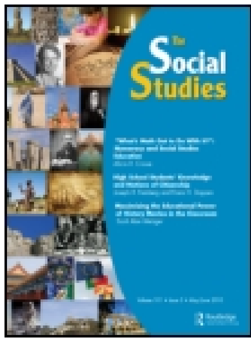

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Youth Historians in Harlem: An After-School Blueprint for History Engagement through the Historical Process

Barry M. Goldenberg

Teachers College, Columbia University, Institute for Urban and Minority Education, New York, New York, USA

ABSTRACT
This manuscript, written with the educator in mind, describes the Youth Historians in Harlem (YHH) program, a twenty-week after-school history program that engaged urban students in history by immersing them in aspects of the historical process. Throughout the program, a group of Black male high school students were apprenticed as historical scholars, learning the various skills of a historian through a carefully sequenced, four-step curriculum. Furthermore, students self-selected a historical topic relating to their lives, personal interests, and mostly, their Harlem community in which they live and/or learn. Despite new pedagogical strategies in history education, still, rarely are students exposed to history by "doing" it in ways that model the processes undertaken by historical scholars and that promote deep engagement in the discipline itself. Despite the relatively short length of the program, students were able to create historical projects and developed a newfound interest in history through this approach. Most importantly, student participants became empowered as intellectuals and learned various skill sets that they had previously not had. Overall, this manuscript illustrates how a Youth Historians paradigm has the potential to expand educators' notions of student engagement in history while serving as a blueprint for future, more expansive programs to be developed.

KEYWORDS
History pedagogy; history engagement; urban education; social studies curriculum

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The beauty of academic engagement among youth revolves around moments of organic, self-led exploration—the moments when students are not quite sure what they might learn but exhibit an inner desire to push themselves to find out. In well-taught (and well-resourced) high school science classrooms, for example, lessons that promote such moments are common: students take on the role of quasi-scientists performing experiments, and although often tailored in scope, students undergo parts of the scientific process that promote understanding, if not engagement, in the science discipline at large. They are provided the opportunity to act—and feel—as if they are emerging scientists while learning content and thinking critically, regardless of the outcome of the experiment. However, this pedagogical strategy remains largely absent in social studies classrooms, even despite the important scholarly advances in history pedagogy (e.g., Barton and Levstik 2013; Reisman and Wineburg 2008); rarely are students apprenticed as beginning historians who learn historical skills germane to the discipline *and* undergo scholarly experiences similar to scholars of history.

This article describes the creation of an after-school program that applies this model to history instruction, with the goal of engagement and a focus on process. At best, students in social studies classrooms are often exposed to modified versions of history that conceal the interpretative and dynamic nature of historical research (Rosenzweig 2000; Yilmaz 2008). Such methods deprive students of the opportunity to engage deeply—and not just topically—in the discipline of history and inspire students to see themselves as historical researchers. Furthermore, students are also too infrequently provided the opportunity to become "critical public historians" of their *community*—communities that are often full of powerful historical narratives that directly relate to students' lives but are far too often absent in school curricula (Morrell and Rogers 2006). Thus, there is an opportunity for students to authentically experience parts of the historical process *while* engaging in these community-focused and student-driven narratives.

The after-school program detailed in this article describes one particular attempt to engage urban students, specifically as researchers of their local community by becoming what I refer to as "youth historians." Following a detailed description of how the Youth Historians in Harlem (YHH) after-school program apprenticed urban youth in the historical process, this article concludes by illustrating how a YHH paradigm can effectively expose students to historical practices, empower them as intellectuals, and, at the very least, promote the use of critical thinking skills and academic literacies. However, this article does not purport to claim that this after-school program resulted in the production of original historical research but merely to recognize that there are untapped opportunities to promote novel engagement in history by having students mirror aspects of the historical process. Ultimately, the goal of this article is to provide an after-school history program blueprint

CONTACT Barry M. Goldenberg bmg2136@columbia.edu Teachers College, Columbia University, Institute for Urban and Minority Education, 525 W. 120th St., New York, NY 10027, USA.

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for educators interested in creating similar—and more expansive—programs in schools all across the world.

About the Youth Historians in Harlem (YHH) program

Funded through a one-year Dean's Grant for Student Research at Teachers College, Columbia University, the Youth Historians in Harlem (YHH) program sought to apprentice local public high school urban youth in Harlem as emerging historians. Broken up into four phases over twenty weeks, I designed the program primarily based on my prior experiences in the history discipline. As a graduate student in a history-focused program, I had little formal classroom teaching experience, instead relying on my methodological training and past experience conducting historical research. However, as a white male from suburban St. Louis with contrasting educational experiences from students in Harlem, I also made sure to recognize these particular dynamics in the classroom (Goldenberg 2014). Two additional graduate students also helped facilitate the program, including one with previous teaching experience.

The student group consisted of seven tenth-grade African American males from poor or working-class families with varying levels of academic achievement. At the most recent marking period at the start of the program, three held a C+ average or below, one held a B- average, two held B+ averages, and one held an A average. Students were self-selected and from the same public high school, volunteering to participate in the program after learning about YHH from schoolwide announcements. More importantly, students' prior interest in history was decidedly mixed; although a few students possessed a prior interest in history, most students arrived at the first YHH session for other reasons, such as an interest in their Harlem community, an interest in Teachers College, Columbia University, and various "perks" such as complimentary food. Sessions were held interchangeably at the students' high school and at nearby Teachers College, Columbia University once per week for roughly one and half to two hours each session.

Collectively, students worked through four distinct YHH phases designed to immerse them—as much as possible within the scope of a twenty-week after-school program—in the historical process via a step-by-step progression. At the program's conclusion, students produced small, but meaningful, historical projects. The remainder of the article explains in more detail how a group of seven students with little interest or knowledge about the work of historians were transformed into empowered "youth historians" who were eager to read, write, and think in more critical ways about their community's history.

Phase one: introduction—what is history?

The purpose of this brief, but foundational, two-week phase was to help students re-conceptualize their understanding of the history discipline and learn about the work that historians do. Before students could begin any type of basic historical analysis later in the program, it was first critical to build a more advanced notion of history writ large. Thus, to begin this shift in students' minds, I framed this inaugural session by first asking students one simple question: What is history? After a few moments scribbling down their thoughts in their YHH "research journals" that I provided, predictably, students unanimously responded in a chorus of statements such as "history is facts" and "history is learning about the past" that spoke to students' conceptions about the "finality" of history.

