"Now We Need to Write Something that People Will Read": Examining Youth
Choices as Perspectives of Literacy Research

Joanne E. Marciano and Vaughn W. M. Watson
Michigan State University

Author Note

Joanne E. Marciano, Department of Teacher Education, Michigan State
University; Vaughn W. M. Watson, Department of Teacher Education, Michigan
State University.

Correspondence regarding this article should be addressed to Joanne E.
Marciano, Assistant Professor, Department of Teacher Education, Michigan State
University, Erickson Hall, 620 Farm Lane, Room 364, East Lansing, MI 48824.
Phone: (517) 353-5091. E-mail: marcian2@msu.edu

Abstract

In this article, the authors examine opportunities and tensions that arose when youth co-researchers, collaborating in two in-depth, qualitative, participatory research studies, challenged modalities for sharing literacy research findings in academic forums such as peer-reviewed journals and at professional conferences. The authors frame the youths' contributions as new forms of civic participation, highlighting the ways in which the youth co-researchers—Black youth and youth of color in a large city in the northeastern United States—sought to: (1) share research findings with "kids like us," and (2) make the research relevant across multiple contexts. The article discusses implications for researchers and educators who seek to involve youth as designers, creators, and distributors of publicly engaged knowledge with communities grounded in partnership and reciprocity.

Keywords: civic engagement, participatory research, youth, education

Now we need to write something that people will read.

- Harold[1], youth co-researcher (12th grade)

Harold's comment to Vaughn—made the day after they and two co-researchers submitted a manuscript to an academic journal—resonates at a time when social science and educational researchers are increasingly and more purposefully including the assets-based experiences and perspectives of youth in their work (Howard, 2013; Paris, 2012; Yosso, 2005). A growing body of research literature has extended opportunities for involving youth, particularly youth of color who experience educational inequities, as participants in the design, enactment, and analysis of research related to youths' lived experiences, namely their educational experiences (Cammarota & Fine, 2010; Irizarry, 2011; Knight, Dixon, Norton & Bentley, 2004). Moreover, a number of researchers have sought to understand the contexts of youths' literacy practices, underscoring youths' identities as civic participants (Fisher, 2005; Mirra & Morrell, 2011).

While research has highlighted the importance of supporting assets-based perspectives of youth of color, less is known about enacting collaborative partnerships that specifically incorporate youths' experiences and perspectives as approaches to researcher/participant relationships when engaging in participatory research with youth (Irizarry, 2011). In addition, a dearth of research has conceptualized youth enacting such experiences and perspectives as new forms of civic participation. Therefore, in this article, we examine the opportunities and tensions that arose as youth co-researchers participating in two in-depth, qualitative, participatory research studies challenged academic forums and modalities, such as peer-reviewed journals and professional conferences, as venues for sharing findings of literacy research. We discuss the youths' contributions as emerging forms of civic participation, highlighting the ways in which the youth co-researchers—Black youth and youth of color in New York City—sought to (1) share research findings with "kids like us," and (2) make the research matter across multiple contexts. We also discuss implications for researchers and educators who seek to involve youth as designers, creators, and distributors of publicly engaged knowledge with communities grounded in partnership.

Theoretical Framework

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[1] All youth and school names used in this article are pseudonymous.

Howard (2013), in a review of research "on, about, or concerned with Black males within the context of education" (p. 55), argued for a paradigmatic shift toward an "asset-based approach, which recognizes the strengths, promise and potential of students" (p. 62). Howard compelled education researchers to

center [Black male students] as the author of their experiences … to acknowledge the permanence of storytelling from the dominant paradigm when it comes to ideas such as meritocracy, democracy, and equality [to center] new voices … in [our] analysis, voices that are often overlooked, ignored, or outright dismissed. (p. 64)

Across our two qualitative research studies, we engaged youth as "author[s] of their experiences" (Howard, 2013, p. 64), envisioning participatory research enacted with youth co-researchers as explicitly involving assets-based perspectives of Black youth and youth of color. We designed and enacted research studies extending from our classroom practices as former secondary English teachers who taught Grades 9 to 12 at City Public High School for 13 years (Joanne) and 12 years (Vaughn). Our classroom activities built upon literacy and learning that were youth-enacted in contexts beyond school. For example, Joanne analyzed how youth enacted culturally relevant peer interactions that centered on preparing for, applying to, and enrolling in college. Vaughn examined how youth demonstrated academic literacy in designing multimodal texts (later posted to YouTube) featuring basketball and hip-hop. Across the participatory research projects, we positioned and built upon the lived experiences and perspectives of youth of color beyond school settings as contributions to in-school curriculum, teaching, and literacy research. In the current inquiry, we drew from and extended social science and educational research literature that values participatory research as involving assets-based perspectives, considers emerging forms of citizenship, attends to relational roles in research, and constructs relational roles as literary presence.

