

Social Geography for Mitigation:

Developing Geo-narrative Media to Tell Your Client's Story



Julie Urbanik, Ph.D.

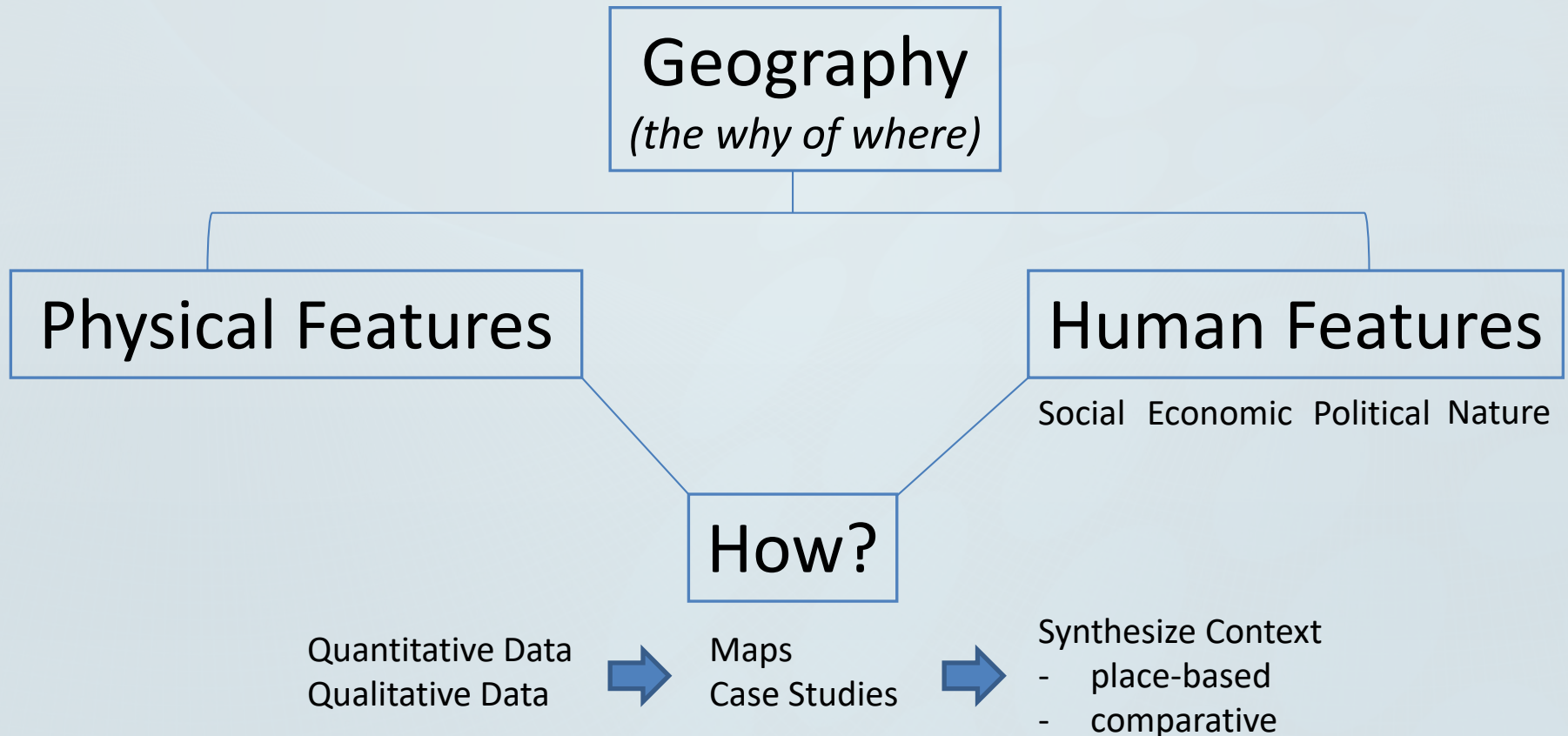
Federal Public Defender Training, KC, MO

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Social Geography?