To complicate students' understanding of history, however, they were later shown an original *New York Times* newspaper from July 20, 1964, specifically chosen because of its front-page story on the Harlem Riots (Montgomery 1964). Not only were students enamored by the mystique of an "old" newspaper—yellowed on the edges and oversized as they used to be printed—but this visual example allowed me to ask students to imagine themselves as historical detectives. For example, after students were given a photocopy of the article to read quietly, I then explained how the reporter who wrote the story on the Harlem riots was a white male who only observed the riot. I subsequently asked the students: "Imagine you were one of the Harlem students beaten by the police in the riots, could your perspective on what occurred that day be different than the reporter's?" Imaginary light bulbs immediately clicked on in students' minds—they began to see history less as "facts" but, rather, interpretations made by people, using various pieces of evidence, during particular moments in time.

To continue with the idea of being a historian, students collectively brainstormed other sources (i.e., interviews with participants, other newspapers, and photographs) that may agree or disagree with the reporter's account. This initial brainstorming, which gave students agency and relied on students' unique familiarity with their community, helped them process that history is complex and ever-changing compared to their previous static notions of the discipline. Overall, juxtaposing students' earlier journal responses with this newspaper activity proved to be an effective way to reframe students' broad conceptions of history and locate their complex "social identities" within Harlem's past (Epstein 2001, 42). This activity was effective not only because the article's discussion of Harlem students in the 1960s instantly captured the current youth's attention but because it allowed them to relate what they read to their own lives.

To further build on students' new historical comprehension, the following session consisted of students reading an accessible *Huffington Post* article (Bigelow 2012) about the many historical interpretations of Abraham Lincoln's views on slavery. This second session provided a time for additional brief discussions about historiography and free-style journaling on how historical narratives change over time. Overall, Phase One provided an important opportunity for students to begin developing a nuanced awareness of history rooted in their own community and cultural experiences living in Harlem that would lay the foundation for their future research.

Phase two: picking a topic and writing a proposal

During the five weeks of Phase Two, students were introduced to the historical process with the goal of having students "think like historians" and toward the end of this phase, begin writing. First, students used special graphic organizers that I developed that would aid them in narrowing a historical research topic related to their historical

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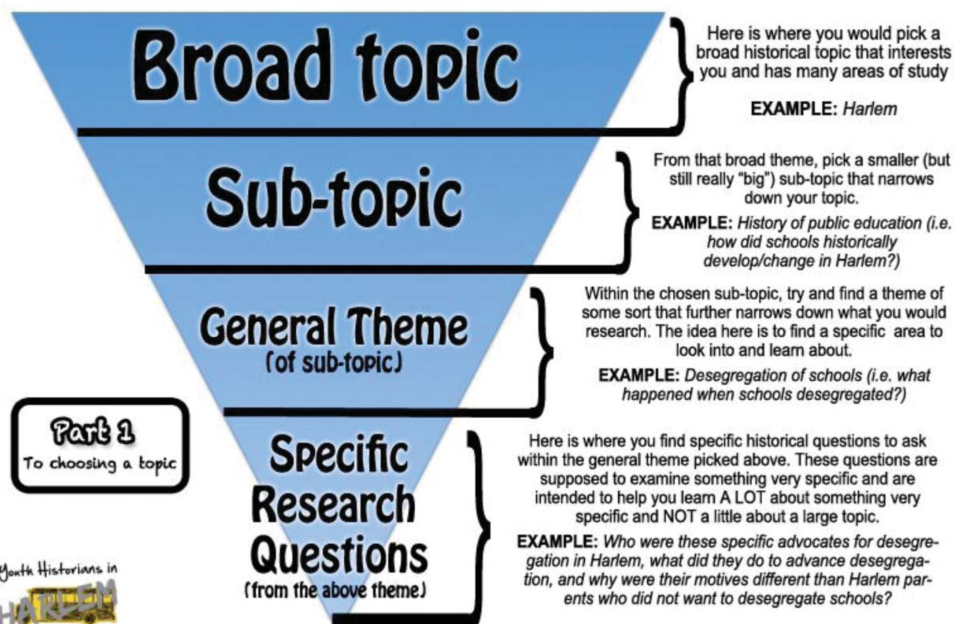

Figure 1. This historical topic graphic organizer was created to help students go about the process, from a critical thinking standpoint, of narrowing down a historical topic and asking historical questions as a historian might similarly do.

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interest around Harlem (Figure 1). This graphic organizer was key to providing some type of conceptual structure help students to choose a manageable research topic—a necessary process that can often be daunting for students. Before having students brainstorm on their own, however, we first went through an example as a group of how we might take a broad topic such as Harlem and narrow it down to a specific question about segregated schools in the 1940s. Then, students worked independently to fill in their own blank graphic organizers. As students completed this activity, I made sure to emphasize that at this early stage, their specific interests will fluctuate and change as they read more about Harlem and their specific topic. Not only were students using critical inquiry skills to analyze a particular topic but the frustration and organic deliberation of these students as they worked through topic ideas—ideas centered around their personal day-to-day interests—authentically mirrored parts of the process undertaken by professional historians. Still, this challenging process certainly perplexed students at times; more than half of the students asked for help, in which the instructors had to reassure students that creating historical questions can be frustrating for *all* historians.

During week two of this phase, students used laptop computers at Teachers College, Columbia University to gather preliminary information about their topics and verify whether such topics were feasible for additional research. Logistically, this generally consisted of students doing simple Internet searches and looking through the index of *Harlem* by Jonathan Gill (2011), a recent synthesis on Harlem history. More importantly, however, this initial freedom was pivotal in further solidifying the foundation of the YHH program; working independently in a college atmosphere and having the autonomy to learn about information on their own accord centered students as "scholars" and knowledge producers in ways that motivated them to read and write. As one student would later write in his year-end survey, his favorite activity in YHH was "working at Teachers College" because, as he explained, "it made me feel like a professional." In terms of the latter, for example, one student who wanted to compare the historical demographics of Harlem and neighboring Washington Heights kept beckoning me to her seat during this session, eager to share what she was learning by blurting out "did you know" statements with boundless enthusiasm and excitement.[1]

For the remainder of this session students then followed a template and began writing their Preliminary Research Proposals (PRP) that would serve as a starting point for their historical research. This template laid out five steps to guide students in this short writing exercise: step one, introduce their broad topic of research; step two, make a link from their broad topic to their specific research interest; step three, articulate specific (even if tentative) "research" questions; step four, write about their topic's specific connection to Harlem (if not already explicit); and step five, write a concluding sentence stating why this topic is important and/or relevant to their lives. Paired with a visual aid further explaining how these "steps" built on one another with approximate number of sentences for each, this template handout and short writing exercise reflected the way in which YHH taught writing skills to student participants—by emphasizing structure and function during formal writing (but maintaining the focus on students' topics of interest) (see Appendix A). Helping students think deliberately about the purpose of each sentence made it easier for them to express their thoughts in prose. As one student wrote in his PRP, "I guess the more I come to this program the more I

can have less difficulty with writing papers like these." Overall, these initial proposals served a dual purpose: one, as a way for me to gauge their initial research interests and two, to introduce students to structured (historical) writing and ingrain a habit of documenting their thoughts.