Enacting Participatory Research through Assets-Based Perspectives

Our understanding of participatory work involves taking a stance on enacting research with, rather than on, youth, families, and communities of color within and beyond school contexts. We understand participatory research as

facilitat[ing] purposeful researcher roles that forefront youth's cultural assets, knowledges, and lived experiences, complicating static identities of youth, teacher, research(er) and contexts of academic literacy, standardized

curriculum and teacher evaluation, as youth grapple with issues of educational equity. (Watson & Marciano, 2015, p. 38)

Irizarry (2009) conceptualized participatory research as "more than a tool for inquiry solely for use by credentialed researchers in the ivory tower" (p. 196). Rather, such research positions youth as "equal partners in the struggle for social justice and educational equity" (p. 194). Morrell (2008) discussed how high-school youth, enacting youth participatory action research (YPAR) projects, analyzed artifacts relating to hip-hop music and culture to reframe notions of academic literacy and research skills used in college. In this way, researchers across participatory projects place youths' knowledge at the center of their work. Mirra, Garcia, and Morrell (2015) demonstrated how youth and their collaborators enacting YPAR projects engaged in "citizenship-as-practice" (p. 174). The authors described the ways in which youth participated in writing and presenting their work by connecting participatory research approaches to the youths' lived experiences, galvanizing new identities. Such approaches place at the center the lived experiences of youth of color, who are too often excluded from school-sanctioned curricula (Watson & Marciano, 2015).

Participatory Research as Emerging Forms of Civic Participation

We understand that civic learning and action emphasize more than merely activities such as following current events (Jensen & Flanagan, 2008) or skills such as doing community service (Haste & Hogan, 2006). We draw upon Knight and Watson's (2014) consideration of "contexts of families, identities, and schooling" to understand "civic learning and action and participatory citizenship [to be] embedded within everyday lives" of youth (p. 542). As Knight and Watson observed,

> by civic teaching and learning, we point to, for example, dialoguing, analyzing, responding to collective problems, and fostering awareness with others; by action, we mean extending and putting to work those notions of civic learning and enacting identities toward purposes of social justice, equality, and citizenship. (p. 542)

Broadening understandings of how youth enact participatory research roles also extends considerations of civic action-taking. Moreover, such work involves envisioning assets-based perspectives as ways to underscore stances that are oriented toward social-justice and participatory in nature, and identities that are

oriented toward citizenship (Ginwright & Cammarota, 2002), highlighting social and relational perspectives (Westheimer & Kahne, 2004) as emerging forms of civic participation.

Considering Relational Roles

We grappled with tensions that emerged when youth, enacting participatory researcher roles, questioned what it meant to participate in their community through sharing research findings. Mirra, Garcia, and Morrell (2015) highlighted "pedagogies of relationships" (p. 36) that emerge when enacting YPAR projects with youth. The authors noted:

> Research in general is often a social practice involving relationships among researchers and between researchers and participants, but YPAR is unique in the way that it conceptualizes participation—as not simply the act of working in concert with others, but as the formation of strong relational bonds. (p. 36)

Connelly and Clandinin (2006), contextualizing narrative approaches in research, noted methods of inquiry for researchers working "in participation with others" (p. 478). Specifically, the authors named three "commonplaces" of research that examines relational roles: "temporality," "sociality," and "place" (p. 479). "Temporality" considers participants as having "a past, a present, and a future" (p. 479). Researchers across participatory approaches should remain attentive to and seek to build upon particular and individual histories related simultaneously to youths' present experiences and future learning. "Sociality" compels understandings of youth participants' "hopes, [and] desires" (p. 480)—not just researchers' goals of rendering findings in publications. Researchers within collaborative inquiries seek to navigate "purposes, next steps, [and] outcomes" (p. 480). Attending to "place" implores researchers to engage thoughtfully about experiences of participants enacted in particular places (p. 481). Collaborations hold possibilities for considering meanings and relationships of participants and researchers across the contexts of schools, communities, universities, and community-based organizations as places of collaborative inquiry (Watson, 2016). By attending to temporality, sociality, and place in asserting assets-based perspectives of youth within participatory research, researchers are compelled, as Clandinin and Burke Johnson (2014) held, to "negotiat[e] research texts that respectfully represent participants' lived and told stories" (p. 433).

