

Spring 5-2016

# Affecting Nicaraguan “Vegetable” Literacy with Social Change Advertising

Summer Schneider

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Affecting Nicaraguan “Vegetable” Literacy with Social Change Advertising

A Capstone Project Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the  
Requirements of the Renée Crown University Honors Program at  
Syracuse University

Summer Schneider

Candidate for Bachelor of Science  
and Renée Crown University Honors  
May 2016

Honors Capstone Project in Advertising

Capstone Project Advisor: \_\_\_\_\_  
Brian Sheehan, Associate Professor

Capstone Project Reader: \_\_\_\_\_  
Kevin O’Neill, Professor

Honors Director: \_\_\_\_\_  
Stephen Kuusisto, Director

Abstract:

When the Sandinista socialist government gained control they began a total reformation of the country, most notably, the education system. The government supported a small group of men who created the 1980 Literacy Campaign, which worked to educate the majority of the nation. Nicaraguan literacy rates jumped from 49.65% to 87.04% in five months. Despite their successes, literacy rates still suffer today. Through primary research, it has been determined that the biggest issue facing Nicaraguan literacy are “vegetable literates,” those who lose their literacy because they do not use it. In order to combat the issue, I developed a four-part campaign which includes a television commercial, a mobile app, an outdoor Blue Box library and a Facebook campaign. The campaign focuses on two objectives: access to literacy material, and an incentive to participate in the movement. Born from these objectives was the idea of community development through literacy. Each creative execution manifests itself within the idea that literacy can benefit you and your community.

## Executive Summary:

1980 was a time of empowerment for Nicaragua. With the new Sandinista government who “[invited] the population to revolt against ignorance,” a series of reformations began, most notably, the education system. With a staggering illiteracy rate of 50.35%, it was time for Nicaragua to make a change.

Enter a small group of men with a big dream. After months of planning and gaining outside and governmental support, these men began the 1980 literacy campaign. The campaign spanned 5 months time and engrossed most of Nicaragua in the idea of reading and writing. Despite many obstacles and a lack of funding, this campaign revolutionized the education system, turning the 50.35% into only 12.96% of the population. With a blossoming literate society, Nicaraguans could empower themselves in other parts of daily life, whether it be women’s rights or political views.

But Nicaraguan literacy failed once again. By 2012 the illiteracy rate had spiked back to 22%, according to the UN. So what happened? To find out, I conducted extensive primary and secondary research, including surveys, personal interviews and an ethnography, a method of discovering deep cultural insights by observing individuals in their own environments. I came to two conclusions. One, the government reported illiteracy rate reflects elderly and disabled individuals unwilling or unable to learn to read and write. Two, there is a greater population of individuals unreported by the government that struggle from the lack of fortification of knowledge. These Nicaraguans are learning basic literacy, and then losing it

because they do not continue to use it. They are defined as “vegetable literates.” The latter is the issue I will be focusing on in this dissertation.

To combat this problem, I chose to work with the San Juan del Sur library, an organization that brings books to rural communities. In this campaign, I had to create access to reading and writing material, as well as convince the target audience it was worth their time to participate in a new literacy movement. Through this the idea of community development through literacy was born. Each execution of the four-part campaign provides access to literacy, and inspiration and a way of raising money for a local community project. Spanning from a television commercial to a mobile app, an outdoor execution and Facebook, this campaign reaches consumers at four main touch points in their daily lives. Even more so, it is accessible to rural and urban communities alike.

This project’s significance lies in its ability to shape the future of Nicaraguan literacy. Once implemented, this literacy initiative can spread to all areas of the country, combating an issue that remains critical to Nicaragua’s lack of national development. By encouraging society to maintain their literacy, I am in turn, encouraging Nicaraguans to become informed, inspired and empower themselves in their communities. By utilizing advertising to create this cultural change, I am taking an influential medium that has the power to shape society’s perspectives, and using it to create positive world change.

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### **Acknowledgements**

#### **Special thanks to:**

Brian Sheehan, Capstone Advisor

Kevin O'Neill, Reader

Jane Mirandette, San Juan del Sur Library Owner

Francisco Lacayo Parajon, Retired UNESCO leader and creator of the  
1980 Literacy Campaign

Edgard Antonio Henriquez Malianos, Professor at La Tortuga

Mayra Perez, Nicaraguan Host Mother

The San Juan del Sur Biblioteca Movil and staff

The students and teachers who allowed me to interview them and photograph their  
daily lives

The people of San Juan who welcomed me into their community and opened up  
about education within their society

Fred and Robin Schneider, Emotional and Financial Support

Devin Carey, Commercial Producer/Editor

Connor Bahng, Commercial Director of Photography

Nick Claro, Commercial Production Assistant

Shantelle Cuevas, Commercial Actress

Meaghan McCormick, Ella D'Amico, Alex Lederman, Adrien Carrere,  
Commercial Extras

Nicole Rodriguez and Elvis Lora, Commercial Voice Overs

**Renee Crown University Honors Program and the Crown Wise Grant**

### **Advice to Future Honors Students**

Don't let anyone tell you "you can't." If you're passionate enough about the project, you will make it happen. When people tell you the project is too wide in scope and too extensive for one person to accomplish, do it anyway. Be defined by your own abilities, not by the limits others set for you.

And save your summer job money for coffee. Lots and lots of coffee.



## Background

Nicaragua has long been recognized as an underdeveloped nation with no tradition of providing acceptable levels of education to its citizens. More important, over the course of Nicaraguan history, there has been a series of governmental attempts to actively restrict literacy. Most recently, between 1936 and 1979, the Somocist dictatorship deprived people of education in an attempt to suppress uprisings against the government. Knowing that literacy promotes understanding of governmental proceedings and the establishment of a self-regulated middle class, the Somocist leaders continued to suppress education. This oppression led to a staggering illiteracy rate of 50.35% across the nation. With more than half of the Nicaraguan population unable to read and write, the Somocist dictatorial system was able to maintain power and create a socioeconomic divide that limited the poor and subsidized the rich.

After a forty-three year regime of corruption and manipulation of outside aid funding during the Somocist rule, it was imperative that Nicaragua have a government willing to work for its people. In 1979 the socialistic party, La Frente Sandinista, overthrew the dictatorship and gained control of Nicaragua. With a moral obligation to their supporters and a dream of national reconstruction, the fledgling government looked to solve the national societal distress.<sup>1</sup> Education and literacy were part of the answer for developing nations such as Nicaragua, as shown

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<sup>1</sup> Sandinista Revolution. (n.d.). Retrieved September 27, 2015, from <https://vianica.com/go/specials/15-sandinista-revolution-in-nicaragua.html>

through previous Latin American regimes, and helped solve “problems ranging from inequality to ethnic conflicts to discrimination to economics.”<sup>2</sup> With this knowledge, Nicaragua began the reformation of its society by making a statement about the crippled education system. “Literacy,” the government proclaimed, “is an apprenticeship in life because in the process, people learn their intrinsic value as human beings, as makers of history, as actors of important social roles, as individuals with rights to demand and duties to fulfill.” Additionally, it has been noted by Teresa Squires Osborne in her thesis about politics and education, that education can be an agent in “establishing the legitimacy of a government,”<sup>3</sup> a pertinent goal at a time when Nicaragua’s population was doubting governmental stability. With this in mind, the Sandinistas began extensive planning to reform the education policies of their nation.<sup>4</sup>

With growing support from the Nicaraguan people, the new government rallied behind the 1980 literacy campaign. While the campaign itself spanned only 5 months, from March to August of 1980, the results were reported to be dramatically positive. Based on the UN’s definition that a person is literate if they can “with understanding, both read and write a short simple statement related to his/her everyday life”<sup>5</sup>, illiteracy rates in Nicaragua dropped from 50.35% to just 12.96%.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Osborne, Teresa Squires, "Politics and Education: The Nicaraguan Literacy Crusade" (1990). *Dissertations and Theses*. Paper 2038.

