How Did It Fit Into Your Career Path?

Both then and now, I would describe my research as a scholarship of voice, driven by an interest in meaningful and equitable participatory practices, and characterized by a strong interdisciplinary ethos. More specifically, my research examines participatory online cultures, with a particular focus on youth and creative participation. Although my work is rooted in communication and new media studies, I take an interdisciplinary approach to studying participation. Accordingly, my research so far has included explorations of participatory practices across a variety of domains: I have published, for instance, on participatory learning (Felt, Vartabedian, Literat, & Mehta, 2012; Literat, 2014), participatory online art (Literat, 2012, 2017; Literat & Glaveanu, 2016), or participatory innovation (Literat, 2013a).

In theorizing the nature of participation across sociocultural spheres, my principal interest lies in the stakes thereof. Therefore, agency and empowerment—be it social, creative, civic or educational empowerment—represent core aspects of my scholarly engagement with participatory cultures. Similarly, from a methodological perspective, my article on participatory drawing in International Journal of Qualitative Methods (IJQM; Literat, 2013b) speaks particularly to these questions of participation, empowerment, and ethics.

How Did It Impact Your Work?

Sharing this article with such an interdisciplinary audience of researchers and practitioners allowed me to think more deeply about the nature of participation and knowledge co-construction in research settings as well as the potential of visual methodologies to facilitate voice and offer facilitate research insights.

Since publishing that article, I expanded by work on participatory multimodal research methodologies by publishing on participatory drawing (Literat, 2013c) and multimodal research as a challenge to the hegemony of text-based knowledge in academic scholarship (Literat et al., 2017).

But more broadly, I’ve been pursuing an interest in the visual as a window into youth perceptions, attitudes, and concerns. For instance, my research agenda over the past few years has been centered on an examination of young people’s online creative participation, with a focus on multimodal digital expression. Within this trajectory, my most recent work (Kligler-Vilenchik & Literat, 2018) examines young people’s participation in the aftermath of the 2016 U.S. presidential election, looking at their processes of communication and self-expression on youth-focused online platforms that represent different creative genres (including memes, digital games, digital art, and animation). We find that these platforms facilitate meaningful practices of self-expression and enable them to communicate openly with peers about matters of personal and political significance. In particular, youth use online creativity to reclaim agency toward the political process, provide peers with social support or distraction, and (re)imagine the political by participating in collective processes of civic (re)imagination. Next steps include a more specific inquiry into the potential of participatory drawing to shed light onto the different kinds of imagination deployed.

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by youth within these processes of civic expression, as modeled, for instance, by Glăveanu, Karwowski, Jankowska, and de Saint Laurent (2017) in their work on the creative imagination.

How Did It Impact the Field? Where There Any Surprises That Came From This Publication?

In my view, a particularly significant way in which my article impacted the field is by drawing attention to ethics and power dynamics in participatory research with youth (Akesson et al., 2014; Burkholder, Makramalla, Abdou, Khoja, & Khan, 2015; Pfister, Vindrola-Padros, & Johnson, 2014). This was indeed one of my goals in writing this article, and I was very pleased to see this line of inquiry taken up so meaningfully by other researchers, such as the ones cited above. And related to this observation, a major surprise that came out of this publication is the sheer diversity of applications and the way in which this article has been deployed and cited across disciplinary boundaries—including education (Knight et al., 2016), refugee studies (Thoresen, Fielding, Gillieatt, & Thoresen, 2016), architecture (Frerichs, 2014), tourist studies (Barry, 2017), business (Clarke & Holt, 2017), engineering (Ng & Chan, 2016), and health (Noonan, Boddy, Fairclough, & Knowles, 2016). This is a testament to both the versatility of the participatory drawing approach and the cross-disciplinary reach of IJQM.

What Is the One Thing That You Think Has Changed the Most in This Area Since You Published This Article?

The aspect that first comes to mind here is in regard to technology. In my article, I noted how little attention is paid to technology. In my view, a particularly significant way in which my article impacted the field is by drawing attention to ethics and power dynamics in participatory research with youth (Akesson et al., 2014; Burkholder, Makramalla, Abdou, Khoja, & Khan, 2015; Pfister, Vindrola-Padros, & Johnson, 2014). This was indeed one of my goals in writing this article, and I was very pleased to see this line of inquiry taken up so meaningfully by other researchers, such as the ones cited above. And related to this observation, a major surprise that came out of this publication is the sheer diversity of applications and the way in which this article has been deployed and cited across disciplinary boundaries—including education (Knight et al., 2016), refugee studies (Thoresen, Fielding, Gillieatt, & Thoresen, 2016), architecture (Frerichs, 2014), tourist studies (Barry, 2017), business (Clarke & Holt, 2017), engineering (Ng & Chan, 2016), and health (Noonan, Boddy, Fairclough, & Knowles, 2016). This is a testament to both the versatility of the participatory drawing approach and the cross-disciplinary reach of IJQM.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The author(s) declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

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