Enacting Literary Presence through Relational Roles

Youth co-researchers can construct new opportunities for sharing perspectives as research findings across varied modalities. Enacting assets-based perspectives asserts youths' presence as contributors and participants, evoking emerging forms of civic action-taking. By *presence* we refer to Tatum and Muhammad's (2012) conceptualization of *literary presence* across current accountability-era literacy mandates focused on improving African-American males' reading achievement and historical practices of African-American male literary societies. The authors illuminated historical practices through which African-American males foregrounded a "literary presence" (p. 446) and sought to be acknowledged for their contributions as scholars emboldening the civic potential of communities. Muhammad (2012) extended this framing to include the literate lives of Black adolescent girls as they co-authored a preamble during a summer writing institute; she suggested that in a "desire to engage others in listening to their experiences by sharing past events from their lives … [g]irls' writings were intricately linked to black literate practices of the past" (pp. 204-205). Watson (2016) built upon the notion of literary presence by highlighting the multi-literacy practices of youth of color brainstorming song lyrics in a literacy-and-songwriting program at the Community Music School in Detroit and youth co-researchers in New York City writing about their creative artistic artifacts and literacy practices.

In the current inquiry, envisioning assets-based perspectives involved youth co-researchers constructing new opportunities as youth of color enacting roles as "author[s] of their experiences" (Howard, 2013, p. 64). Sharing youths' perspectives as research findings called forth emerging forms of citizenship while highlighting challenges of attending to relational roles in participatory research, and opportunities for enacting literary presence of youth of color.

Methodology

We built upon an ongoing cross-case analysis (Miles & Huberman, 1994) to "identify and describe commonalities" across two qualitative research studies that engaged participatory methodological approaches (Watson & Marciano, 2015, p. 39). We drew upon assets-based understandings of youths' literacies, identities, and lived experiences (Paris, 2012) to underscore ways in which youth inform multiple aspects of research processes, including participant selection, data collection, data analysis, and sharing of research findings (Irizarry, 2011; Mirra,

Garcia, & Morrell, 2015). Throughout the inquiry, we sought to understand how youth co-researchers conceptualized forums and modalities for sharing findings of educational research and, in doing so, how they extended understandings of varied forms of civic learning and action.

Researcher Positionalities

Joanne spent 13 years as a secondary English teacher at City Public. During that time, she collaborated with youth of color to co-research how students navigated barriers to their college readiness and access using lenses of culturally relevant pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 1994). Across such work, which was informed by Lutrell (2010), Joanne sought to advance an agenda of social critique, social justice, and opportunity. As a current university faculty member in a college of education, Joanne recently completed a semester-long YPAR project with 20 youth from seven high schools examining issues of educational inequities in a characteristically urban (Tatum & Muhammad, 2012) community in the U.S. Midwest. In that project, Joanne collaborated with youth, another university faculty member, and five PhD students in teacher education to develop and enact three mixed-methods research projects. The projects were led by youth and utilized surveys, interviews, focus groups, and collaborative data analyses (Kirkland, Ahram, Boesen, Sanzone, Johnson, & Freidus, 2017).

Vaughn taught secondary English for 12 years at City Public, where he also facilitated curriculum design and teacher professional development. In his teaching and research, Vaughn highlights and explores youth's multi-literacy practices beyond school, while seeking to enact research approaches "informed and transformed by the lived experiences" (Bogdon & Biklen, 2007, p. 34) of the youth with whom he works. Currently, as a university faculty member in a college of education, Vaughn is facilitating an ongoing, year-long YPAR project with six youth co-researchers examining the transition experiences of freshmen of color to a predominantly White institution in the U.S. Midwest. For this project, Vaughn, a research team of six undergraduate co-researchers, another university-based faculty member, and a doctoral-student research assistant co-developed a survey instrument, interview protocol, and photo-voice protocol. The research team engaged collaboratively in data collection and ongoing data analyses. Vaughn is also co-principal investigator in an ongoing, 18-month critical ethnography of an afterschool literacy-and-songwriting program in Detroit. In researching the creative and artistic artifacts and literacy practices of the youth in the program, Vaughn

seeks to "challenge potential normalizing discourses" (Brown & Brown, 2006) and build upon the multiplicity of literacies, identities, and varied knowledge of youth of color that contributes to secondary English classrooms and youths' communities.