[http://pdxscholar.library.pdx.edu/open\\_access\\_etds/2038](http://pdxscholar.library.pdx.edu/open_access_etds/2038)

<sup>3</sup> Osborne, Teresa Squires, "Politics and Education: The Nicaraguan Literacy Crusade" (1990). *Dissertations and Theses*. Paper 2038.

[http://pdxscholar.library.pdx.edu/open\\_access\\_etds/2038](http://pdxscholar.library.pdx.edu/open_access_etds/2038)

<sup>4</sup> Hanemann, U. (2005). *Nicaragua's Literacy Campaign* (Rep.). Hamburg, Germany: UNESCO.

<sup>5</sup> [http://www.un.org/esa/sustdev/natlinfo/indicators/methodology\\_sheets/education/adult\\_literacy.pdf](http://www.un.org/esa/sustdev/natlinfo/indicators/methodology_sheets/education/adult_literacy.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> Hanemann, U. (2005). *Nicaragua's Literacy Campaign* (Rep.). Hamburg, Germany: UNESCO.

There were a number of other positive national effects that came from the campaign, as well. Consistent with the original goals of the campaign, increasing literacy rates led to a better understanding of different social classes, an increase in political awareness, and greater national cohesion.<sup>7</sup>

Before beginning the campaign, Nicaraguan officials studied other Latin American literacy initiatives. Their primary focus was on the improvements of nations, like Cuba, which had undergone a similar reconstruction.<sup>8</sup> By improving upon Cuba's literacy campaign, Nicaragua implemented an in depth education initiative that impacted the lives of both urban and rural Nicaraguans.

After studying successful campaigns from around the world, the Nicaraguan government then conducted an introspective analysis of its own literacy rate. Nicaraguan officials developed a census to accurately record the current literacy rate. Dr. Hanemann, a research specialist at UNESCO Institute for Education, states "the census was not just a gathering of data but a miniature campaign in itself, because it helped inform people about the upcoming literacy campaign, overcome cultural barriers between urban and rural areas, and develop first relationships of mutual commitment."<sup>9</sup> It initiated the overall campaign, unifying the nation under the common goal of literacy and sparking interest in prospective teachers and students alike. The census was the beginning stage of completing campaign goals by being an inexpensive, timely and tactical achievement in raising awareness about Nicaragua's new education reform.

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<sup>7</sup> Hanemann, U. (2005). *Nicaragua's Literacy Campaign* (Rep.). Hamburg, Germany: UNESCO.

<sup>8</sup> Hanemann, U. (2005). *Nicaragua's Literacy Campaign* (Rep.). Hamburg, Germany: UNESCO.

<sup>9</sup> Hanemann, U. (2005). *Nicaragua's Literacy Campaign* (Rep.). Hamburg, Germany: UNESCO.

The second stage of the literacy involved developing an interest in volunteering and participating for teachers and students. Although there was a strong consensus around the idea of improving literacy, getting individuals to volunteer to teach proved more difficult. Obstacles stood in the way of obtaining the appropriate number of volunteers, including a need for parental consent for young volunteers, and the prevalence of urban teachers who feigned illness or pregnancy to stay in populated areas. Additionally, a portion of the middle class population disagreed with the campaign for reasons such as “snobbery, misunderstanding and political aggravation.”<sup>10</sup> To compensate for the obstacles, the Ministry of Education developed a primary and secondary recruiting campaign, attempting to reach all possible volunteers, or *brigadistas*. “Peer pressure to join was strong and the Ministry of Education promised to give preferential treatment in the future to ex-*brigadistas* in such matters as scholarships.”<sup>11</sup> Many of the volunteers that eventually agreed to participate were adolescents. Although being taught by the youth could have proved embarrassing for adult learners, at the time the initiative was considered mass mobilization and the population put away their hesitations to participate.<sup>12</sup>

The scope of the campaign was immense. Classes were taught in both rural and urban areas. Over 65,000 individuals, or 30% of the literate population 10 years and older, volunteered to teach the illiterate.<sup>13</sup> To achieve such a massive training

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<sup>10</sup> Hanemann, U. (2005). *Nicaragua's Literacy Campaign* (Rep.). Hamburg, Germany: UNESCO.

<sup>11</sup> Hanemann, U. (2005). *Nicaragua's Literacy Campaign* (Rep.). Hamburg, Germany: UNESCO.

<sup>12</sup> Kintgen, E. R., Kroll, B. M., & Rose, M. (1988). *Perspectives on literacy*. Retrieved August 7, 2015.

<sup>13</sup> Kintgen, E. R., Kroll, B. M., & Rose, M. (1988). *Perspectives on literacy*. Retrieved August 7, 2015.

operation in a short period of time, the Ministry of Education set up a program where the trained volunteers taught the new volunteers until each volunteer was well prepared to endure five months of educating.

Many different governmental departments were heavily involved in the success of the campaign including the Sandinista Defense Committee who worked in urban areas, and the Association of Nicaraguan Women, which mobilized females as teachers and students.<sup>14</sup> By incorporating different sectors of the community, the campaign utilized diverse educational programs that catered to individual needs.

The campaign was largely successful because of the immense network of relationships that were forged between the government, the campaign participants and the idea of literacy. A series of “advertising” initiatives were created to build these relationships. Mandatory tune-ins to the radio broadcast “Puño el Alto” (Fists in the Air), the Sandinista salute, twice daily were used as training for the educators.<sup>15</sup> These broadcasts were linked to all transmitters in the country, providing the people of both rural and urban Nicaragua with the opportunity to learn about the new reformation. While it is apparent that this was propaganda, it was successful in strengthening the relationship between the Nicaraguan people and the government. It is difficult to separate the idea of education and politics. The results of this campaign as well as those conducted by other regional governments showcase the symbiotic relationship between the two. To separate them is to

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<sup>14</sup> Kintgen, E. R., Kroll, B. M., & Rose, M. (1988). *Perspectives on literacy*. Retrieved August 7, 2015.

<sup>15</sup> Kintgen, E. R., Kroll, B. M., & Rose, M. (1988). *Perspectives on literacy*. Retrieved August 7, 2015.

diminish the strength of each. The Sandinistas needed the support of their government in order to support their people in their journey to literacy.

Secondly, bulletins were used to inform volunteers about campaign news across Nicaragua, “and provide suggestions for instructional activities using local resources.”<sup>16</sup> This helped engage the people in the literacy discussion. It gave volunteers a tangible resource in implementing the campaign, as well as a consistent reminder of the work they were accomplishing.

Meetings were conducted between volunteers and supervisors to discuss the most efficient pedagogical techniques. They spent time determining the best options to “motivate recalcitrant adults”<sup>17</sup> and to encourage the population to pursue literacy. This not only strengthened the bond between workers and volunteers, but added to the strength of the literacy campaign by encouraging full participation and dedication to the idea.

### **Impact of campaign**

The steps that Nicaragua took to ensure a successful campaign paid off. As stated earlier, the illiteracy rates dropped dramatically. Urban individuals who knew little of the hardships outside of their own city were exposed to rural Nicaraguans. A national understanding was established and a strength in this unity between different socioeconomic sectors developed. Nicaraguans felt positively

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<sup>16</sup> Kintgen, E. R., Kroll, B. M., & Rose, M. (1988). *Perspectives on literacy*. Retrieved August 7, 2015.