The following week's session, the third week of Phase Two, was held at the students' high school where students peer-read and discussed the PRPs in small working groups, offering suggestions to strengthen its content and improve its historicity. Unlike traditional history classrooms that often systematically provide historical topics to study (or even modified "primary" sources to examine), these emerging "youth historians" had to choose their own—a new thought progression that forced them think critically about what makes a topic historical in nature as opposed to sociological and/or present day. In guided small groups of three students, students came up with different variables together, such as determining when history "starts" and the "popular" narrative (or lack thereof) around a historical event or person. Pedagogically, having students emulate scholarly working groups in this session worked to further narrow—or more accurately at this juncture, clarify—students' research topics as well as continue the program's underlying goal of helping students internalize that they have the ability to become historical researchers. For example, one student, an adamant fan of Capcom comic books, wanted to research the current state of the company's recent turn in focus from comic books to video games. However, after these discussions about historicity with his group and with the other instructors, this student then revised his topic to something more historical—the history of Black comic book characters (many of which emerged in Harlem or out of ideas related to Harlem).

Students' eagerness to learn about their topics as well as inquisitive class discussions helped me assess that by the final weeks of Phase Two students felt empowered by the opportunity to research a topic of personal interest related to their neighborhood. A conversation with one student after the session reiterated the relevancy of community history. When I asked this student his thoughts on the program, he responded:

> Student: I like this program so far…I skipped out on a lot other programs to do this one, so I guess it's cool so far.
> Author: What do you like about it?
> Student: I like how I get to learn about new stuff that I didn't know before I came here, I guess.
> Author: Can you give me an example?
> Student: The segregation of Harlem…I didn't know there was a segregation in Harlem because I thought that there was only segregation in the South, and since like the North was like the savior for Black people for slavery, even though it was still bad, I didn't know that it had segregation.

Even though at this stage of the program students had only conducted very minimal amounts of research, the idea that they could become historical experts about their neighborhood was appealing.

In the penultimate session of Phase Two, students visited the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture to visit a powerful exhibit on the Emancipation Proclamation and hear from the Schomburg Center's Director, Dr. Khalil Muhammad, who discussed the history of the Center and the importance of learning one's own history. Most of all, however, it was important to expose students to this historic community institution blocks from their school (and their homes). After viewing the exhibit of original pictures of former slaves from the nineteenth century, students went to the historic American Negro Theater in the Schomburg Center's basement and listened to Dr. Muhammad speak to them about the vital role history can play in bettering students' communities and their own lives.[2] Dr. Muhammad shared a personal story about how learning the history of his African American ancestors was immensely powerful and stressed the significance of not only learning about one's history, but sharing it with the world. Students unanimously enjoyed the visit, with one student declaring that "it was inspirational" and that it "made me want to do history even more."[3] As demonstrated in student feedback following the trip, hearing from a professional historian and visiting a local institution further bolstered students' understanding that history reaches far beyond the confines of their textbooks and into their daily lives.

In the final week of this phase students returned to Teachers College, Columbia University to make edits to their PRPs so that they reflected their peers' (plus myself and one of the other instructors') suggestions, additional learned information, and their (developing) empowered state-of-mind. Returning to these documents that students had started a few weeks prior was an important part on the program's sequencing as I wanted to emphasize to students that writing is not a separate, arbitrary exercise, but instead, one that is intricately related to their evolving thoughts. Specifically, in this session, I instructed students to re-read each sentence of their PRP and assess whether the sentence was still accurate to their revised historical topics. These guidelines provided students a sense of purpose and rationale for engaging in the writing process because students needed to update their proposals to reflect their new ideas and learned information.

Phase three: doing historical research

This seven-week phase represented the core of the program, as students progressed from only thinking historically to tangibly conducting basic historical research. By engaging in historical practices, students obtained a set of rudimentary historical skills—a historical "toolkit" in a sense—that, bolstered by their inherent curiosity and intellect, promoted the use of various "academic literacies" (Johns 1997). Specifically, in weeks one and two of this phase, students once again traveled to Teachers College, Columbia University to work on laptop computers, learning how to search through various academic catalogs including their local New York Public Library catalog, the Columbia University catalog, and digital archive collections, such as the Library of Congress. These basic skills are essential for any historian to acquire, yet were altogether new experiences for the youth. Students responded to these activities with equal parts intrigue and hesitation; by internalizing the notion that they were learning how to be historians, they were eager to learn a specific skill (i.e., search on a library catalog) but also found interacting with online catalogs daunting, too, even despite the step-by-step handouts I provided them (see Appendix B). While I did initially demonstrate how to use each catalog, I then left the students to explore the catalogs (along with the directions still in front of them) on their

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own—my focus for students was on the process and not the end result. When students did find a book or collection that seemed relevant, I asked them to write down its details on the slips at the bottom of the handouts they were given, which I would collect at the end of the session.

In one specific example, students learned to navigate the New York Public Library Archives and Manuscripts collection, a complex primary source catalog; students had to rely on problem-solving skills and investigative history to determine whether a primary source collection would be useful. One student, for instance, expressed difficulty finding a relevant collection that related to his topic on the history of basketball in Harlem because he had only been reading the collection titles. However, after urging him to think like a historical detective looking for clues in each item description, he was able to find a collection of original papers from a man who refereed black basketball games in 1940s Harlem. Students would view the collections that they found during a future visit to the Schomburg Center's Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Division.

To aid in students' development of these historical search skills, the subsequent session (Phase Three, week three) featured an important concept central to their research and developing toolkits: historical context. Although students were quickly becoming "experts" in their selected topics and were beginning to learn some basic skills of a historian—basic only in the sense they had not been taught them before—they had collectively spent little time examining their topic's historical context. For example, although one student had been learning about Vietnam War protests in Harlem, like any scholar, it was also crucial for him to become knowledgeable about 1960s activism more broadly to place those specific Harlem protests in a proper context. (After learning more about Blacks' struggle for civil rights, he later wrote about the hypocritical nature of sending Black soldiers to fight for freedom abroad when they were not free at home.)

Using both the resources that students had already found plus an array of additional sources that I provided for them (i.e., short excerpts from scholarly articles and book chapters), students spent the entire session independently reading these scholarly sources—many of them dense college-level reading. Even though students were initially intimidated by these texts, I felt it was important for them to see that I was challenging them with "real" scholarly readings like the ones they had been searching for in the previous session. Furthermore, the fact that these materials related to students' individual topics—topics that, by this point, students had begun to take real ownership of—helped them see this reading session as a way to become more knowledgeable historians as opposed to as an arbitrary activity. Almost unanimously, students were glued to the literature, steadfastly reading and enjoying each excerpt. As I recorded in my field notes for a student who was researching nineteenth-century Harlem:

> He was very enthusiastic when talking [about] his topic, and what he was finding out in the readings, raising his voice slightly and using his hands, and saying, "Barry, look at this" or "Sir, can you believe…" For example, he thought the fact that some white people could pay their way [out] of the [New York City] draft in the 1860s while blacks could not was unfair.