Research Context

This section describes two studies that involved youth attending City Public High School.[2] City Public occupies a city block between a six-lane highway and a recently rebuilt Navy shipyard that ceased operation in the mid-1960s (Watson, 2016). As Watson noted:

> [The neighborhood] includes such recent construction as an arena just six blocks away, newly built in 2012 to house a relocated National Basketball Association team, and a renovated building at the shipyard that in April, 2016, was site of a Hillary Clinton-Bernie Sanders U.S. presidential debate (McGeehan, 2016; Robbins, 2012). (p. 58)

Yet, even as the neighborhood surrounding City Public changes, youth enrolled in the school continue to experience inequities based on race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status. In the 2015-2016 academic year, 99% of City Public students were youth of color, 80% qualified for free lunch, and 5% qualified for reduced-price lunch (New York City Department of Education, 2016). As Sleeter and Grant (2009) noted, students enrolled in "high-poverty schools" often experience limited access to a "high-quality education" that includes teachers considered "well-qualified" and an academic curriculum that challenges students (p. 6).

We therefore envisioned participatory research approaches as being enacted with youth co-researchers, extending from sanctioned classroom practices and building upon assets-based perspectives of Black youth and youth of color in the literacy lives and learning of youth beyond schools.

Context of Study One

In study one, Joanne enacted qualitative participatory research that created opportunities for Black youth and youth of color to examine how and why youth and their peers invoked tenets of culturally relevant and sustaining pedagogies (Ladson-Billings, 1995, 2014; Paris, 2012). Joanne sought in particular to understand how youth supported one another's college readiness and access.

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[2] Completed assent forms were collected from youth.

Joanne recruited participants using professional contacts, a community-nomination process (Knight & Marciano, 2013; Ladson-Billings, 1994), and snowball sampling (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). Specifically, English teachers at City Public were asked to nominate enrolled 12th-grade students who planned to attend college and who supported their peers' college readiness and access. Teachers nominated Brianna, Cathy, and Emmy, who all agreed to participate as focal participants. In consideration of the study's participatory methodology, Joanne asked each of the nominees to select two or three peers to participate in the study as peer participants. In total, seven of Brianna, Cathy, and Emmy's classmates (Alex, Ashley, Bea, Melissa, Nathan, Shaniece, and Sherry) agreed to participate in the study as peer participants. Together, the focal and peer participants included two Black males, six Black females, and two Latinas.

All participants were enrolled in Grade 12 at City Public during data collection and identified as first-generation college applicants. Participants included youth enrolled in an 11th-grade English class Joanne taught the year prior to data collection at City Public but were not enrolled in classes Joanne taught at City Public during data collection. Data collection included individual semi-structured interviews with focal and peer participants conducted by Joanne, while Brianna, Cathy, and Emmy interviewed the peer participants they invited to the study. In utilizing a participatory methodology, both focal and peer participants were involved in developing interview protocols, and assisted in data analysis, discussing themes with Joanne that emerged from transcribed interviews and focus groups (see Marciano, 2017; Watson & Marciano, 2015).

Context of Study Two

In study two, Vaughn, with 11 Black youth and youth of color, examined youths' meaning making of their artistic artifacts and creative practices related to hip-hop. Vaughn sought to understand how youth in their practices re-envisioned everyday notions of student work and teacher accountability. He used snowball sampling and personal contacts to recruit participants. The youth co-researchers attended City Public, but none was enrolled in classes Vaughn taught at the time of data collection, which included individual and focus-group interviews, and youth-created multimodal artifacts.

Taking up participatory methods, Vaughn and the youth co-researchers conducted "listening party" interviews to reposition each interview "beyond a

singular space of exclusivity enacted by the researcher" (Watson & Marciano, 2015, p. 39; Kvale, 2006). For example, Vaughn asked youth co-researchers to redesign the interview protocol by posing their own questions to conclude individual interviews. Vaughn then posed youths' questions to the next co-researcher. In addition, Vaughn and the co-researchers collaboratively composed a literature review across which youth reviewed and remixed intersections between youths' creative and artistic practices related to hip-hop, and everyday discourses of hip-hop in popular literature. Co-researchers participated in data analysis by reviewing interview transcripts and discussing emerging themes.

Throughout study one and study two, youth maintained ongoing commitments to afterschool activities, including participation in sports and employment. Thus, the youths' opportunities to participate in data analysis emerged as a limitation of our research approach.

Cross-Case Data Analysis

We engaged in an iterative process of data analysis across study one and study two (Luttrell, 2010). We transcribed verbatim all interviews and focus groups featuring perspectives of 21 Black youth and youth of color (i.e., 10 in study one, 11 in study two). Using cross-case analysis, we engaged open- and closed-coding processes across transcripts. We developed focus codes, identifying repeated patterns such as "sharing findings with peers," "having interest in findings," and "challenging (re)presentations of findings." We collapsed and refined focused codes into categories, and further identified themes in examining talk across youth participants, who tussled pointedly with how data would be collected, analyzed, and shared.

