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Broadening representations of rhetoric in Wikipedia: disciplinary praxis as graduate pedagogy and research (7682)

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ABSTRACT

Research in rhetoric and writing has found that Wikipedia-based education allows for direct and transparent observation of practices and concepts related to writing process, research, social collaboration, and digital rhetoric while also providing opportunities for authentic writing situations. However, much of this literature has been focused on undergraduate applications. To expand this scholarship, this article centers on pedagogical applications for Wikipedia-based practices in doctoral education. Drawing from two methodologies, participatory action research and teacher research, and utilizing a method of collaborative reflective inquiry for the collection of data, this study examines graduate students' reflective writing regarding their experience with a Wikipedia-based assignment. Qualitative analysis provides insight into students' understanding of Wikipedia editing as a form of disciplinary praxis and teacher training that enables expansion of academic knowledge in the encyclopedia, while also highlighting specific challenges related to this form of pedagogy. Finally, this article offers specific recommendations for Wikipedia-based education and suggests avenues for future research.

KEYWORDS

graduate education;
disciplinary praxis; teacher
research; participatory action
research

Introduction

Rhetoric and writing scholars have spent over a decade exploring the impact of Wikipedia and its influence on literacy pedagogy. According to these researchers, Wikipedia enables direct and transparent observation of practices and concepts related to writing process, research, social collaboration, and digital rhetoric (Hood 2007; Di Lauro and Johnke 2017; Kill 2012; Kuhne and Creel 2012; Patch 2010; Purdy 2009; Tardy 2010; Gruwell 2015). Beyond observation, the encyclopedia also provides opportunities for a public writing experience with an authentic audience, an experience in which the writing situation becomes immediate and much more tangible to students (Cummings 2009; Sweeney 2012; Vetter 2013) and often results in increased motivation levels among students (Cummings 2009; Vetter 2014). Perhaps due to the need to make Wikipedia-based educational practices accessible to as wide of an academic audience as possible, the majority of this research has focused on undergraduate applications. This article reports on an initiative by the author to examine pedagogical applications for Wikipedia-based practices in doctoral education related to rhetorical theory. Drawing from two methodologies, participatory action research and classroom research, and utilizing a method of collaborative reflective inquiry for the collection of data, this article presents original findings related to graduate student experience with a Wikipedia-based assignment. Student-participants in this study ($n=25$) collaborated in small groups of three to four to co-author reflective essays that addressed three categories reflecting on the Wikipedia-

based assignment: (1) goals and accomplishments, (2) what was learned from the assignment, and (3) challenges related to the assignment. While this study is limited by its sample size, qualitative analysis yields a number of significant realizations related to the above categories while providing insight into graduate student experience with Wikipedia-based assignments. In particular, (1) student-participants view the assignment as enabling expansion and disruption of the encyclopedia's representation of disciplinary-related topic coverage (in the case of this study, that of rhetoric). As they reflect on their own learning, student-participants (2) emphasize opportunities and applications related to the teaching of writing, research, and digital literacy at the undergraduate level. Finally, student-participants also contribute to our understanding of the challenges of Wikipedia-based assignments by identifying particular hurdles related to contributing to a Wikipedia article, correctly following writing conventions in Wikipedia, and technological problems. Such findings illustrate the potential of Wikipedia-based assignments for graduate-level pedagogy, extend previous research on Wikipedia-based education, and provide thick descriptions of student experience. Furthermore, because this study enacts a model of teacher research, contextualization of the research setting also offers a specific model for graduate pedagogy or 'disciplinary praxis' (Vetter et al. 2018) immediately applicable to rhetoric instruction but which also could be applied to other disciplinary contexts. This model is introduced in the next section, which introduces the study's pedagogical context: two doctoral-level courses in rhetoric and the Wikipedia-based assignment students worked on in both courses. A rationale and explanation of the research methodologies and methods for the study follows and the study's findings are presented through a thematic analysis of student-authored reflective essays. Finally, in lieu of a lengthy literature review, a discussion section contextualizes this research among other scholarship on Wikipedia in writing and rhetoric studies.

Study context: curricular overview

This research follows a year-long trajectory of mirrored assignments in two separate doctoral courses, English 831: Rhetorical Traditions and English 846: Digital Rhetoric, at Indiana University of Pennsylvania. Both assignments asked students to (1) expand Wikipedia's coverage of rhetoric beyond classical and Greco-Roman traditions through direct editing of articles related to course content in Wikipedia, and (2) reflect on their experience in terms of what their editorial actions accomplished, the major challenges of the project, and the project's educational value. Both assignments were collaborative and asked students to work in groups of three or four to complete both the writing (Wikipedia edit) element as well as the reflection. As explained in the section introducing student reflections, student-participants fully consented to the use of their reflections in this project through a formal (IRB-approved) procedure that explained the project's goals and usage of their writing.

