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Project Report

Developing Black feminist researcher identities: A youth-engaged Wikipedia case study in information activism

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Abstract

This project report describes a community-engaged, extra-institutional, out-of-school Wikipedia editing project focused on the digital literacies of Black girls. The project was located in a systemically under-resourced neighbourhood of Pittsburgh, PA, USA. Given the under representation of Black women editing Wikipedia, and continued concerns about gaps in Wikipedia's content, this project made a critical intervention towards information justice. We report on the project's process in brainstorming, community engagement, set up, digital and analogue interactions, and reflection. Our approach was heavily informed by Black feminist pedagogy and critical information literacy.

Keywords

activism; Black feminism; community engagement; information literacy; US

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1. Introduction

Our project report describes a community-engaged research, writing, and information activism project built on the tenets of critical information literacy (CIL) and Black feminism. CIL has theoretical and practical aspects, and we used these aspects to plan and enact a Wikipedia editing project in an historically Black neighbourhood in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, USA. CIL is a robust theoretical lens which carefully questions information production within systems of power—and these systems can be examined in university settings or public spaces. Indeed, a major complaint of many librarians is that they do not feel fully integrated or even able to teach CIL given the constraints of university settings. The ubiquitous one-shot library session does not lend itself well to deeply thinking about and exploring critical topics (Sullivan and Porter, 2016). Students and faculty members who come to library sessions may have expectations that instruction will be more competency based (for example, a database demonstration) than delving into information-production politics. In the higher-education world of learning outcomes and institutional assessment, measurable skills may be hard to test for when teaching CIL, and thus point-and-click instruction becomes the default. All these "institutional roadblocks" make it difficult for librarians to fully engage students in the complexities of CIL (Tewell, 2018, p. 21).

Universities may gesture towards community, but hyper-disciplinarity, assessment culture, limited time, varying levels of buy in from partnering instructors and other institutional demands sometimes create pressures that stand in the way of creating settings where critical engagement with material is possible (Tewell, 2018). Librarians feel this lack, or disconnect, more keenly than most and are often one step away from students—trying to connect and engage, but at the mercy of instructors or administrators (Torrell, 2020). What we learned from

our community-engaged project is that building community takes work to create, sustain, and cultivate the connections that can lead to critical engagement with material and transformational learning experiences. We suggest in this article that community-engaged spaces and Black feminist pedagogy can give us a sense of what may be needed to create the kind of community where the deep work of teaching (even experiencing) CIL can thrive.

By using Black feminist pedagogy for this project, we introduce endarkened feminist epistemologies (Dillard, 2000) to advance strategies that prioritise self-definition (Collins, 1990), dialogue (hooks, 1989), and revision alongside attention to content that deepens student-facilitator relationships. Endarkened feminist epistemologies:

> Articulate how reality is known when based in the historical roots of Black feminist thought, embodying a distinguishable difference in cultural standpoint located in the intersection/overlap of the culturally constructed socializations of race, gender, and other identities and the historical and contemporary contexts of oppressions and resistance for African-American women (Dillard, 2000, p. 662).

Employing these epistemologies opened space for the Black girls participating in the project to imagine new ways of learning, knowing, and researching, and participation bolstered their introduction to CIL.

One way to teach CIL is to engage students in information production practices rather than analysing information outputs that have already been produced within systems of power and oppression. That is, it is important to focus on the making of information rather than just the consumption. As defined by Eamon Tewell, CIL "examines the social construction and political dimensions of libraries and information, problematizing information's production and use so that library users may think critically about such forces" (2018, p. 10). As a theory, CIL helps information users understand how information ecosystems work within complex systems of power and privilege. It can also influence how they produce information. CIL does not take for granted the neutrality of information and its production, but instead, investigates the politically charged ways information is created, valued, and circulated, and the social implications of such. When paired with Black feminist pedagogy, CIL is interwoven with the impossibility of imagining Black girls' and women's experiences as neutral. Black feminist approaches are a direct response to the intersecting oppressions faced by Black girls and women at junctures like, but not limited to, race, gender, class, and sex. CIL moves us beyond information broadly conceived to better understand what we know and how we come to know it. As a result, grounding our work in Black feminist epistemologies deepens the impact the work that CIL makes possible. CIL considers the way humans interact with information, not as passive beings, but as actors in a larger, evolving and adapting ecosystem. We argue that this approach is particularly empowering for individuals who come from historically marginalised communities who have not always been involved in institutionalised information creation and dissemination practices.