Such a display of enthusiasm attests not only to the power of students' desire to learn about their *own* topics but more importantly how empowered they were by the agency of learning how to become a historian of their local community.

Students' sustained engagement carried over to the next session, where we visited an office building in Harlem that used to be a famous hotel—the Hotel Theresa. Pedagogically, I hoped that exposing students to this building, only a few blocks from their school, would further help them develop a historical awareness of place and internalize that their Harlem community was a place of much historical significance. For example, upon hearing about the famous people who had once visited the Hotel Theresa and their Harlem community, students initiated an impromptu discussion about the space they were sitting in. While it is no surprise to see students interested in their community's history, their exchange was a turning point in how students began to cultivate an internal belief that they were critical historians who had the agency to discuss these topics.

Yet the most captivating session occurred in the second to last week of Phase Three, in which students returned to the Schomburg Center to view the primary source collections that they had previously requested. At the Schomburg Center students participated in the archival process by registering for library cards, meeting with archivists, and filling out a "Research Card" for their research purpose followed by a "Call Slip" about their selected primary source collections. After submitting these documents into the archivists and receiving detailed instructions for viewing each primary source, students began to examine their documents (Figure 2). I observed students become fascinated with these antique primary document collections; students inspected "their" sources with precision, fully fixated on the texts and photographs they were viewing. As opposed to providing students with a graphic organizer or a prompt instructing them what to look for in these documents, I urged students to view the documents as they saw fit—in sync with my belief (from my own experiences as a historian) that the more authentic the historical process felt to students, the more they would be engaged. Still, I did ask that students close-read at least one specific document in their collection and take notes for later reference, analyzing it for purpose (i.e., why the author created this document), bias, and relevance. In a later reflection, one student wrote that in terms of the process, "I felt like I was a real historian…it was amazing," while another student similarly wrote that the whole experience "made history more realistic to me—it made me feel like I went a step forward than just looking on Wikipedia or the textbook." More specifically, viewing these primary source collections in this archival setting motivated students to continue learning; one student who viewed the papers of Aaron Douglas, a prominent African American artist during the Harlem Renaissance era, wrote that reading the papers as an aspiring artist himself, "inspired him to form an art group" like Douglas did in the 1920s. It was exciting to see how this student's research was based on his own cultural interests in art, Harlem, and his African-American heritage—all of which were culturally relevant to his life *and* to which he was able to connect historically (Brown-Jeffy and Cooper 2011; Ladson-Billings 2009).

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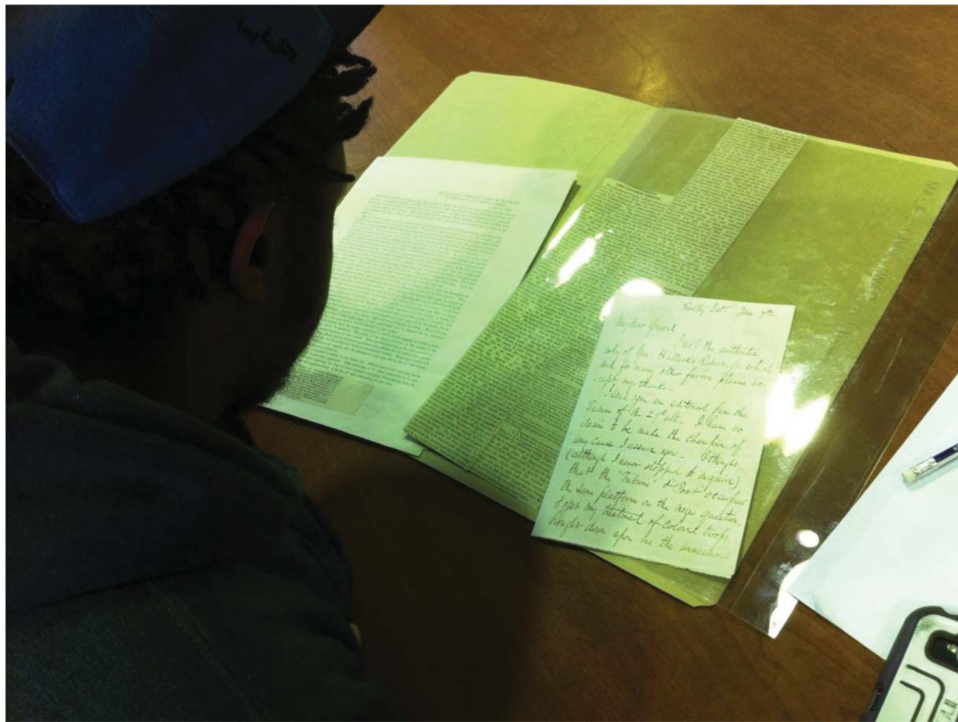

Figure 2. A picture of one student examining a letter written by a Black solider during the U.S. Civil War, found in a primary source collection at the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture.

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Besides reflecting on this experience in the following session—discussion time that centered around the students' experiences was important to legitimizing our shared community of "scholars"—I concluded Phase Three by teaching students how to search for articles in the JSTOR database (see Appendix B). (Because this session was held at Teachers College, Columbia University, the computers that students used had institutional access to JSTOR.) I challenged students to approach each JSTOR search like a word puzzle—that is, what phrases and words would be most useful? Before performing any searches, I instructed students to jot down at least five "keywords" that related to their research topic. Admittedly, while students did not find this session particularly exciting, they were willing to try their hand at these searches because I framed this activity as an opportunity for students to add another skill to their growing "historical toolkit." While not all were successful, some students did find articles relevant to their research.

Phase four: preparing a final history project

In the final six weeks of YHH, students traveled to Teachers College, Columbia University to put their historical skills into action and produce their final history projects. As opposed to the first three phases where students were taught the essential parts of the historical process or practiced learning various skills, each week of Phase Four consisted of students working independently each session, relying on these learned skills and the information they previously gathered (Figure 3). The main pedagogical challenge of these final sessions was striking a balance between providing necessary scaffolding and structural support to students while also making sure students did not feel restricted and that they maintained full autonomy over the direction of their projects—just as researchers. To help with this balance, I provided students with various handouts, including a review sheet of skills (Appendix C) they had learned and "storyboard packets," which I suggested they fill out sentence by sentence to help guide their independent work (Appendix D). This packet provided writing space and explained all the areas of information students needed to think about for their projects, such as an introduction; basic context; specific inquiry/questions; sources/evidence (both secondary and primary); and missing "pieces"/information they still do not know (as suggestions for future research in the remaining weeks). Consistent with my approach to writing throughout the program, I wanted students to explicitly think about the purpose of each sentence, which the storyboard packet helped promote.