Wikipedia edit assignment

For both courses, the Wikipedia Edit assignment provided way for students to engage innovative pedagogy and work towards broadening representations of rhetoric in a public, digital knowledge archive. Additionally, both courses asked students to work in small groups of three or four to edit Wikipedia articles on subjects relating to rhetoric or digital rhetoric. In English 831: Rhetorical Traditions, a central goal for the project was to explicitly address how the encyclopedia presents rhetoric within a primarily Western and androcentric tradition, and challenge or complicate that representation by adding content from alternate and often marginalized traditions. In English 846: Digital Rhetoric, this particular goal was not stated, but students were encouraged to improve representation of rhetoric in the online encyclopedia by editing articles related to digital rhetoric and course readings. To prepare for the assignment, students learned about Wikipedia conventions and policies via the Wiki Education training libraries ('Training Libraries' 2019), spent time reading and evaluating Wikipedia articles, and practiced writing in a neutral style appropriate to the genre.

In both courses, additionally, students engaged in a critical assessment of the article they intended to improve, create, or add to in order to evaluate its gaps and/or weaknesses and plan their modifications. All students were asked to collaboratively author a brief (500–800 word) reflective essay with members of their group. Finally, they were directed to focus their essay on the following: (1) Goals of their editing project and what was accomplished; (2) what was learned from the assignment; and (3) challenges of the assignment. These collaborative essays are analyzed in the 'Reflections' section of this article.

English 831: rhetorical traditions

The doctoral course English 831: Rhetorical Traditions, as it has historically been taught at my institution, emphasizes a cultural approach. An institutional catalogue description of the course, for instance, defines its focus as an examination of how 'cultural factors such as history, politics, ideology, gender, race, and ethnicity affect the composing process' ('Course descriptions' 2019). Educational training in classical, Greco-Roman rhetoric compelled the author to work with at least a portion of this (more dominant) historical literature. However, another goal was to continue the multi/cultural approach, especially due to the transnational and multicultural demographic of our doctoral program. Accordingly, the design of this course attempts to both (1) acknowledge how rhetoric has been predominantly and historically identified as a Greco-Roman domain in which male voices are prominent, and (2) challenge and disrupt such an identification through a re-visioning of rhetoric as it is practiced and understood by voices outside dominant discourses. These goals are further described in an introductory passage in the course syllabus.

While we will read some classical texts by figures such as Plato and Aristotle, we will take a comparative approach that examines rhetoric in ancient cultures beyond the Greek tradition. Furthermore, by exploring contemporary theories, practices, and applications, we will work to validate traditionally marginalized voices and identities. We will pay special attention to the ways in which feminist rhetorical practices allow us to rethink rhetoric, and the ways in which digital technologies are shaping new methods of rhetoric and communication. (English 831 Syllabus)

The feminist ambition of the course design is further exemplified by the following learning outcome, stated as a 'course goal' in the syllabus: 'Understand the significance of and need for a multicultural and feminist approach to rhetoric'. (English 831 Syllabus)

The Wikipedia Edit assignment effectively worked towards course outcomes for English 831: Rhetorical Traditions because of the way it provided opportunities for students to both assess the current state of Wikipedia's representation of rhetoric and work to diversify that representation by editing and adding content by traditionally marginalized sources and authors. In this course, students edited and diversified content in articles such as 'Rhetoric,' 'Visual rhetoric,' 'Identification in rhetoric,' and 'Indian rhetoric.'

English 846: advanced seminar in literacy: digital rhetoric

The doctoral course English 846: Digital Rhetoric is a special topic research seminar in IUP's Composition and Applied Linguistics program that focused on digital rhetoric, the application of rhetorical theory to digital texts and technologies. As an emerging field of inquiry, digital rhetoric encompasses the study of rhetorical techniques for production and analysis; new media function, design, and capability; digital identity; community formation; ideology, epistemology, and culture in digital interfaces and texts; and technology's influence on agency and the emergence of posthuman actors in networks and interfaces (Eyman 2015). While this course was not centered on the cultural politics of rhetoric's history as a western domain, a broader concern and goal was our expansion of contemporary understandings and representations of (digital) rhetoric. Accordingly, relevant learning outcomes included building students' 'understanding and knowledge of a body of scholarship in digital

rhetoric,' and providing opportunities for them to 'think critically about the cultural ramifications of technology' (English 846 Syllabus). Additionally, the Wikipedia Edit assignment represented a practical way to teach innovative pedagogy and immersion in actual processes of digital rhetoric (digital composition in a wiki environment). However, it is important to differentiate between the two courses as Rhetorical Traditions was focused on expanding representations of rhetoric through the inclusion of marginalized voices and identities and Digital Rhetoric was meant to introduce students to an emerging subfield of rhetoric.

