

Spatializing Race, Understanding History: A Professional Development Experience Centered on African American History and Culture

Jennifer Sdunzik, Chrystal S. Johnson, and Ningning N. Kong
Purdue University

UNITED STATES HISTORY classrooms have the potential to simultaneously foster an understanding of students' cultures and experiences today in relation to the nation's history *and* develop critical thinking and technology literacy. Yet classroom materials and instructors tend to avoid, ignore, or misrepresent controversial topics such as race and racism.¹ Spatial technology information can offer an end to this dilemma by providing the opportunity to overcome hesitations (both personal and pedagogical) of confronting race and racism in the classroom while honing students' technology and critical thinking skills. Let's take the Great Migration as an example—one of the most pivotal moments of the twentieth century to impact American life, and a popular topic in history classrooms. Both educators and scholars alike portray a predilection of framing the migration from the rural South to the urban North. Spatial information literacy and technology, however, open a door into re-envisioning the phenomenon and reinterpreting history at large. Digital tools and maps can decenter dominant white Eurocentric interpretations and history curricula

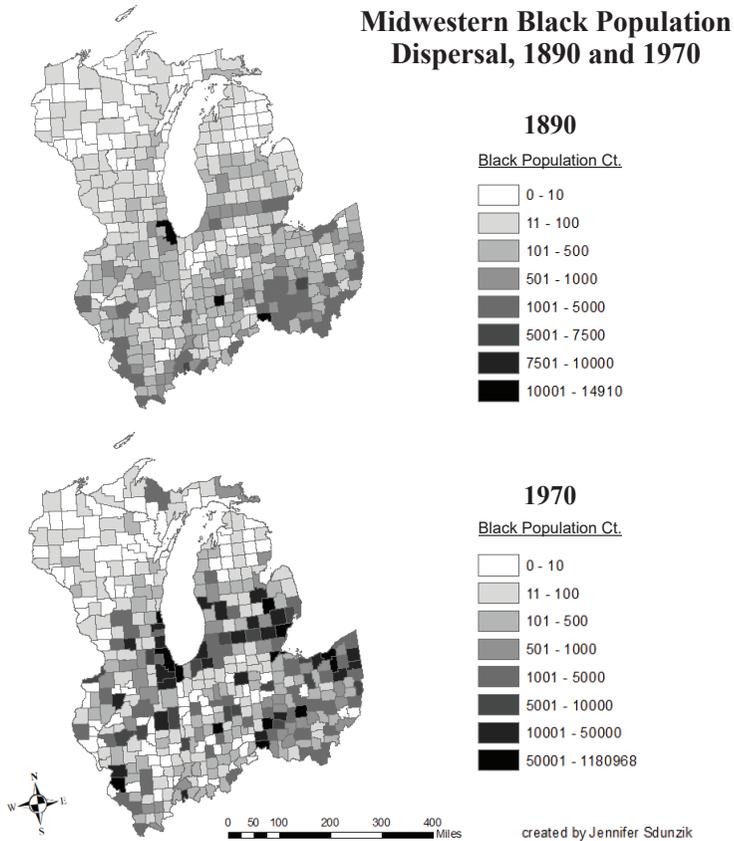


Figure 1: Midwestern Black Population Dispersal, 1890 and 1970. These maps capture the Black population numerically in the Midwest in 1890 and 1970, decades preceding and following the Great Migration, the era of massive relocation for Southern African Americans across the nation.

while featuring multiple perspectives to critically examine the role of race and racism over time.

As an example, maps of Midwestern Black Population Dispersal (**Figure 1**) and Midwestern White-Only Counties (**Figure 2**) illustrate the general trends of the dispersion of African Americans throughout the Midwest before and after the Great Migration.² The maps of Black population dispersal notably indicate that the African American population in the Midwest had grown immensely over these eight decades. The juxtaposition with the maps of white-

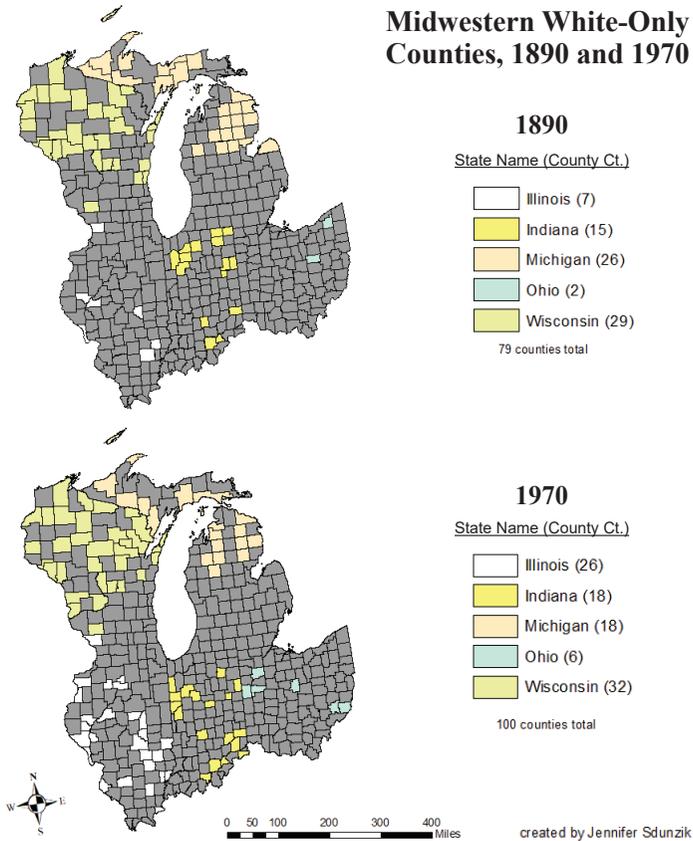


Figure 2: Midwestern White-Only Counties, 1890 and 1970. These maps visualize the number of counties with a minuscule (less than 10) or non-existent Black population in 1890 and 1970, decades preceding and following the Great Migration, the era of massive relocation for Southern African Americans across the nation.