In an age of experiential learning and an unprecedented ability to add content to the internet, there are many opportunities to not only teach CIL but modify information environments. Wikipedia editing is an especially poignant place to enact CIL with an information activist praxis. McDowell and Vetter suggest in their article, "Wikipedia as Open Educational Practice", that engaging young people in Wikipedia editing is an act of social justice: "skills that learners gain are crucial to educational successes as well as foundational to critical engagement in social, political, and economic issues. Wikipedia can also engage broader social justice issues by empowering students as critical producers of knowledge" (2022b, p. 7). A major component of this practice is that it helps young people understand their own authorities and grow their own identities through engaging in editing. Identity development was particularly important for the youth in our program, coming from a systemically under-resourced neighbourhood and school where they expressed not feeling heard or seen. Editing Wikipedia was one way they could

leave their mark on a visible, highly accessed platform. Wikipedia editing is also a form of open pedagogy and experiential learning. This means students learn by doing (by failures and successes) and "focus on [creating] open content ... having student work and interactions brought into the public sphere" (De Voe & Shaw, 2021, p. 20).

Until now, much literature on CIL and teaching with and through Wikipedia focuses on college classrooms (Foster-Kaufman, 2019). Our use of the tool with high school youth is a unique and meaningful way to add to CIL and Wikipedia literature. Black feminist pedagogy, alongside CIL, is a helpful framework for situating our project and conceiving of Wikipedia editing in youth-engaged community spaces. Black feminist pedagogy utilises flexibility, dialogue, revision, and a central understanding that narratives and education are deeply political. Black feminism recognises everyday knowledge as key to social understanding and engages social justice praxis in teaching and learning (Richie, 2012). Ultimately, we wanted to create a program that recognised the power and authority of Black youth as already-researchers while critically understanding the way that they can re-create the information landscapes which surround them.

2. About HYPE Media

Homewood Youth-Powered and Engaged Media (HYPE Media) is a critical literacies and digital studies project focused on story-making and civic exploration for Black girls who attend school in the Homewood community, one of Pittsburgh's historically and predominately Black neighbourhoods. The out-of-school learning project aims to address the stigmatised neighbourhood narratives of Homewood and the possible internalisation of that stigma by engaging youth in critical analyses of existing narratives about their neighbourhood and teaching them how to use storytelling (data, expressive, prose, etc.) and digital media to advance their own counter narratives. Since 2019, HYPE Media has engaged four cohorts of students in the creation of digital media projects ranging from a Black Girl Affirmation social media campaign to digital community (re)mapping projects and podcasting. These projects have been developed in the context of co-learning sessions (over 400 hours of engagement) after traditional school hours with the intention of listening to and amplifying the experiences and desires shared by Black girls in the space. Ultimately, HYPE Media prioritises a goal of equipping high school students with new media skills that will help them evaluate, articulate, and revise narratives about themselves, their communities, and the world. We define new media as digital outcomes of multimodal composition where HYPE Media participants use various modes to craft information or arguments. The final product is usually a media text, composed of other discrete media and disseminated in digital form (Werner, 2017).

By editing Wikipedia and bolstering research identities throughout this digital project, we created space for the Black girls participating in HYPE Media to imagine new ways of knowing, researching, and participating in information and media culture. Scholars argue that critical media literacy acts as an expansion of "the notion of literacy to include different forms of mass communication and popular culture as well as deepens the potential of education to critically analyze relationships between media and audiences, information and power" (Kellner & Share, 2007, p. 4). Through skill-based engagement like the Wikipedia editing project carried out by HYPE Media, critical media literacy introduces skills and the relational support needed to "critically analyze relationships between media and audiences, information and power…[in order to create] messages that can challenge media texts and narratives" (Kellner & Share, 2007, p. 60). This attention to critical media literacy fits squarely into HYPE Media's larger values and goals—to respond to and revise stigmatised narratives of Black girls, Black women, and Black communities. Essential to this response and revision relationship is an understanding that "lived experiences are important components of developing an understanding of the irrefutable connections that tie information and power together" (Patterson et al., 2016a, p. 45). Centring these experiences was a meaningful part of our approach and methodology.