The Wikipedia Edit assignment worked towards course outcomes in English 846: Digital Rhetoric because it allowed students to engage readings in digital rhetoric, while also expanding the encyclopedia's representation of this emerging field. Furthermore, a Wikipedia Edit assignment introduced students to innovative pedagogy and immersed them in a digital environment where they could practice cultural and rhetorical analysis. Doctoral students in this course all edited different sections of the article 'Digital rhetoric' in order to improve and broaden Wikipedia's representation of rhetoric.

Research methodologies and methods

This project draws from two methodologies, participatory action research (Kemmis and McTaggart 2005; McIntyre 2007) and classroom research (Cochran-Smith and Lytle 1990; Ray 1992) and utilizes a method of collaborative reflective inquiry for the collection of data from participants. Furthermore, both methodologies and method are motivated by a feminist concern for (1) valuing student-instructor relationships and embodied knowledges through classroom research, and (2) promoting research as collective praxis or action to improve a publicly available information archive (Wikipedia).

As a form of participatory action research (PAR) (Kemmis and McTaggart 2005), this project engages students and teacher in a conscious initiative for social change through public intellectual service and advocacy. In a discussion of the opportunities for meaningful qualitative research provided by PAR, Alice McIntyre emphasizes how this methodology encourages three specific possibilities (McIntyre 2007). First, PAR encourages 'active participation of researchers and participants in the co-construction of knowledge' (ix) – a goal which is especially well-suited to research praxis on Wikipedia writing as graduate pedagogy. Next, PAR encourages 'self- and critical awareness that leads to individual, collective, and/or social change' (ix). In attending to disciplinary gaps in Wikipedia to 'collect the sum of all human knowledge' (Roblimo 2004), the research and pedagogy discussed in this article are especially engaged in the conscious remediation of the encyclopedia to more fully represent marginalized academic knowledge related to rhetoric. While such a task may seem, on the surface, to be superficially discursive, Wikipedia's position as *de facto* public knowledge source (Graham 2011) has material implications in terms of access and representation of topics (Vetter et al. 2018). Furthermore, the opportunities provided by Wikipedia for sponsoring critical literacy and awareness also make PAR a good match for Wikipedia-based education research. A third affordance of PAR is its capability for 'building alliances between researchers and participants in planning, implementation, and dissemination of the research process' (McIntyre 2007, ix). Graduate students in these courses became co-authors in the collective production of knowledge regarding their own experiences related to editing project goals and accomplishments, learning outcomes, and challenges. This kind of alliance between instructor/researcher and graduate students/participants attempts to disrupt those binary boundaries towards a more productive working relationship. Action research has also been demonstrated to be especially well-suited for academic engagement with/in digital media (Hearn et al. 2009). More specifically, this project productively echoes calls for 'new media praxis' (Cushman 2006) and 'critical digital praxis' (Vetter et al. 2017) in that PAR promotes epistemologies which move scholarship outside of and beyond academic silos towards the realization of specific public goals directed at social change.

The methodological design of this project is also influenced by what has been termed 'teacher research,' or 'systematic and intentional inquiry carried out by teachers' (Cochran-Smith and Lytle 1990, 3). Teacher research complements this project's investment in PAR, as well as its feminist

inflections, because it disrupts the ‘conventional belief in the separation between researchers (those who make knowledge) and teachers (those who consume and disseminate it) (Ray 1992, 174). When combined with PAR, teacher research also provides opportunities to challenge the boundaries between researcher and participant, as teachers and students work together to create new knowledge. In this project, for instance, both teacher-researcher and student-participants worked to create and share knowledge on the online platform Wikipedia as well as through reflections and analysis of those reflections about their experience (as presented in this article).

The primary method for data collection, collaborative reflective inquiry, engages student-participants in conscious reflective writing about the Wikipedia-based assignment in order to create knowledge about their shared and embodied experiences with this form of graduate pedagogy. Open-ended reflective essays were requested from students and written through a collaborative process by student-authors. Accordingly, 25 student-participants between two courses took part in this study. In English 831: Rhetorical Traditions, 15 students formed 5 groups and wrote 5 collaborative reflective essays. In English 846: Digital Rhetoric, 10 students formed 3 groups and wrote 3 collaborative reflective essays. These reflections were included as part of the assignment in order to help students generate current and valuable reflections and realizations about the project as they finished it. After both courses were completed, analysis of these reflections as data was performed using NVivo qualitative analysis software, which aided in code-recognition, followed by exploratory, inductive thematic analysis (Boyatzis 1981). Data were initially separated into three separate NVivo projects, following the three categories reflecting on the Wikipedia-based assignment (goals; learning outcomes; challenges). Each dataset was then coded by an outside reader to identify themes related to each category, represented in the table below, which are explored more in the following sections related to the findings (Table 1).

