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Mapping the Residential Landscape of King County, 2015

This report presents a spatial analysis and discussion of King County, Washington, focusing on residential statistics. The whole county is examined broken down into census tracts, and using geodemographic data retrieved from the Federal Financial Institutions Examination Council (FFIEC) website. The data reflects statistics from 2015, except for median income, which is estimated from 2009.

King County develops eastwards; suburban development

King County started developing along the Puget Sound, around the Seattle area. Evidence of that is found by looking at the median house age Seattle, which reveals that most households 50 years and older are in the area north of Lake Union and around the University District (map 1).

Reflecting the American Westward Expansion and in comparison to the East Coast of the United States, the region is quite young for a major metropolitan American area, with an average household age of 37 years old (table 1). Many tracts north of Lake Union are almost 2 standard deviation points above this average; here there is a cluster of older homes in neighborhoods that have seen little change in comparison to South Lake Union and most tracts along the coast in downtown (tracts 72, 80.1 and 81 for example), where revitalization dropped the median household age to 20 years and below.

Moving eastwards from the Sound, the median house age drops substantially, reflecting patterns of Fordism observed all over America – a move from city centers to the more spacious, affordable hinterland. A notable outlier is tract 327.03, around the area of Snoqualmie Casino where the average household age is 65 years old.

This patterns of eastward expansion from Seattle revitalization around its downtown is also reflected in the proportion of owner and renter occupied units (maps 2,3,4 and 5). With few exceptions, tracts east of Lake Washington are generally composed of a majority of owner occupied residences, while the older homes in Seattle are generally rental units. Notably, the vast majority of units in the Seattle downtown and Lake Union area rentals; this reflects patterns of revitalization, as zoning regulations changed and allowed for the construction of taller structures such as condos, making these areas denser and more desirable.

Median income, minorities and poverty in King County

Recent trends of revitalization of urban cores across America are visible in the analyzes of median house age and renter/owner occupied unit proportions, but in King County, income can also inform demographic distribution (map 6) .

Central Seattle and the region north of Lake Union is where the high earners living close to the city core prefer to live, but the highest concentration of households with an income above \$90,000 live around Lake Washington, unsurprisingly in some of the most desirable and expensive areas of the county. Many are also present in the more suburban areas of tract 322, even more eastward from Lake Washington.

Although the average median household income in the county is high, at around \$95,000 (table 2), one wild outlier is found In tract 53.02, where the average is \$0. This must be noted, for this tract is where the University of Washington sits, and where residential units are inhabited by a majority of students in housing provided by the University, and thus should not be representative, although is worth pointing out that tract is surrounding by others on both extremes; tract 53.01 for example, has a standard deviation from the mean of more than two points negative (with an average income of below \$30,000) while tract 41 directly adjacent to the east has a median income of above \$165,000.

The case of tract 81

One of the most notable findings is observed in tract 81, in the core of downtown Seattle. With an average of households living below the poverty line of almost 40% (map 7), which is four times above the average for the county (table 3), the tract has at the same time a concentration of some of the highest earners in the whole county, with the average household earning well above \$200,000.

This discrepancy could be another reflection of Seattle's aggressive revitalization and gentrification, which has rapidly shifted the demographics of some neighborhoods such as Capitol Hill - tracts 65, 75.

A look at the minorities statistics will reinforce this theory, showing that most tracts with a high presence of minorities (map 8) live south of these areas where high earners are found, and where revitalization occurred. And although about a third of King County is classified as minority (table 4), the average of households composed by minorities is much higher south of Seattle, where some tracts have over 90% of minority households, such as 110,02.

