

Assessing Spatial Inequality and Cultural Capital in East Baton Rouge Parish, Louisiana

Introduction

Museums house the artifacts of human history, and serve as important cultural institutions in a community. The purpose for writing this paper is to evaluate whether this quality of life can be equally and universally attained in neighboring populations, specifically in East Baton Rouge Parish, Louisiana. Much of the literature that addresses culture and its institutions as a whole tends to focus on the individual and structural nuances of cultural capital (Bunting 2005; Chan and Goldthorpe; Dandrow 2008; DiMaggio, P., & Mukhtar (n.d.); DiMaggio and Useem 1978). Furthermore, sociological literature for the most part addresses cultural phenomena such as the nuances of consumption patterns among different groups, even the social integration of individuals based on these patterns (DiMaggio and Useem 1978; van Eijck and Lievens 2008). What gets left out of these discussions are the spatial placements that potentially characterize said consumption patterns, where limited studies are conducted on the relationship between culture and space.

The spatial literature at hand tends to for the most part analyze literature between cities rather within one given city (Blau and Hall 1986; Poon and Lai 1986). Within the little intra-city literature that exists, what lacks are studies within southern areas such as East Baton Rouge, Louisiana; most previous research has been conducted with the Northeast in mind such as New York City (Kondo 2010). By examining the spatial elements of museums, we can visualize the social phenomenon of culture, and fill in the missing gap within the field of study with the ultimate goal of addressing the broader issue of equity in development across space.

This paper seeks to answer various questions regarding spatial dynamics of culture, particularly in East Baton Rouge Parish. The question is how do social factors such as racial composition, educational attainment, income, and total population of a given census tract play a role in the physical (in)accessibility of museums across the parish. Using proximity tools and spatial regression analysis in ArcGIS Pro and GeoDa respectively, I measure the distance to the nearest museum to evaluate potential disparities in distance, taking into account the aforementioned variables. I find that there is a weak correlation with the majority of these variables, with the exception median income and total population. However, we find a slightly positive relationship between median income and the spatial distribution of museums, suggesting that the distribution favors census tracts of lower median income compared to higher income. We also find a negative relationship between the total population of a census tract and the distance to the museum, suggesting that museums geographically favor more populated census tracts. As a result, this research is a valuable extension to the broader literature on spatial inequalities, and adds another layer to research on cultural capital that focuses primarily on the individual, and their relationship to the broader society.

Individual Perspectives on the Arts

Research on the arts has traditionally focused on the relationship between the individual and society. Central to this literature is Pierre Bourdieu's theory of cultural capital. It consists of "tastes, knowledge, modes of appreciation, and ways of thinking that are institutionally supported and very broadly acknowledged to be high-status and worthy of respect" (2004). It is exchanged in interaction with others and is rooted in our perception of reality. Through this process, a power dynamic is perpetuated due to certain cultures being valued over others in a given society. It, in other words, is "currency based on taste". This currency is tied to control

over social and economic resources, as it allows those in power to “distinguish themselves from others” as well as exclude them (Kondo 2010). Groups in general become separated due to artistic knowledge and tastes.

There are several factors that have been recognized among the study of cultural capital, which include, race, income, and gender. Education, especially higher education, is likely to be an “important determinant of artistic taste” (DiMaggio and Useem 2003). Because education is influenced by social class, education also contributes to the disparities of art consumption (2003). Moreover, scholars have demonstrated art consumption – defined in a variety of ways – is stratified by race and gender, in addition to income and education (Dandrow 2008). It is critical that we understand art consumption patterns because they may reinforce existing inequalities through the role that they play in social capital. Chan and Goldthorpe (2007) seek to explain how these cultural activities can be characterized by class. In their study of England, they find that “omnivorous consumption of the visual arts or music” does not possess a relationship with one's income (Bunting 2015; Chan and Goldthorpe 2007). On the other hand, they find that attendance at venues such as theatre, musicals, pantomime and the ballet increases with income, which can be attributed to their higher costs, whereas a museum or gallery would more likely be free at the point of entrance (2015).

Research focusing on individual-level characteristics has provided a wealth of information, yet this theoretical perspective is missing attention to context and fails to take into account the role of spatial position.

Spatial Perspectives on the Arts

Providing this missing spatial lens within the literature offers a way to examine the structural forces related to representations of culture within a given city. It also provides an

additional lens from which to understand culture and how individuals interact with manifestations of that culture. Scholars, in fact, have argued “spatial exposure to cultural institutions creates capacities for neighborhoods and their residents,” and “while neighborhoods have culture, when institutionalized such culture generates additional cognitive and social benefits” (Kondo and Khan 2011). In other words, this is a matter of whether certain cultures are institutionally supported compared to others. We should expect that the current spatial structure is a reflection of power dynamics. By examining spatial relationships, I can offer insight into the prevailing power dynamics and the extent to which the benefits to neighborhoods are unevenly shared across different characteristics.

There is a large body of research on various spatial inequalities ranging from proximity to supermarkets (e.g., O’Connell, King, and Bratter 2016), banks and other organizational resources (e.g., Small and McDermott 2006), parks (e.g., Rigolon, Browning, and Jennings 2018) and even negative environmental exposures such as pollution (e.g., Elliott and Smiley 2019). This literature generally finds that majority Black and sometimes majority Hispanic areas have less access to desirable goods whereas majority White spaces are more advantaged. There are also pronounced spatial inequalities along economic lines. Despite the broad coverage of topics within the spatial inequality literature, this perspective/approach has yet to be applied to studies of cultural institutions, such as museums.

There are few studies that engage with cultural institutions and spatial position. Of those that do, Blau and Hall (1986) focus on the concentration of cultural institutions – specifically performing arts organizations – across metropolitan areas and regions in the United States by comparing variables such as the number of establishments in a given city and population size. This provides insight into broader spatial trends, but it offers less for understanding the

distribution of these kinds of institutions within a city. Analogous to the rationale used in the spatial inequality literature, understanding these smaller scale variations indicates the extent to which there are potential disparities in exposure.

There is one unpublished study that draws on the spatial inequality logic to examine the distribution of cultural institutions within a specific city or metropolitan area (Kondo 2010). Kondo examines the number of arts institutions across census tracts in New York City. She finds that populations which are least likely to attend arts and culture institutions are also those farthest from them. She elaborates on this finding by stating that “those who already have little access to the arts in their immediate neighborhood are not likely to be near a place in the city with a high amount of arts access” (2010). From a class standpoint, she finds that there is a positive relationship between per capita income and the number of arts institutions that exist in a given census tract. She finds that majority-Black neighborhoods in New York contain the fewest arts and cultural institutions, regardless of income, in comparison to white and Latino neighborhoods. This finding implies that these neighborhoods are less likely to experience these cultural institutions that the city has to offer. Historically, Black people had little opportunity and access to these elite cultural forms and although there have been significant changes to this, disparities persist (Kondo 2010). Overall, she finds that space plays a major role, as there is an unequal distribution of these kinds of institutions.

New York City is a frequently used and iconic city within sociological research; however, it is not representative of all or even most US cities. What lacks in the literature is a detailed study of a city in the South, particularly one of smaller population size and density. I aim to extend our understanding of spatial inequalities by examining the distribution of museums within a unique case study, Baton Rouge, Louisiana.

