

10-25-2016

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Recommended Citation

Najera, Rosa, "Mapping Omaha: A Geographic Assessment of the Service Learning P-16 Initiative" (2016). *SLA Scholarship*. 2.

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Mapping Omaha: A Geographic Assessment of the Service Learning P-16 Initiative

Rosa Najera, B.A.



What is Service Learning?

Service Learning is a method of teaching that combines classroom instruction with meaningful community service. This form of learning emphasizes critical thinking and personal reflection while encouraging a heightened sense of community, civic engagement, and personal responsibility.

The P-16 Initiative

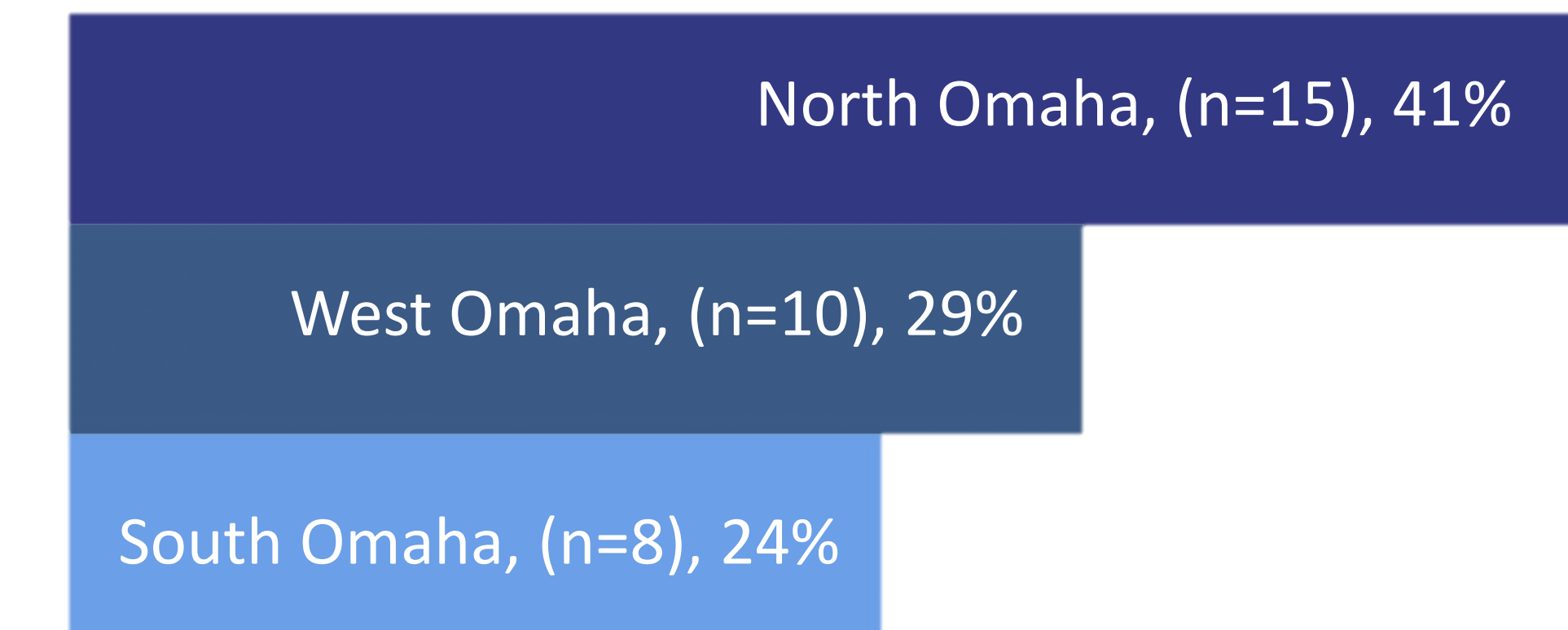
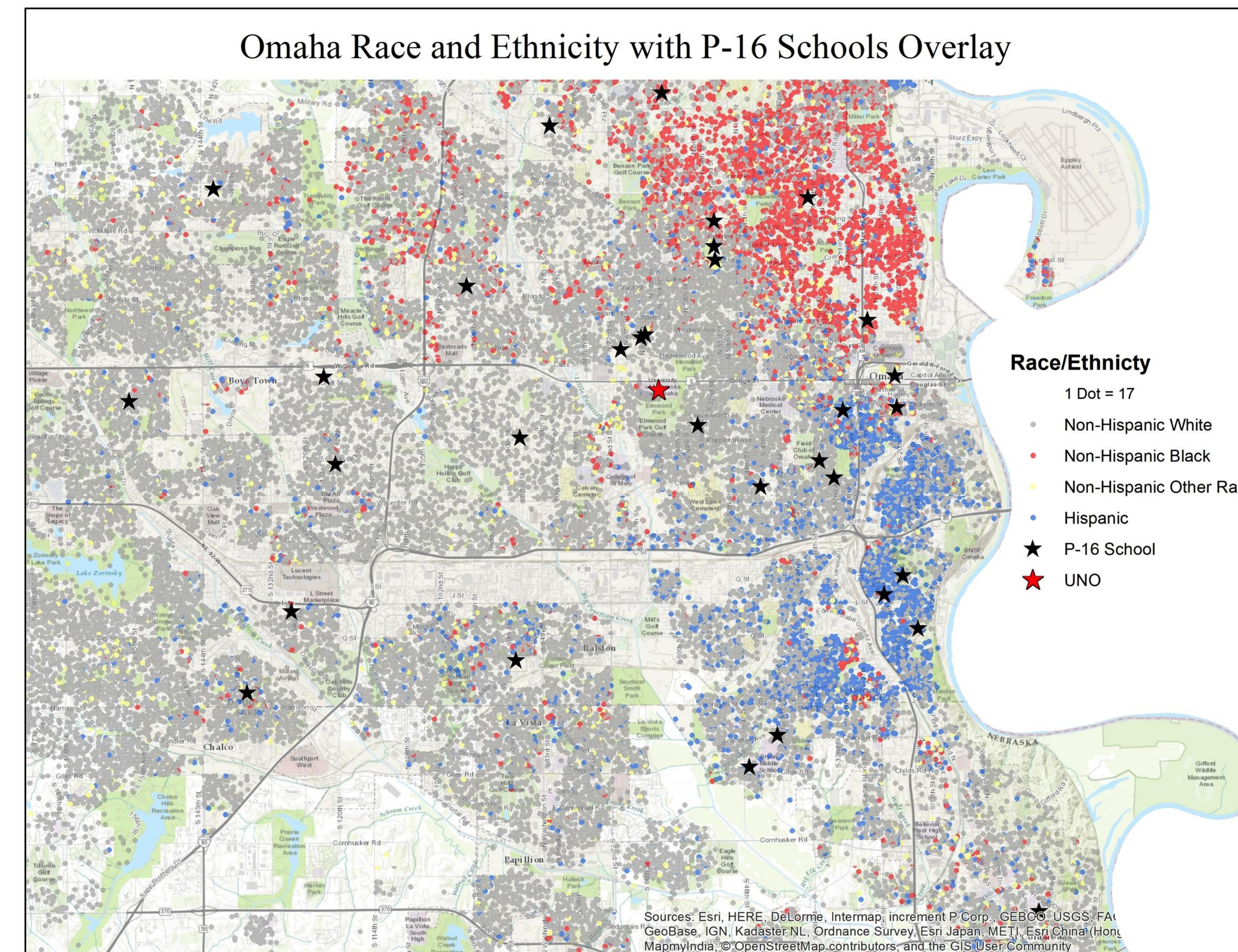
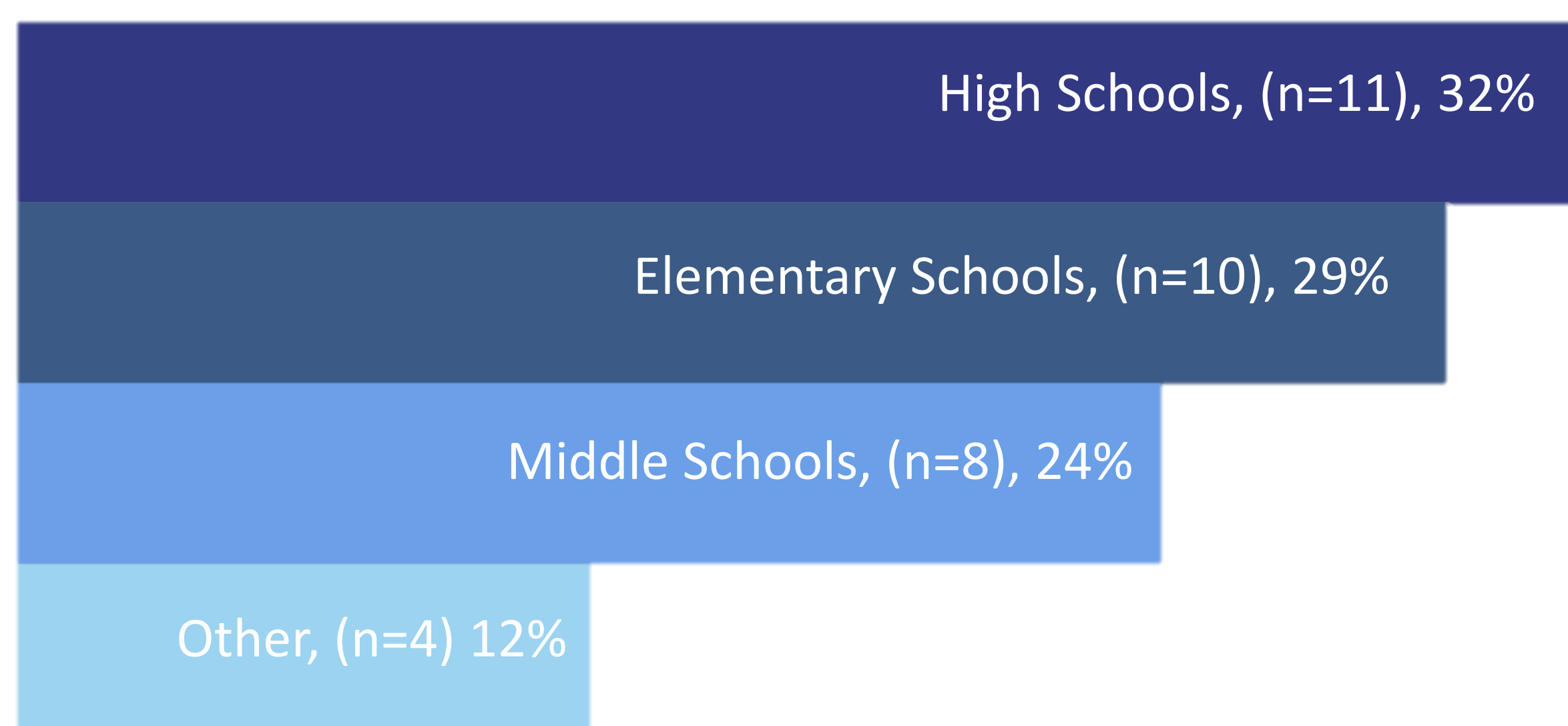
The University of Nebraska Omaha created the P-16 Initiative to specifically address poverty and its residual effects such as: educational achievement gaps, high drop out rates, disengaged youth, and high truancy rates. The P-16 Initiative was created to serve the Omaha community, focusing on schools where 75% of families attending are below the poverty line (Dierberger, 2015). The P-16 Initiative aims at connecting Preschool-12th grade and UNO curriculum through the development of collaborative academic service learning experiences.