Goals and accomplishments

When asked to reflect on the goals of their editing project and what was accomplished, students in these courses focused much of their discussion on expansion of Wikipedia’s representation of rhetoric, a theme which was clearly evident in the majority of essays written by student-groups in both courses. Student-groups in English 831, undoubtedly due to the course’s focus on interrogating dominant rhetoric, also expressed goals and accomplishments related to ‘disruption’ of traditionally dominant rhetoric as well as ‘giving voice to’ or legitimizing a marginalized topic.

Nearly every student group, in one way or another, discussed their expansion of Wikipedia’s representation of rhetoric as a goal or accomplishment. Of the five student-groups in English 831: Rhetorical Traditions, for instance, one identified their major accomplishment as creating a new article in Wikipedia on ‘Ancient Indian rhetoric’ (“Ancient,” 2019), not often included in dominant discussions of rhetorical history (Group 4). Two student-groups from this course also edited the existing Wikipedia article, ‘Rhetoric’ (“Rhetoric,” 2019). One of these groups added three female rhetoricians – Krista Ratcliffe, Gloria Anzaldúa, and Gertrude Buck – to the section on ‘Notable modern theorists’ (which had previously only identified male theorists) (Group 5 Essay). Another group successfully expanded

Table 1. Categories and themes produced through thematic analysis of student reflections.

Goals and accomplishments	Learning outcomes	Challenges
Expansion of Wikipedia’s representation of rhetoric	Pedagogical opportunities related to undergraduate teaching of writing, research, and digital literacy	Identifying a gap (in order to contribute to a Wikipedia article)
Disruption of dominant rhetoric in Wikipedia	Learning about Wikipedia culture	Following Wikipedia writing conventions
Representing marginalized voices in Wikipedia	Learning as process of identity information	Challenges related to technology issues
Collaborating with a community of practice	Learning about collaboration	

the same article to include a section on 'Animal rhetorics,' which they wrote about in their collaborative essay as 'disrupting anthropocentric concepts of rhetoric' and introducing an 'element of post-humanism to the "rhetoric" page in hopes that the [new] section might catalyze more work (on this page and others) with posthuman foci' (Group 1 Essay). According to another student group in English 831, who chose to edit the Wikipedia article 'Visual rhetoric' (2019), their goal was to 'enrich the existing article ... by adding three new sections on semiotics, graffiti, and composition' (Group 2 Essay). The final group in English 831: Rhetorical Traditions also defined their goal as the expansion of Wikipedia's representation of rhetoric, focusing on the article 'Identification in rhetoric' (2019). 'Our project,' wrote this group 'seeks to expand the Wikipedia stub on "Identification in rhetoric," bringing into discussions new developments in applying and reframing Kenneth Burke's theory of identification.' In addition to this description of their project as expanding/expansive, these students also expressed their goal of giving voice to alternate scholars:

Our project also aims to incorporate other voices in the field of rhetorical studies. For instance, we have turned to feminist works including Diana Fuss and Krista Ratcliffe's theorization of identification and non-western works including Dominic J. Ashby's Japanese rhetoric of identification (Group 3 Essay).

Student-groups reflecting on goals and accomplishments of the Wikipedia Edit assignment in English 846: Digital Rhetoric emphasized their expansion of the article 'Digital rhetoric' (which all three groups chose to edit) as well as the themes related to collaboration. Students in this course worked to '[e]xtend the definition of "digital rhetoric" to include [Douglas] Eyman's contention that [digital rhetoric] can be used as a heuristic and/or analytical tool' (Group 7). Another group described their editing accomplishments as modification, modernization, and expansion:

Our activity was to modify the digital [rhetoric] article's section on kairos. We modified the original definition of kairos to be more specific and include more references. We also modernized and expanded that definition for the digital world with guidance from and citation of Sheridan, Ridolfo, and Michel's 2012 book [*Available Means of Persuasion: Mapping a Theory and Pedagogy of Multimodal Public Rhetoric*] (Group 6).

A final student-group in this course wrote little about expansion or the particular editing they accomplished in the 'Digital rhetoric' article but did express how the project allowed them to 'collaborate with one another' and 'become part of a community of practice [Wikipedia]' (Group 8).

What was learned from the assignment

When asked to reflect on what they learned from the assignment in terms of digital literacy, Wikipedia culture, information politics of representation, pedagogy or other areas, student-groups wrote overwhelmingly about two themes: how the assignment presented pedagogical opportunities for them as future teachers of English and their learning in terms of Wikipedia culture. Less prevalent themes regarding learning included learning as a process of identity formation and learning about collaboration.