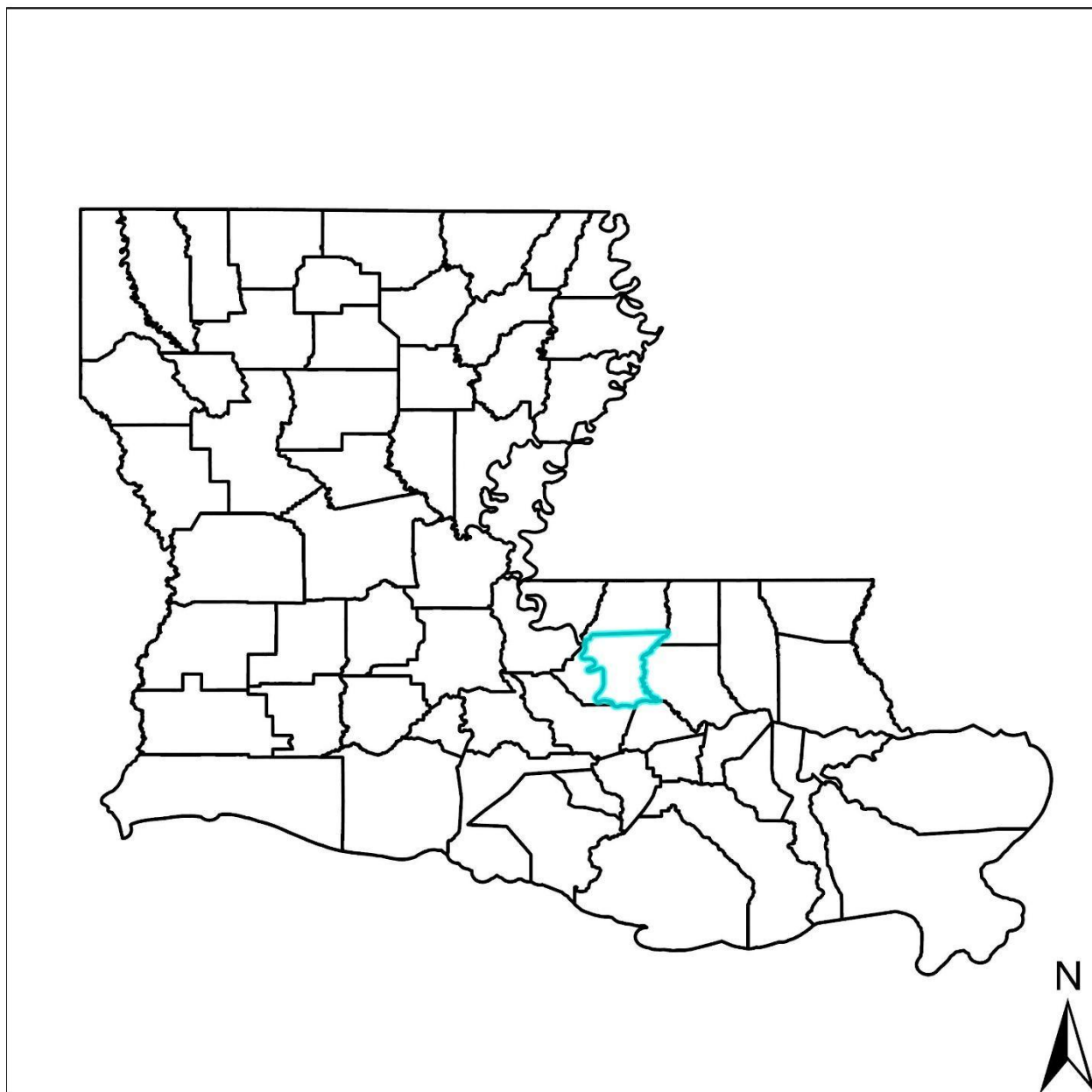
Baton Rouge: A Small Southern City

Louisiana was chosen for this study due to the cultural diversity it inhabits, especially its Cajun and Creole influences that are represented within general tourism and cultural celebrations in the form of Mardi Gras parades, cuisine, etc. Unlike much of the rest of the areas colonized by Europeans, Louisiana was colonized by the French for 80 years prior to the 40-year Spanish rule. Many of the cultural traditions, including language, were well-established before the area now known as Louisiana became part of the United States.

Baton Rouge is the state capital, and the second largest city in the state. It is located in East Baton Rouge Parish, Louisiana, which consisted of 440,171 residents as of 2010, and it is located in the southeastern section of the state (see Figure 1). East Baton Rouge Parish is the most populated parish in the state, with a population density of 966.6 people per square mile. New York City, on the other hand, contains a population of 19,378,102 and a population density of 27,012 per square mile across its boroughs. My geographic focus allows us to diversify the studies done on this subject to include areas that are not as populous as previous studies have focused on.

Like many urban areas, East Baton Rouge is segregated racially, where the Black population tends to mostly reside in the Northern half of the parish, while majority White areas concentrate in the Southern half, with Florida Boulevard serving as a physical marker dividing the city that is recognized by residents. Segregation is most prominent between the Black and White populations because they comprise the largest portions of the total population. The parish-wide population is 47.6 % percent White (specifically 44% non-Hispanic), 47.2% percent Black or African American, 3.4% percent Asian, and 1 percent or less for people who identify as “some other race”, two or more races, Native American, and Pacific Islander. It contains 4.4% of

Hispanic/Latino individuals overall in the parish. By examining this area, we can further our understanding of the socio-spatial forces underlying the location of museums. East Baton Rouge Parish represents a distinct context from that typically examined within the literature on spatial inequality, particularly as relates to cultural institutions. I aim to assess the extent to which spatial inequality, particularly by race and other social factors, persists in a smaller, low-density city when examining the distribution of museums, a key cultural institution.



□ Louisiana Parishes

Figure 1 Map of Louisiana's Parishes with East Baton Rouge Parish highlighted for reference

Data

To analyze the spatial dynamics of cultural capital within East Baton Rouge Parish, I use Census Tracts which have been used in previous research, examining various social variables across these spatial units. There are a total of 92 census tracts in the parish. This approach allows us to provide a precise, in-depth analysis of culture as these census tracts are the smallest unit of analysis within the Census database, compared to a zip code which broadens the data.

I used a shapefile of museums provided by the East Baton Rouge Parish Open Data portal (<https://data-ebrgis.opendata.arcgis.com>) to identify the locations of museums, which was updated within 2021. To ensure that this was the comprehensive list of museums, I utilized Visit Baton Rouge (visitbatonrouge.org) as well as CountyOffice.org which provided their own list of museums in the parish. This led to a total of 19 museums for analysis. Shapefiles are a file format that allows us to store geospatial data, such as the location of these museums. I then measured the distance from these census tracts to the nearest museum using the Generate Near Table feature in ArcGIS Pro. This distance serves as my dependent variable. This tool calculates the proximity between multiple features, and it generates a table of these values in meters. In this case, it measures the distance from the boundary of the census tract, rather than the center or centroid, to the nearest museum it can find. By nature of the tool, any census tract in which a museum resides will be assigned a distance of 0 meters as it intersects it. In the dataset, there are 19 museums across 10 census tracts. Therefore, there will be 10 out of 92 census tracts in the shapefile with a distance value of 0 meters.