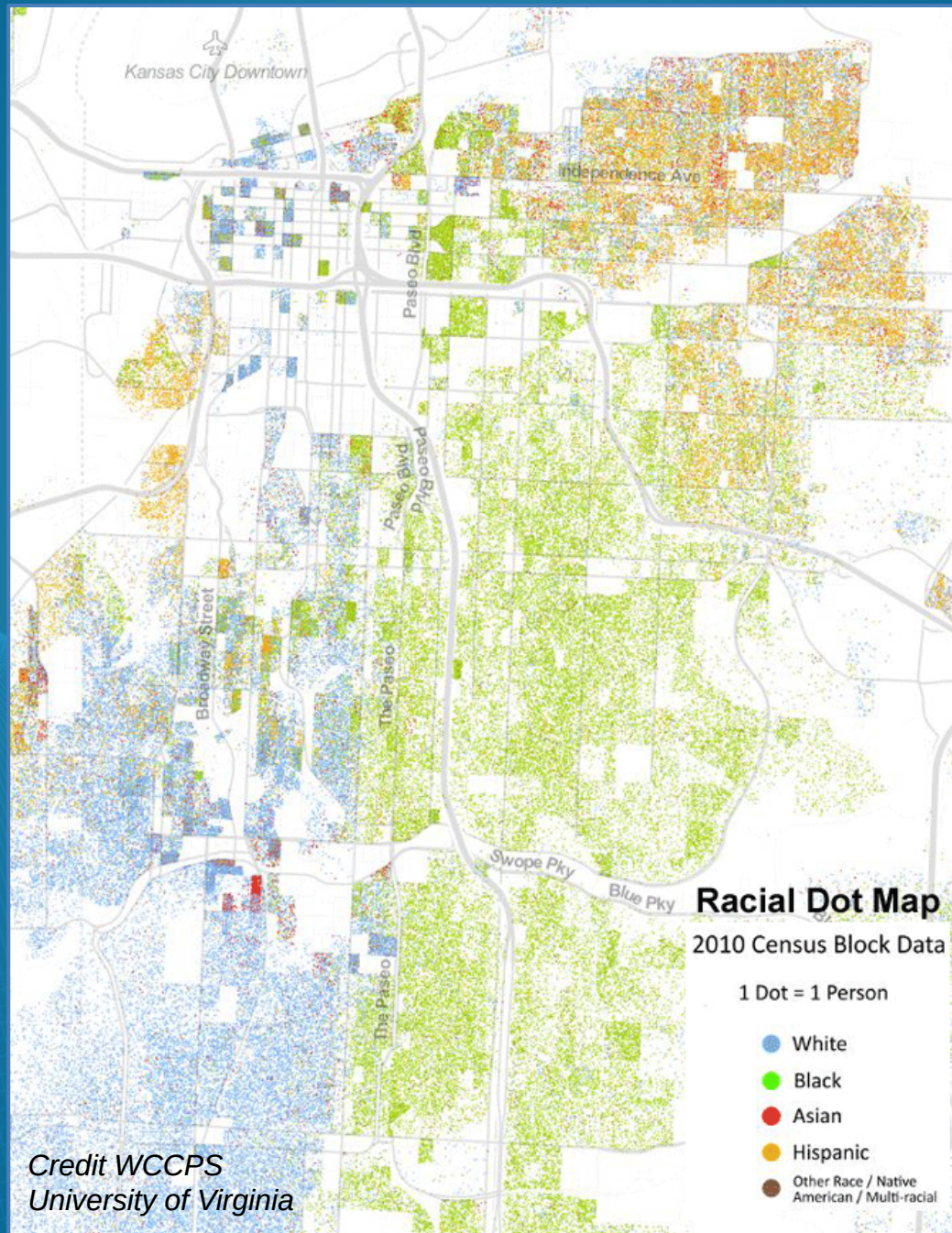
- *Don't we already know where everything is?* **N**
- *Don't we already use maps in mitigation?* **Y**
- *Are you going to give me a map test?* **M**