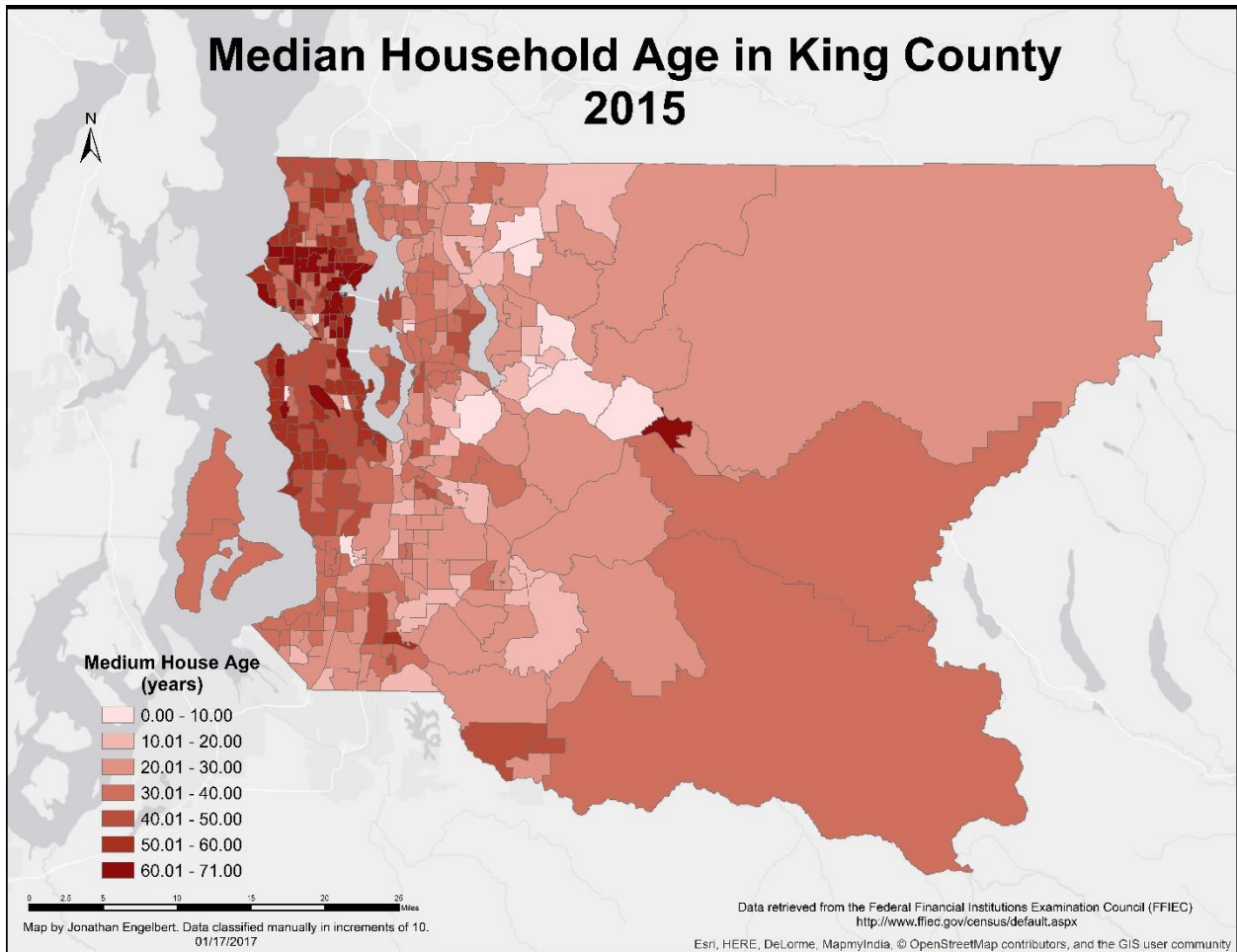
Conclusion and discussion

The spatial analysis performed reveals that older parts of King County have gone through intense revitalization – judging by the median household age and renter/owner unit proportion – and gentrification – looking at minority and median income distributions. The Seattle core has a much lower proportion of minorities and higher concentration of earners than South Seattle, which is representational of current trends of minorities being pushed out of urban cores towards the suburbs. Outside the more urbanized areas along the Sound, many high earners still live in more secluded areas, reflecting