<sup>17</sup> Kintgen, E. R., Kroll, B. M., & Rose, M. (1988). *Perspectives on literacy*. Retrieved August 7, 2015.

about their government, recognizing its desire to help them achieve basic human rights and recognize their value as individuals.

Although the effects of the literacy campaign on development of Nicaragua are numerous, the most obvious effects are seen through the eyes of the individuals involved. According to one source, a rural participant spoke to the mother of his literacy teacher about his personal growth, stating, “Do you know, I am no longer ignorant any more. I know how to read now. Not perfectly, you understand, but I know how. And do you know, your son isn't ignorant any more either. Now he knows how we live, what we eat, how we work and he knows the life of the mountains. Your son, ma'am, has learned to read from our book.”<sup>18</sup>

### **Criticisms of campaign**

Despite the positive effects of the campaign, it did not come without criticism. In addition to the obstacles the campaign faced in gaining volunteers, and those created by the partial pretention of the middle class, the Nicaraguan 1980 literacy campaign success had numerous aspects that were perceived negatively. Among the foremost problems was post-campaign enrollment. Despite the mass mobilization that began in 1980, school enrollment rates dropped dramatically once the campaign ended. By the end of the Sandinista's term in office, the illiteracy rate had risen to 20%.<sup>19</sup> This reversal in literacy rates continued throughout the

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<sup>18</sup> Osborne, Teresa Squires, "Politics and Education: The Nicaraguan Literacy Crusade" (1990). *Dissertations and Theses*. Paper 2038.

[http://pdxscholar.library.pdx.edu/open\\_access\\_etds/2038](http://pdxscholar.library.pdx.edu/open_access_etds/2038)

<sup>19</sup> Hanemann, U. (2005). *Nicaragua's Literacy Campaign* (Rep.). Hamburg, Germany: UNESCO.

following years. As a result, the 1998 UNDP Human Development Report cited Nicaragua as “amongst those countries with a literacy rate below 70% and [those] which made the smallest progress during the past 25 years in the field of literacy and adult education.”<sup>20</sup>

Other unintended results added to the program’s controversy. Among these was the point of view of the people. Those who volunteered to help teach the illiterate often viewed themselves as heroic, giving the already-educated a sense of superiority during the campaign. Other people viewed the campaign as “political indoctrination.” As seen earlier, politics and education are often intertwined. Some Nicaraguans saw this as a step backward for a government that preached that it was for the people. According to Kintgen in “Perspectives on Literacy”, this indoctrination would occur no matter the circumstances. What differentiates a literacy campaign benefitting the government, and a campaign for the people is the “subtlety and message” that is presented through the campaign marketing.<sup>21</sup> In the case of Nicaragua, the government’s goal was less in support of themselves, and more in an effort to maximize and equalize literacy.<sup>22</sup>

Because Nicaragua had a new government, funding for programs such as the 1980 literacy campaign was lacking. In order to establish a campaign that improved the education system in the country, the Sandinistas had to rely on structures

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<sup>20</sup> Hanemann, U. (2005). *Nicaragua's Literacy Campaign* (Rep.). Hamburg, Germany: UNESCO.

<sup>21</sup> Kintgen, E. R., Kroll, B. M., & Rose, M. (1988). *Perspectives on literacy*. Retrieved August 7, 2015

<sup>22</sup> Kintgen, E. R., Kroll, B. M., & Rose, M. (1988). *Perspectives on literacy*. Retrieved August 7, 2015



already put in place through years of imperialism. The existing education system relied on the texts, structure, and curricula that were used to indoctrinate the idea of imperialism into the institutions of underdeveloped countries. The resources to build an education system from scratch were unavailable. The Sandinistas were forced, as many developing countries are, to keep the structures of previous governments in place and use additional funding from “donor developed nations or outside organizations” to help accomplish their goals. These donations create an even greater bias in the education system by increasing the dependency on and influence of outside systems.<sup>23</sup> This causes conflict because despite Nicaragua’s attempt to focus strictly on the profitability of the Nicaraguan population, outside influences continued to shape the campaign and the Nicaraguan people’s knowledge.

Despite governmental efforts to keep volunteers safe, criticism around the deaths of the participants ensued. Many census volunteers died of health issues common in rural Nicaragua such as malaria, etc. Many of those who remained healthy still returned from their job with post traumatic stress from witnessing the conditions the rural people lived in.<sup>24</sup> Not only did the underdevelopment and lack of medical care in the rural areas lead to the death of some volunteers, but there were also a series of deaths due to “attacks by ex-guardsmen who had fled Nicaragua but came back to attack the idea of modernity and revolution.”<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Osborne, Teresa Squires, "Politics and Education: The Nicaraguan Literacy Crusade" (1990). *Dissertations and Theses*. Paper 2038. [http://pdxscholar.library.pdx.edu/open\\_access\\_etds/2038](http://pdxscholar.library.pdx.edu/open_access_etds/2038)

<sup>24</sup> Hanemann, U. (2005). *Nicaragua's Literacy Campaign* (Rep.). Hamburg, Germany: UNESCO.

<sup>25</sup> Kintgen, E. R., Kroll, B. M., & Rose, M. (1988). *Perspectives on literacy*. Retrieved August 7, 2015

Although the 1980 Literacy Campaign was a crucial beginning to the education reform in Nicaragua, its criticisms and lack of literacy maintenance prove there is still work to be done.

### **Literacy campaigns today**

Literacy is still a serious issue around the world today. Most countries struggle with illiteracy, from the United States to Nicaragua and beyond. Literacy campaigns attempt to equalize education. Many of the campaigns today are created through the help of non-profit organizations, such as Pro Literacy. Pro Literacy, an organization founded in 2002 in Syracuse, NY, works to end illiteracy both nationally and globally. Pro Literacy's campaigns differ from the 1980 literacy initiative in Nicaragua as they are not politically directed, and their achievements are measured on a smaller scale. The advertising campaigns that Pro Literacy implements focus strictly on education. They promote literacy to volunteers instead of the illiterate. The ads include quotes from famous authors and information about how literacy can improve one's life. These advertisements include only headline copy, with a distinct message about self-improvement through education.

After further analysis of Pro Literacy's advertisements, it appears that there is a possibility to partner with Pro Literacy in its efforts. Corporations can feature their logo on Pro Literacy's advertisements, suggesting a possibility for funding through outside resources. This collaboration could impact the advertising's message and therefore alter the original idea of the campaign to focus more on big business.

San Juan del Sur Biblioteca Movil is another organization that works to promote literacy. This organization specifically advocates for literacy within Nicaragua by bringing books to rural communities. SJDS Biblioteca Movil is less active in advertising its work, but instead provides information for participants through a website, Facebook page and by word of mouth.

The promotional differences between these two literacy organizations help distinguish social change advertising in the United States from social change advertising in Nicaragua.

### **Social Change Advertising**

Social change advertising and marketing has been used to highlight an array of issues throughout history, including anti-smoking promotions, mobilizing voting rights, etc. Despite the differences in subject, these advertising campaigns are similar in that they all follow the guidelines of strong social change advertisements.

The guidelines of social change ad campaigns are as follows: social change advertising focuses on stopping/ encouraging a beginning or an end to an idea, action, etc. These changes include cognitive, behavioral, change in action, and change in values. While social change is easiest to implement in a community that already has a connection to the idea being presented, one of the goals of advertising is to combat a lack of knowledge and disinterest.<sup>26</sup> In order to do this, research must

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<sup>26</sup> Stathis, Jessica, "Marketing Social Change: A Comparative Historical and Methodological Analysis of Anti-Smoking Endeavors" (2006). Undergraduate Research Symposium. Paper 39. <http://digitalcommons.colby.edu/ugrs/39>

be conducted to best understand the target audience and how the proposed ad will most likely alter their behavior.