Initially, students struggled in this transition from group work with guided instructions to independent work. Not only was the information that they were learning novel but so was the entire process of creating a project without specific guidelines or prompts—resulting in students expressing feelings of being "lost" and unsure of how to logistically move forward from collecting information to writing about it. I stressed to students that these feelings were natural, if not common, and ones that myself and the other instructors also feel when we undertake research. Still, in each session, students became increasingly comfortable working independently—it helped that this independent phase was not just one session, but many—and combined with the aforementioned handouts, they began to work confidently and efficiently. Of course, each instructor spent small bursts of time working with each student one-on-one; however, we always made sure to act more like "brainstorming partners" than experts, always emphasizing that students were teaching us

Figure 3. A picture of the full group of Youth Historian students working independently on their projects at Teachers College, Columbia University.

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about their historical topics (Goldenberg, Wintner, and Berg 2015, 75).

Thus, by the end of the phase, students produced history projects related to the history of Harlem in a variety of different formats, including one PowerPoint presentation, three short historical essays, one original piece of artwork with historical information sketched within, and a fascinating play-script based on history. Students were exposed to Chicago Manuel Style (CMS), the preferred historical format of historical scholars for their citations, and did their best to use footnotes in their projects. Each final project reflected students' personal interests and historical knowledge on Harlem, such as the one student who beautifully sketched a portrait of Harlem Renaissance artist Aaron Douglas while writing and citing information about his life throughout the portrait (Figure 4). In a reflection, this student wrote that "Overall I loved it [the experience] and would definitely like to learn more, it made me feel like a real historian! I enjoyed learning about an artist, because I am an artist myself." Although students were asked to read and write throughout the program—and I encouraged them to write an essay for their concluding project—they had the option to express themselves and share their findings through any medium, such as through artwork demonstrated by the aforementioned student.

Although the completion of students' final projects was important, I was more focused on making sure students engaged with the various steps and skills of the historical process than focus only on the end result. I was eager to stay true to the idea that research—the work of scholars—is ongoing and that their projects were only the start of their lifelong inquiry. Instead, I focused on making sure the students developed a genuine connection with the discipline that would inspire them to engage in historical research in the future. At the program's conclusion, students presented their work briefly to other high school students in the area and were awarded certificates on a job well done.

Empowering youth, increasing history engagement, and promoting academic literacies

Students who participated in YHH benefited both intellectually and emotionally in ways that are conducive to creating positive learning experiences in social studies classrooms. Besides the fact that students volunteered to "do" history work after school—one student wrote in his year-end survey that his suggestion for improving the program was to "meet more times a week" while another asked for "longer meetings"—I was able to assess student learning through my written observations and student survey responses. First, I saw students become more empowered youth, as demonstrated by their increased confidence in their intellectual capacities and assertiveness inside and outside the classroom. When asked what he liked most about the program, one student wrote that "I liked the feeling and the opportunity I got from [it]." This opportunity he was referring to was for how he felt as a "youth historian," who took ownership of "his" particular project and treated—as all students should be—as an intellectual with the ability to produce knowledge. (Even though producing original research was not the goal of this short after-school endeavor, students certainly have the ability to do so in a longer, more expansive setting after they, like adults, learn the necessary skills.) For example, by internalizing the notion of being historians, students would proudly spew off facts about their Harlem topic to peers, to administrators and teachers, and to myself

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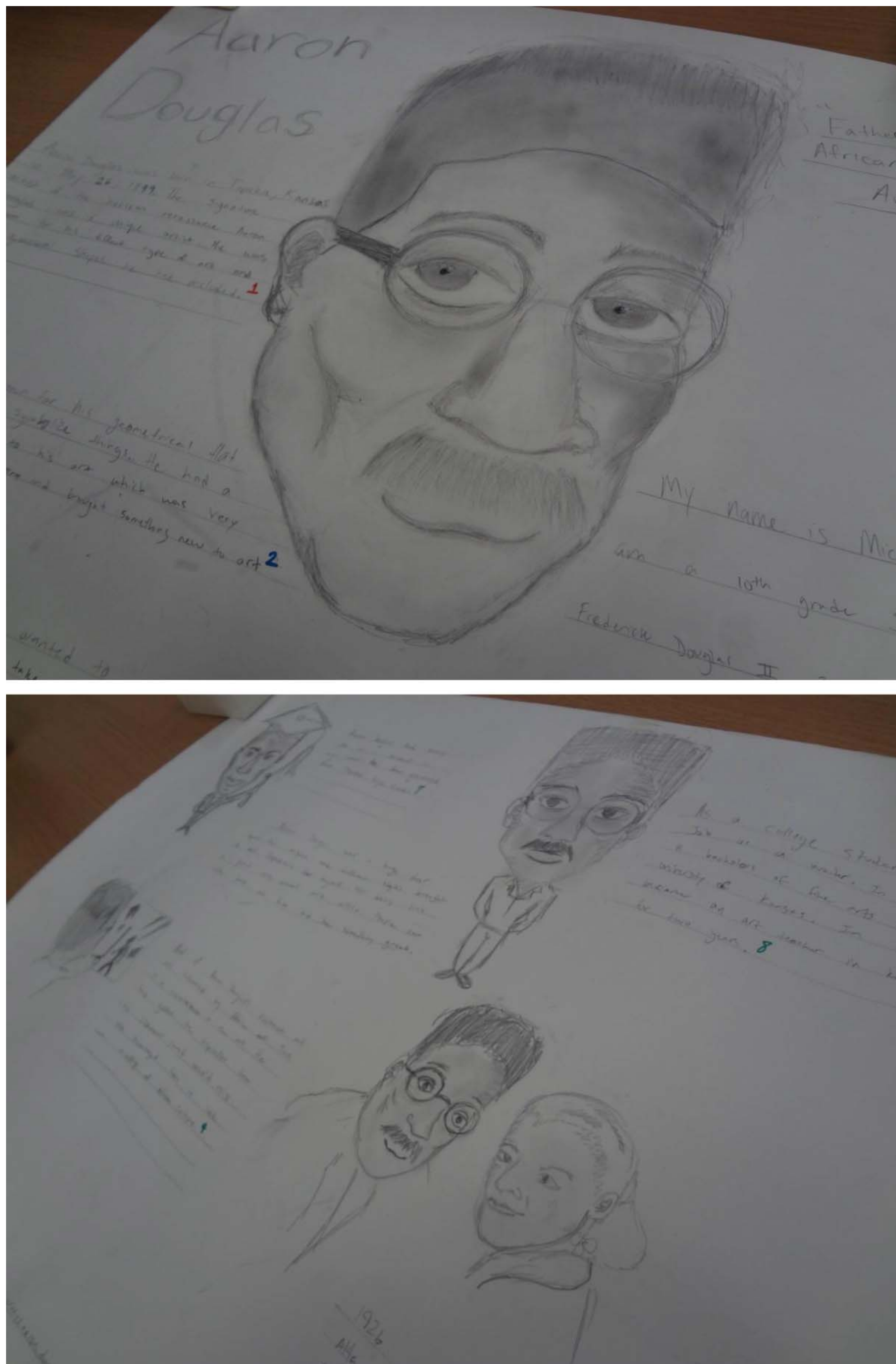