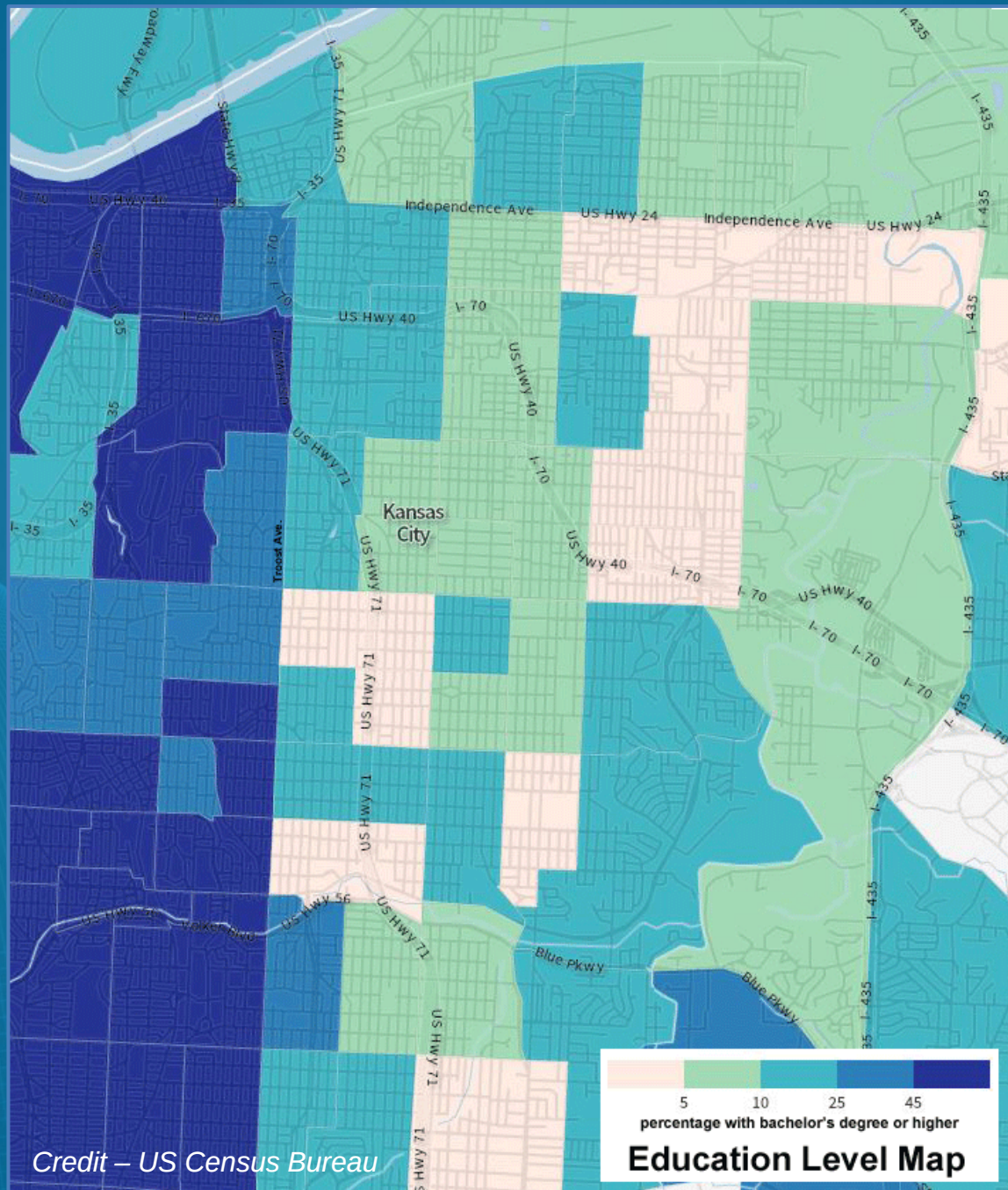


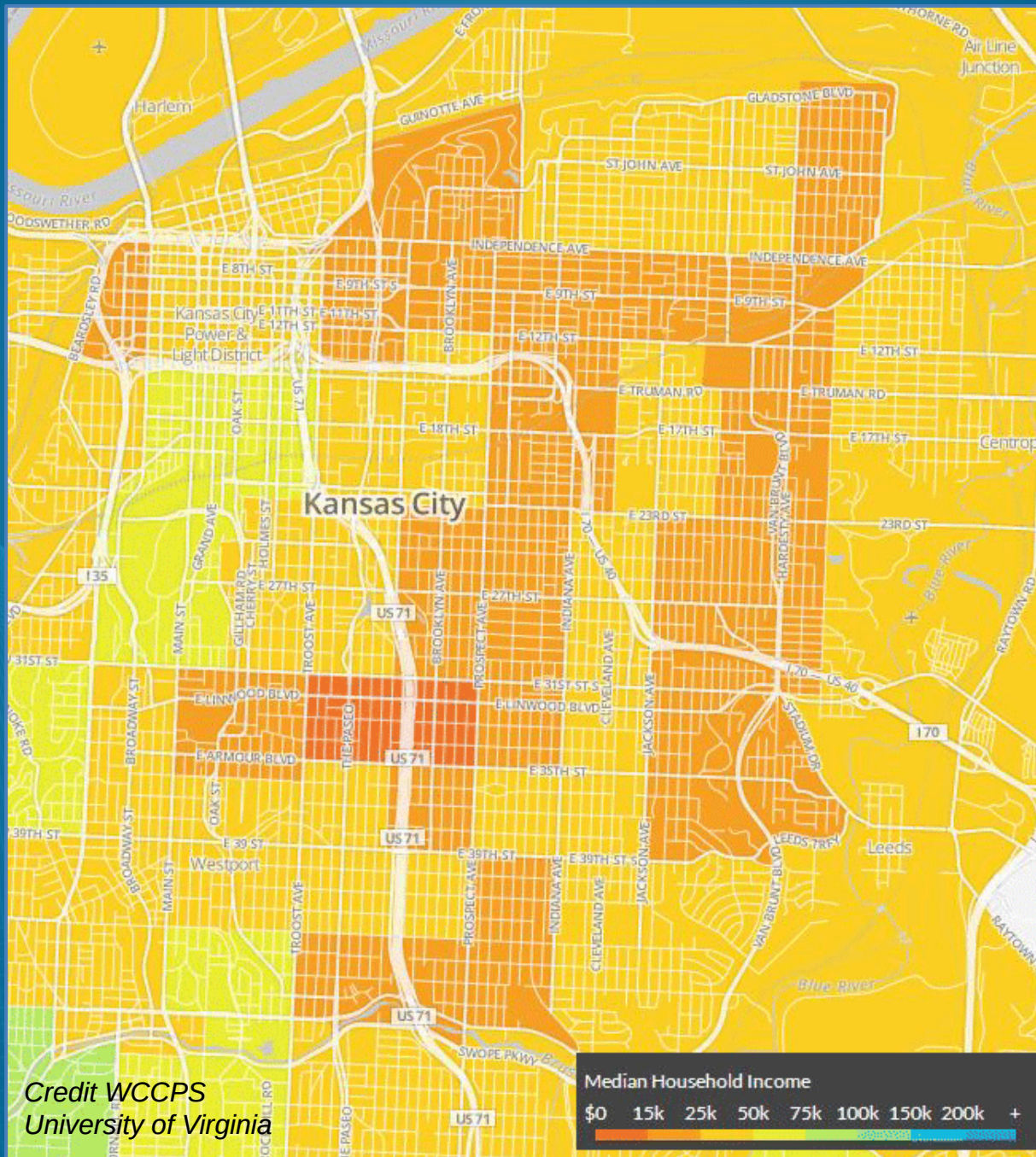
Social Geography



- explores the ways people (as individuals and communities) experience identity, difference, and inequality
 - impulse towards activism and social welfare – “applied”
1. Mapping Social Conditions – where and what is happening? ([KCUR article](#))
 - Quantitative Data Collection