Our analysis was informed by analytic and comparative questions such as: How do youth make meaning of who will "hear" what they share during interviews and focus groups?; how do youth talk about who will have access to or be able to access research findings?; in what ways may education research design embolden opportunities for youth participatory research to generate questions about sharing research findings?; and, how may youths' meaning making evoke new forms of civic learning and action-taking?

Findings

In our examination of youths' perspectives related to sharing findings of educational research, opportunities and tensions arose as youth co-researchers

compelled us to reconsider academic forums, such as journal manuscripts and conference presentations, within and across which research may be discussed and shared. We understood youths' meaning making of forums and modalities for sharing research as emerging civic contributions. Specifically, two predominant themes emerged related to how youth called on researchers to: (1) share research findings with "kids like us," and (2) make research matter across multiple contexts.

Sharing Research Findings with "Kids Like Us"

Literacy research is shared most frequently in peer-reviewed journals and at research conferences. Yet, youth co-researchers anticipated that peers—that is, "kids like us"—as well as teachers, guidance counselors, and school administrators could learn from the experiences and perspectives that youth shared across individual, co-researcher, and focus-group interviews. In study one, for example, Nathan shared advice about addressing educational inequities, noting that teachers should provide more opportunities for youth to collaborate with friends on school projects. Nathan challenged educators to invoke assets-based perceptions of youth and their peers:

> If you pair, like, two best friends together, even though they might have difficulties to talk about, in the end they're gonna do good because their minds, you know, it works together and they're very comfortable with each other.

Nathan's advice highlights tensions between youths' ideas about who will have access to their perspectives and how such perspectives are actually shared by education researchers such as Joanne. While Nathan assumed that secondary-school educators would have opportunities to hear what he had to say—and he targeted his comments toward teachers— collaborators in the educational lives of youth whom Nathan sought to inform may not, in fact, have easy access to journals and conferences across which findings of literacy research are often shared. For example, education researchers have collaborated with youth co-researchers to publish writing for academic audiences (see Farrell et al., 1988; Garcia et. al, 1995; Irizarry, 2011) and present at education-research conferences (Mirra, Garcia, & Morrell, 2015). However, youth in this study assumed that what they had to say, particularly advice they had for educators and peers, would be heard by a wider audience, including youth who shared their cultural experiences, and teachers, school counselors, and administrators who worked with them.

Cathy, a focal participant in study one, provided another example of who youth co-researchers perceived as having access to perspectives they shared across their participation in the study. Cathy invited Alex, Nathan, and Sherry to participate, and generated questions she used to interview them as peer participants. In each interview, Cathy asked a variation of the following question, excerpted from her interview with Alex: "Do you have any kind of advice for students who are preparing for college, or who doesn't know anything really much about college? Like what would you tell them?" In asking peers to share their experiences, Cathy created opportunities for youth participants to learn from one another's perspectives and share comments in the context of this research study. Interestingly, Cathy posed her questions assuming that other youth who sought to overcome educational inequity and gain college access would have actual opportunities to hear the advice Alex, Nathan, and Sherry provided. Cathy's question evidenced the relational roles of youths' co-researcher identities as new and participatory forms of civic learning. Cathy invoked assets-based considerations of her peers' experiences and perspectives, and asked peers to share suggestions for addressing issues connected to educational opportunities (or lack thereof). Cathy's question further underscored notions of sociality and place (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006) in engaging in qualitative research with youth co-researchers, attending to relationships with peers and their shared experiences at City Public while seeking to enroll in college.

Joanne brought to the center Cathy's contribution to the interview protocol, asking Ashley, Brianna, Melissa, and Emmy in subsequent interviews how they would respond to Cathy's question. Moreover, when Emmy interviewed peer participants Bea and Shaniece, Emmy also posed Cathy's question. Shaniece responded:

> Don't give up because if you give up you'll regret it. Definitely you'll regret it…. If anybody ever tells you you can't do it, you can do it, you can. I think you should be able to have that motivation from everyone around you to help you succeed in life and progress.

Shaniece's statement represents a starting point for assets-based considerations of youth, rather than presuming deficit-oriented perceptions that youth of color may encounter regarding their futures (Howard, 2013). Shaniece drew upon past experiences to envision her role as a contributor and participant underscoring a literary presence (Muhammad, 2012), and, further, she encouraged other youth to do the same by aligning themselves with people, including peers, who can "help

you succeed in life and progress." Shaniece's perspective and her message to peers are rendered visible because of Cathy's original question.