The second data source is the 2010 5-year period estimates from the American Community Survey (2005-2010). These data provide information on the social and demographic characteristics of the census tracts that are the focus of my analysis. Racial and ethnic variables

are converted into binary variables where based on the dataset, we will evaluate whether a census tract is majority white, majority Black, or where there's no majority at all, as other race and ethnicities do not meet the 50% threshold at all of a majority. These binary variables were computed from the respective population statistics derived from the American Community Survey. Additionally, I account for the socioeconomic status of a neighborhood using educational composition (attainment of only a high school degree) among those who are 25 years old or higher, and household median income. To directly capture the role a diploma may play in this spatial distribution of museums, I also break down educational attainment by evaluating the census tracts based on those who have less than a high school degree overall in the form of a percentage. On top of this, I take the natural log of the total population in each census tract to see if the distance to nearest museum is influenced in any way due to the size of a population in a given census tract. Including these variables will allow us to look at the various dynamics at play when it comes to the forces behind culture and cultural capital. Examining the relationships between these aggregate characteristics and the distance to the nearest museum in the parish will provide insight into the extent to which there are spatial inequalities in the location of museums.

Methods

I use descriptive maps of each individual variable to visualize how my focal variables are distributed within the parish. This provides a foundation for understanding my statistical analysis, which relies on spatial regression analysis. Spatial regression – as opposed to traditional regression analysis – is required because it allows us to see if any spatial processes outside of these listed variables are taking place. However, they are otherwise similar, and the focal coefficients can be interpreted as they would in a standard OLS model.

In order to estimate the model you need a spatial weights matrix, which represents the spatial structure of the dataset. This takes into account neighboring polygons such as the census tracts examined here. I use a Queen contiguity weights matrix with an order of one, which takes into account neighboring census tracts that border all sides of a particular census tract polygon. I use a first order contiguity because there is no particular hierarchy of space that suggests the need to use a specific distance or some other form of neighborhood structure.

I use the GeoDa software to create the spatial weights matrix and conduct the spatial regression analysis. Based on an analysis of the spatial autocorrelation – or correlation of values related to spatial proximity (as defined by the spatial weights matrix) – of the model residuals from the classic OLS model, I decide whether to pursue a standard OLS model, spatial lag, or a spatial error model. There is a large and significant amount of spatial autocorrelation in the OLS residuals (see Table 1), so I cannot use a standard regression model due to concerns about the consequences of the correlated residuals on my coefficient estimates. I use the Lagrange Multiplier and Robust Lagrange Multiplier test statistics to further distinguish between the spatial lag and spatial error models (O'Connell and Reece 2018).

A spatial lag model takes into account the process of diffusion across space of a particular social process. In other words, if a social process of any sort takes place in one given area, it would theoretically affect the outcome of the places surrounding it. In this case, I would not argue that a distance to a museum is influencing other census tracts' respective distance to the museum nearest to them. A spatial error model, on the other hand, would be used if there were omitted explanatory variables that may interfere with the output, or that the “unit of analysis is not a good fit” (2018). Ideally, I would utilize this model to account for unobserved spatial processes that may be taking place. However, the data indicate that spatial lag is actually a better

fit despite being theoretically less appealing. I draw this conclusion based on the significant robust Lagrange Multiplier test statistic for the spatial lag model (0.00000, $p < .001$) and the non-significant corresponding statistic for the spatial error model (0.67003, $p < .10$; also see Table 1). Therefore, I would need to utilize the spatial lag model to analyze these variables, despite the general purpose behind it.

| Test | MI/DF | Value | Probability |
|-----------------------------|--------|---------|-------------|
| Moran's I | 0.5148 | 9.5330 | 0.00000 |
| Lagrange Multiplier (lag) | 1 | 95.6270 | 0.00000* |
| Robust LM (lag) | 1 | 27.5848 | 0.00000** |
| Lagrange Multiplier (error) | 1 | 68.2238 | 0.00000* |
| Robust LM (error) | 1 | 0.1816 | 0.67003** |
| Lagrange Multiplier (SARMA) | 2 | 95.8086 | 0.00000 |

*Table 1 Diagnostics for Spatial Dependence (Ordinary Least Squares Model; * $p < 0.001$ ** $p < 0.10$)*

Results

| Variable | Coefficient | Standard Error | z-value | Probability (p < 0.05) |
|----------------------------------|-------------|----------------|-----------|------------------------|
| Museum Distance | 0.958984 | 0.0224853 | 42.6494 | 0.00000 |
| CONSTANT | 1417.36 | 972.622 | 1.45726 | 0.14505 |
| Majority White | 265.465 | 466.083 | 0.569565 | 0.56897 |
| Majority Black | -165.913 | 456.577 | -0.363384 | 0.71632 |
| % Less than a High School Degree | -757.943 | 2630.21 | -0.288168 | 0.77322 |
| % High School Degree | 1892.77 | 1385.89 | 1.36574 | 0.17202 |
| Median Income | 0.0176724 | 0.00752533 | 2.34839 | 0.01885 |
| Total Population (Natural Log) | -316.81 | 137.412 | -2.30555 | 0.02114 |