HYPE Media is a multi-disciplinary and multi-spatial collaboration between the University of Pittsburgh's School of Education and School of Social Work, the university's Homewood Community Engagement Center, the university's Center for Urban Education, the Homewood Children's Village (HCV), and Pittsburgh's Westinghouse Academy 6-12. HYPE Media was designed to:

1. Engage youth in critical analysis of the existing narrative about their neighbourhood and Black girlhood.
2. Equip youth to use the power of new media to address stigmatised narratives of Homewood and Black girlhood.
3. Empower youth to design and execute creative and impactful ways to share their personal experiences through storytelling.
4. Engage youth in understanding the role of digital, healing, and social justice through self-reflection, community engagement, and world making possibilities.

As a knowledge equity and digital justice project, HYPE Media creates and disseminates nuanced and diverse information and narratives for public consumption. HYPE Media's foundation in Black feminist methodologies and pedagogies has introduced everyone involved in the project—students, faculty facilitators, graduate students, community partners, school leaders, and peers—to new understandings of activism and what it means to listen to Black girls. These expansive conceptions of activism are motivated by the two ways that Collins (2000) perceived of Black women's (collective and/or individual) activism in the United States:

1. Black women have crafted "Black female spheres of influence" by which they embrace "a worldview that sees lived Black experiences as important to creating a critical Black consciousness and crafting political strategies" (p. 204).
2. Black women have also attempted to change oppressive institutions by seeking "to change discriminatory policies and procedures of government, schools, the workplace, the media, stores, and other social institutions" (p. 204).

For those connected to HYPE Media, this acknowledgement requires a slowing down to understand the identities that are entering the space and identity dimensions that are being developed—the Black feminist research identity being most prominent. In the slowing down, we are better able to see the importance of feminist values of self-definition and self-determination to reclaim individual and community narratives for oneself. Within an endarkened feminist epistemological frame, the development of this researcher identity "arises from a personally and culturally defined set of beliefs that render the researcher *responsible* to the members and the well-being of the community from which their very definition arises" (Dillard, 2000, p. 672). In these ways, the HYPE Media feminist researchers are responsible to themselves, to each other, and to their broader communities. These layers serve as foundation and motivation for our exploration and editing of Wikipedia.

3. Project Overview

Given the context above, we, the project facilitators, conceived of the HYPE Media Wikipedia project as a knowledge, information, and data equity project, with information activism at its core. As we define it, *information activism means involving diverse communities in the information creation process*. We start with the understanding that information creation practices have long been institutionalised in ways that marginalise and silence diverse voices. If activism is bringing about change, we practiced this change by diversifying information production processes. We are far from the first thinkers to locate their activism in Wikipedia. Recently, for example, the Decolonising Wikipedia Network was established to do just this: utilise Wikipedia's accessibility and flexibility to "make the internet a better place" (Pansear et al, 2022, p. 99).

In our project, this mobilisation of research and writing engaged by Black girls "necessitate[d] that truths made visible by the research process be translated into action, resistance, and/or activism" (Patterson et al., 2016b, p. 69). We looked to the lived experiences of the girls as a guide and a means of information activism. Their positionality as HYPE Media members attending Pittsburgh's Westinghouse Academy 6-12 made them experts of knowledge making about their school and schooling experiences inside the classrooms and throughout the world. The resulting information activism was rooted in everyday activism, an activism that acts as survival strategies and a form of literacy (Collins, 2012).

For our project we developed a six-week facilitation plan to edit the Westinghouse High School Wikipedia page. All HYPE Media participants attended Westinghouse High School, so it was a common subject for all involved in the program and they could draw on lived experience to inform the project. Before the project, the Westinghouse Wikipedia page had only three sentences in the Introduction, a short Feeder District section, a two-sentence History section, and a Notable Alumni section, with a warning from Wikipedia that some of the names were not verified. Looking as far back as 2016, we could see that there was at one time more information on the page, which was later removed, likely due to lack of sources. The lack of content on the Westinghouse High School page provided us with a unique opening to add substantial content.

Our facilitation team consisted of the University of Pittsburgh faculty facilitators of HYPE Media—one member from the school of education who founded HYPE Media and one from the school of social work—and a PhD student in English composition from the same institution whose background is in library instruction and information literacy and holds an MLIS degree. During the program, nine youth were enrolled, aged 13-17. To run the program, we sought funding from the university through a competitive grant process and were awarded $8,000 which we used to buy program supplies, including snacks, writing supplies, and iPads for each participant. The decision to purchase iPads helped us attract and retain participants. They were able to feel ownership of the technology used to write the articles just as we hoped they would feel ownership of the project as a whole. The grant was provided by the University of Pittsburgh's Year of Data and Society, an annual program offered by the Office of the Provost centred around a new theme each year. The Year of Data and Society explored the societal implications of data and its uses, recognising that data can both empower and marginalise individuals and communities. We recognised how data and information about Homewood circulating online perpetuated harmful narratives and sought, through our program, to create information sources about the area that would challenge existing narratives which marginalised the community.