patterns of Fordism, where those who could afford the commute sought land and housing outside dense urban areas, looking for more space and less of the urban negative externalities. King County is found to be a very racially and income segregated region.

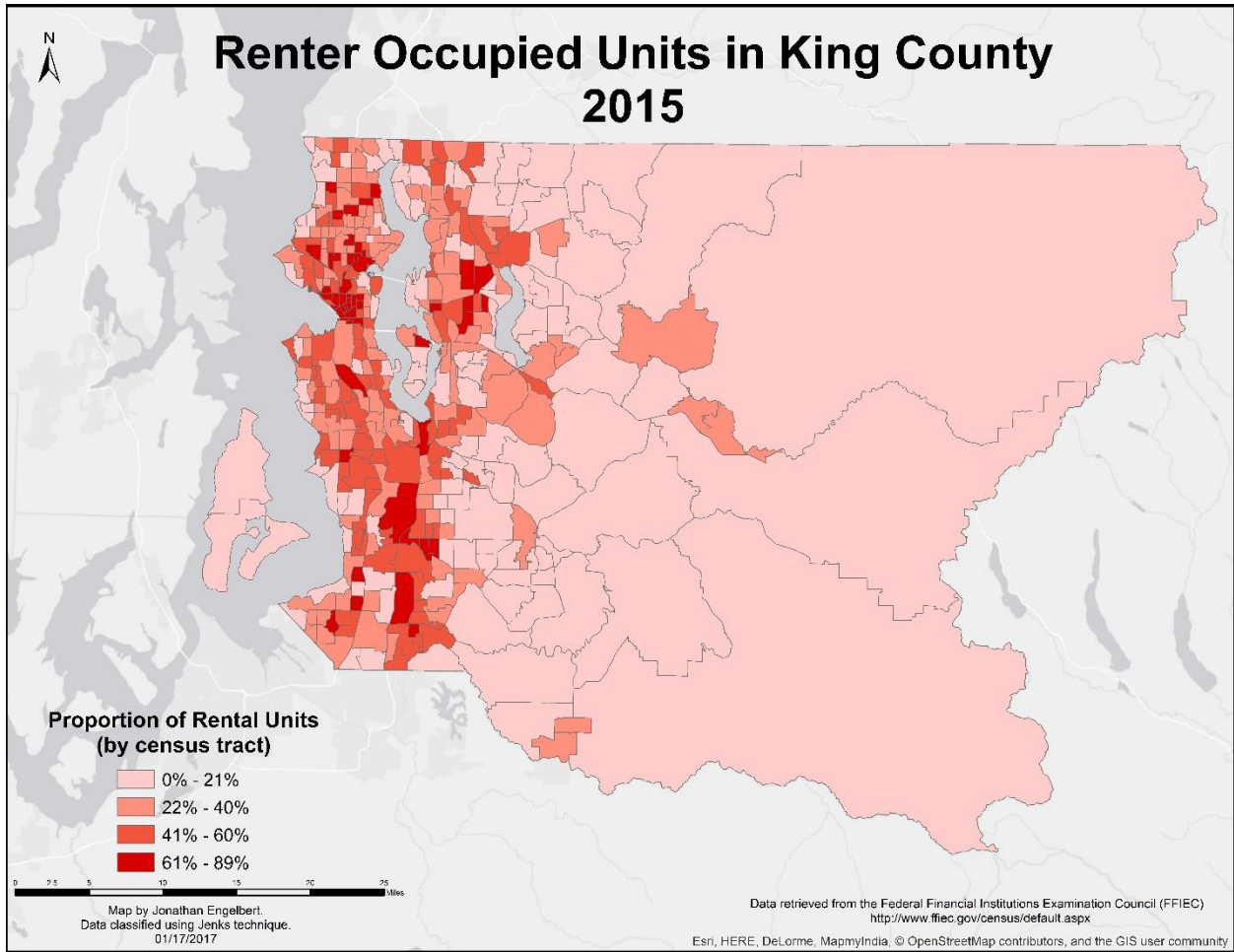
Finally, this report recommends a more in-depth investigation of tract 81, for it contains itself one of the highest concentration of high-earners and households living below poverty. An investigation of this wild outlier could be a representative sample of the trends triggered by Post-Fordism and the shift to a service-based industry in the region.