Table 2 Spatial Regression Output Utilizing a Spatial Lag Model by GeoDa

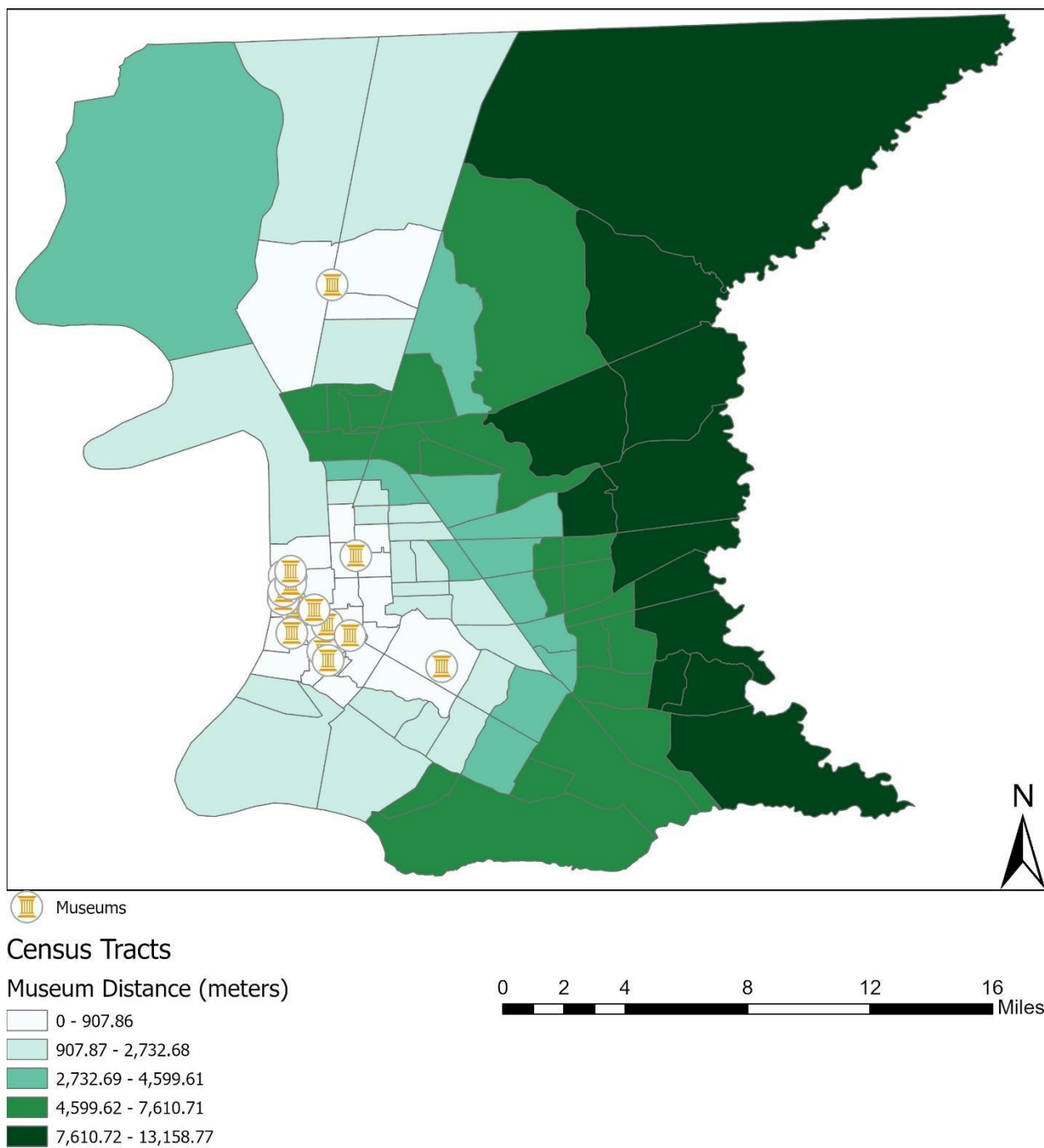


Figure 2 Museum Distance Across East Baton Rouge Parish

There are a total of 19 museums in East Baton Rouge Parish. The vast majority of these museums are located in the downtown and surrounding areas, as indicated by Figure 2, with an outlier museum located in Baker, Louisiana, which is another city within the northernmost section of the parish. Figure 2 also displays the distance (in meters) of census tracts to their respective nearest museums. In this case, the downtown serves as a core for the concentration of these museums, and as you move away from that area, the distance for the most part increases in layers, forming a periphery of museum distance across the parish. The easternmost side of the parish is where we find the furthest distance from a museum with no museums present at all (7,610-13,158.77 meters).

Race and Ethnicity and Museum Distance

This paper examines the following binary race and ethnicity variable percentages: majority Black, majority white, and census tracts where there is no majority at all. Census Tracts of no majority is left out of this output, as it serves as our reference variable.

When evaluating census tracts of a white majority, we find that there is not a significant relationship at all between that racial composition and museum distance. The coefficient for white majority census tracts vis-à-vis museums comes down to 265.465, which would imply a positive relationship where white majority census tracts tend to live further away from museums. However, this relationship is rendered inconclusive as we are presented with a probability of 0.56897 (see Table 2).

As it relates to Black majority census tracts, we also come across a non-significant relationship between its racial and ethnic composition and its distance to museums. These census

tracts overall carry a coefficient of -165.913 which would imply a negative relationship between the two variables, where Black census tracts are more likely to reside closer to museums. However, this is rendered inconclusive as it contains a probability of 0.71632. Therefore, whether a census tract is majority Black or not does not in fact play a role in the spatial distribution of museums across East Baton Rouge Parish. This is the opposite of what the spatial inequality literature has found for other outcomes (e.g., CITE) and the findings from research on museums in New York City (Kondo 2015). On a visual basis, we see high concentrations of Black people located within the northern half of the parish starting at the museum at the center of the parish, which is the downtown area (see Figure 4). We see white majority census tracts, mostly within the southern half of the parish, when specifically discussing the spatial distribution of the metropolitan area of Baton Rouge. This positioning of museums as nearly the center of both sections of the city and broader parish help to explain the non-significance between their relationships vis-à-vis museums, especially in the face of racial segregation as such that we see as evidenced by figures 3 and 4.