A frequent theme in student-group reflections was discussion of pedagogical opportunities for undergraduate writing education. In particular, students wrote about how Wikipedia provides opportunities for teaching: introduction to academic writing (Group 3); source evaluation (Group 8); integrating sources and documentation (Group 5); digital literacy (Group 4); and writing process (Group 6) and could also be a motivating educational assignment due to its public nature (Group 7). Perhaps the most compelling of these discussions were those that focused on source evaluation and Wikipedia as an introduction to academic writing.

In particular, Group 3 described the Wikipedia community as a 'place for much growth and learning ... a community of learners who strive to create a fact-based neutral-toned website that keeps people informed.' The significance of the value placed on neutrality and fact-based, informative writing, furthermore, can be transferred to the teaching of source evaluation in an English or writing-intensive course: 'Taking these practices and applying them to our courses shows the

importance of assessing the validity of sources. Using the same methods that Wikipedia uses for assessing credibility can be applied to students' efforts to choose their own sources for their own assignments.' (Group 8). The notion that Wikipedia should be used as a way to teach source evaluation, as discussed by a group of English graduate students, demonstrates just how far we as academics have come to understanding the value and significance of this encyclopedia in the last two decades. At the same time, transferring procedural steps and policies from the community of Wikipedia editors represents a tremendous insight into the possibilities of future Wikipedia-based education and other applications.

An additional compelling discussion from reflective essays focusing on pedagogy was the idea that Wikipedia-based assignments be used as a type of primer or introduction to academic writing. One student-group, in particular, saw Wikipedia as an interactive space where students can take part in a 'dynamic trajectory of knowledge sharing ... [and using Talk and History wiki functions,] learn to respond to previous conversations and generate new conversations' (Group 3). Through this environment, these students continue,

Wikipedia generates a great repertoire for teaching and learning that paves the way for more challenging genres of writing such as researched arguments and analytical papers. In other words, Wikipedia can serve to boost students' confidence in academic writing before exposing them to diverse genres in the academic discipline. (Group 3)

Summary, synthesis, source integration and documentation, and issues of copyright – all of these specific skills are cited by this student-group. But what's most interesting in this discussion is their focus on the interactive and dynamic learning atmosphere Wikipedia creates. It is this quality that academics often try and fail to re-create in online learning platforms such as Learning Management Systems (LMS) that are closed off from extra-academic publics.

Nearly equally salient to the theme of pedagogy, student-groups also wrote frequently about what they learned in terms of Wikipedia culture. Identifying the usefulness of training modules provided by the Wiki Education program ('Wiki Education' 2019) for instance, one of the reflection essays made the following claim: 'We learned how to navigate Wikipedia. We also learned about some of the political undercurrents of Wikipedia such as the creation, formation, and policing of content and style' (Group 6). Another essay also identified the training modules as invaluable for learning about Wikipedia culture:

The trainings were useful because they provided us with an overview of important and essential skills required to participate in Wikipedia culture as well as an understanding of Wikipedia culture. This gave us confidence to post and accept editing, revision, and even deletion as important parts of making Wikipedia a useful resource and collaborative space. (Group 1)

While it was made more explicit in Group 1's reflection, both groups recognized the importance of a nuanced understanding of Wikipedia culture – both in terms of making effective edits, and of becoming a part of the Wikipedia community.

Two themes related to learning that were less salient included learning as a process of identity formation and learning about collaboration. One student-group, in particular, wrote explicitly about engaging with the identity of 'Wikipedian' as something that could be transferred to an academic identity or skillset.

Additionally, this project fosters our growth as Wikipedians. We have learned how to edit Wikipedia pages through having curiosity about our topic, exploring the topic through documenting sources, and sharing our works on the online platform. This project builds our strength as we engage in public writing and scholarly conversations ... This experience opens up the gateway for us to re-examine our identities as future scholars, or 'stakeholders' of knowledge in the field (Group 3).

The idea that growing as a Wikipedian could help graduate students 're-examine [their] identities as future scholars' is particularly fascinating, given the precarity of English Studies and academia in general.

Finally, one group also focused briefly on how Wikipedia-based education opens up opportunities for collaboration and how these opportunities can improve and advance learning:

Working in a group reminds us of the affordances and challenges involved in group work. There really is another level of learning involved when we work within a group of individuals ... When having to deal with others, there are levels of criticality achieved that don't happen when one works alone. Working collaboratively has a myriad of benefits for students and should be incorporated into the classroom whenever possible. Wikipedia editing as a pedagogical tool provides a digital platform for collaboration. (Group 6)

Of special note here is these students' focus on the 'level of criticality' made possible by collaborative projects. Wikipedia-based educational activities allow for collaboration within student-classroom groups, which characterizes the assignment design in this article. But they also allow for collaboration with other editors in the Wikipedia community. That such collaboration can open up new levels of criticality and learning needs to be more fully considered, especially within the context of graduate education.