Figure 4. A two-poster drawing of Harlem Renaissance artist Aaron Douglas, accompanied by historical information about his life footnoted at the bottom of the poster, that served as a student's final project.

and the other instructors. Furthermore, it was clear by collectively analyzing students' year-end anonymous surveys that their newfound sense of agency was their favorite aspect of the program. For instance, one student wrote that what he liked most about YHH was "finding out facts about your own topic" while another student similarly declared that "I like the fact that I could research something that interested me." When asked about his favorite activity from the program, a third student wrote that "researching was my favorite part" as a fourth student similarly expressed that his favorite activity was "choosing your topics and researching [them]."

YHH also noticeably increased students' sheer interest in history as a whole. By progressing through the various steps of the historical method that I adapted for the program, students learned that history is a dynamic discipline that changes over time while developing a previously nonexistent appreciation for the work of historians. For example, following the second visit to the Schomburg Center library, one student wrote that viewing the original documents "changed my thoughts on

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historians" and that being a historian "is extremely hard." Ultimately, of course, this appreciation for history developed within students because they realized that history was related to their lives, and that there was a sense of "doing"—if not experimenting—in history that they had previously not experienced in their classrooms. Multiple students wrote about how they learned much about their historical topics, such as one student who candidly wrote that "I didn't even know half the stuff I knew before this [program]." A year-end survey also helped provide a quantitative perspective on students' progress. On a scale of one through ten, gauging students' interests in history on the year-end survey, students' marked, on average, that their interest in history was three points higher after the program than before. Overall, students' exposure to the richness of the history discipline compounded by the fact students began to view history with a sense of added relevance suggests an increase in history engagement.

Of course, it is also important to recognize that students who participated in YHH learned, or refined, a variety of tangible skills, such as how to research library catalogs; cite evidence; use the resources of their local library; work independently; close-read historical documents; take research notes; explain their interests to peers; and read challenging college-level texts that pushed them to think differently compared to traditional textbooks. Although students of course did not yet master these skills, they were exposed to them for the first time solely because of the program. In addition, students became comfortable learning in a college atmosphere—students unanimously expressed how much they loved coming to Teachers College, such as the aforementioned student who explained how he felt like a professional working there. Immersing students in the historical process, particularly in a college environment, while allowing that process to reflect students' lives and most of all, their communities' histories, lucidly promoted the use of vital academic literacies and critical thinking skills. Frankly, when one student was asked at the conclusion of YHH what he liked most about the program, he simply wrote, "the experience and learning."

Conclusion: creating a "youth historians" paradigm

I believe that there are many lessons to take away from the YHH program for social studies educators (particularly those teaching in urban communities) or for historians at colleges and universities interested in working with youth. First, for students who are disengaged in history classrooms or find the subject tedious, allowing them to participate in the historical process, even tiny parts of it such as developing a research approach or looking at an online library catalog like a word puzzle, can help reverse this mindset. Students who completed the YHH program found history exciting because they were provided the opportunity to experience history, at least in part, the way a historian does—by becoming historical detectives and having the opportunity to freely, with only a few boundaries, explore their inner curiosities. While students certainly have the ability to do this kind of advanced thinking, unfortunately, many students are not provided this opportunity, and rarely get to experience the compelling aspects of historical study in ways that substantially piqued these students' engagement in the discipline.

In addition, for students in urban areas who often feel that history is unrelated to their lives, YHH opened up the possibility to make history distinctly local by focusing on the history of their Harlem community. Although standards often dictate history curriculum, teachers can use students' inherent interests in their neighborhoods—often in urban areas that are almost universally full of rich historical narratives—to first engage them in historical content before connecting such narratives to other standardized content. This strategy can be an effective method for teachers to "hook" students onto history while also promoting the necessary academic skills, just as it did for the YHH students who became enticed by new information that was directly linked to their lives. Although this paradigm was useful for students of color in this particular urban environment who had not been exposed to history in this manner, I believe similar Youth Historians programs could be effective for all types of students worldwide.

Although clichéd, it remains true that every place has a history. Frankly, as evidenced, enacting a program such as Youth Historians provides an opportunity to infuse a neighborhood's history in liberating and academically beneficial ways—with the key being to emphasize students' agency in revealing this local history. In addition, although this specific program had a small group of students, it could certainly be effective for larger groups; because the program's curriculum focuses on the students' interests and relies on broad lessons (i.e., how to perform specific skills, or historical practices) and independent work, the benefits of a larger classroom space and extra instructors could make this a reality. With larger groups, instructors could even experiment with putting students in pairs or small groups, as long as student voice remains at the forefront. Overall, by creating a local lens in which students viewed history—and changing the methodology by which they engaged in it—a model such as YHH not only has the potential to motivate students to study history (and even those with no interest in the discipline at all) but help them thrive in academically empowering ways.

Notes

1. Although only seven students finished the program and attended the majority of the sessions, there were also three additional students who participated early in the program, including two females. Unfortunately, because of personal reasons, these students were unable to complete the program.
2. The Schomburg Center has one of the largest depositories for historical documents and artifacts regarding African Americans and also serves as a public library located in the heart of Central Harlem between 135th Street and Malcolm X Boulevard. For more information about the Schomburg Center, please visit http://www.nypl.org/locations/schomburg.
3. Teachers conducting a similar Youth Historians program should plan at least one community field trip or guest visit from a community role model; it is important for students to understand the richness of their community in which they live and learn. Examples of speakers who serve as community leaders include the head of a local library, a local religious leader, or a community elder (such as one of the students' grandparents) who can speak about his or her experiences growing up in the community.