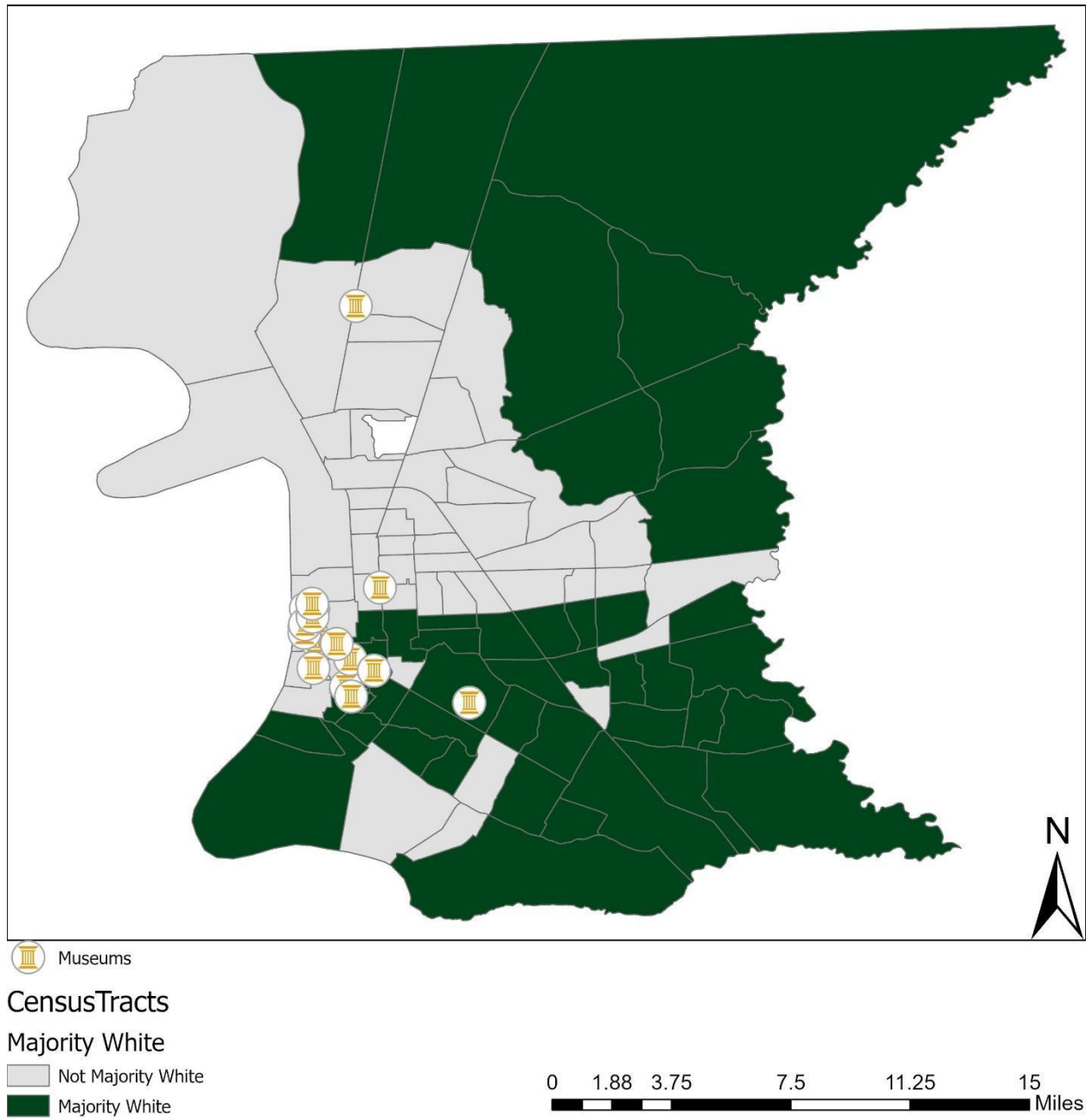


Figure 3 Census Tracts where there is a white majority

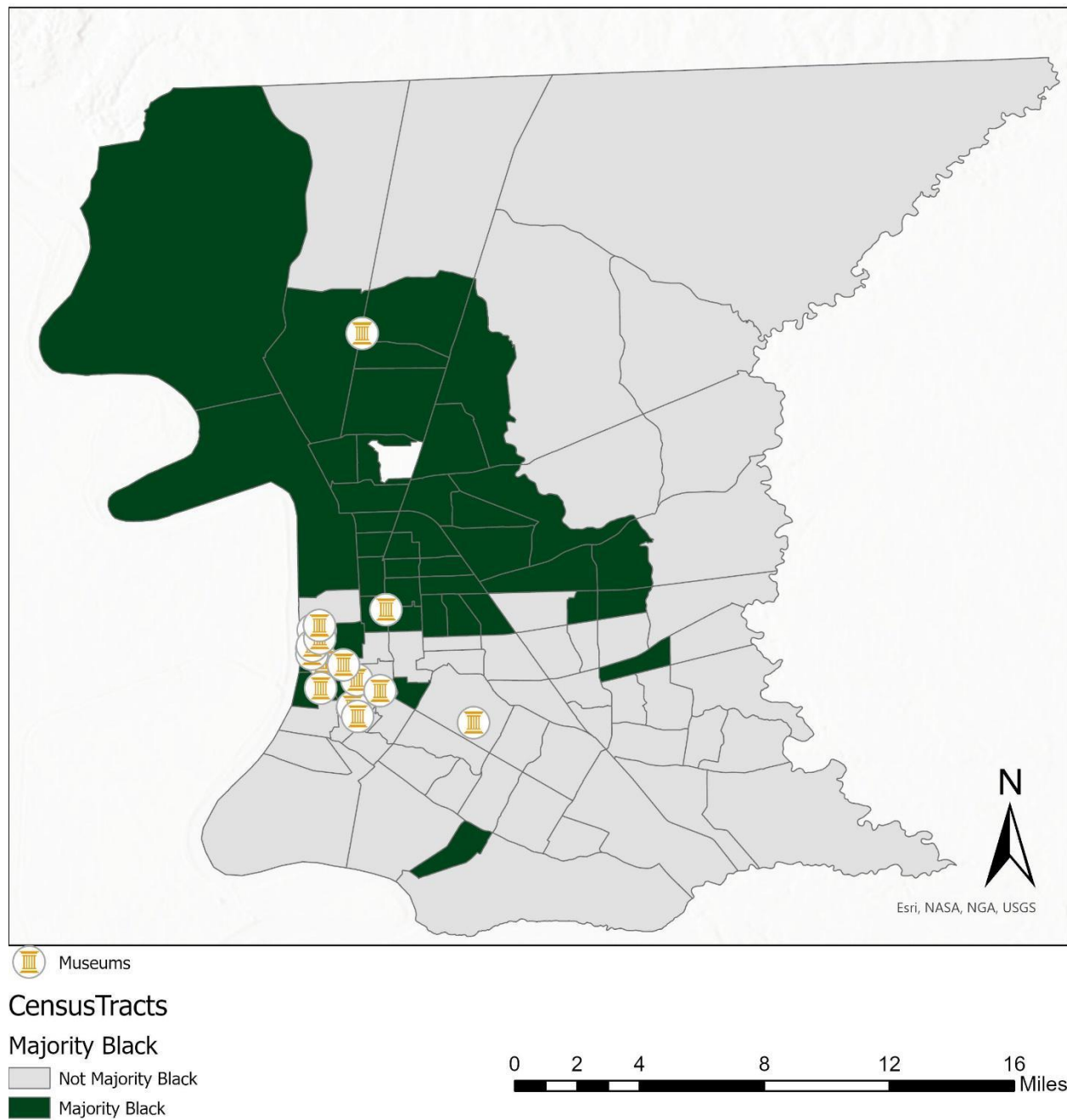


Figure 4 Census Tracts where there is a Black majority

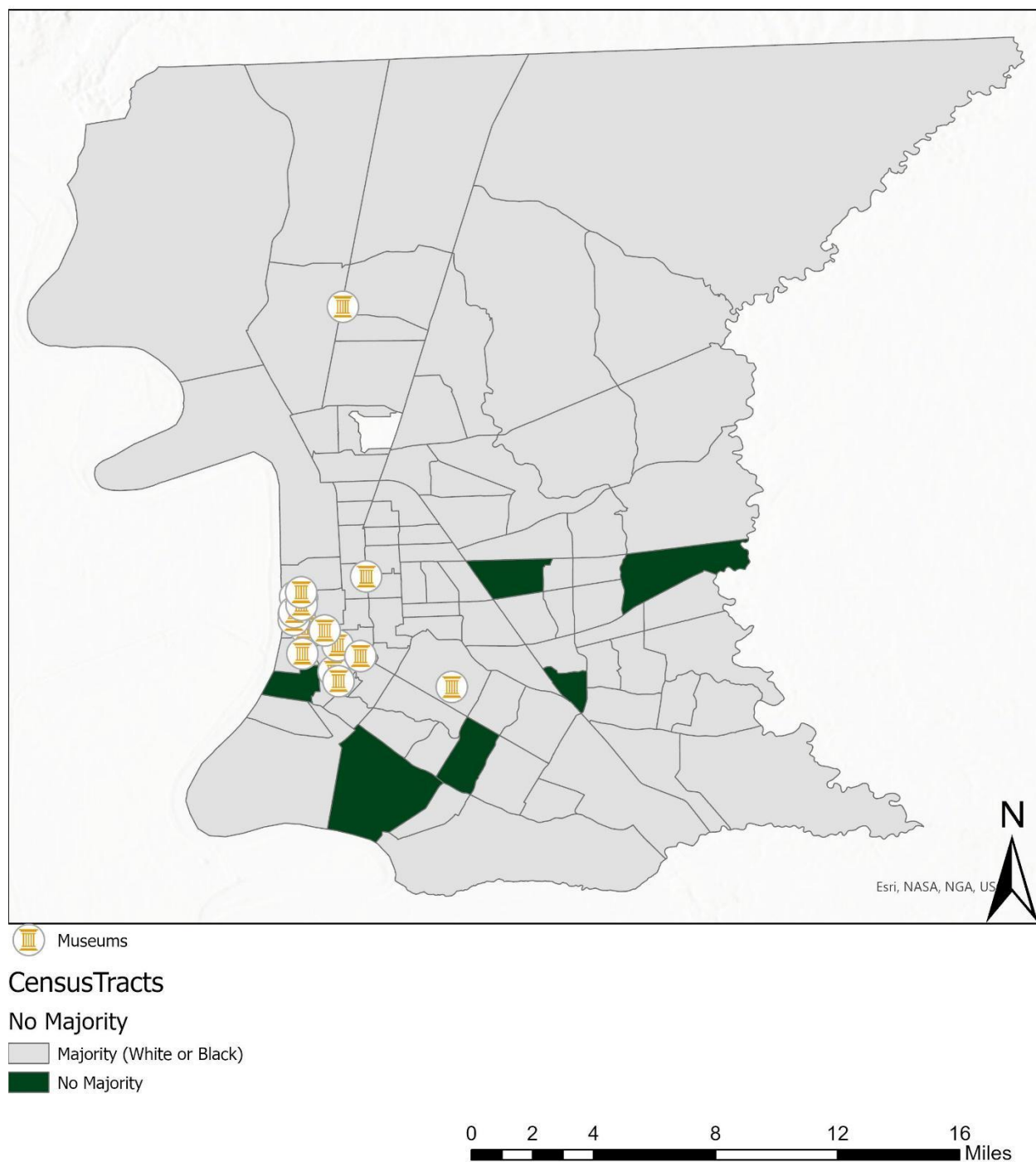


Figure 5 Census Tracts where there is not a racial/ethnic majority at all

Educational Attainment and Museum Distance

Educational attainment was divided between those who did not have a high school degree or alternative, and those who only have gone as far as acquired a high school degree