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 2. Understanding Categories of Social Difference
 - Quantitative Data (e.g., Census)
 - Qualitative Data (e.g., interviews, observation, primary sources)



Categories of Social Difference:

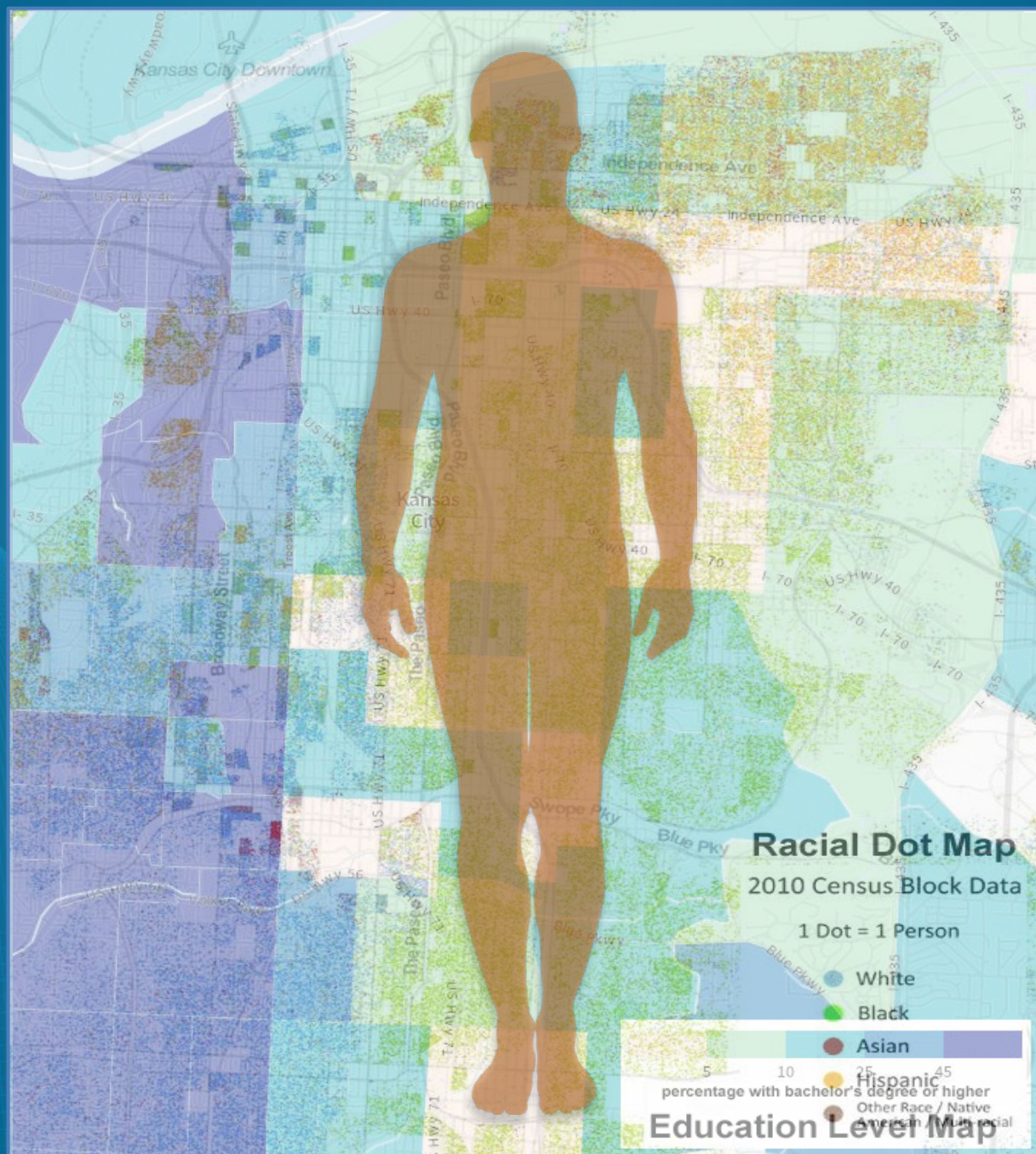
Gender
Race
Ethnicity
Income
Education
Nationality

Technology
Health
Family
Culture
Sexuality
Transportation

Social Geography



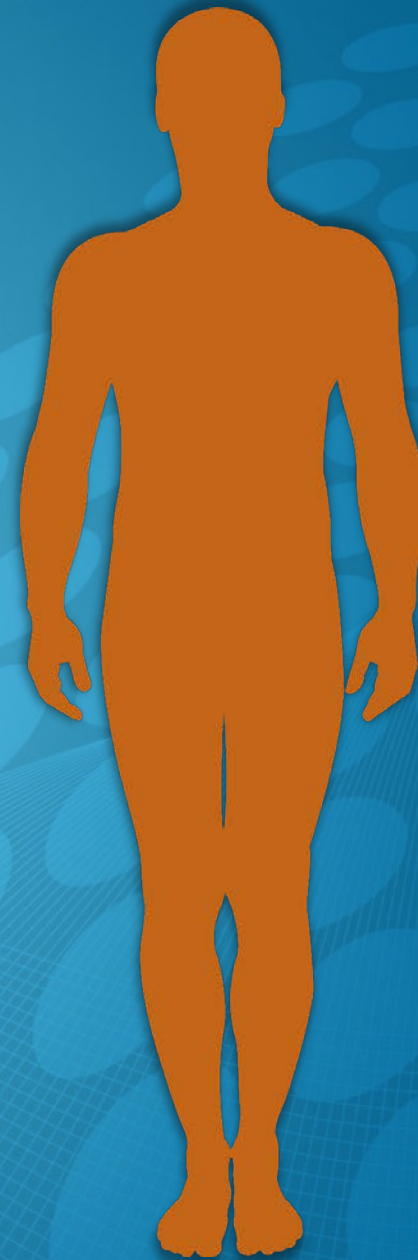
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 - Quantitative Data (e.g., Census)
 - Qualitative Data (e.g., interviews, observation, primary sources)
 3. Overlapping nature of difference, social conditions, and **PLACES** – not exclusive!
 - Negotiations made in everyday life as place, differences, and conditions intersect through the **INDIVIDUAL**