According to Jessica Stathis, social change advertising requires five factors to be effective: force, direction, mechanism, adequacy and compatibility, and distance.<sup>27</sup> The force is “the motivation for listening to information.” In the case of Nicaraguan literacy, this motivation could range from a betterment of self to an incentive offered through the ad. The direction factor is “satisfying desire through the social mechanism,” or the aspect of the campaign that is directly related to evolving or adopting a new behavior. The adequacy and compatibility portion of the campaign focuses on whether or not the advertisements for social change and the desire for behavioral change can satisfy the consumer’s “concern through the [social] mechanism.” Does it benefit both the consumer and society and does it provide the consumer with enough of a reason to commit to change? Finally, distance is the factor directly associated with the effort required to achieve the desired change. The “shorter” the distance, the greater chance at success.

Changing behavior requires research into the benefits of the desired behavior as well as the possible negative effects that could result from the change. The cost of the change must also be calculated, as any advertising campaign would require a cost calculation. This cost calculation then has to be altered in a way that makes the target consumers believe that the cost of their change is less than it is in reality. This alteration is not to mislead the public but rather to encourage

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<sup>27</sup> Stathis, Jessica, "Marketing Social Change: A Comparative Historical and Methodological Analysis of Anti-Smoking Endeavors" (2006). Undergraduate Research Symposium. Paper 39. <http://digitalcommons.colby.edu/ugrs/39>

participation in said change. It emphasizes the positives of change for the participants rather than exacerbating the negatives, including any doubts the consumers might have.

In order to determine the most successful approach in social change advertising, a series of studies must be completed to best understand the internal and external environmental factors that are affecting the target audience. To begin, one must study both human and financial resources available to the consumer. This will help determine effective ways of reaching the audience through media. Studying recent developments in culture and technology will allow the ad to be more relevant to the consumer, increasing the chances of receptivity within the target audience. Social change advertising must be culturally relevant in order to capture the audience's interest. Additionally, studying past attempts to change behavior will provide the researcher the efficacy of certain tactics and how the people responded to the change. Finally, research of the competition, defined as the opposing viewpoint in social change (such as cigarette companies versus anti-smoking), is critical to a successful campaign. Determining their approach and their successes and failures will help build a stronger campaign and prevent the repetition of past mistakes.

Following the analysis of the target audience, one can narrow the advertising objectives and determine tactical approaches for his/her consumer. Social change advertising should closely relate to product campaigns in order to achieve the best chance at success of getting individuals engaged. According to Kotler and Zaltman, "the application of the logic of marketing to social goals is a natural development

and on the whole a promising one.”<sup>28</sup> Advertising is a type of mass propaganda and must follow three conditions in order to be effective. The first is monopolizing media in order to prevent counter-propaganda. Secondly, “canalization” must occur, wherein the desire (such as wanting to be literate) must be present and then shaped into a singular direction. This process has proven to be easier than social reconditioning. Finally, supplementation, or “following up mass communication campaigns with face to face contact” is important to ensure there is a level of human interaction involved in propagating social change.

Once the marketing has been implemented, the evaluation of the marketing effectiveness must begin. Social change campaigns require a “clear criteria for evaluation,” specifically utilizing statistics, in order to determine the success of mobilizing change.

### **Media in Latin America**

Widespread access to media in Nicaragua has varied since the 1980 literacy crusade, but radio continues to dominate as the most popular form of media. More than 80% of the Nicaraguan population has access to, and utilizes, radio.<sup>29</sup> As seen earlier, this medium was used by the government to spread awareness of the 1980 campaign and to gain followers by implementing mandatory tune-ins to the nightly Sandinista salute.

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<sup>28</sup> Kotler, Philip and Gerald Zaltman. 1971. “Social Marketing: An Approach to Planned Social Change.” *Journal of Marketing*. 35(July 1971):3-12.

<sup>29</sup> Zuniga, L. (2013). *Mapping Digital Media: Nicaragua* (Rep.). Open Society Foundations.

Newspapers are the second most widespread medium in Nicaragua, though the circulation has decreased substantially since the original literacy campaign. During the literacy crusade, the circulation rose due to the campaign's use of newspapers to promote literacy. Despite the decline in the popularity of printed newspapers, the digital version readership of popular newspapers has risen in recent years. The two most widely read newspapers are La Prensa and El Nuevo Diario. The latter was bought by a group with a strong connection to a large Nicaraguan bank associated with the government, and since has become less aggressive and critical in its political journalism.

Today, there are other options for media in Nicaragua that weren't available during the original initiative. These include television, Internet and social media. The majority of Nicaraguans own a television, though it has not proved to be conducive to idea engagement. As of 2011, the Ortego-Murillo group, with its owner being the president of Nicaragua, had control over four of the 12 VHF channels, and a partnership with the Gonzalez Group which controlled three other channels. Despite the fact that the Ortego-Murillo group has dissolved, these channels remain friendly to the government, affecting the news and information that is broadcast.

Internet has grown dramatically since the 1980 literacy crusade, during which only two institutions had access. Today large businesses, schools, universities, Internet cafes and even some households have reliable access to Internet. Despite this, it is still not a prevalent medium in Nicaragua due to widespread poverty. Approximately 18.5% of households have Internet. Many remote places lack this luxury, where "the digital divide remains a significant

barrier.”<sup>30</sup> Some spikes in online readership of newspapers, etc. have proven to be misleading, due to the fact that many of the readers are from outside the nation. Emigration has had a large affect on the media consumption statistics. The Internet has allowed Nicaraguans living abroad to access information from continental news sources. This dispersion of national news could be beneficial in a present day literacy initiative in terms of obtaining outside support and global awareness. There is no official censorship of the Internet in Nicaragua, and therefore it has become a main source of news for many Nicaraguans.

In addition to the Internet, Nicaragua has established itself in the social media sphere. There has been an increase in membership on social sites, specifically Facebook, in recent years. According to CNBC, “Latin America is one of the leaders in social networking penetration and time spent online... We expect that Latin America’s advertising market will continue to grow... driven by strong online video and social networking advertising spending.”<sup>31</sup> Social media remains a critical piece of today’s society and “Facebook has played an important role in reviving civil society activism.”<sup>32</sup> With Nicaraguans interacting in this digital sphere, there is a greater chance today at mass mobilization for literacy via social media.

Censorship has occurred both in print and on the radio in Nicaragua, with broadcasts and articles requiring government approval before airing/being printed. The greatest corruption, though, is through official advertising. The government has

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<sup>30</sup> Zuniga, L. (2013). *Mapping Digital Media: Nicaragua* (Rep.). Open Society Foundations.