Studies have shown that the racial and economic context of a neighbourhood impacts Whites, Blacks, and community leaders' perception of "disorder" in neighbourhoods, and that cognitive bias rather than objective conditions are driving those perceptions (Sampson & Raudenbush, 2004). Stigmatised neighbourhood narratives not only negatively impact resident's identity and experience of discrimination and exclusion (Anderson, 2011; Link & Phelan, 2001) but also the willingness of outside actors to invest in neighbourhoods, resulting in fewer resources (Besbris et al., 2015). Available information about an area plays a critical role in shaping these narratives, and provides a place to intervene to effectively counter them (Chiricos et al., 2000).

Historically, youth have not been given the opportunity to actively participate in collecting, analysing, and disseminating information and data that shape these narratives; however, new media platforms have made their participation possible in ways that they were not in previous eras. Engagement with data and online information and media platforms offer expansive possibilities to imagine creative and impactful ways to share experiences widely and engage in counter-storytelling and information justice. The making of new knowledge that is grounded in Black feminist epistemologies and led by Black girls who embrace responsibility for their

community is an act of resistance against hegemonic policies and practices that have limited the ways that these girls have interacted with their school and schooling in general.

During our fundraising and planning stage we also visited the high school and met with the principal. This was integral to get a sense of not only the history of Westinghouse High School, but its current material conditions. The girls often describe Westinghouse as a prison and harbour negative feelings about the space—citing lack of basic necessities like toilet paper and menstruation products. They also are extremely loyal to Westinghouse and protective of its image. These conflicting realities created rich opportunities to discuss Wikipedia's online presence, and its claims to objectivity and neutrality with editors who may not be objective and neutral about the material with which they engage.

To plan for the project, two members of the facilitation team met weekly and outlined meeting plans, realizing that the trajectory of the project would need to change and morph as the girls were introduced. One facilitator was a PhD student and the other was a faculty mentor who modelled approaches to community-engaged learning and provided feedback to the student facilitator as needs dictated. Indeed, the plans provided a starting point, and a way for facilitators to orient themselves to overarching ideas and themes they wanted to treat including technical competencies, publishing processes, and CIL, which were initially envisioned to be taught as separate entities in different sessions. Once the meetings with the girls started, however, CIL came to the fore and was taught alongside the technical skills needed for Wikipedia publishing—this happened organically as the participants began asking questions that spurred important discussions regarding information creation and power. Facilitator meetings continued before each session with email reflections after which helped to process what happened in each session and revise plans for further encounters.

This recursive planning, revising, enacting, rethinking, pivoting, and replanning happened iteratively throughout the project and is an example of Black feminist pedagogy. The layers of dialogue across planning and participants deepened our connection to endarkened feminist epistemologies insofar as dialogue is the cornerstone for the success of this work of developing Black feminist researcher identity through CIL and activism. Dillard (2000) argued:

> only within the context of community does the individual appear, and through dialogue continue to become…That there is value in the telling, in invading those secret silent moments often unspoken, in order to be understood as both participating in and responsible to one another as researchers. Further, there is value in being connected, in seeking harmony and wholeness as a way to discern 'truth' (p. 675).

This truth seeking is not limited to the information that was collected for Wikipedia editing, but also extends to the truth seeking of seeing oneself as just that—a truth seeker. One who has the ability and responsibility to influence information and perceptions of community.

In the next sections, we describe chronologically the steps we took to edit the Wikipedia page. Along the way, we describe what we did, how we did it (or the mediums we used to achieve our goals), and why it matters in the context of the CIL and information activism we were trying to build in our program.

3.1 Stage 1: Introduction to Wikipedia

We met with participants weekly in the University of Pittsburgh's Community Engagement Center, a building recently opened in the historically Black neighbourhood of Homewood where members of the university and community-engaged partners can meet to provide programming or work on projects together. We used a conference room space and a computer lab for our meetings.

At the first meeting we introduced the Wikipedia project as an information activism project, sharing with the girls the discrepancies in Black female representation in Wikipedia editing circles. As much as Homewood is a systemically under-resourced neighbourhood, Wikipedia is a systemically uneven information source when it comes to diversity of both participants and content. For example, fewer than 13% of Wikipedia editors are women (Antin et al., 2011). In response to similar racial disparities in editor demographics, Black activist groups have tried to create content centred in their communities and interests. These include Black Lunch Table and AfroCROWD. Our participants were able to position themselves as activists aligning with these efforts to promote representation in Wikipedia editorship and content creation.