2015-2016 Academic Year P-16 Schools

The UNO Service Learning Academy works with a number of schools throughout the Omaha metro area. Thirty-four schools worked with P-16 service learning projects during the 2015-2016 academic year. The schools are categorized by type in the bar graph below.

P-16 service learning projects are mostly occurring at the high school level

There were 34 schools participating in P-16 service learning projects for the 2015-2016 academic year. The "Other" category was made up of one school that is an accelerated program, and three pre-kindergarten through eighth grade schools.



P-16 service learning projects are mostly occurring in North Omaha

There were 34 schools in P-16 learning projects for the 2015-2016 academic year. School duplicates and schools outside the Omaha metro area were excluded.

Map Findings

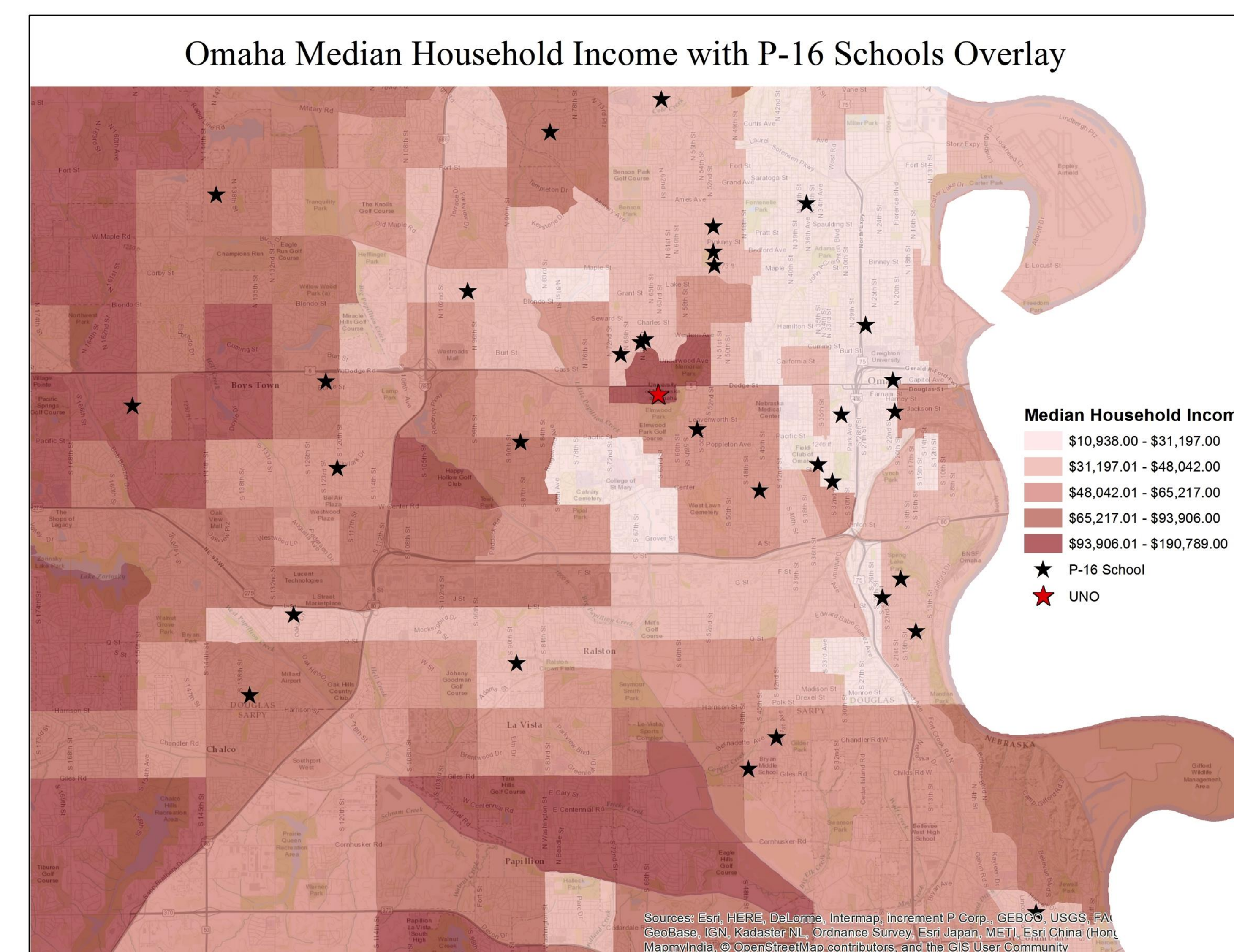
Racial divide in Omaha, NE is apparent; African-Americans in the north, Latinos in the south, and Whites in the west, which is visually depicted in the Omaha race and ethnicity map. People of color are concentrated on the east side of Omaha which includes both the north and south Omaha. In the 2015-2016 academic year, P-16 service learning project school sites were spread out throughout Omaha. According to the map, there were four (19%) schools that were located in a high African-American population area, and another four (19%) schools located in a high Latino population. Overall, P-16 service learning project schools are located in areas that are predominately white at 62% compared to 38% in locations that are predominately people of color.

Beyond race, U.S. Census data illustrates median incomes in Omaha; the lowest incomes appear in both north and south Omaha (2010). The P-16 Initiative was created to address these factors. About seven (21%) P-16 service learning project school site locations were in areas where the household median income was between \$10,038 to \$31,197. The next household median income bracket of \$31,197.01 to \$48,042 had thirteen (38%) schools located within it. A little over half of P-16 service learning projects at 59% (n=20) were school site areas where the median household income was \$48,042 and lower.

Results

A visual depiction of P-16 project locations with race and income data overlaid help identify areas of need within established relationships, and areas where additional presence is possible. The Service Learning Academy can use data visualization to increase its efforts in community areas with higher proportions of people of color and higher proportions of low median household incomes. Overall, most P-16 service learning project school sites are located in North Omaha at 41%.

The Service Learning Academy can increase its outreach efforts to educators in north and south Omaha since the P-16 Initiative was created to serve school locations where 75% of families are in poverty. Because race and ethnicity is often correlated to poverty which negatively impacts academic achievement, it is important to continuously look at those two variables and be strategic how P-16 service learning project school sites are recruited, created, and implemented.



References
 Dierberger, J. (2015). *P-16 service learning partnerships: A model for success*. Delano Oriaran, O., Penick-Parks, M. W. & S. Fondrie (Eds.), *The Sage sourcebook of service learning and civic engagement* (pp. 171-178). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, Inc.
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