Moreover, the participatory methodology used in the studies created opportunities for youth who may not have otherwise had an opportunity to share experiences and perspectives with those who had access to research findings. Similar to research studies involving youth participants as co-researchers (Farrell et al., 1988; Knight & Marciano, 2013; Marciano, 2015; Watson & Marciano, 2015), study one used a community-nomination process (Ladson-Billings, 1994), in which adults who worked with youth were asked to recommend study participants. Yet, the selection process did not end there. Joanne also asked focal participants to recruit two to three peers for participation. Interestingly, Alex was the only youth selected as a peer participant who met the selection criteria (i.e., college-bound and encouraging of peers' college readiness and access) who was also recommended by City Public English teachers (i.e., the adult community nominators). Had Joanne relied solely on perceptions of adults to identify and select youth participants, Ashley, Bea, Melissa, Nathan, Shaniece, and Sherry would not have been included in the study. Opportunities exist for researchers to recruit participants beyond those recommended by adults and/or participating in curriculum, extracurricular programs, or activities under study. Possibilities therefore emerge for highlighting youths' lived experiences as a participatory research stance (Knight et al., 2004) by drawing on experiences and perspectives of youth who may not otherwise participate in research.

Making Research Matter in Multiple Contexts

Prior to a focus-group interview with six youth, two of whom had just joined the group for the first time, Vaughn asked the youths in study two to pair up and read a magazine article about a library exhibit featuring hip-hop artifacts. Vaughn then left the room to get snacks for the full group. It was not until Vaughn transcribed the focus-group audio recording that he heard Harold, a co-researcher, express reluctance to complete the researcher-chosen task. Royce, a co-researcher, asked Harold, "You don't want to read?":

Harold responded: Nah, I don't want to do this ...

Antonio: What? He say he want to leave?

Royce: So leave …

Antonio: Yo, don't leave Harold. That's mad rude.

Royce: … Then [Vaughn] gonna be like something is wrong.

Harold, to Antonio, who had just joined the group: Something is wrong; we got all of ya'll in here.

Royce: Harold, you smart; you just wanna do too much. Everybody tell Harold that—"You smart."

Antonio: Harold, you smart.

Royce: You smart boy. You just wanna mess … up.

Harold: I want to be like ya'll? I don't want to be like ya'll; I ain't like ya'll. There's a few things I know about school. It's not about me being smart. If you define the word smart, what the … is it? …

Vaughn, returning to the room: … So, what we're lookin at is … things that are written in newspapers and what not, and so what we need to do is …

As university-based researchers and former secondary English teachers who worked with youth as co-researchers, we tussle with relational roles across our research studies as we enact participatory research with youth. We understand youth not as static and passive students but as engaged participants moving in, out, and across roles, and with identities as peers, researchers, teachers, and learners. In this example, Harold was encouraged by Royce, who was prompted by Vaughn via the research design, to enact a school-like research task of reading an article about hip-hop. Vaughn and four co-researchers, including Harold, had previously discussed youths' creative and artistic literacy practices involving hip-hop during five, 45-minute research team meetings. Harold, who in a research-team meeting referred to the red Beats headphones he often wore as he listened to hip-hop music as his "prized possession," facilitated peers' talk in two of the previous meetings. However, in the meeting that included two new participants, he told Royce, "Nah, I don't want to do this."

Harold's comment recalled how youth participants in Mirra, Garcia, and Morrell's (2015) work were "on the edge of thinking school sucks, but who [are] also very creative and talented" (p. 44). Connelly and Clandinin (2006) observed that accounting for sociality involves attending to youth participants' goals for research engagements, even as researchers seek to engage in data collection and analysis with youth in qualitative research. As exemplified in the exchange between

Harold, Antonio, and Royce, participatory researchers struggle with how they navigate conceptions of sociality as multiple participants interact within and across research relationships. In study two, youth negotiated roles of engagement with each other, with Vaughn, and across research processes. In these moments, youth compelled us to consider how "pedagogies of relationships speak back to many taken-for-granted understandings about how adults and youth should interact in both formal and informal academic settings" (Mirra, Garcia, & Morrell, 2015, p. 36).