Maps

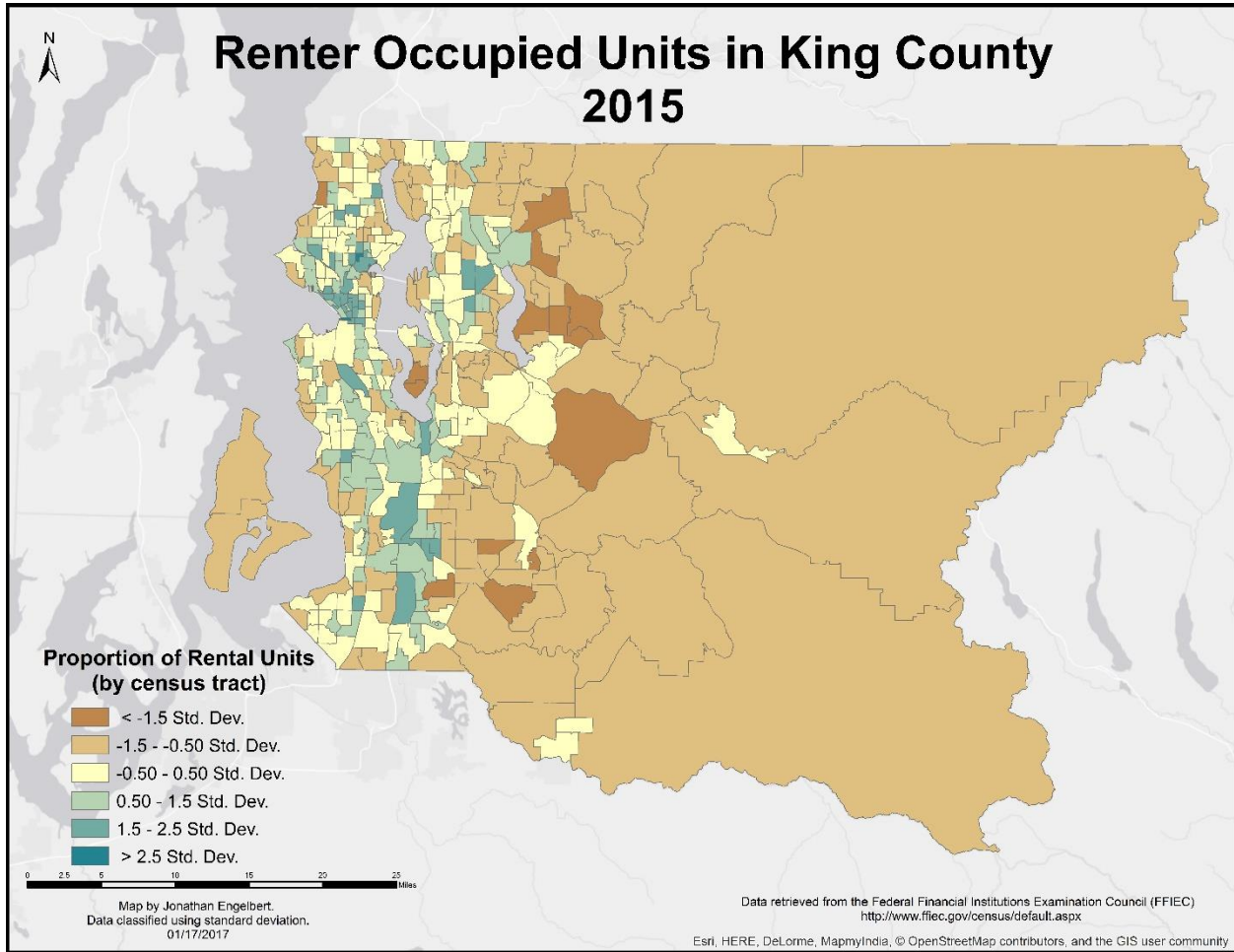
Map 1



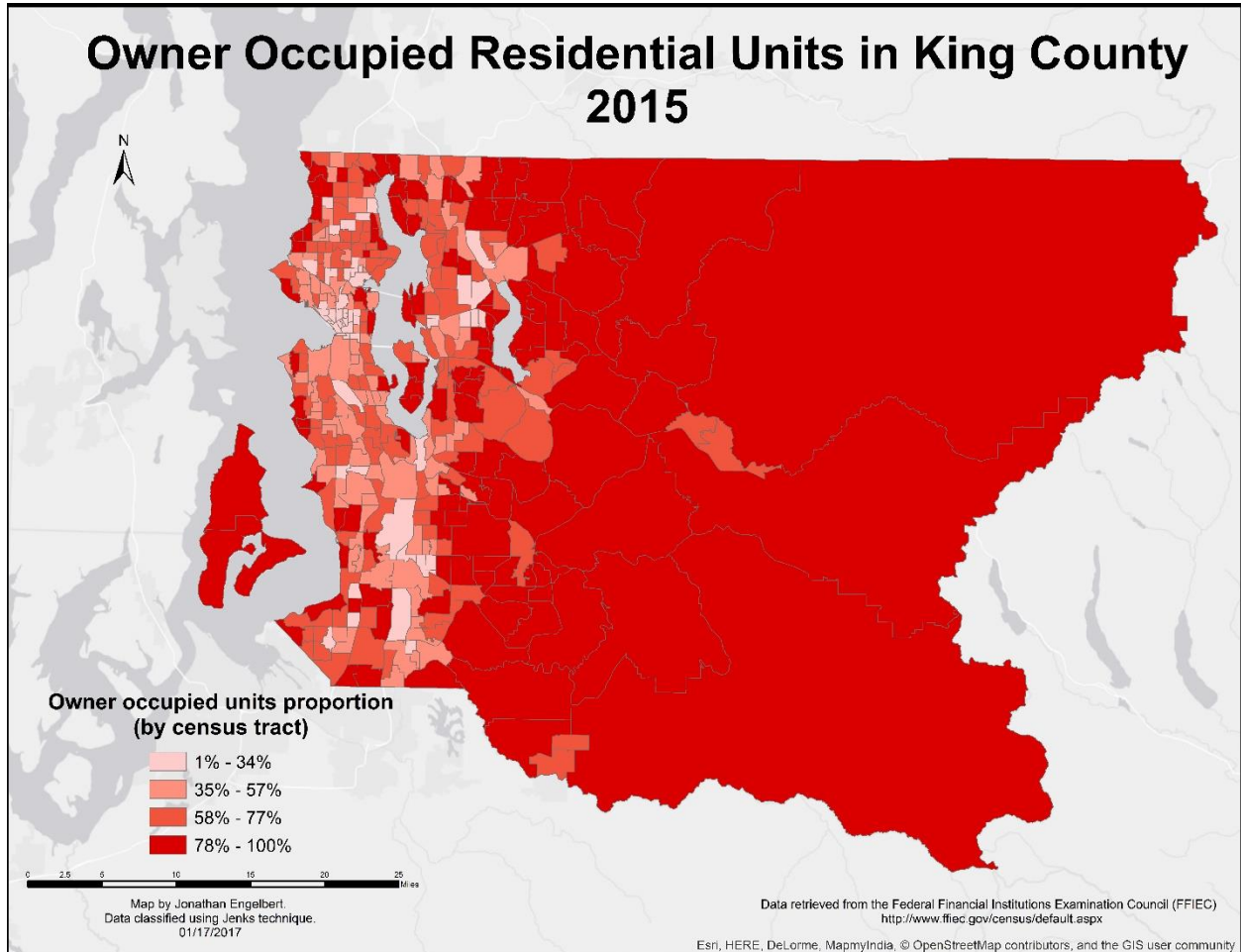