The girls were interested to see that such a well-used platform was not, in fact, representative of their experiences or information expertise. Indeed, when they saw a picture of Steve Pruitt, a famous Wikipedia editor who has edited more than a third of all Wikipedia pages in the English language (CBS News, 2019), they realised that a middle-aged white man's take, no matter how "neutral," would likely be different than theirs. Framing the project as a representation project gave the girls a reason to participate and a drive to complete the project, even if researching and writing might not be their favourite after-school activity.

In this sense, the introduction to the project gave the girls a reason to participate and a drive to finish. They realised that without a diverse editing body, Wikipedia's topic representation is lacking. We discussed this lack and the "viewpoints that are not represented in Wikipedia because the editors actually contributing most of its content are not socio-demographically or mindset-wise representative of society in general, of the average Internet users, or even the average reader of Wikipedia" (Flöck, 2011, sec 2.1). Our project, in many ways, sought to close this gap in a communally feminist way.

Representation gaps are important to address, especially because Wikipedia employs a neutrality standard for its articles ("Wikipedia: Neutral", 2023). While information might be drafted in a neutral tone, if diverse topics are not represented, Wikipedia is anything but a neutral information space. As those enacting similar information activism projects like ours note:

> "Although Wikipedia's neutral point of view principle attempts to create uniform content removed from potential author bias, it fails to acknowledge the impact of racial, cultural, and national identity on authorship. This is particularly troubling given the demographics of Wikipedia editors" (Montez, 2017, p. 4).

CIL discussions like this helped us uncover the power structures built into the information platform of such a widely used resource.

We also discussed notability, Wikipedia's standard that articles contain subjects that are "worthy of notice" ("Wikipedia: Notability", 2023). In other words, "Wiki-notability means that the topic/subject has received significant coverage in reliable sources that are independent of the subject" (Tripodi, 2021, p. 4). The problem here is that underrepresented subjects like those related to women and people of colour are often not covered with the same rigor or breadth as more privileged topics (Adams et al, 2019). This means there is a lack of information sources about such topics that are easily and freely available online which perpetuates difficulty finding information about marginalised topics. The girls were surprised to hear that when it comes to diversity, studies show a concerning trend that "wiki-notability is inconsistently enforced, arbitrarily assessed, and biased against women" (Tripodi, 2021, p. 4) and other marginalised groups. Because Wikipedia is so widely used and so freely available, this is a knowledge equity issue. If free and widely consulted information is not available on diverse subjects, it widens the information gap, and further marginalises important, diverse topics.

Introducing our Wikipedia editing project as a CIL and information activism project was integral to garner buy-in and maintain momentum throughout the project. It gave meaning to the brainstorming, drafting, and publishing phases.

3.2 Stage 2: Brainstorming and Prewriting

To keep the participants' attention—but also to decidedly make the Wikipedia project as unlike school as possible—we built play breaks into our workflow. While we brainstormed by having the girls use printed-out templates to create their own Wikipedia pages about topics they cared about without consulting the already-written ones, we also had them digitally create TikToks with Wikipedia facts to share with their followers. This mixing of play and work, analogue and digital, was important to keep the girls interested in the project but was also an important factor in community-engaged work that universities might enact in their own pedagogy. The times we played were no less critical to our outcomes as the times we were working. For instance, we played the Wikipedia 30-second challenge. This game has the player start on a random Wikipedia Page (like American rapper Megan Thee Stallion) and within 30 seconds use hyperlinks to navigate as fast as possible to another unrelated page (like Hot Dogs). By using printed, blank templates, the girls got a sense of what to include in Wikipedia articles and compare their creations to the ones already published, and by playing the 30-second challenge, they got a sense of the information ontology of the website—how information sources are linked and how topics relate to one another. Both of these were lessons that were important for the girls to understand how Wikipedia functions as a platform and they worked in tandem by creating a sense of levity and personal interest in the project.