only counties, however, is important to tell the whole story. These maps identify counties with a population of less than ten African Americans, clearly contradicting the impression one gets from the maps of Black population dispersal. Whereas 18% of all counties in 1890 registered such low numbers of African Americans, 22.9% of all counties in 1970 were almost exclusively white. In other words, despite the relocation of thousands of Black Southerners to the Midwest, there are *more* counties in 1970 with a minuscule (less than ten) or non-existent Black population than in 1890.

These maps, and the story surrounding them, exemplify the potency of spatial technology for teaching and learning history in a classroom setting. The call for spatial thinking and spatial literacy by the National Research Council in 2006 has profoundly changed how K-12 educators approach their classrooms.³ Applications like the geographic information systems (GIS) have transformed geography and environmental education classrooms quickly, while the classrooms of the humanities and social studies have struggled to promote spatial literacy.⁴ Yet, as these maps clearly demonstrate, “Space is not simply a passive reflection of social and cultural trends, but an active participant, i.e., geography is constitutive as well as representative.”⁵ Adopting spatial technologies like GIS maps for history classroom settings not only fosters critical spatial thinking and critical thinking skills among students, but also keeps students engaged with interactive learning resources. Maps like those in **Figure 1** and **Figure 2** provocatively invite diving deeper into the past, as it appears that Midwestern residents actively contributed to their all-white environments, turning more and more of their adjacent counties into all-white spaces. By mapping and spatializing real (historical) data, students can develop a deeper (and spatial) understanding of the past and see how it connects to their everyday communities.⁶

Today’s learners continue to be taught overwhelmingly by twentieth-century teachers. It is therefore important to engage educators in professional development experiences that correspond with the sweeping demographic, cultural, and technological changes of today. Such opportunities boost educator confidence and competence in using technology or addressing race in the classroom.⁷ Consequently, this article features the promises of a technology-savvy yet culturally responsive professional development opportunity for K-12 educators, inviting them to reimagine and reinvigorate their classrooms. Utilizing the strides in the field of digital humanities, our professional development experience intended to equip educators with knowledge, confidence, technological tools, and a digital platform to reconsider the history of the long civil rights struggle in the United States and redesign their lesson plans accordingly. In this article, we share pivotal institute moments from development to implementation, and provide a qualitative assessment of the professional development experience as it highlights the promises of this new model to tackle twenty-first-century challenges in history classrooms. Contributing

at large to the field of teacher education through culturally responsive and technology-fostering professional development, we hope to encourage educators to adopt, adapt, and further share strategies in their classrooms and beyond.

Background

“From Plessy to Brown: The African American Freedom Struggle in the Twentieth Century” was an intensive, on-site, four-week summer institute for K-12 teachers at a Midwestern university sponsored by the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH). The program was conceptualized around blending African American history and literature, digital humanities, and GIS into innovative and applicable teaching methodologies and resources for history, social studies, and English classrooms. We intended to create a professional development experience that overcomes ethnocultural invisibilities in U.S. classroom curricula by providing specific content knowledge, strategies, and tools that realize the inclusion and empowerment of all student cultures and voices. More specifically, we anchored our professional development experience in three objectives:

- 1) Introduce participants to subject matter experts to collaborate on developing more extensive content knowledge of the African American freedom struggle in the twentieth century;
- 2) Enhance participants’ understanding of spatial technologies and digital humanities as teaching tools; and
- 3) Guide participants in combining content knowledge, digital humanities resources, and GIS skills into suitable interdisciplinary teaching strategies and instructional materials.

In essence, this three-pronged approach enabled bridging content matter with student cultures and experiences through spatial information literacy and more inclusive lesson plans. Through participation, teachers would develop and strengthen their skillset as culturally responsive, technology-savvy practitioners.

While planning and developing “From Plessy to Brown,” we strategized meticulously on how to effectively structure a program that supports the design of new K-12 teaching units and corresponds with the outlined objectives. Given the intensive, yet short-term

nature of this professional development opportunity, it was crucial to provide a common knowledge base on the expansive field of digital humanities and GIS to the participating audience prior to the institute. In preparation for their participation in the summer institute, educators were provided with reference materials, digital resources, and supplemental readings that showcased GIS applications to the study of humanities. These materials incentivized participants to think about particular history units and lesson plans that enable centering African American experiences and adopting spatial technologies.

The program encompassed and was built around major historical moments in African American history. It began with contextualizing *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896) in the 1890s and chronologically unfolded events leading up to and following *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954). Institute themes engaged and expanded upon philosophical and ideological approaches of what Jacquelyn Dowd coined the “Long Civil Rights Movement.”⁸ Expanding the civil rights conversation temporally and spatially allowed to emphasize how early twentieth-century activism of Black institutions, the Great Migration, and Black veterans of both World War I and World War II transformed the historical framing of the Civil Rights Movement. Engaging historical primary and secondary sources as well as literature selections, viewing related films and artworks, and visiting historical and cultural sites enabled participants to dive into a deeper understanding of each period. The content knowledge built the basis and was revisited during the pedagogical and spatial information workshops. The pedagogical workshops focused on guiding participants through culturally responsive lesson plan designs, while the technology workshops targeted content knowledge translation into a digital format to foster spatial information literacy skills.

