

BACKGROUND

W.E.B. Du Bois' 1899 book, *The Philadelphia Negro*, is recognized as a classic work of urban history and sociology both for its innovative research methods and exhaustive findings about African American life at the turn of the 20th century. The Philadelphia branch of the College Settlement Association (CSA) commissioned the study in 1896 because it wanted to know more about the "Negro problem" in Philadelphia that CSA believed was inhibiting their political reform efforts. With little assistance, Du Bois surveyed all 2,500 black households in the Old Seventh Ward, a 50-block area stretching from 6th Street to the Schuylkill River, Spruce to South Streets. Based on his detailed interviews and observations, newspaper articles, and administrative records, Du Bois documented racial disparities in employment, housing, education, voting opportunities, and health. He succeeded in recasting the "Negro problem," giving attention to the problems blacks faced, rather than caused. As he explained, "There have... been few other cases in the history of civilized peoples where human suffering has been viewed with such peculiar indifference." (p. 163)

OBJECTIVES, SIGNIFICANCE, and IMPACT

Mapping the Du Bois Philadelphia Negro is a funded research and teaching project that aims to use GIS technology to recreate Du Bois' study with online interactive mapping that integrates historical demographic and housing data with historical maps, photographs, and newspaper articles. Visitors to our website will be able to query individual-level data and analyze spatial patterns through thematic mapping, making the book more engaging while offering lessons in GIS and spatial data analysis. The National Endowment for Humanities (NEH) and University Research Foundation (URF) have funded the first phase of this project which focuses on the collection of 1900 census data for all 4,500 properties in the study area. The 1900 census data includes name, age, relationship, marital status, education status, place of birth, parents' place of birth, children, occupation, and housing tenure (own/rent).

This application seeks funding to extend data collection to include historical health data. In his chapter, "The Health of Negroes," Du Bois focused primarily on death rates and causes of death, comparing those for blacks, native-born whites, and white immigrants. He emphasized the role of poor housing, diet and sanitation on racial health disparities, but he also worked to discredit the idea that blacks were in such poor health that they were dying off. Du Bois relied on aggregate data collected by the Philadelphia Board of Health as well as his own observations. He made no effort to map the data, to show how urban geography helped to explain health disparities, or to link health records to individual people or households in the Seventh Ward. These limitations make it more difficult for students reading *The Philadelphia Negro* to connect his findings to real people and for researchers to analyze his findings.

The goal of collecting the historical health data would be to allow teachers, students, and scholars access to primary data and tools for conducting basic spatial analysis. The NEH grant is for curriculum development, so we will be designing the interactive website with high school and college students in mind, although we are seeking funding for tools designed specifically for researchers. The interactive mapping and historical sources are intended to supplement reading of the book and to allow students to make their own discoveries about the Seventh Ward. We will also develop teaching lessons. For the health data, we anticipate an assignment that has students compare racial health disparities in Philadelphia in the 1890s to the present day (this is based on an assignment currently used at Masterman High School where students read *The Philadelphia Negro*).

We also anticipate that these data will be valuable to scholars. The principal investigator plans to conduct research on the role of the black church in community development and asset-building (with Dr. Stephanie Boddie), the nature of residential segregation (with Dr. Tara Jackson), the role of the Settlement House and Social Survey Movement in Du Bois' research, and the research methods Du Bois employed. All of these would benefit from access to health data. We have also reached out to scholars who work in the area of health disparities in anticipation of supporting additional scholarly research. Carolyn Cannuscio (RWJ scholar) has expressed interest in collaborating on a paper about the social determinants of health during the 1890s and Irma Elo (Demographer) has expressed interest in using the data as part of a larger investigation of health patterns over the 20th century. We anticipate building relationships with additional scholars in the medical history, nursing history, and public health fields.

DATA COLLECTION

We propose to collect all the available health data from 1890 – 1910 for households living in the Seventh Ward and, in some instances, for the entire city. Based on preliminary research this summer, we know that we can find the following at the Philadelphia City Archives:

- Births: name, dates, sex, race, place of birth, parents' names, father's occupation, physician or midwife.

- Deaths: DOB, parents' names and birthplaces, address, duration of illness, physician's and undertaker's address
- City Hospital admissions (1890-1896): name, age, race, disease, dates of admission, death, discharge, and remarks
- Contagious disease (1890-1897): name, disease, date of death, age, residence, physician
- Scrapbooks (1890-1899): Press clippings of health related newspaper articles from daily newspapers
- Board of Health annual reports

We will also explore additional sources of health information. These include the patient records at the Pennsylvania Hospital Historical Collections (that include address) and the records of the Frederick Douglass Hospital, built at 15th and Lombard Streets in 1895 to serve black residents. The Douglass Hospital records are part of the archives at the Barbara Bates Center for The Study of The History of Nursing at the University of Pennsylvania. They do not appear to include any patient-level data but do include annual reports, personnel files, and testimonials. We expect to discover additional sources of historical health data through our research, as well.

The birth, death, disease, and hospital admissions data will be collected by undergraduate and graduate research assistants using laptop computers. They will create simple spreadsheets that include address, allowing these data to be integrated with our historical census data. The scrapbooks, annual reports, and other manuscript sources will be scanned or photographed by either student research assistants or a professional photographer. The address-level data for the Seventh Ward will be made available through the online mapping application being developed by Avencia, Inc. (the same company that developed the Neighborhood Information System for the Cartographic Modeling Lab). The city-wide data will be mapped and, with the scanned newspaper articles, reports, and manuscripts, made available as .pdf or image files to view or download from the website.

We will also inventory current publicly-available health data, such as annual vital statistics reports, and organize links and maps on our website to facilitate an assignment for students comparing 1890s Philadelphia to the present.

ADDITIONAL EXTERNAL FUNDING

This is not a pilot project, but it is likely that we will identify additional data to be collected and thus need additional funding. Also, we expect to use these initial data from 1890-1910 to demonstrate the value of collecting housing, demographic, and health data for this area for the entire 20th century. Therefore, we are likely to apply for additional funding from NEH, local foundations, or even a large federal grant (NSF for methodologically-focused, NIA for demographic analysis).

DELIVERABLES

Our primary product from this grant will be digital versions of the data described under "data collection." The spatial data will be in .dbf and .shp (GIS map layer) format. The scanned documents will likely be in .pdf format. All of these will be available to share even before they are made available on our website. By May 2008, the data will be integrated into the online application and also available for public download from the website. We will complete preliminary analysis of the health data for our RWJ report, identifying patterns and describing other research the data could support. By the end of the grant period, we will also have specific plans and outlines for at least two manuscripts.

TIMELINE

Data collection will take place between January and June, 2007. We will then integrate that data with our census database in July and August. We will map the Seventh Ward and citywide data in June and July. Scanning and photographing will take place between January and July. The online mapping will be under construction from June-December 2007.