While creating their own templates, the girls discussed how their teachers consistently warn them not to use Wikipedia as an information source because "anyone can edit it." However, once they began creating their own pages they realised how hard it was to write a Wikipedia article and to find verifiable facts to back up each major point. While anyone can edit Wikipedia, it became clear to them that not everyone was editing the platform—and that representation was a problem. Further, the blanket statement that "Wikipedia is bad" did not show critical awareness of how the information was created and how it might be used. The girls began critically questioning why they were discouraged from using Wikipedia if so much research went into each article. They reflected that they would know to look at the citations at the bottom of each article to verify the source if they used Wikipedia articles in the future as a measure of reliability, and by writing their own articles they would be more empowered to evaluate Wikipedia pages in the future in terms of topic representation, but also content reliability. This shows how being integrated in the information creation process is an important way to teach CIL and information evaluation skills. In our community-engaged project, CIL conversations were inscribed into our daily workflows. We learned by doing.

3.3 Stage 3: Background Research and Genre Awareness

In order to get a sense of what a Wikipedia page about a high school might include, we looked at other high school pages to see what categories and subcategories existed across the board. We also examined the history of the Westinghouse High School page to see what work had been done in the past. We looked at other pages throughout the area, and also brought up the high school page of one of the white facilitators, who attended a majority white/Asian school on the West Coast of the United States. The girls used these as guides to create categories and subcategories they might want to write on including sports, unique classes, school histories, notable alumni, school achievements, alma mater, etc.

In one example of CIL the girls noted that their high school page was significantly less built out than the high school page of the facilitator who attended a majority white/Asian school. Westinghouse High School had a majority Black student body. This brought up questions of

information representation and what subjects and pages on Wikipedia receive the most attention. Indeed, the girls noted, information is a resource, and without information on their school built out on Wikipedia, important history and current events were not being represented as well as they were for other high schools. This disparity created gaps in easily accessed and shareable knowledge online. The girls noted that the availability or unavailability of information suggested that some schools were valued higher than others, and that some narratives were getting shared and contributed to at higher rates. This helped them want to build out the Wikipedia page of Westinghouse because they were able to shape the narrative and provide valuable information that wider publics could read and consume. In other words, by creating content that was added to their high school page, they created cultural capital for the school by boosting its information-availability online. In this sense, they saw the ways that information is valuable economically, but also socially.

3.4 Stage 4: Drafting on Paper

With a sense of the categories we wanted in the Wikipedia article we started with analogue drafting methods. We used whiteboards, large sticky notes, and pads of paper, and over two sessions we first outlined each addition to the article, and then wrote the sections. Girls used their phones and iPads to find information about each sub-category, shared information with the group, and then composed sentences and wrote down where they found the information. We discussed how to avoid plagiarism, including the mechanics of paraphrasing and citations. By drafting together on paper, we were able to create a unique voice for the group. This also gave us the opportunity to discuss tone as Wikipedia strives for a neutral, objective tone. The girls had strong feelings about their school—a fierce pride, but also a great disappointment in how they were treated there. They described it as a prison at times, but were proud of its sports history and their own achievements in courses and technical training programs. As we wrote, we questioned the neutrality of each sentence. Would anyone be able to argue with this statement? How do we sound objective even if we have strong feelings about a subject? We also, in the spirit of CIL, questioned neutrality in and of itself. Indeed, the girls wondered if anything can be completely free of bias.

If neutrality's objective is to treat a subject fairly, but Wikipedia's editors skew white and male, how could the content be truly neutral? By questioning Wikipedia's content, at the same time as we were adhering to its conventions and adding to the content, we built critical literacy skills into our program and helped the girls see the impact of their work as active information creators.

The community aspect of information-finding is worth noting here since the girls called friends, video chatted with family members, and texted acquaintances as part of their information-finding and drafting stage. While we drafted on paper using analogue means, they were engaged in community-based research practices to create content. While they backed up their information by finding verifiable sources online, they relied on community members with lived experience in the school and with the local culture to start their drafting. This is a far cry from individuals sitting behind screens writing articles alone. Instead, the drafting started with their embodied, subjective, lived experiences which became the basis of the categories and content that later showed up in the article. By embracing their authority as *already experts* on the subject, we focused on growing their researcher identities. This process also showed them the rich resources that surround them in terms of friends, family, and community. Information, in other words, surrounds us—it is not all online.

3.5 Stage 5: Drafting in Sandbox

After writing the content on paper, the girls practiced moving sentences over to the Wikipedia sandbox. This built digital Wikipedia literacies including creating accounts, logging in, using editing boxes, making and documenting changes, using headings and subheadings, and

creating hyperlinks and footnote citations. Participants began this stage on their iPads but eventually moved to a computer lab for the ease of larger screens and the dexterity of a computer mouse. The participants found this part frustrating as they had to work within the constraints of the platform. Words they used to describe drafting online were "hard," "frustrating," and "irritating" as they struggled to save their work and follow Wikipedia conventions for citations.