Our professional experience did not only teach about spatial information literacy, but was also taught with it. Workshop facilitators, prominent scholars in the fields of African American history and literature and mainly novices in the field of digital humanities themselves, actively incorporated GIS and story maps as well as other digital tools to teach their materials. Furthermore, GIS experts led specific technology-focused workshops to teach participants how to use spatial information, build maps and digital platforms, and integrate them into their teaching plans. Having institute instructors demonstrate how to effectively teach historical

and literary content in a culturally responsive *and* technology-savvy way was intended as a guide and role model concept for participating educators. This way, they could draw on a variety of different content matters and digital concepts to adopt for their own lesson plans and classroom settings.

Academically, the institute embraced culturally responsive pedagogy because it provided opportunities to highlight diverse content in a diverse setting and allowed participants to engage in self-reflections and discussions with peers.⁹ By reflecting upon and sharing their own classroom experiences with culturally diverse students or about culturally sensitive topics, participants could enhance their cultural competence skills, build trust relationships with colleagues, and brainstorm together on how to address similar scenarios in the future.

Workshop days lasted from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., including field trips and ample unscheduled time for participants to review materials and strategize how to innovate their curricula. Despite individual foci, all workshop sessions intended to either enhance participant knowledge on institute concepts and themes via subject matter and technology experts or directly translate gained knowledge into specific curricular materials. Some program days started with content workshops and ended with pedagogy workshops. In other instances, the pedagogical morning discussions and materials led to approaching the content more oriented to lesson planning. Regardless, the sessions built upon and fed off of each other. This framework made the summer institute more dynamic and provided the necessary flexibility, both mandatory for a prolonged intensive on-site professional development experience. This way, faculty could design variegated workshop lessons for the participants, who emulated corresponding dynamism and flexibility in their own lesson planning.

Field trips to vital African American historical and cultural sites in the Midwest covered another essential component of the summer institute, as they provided first-hand experiences with spatial technology applications. We integrated these field trips into the institute schedule when conducive to the weekly themes, as well as in coordination with and availability of staff on site. Expanding the instructional space beyond the physical institute classroom enabled participants to gain a deeper understanding of the events and themes discussed during the summer institute. The field trips also allowed

participants to acquire hands-on experience in gathering primary sources and collecting and collating spatial, location-related data to develop their unique and individualized projects. Participants collected data points and connected photographs and videos to their site visits, experiencing the potency of GIS for classrooms projects as technology learners themselves.

The summer institute was not intended to cover the entirety of twentieth-century African American history, nor cover every aspect of spatial information technology and digital humanities. Instead, we selected popular K-12 history topics and provided alternative approaches to teaching the material in a culturally responsive and technologically advanced way.

Methods

“From Plessy to Brown” was conceived as a technology-enhancing professional development opportunity to address challenges of twenty-first-century education, such as migration, technological advances, and inclusive pedagogy, in a culturally responsive manner. Our qualitatively focused case study approach in this article enables us to discuss program design via exemplar workshop days and teaching materials, and evaluate the extent to which the institute met our outlined objectives. Doing so, we hope to enhance future institute leads and share overarching strategies for teaching history, social studies, and English Language Arts subject matters in a culturally responsive and technologically advanced manner.

Conceptualizing the Workshops

The weekly workshops on content knowledge, pedagogy, and technology corresponded with each other based on the following thematic scopes:

- Week 1: African Americans, the Progressive Era, and Social Reform, 1895-1920
- Week 2: Postwar Evolution of African American Arts and Letters, 1920s and 1930s
- Week 3: African Americans and the Economic Decline and Recovery of the Depression through World War II, 1925-1940s
- Week 4: World War II through *Brown* and Beyond, 1940s and 1950s

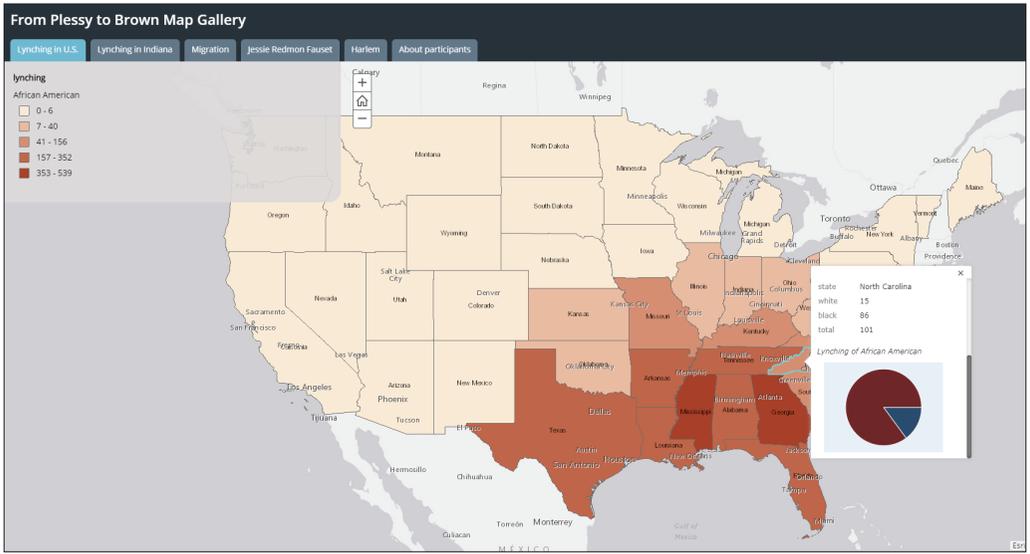


Figure 3: The map displays the number of recorded lynchings between 1895 and 1920. The pop-up window provides state-specific information, including a pie chart breaking down the number of lynching victims into African Americans and non-African Americans.