We are born into ***natural and cultural environments*** that may either ***demand our every effort to survive*** or give us space and scope to make choices and decisions of which ***others can only dream.***

Place, most emphatically place of birth but also the constricted space in which the majority of lives are lived, ***remains the most potent factor*** shaping the destiny of humans.

- Harm De Blij *The Power of Place*

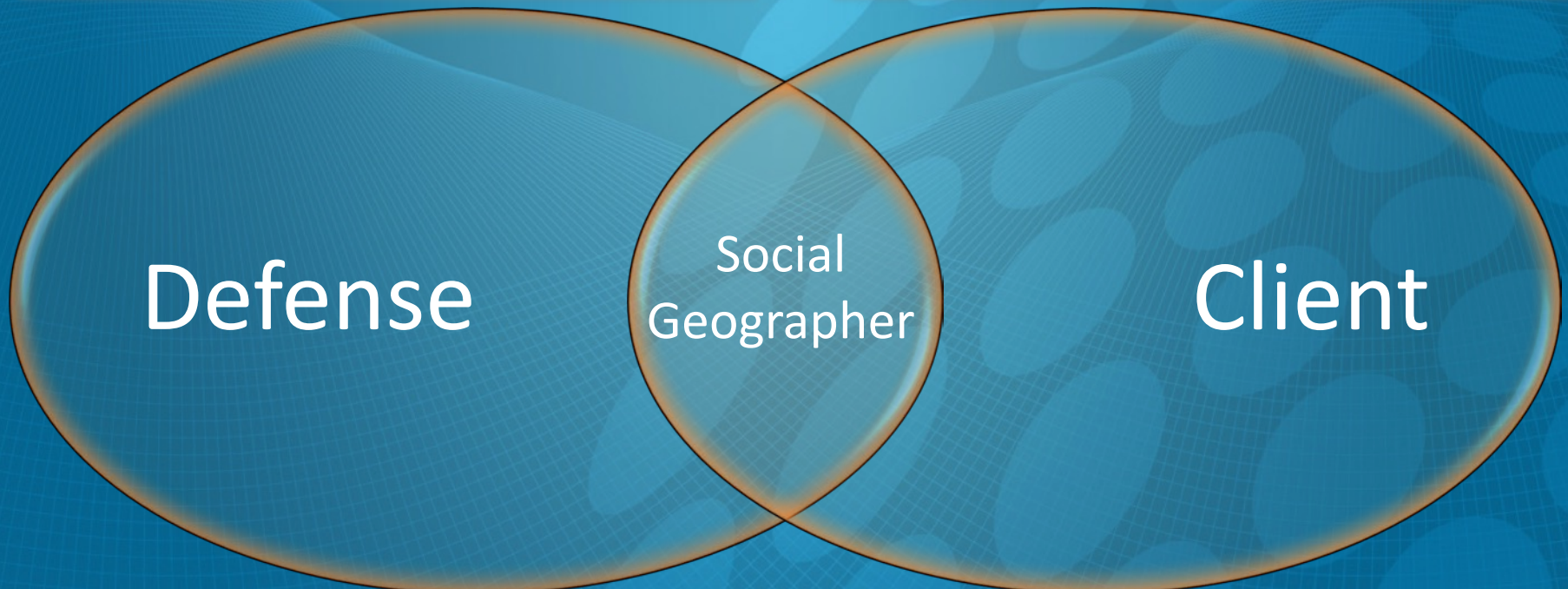


Mitigation

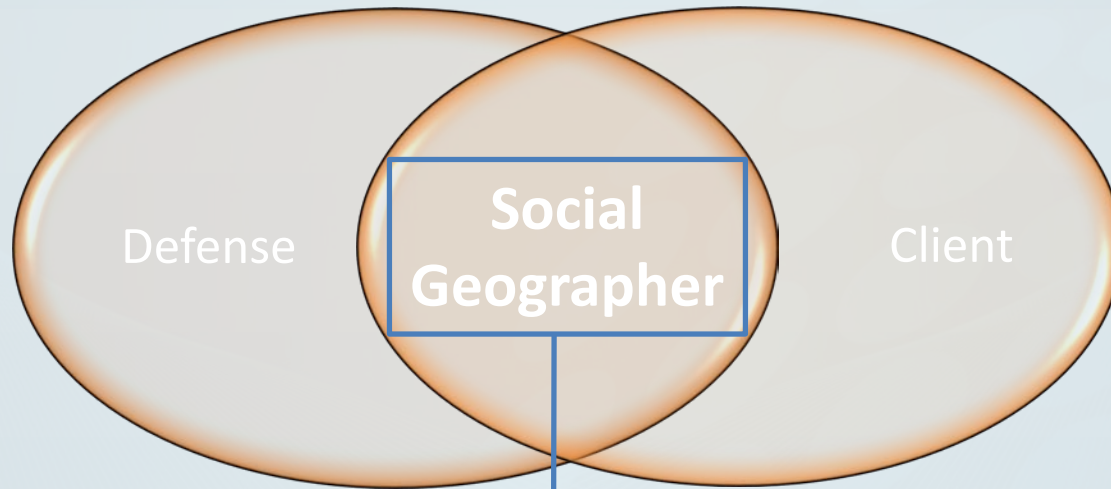
- Life history investigation
- “Maps and Facts”
- Materials that “humanize” the client

Social Geography

- Life history must include place-relations