For example, a notion of sociality was highlighted in Antonio's hope that Harold "won't leave"—as Vaughn may have considered doing so to be "mad rude." The exchange could be understood in the context of Harold and Antonio's existing relational role with Vaughn, who two years prior worked as Harold and Antonio's 10th-grade English teacher. Moreover, Vaughn failed to consider how Harold had experienced the research team as it was constructed prior to the moment highlighted earlier, across the concept of sociality whereby youth talked about their "hopes and desires" before "we got all of ya'll in here"—that is, before the new research team members joined the group. The exchange reflects the complexities of what Mirra, Garcia, and Morrell (2015) discussed as "relational trust" (p. 38), building on Byrk and Schneider's (2004, as cited in Mirra, Garcia, & Morrell, 2015) understanding of "interpersonal relationships and mutual dependencies that connect actors within educational environments and make possible the vulnerability and openness needed for meaningful learning" (p. 38). Harold sought to choose the ways in which he participated and how he had participated as a research-team member.

Later in the semester, Vaughn invited all youth participants in study two to take on collaborative roles in data analysis and co-writing (Watson, 2016). Harold, as well as co-researchers Dwight, Ernest, and Royce, discussed comparative questions regarding their creative and artistic artifacts and practices. Harold assumed a lead role among his peers in data analysis, reading interview and focus-group transcripts, and writing memo reflections. He also collaborated on a manuscript that Vaughn submitted to a research journal. The next day, Vaughn shared with Harold that the manuscript was submitted. Harold remarked, "But Watson, now we need to write something that people will read."

Implicit in Harold's comment was an assumption that findings of education research literature are not "read" across varied audiences by "people" important to Harold. Harold's comment is particularly noteworthy as he and participants in both

studies actively used Snapchat, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, and Facebook Messenger (Marciano, 2015, 2017; Watson, 2016), sharing ideas and perspectives with a global social-media audience. Yet, Harold, as "author of [his] experiences" (Howard, 2013, p. 64), challenged the notion of sharing research findings across Vaughn's researcher-chosen forums and academically aligned genres of writing. Moreover, Harold sought to assert his role as education researcher, enacting a researcher identity, or what Watson and Marciano (2015) likened to a "researcher-ly echo." In doing so, Harold underscored and demonstrated singular notions of academic identity, and he complicated meanings for adolescent males of color of "you smart" which he, Royce, and Antonio had debated. The exchange compels a rethinking of how education researchers may attend to youth like Harold as collaborators enacting meaningful research roles, rather than dismiss youth as merely research participants (Cook Sather, 2006; Ruddock & Flutter, 2000). Such work requires the continual invocation of the assets-based perceptions of youth of color, particularly as co-researchers, who may unsettle questions distinct from designed research plans.

Implications

The examination of tensions across academic forums and modalities for sharing education research findings, and youth co-researchers' understandings of how, why, and for whom their perspectives are shared with multiple audiences, points to new opportunities for supporting youth civic engagement. Mirra, Garcia, and Morrell (2015) noted that "issues of leadership, power, and resources must be constantly negotiated and renegotiated" (p. 38). Approaches to youth co-researchers require researchers to make visible such tensions and to reconsider specific ways to engage youth co-researchers in questions that address when, where, and how research is shared. Such work for literacy researchers involves valuing youth participants' perspectives in ways that extend beyond youths' responses to researchers' original research questions. In our inquiry, we sought to not merely ask youth what they thought about ideas that we, as researchers, were interested in examining. Rather, in invoking assets-based perspectives of youth and remaining attentive to relational roles in participatory research, we felt compelled to pay attention to new openings created in response to, and building upon, youths' engagement. This kind of stance-taking led us to (re)consider how we welcome and urgently seek out perspectives of youth with whom we engage in sharing research findings as we move toward enacting humanizing research approaches (Paris &

Winn, 2014), what we think of as *youth-choiced research*. We recognize that our relational roles with youth, as their former English teachers and contributors to their schooling experiences, influenced our engagement with youth across the research studies discussed in this article. Yet, implications for tussling with relational roles are relevant to researchers enacting and considering participatory methods with youth co-researchers across multiple educational and community-based settings and contexts.

Enacting Assets-Based Perspectives as Youth-Choiced Research

We point specifically to opportunities for uncovering new insights in our collaborations with participants when we value youth as co-researchers and honor their insights—in youths' words but also whom they seek to speak, think, and listen with in wider audiences. Reciprocal relationships with participants, notably with co-researchers, involves listening in ways that Kinloch and San Pedro (2014) described as evoking a "humanizing research in ways that privilege the co-construction of knowledge, human agency and voice, diverse perspectives, moments of vulnerability, and acts of listening" (p. 23). Harold's challenge that we "write something that people will read" involves thinking about youth co-researcher roles as more than merely assistant researcher roles. Engaging youth as co-researchers involves continuing to strengthen and build relationships in this necessary work of enacting publicly engaged literacy research. We argue that researchers who seek to enact assets-based perspectives of youth and to include their participation in research must take up actions supportive of youths' civic learning as youth-choiced research.