Workshop faculty—leading scholars of African American history, culture, and literature—collaborated with participants in disrupting the master narrative, re-envisioning it with the diverse narratives and experiences of America. Sessions focused on lesson planning provided room for participants to discuss and co-create specific activities for their classroom environments.

For example, the institute’s first week, “African Americans, the Progressive Era, and Social Reform, 1895-1920,” incorporated seminal texts and moments, from Ida B. Wells-Barnett’s exhaustive study of lynching, *A Red Record* (1895), to the extension of residential segregation with *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896), to W. E. B. Du Bois’ *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903) to the tumultuous violence-prone summer months of 1919 known as the Red Summer. These materials facilitated conversations that underscored how African Americans shaped their surroundings and responded to racial discrimination and violence. Corresponding technology workshops introduced participants to the basic skills of digital mapping, and picked up the often-avoided topic of lynching to illustrate the power and the benefits of spatial information and GIS for a classroom setting (**Figure 3**).

Visualizing lynching data with GIS mapping technology facilitates identification of trends, frequency, and location of these crimes. This was one example of how teachers can bring digital technology into the classroom that enables students to spatially conceptualize historical information, analyzing related and relevant data with the gained insights of “lynching-prone” states and classification of victims. Corresponding pedagogy workshops unpacked the standards of current curricula with regards to the history, identifying the dearth of lesson plans and instructive materials as it pertains to racial violence. Teacher group discussions also identified resistance, a lack of readiness, and a lack of preparation among teachers and students alike to discuss these difficult topics around race, oppressions, or issues of privilege.

The topic of lynching resurfaced in Week 3 of the summer institute, as lynching postcards served as a poignant example of primary source use to enhance classroom instruction. The accompanying technology workshop taught participants how to create generic web maps and integrate spatial and other related materials to the maps. Primary sources, postcards, and photographs were among the main sources that participants integrated into their story maps. The pedagogical workshops sessions, such as “Planning for Learning” and “Helping Learners Grapple with the Past,” covered general strategies of introducing primary sources in the classroom and specific ways to address atrocious historical moments in a classroom environment. These sessions enabled educators to brainstorm together, developing ideas and specific activities that would engage students beyond the initial moments of horror or perplexion.

Field trips corresponded with the weekly themes and workshop materials, enabling some of our expert-led workshop sessions to take place inside museums and national libraries. We specifically selected places such as Chicago, Illinois or Indianapolis, Indiana that illustrated the social, economic, and political changes wrought by African Americans’ experiences. Being on site helped participants to envision how the profound demographic shifts of the Great Migration forever altered the cultural, political, and economic landscapes of cities like New York, Chicago, and Philadelphia, significantly changing the nation’s labor force, politics, and legal system. Subject matter experts and internal staff members led some of the sessions, providing additional perspectives on the various

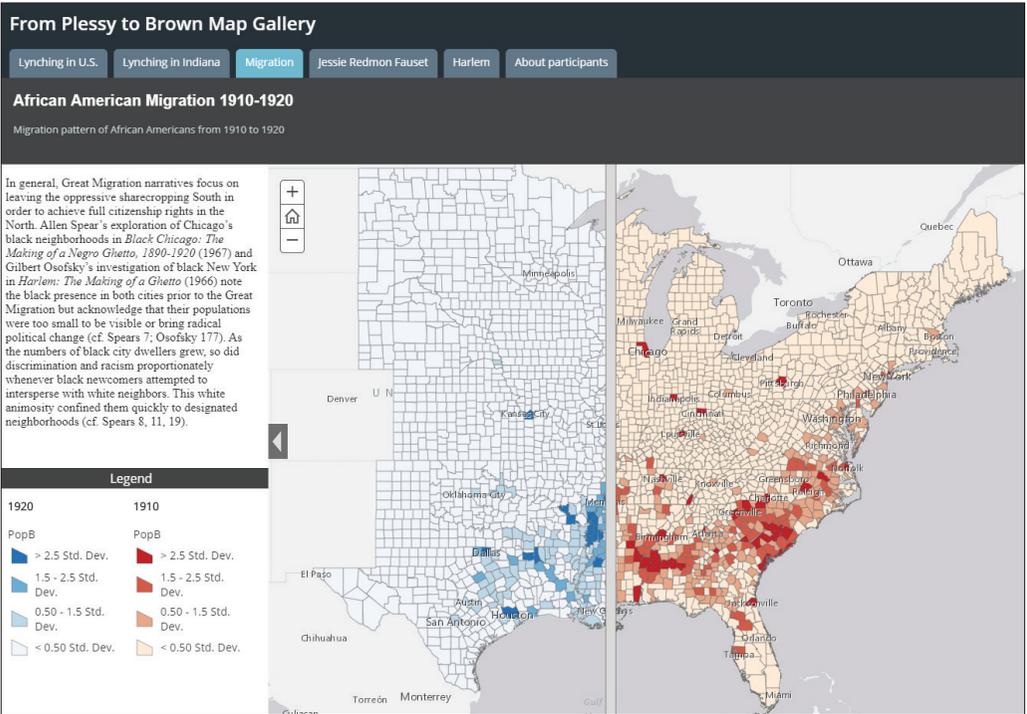


Figure 4: The map displays a swipe story map, which helps students to visually comprehend the Great Migration between 1910 and 1920 by swiping between the two layers that recorded the African American population in 1910 and 1920.

historical phenomena and sharing phenomenal classroom projects based on primary sources on-site.