Participants realised by now that editing Wikipedia wasn't as easy or open as they once thought. Indeed, their high school teachers had warned them about believing Wikipedia articles because "anyone could edit them" but this experience taught them that even though the platform is open, it is far from accessible. In other words, in order to really add to Wikipedia, a lot of work must be done to follow the platform's conventions. Editing Wikipedia was more work than they bargained for, and they later reflected that this made them rethink their approach to the source as a whole.

They also found it funny that the drafting area was called a sandbox, a place usually associated with play and joy. Their experience with the sandbox was not joyful or playful—it was work and labour. This contrasted with earlier interactions with the platform which we envisioned around play time—the 30-second Wikipedia challenge or TikToks. This focus on the labour of editing Wikipedia is important in an activist space, especially when racial politics are present. Indeed, the labour of representation falling on the shoulders of young Black women was not lost to us, and we discussed the information economics involved in Wikipedia editing and the choices the girls had to make in order to work in the space.

Making the labour inequity visible is part of a CIL approach. As Wikipedia editing is unpaid labour, it is important to note that while Wikipedia editing projects which involve Black communities are one way to promote diversity and information equity, they cannot be the only way. This is one way that community engaged spaces might influence and inflect information literacy work, and even Wikipedia work that happens within universities, which could take up minority concerns while distributing the labour of representation more equitably.

3.6 Stage 6: Sourcing, Hyperlinking, Publishing

After practicing in the sandbox, the girls worked in teams to move sections of the drafted article onto the Wikipedia page. During this stage they finalised hyperlinks and verified citations throughout the article. We discussed (and questioned) Wikipedia's standards around verifiability. According to Wikipedia:

> Verifiability means other people using the encyclopedia can check that the information comes from a reliable source. Wikipedia does not publish original research. Its content is determined by previously published information rather than the beliefs or experiences of editors. Even if you are sure something is true, it must be verifiable before you can add it ("Wikipedia: Verifiability", 2022).

Yet with a critical lens we see that there are power dynamics involved in what previously published information exists. If information presence in the form of media coverage is a privilege, then it follows that it may be harder to verify information about subjects that are less reported on or published about, leading to a self-replicating absence of information about marginalised subjects considered notable, according to the verifiability definition. In their recent book, *Wikipedia and the Representation of Reality*, McDowell and Vetter (2022a) traced this absence back to Wikipedia's reliance on print culture and secondary source material as verifiable. Print culture has historically been controlled by Western white, educated, male voices, and has excluded alternative ways of knowing including oral histories and communally passed-down knowledge (McDowell & Vetter, 2022a). Wikipedia's verifiability standard boosts

the website's reliability as a source but also creates the potential of exclusionary knowledge production practice.

The politics of verifiability were not lost on the girls, and we talked about this consistently throughout the project. They found themselves frustrated with the media coverage and lack of available, published information about Westinghouse. The constraints of sourcing changed the way they approached the project as well. They recognised intrinsically that there are many ways to verify something, including talking to people with first-hand experience. The girls had to get creative in finding verified sources and worked hard to dig through media coverage, publications from the public-school system, and other archival source material to create citations for their work.

Girls worked together to double check conventions and make sure the article read well and was properly formatted. With two or three girls around a screen, they also worked together to finalise and publish. In most Wikipedia edit-a-thons, individuals come together as a community, but generally work on articles by themselves, based on individual interests. In other words, in conventional edit-a-thons, the group is together temporally in time and space, but working on individual projects. Our approach was different and provided a social scaffolding for our younger participants. The final product was truly a group effort, and participants could work together and problem solve as issues arose. This made them feel safer, and also more confident, since their peers and the facilitators were there to help if needed.

Lockett (2019) reflected on the communal aspect of Wikipedia editing as a distinctly womanist method which allows everyone to participate. By assuming that every participant has expertise in some way, programs like ours assume that all participants know something and by so doing, they upend power structures and rethink sometimes oppressive notions of expertise and authority:

> By coming together to share our knowledge, we all [benefit] from the exchange. The social aspect of knowledge production and learning strengthens our spirit and our will to seek wisdom in the honor of both our individual excellence and our ancestors (Lockett, 2019, p. 11).