Challenges of the assignment

The final prompt provided for student-groups reflecting on their experience with the Wikipedia assignment asked them to consider challenges related to the assignment. Analysis of the sections mentioning challenges uncovered three salient themes: (1) identifying a gap; (2) following Wikipedia writing conventions; and (3) challenges related to technology issues.

When student-groups wrote about the challenge of identifying a gap, they were referring to the difficulty of planning a particular contribution to a Wikipedia article and working within existing content. Reflections regarding this challenge illustrate some important realizations about how Wikipedia-based writing assignments will be viewed by students as complex, difficult projects, even at the graduate level. These students recognized the complexity of the writing they were engaged in. One group writes, for instance: 'The Wikipedia article we added should appropriately address the gap in rhetoric as well as Wikipedia protocols' (Group 1). The 'gap in rhetoric' that these students refer to demonstrates their thinking about how Wikipedia fails to represent their understanding of how rhetoric should be treated in the encyclopedia. Other students explore the issue in greater detail in the following passage:

One of the challenges we faced was narrowing down our topic. We knew that we wanted to expand on the theory of identification in rhetoric, but we needed to come up with a nice way to keep what was there about [Kenneth] Burke, but to do a friendly expansion on it. We agreed that we could focus on [Krista] Ratcliffe and then narrow down from [Krista] Ratcliffe to [Diana] Fuss, and finally end with applications. Part of what we wanted to do was recognize women rhetors on this topic and we think that we achieved that nicely. (Group 3)

As demonstrated in the above reflection, planning an expansion of an article requires a critical evaluation and assessment of existing content, as well as the imagination to see absences: what's missing from the article and how could it be integrated in a way that is consistent and coherent with existing content. This can actually be extremely difficult because of the way the student-writer encounters and enters a text that is already in-progress and developed by multiple editorial voices. Yet the complexity of this writing also underscores its social and interactive possibilities. Group 3 was attempting to be careful about their addition because they wanted to value previous editors' contributions while also expanding an article to include marginalized voices of women rhetoricians.

In addition to the complexity of identifying a gap and planning a contribution in Wikipedia, an additional salient theme in this category was students' recognition of the challenges related to Wikipedia writing conventions. As part of the project, and leading up to their actual edit, students engaged with the required training modules provided by the Wiki Education program ('Training Libraries' 2019). These training modules introduced students to encyclopedic style and Wikipedia

conventions, yet these elements continued to be challenging, even for doctoral-level students. One group wrote about the difficulty of summarizing and paraphrasing academic sources into a Wikipedia entry, for instance: 'Wiki[pedi]a requires editors to paraphrase and avoid using the original words from the sources. It's challenging to stick to the initial idea, meanwhile to use different wording and structure.' (Group 2). That such basic writing skills became difficult for these graduate students in this particular context provides a compelling example of how writing in Wikipedia can quickly become a high stake writing performance. Even graduate students may struggle a little more with basic tasks when the audience and discourse community is both extra-academic (Vetter 2014) and genuinely present (Cummings 2009). An awareness of other editors and of the conventions of Wikipedia was also evident in another student-group's reflection on convention and style.

Conforming and complying with the writing styles of all other entries was key. So while it felt inexplicable to exclude information that we deemed to be important, we had to be particularly selective in the phrases we used to describe our rhetorician from an occupational standpoint, make sure to only cite our rhetorician's most notable publications, and be clear and concise in the description of our female rhetorician's contribution to the field of rhetoric (Group 5).

These student-authors go farther in their reflection to demonstrate the importance of following writing conventions in order to ensure their own edit remained in the article. Both reflections illustrate the influence of the Wikipedia community and context on even the most basic writing processes. But they also demonstrate how students engaged in Wikipedia-based writing assignments, even at the graduate level, need plenty of support and practice with writing in an encyclopedic style and following Wikipedia conventions.

A final theme identified in student reflection under the category of challenges centers on issues related to technology. While most of these issues were handled by providing in-class time for student-groups to make edits and negotiate Wikipedia's editing interface, these reflections also demonstrate some lingering problems related to information retention and accessibility. Wikipedia-based assignments require students to process a good deal of new information quickly. They need to understand and practice technical skills, writing conventions, and cultural values of the community – to name only a few. Coupled with course content, this can be overwhelming and may lead to a type of cognitive overload. As one group describes it, 'By the time we edited, some of us had already forgotten some of the information we learned from the online training' (Group 1). They continued by describing how they relied on each other: 'one had to refer to another team member to make sure [s/he] was on the right track' (Group 1). This reflection demonstrates the mental challenge related to learning a new technology, but also a possible solution: having students work in groups can partially alleviate this issue.