For example, our field trip to Chicago ensued after various content and technology sessions on the Great Migration, in which we illustrated the profound demographic shift to educators with the help of GIS maps (**Figure 4**). The GIS workshops introduced participants to story maps to enhance basic spatial information, such as swipe story maps and side accordion story maps to organize and convey teaching materials. These maps also served content instruction, which among other topics, focused on “African Americans Organizing Against Oppression.” **Figure 4** easily identifies geographical hotspots in the respective decades, which helps illustrate where African Americans organized successfully. One of the thriving locales for organizing and community-building

hotspots for African Americans during that time was Chicago, which we explored during one of our field trips. Workshops leading up to the trip adequately prepared participants to contextualize and engage more efficiently thematic, theoretical, and archival materials pertaining to the Great Migration, Chicago's South Side, and *The Chicago Defender* while on site. Targeted questions to museum and library staff members prompted some staff to share past student projects from the local community—some of which displayed life in the Black neighborhoods of Chicago with the help of primary sources in their collections, while others creatively showcased works by cartoonists who published in *The Chicago Defender*. As was the case with all field trips, participants collected data points, photographs, and videos to incorporate in digital lesson plans in subsequent pedagogy and technology workshops.

Data Collection and Analysis

Data were collected in the summer 2016 from ten female and ten male participating educators teaching secondary History/Social Studies and English Language Arts. Of the twenty participants, 55% self-identified as African American/Black, and 45% as Caucasian/White. Participants taught across thirteen different states and represented a wide range of professional and personal experiences. Years of teaching experience averaged at ten, and the majority taught history/social studies-related courses.

Data discussed below derives from two qualitative pools: 1) anonymous, open-ended, post-participation survey responses administered by NEH reflecting on and evaluating the quality of the professional development experience, and 2) educators' open-ended interview responses administered during the summer institute documenting their perceptions of cultural awareness before and after the professional development experience and the extent to which this professional experience challenged their ways of teaching with diversity in mind and technology skills in their pocket.¹⁰ Participants' assessment of the professional development experience is shared in sub-categories in alignment with the three objectives of the institute: content, technology, and pedagogy. Participant reflections of how the institute challenged and changed their ways are divided into two categories: professionally and personally.

Evaluating the Summer Institute

This professional development experience—with its multi-dimensional and interdisciplinary focus on content, technology, and pedagogy—proved successful. It succeeded in bringing together like-minded and technologically curious educators around the “controversial” and often avoided topic of race. Participants demonstrated keen and ongoing interests in reimagining U.S. history with the help of new content and teaching tools for their classrooms. More specifically, the summer institute succeeded in:

- 1) Foregrounding African American narratives in the curriculum, providing context, emphasis, and credit to the contributions of diverse people throughout history;
- 2) Expanding educators’ pedagogical toolsets and knowledge base, honing in particular spatial literacy skills and understanding; and
- 3) Providing a safe and professional setting to build an educator community that encourages sharing experiences, knowledge, and perspectives on the topic.

Participant voices reflect the extent to which the three main objectives of the professional development experience for K-12 educators were met.

Content

Participants overwhelmingly valued the subject matter shared during the summer institute, which greatly exceeded and expanded their knowledge on the topic. For example, one participant reflected as follows:

I applied to this Institute wanting a deeper understanding of the Civil Rights Movement. This experience went far beyond my expectations and anticipations...When I have covered this time period or various aspects of it in the past, I now feel like I have never done it justice. Now, I have a deeper and richer understanding overall and more specifically of individuals and movements within the greater Civil Rights Movement itself.

Another participant described it as eye-opening, stating, “The historical content that was presented really opened up my eyes to the many different paths to teaching historical events.” Some

participants emphasized the institute's ability to reimagine the master narrative frequently taught in U.S. history classrooms:

I have listened to individuals in this institute reflect the daily double-consciousness of being African American. I feel that the readings, films, and field trips have inspired me to be a broader listener and developer of lessons...I have more knowledge of the history and the sad transmutation of racism to expose my students to. I have excellent resources to combine personal stories with academic ideas.

Recalling some of the key content from the summer institute, this participant reflected on how it would alter their classrooms thematically and pedagogically.

Technology

Background on handling digital humanities and spatial information literacy varied greatly among the participants, yet regardless of their prior experiences, all valued the introduction to spatial information literacy. One participant noted, "New skills—GIS, backward design—will provide new tools upon which to explore questions of diversity," emphasizing mapping software's potential to explore sociohistorical and cultural questions—or, to paraphrase the title of this article, to understand history by spatializing race. Another participant, classifying GIS as "the best aspect," succinctly summarized the benefits of a technology-enhancing professional development opportunity, noting:

The GIS map making skills is by far, the best aspect of the program as I will be able to take back the concept of using maps and map making to engage my students. ArcGIS is a great technological tool that I will be sharing not only with my students, but with other staff members as well.

Indeed, informal follow-up conversations some weeks after the institute with some participants revealed that in at least two instances, participants led workshops for teachers in their home communities, in which they shared ideas and strategies of incorporating GIS into respective history and English classrooms. The thirst for spatial and digital literacy skills among participants resulted in our institute enhancing the toolkits not only of our participants, but also their colleagues across the country.