Map 2



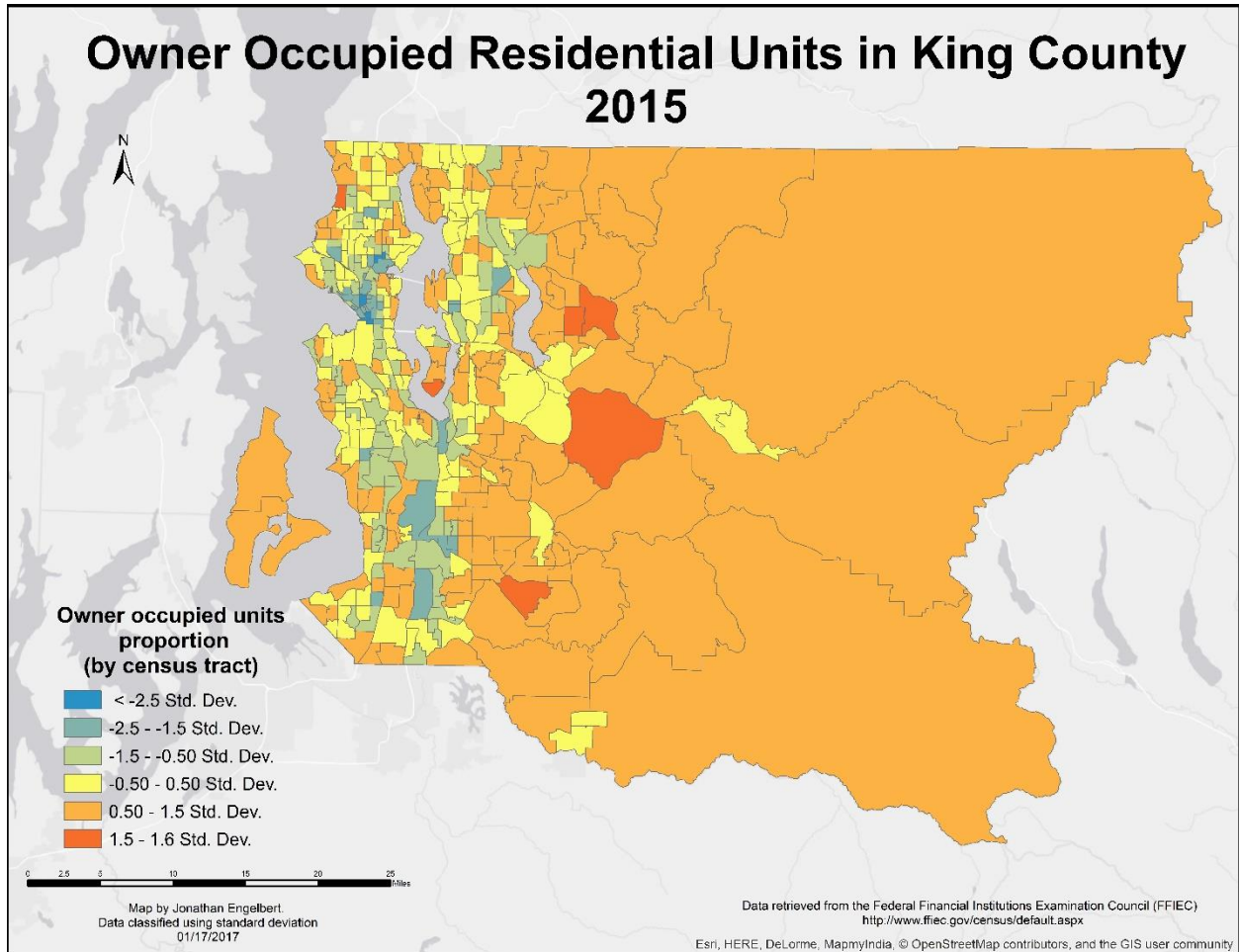
Map 3



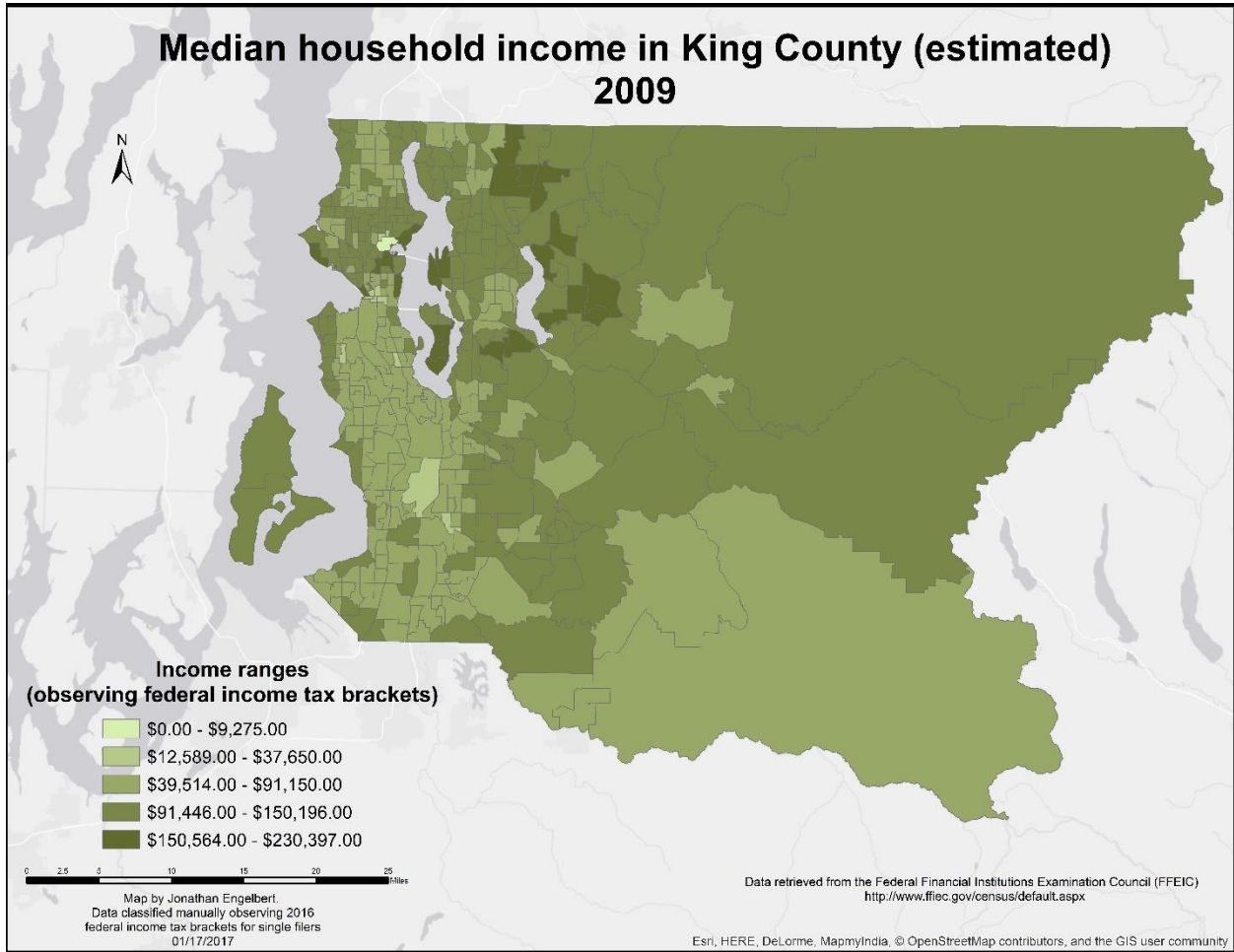
