidence that they were not consubstantial with the youth they saw in the video; that is, they felt the spaces they saw were nothing like those they knew. This interfered with the viewers’ sense that the messages in the videos were relevant to their lives:

- ❖ *You guys are in SF, this is Richmond, there is nothing here*
- ❖ *There is a big difference between being in urban spaces and being in forests and parks.*
- ❖ *They talked about nature and peace which is the opposite of what I see in my real life - there is a disconnect with what they showed in the video but we are not that way in real life anymore. . .*
- ❖ *The message is positive but one has to think about other people’s situations–there are some real fears out there–someone out there might want to hurt us, scared of the sunlight*

Video quality. The viewers in the listening sessions made several references to the production and quality of the videos produced by the BAYCAT youth. Generally, the youth who watched the production liked the videos’ professionalism. They described the youth producers as very creative, particularly the ones that produced the songs and the corresponding music videos. The following sample statements substantiate this finding:

- ❖ *Creative, mixing, funny, professional but cool*
- ❖ *These videos came to us in a different way so we could all understand them*
- ❖ *Very creative. Funny, very professional.*
- ❖ *Baycat. “I love the beat and the 1st video. Nice song*
- ❖ *Liked the questions. Liked music video just maybe, relate to youth today. Interview was hilarious. Music video very nice.*
- ❖ *It is very creative. I like how it’s a lot of pictures.*

Not surprisingly, the majority of the comments from the viewers were positive. As authors, we would argue that social desirability, possibly augmented by the viewers' identification with the producers, may have contributed to this. The viewers clearly enjoyed the videos, but they may have been disinclined to mention criticism. The number of critical comments in the listening sessions was so low, no clear patterns of criticism emerged.

Secondary Viewers: A University Perspective. During the 2014 summer semester at San Francisco State University, 44 of 47 enrolled undergraduate students watched the BAYCAT videos as an assignment in an online general education class about trends in social media. They were asked to analyze the persuasive effectiveness of the videos. Because it was an online class, basic demographics were not asked and therefore not known, but the students would likely all be older than the students who created the videos and participated in the listening sessions. Furthermore, several of the students participated in the class from different countries.

Many of the comments this group of viewers made about the videos also focused on the messenger, but the emphasis was different. Although some of them described concepts that suggested they related to the messengers, they focused on different attributes than those dominating the listening sessions. Few SFSU students' comments mentioned youth (e.g., age) or race at all. Several wrote about common ground established by the settings of the videos and the love for a pet, while a few shared the experience of the loss of a parent. The SFSU students were also more critical of the production quality of the videos.

Conclusions

The youth participating in this study expressed a range of perspectives about the value and relevance of outdoor spaces. Despite some initial dismay when they learned the theme for their semester was *Outside Your Door*, careful consideration and variety of brainstorming enabled many of the BAYCAT students to realize they already appreciated the outdoors, yet had just not thought about it much. The production process enabled them to explore this concept and further develop their appreciation.

As discussed earlier, the theory of identification suggests people respond more to persuasive messages coming from a source they perceive as being similar to them in a meaningful way. Identification with the source may be particularly influential when the audience has low knowledge or interest in the topic. In this study, the attribute of age contributed significantly to audience identification with the messengers and also influenced viewer reception of the message. Social media channels, such as those employed by BAYCAT, enable environmental communicators to distribute targeted messages.

Constraints Remain: Safety and fear.

While most of the listening session responses to the videos were positive, some viewers felt the videos' depiction of the outdoors was not their reality. References like this suggest that some viewers could not identify with the videos due to differences in the environment. They agreed that there are many benefits to being outdoors and that it can enrich their lives, yet they noted they need to be careful and stay away from things that could hurt them. While they did not explicitly state what these "things that could hurt them" were, they mentioned "gangs" and "scary people" that hang around local parks. Closely related to this was the issue of access—it is hard for them to get to the "good parks." The parks in their local areas are places where they are likely to "get robbed." They were all expected to be home before the street lights came on. For some, their lives felt very disconnected and far removed from the youth in the videos. Thus, any campaign to encourage urban youth to spend more time outdoors needs to address these legitimate safety concerns.

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