Pedagogy

Participants responded positively to the pedagogical input provided by the summer institute. Some participants generally remarked, “It will impact my curriculum in my lesson design and content” and that they plan to be “more intentional in the way I plan units to try to focus more clearly on essential questions.” Others noted specific examples, appreciating for instance the “new technique for implementing debates within the classroom.” One participant expressed appreciation for the institute’s ability to disrupt the master narrative while providing pedagogical tools to emphasize contributions of all Americans:

People can explain things and students can respond with the right answers, but sexism and racism lie deeper than knowledge. Empowerment as well. This institute has shattered off more of the status quo by presenting tools to understand and the richness of images (visual and narrative). I hope to fill my teaching with images and tracks to walk when they explore.

This quote not only indicates the extent to which the summer institute met our outlined objectives, but also illustrates the potential of such interdisciplinary professional development experiences for personal and professional growth among educators.

Professional Growth

In addition to meeting our main objectives in providing teachers with more meaningful ways of integrating African American experiences in the classroom, our professional development experience enabled teachers to build a professional community and grow personally and professionally. Participants embraced the professional development experience, appreciating that “the institute provided a great opportunity to collaborate with other teachers, share [i]deas and experiences that will certainly be taken back to the workplace.” Highlighting the professional community of the summer institute, one participant simply stated, “Topics were very good and I found many brilliant and dedicated colleagues in the classroom with me.”

Workshop-facilitated discussions have been described as “provocative,” with conversations having sparked “lots of ways to think about history...I’ve learned that it is possible to teach a segment of history through the experiences of one person and that

is pretty awesome.” Summarizing the professional impact of the summer institute, one participant acknowledged:

I feel like I am walking away with a lot of content and a new-found reflection on my own teaching practices. I feel empowered to go back to my students and teach them using themes and topics from this institute that will undoubtedly change the way they see history.

In other words, this participant rose to the challenge not only to reinterpret history individually, but also utilize the institute experience to help students reimagine the history they once thought they knew and reconcile potentially widely different views of history.

Personal Growth

Among the key findings for personal growth were self-reflection and reinvigoration. One participant stated, “I have also reassessed the unconsciousness of bias more deeply, aware that my habits and social location impede understanding when unexplored.” Other participants described their experience as having “forever enriched” their “professional and personal life.”

Teacher confidence and comfort were also frequently highlighted, as the following remarks demonstrate:

I feel much more comfortable addressing issues of race in the classroom.

I have loved this experience because it has given me numerous examples of Black excellence that I can share with my students to empower and uplift them. I also feel like I have gained deeper insight into historical antecedents so I can better appreciate the modern freedom struggle. When students ask me about what is going on in the world, I will feel more confident with my answers...

Overall, participants left the institute feeling more equipped and empowered—not only to use technology in the classroom, but also to initiate difficult conversations—with their students and their colleagues.

Discussion

Anticipated demographic changes in the U.S. in the next three decades highlight the need for culturally responsive educators. Today’s diverse classrooms can no longer be led with white,

western master narratives, but demand diverse voices, perspectives, and interpretations alongside them. Furthermore, technological advances mandate adequate preparation of students in and beyond the classroom. Professional development experiences such as our institute, focusing on both cultural competence and spatial information literacy, are therefore an excellent way to hone educators' skillsets in both areas. The institute's three-pronged approach (content, technology, and pedagogy) was an effective method to foster educators' culturally responsive, technologically advancing teaching practices. We shared the design and implementation of such a professional development experience with workshop sessions complementing and building onto each other, and showed how to expand the classroom space to alternative teaching places like libraries and museums. Whereas the extension of classroom space beyond the physical space in school is nothing new, the combination with content and technology in their pedagogical training added a unique layer to our educators' professional development experience.

Making spatial information literacy an integral part of professional development experiences for educators equips both teachers and students with twenty-first-century skills. In our case, participants acquired spatial information literacy skills and developed a toolkit to embed technology in their individualized lesson plans. Their personal hands-on experience with GIS technology simulated to them how teaching materials can be spatially and visually conceptualized. Integrating digital technology in the classroom, including history classrooms, entices students to learn and makes learning relevant to them. Digital humanities classroom instruction can inspire students to create new digital knowledge based on assigned reading materials and draw spatial connections based on location-related data from past events to their current neighborhoods. Our content experts made use of the technological advances themselves to illustrate to participants how they can stimulate inquiry-based learning by blending new digital technologies with real world scenarios.¹¹ In other words, our summer institute provided explicit ways to reimagine history teaching—i.e., approaching history from a new, technologically advanced perspective.

Mapping the diverse narratives of American experiences allows for a more culturally responsive way of teaching. Though the participants in our professional development opportunity were

Lesson Idea – The Great Migration		
<p>Ask students the compelling question. Chart student responses. Inform students of the goals of the lesson. Use <i>K-W-L</i> to assess students' prior knowledge on the Great Migration. Show a brief clip of an excerpt from "Episode Four, Making a Way Out of No Way," from the series <i>The African Americans: Many Rivers to Cross with Henry Louis Gates, Jr.</i></p>		
Question	Sources	Mapping Activity
<p>How did geography and demography affect African American movement from the South?</p>	<p>Using primary sources, compare and contrast the lives of rural African Americans in the South with the "seductive and frightening" lifestyle in Chicago.</p> <p>Have students use a T-chart to note comparisons and contrasts.</p> <p>Have students collect the materials in Excel and create a map with the data to be shared with classmates at the end of the period.</p>	<p>Step 1: Create a spreadsheet in Excel with the information corresponding to the following headers: "Who migrated?" "When?" "From where?" "To where?" Save as CSV file.</p> <p>Step 2: Login to ArcGIS Online. At the top-right, click on "New Map" and click on "Create New Map."</p> <p>Step 3: Expand on the "Add" button at top-left, and click on "Add Layer from File." Choose your CSV file to upload, then click "Import Layer."</p> <p>Step 4: Select "Address" on the top, then click "Add Layer." Locations included in your CSV file will be added to your map. At the left panel, select "Show Location Only." Check the map for your locations.</p> <p>Step 5: Create labels for your points. You can configure the Pop-up information.</p> <p>Step 6: Save your map and share with everyone in class.</p>

Figure 5: Exemplary lesson idea on the Great Migration, utilizing GIS software.