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Appendix A. Preliminary research proposal template and examples

Guide to Writing a Preliminary Research Proposal (PRP)

STEP ONE: Introduce your broad topic (in general terms) *[1 sentence]*
HINT: The *same* "broad topic" from your graphic organizer

STEP TWO: Make link from broad topic to specific research interest *[2-3 sentences]*

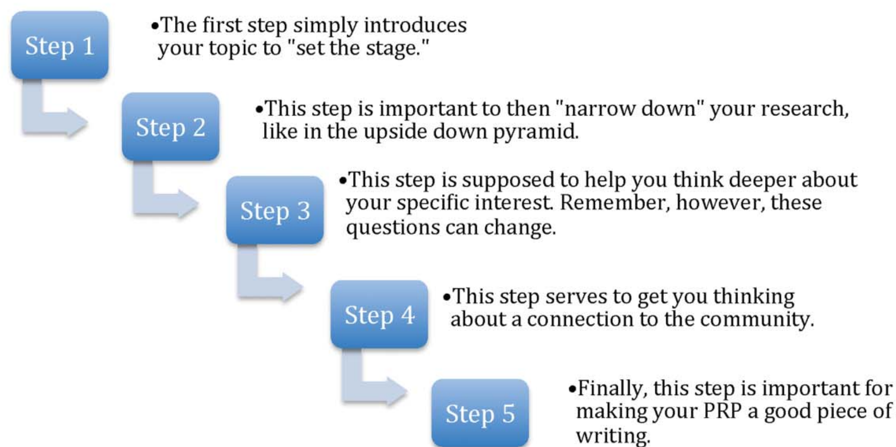
STEP THREE: Articulate specific (potential) research questions *[1-3 sentences]*
**One of the three sentences must be in the form of a question.*

STEP FOUR: Make connection to Harlem or your community *[1-2 sentences]*

STEP FIVE: Conclusion and/or statement of importance *[1 sentence]*
**This can be a general conclusion or an opportunity to state why this topic is important to you*

****Although there are only five steps in writing a PRP, it takes a lot of thought in crafting these sentences. Unlike traditional papers, you have to "think" like a historian and spend time writing each step carefully. Remember, each "step" builds on each other, so they must be written in chronological order.*

PRP Step-Chart



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Writing a Preliminary Research Proposal (PRP) Example #1

STEP ONE: Harlem has been an important part of Black history in American for over one hundred years, serving as the "Black Capital of the World" since the Harlem Renaissance occurred in the 1920s.

STEP TWO: However, since Harlem has served as a *catalyst for many important historical events (such as civil rights marches), I am interested in seeing how public education developed in Harlem from the 1940s to the 1960s. To me, learning about how schools developed (or failed to properly educate Harlem students) is really fascinating and I am curious to explore this history. Education is really important to my family and I, which is why I became interested in this particular topic.

STEP THREE: Specifically, within the history of public education in Harlem, I am most interested in desegregation: why did some parents and community leaders in Harlem want to desegregate schools while others wanted to create all black public schools? I am also curious to learn about what these two groups of people in Harlem felt about the other group during this time period.

STEP FOUR: This connects to Harlem because of how I am focusing on the history of education in Harlem and will find resources from the Harlem community.

STEP FIVE: In conclusion, I think my research will help me and the community better understand the state of schools in Harlem today.

IN PARAGRAPH FORM:

Harlem has been an important part of Black history in American for over one hundred years, serving as the "Black Capital of the World" since the Harlem Renaissance occurred in the 1920s. However, since Harlem has served as a *catalyst for many important historical events (such as civil rights marches), I am interested in seeing how public education developed in Harlem from the 1940s to the 1960s. To me, learning about how schools developed (or failed to properly educate Harlem students) is really fascinating and I am curious to explore this history. Education is really important to my family and I, which is why I became interested in this particular topic. Specifically, within the history of public education in Harlem, I am most interested in desegregation: why did some parents and community leaders in Harlem want to desegregate schools while others wanted to create all black public schools? I am also curious to learn about what these two groups of people in Harlem felt about the other group during this time period. This connects to Harlem because of how I am focusing on the history of education in Harlem and will find resources from the Harlem community. In conclusion, I think my research will help me and the community better understand the state of schools in Harlem today.

*something that has sparked, or started, an event or activity (I.E. "The coaching change served as a catalyst for the team's recent winning streak.")

Appendix B. Instructions for performing primary and secondary searches

SEARCHING FOR BOOKS AT COLUMBIA AND TEACHERS COLLEGE

Today, we are going to learn how to use Columbia and TC search engines to find books that interest you *and* relate to your research topic.

Step 1: Type "www.tc.edu" into the search bar

Step 2: Click on "Library" at the top right corner of the TC homepage

Step 3: Click on "TC Catalog (EDUCAT)" or "CU Catalog (CLIO)" under "Library Resources" in the middle of the webpage

Step 4: "Keyword" Search

1. What is a "keyword"?

2. What are important characteristics of "keywords"?
   a. Related to Topic
   b. Specific
   c. Other Ideas?

3. List five "keywords" that you could use to search for books on your topic:
   a.
   b.
   c.
   d.
   e.

Step 5: Enter the "keywords" that you brainstormed into search bar; you can enter the "keywords" as individual works or short phrases

Step 6: Scan the results and determine which titles look interesting to you *and* most closely reflect/relate to your research topic

Step 7: Click on the link for each title and read the summary of the book; if you are interested in the book *and* if it relates to your topic, record the following information:

a. *Author of Book:*
b. *Title of Book:*
c. *Date of Publication:*
d. *Call Number:*
e. *One Sentence Summary of Book:*

Step 8: Repeats Steps 5, 6, and 7 in order to locate additional books

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Today's Exercise: Please find between three and five books that interest you *and* relate to your research topic. Be sure to record all the important information for each book!

Book One:

a. *Author of Book:*
b. *Title of Book:*
c. *Date of Publication:*
d. *Call Number:*
e. *One Sentence Summary of Book:*

Book Two:

a. *Author of Book:*
b. *Title of Book:*
c. *Date of Publication:*
d. *Call Number:*
e. *One Sentence Summary of Book:*

Book Three:

a. *Author of Book:*
b. *Title of Book:*
c. *Date of Publication:*
d. *Call Number:*
e. *One Sentence Summary of Book:*

Book Four:

a. *Author of Book:*
b. *Title of Book:*
c. *Date of Publication:*
d. *Call Number:*
e. *One Sentence Summary of Book:*

Book Five:

a. *Author of Book:*
b. *Title of Book:*
c. *Date of Publication:*
d. *Call Number:*
e. *One Sentence Summary of Book:*

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Locating a SPECIAL COLLECTION (PRIMARY SOURCE) at the Schomburg Center

GOAL: *Learn how to use the New York Public Library (NYPL) Catalog, specifically searching at the Schomburg Center's "Rare Books and Manuscript Division."*

Step 1: Type "schomburgcenter.org" into the search bar in Firefox/Safari/Chrome

Step 2: On the top of the screen, click "Research" (it turns red)

Step 3: Then click, "Manuscripts and Archives "

Step 4: Then, in the box, type in different keywords related to your topic
--HINT: If nothing comes up for something specific, try broader terms
--EXAMPLE: Instead of typing "Cotton Club," try "Harlem music"

Step 4a: On the left hand side, you will see three different "Filters"
--The SECOND BOX (Filter by Division/Collection), make sure to scroll down and click "Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, Manuscripts, Archives, and Rare Books Division"
--This search only matches your keyword with the title of a certain collection.