<sup>31</sup> Bishop, K. (2013). This Region is the World's Fastest Growing Advertising Market. Retrieved April 27, 2016, from <http://www.cnbc.com/id/100893416>

<sup>32</sup> Zuniga, L. (2013). *Mapping Digital Media: Nicaragua* (Rep.). Open Society Foundations.



a strong hold on the marketing media of Nicaragua, and “around 80 percent of [advertising] funds have been allocated in favor of Mr. Ortega’s [the Nicaraguan president] own media interests or those allied to his administration.”<sup>33</sup>

### **Methodology for Primary Research:**

Types of primary research:

- Personal Interviews
- Ethnography
- Observation

Researching in Nicaragua began with personal interviews. These interviews were conducted with a series of people, including local residents of San Juan del Sur, the professor of a rural Nicaraguan school, the head of the San Juan del Sur Biblioteca, the superintendent of the San Juan del Sur school district, and Francisco Lacayo Parajon, a retired UNESCO leader and the creator of the Sandinista Liberation Front educational program. Below are my objectives for each interview as well as a list of research questions that were asked:

### **Local Residents**

My objective for interviewing the locals was to better understand the importance placed on education within the Nicaraguan culture. I learned how their

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<sup>33</sup> Zuniga, L. (2013). *Mapping Digital Media: Nicaragua* (Rep.). Open Society Foundations.

society views literacy and furthering education versus how they view the importance of working from a young age. I also better understand that locals saw a shift in literacy during the 1980 Literacy Campaign and that these shifts seem to match the data from government sources.

Below are research questions I asked:

- What are your thoughts on the 1980 literacy campaign?
- Were you directly affected by this campaign?
- What changes did you see in your community during this time?
- What propaganda was used to entice you to become educated/educate?
- How has this campaign affected Nicaragua since 1980?
- How important is education to you today?
- What factors do you believe affect the opportunity to become educated?
- Do you have children and if so what do you do to encourage their education?
- Do you read to your children?
- Do your children attend school? When do they stop attending school?
- What additional activities are your children expected to do outside of school?
- How old were you when you stopped attending school?
- How does parental illiteracy affect a child's literacy?
- What access to education is there in rural areas of Nicaragua?
- What access do working class families have to education?
- How do you feel about the government's involvement in education?
- How does a lack of education and literacy cause other issues in your community? Have you seen this firsthand?

- What do you believe is the most important value you can pass down to your children?
- If you could wish one thing for your children's future, what would it be?
- If you could change one thing about your life, what would it be and why?

**Professor:**

My objective in interviewing a rural school professor was to understand how education has changed in recent years, and how he views the disparity between rural and urban education. By interviewing someone with firsthand experience in the education field, I had the opportunity to gain insight into how the education system works in Nicaragua, and the prominence of literacy in rural families.

- How have you seen education shift since you entered the field?
- How does parent illiteracy affect children's literacy?
- What kinds of things are taught in school?
- What other pressures, outside of education, are put on your students?
- What is the incentive to gain a higher education?
- What do you know about the 1980 literacy campaign? Do you recognize a change in the educational system since the conclusion of this campaign?
- How do you see the difference in education offered to lower class families versus upper class families?
- What other factors affect education?
- Why did you want to be in the field of education?

- What is the most inspiring story you have heard from one of your students?
- What are the tutoring opportunities for students who struggle at school?
- Why do you believe literacy is important?

**Students:**

My objective for surveying students was to understand from a firsthand perspective how education works in Nicaragua. I wanted to know what/who encouraged them to gain an education, the effects of their parents' education on their own, what is taught about the 1980 literacy campaign in school, and how formal education promotes a love of learning:

- What does education mean to you?
- What do you want to do with your education?
- What importance is placed on education?
- How did your parents encourage literacy throughout your childhood?
- Do you know anything about the 1980 literacy campaign? Do they teach it in school?
- Think of your favorite teacher from secondary school. Why was s/he your favorite? What did s/he do to encourage learning and literacy?

## **Francisco Lacayo Parajon**

This interview was key in my Capstone's success. Parajon is the ex-director of Latin American UNESCO, and the creator of the Sandinista National Liberation Front education program. My objective was to be able to understand the actual scope of the 1980 Literacy Campaign. I learned how the information dispersed to the public was factual and not altered by government sources. I learned the objectives of the campaign, and how those objectives have evolved since 1980.

- Explain your position at UNESCO
- What was your involvement in the FSLN education program?
- What evaluation techniques were used in the 1980 literacy campaign?
- Explain how the literacy rate jumped by 37.4% in 5 months time
- What tactics did the campaign utilize to encourage participation?
- What marketing did the campaign use? What advertisements were included and what was the content of the ads? Who were the ads directed to?
- Where did the campaign begin?
- How did having a new government affect the acceptance of an educational revolution?
- What was the spirit of Nicaragua at the time of the 1980 campaign? How has that changed in recent years?
- If you were to implement the campaign today, what would you change?
- How do you think the need for literacy has shifted since 1980?

- What are the educational needs of the Nicaraguan citizens now? How do we go about fixing these problems?
- Why is Nicaragua's literacy rate one of the lowest in Latin America? What factors do you believe affect this?

## **Ethnography**

Ethnographic research is defined as “systematic market research observing consumers in their own environment.”<sup>34</sup> It began as a tool for anthropologists to understand people and their cultures. The researcher stays with a family and lives like them in order to truly understand their culture. Recently, it has become key in research for marketing and advertising because it allows the agency to gain insight into how people interact with their daily life when not being interviewed. It is natural, providing an observation that is not misconstrued by the interviewee's perception of his or her own life. It provides deep cultural insights and gives the researcher new knowledge or validates held beliefs.

I observed the host family I stayed with for the week that I was in Nicaragua. I gained insight into their media usage, the importance of education, and other cultural factors that play into their everyday lives. By understanding the Nicaraguan culture, I am better able to determine how to market literacy to the Nicaraguan people. Additionally, gaining insight into media usage allows me to better choose the media platforms I will utilize for my campaign.

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<sup>34</sup> Definition of Ethnographic Market Research. (n.d.). Retrieved December 28, 2015, from <http://lexicon.ft.com/Term?term=ethnographic-market-research>

### Primary Research Conclusions:



### Visit to Rural School, La Tortuga

Professor Edgard Antonio Henriquez Malianos travels to La Tortuga, a rural Nicaraguan school, on Saturdays to teach students who are unable to attend school during the week. This inability derives from the necessity to aid their families in *los campos* to help them survive. The students range from age 13 to 27 and are divided into five groups based on education level. I handed out the survey to each student within the five years. The survey included a series of questions directed towards the students' feelings on the importance of education, their knowledge of the 1980

literacy campaign, and their motivation to continue their education. The responses mirrored one another and are summarized as follows:

- Education is important because it will provide the students with better lives and will make them good people. Without education, you may fall on hard times or be enticed to become a gangster or criminal.
- The 1980 Literacy Campaign is not discussed in school. Those who know about the campaign only know the basics in regards to educating a large population throughout Nicaragua.
- Parents are supportive of gaining an education and help their children complete their homework. They encourage the students to attend school and teach them the value of education.
- Education is valued as a way to have a better career that will allow the students to have a more profitable life. It is a means to a better ending but is not valued solely for its ability to enhance the mind or independent/individual thinking.
- Students value their teachers based on their ability to explain problems to the class and on the student's favorite subjects (many mentioned mathematics). Additionally, teachers encourage their students to read and write continuously.





After surveying the students of La Tortuga, I gave a different survey to Yamil Bermúdez, 28, a teacher's aid that taught in all of the classrooms and was considered to know English (which was at a basic level). The survey he received asked about the changes in education, the incentive to obtain a higher education, and what factors affect education. His answers are summarized as follows:

Many times parents consider work to be more beneficial than studying and force their children to work in the fields, minimizing their opportunity to attend school. Additionally, the lack of transportation to schools in rural areas and the lack of technology affect education throughout Nicaragua. Higher education is meant to increase opportunities for a better job and to better a person's relationship within society. Yamil is also unaware of the 1980 Literacy Campaign.