History/Social Studies and English Language Arts teachers, the strategies employed in the institute encompass all areas of teaching with cultural awareness and sensitivity in mind. While enhancing teachers' repertoire to bridge content matter with student cultures and experiences, this professional development experience utilized workshops and online platforms to facilitate dialogue on contentious issues around race, oppression, and privilege.¹² The media narrative about African Americans in the U.S. remains inept at capturing the eclectic breadth surrounding the rich history and strong traditions of civic contribution in connection to the lives of African Americans today. Teaching aspects of African American experiences from history to date in the classroom creates a counternarrative and, thus, a necessary balance to the media representation of the Black community that will empower students and teachers of color alike, while facilitating a healthy educational and developmental experience for all students. Reading literature, visualizing histories, or discussing significant contributions to society made by someone who has similar ethno-cultural experiences and physiological traits to students encourages the beholder in aspiration toward achievement.

This interdisciplinary, multi-dimensional, professional development opportunity enabled the creation of culturally competent, technology-savvy classrooms. Content and digital tools provided specific means for participants to design lesson plans that allow students and teachers to dive deeper, asking and answering more questions. Significant questions of citizenship, democracy, justice, and inclusion cannot be comprehensively addressed when ignoring the past. Providing counternarratives to reimagine and engage the white-washed characterizations of accomplished U.S. history in the classroom is therefore critical. Educators might consider using the lesson idea in **Figure 5** to encourage classroom discussions and student projects that expand on this historical period accordingly, elucidating to students "their roles as makers, not just consumers, of historical knowledge."¹³

Acknowledging the atrocities emanating from accurate historical reflections of racial tensions in the United States amidst the salient efforts of Black Americans to overcome systemic oppression helps contextualize today's representations and experiences of African Americans. Spatial technology such as GIS mapping can facilitate sharing the unsanitized versions of traditionally

innocuous historical narratives within the classroom by mapping and thus visualizing matters such as slavery, lynching, and other extralegal, socially sanctioned violence. Facing past wrongdoing and accomplishments, learning from them, and understanding the plight of fellow citizens (if one does not belong to the group being talked about in the class) fosters empathy and understanding among the future citizenry, promising a better outlook and healing for ethnic relations in our United States.

Conclusion

This article undergirds the value of culturally relevant, technology-advancing professional development experiences. They contribute to student learning and achievement by inviting and incorporating new technologies and perspectives into the classroom. They enhance educators' personal and professional growth significantly. Lastly, they provide evidence data to improve teacher education and professional development programs that can shape tomorrow's K-12 curricula and educational standards in a global society.

We evaluated the intervention of one such professional development experience. We found that our summer institute centered on African American history and culture was successful, based on the input from participating teachers. This article provides a promising model for combining content, technology, and pedagogy in professional development opportunities effectually.

As our study is limited by the small number of participants, we encourage similar professional development experiences that embrace collaboration and reflection to establish impactful, classroom-changing, and empowering learning toolkits for educators. It would be worthwhile to revisit this study with a larger sample size to gather information on the influence of race, gender, and teaching experience on educators who participate in professional development experiences centered on African American history and culture. However, given that few, if any, funded professional development experiences seek to use African American history to increase the cultural competency of educators, it may seem a daunting task for researchers to gather larger sample sizes than produced by this study. Furthermore, to gauge the long-term impacts of such professional experiences, we recommend

investigations that follow participants into their classrooms once the professional development experience has concluded. Lastly, our experience raised the question if the summer institute exceeded the length for effectual professional development experiences. Though it is reasonable to infer that our participants were curious and keenly interested in such innovative interdisciplinary endeavors, four weeks pose a long time away from home. Future educators might find it worthwhile to reduce the duration of such professional development experiences to achieve desired outcomes.

Notes

1. For example, see: Christopher C. Martell, "Teaching Race in U.S. History: Examining Culturally Relevant Pedagogy in a Multicultural Urban High School," *Journal of Education* 198, no. 1 (January 2018): 63-77; Ryan D. Cummings, "Justice Then and Now: Engaging Students in Critical Thinking About Justice and History," *The Social Studies* 110, no. 6 (2019): 281-292; LaGarrett J. King, "The Status of Black History in U.S. Schools and Society," *Social Education* 81, no. 1 (January-February 2017): 14-18.

2. The Midwest here is defined by what the U.S. Census Bureau classifies as East North Central division, comprising the states of Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Ohio, and Wisconsin. Our sample decades are 1890 and 1970, before the first wave of the Great Migration reached the Midwest, and the end of the second wave of the Great Migration.

3. National Research Council, *Learning to Think Spatially: GIS as a Support System in the K-12 Curriculum* (Washington, DC: National Academies Press, 2006).

4. Marsha Alibrandi and Jean Palmer-Moloney, "Making a Place for Technology in Teacher Education with Geographic Information Systems (GIS)," *CITE Journal: Contemporary Issues in Technology and Teacher Education* 1, no. 4 (2001): 483-500.