or alternative. When examining census tracts of individuals who did not achieve a high school degree, we find that there is a negative relationship between the two variables being studied. Census tracts where there is this educational factor carry a negative coefficient of -757.943 with a probability of 0.77322. Therefore, it is inconclusive and highly unlikely that there's a significant relationship between not obtaining a high school degree and distance between one's own census tract and a museum as it failed to meet the threshold of significance. When taking to account the attainment of a high school degree or alternative, there is actually a positive relationship, with a positive coefficient of 1892.77. However, this variable contains a probability of 0.17202, therefore rendering this relationship insignificant. Overall, it can be said that educational attainment did not play a role in the geographic distribution of museums in East Baton Rouge Parish at all.

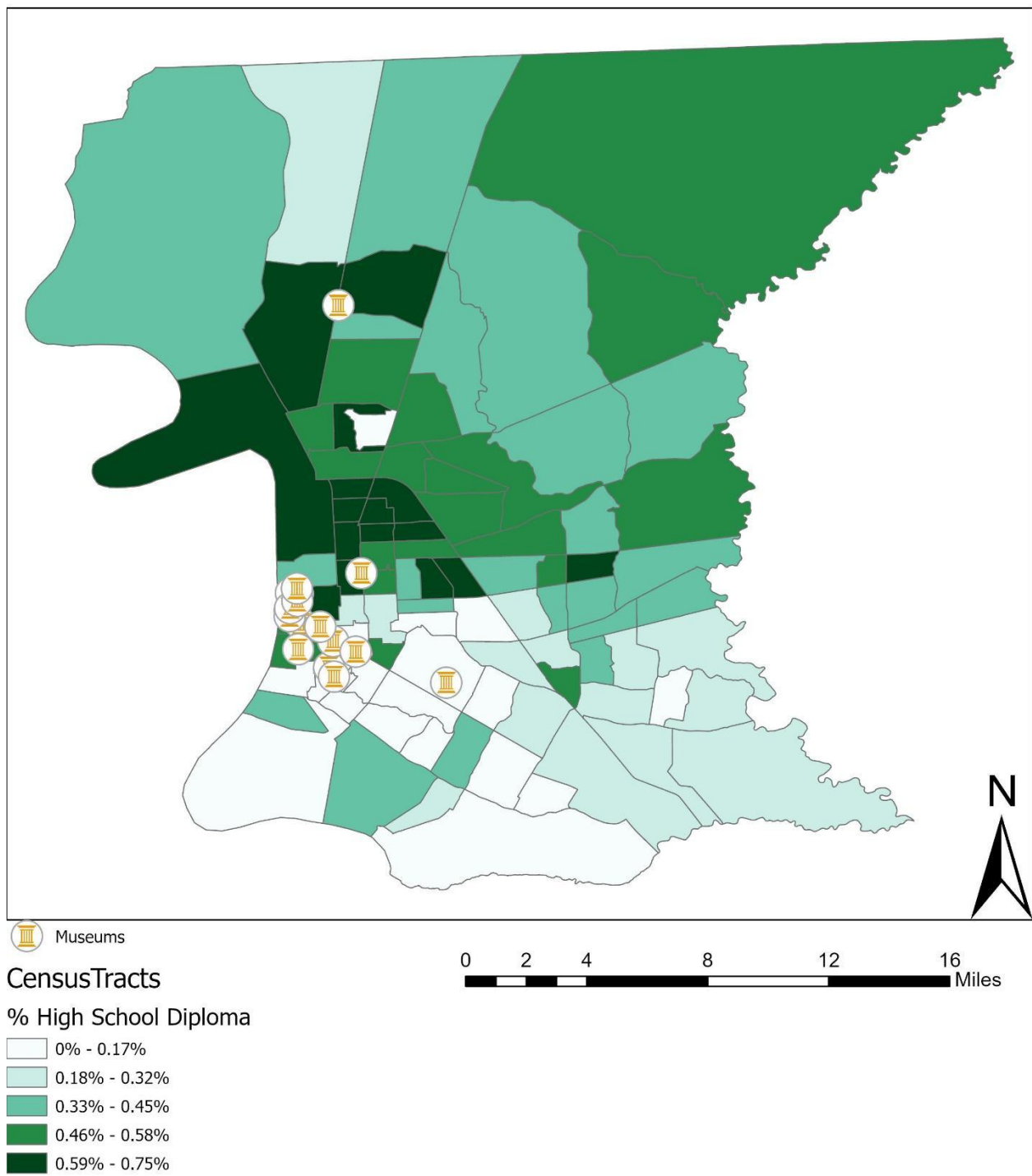
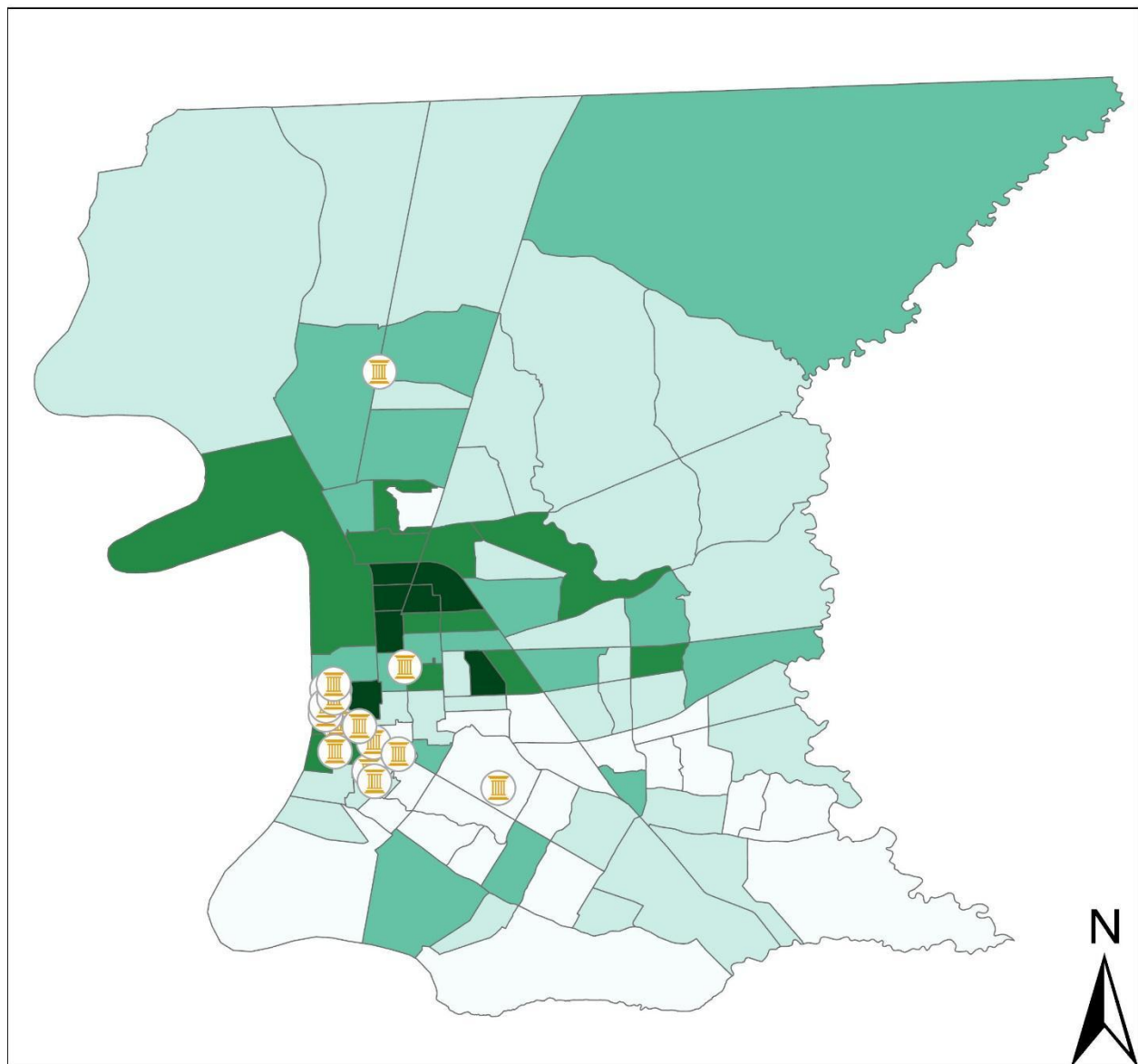