Map 4



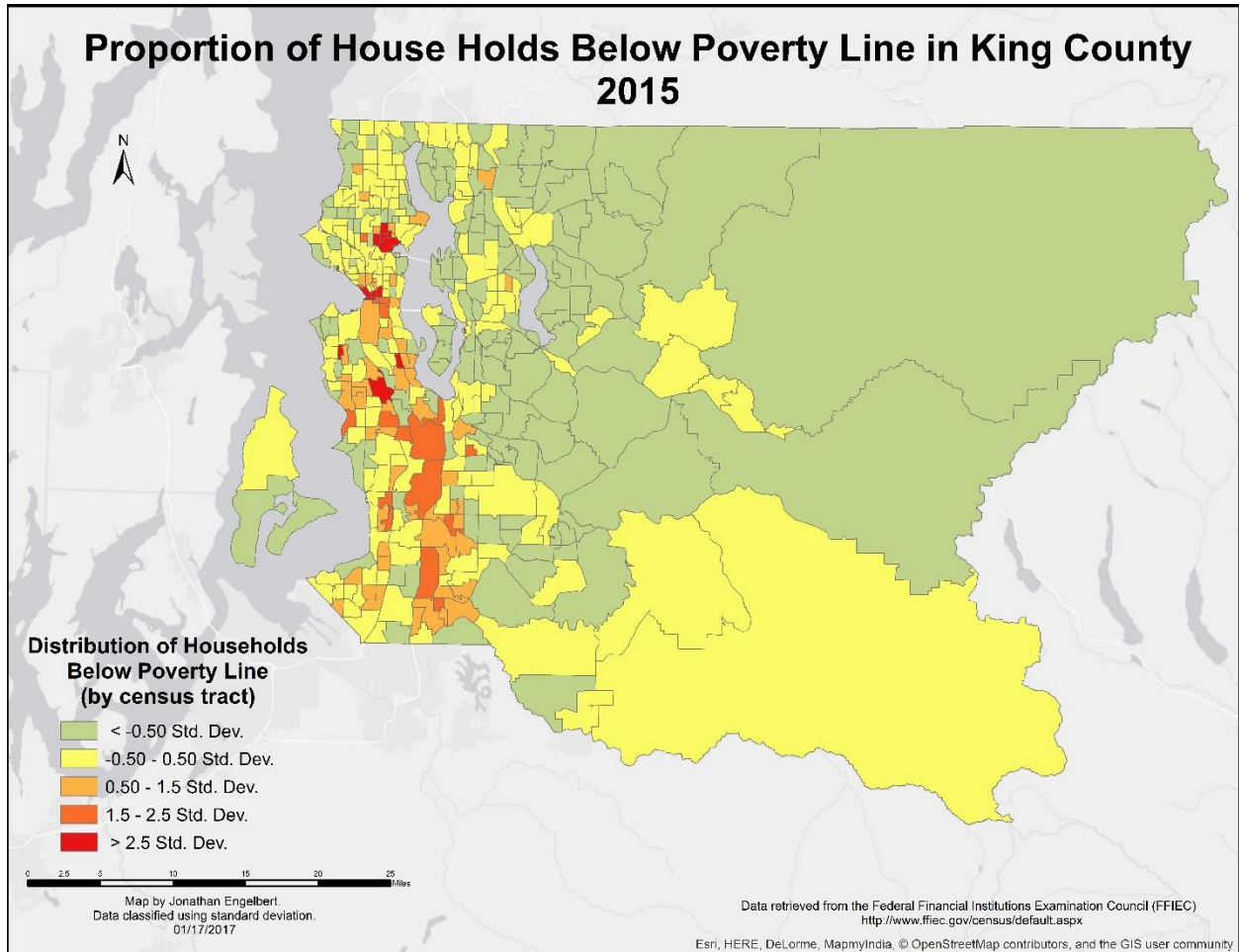
Map 5



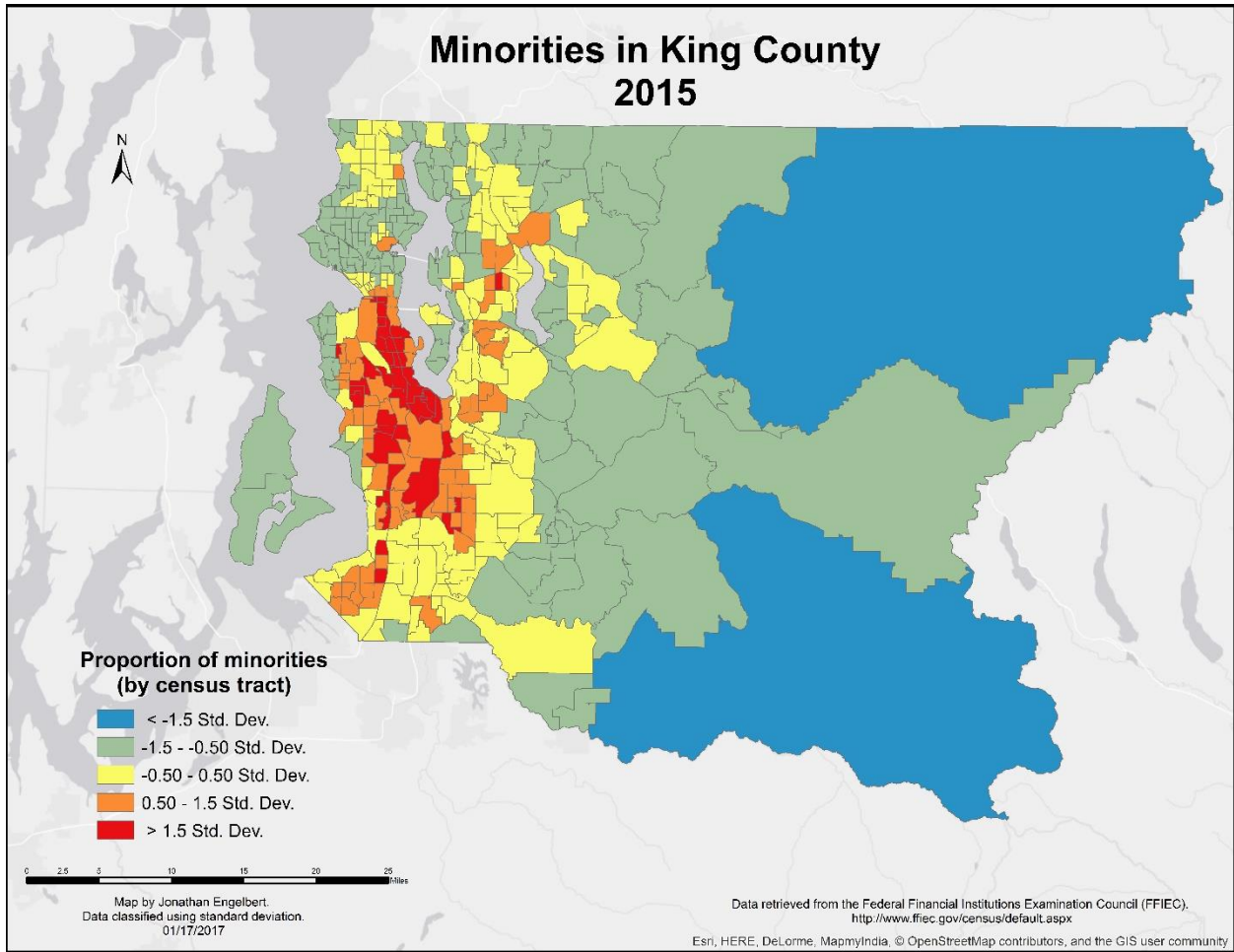
