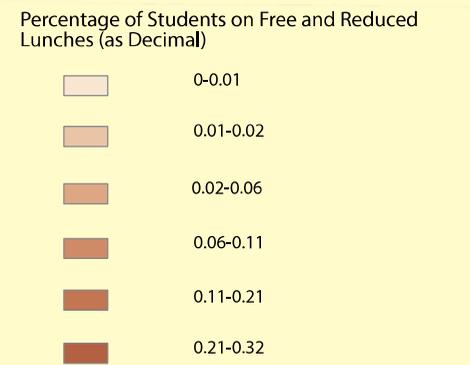
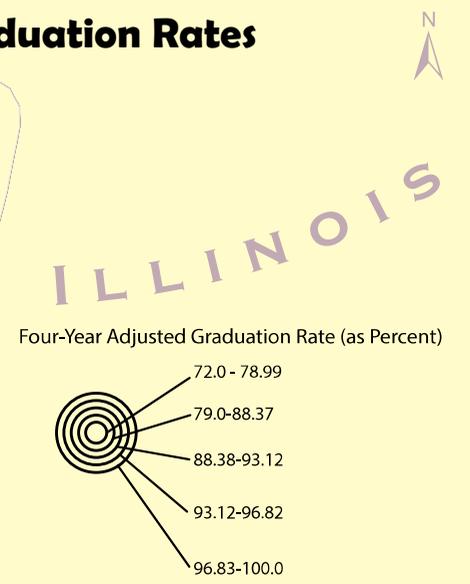
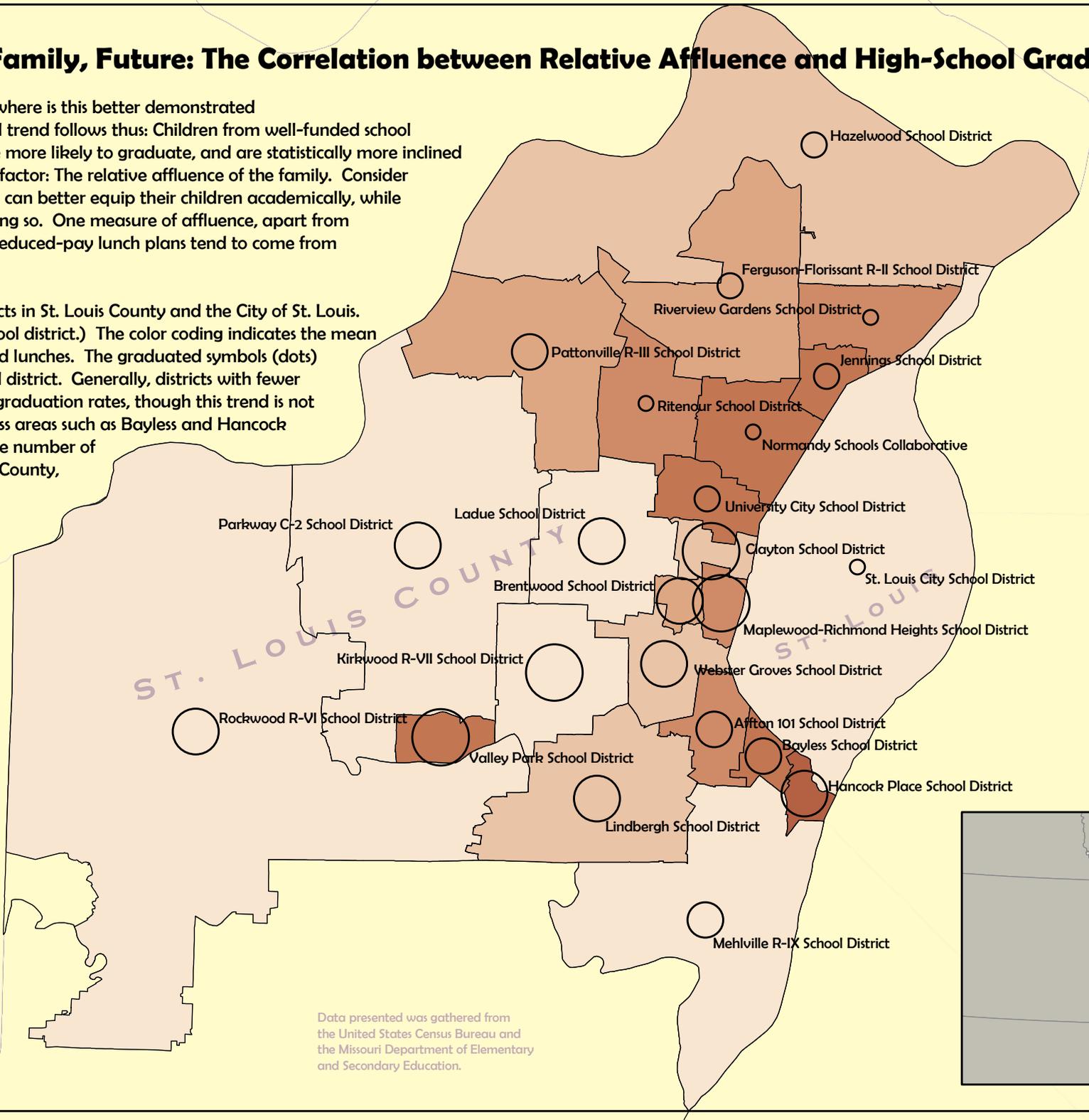


Food, Family, Future: The Correlation between Relative Affluence and High-School Graduation Rates

21st century America is a class-based society. Nowhere is this better demonstrated than in our public education system. The general trend follows thus: Children from well-funded school districts tend to perform better academically, are more likely to graduate, and are statistically more inclined to attend college. This map emphasizes another factor: The relative affluence of the family. Consider that middle class and upper-middle class families can better equip their children academically, while low-income families may have a harder time doing so. One measure of affluence, apart from household income, is food: Students on free and reduced-pay lunch plans tend to come from disadvantaged backgrounds.

The map at right shows consolidated school districts in St. Louis County and the City of St. Louis. (Note that the City consists of a single unified school district.) The color coding indicates the mean percentage of students receiving free and reduced lunches. The graduated symbols (dots) indicate the four-year graduation rate per school district. Generally, districts with fewer students receiving meal aid tend to have higher graduation rates, though this trend is not strictly adhered to. School districts in working class areas such as Bayless and Hancock Place show very high graduation rates despite the number of students receiving aid. Districts in north St. Louis County, such as Jennings and Normandy, show a positive correlation between high numbers of students on meal aid and low graduation rates. These areas are largely populated by minorities, a fact which speaks to the St. Louis region's history of racial segregation.

Data regarding free and reduced lunches was normalized by dividing the number of students receiving aid per school by the number of schools in the district. These figures were then divided by total district enrollment to determine the mean percentage of students receiving aid.



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 Course: Geography 370
 Projection: Albers equal-area conic
 Inset projection: Lambert conformal conic
 Scale: 1:300000
 Inset scale: 1:12500000
 Date: 2 May 2019

Data presented was gathered from the United States Census Bureau and the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.