**Key points of Professor Edgard's interview:**

Edgard Antonio Henriquez Malianos is a primary and secondary school professor who specializes in social sciences and the improvement of education within Nicaragua. He was also a regional coordinator for the 1980 Literacy campaign for the San Juan del Sur district. While visiting La Tortuga, I interviewed him about the education system in Nicaragua and his thoughts about literacy. Below is the summary of his views:

Education has evolved dramatically since the 1980 literacy campaign. This includes a change in pedagogical methodology, content taught to students, and the evaluation of education. Additionally, globalization and the introduction of technology have helped improve Nicaraguan education. Despite the shift, there is still a lack of funding for schools and therefore a smaller budget for technology. For example, at one school a course about computing was cut to save money. Schools cannot afford brand new computers but rather use secondhand computers that are "on their last life." Technology is a limited resource in rural areas and to many of those who are illiterate.

Students are taught common subjects in school such as humanities and social sciences. Furthermore, they are exposed to the value of self-esteem which is used to encourage them to further their education and become a professional within society.

Students attend Saturday school because they work for their families in the fields during the week. On Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays, after their daily work is done, these students have meetings to receive extra help on their schoolwork.

Higher education seems out of reach for many Nicaraguans because the cost of moving to Managua and paying the university is more than most families can afford. Most rural families do not have relatives that live in Managua that students can stay with.

Edgard verified the success of the 1980 literacy campaign, stating that there could not have been an alteration of data due to the fact that it was reported by UNESCO. He believes that those that were still considered illiterate by the end of the campaign were those who were too old to participate or had a developmental disability that prevented them from learning.



To determine if a person is literate the government dispenses a census. This census

asks rudimentary questions including name, age, gender, etc. Finally the census asks the participant if he or she is literate. If the response is “yes,” the participant is asked to read forty words in a minute in order to prove their literacy. (This census differs from the UN’s determination of literacy).

Illiteracy of parents may affect the education of their children. More so, the economic condition of the family may be a formidable problem when dealing with students’ opportunities to learn. For example, some families cannot afford to give their children books, backpacks, school uniforms, etc. Many students are not given breakfast if their families have been through a tough winter or harvest. In order to combat this issue, the school system in Nicaragua implemented a food program for the students.

According to Professor Edgard, a literate person has a door open to them to develop further within society. An illiterate person is “blind.”

### **Interview with Carol, English Teacher**

Canadian ex-pat and English teacher, Carol, mentioned her observations of Nicaraguan culture and its education system through a non-native perspective. Key points from our interview are summarized below:

- There is a lack of interest in education, and a lack of jobs even if the people are educated.
- The graduation rate is decreasing.
- Students do not read long text because of a low attention span.

- The people of Nicaragua do not complain and will put up with any situation. This translates directly to their complacency with the government and their position within society.
- Some adults take English classes without being literate in Spanish.
- There is a high rate of teen pregnancy and dropouts across Nicaragua causing them to lose the literacy they had gained.

### **Interview with Jaime, English Teacher**

Jaime is a director of the English school that is held within the San Juan del Sur Biblioteca. Originally from Philadelphia, she has been living in Nicaragua for six years. She is in the process of starting “Escuela Adelante” an international and bilingual school that is meant to ensure high achieving students move on to secondary schooling. Jaime’s key insights into literacy and education are summarized below:

- “It’s not cool to be smart.”
- Because of the lack of wealth in the country, those who are wealthy enough to afford things such as college or books are often made fun of. There is no support for friends or people who have more than others and it is considered rude to flaunt money.

- Nicaragua needs more innovators and creators but locals are focusing more on the tourism industry which will be short-lived.
- There are a lot of mental health and learning disabilities that go un-diagnosed throughout childhood development.
- People are comfortable in San Juan and afraid of leaving to attend school or get a job in cities like Managua.
- 25% of an average salary goes to paying for college. If you have kids to feed, you cannot afford it. Even if you attend college, there are not enough jobs when you graduate.
- There is a high rate of single mothers within the country. Men often impregnate teenage girls and then leave them without financial support. Teenage pregnancy occurs because of the lack of knowledge of contraceptives. Sex at a young age has been linked to boredom within adolescents.
- People are not embarrassed by their illiteracy.
- Teachers rely on memorization, repetition and testing instead of an application of knowledge. Students fail to keep the knowledge that they learn.
- Students are not used to liking school. Their school days are short and have a lot of breaks. There is a lack of extra curricular activities for the students to participate in.
- Parents do not force their children to attend school. "Nobody gives a fuck" about education, she stated. Complacency with poverty is a big issue throughout San Juan del Sur.

### **Interview with Dorquis, Delegate of the Ministry of Education**

Dorquis Mantza Lopez Muniz is a delegate for the Ministry of Education in Nicaragua. She is the superintendent for the San Juan del Sur school district and worked as a coordinator of literacy throughout her years in education. Her interview is summarized as follows:

- Knowledge must be fortified or an individual will go back to being illiterate. Today the issue is more about practicing literacy than teaching.
- “Vegetable literates”: those who were once literate (and are still considered so by government standards) but lose their ability to read and write because they do not continue to do so are the bigger issue among the Nicaraguan population.
- The government has all of the resources in place to teach literacy and promote the programs, but it lacks economic support.
- The 1980 Literacy Campaign changed the way of thinking among the *campesino* population.
- Women’s literacy is affected by the idea of machismo (abuse, pregnancy).
- Much of the illiterate population is old and complacent about their lack of education.
- Children work and make money and get used to that idea rather than going back to school to further their education.

## Interview with Mayra's Mother

Mayra's mother lent insight into the 1980 Literacy Campaign from first hand experience. She also commented on the education system of Nicaragua today and what cultural aspects affect the literacy rates. The following points summarize her interview:

- She listened to the Sandinista radio broadcasts during the 1980 education initiative.
- Her younger sister participated in the movement and went to the rural areas of Nicaragua to help teach the uneducated. Upon her return, she expressed that it was a positive experience for her and for those she taught.
- The 1980 Literacy Campaign promoted *convivencia*, or coexistence, of rural and urban Nicaraguans. It helped spread a cultural change where urban Nicaraguans adopted some of the *campesino* culture and vice versa.
- The campaign heightened women's position within society. Collectively, they became more independent and more resistant to domestic violence. Resources were put in place such as an office for domestic violence victims to discuss the issue.
- Since Mayra's mother was in school, there has been a large cultural shift in women's resources. Although she was forced to drop out because she became pregnant as a teenager, today there is a school that was developed in Nicaragua to teach young pregnant girls. This provides them with the opportunity to continue their education throughout their pregnancy.



- Additionally, daycare now exists so working mothers can continually support their family during the early years of their child's life.
- When Mayra was a young girl, her mother would invent stories to tell her instead of reading them. This was not due to a lack of literacy but rather a lack of money for books.
  - The illiteracy of parents does not affect their children's literacy potential if they encourage their children to attend school and *escuelitas* (after school additional tutoring done by the teacher within their own home).
  - The government involvement within the education system in Nicaragua is a positive thing because it helps provide resources for the children.
  - Mayra's mother does not believe that illiteracy causes other problems for the individual.

**Interview with Francisco Lacayo Parajon, Ex-Director of UNESCO in Latin American and Caribbean Culture, Ex-Senior Advisor to the President of the UN**

Francisco Lacayo Parajon was one of the original members of the group of men who created the 1980 Literacy Campaign in Nicaragua. He studied philosophy, psychology, theology, history and economics.

Parajon confirmed the success of the 1980 Literacy Campaign and its ability to transform the nation into an "Illiteracy-free" country, according to the United Nations. "It was the largest national mobilization in the history of Nicaragua," he

stated, mentioning that half of the population participated and 406,056 Nicaraguans became literate through the program. In five months, as confirmed by Parajon, the illiteracy rate dropped from 50.35% to 12.96%.