Youth-choiced research considering youth as contributors to research. Taking such a stance compels education and social-science researchers—particularly those who study youth and/or the policies, practices, and institutional structures facilitating or hindering youths' access to educational opportunity—to approach Black youth and youth of color from assets-based perspectives that understand youth as possessing strengths as researchers. Research involving youth as contributors assists in creating more robust considerations of youth's experiences and perspectives, and challenges deficit-oriented notions that seek to delineate what youth can or (more often) cannot do.

Youth-choiced research utilizing youth perspectives in data collection. Considering varied models of participant selection beyond criteria privileging

recommendations by adults provides noteworthy youth perspectives when enacting participatory research with youth. As Joanne's experience selecting research participants demonstrated, adults and youth hold varied ideas regarding who meets selection criteria. Involving youth in processes of identifying potential study participants creates opportunities for examining youth perspectives otherwise not included in research. Moreover, involving youth in developing, revisiting, and revising research questions in ways that reflect not just the interests of researchers but also those of youth extend relational roles across research engagements.

Youth-choiced research and the sharing of research findings. Researchers engaged in participatory work with youth should include youth co-researchers in decisions about where and with whom research findings will be shared. Such collaborative decision making requires researchers to inform youth about various forums and modalities for sharing education research findings and involve youth in considering additional contexts in which youth may wish to share contributions. For example, opportunities for youth to (re)present themselves galvanizes and emboldens spaces across which youth may challenge popularized deficit-oriented narratives of youth of color in the media and within and across school contexts (Howard, 2013; Watson & Knight, 2017). Researchers should seek to bolster understandings of how and why youths' preferred communication modes may be utilized in sharing research findings. Youth who actively engage social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, Twitter, and YouTube may inform researchers' decisions about when, where, and how to share research findings in ways that include uses familiar to youth, across social media platforms, in ways that matter to youth.

Youth participants in the studies described in this article had never actively participated as contributors to qualitative research. In outlining informed consent procedures for participation in our studies, we talked with youth about the purposes of the research and where findings would likely be shared. However, opportunities exist to make more explicit to youth that audiences of academic journals and conferences are typically academics, allowing youth and adult researchers to examine assumptions about audience and to consider new or varied avenues for sharing research with multiple stakeholders, including educators, families, community members, and peers.

Conclusion: Toward Youth-Choiced Participatory Research as Civic Imaginaries

We understand youth co-researchers across this study as enacting meaningful contributions, thereby extending what we (Watson & Marciano, 2015) and Watson and Knight (2017) have observed as "civic imaginaries." DeChaine (2012) built on the rhetoric of U.S.-Mexico bordering practices as at-once galvanizing and constricting a "civic imaginary," an underscoring of "our conduct toward one another and our aspirations of the kinds of citizens we desire to become" (p. 14). As Watson and Knight (2017) noted, civic imaginaries underscore a stance around "simultaneously extending possibilities and meanings of negotiating identities and engaging civically in schools and communities" (p. 303). As we consider ways in which Harold's words continue to resonate, we are compelled to call on literacy scholars to collaborate with youth in ways that contribute to and extend varied audiences for youths' work. Further, we endorse assets-based approaches to participatory research that envision possibilities for youth to participate across contexts of schools and communities.

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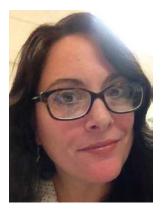
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Author Biographies

Joanne E. Marciano is an assistant professor of Teacher Education at Michigan State University, and a former high school English teacher of 13 years in New York City. Her research engages qualitative participatory methodologies to highlight opportunities for supporting youth's literacy learning across contexts of urban education, secondary English education, college access, and teacher education. A central part of her research agenda involves highlighting opportunities for culturally and linguistically diverse youth to examine how their schooling experiences are influenced by tensions that emerge when students encounter educational inequities. Joanne is co-author (with Michelle G. Knight-Manuel) of College Ready: Preparing Black and Latina/o Youth for Higher Education - A Culturally Relevant Approach (Teachers College Press, 2013). She has also published research findings in Urban Education, English Journal, The Urban Review, and Literacy.

Vaughn W. M. Watson is an assistant professor of English education at Michigan State University. Previously, Vaughn taught high-school English for 12 years. Vaughn's research examines how youth of color, making meaning of diverse literacies and identities across their creative and artistic artifacts and practices within and beyond school contexts, reframe understandings of changing mandates for student work, teacher accountability, and civic learning and action. Vaughn has published research findings in journals including American Educational Research Journal; Review of Research in Education, International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education; Urban Education, and Literacy.