Figure 6 Percentage of High School Diploma Attainment or Alternative



Museums

Census Tracts

Less than a High School Diploma

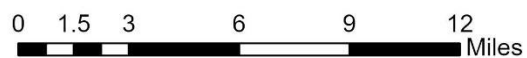
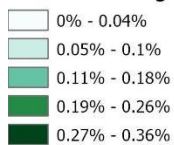


Figure 7 Percent Educational Attainment of Less than a High School Diploma or Equivalent

Median Income and Museum Distance

On the other hand, median income across our census tracts carried a coefficient of 0.0176724, which would represent a very slightly positive relationship, where museums of higher income tend to live slightly further on average from a museum in the parish. This relationship is affirmed by the fact that our probability for median income is 0.01885. Therefore, we can conclude that geographic proximity favors census tracts of lower median income, and that overall census tracts of higher median income tend to be located slightly further from museums on average. This finding echoes that of Kondo's where there is an overall positive relationship between per capita income and the spatial arrangement of arts and cultural institutions in New York City (Kondo 2010). Despite there being a significant contrast in population and population densities between the two locations, we see similar socio-spatial dynamics with regards to median income.

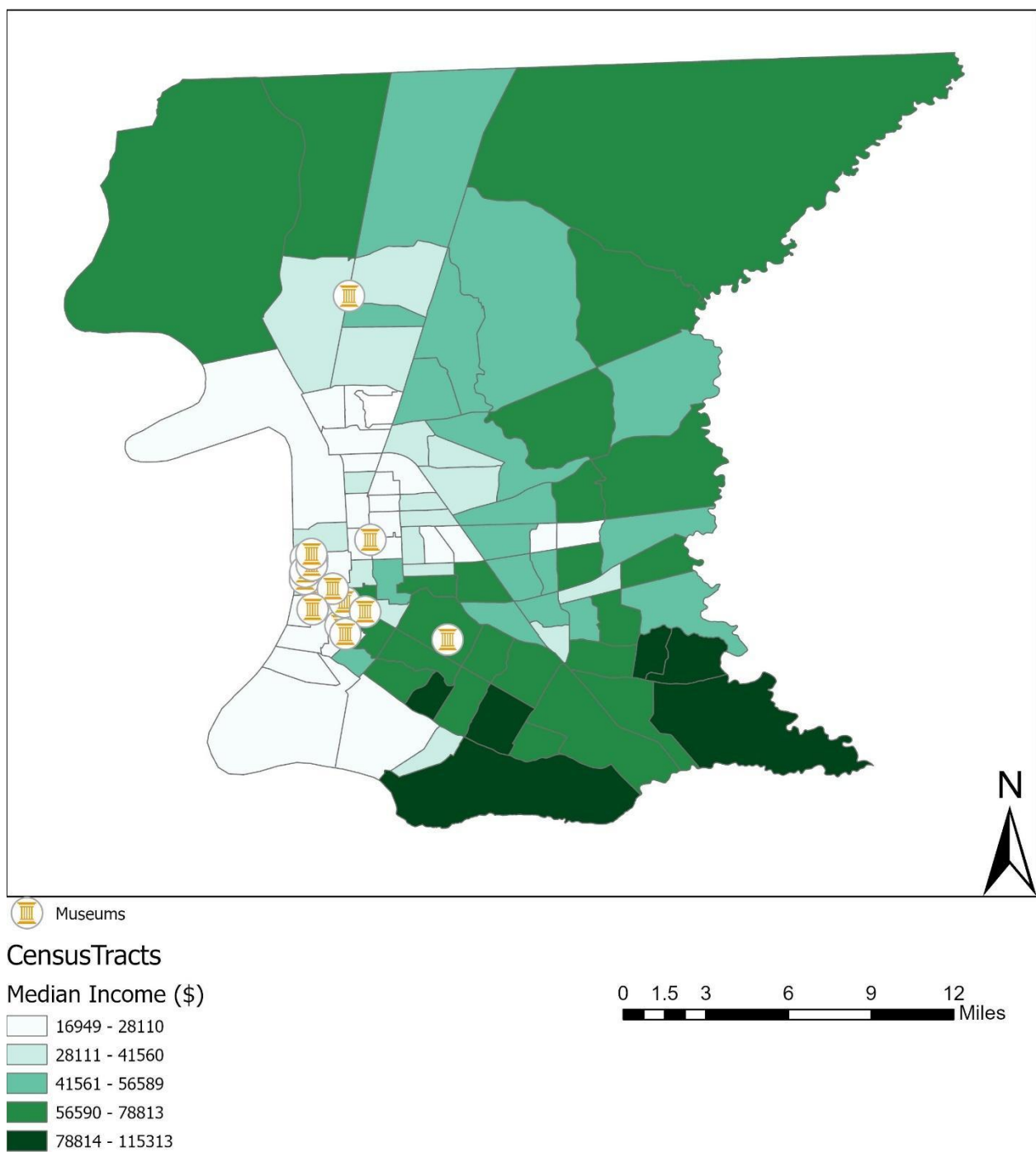


Figure 8 Median Income Across East Baton Rouge Parish Census Tracts

Total Population and Museum Distance

To evaluate if geographic accessibility favored more populous census tracts, a variable looking at the natural log of the total population was included in the dataset. I find that there is a slightly positive relationship as there exists a negative coefficient of -316.81. This is followed by a probability of 0.02114. Therefore, we are able to conclude that there is, in fact, a negative relationship between the total population of a census tract and a museum, where as the population increases, museum distance decreases. In other words, we find that the spatial distribution of museums favors census tracts that are more populated overall across East Baton Rouge Parish, and that census tracts that are less populated overall tend to reside further away from museums.

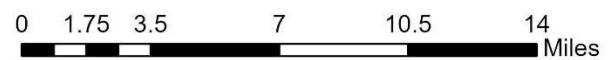
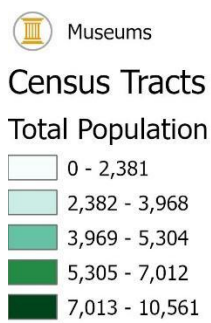
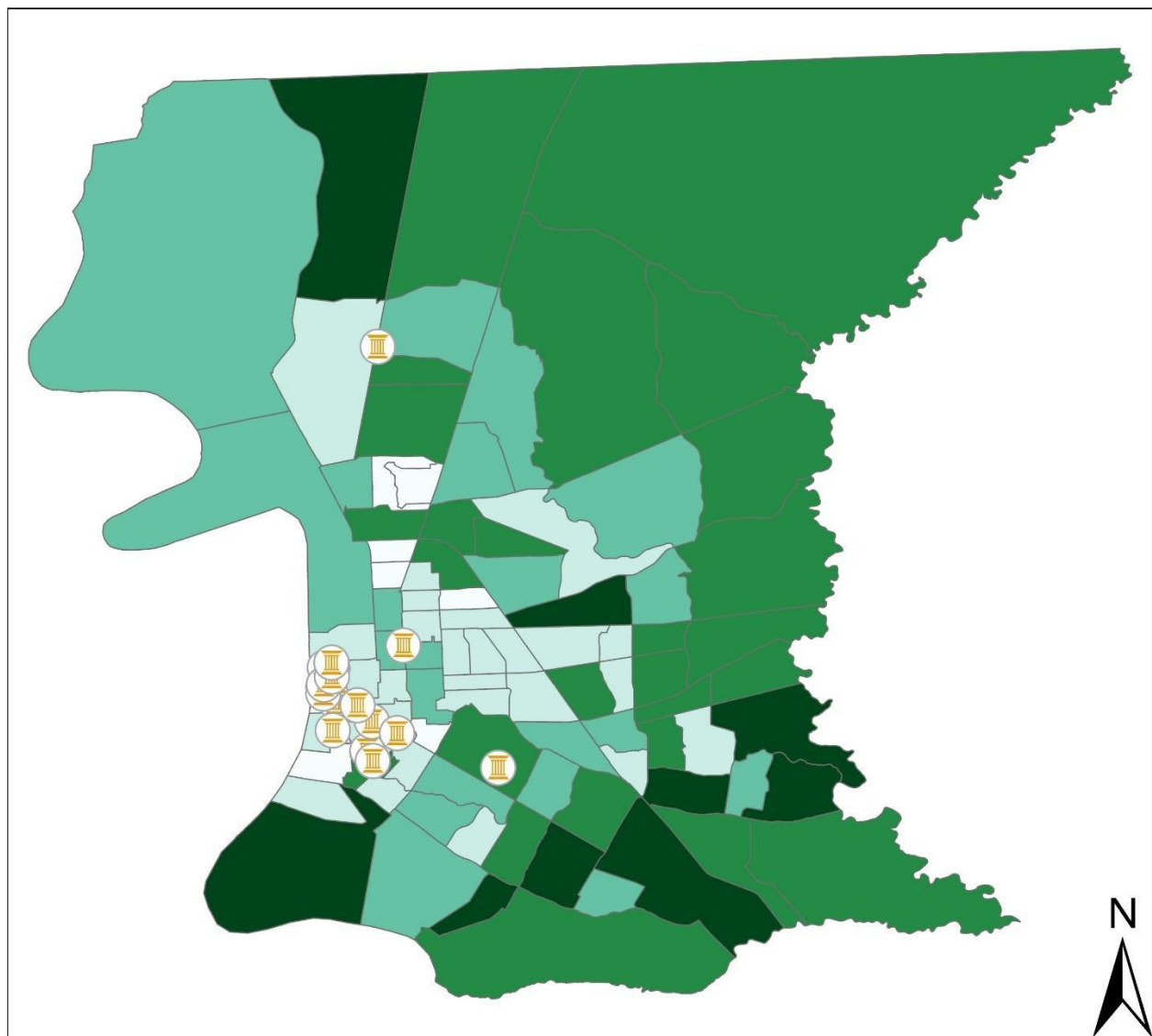


Figure 9 Map of Total Population in each Census Tract

Discussion and Conclusion

This study, in its goal to fill in the gaps of spatial literature among the discourse of culture and cultural capital, has found that census tracts of higher median income tend to reside further away from museums, contrary to what was predicted. It has found that the spatial distribution of museums overall favor more populous census tracts in comparison with less populated units. I find that other variables such as racial and ethnic composition, along with educational attainment do not significantly factor in the geographic accessibility of museums, measured by distance to the nearest one. These statistical findings represent the concentrated arrangement of museums in the parish. These findings, to some degree, also contradict previous literature where racial and ethnic composition of neighborhoods plays a role in geographic proximity to cultural institutions as a whole in their respective communities. On the other hand, this study affirms previous findings that the concentration of arts and cultural institution as a whole are centered around population sizes (Blau and Hall 1986).

This research is a valuable extension to the broader literature on spatial inequalities, and it adds another layer to research on cultural capital that focuses primarily on the individual, especially as it seeks to cover spatial and cultural dynamics of the south that were not widely discussed before. This study could potentially lead to future research on whether we see Black culture incorporated into these cultural institutions in the first place. Future research can possibly analyze the role gentrification may play in the sense that we see a spatial favorability towards more populated census tracts. These studies could also take into account the establishment of these museums vis-à-vis these demographic shifts overall.

City-parish officials of East Baton Rouge should seek to expand arts and cultural programs throughout the area to expand geographic proximities to cultural institutions, especially as we see concentrations in one sector of the parish compared to others, even in neighboring cities such as Baker, Zachary, etc.

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