

# “But What About Representation?”

Finding Ethical Solutions and Best Practices for Gender Information in Wikidata

# Roundtable Discussion: Queering Wikipedia Conference 2023 May 17, 2023

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## Acknowledgements:

Alex Jiyun Jung

Clair Kronk

Gender in Wikidata Group Members

LD4 Wikidata Affinity Group Members

# Discussion Norms

Be Kind!

This is a gender and sexuality affirming space. We are not here to debate the existence and validity of identities. Please help us keep our discussion constructive!

To contribute a question or comment, please raise your hand to talk or type “duck” 🦆 in chat. We will be taking turns to talk, and the facilitators will keep a running list of names. If someone has spoken many times, the facilitator may reorder the list to prioritise folks who have spoken less.

This meeting will be recorded and shared publicly.

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# Gender across cultures

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- Wikidata serves a global community of users
- Wikidata items represent living people from all over the world, with all sorts of gender identities and lived experiences
- Gender is understood and described differently in different cultural and language groups
  - In one culture, it might be “safe” to infer a person’s gender identity based on personal pronouns, given names, or other characteristics. In another, the same inference can cause emotional and/or physical harm
  - Do we trust computers to make these inferences? Do people from one culture have the ability to safely make these inferences about people from other groups?

How can the community reconcile these tensions in Wikidata? Can culturally diverse users have all their needs met in this single platform? How?

# Gender and Ethics

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How do we represent this personal information ethically in the open web?

Does gender have a place in Wikidata at all? What are the reasons for and against inclusion?

What potential harms can arise from including gender information about living people on Wikidata? What harms can come from leaving gender information out of Wikidata entirely?

# Wikidata Property P21 (Sex or gender)

# Data Structure/Accuracy

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- P21 presents data structure and accuracy issues
- Sex and gender are distinct..why are they hanging out together in P21?
- One property for people and other animals and fictional entities? Why?
- Does inaccurate and poorly structured data cause ethical problems?

# Pros and Cons Activity: Recording P21 as it exists now

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Pros:

Cons:



# Brainstorm: How to Make P21 Work Better for Everyone

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# Harm Reduction Strategies

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- Should we limit or ban the use of Quickstatements and bots assigning values to P21? Should there be any exceptions if banned?
- P21 currently does not require a reference. If this was changed, what kinds of references would be appropriate?
- How can we give agency back to living people? Is an opt-in policy feasible?
- Are there best practices that can be adopted to mitigate harm done by misgendering and violations of privacy and consent? Can these best practices be widely adopted and accurately reflect culturally and linguistically diverse understandings and uses of gender information?

# Stay in Touch!

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Interested in moving this work forward?

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