This tremendous difference was achievable by the dedication of the men spearheading the movement, the willingness of the people and the very grassroots support that created this campaign. The government was opposed to the idea when it was first proposed, leaving the creators to financially support and mobilize the idea themselves. Parajon explained how he had to invent the movement from nothing and it developed from the dream of the men working to solve the education issue within Nicaragua. The group of men were “very conscious of limitations” within their country.

The 1980 literacy campaign was the strongest pedagogical movement in the history of Nicaragua because of the welcoming political atmosphere. Sandinistas were gaining support by “inviting the population to revolt against ignorance.” The government was willing to allow the people to gain literacy despite its initial wariness of the campaign. Fernando Cardinal, a leader of the literacy movement, traveled Europe to ask for money from each country, receiving very little aid. A Swiss ministry began a campaign titled “A Light for Nicaragua” which collected 50,000 Coleman lights for the volunteers to use across the rural areas at night. Quebec created a campaign that taught Canadian students about the movement occurring in Nicaragua and donated notebooks to the cause.

Although the campaign was successful, it made its share of mistakes. According to Parajon, the two biggest mistakes were the lack of knowledge (needed glasses for the blind in the dark) and too much trust in technology (the 50,000 Coleman lamps failed because they did not have replacement batteries).

Throughout the campaign there was a radio program that aired twice a day. All radios were tuned into this program and it answered questions about the literacy campaign and the education initiative occurring in Nicaragua. It was not a socialist proselytizer despite democratic opinions, though the Sandinista salute later became important to the program.

The movement did not utilize traditional advertising because of the lack of funding. Instead the idea spread by word of mouth and the radio.

Although there is disbelief about achieving such a tremendous change in literacy rates, Francisco Lacayo Parajon assured me that the statistics were not altered by government nor UN sources. The government was not originally involved but later joined because of its success. The UN utilizes the same basis of literacy across the world and remains unbiased when reporting data. By 2009, the UN declared Nicaragua free of illiteracy. Regrettably, that declaration does not remain true in Nicaragua today.

**Other Observations:****Proyecto Movil**

Proyecto Movil (The Mobile Project) is a subset of San Juan del Sur Biblioteca. A few employees of the library travel to the rural areas around San Juan to lend children books to schools. I spent the day with this group of individuals in order to immerse myself in the experiences of the rural children. The following were my observations:

- The students were eager to receive new books.
- The students were fascinated with my camera and technology, many of them asking to have their photograph taken.
- When we arrived at the schools, the children were not learning. At one school the children were playing baseball, another school the children were sweeping the floors. One classroom had a young girl (appearing to be under the age of 10) taking care of her infant sister while trying to learn.
- Some of the students were wearing uniforms. (Previous to the Sandinista government, students were required to wear uniforms or they could not attend school. Now it is tradition to do so, but children are awarded an education without the need to own proper clothing.)
- Older students go to school at different times than the younger students because of the lack of teachers. These take place in two shifts, 7AM-12PM and 12:30PM-5PM.
- Some of the children were carrying their books in garbage bags instead of backpacks or other traditional school bags.

- The drive to these rural schools included long dirt roads and driving through streams.
- While driving to these areas, we passed many ox and horse carts, a main mean of transportation in Nicaragua.
- Many houses outside of more developed areas consist of sheet metal and wooden planks. Most of these houses lack basics such as flooring, but have satellite dishes on top to receive television channels and residents have mobile phones.





### **English classes**

After sitting in on three English classes taught to young students, I observed the following:

- Most students are eager to learn and show up to a non-required English class despite the fact that they had exams all day.
- The children are literate in Spanish and working towards English literacy.
- Government propaganda is obvious within the classroom. Posters hung on the wall state “Unite for Victory” and contain graphics of the Sandinista government.

**Ethnography (a glance at Nicaraguan culture):**

I spent a week living with a single mother named Mayra and two of her children. Her eldest son was studying in Managua to be an engineer. Mayra owns a smoothie shop and teaches at a Spanish school for non-Spanish speakers. Additionally, she hosts students studying and volunteering abroad in Nicaragua. She rents out two rooms in her home to men who live in San Juan but are not from the town. These four positions allow her to put food (including chicken, a luxury in Nicaragua) on the table for her three children, afford her own home with tile floors (a mark of wealth), and pay for wifi and television. She plans on expanding her home to make more space to rent. Her mother and sister live in the two houses next door to Mayra. Her

mother also works, despite the fact that her age mirrors that of American retirement.

Mayra pays close attention to her sons' study habits, ensuring they have completed their homework prior to watching television. Her youngest son, age 11, is "dramatic and difficult" according to Mayra. Despite this statement, he consistently cleared the dishes from the dinner table and interacted with his family more than with technology. He was welcoming and interested in teaching me how to play traditional Nicaraguan games. The ornament I brought from the United States fascinated him. When the middle son touched the ornament the youngest yelled "ten cuidado!" (Be careful!) Their amazement at something that seems insignificant to Americans made me far more culturally aware and understand the true depth of their poverty and lack of access to the outside world.



## Survey of Students in SJDS English Class



- They associate the word “*educacion*” with manners instead of education.
- The students’ favorite teachers are those who are “friendly and helpful” because so many of the teachers still resort to corporal punishment within the schools.
- Education offers them a chance to go wherever they choose.
- Some students are aware of the 1980 Literacy campaign and others are not. Those who know about the initiative know only the basics of the campaign.
- They attend school to “fight for [their] future.”

- The students desire to continue their education and finish their studies. (This evaluation may be skewed because the students who attend the English classes are among “the best and brightest”).
- Some students drew a line through the question “How did your parents promote literacy throughout your childhood?” Others stated their parents help them do their homework and make them attend school.
- One student responded, “My incentive to attend school is my friends,” while another stated that she attends school to make her parents proud. This shows the importance of validation from others within education.

### **Insights:**

- **Vegetable Literacy:** The biggest problem in Nicaragua today is not a lack of literacy, but a lack of using the literacy to maintain it. Many individuals who are taught to read and write become dependent on the land to support themselves and do not need literacy to do their daily work. This fails to fortify their knowledge. A lack of literacy leads to other issues including domestic abuse, teen pregnancy, etc.
- **Complacency:** The people of Nicaragua are complacent. They have little and have learned to accept this. This reflects on individuals who accept their lack of education, literacy, etc.
- **Not showing off:** Due to the lack of wealth in Nicaragua, it is against cultural norms to flaunt money. In Nicaragua, this wealth could be as miniscule as

being able to afford a book. For this reason, individuals refrain from reading in public places (and private places as well) for fear they will be seen as “showing off.”

- **Need for validation:** As seen from two different accounts of young students, they attend school to gain validation from their parents and friends. Even more so, the idea that “being smart isn’t cool” has been adopted by Nicaraguan society. Instead of choosing education and literacy for their own sake, individuals choose to go with the norm/trend of being uneducated.
- **Outside cultural factors:** Some cultural barriers prevent literacy and education throughout the country. These include a high teen pregnancy rate (part of the lack of education cycle), a lack of funding to support education programs within the country, and going to work at a young age.

## **Media**

The following media were observed being used within Nicaragua:

- Smart phones and basic mobile phones
- Television
- The Internet
- Print
- Outdoor billboards

## **Strategy**

### **1. What do I want the advertising to do?**

a. The advertising is meant to change the viewpoint of the Nicaraguan population from complacency with illiteracy to desiring to continue literacy.