Step 5: When you click on an item in any of the searches, you will see a bunch of information, including long descriptions of what makes up this "collection." Read the description and what is on the page and see if you think it looks interesting and relates to your research topic.
**A "collection" is the term used for a bunch of documents ranging from photographs to diary entries, that are stored together in the same box.*
--Some collections have a "Detailed Description (PDF)" that you can click. Click that and once you get to that page, hold down CONTROL + F and then type in a keyword. It will then search for that keyword in that long document.

Step 6: Write down the "Call No." (i.e. Sc MG 335, Box 1) and make sure the status on the right says "AVAILABLE."

Name: ____

Today's Date: ____

Title of Collection: ______________________________________

Call No.: ____

Available/Access? (what day it say) ______________________________

Locating BOOKS at the Schomburg Center

GOAL: *Learn how to use the New York Public Library (NYPL) Catalog, specifically searching at the Schomburg Center's "Rare Books and Manuscript Division."*

Step 1: Type "schomburgcenter.org" into the search bar in Firefox/Safari/Chrome

Step 2: On the black bar with white text, scroll over "Research" and then click "Classic Catalog"

Step 3: In the menu that says "Entire Collection," click that and scroll down to the very bottom and click "Schomburg Center"

Step 4: Type in words related to your topics in the blank box

--You can change what specifically you are searching for by changing "Keyword" to "Title" as whatever you choose, the words in the box you type must either be in the title of a book (if you choose a title) or anywhere in the description (if you choose Keyword)

Name: ______________________________

Date: ______________________________

Book Title: ______________________________

Author: ______________________________

Call No.: ______________________________

Available? (yes or no) ______________________________

Name: ______________________________

Book Title: ______________________________

Author: ______________________________

Title of Collection: ______________________________

Call No.: ______________________________

Available? (yes or no) ______________________________

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Finding "Secondary Sources" (ARTICLES) in Scholarly Catalogs

GOAL: *Learn how to use the JSTOR catalog to find secondary sources from historians*

Step 1: Type library.columbia.edu

Step 2: Where it says "Quick Search," underneath, click the tab that says "Databases" and type in "JSTOR" and click "GO"

Step 3: The list database listed says "JSTOR" – click that and then you will be taken to a log-in page. Call Barry over and he will enter in the password/username.

Step 4: At the top-right of the screen, you will see "SEARCH," hover your mouse over that and then click the button that pops up that says "Advanced Search"

Step 5: Scroll down the page where it says "NARROW BY DISCIPLINE" and check the boxes that say "African American Studies" and (you'll have scroll down a while) "History." Make sure those two boxes are "checked"!

Step 6: Now you are READY to search! You can do many, many different combinations of things.
--FIRST, under "NARROW BY" check the box that says "Articles" since you only want to search for articles.
--Up top under "Advanced Search," there will be initially two blank spaces to search. These are where you will put terms that you want to look for. For example, you can put the words "civil war" and then it will find all articles that mention the words "civil war" (there will be thousands!). In the second space, you can put "African Americans." Now the search will look for articles that have both of those phrases (there will still be thousands!).
→You have TWO options to further narrow your search:
a) you can add more spaces to add additional terms (click "add field")
b) you can search by title (click the box on the right that says "full-text" and switch it to "item title"

Step 7: Once you start searching, many articles will come up. Click the underlined title of the article to go to it. Usually, there will be the first page that you can read with a summary (usually in *italicized* font) about what the article is about. If you want to read more, click "View PDF" under Tools.

Step 8: When it asked you to "Accept JSTOR'S Conditions" click yes and now the article is downloaded!

Step 9: If you want to keep the article, save it to your USB Drive.

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Appendix C. Review of skills handout

Research Skills Review

1) *Harlem* by Jonathan Gill

*This book has much information about Harlem – look in the "Index" for clues about your topic!
*Also, if you look at the very back of the book, Gill lists many useful books that you might want to look at

2) Clues from your Readings

*Re-read your readings and see if anything might be a "clue" to research further
*Also, you can look at some of the citations of any book if you have the whole book

3) New York Public Library (NYPL) Catalog

*Look for primary sources here
*Also, can look for secondary books and other sources via this catalog

4) Columbia University Catalog

*This catalog has many books to look at and check out
*If you want to check something out, let Barry know and he can get it for you

5) JSTOR Catalog

*Remember, this catalog finds secondary sources from historians and has many thousands of articles!

6) Face-to-Face Information

*Ideas from people you know or come across might be able to help you locate sources (i.e., a grandparent might have information that is useful or contacting someone at a local museum might also have information about where to find sources)

NOTE: *All handouts and guidelines on how to do these skills should be in your folder!*

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Appendix D. Storyboard packet for independent work

Youth Historians in Harlem
Final Project Planning Handout

Preliminary Project Storyboard

INTRODUCTION
Generally, what is your topic about? (In 1 or 2 sentences, give a general description of your topic)

____

____

____

____

____

____

____

BASIC CONTEXT
What do you know about the historical context around your topic? (Think back to discussions on historical context and information related to your topic)

____

____

____

____

____

____

____

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SPECIFIC INQUIRY

What specifically are you researching in regards to your topic? (NOTE: Remember how we talked about that the final project will examine something really specific within your larger topic)

____

____

____

____

____

____

____

SOURCES/EVIDENCE

What sources will you be using? (list specific sources you will use and/or have found information)

<u>Secondary sources (at least 5)</u>

1) ____

2) ____

3) ____

4) ____

5) ____

6) ____

<u>Primary sources (at least 2)</u>

1) ____

2) ____

3) ____

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MOVING FORWARD

What do you need to know more about? (For example, what additional information do you need to learn about and find? What are the "missing pieces" of your history?)

____

____

____

____

____

____

____

Where/how are you going to find this information? (List additional sources or methods of inquiry, such as looking at books or performing an oral history)

____

____

____

____

____

GOALS & DEADLINES

What are your goals for the remaining weeks of the program?

April 24th Fill out and complete storyboard packet; locate more sources

May 1st ______________________________

May 8th ______________________________

May 15th ______________________________

May 17th PROJECT DUE! Send to Barry

May 23rd Present at Columbia digital youth summit (practice presentation!)

OUTLINE AND/OR STORYBOARD

Use this space to draft an outline of your historical essay or a "storyboard" or other plan for how you will write/create your final project (think about how you are going to do it in the coming weeks)

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