Map 6



Map 7



Map 8



Tables

Table 1

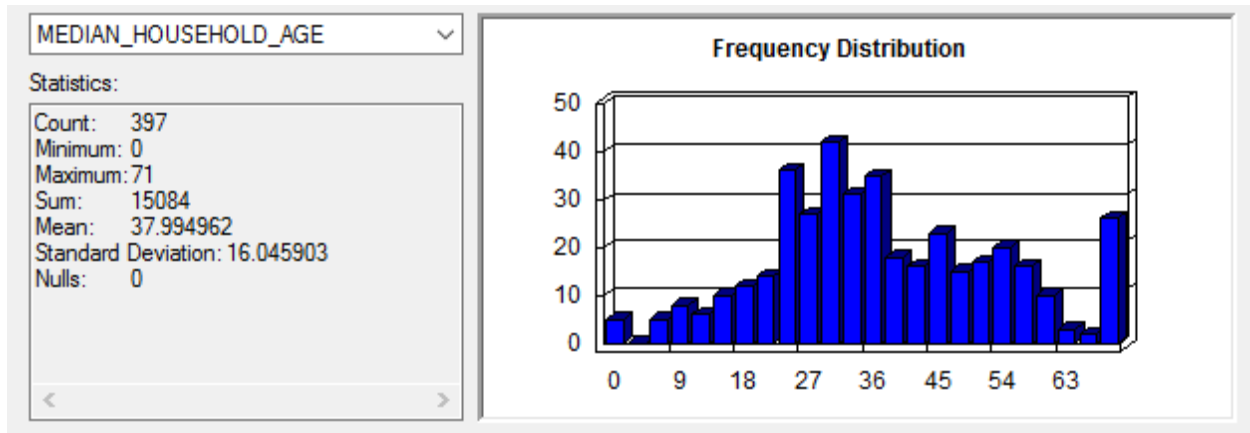


Table 2