### **2. Who is my target?**

a. The target for this campaign is literate people between the ages of 15-60 who are in danger of losing the literacy skills they have.

### **3. What do they currently think?**

a. Literate people in danger of becoming vegetable literates believe reading is “uncool” or unnecessary. They are afraid of showing off books when they have them or outwardly expressing their education.

### **4. What would I like them to think?**

a. I want this demographic to believe in the power and accessibility of literacy.

### **5. What is the single most compelling promise I can make them?**

a. Maintaining your literacy is cool because it will empower you to improve your community.

### **6. Why is that believable?**

a. Literacy and education are important in societal hierarchy. It provides individuals with greater opportunity for jobs, empowerment to speak out against government corruption, and the inspiration to make positive changes within their communities.

**7. How should the advertising feel?**

a. The advertising should feel new, hip and engaging. The advertising will provide a noticeable benefit for the consumer.

**8. Are there any executional mandatories?**

a. The advertising must provide consumers with accessible and engaging content to read that not only furthers their literacy level but also encourages individuals to continue reading at the San Juan del Sur Biblioteca.

**Organizing Idea: Literacy is an accessible way for you to benefit society.**

**Tagline:** Empieza con un libro. (It begins with a book.)

**Creative Idea Summary:**

Individuals are not maintaining their literacy because the benefits of doing so do not outweigh the cultural trends and inconvenience of it. Therefore, to promote the maintenance of literacy in Nicaragua I have to solve two problems:

1. Access to reading and writing material
2. Making individuals feel that their literacy can benefit themselves and their community.

**Debut: TV Campaign**

TV was chosen because it is a relevant medium in Nicaragua. Primary research disproved the secondary research that television is not engaging. Instead, while traveling through rural and urban areas it was clear that both these places

have access and continuously engage with television. Rural families spend many hours a day watching television. It is the easiest and most relatable touch point in their lives. This will be the first touch point the consumers are exposed to.

The TV campaign is as follows:

- Three commercials with one central idea: literacy inspires you to do good for your community. The first commercial showcases a girl who has built a community garden. As the commercial progresses, the story moves backwards to show her planning the project and finally to show her reading a famous Nicaraguan book with a quote that inspires her idea. The commercial will then ask the viewer to join the movement and download the San Juan del Sur Library app. The commercials are all shot in reverse to exacerbate the point that great ideas can be traced back to literacy.

### **Next Step: The app**

A mobile app was chosen as the second medium due to its interactive nature and its ability to engage individuals. While print may be more widespread, I am trying to get reading in the hands of those who lack access. Therefore, by choosing to make a mobile app, the campaign is fitting seamlessly into their digital lives. Further secondary research found that 90% of Nicaraguans have a mobile phone<sup>35</sup>. The app will run without Wi-Fi providing the individuals ability to use it without needing to be near internet access.

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<sup>35</sup> Zuniga, L. (2013). *Mapping Digital Media: Nicaragua* (Rep.). Open Society Foundations.

- The app will help individuals raise money for their community project by providing them with literacy games. The more times that the game is played within a single community, the more Cordobas (Nicaraguan currency) will collect on the app. App users can view their community's Cordobas versus other communities throughout Nicaragua. The top three communities will be given money to complete their community projects, encouraging individuals to use the app, maintain their literacy and help their communities.
- The app will have a second section with information about the San Juan del Sur library. This will include news updates, photographs, and a catalog of the library's books which will help promote the actual organization to the individuals it is helping.
- Finally the app has a digital library card. This card can be used at the local "Blue Box" to check out books for free. The more the card is scanned on the Blue Box, the more Cordobas are raised.

### **Third Step: Blue Box**

- The Blue Box is an outdoor execution placed in participating communities around Nicaragua, specifically in rural areas that lack access to books. These machines work similarly to Redbox Movies, but host a series of books for individuals to rent. The SJDS library will travel to these locations once a month to change the book options within the machine in order to keep the content relevant. Additionally, these boxes offer wireless Wi-Fi hotspots. This provides consumers with the ability to download the app when they are near

the box. The app itself runs without Wi-Fi. This execution targets the access problem and engages consumers by modernizing libraries as digital boxes.

### **Final Step: Facebook**

- Earlier in this report, I stated the importance of social media in Latin American digital lives and grassroots movements. To capitalize on this, the Facebook “It begins with *your* book” campaign was formed. This campaign utilizes the tagline as a hashtag and encourages individuals to share their own stories of bettering the community. Those posts with the most likes will be turned into short stories that show the inspiration of literacy in community development. These stories will be shared on Facebook weekly, allowing individuals to have constantly updated content to read, inspiration to better their community, and an incentive to participate in the SJDS Biblioteca literacy movement.

The creative executions all focus around one central idea: literacy benefits you and your community. Through these executions, Nicaraguans are given consistent access to reading and writing materials, and are encouraged to participate because there is a known benefit for their entire community. As a culture that values the coming together of communities, this campaign will be relatable and inspiring for the Nicaraguan population. Additionally, it is the next step in education reform after the 1980 literacy campaign. The 1980 campaign increased literacy, this campaign fortifies that literacy and digitalizes it for the modern day consumer.



## Campaign Evaluation

To determine the success of the campaign, a census would first be given to determine the exact amount of vegetable literates within Nicaragua. Questions that can be used to determine this include “When did you stop attending school?”, “What do you do to maintain your literacy today?” and an evaluation that asks individuals to read a passage and answer basic questions. If these individuals had completed a certain level of schooling, we can assume they were at one time literate. If they can no longer read the passage and write their responses, then they are categorized as vegetable literates.

Throughout the year, the campaign’s effectiveness will be monitored and evaluated based on its ability to prevent other individuals from becoming vegetable literates. A second census survey will be conducted at the end of the year in order to gain statistical proof of the campaign’s effectiveness. If no more people have become vegetable literates, then the campaign can be deemed a success.

Additionally, this campaign can be evaluated by its fulfillment of Jessica Stathis’ five factors of social change campaign effectiveness. As reported earlier, these are force, direction, mechanism, adequacy and compatibility, and distance.<sup>36</sup> The force for this campaign is the ability to improve your community. The direction is maintaining literacy through the mechanisms: the app, Blue Box, television

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<sup>36</sup> Stathis, Jessica, "Marketing Social Change: A Comparative Historical and Methodological Analysis of Anti-Smoking Endeavors" (2006). Undergraduate Research Symposium. Paper 39. <http://digitalcommons.colby.edu/ugrs/39>

commercial and Facebook campaign. The adequacy and compatibility are fulfilled because it provides both the consumer and with noticeable benefits: a literate society and community development. The distance for the consumer to achieve the desired change is minimal. They must download an app and participate in the game or utilize the digital library card. Since the objective is to prevent more vegetable literacy, these individuals already know how to read. They do not have to learn anything new, they only have to continue to fortify their knowledge.

### **Conclusion**

The 1980 literacy campaign in Nicaragua shaped the future of Latin American education reform. The greatest mobilization in the history of the country led to an almost 38% increase in literacy in five months. But what good is literacy if you don't use it? Today we must fortify that knowledge, give individuals a reason to fight to keep their literacy and prove that the efforts of the 1980 campaign were not wasted. By implementing a social change advertising campaign targeting potential future vegetable literates, I am stopping the digression of Nicaraguan literacy, combating the cultural stigmas around reading, and giving consumers a means to further community development. With the inspiration to read, access to literature, and an incentive to do good in their community, Nicaraguans will be encouraged to join the literacy movement once more.

And how did I get inspired for this Capstone? Well, it began with a book...

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