Another student-group wrote about an additional challenge related to technological access

Another major challenge for one specific member of our group was that not all laptops, for one reason or another, make the 'easy edit mode' accessible. One member of our group was not able to edit on her laptop, so she had to go to the computer labs at the [University] library to make her Wikipedia edit. This made the task more time consuming and a bit of a hassle due to the fact that it meant having to input all the proper citations onto her Wikipedia edit once again (Group 5).

The experience of the student in this passage highlights a problem of access: The visual editor (what the student labels the 'easy edit mode') makes Wikipedia editing much easier for novice editors; however if it isn't accessible from certain devices, this creates an imbalance of access among the group. Instructors working with Wikipedia-based assignments should ultimately make it a priority that every student has equal access to the visual editor and other digital tools necessary for beginning Wikipedia editing.

Major findings and discussion

The above analysis provides a rich set of realizations related to graduate student experience with Wikipedia-based assignments and further illustrates a model for disciplinary praxis as offered by the courses and Wikipedia-based assignment discussed in this article. This final section reviews some of the most salient and valuable findings, placing them in conversation with scholarship in rhetoric and writing studies – as well as the limited research that specifically addresses Wikipedia-based assignments in graduate-level contexts (Kenny, Wold, and Hurd 2013) in order to highlight this study's contributions to the conversation and suggest future research directions.

Disciplinary praxis as graduate pedagogy and research

As a project that moves beyond rote, traditional school-based assignments, the Wikipedia Edit assignment described in this article represents a type of disciplinary praxis because it engages extra-academic publics (Vetter 2014) to perform a type of disciplinary, symbolic action. Student-participants working on the Wikipedia Edit assignment engaged in a model for making writing interventions in a public knowledge archive. Such interventions, as described by these students, expanded – and in some cases, disrupted – Wikipedia's representation of rhetoric through active collaboration with a community of practice. Ultimately, student contributions to the articles 'Rhetoric,' 'Visual rhetoric,' 'Identification in rhetoric,' 'Indian rhetoric,' and 'Digital rhetoric' demonstrate how Wikipedia-based education provides an opportunity for students to effect social change by attending to disciplinary gaps in Wikipedia. By engaging in the conscious remediation of the encyclopedia to more accurately represent marginalized contributions to the field of rhetoric, these students become more familiar with the body of literature in their academic field while also connecting Wikipedia audiences to that knowledge. These opportunities demonstrate the appropriateness of Wikipedia-based education for graduate pedagogy, especially when instructors organize assignments around the purpose of expanding the encyclopedia's representation of disciplinary knowledge. Finally, while little research has investigated Wikipedia-based education applications for graduate pedagogy, the finding that such applications enable graduate students to participate in the communication of specialized, disciplinary knowledge to a public audience is in line with previous research beyond literacy or English Studies fields (Kenny, Wold, and Hurd 2013).

Teacher training for future literacy educators

As they reflect on their learning in co-authored reflections, student-participants also emphasized opportunities and applications related to the teaching of writing, research, and digital literacy at the undergraduate level. In particular, this study demonstrates future educators' realizations about the capacity of Wikipedia-based education to teach towards the introduction to academic writing (Group 3); source evaluation (Group 8); integrating sources and documentation (Group 5); digital literacy (Group 4); and writing process (Group 6) while also noting how this type of pedagogy could be a motivating educational assignment (for undergraduates) due to its public nature (Group 7). While learning outcomes such as source evaluation and integration, digital literacy, and writing process (among others) have been measured empirically in large-scale studies (Vetter, McDowell, and Stewart 2019; McDowell 2017), this study further demonstrates how a Wikipedia-based assignment can be useful for the innovative professionalization of graduate students towards future teaching. Furthermore, realizations by graduate students regarding the usefulness of Wikipedia-based assignments for teaching source evaluation at the undergraduate level prompt directions for future research in the area of information literacy, fake news, and misinformation. As we begin to understand how the community of Wikipedia has developed specific processes and policies for evaluating sources (Di Lauro and Johnke 2017), we also have a responsibility to communicate those practices to academic and non-academic publics for the purpose of sustained and innovative information literacy training.