5. Barney Warf and Santa Arias, "Introduction: The Reinsertion of Space in the Humanities and Social Sciences," in *The Spatial Turn: Interdisciplinary Perspectives*, ed. Barney Warf and Santa Arias (London, United Kingdom: Routledge, 2008), 10.

6. For example, see: Joseph J. Kerski, "Sleepwalking into the Future—The Case for Spatial Analysis Throughout Education," in *Learning with GI: Implementing Digital Earth in Education*, ed. Thomas Jekel, Alfons Koller, Karl Donert, and Robert. Vogler (Berlin, Germany: Wichmann, 2011), 2-11; Sarah Witham Bednarz, "Geographic Information Systems: A Tool to Support Geography and Environmental Education?" *GeoJournal* 60, no. 2 (2004): 191-199; Ningning Nicole Kong, Cornelius Bynum, Chrystal Johnson, Jennifer Sdunzik, and Xiaoyue Qin, "Spatial Information Literacy for Digital Humanities: The Case Study of Leveraging Geospatial Information for African American History Education," *College & Undergraduate Libraries* 24, no. 2-4 (2017): 376-392.

7. See for example: Amy Hutchinson, "Literacy Teachers' Perceptions of Professional Development that Increases Integration of Technology into Literacy Instruction," *Technology, Pedagogy and Education* 21, no. 1 (2012): 37-56; Joan Hughes, "The Role of Teacher Knowledge and Learning Experiences in Forming Technology-Integrated Pedagogy," *Journal of Technology and Teacher Education* 13, no. 2 (April 2005): 277-302; Jung Eun Hong, "Designing GIS Learning Materials for K-12 Teachers," *Technology, Pedagogy and Education* 26, no. 3 (2017): 323-345; Sonia Aujla-Bhullar, "Deconstructing Diversity: Professional Development for Elementary Teachers," *Diaspora, Indigenous, and Minority Education* 5, no. 4 (2011): 266-276; Joan G. DeJaeghere and Yongling Zhang, "Development of Intercultural Competence among US American Teachers:

Professional Development Factors That Enhance Competence,” *Intercultural Education* 19, no. 3 (June 2008): 255-268.

8. Jacquelyn Dowd Hall, “The Long Civil Rights Movement and the Political Uses of the Past,” *The Journal of American History* 91, no. 4 (March 2005): 1233-1263.

9. Geneva Gay, *Culturally Responsive Teaching: Theory, Research, and Practice*, third ed. (New York: Teachers College Press, 2018), 83.

10. Some of the participant responses contain minor edits for presentation and clarity.

11. For a more in-depth analysis of the spatial literacy advantages in teachers’ professional development experiences, see: Kong, Bynum, Johnson, Sdunzik, and Qin, “Spatial Information Literacy for Digital Humanities,” 376-392.

12. Michael S. Garet, Andrew C. Porter, Laura Desimone, Beatrice F. Birman, and Kwang Suk Yoon, “What Makes Professional Development Effective? Results from a National Sample of Teachers,” *American Educational Research Journal* 38, no. 4 (Winter 2001): 915-945.

13. Tona Hangen, “Historical Digital Literacy, One Classroom at a Time,” *The Journal of American History* 101, no. 4 (March 2015): 1192-1203.

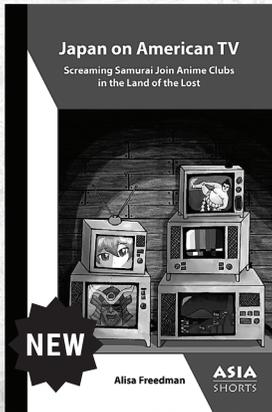
ASIA SHORTS

an Association for Asian Studies Book Series



**AAS MEMBERS
SAVE ON AAS
PUBLICATIONS**

NEW BOOK RELEASES:



Japan on American TV: Screaming Samurai Join Anime Clubs in the Land of the Lost

Alisa Freedman

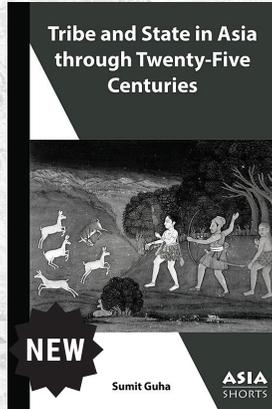
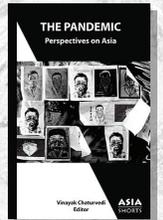
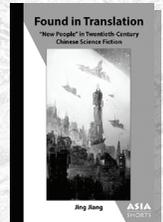
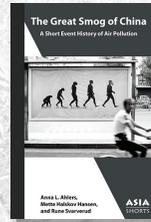
ISBN: 9781952636219

202pages

FORMAT: Paperback

AAS MEMBERS: \$12.80

NONMEMBERS: \$16.00



Tribe and State in Asia through Twenty-Five Centuries

Sumit Guha

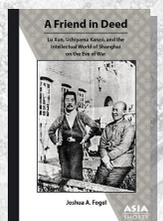
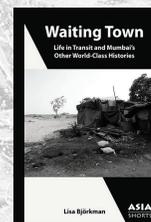
ISBN: 9780924304958

142 pages

FORMAT: Paperback

AAS MEMBERS: \$12.80

NONMEMBERS: \$16.00



**Association for
Asian Studies
PUBLICATIONS**

Distributed by
Columbia University Press

**EXPLORE THE WHOLE RANGE
OF PUBLICATIONS AT:**

 asianstudies.org/bookstore/