For HYPE Media, this wisdom gleans the possibility for seeing ourselves as not only researchers, but in community with one another and those who have preceded us in writing and revising representations of Black communities.

3.7 Stage 7: Reflection and Debrief

After publishing the final draft, we communally reflected about the project. The girls outlined each part of the process and were able to articulate how they felt (interested, frustrated, bored, proud) throughout the project. This created a sense of ownership and identity building as a group as they were able to see how much work they did, and also how hard that work was. They overwhelmingly articulated that the project was difficult, but they were proud of it. Ultimately this reflection helped us all metacognitively understand the wider importance of the intervention made. They recognised that their representation in the space was important and the validation of such within the community was meaningful.

Such a focus on dialogue was important as we wished to root our praxis in Black feminist epistemology—focusing on these communal moments of knowledge building. Reflections like this helped us understand that not all knowledge is held in information objects like Wikipedia articles, but instead, knowledge can be built and enacted in daily life and through embodied experiences like our experience of being together and editing in sync with one another. Drawing attention to the process we went through to edit the article helped us see how information

creation is a process and the different ways that individuals and communities participate in that process.

3.8 Stage 8: Share Out

As a final part of the project, the girls were invited to share their work at the University of Pittsburgh's year end celebration of the Year of Data and Society. Together, they built a poster and presented it to academics and other grant awardees. They practiced what they would say about the project to interested parties and synthesised major takeaways from the project. The girls reflected that they were excited and happy to see so many people interested in their work, and it gave the project a stronger exigence for them to know that other academics and thinkers engage in Wikipedia platform studies. More pointedly, the experience of seeing other Black women researchers talk about their work on Wikipedia and information literacy was affirming and further encouraged the girls to embrace their identities as Black feminist researchers.

Our project's focus on information justice was important in this share out as well. We wanted to focus on getting individuals and communities involved in information creation practices, and Wikipedia was one output of this. However, academic knowledge sharing is another important information creation process that needs diversification and depth. Bringing a group of Black youth to a university conference challenged intersecting identities of age, gender, education, and race on multiple levels, and was a way in which we tried to crucially understand academic knowledge making and subvert it simultaneously.

4. Conclusion

At the beginning of this report, we suggested that CIL pedagogy and university library spaces might be able to learn from community-engaged IL programming. Our Wikipedia editing initiative used tenants of Black feminism, including self-definition, self-determination, flexibility, and adaptability, to bring community members together in order to not only theoretically talk about information and the power structures that create source material, but to create information together, critically. CIL skills were built into every part of the program—from prewriting to drafting, from play to work, from analogue to digital engagement with material.

Readers may notice that our project walks a grey line given Wikipedia's conflict of interest policy which discourages "contributing to Wikipedia about yourself, family, friends, clients, employers, or your financial and other relationships" ("Conflict of Interest"). The girls all attend Westinghouse High School and edited the page. While they were not employed to do this, and did not consider the institution a "friend", they certainly had experience in the school which affected their approach to the project. We leveraged this relationship in order to talk about the politics of neutrality and objectivity as critical information constructs. In many ways, our project shows the limits of the Conflict of Interest Policy, which discourages individuals with lived, embodied experience from contributing to issues that matter to them. While the policy makes sense in terms of problematic influence in what is supposed to be an open, neutral platform, it becomes problematic with underrepresented content that may not get the attention it deserves from the larger, less diverse, editing body. In other words, it can perpetuate marginalisation and information gaps. For HYPE Media, these disparities are mediated through endarkened feminist epistemologies that allow the girls to see themselves as skilled contributors to Wikipedia and Black feminist researchers.

Ultimately, this is our major takeaway: becoming part of the information creation process is an important way to dynamically teach CIL skills. Information activism, at its core, is built around doing. Engaging diverse information creators empowers learners to not only understand how power structures function in information creation and dissemination platforms, but it gives them the skills to actively participate and potentially change those structures.

Further, asset-based pedagogy, influenced by Black feminism, builds programs and learning experiences around what learners bring to the table. In this case, we focused on a Wikipedia article that represented something our participants had in common—their high school. Showing how lived experience is a form of authority, alongside other information-creation processes (like research and citation practices), gives depth and breadth to these experiences.

Ultimately, we believe that university spaces might take lessons from community-engaged work such as this. CIL seeks to uncover and understand the power dynamics inherent in information production and dissemination. Information activist projects, like the one described in this article, bring community members together to confront those power structures and seek to change them. Black feminism can be our guide for more equitable and inclusive information activism futures.

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