- Synthesize the social conditions, relevant categories of difference, and personal experience.
- Participatory methods generating “humanizing” media
- “Step into someone’s shoes”



- ❖ What the social geographer produces
- ❖ Organizing (events/stories in places) into a meaningful narrative



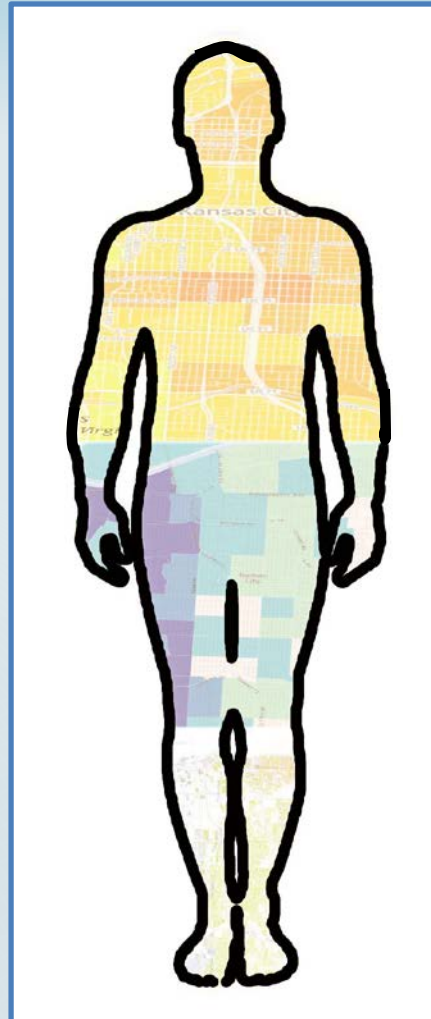
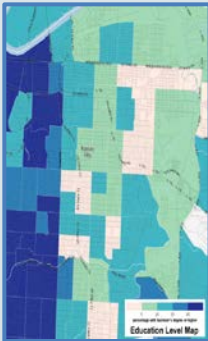
Geo-narrative Aims

- produce knowledge specific to client
- forefront subjective and complex voice
- self-representation vs. authoritative

Geo-narrative Methods

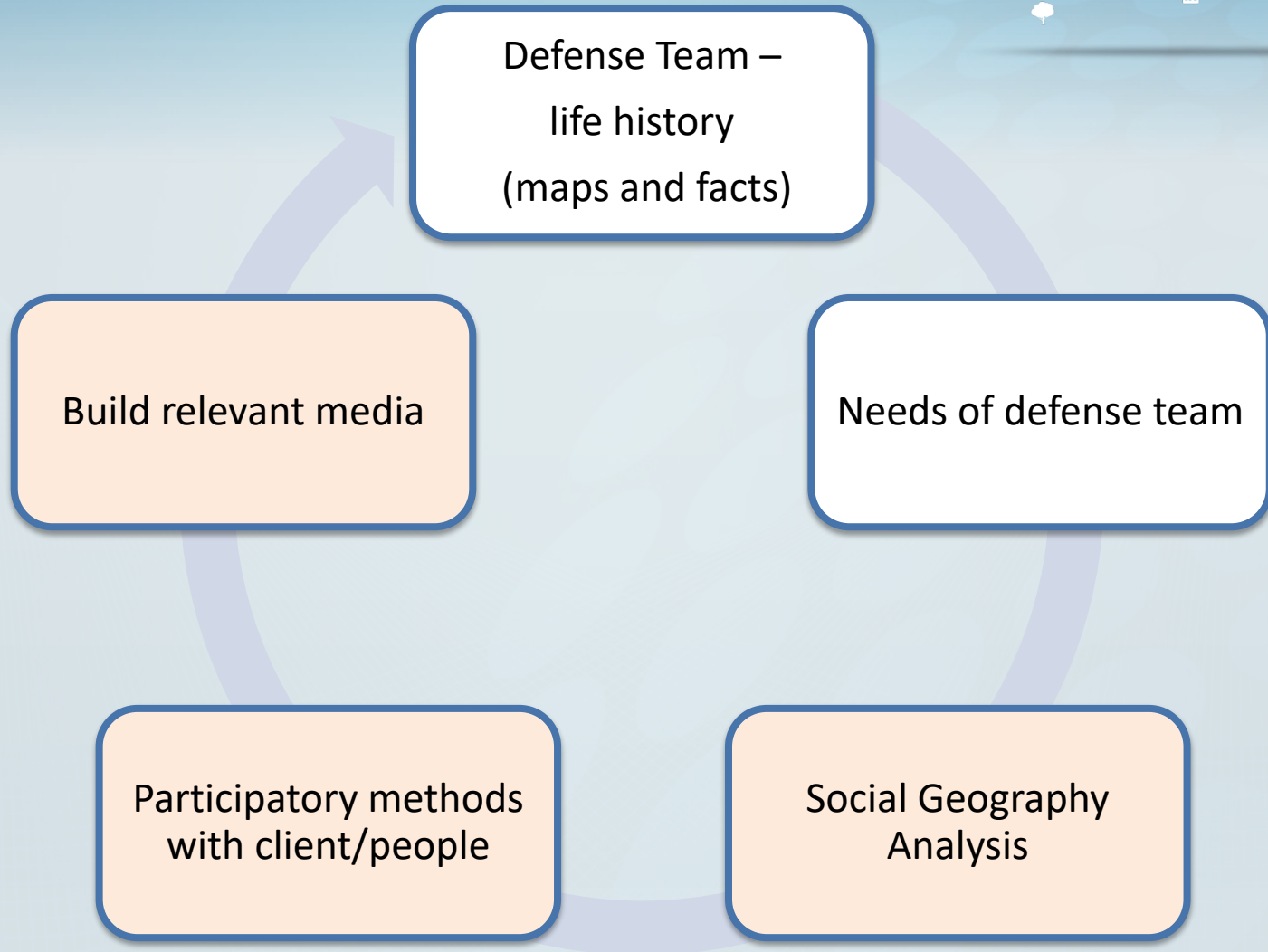
- personal maps/personal atlas
- body-mapping
- memory walks
- video, visuals, audio