Understanding the challenges of Wikipedia-based assignments

This study contributes to our understanding of the challenges of Wikipedia-based assignments. Despite the limited sample size of this research, difficulties faced by graduate students may give us a snapshot of some of the most pervasive problems students of any educational level are likely to encounter. When working on a Wikipedia Edit assignment, the most salient challenges faced by students included identifying a gap and following writing conventions. These challenges are summarized and contextualized below, and recommendations for addressing them are offered in a subsequent section.

Identifying a gap in a Wikipedia article in order to plan and contribute new material represents an exceptionally complex task. To do so requires specialized knowledge regarding Wikipedia conventions, as well as an in-depth understanding of the topic. This challenge has been explicitly identified by Kenny, Wold, and Hurd, who made the following recommendation: 'Initial research is important to ensure that a topic has not already been covered – [students] may wish to consider improving established pages as opposed to creating new ones' (2013, 89). Further recommendations emerging from the current study are offered in the next section.

The other most salient challenge reported by participants in this study related to their struggle to understand and follow Wikipedia writing conventions. As demonstrated at the undergraduate level (McDowell 2017), students in natural sciences tend to adapt more easily to encyclopedic writing conventions when compared to those in the humanities, fine arts, or social sciences. While further research on this topic is needed, we might speculate that these students are successful because genres required in the natural sciences predispose them to write in Wikipedia. Stylistic and epistemological features such as brevity and objectivity, for example, tend to be valued and thus practiced more in the natural sciences. More often than not, however, students at all levels tend to struggle with the genre of the encyclopedic article simply because it is a new genre they don't often write in. For English Studies students, Wikipedia's emphasis on neutrality and no original research, for instance, can prove to be extremely challenging given the value placed on argumentation, original analysis, and embodied reflection.

Like the students participating in this study, Kenny, Wold, and Hurd have found that graduate students engaged in Wikipedia editing in a course on human and environmental safety also struggled with synthesizing information in encyclopedic style. They offer the following recommendation for instructors: 'Make sure important statements contain citations and that the ideas behind entries are not novel' (2013, 89). Yet instructors also need to do more to train students in genre-based understandings of Wikipedia style and other writing conventions. While there is much work to be done in this area, both in terms of better understanding why students struggle with the encyclopedic genre and in proposing new approaches to supporting their learning, recommendations for further solutions to this challenge are offered below.

Recommendations

In order to help students meet the challenge of identifying a gap, instructors should engage them with a significant exercise or assignment in critical evaluation or assessment – in line with Wikipedia's standards for assessing the class of an article ('Wikipedia: Content assessment' 2019). In addition, students at any level need to be able to understand assessment banners and other notices on the main-space or talk page of an article which can provide clues for developing and improving that article. Ultimately, this is a challenge that requires commitment both to Wikipedia practices and values as well as a deep understanding of the topic.

Instructors can support students in 'identifying a gap' by (1) planning potential articles and editorial improvements before the assignment begins, (2) having students work in small groups so they can support each other through this challenge, (3) giving students a formal opportunity to critically evaluate a Wikipedia article using standards set by the Wikipedia community, and (4) providing

students with an immersive review of both Wikipedia practices and content knowledge leading up to the event.

Instructors can support students' understanding of Wikipedia writing conventions by training them in genre-based understandings of Wikipedia. If students can begin to see that the encyclopedic genre emerges from particular values (neutrality, no original research, accessibility) and that these values manifest in style, form, and content, they can also begin to better understand what motivates writers and writing conventions in Wikipedia. There is much work to be done in this area, however, both in terms of better understanding of why students struggle with the encyclopedic genre and in proposing new approaches to supporting their learning.

Concluding remarks: a note on methodology, authorship, and collaboration

By engaging methodologies of PAR and teacher research, and utilizing a method of collaborative reflective inquiry, this project has attempted to enact a collaborative model for pedagogy and research. If we truly value the capacity of Wikipedia, as a free and open-source archive, to empower more transparent and collaborative peer production towards knowledge equity, we should also consider how the encyclopedia can sponsor transformations of conventional academic teaching and research practices.

The methodologies activated in this study emerged from a feminist concern for valuing student-instructor relations and embodied knowledge and promoting pedagogy and research as disciplinary praxis. Furthermore, by engaging students in collaborative projects and reflections, this project has attempted to deconstruct some of the traditional boundaries between researcher and participant towards a more cooperative and productive working relationship. In many ways, however, this project falters to fully enact these methodologies. Students are positioned as 'student-participants' rather than co-researchers or co-writers; their reflections as 'data' rather than embodied and experiential expertise. Moreover, students don't share in the academic credit offered through authorship of this publication. To conclude, then, a question: If we in higher education value the potential of this kind of collaboration, as well as the large-scale collaboration occurring in Wikipedia every day, how might we challenge ourselves and our peers, as academics, to work towards different models for authorship and research that might demonstrate those values?

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