Geo-Narrative Media: The Power of Geography



We all have geographies...
The gulf that exists between us as people is that when we look at each other we might see faces, skin color, gender, race, or attitudes, but we don't see, we can't see, the geographies. And once we experience each other's geographies we realize that the things we see as dividing us are, all too often, illusions, falsehoods: that the borders between us are in truth not hard but porous.

- *paraphrased from Neil Gaiman*



A large graphic of a blue heart composed of various white icons representing different aspects of life, including technology, nature, industry, and social interaction. The icons include a plane, house, cloud, Wi-Fi symbol, lightbulb, camera, person, magnifying glass, gear, factory, sun, skull, bird, moon, clock, smartphone, people, scissors, paperclip, fish, cup, fork, and many others.

Life history:
case history/incarceration
troubled family, learning
disabilities, drug use

Build relevant media:

- 10-minute Body Map video
- 5-minute Neighborhood video

1

Needs of defense team:

- Bryan's story
- Neighborhood context

100

Participatory work:

6-hour Body Map Interview with Bryan

3-hour Memory Walk with Deb Howard

Social Geography Analysis:
relevant categories of difference
available visuals
how to synthesize?

Geo-Narrative Media

Case Study: *U.S. v. Bryan Sheppard – (Miller Case)*



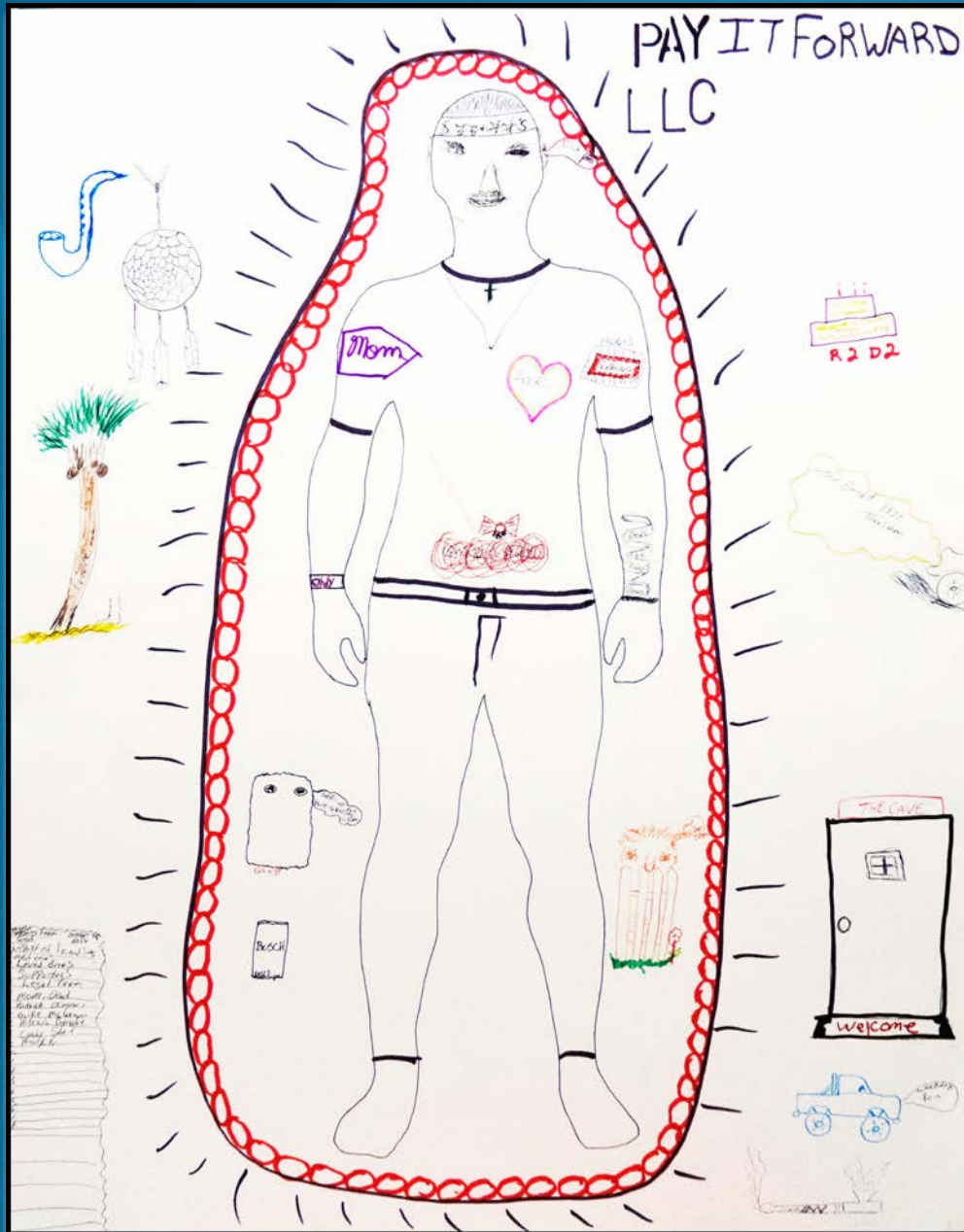
Body Map:

A visual and symbolic interpretation of an autobiography

- Goals: (a) to help Bryan prepare himself for mitigation hearing; (b) to show Bryan's ability to be self-reflective, to share how he sees his past and his future, (c) to provide a visually explanatory narrative that makes use of available life history materials
- 1st 3-hour session – brainstorm key life chapters, events, locations as he sees them
 - provide an outline of his body and drawing materials
 - help him develop symbols to represent key aspects of himself and his narrative
- 2nd 3-hour session – review and edit body map and then record audio of Bryan explaining his symbols
 - ~ 90 minutes of audio was edited down to ten minutes
- Produce media combining body map, family photos, and relevant visual materials

Bryan's Body Map

Personality
Physical Appearance
Personal Strengths
Personal Hardships
Support Systems
Spirituality
Life Stages
Vision for Future



Bryan's Body Map Video

Please click [here](#) to watch full 10-minute video
Use password: Bryan

Case Study: *U.S. v. Bryan Sheppard* – (Miller Case)

Memory Walk:

Generating memories/stories while moving through a place

- Goals: (a) to provide a view of Bryan (as a teenager) that was not heard during original trial; (b) to create a narrative that provides insight into the Marlborough neighborhood where Bryan spent the majority of his life
- 1 3-hour session – driving/walking tour of key locations in Marlborough
 - ~ 90 minutes of audio was collected and then edited down to 5 minutes
 - ~ 30 minutes of video footage and still images were collected
 - specific locations were based on life history information as well as sites provided by Deb Howard.
- Produce media combining memory walk footage, family photos, and relevant visual materials

Teenagers in Marlborough Video

Please click [here](#) to watch full 5-minute video
Use password: Deb

A large graphic of a blue heart composed of various white icons representing different aspects of life, including technology, nature, industry, and social interaction. The icons include a plane, house, cloud, Wi-Fi symbol, lightbulb, camera, person, magnifying glass, gear, factory, sun, skull, bird, moon, clock, smartphone, people, scissors, paperclip, fish, cup, fork, and many others.

Material was submitted as exhibits to the sentencing memorandum
Process of creating the Body Map assisted defense in preparing Bryan for testifying
Production of media made ample use of disparate life history materials by synthesizing them from a social geography perspective

-)Assisting defense in synthesizing larger social conditions, specific categories of difference, and the client's experience of the identity and place nexus
-)Intermediary between the "maps and facts" of defense/mitigation specialists and the client's perspective – giving client a voice
-)"Humanizing" the client for juries/judges:
 - everyone has a personal geography
 - challenging stereotypes of clients as only "criminals"
 - helping to show that regardless of circumstance, client still has a real heart and future.

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Resources

Contact: julie.urbanik@gmail.com

De Blij, H. 2009. *The Power of Place: Geography, Destiny, and Globalization's Rough Landscape*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Del Casino, Jr., V. 2009. *Social Geography: A Critical Introduction*. Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell.

Gastaldo, D., Magalhães, L., Carrasco, C., and Davy, C. (2012). Body-Map Storytelling as Research: Methodological considerations for telling the stories of undocumented workers through body mapping. Retrieve [PDF](#).

Hein, J., J. Evans, & P. Jones. (2008) Mobile Methodologies: Theory, Technology and Practice. *Geography Compass* 2/5: 1266-1285. Retrieve [PDF](#).

O'Higgins, B. 2014. *Data Maps Show Troost As Racial, Economic, and Educational Divide*. Kansas City: KCUR. [URL](#)

Please click [here](#) to watch full Body Map video (Use password: Bryan)

Please click [here](#) to watch full Neighborhood video (Use password: Deb)