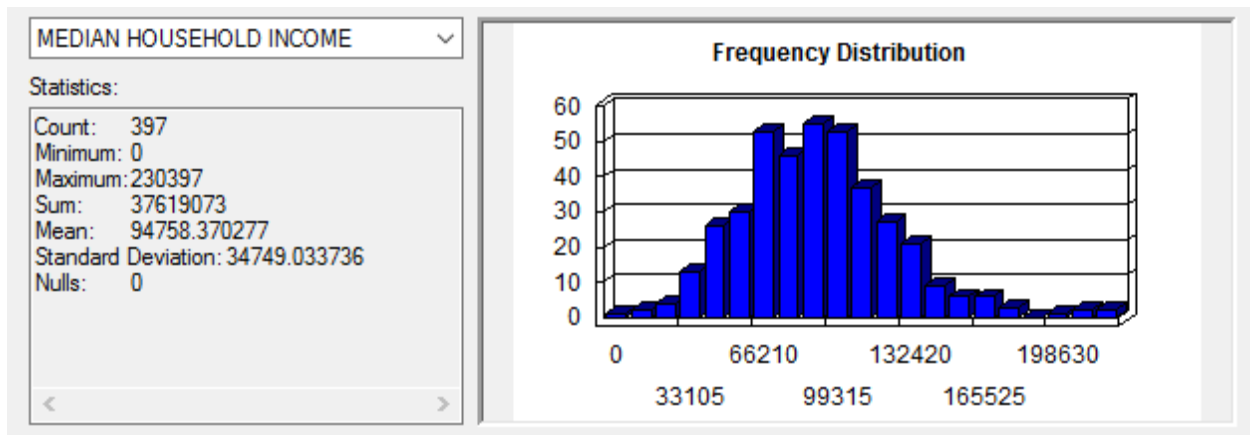


Table 3

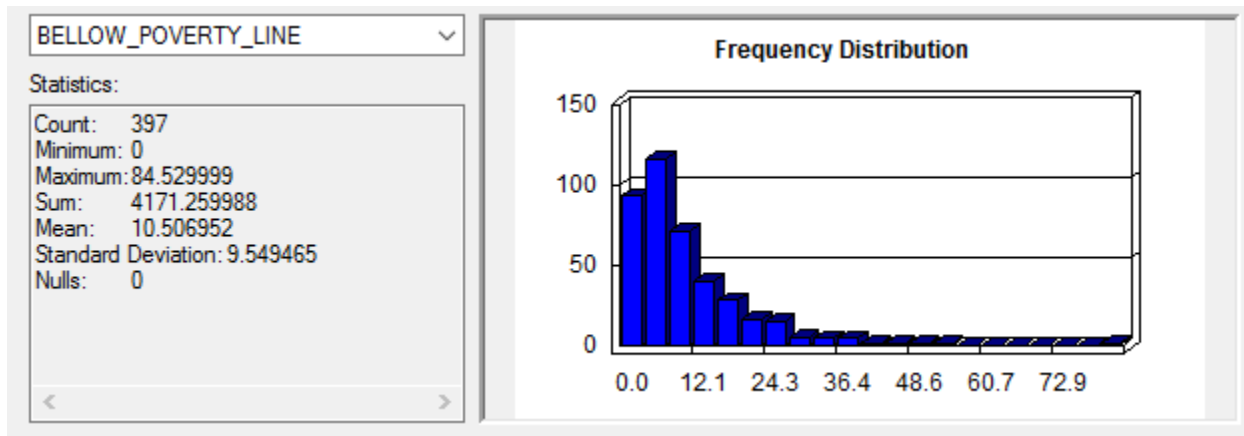
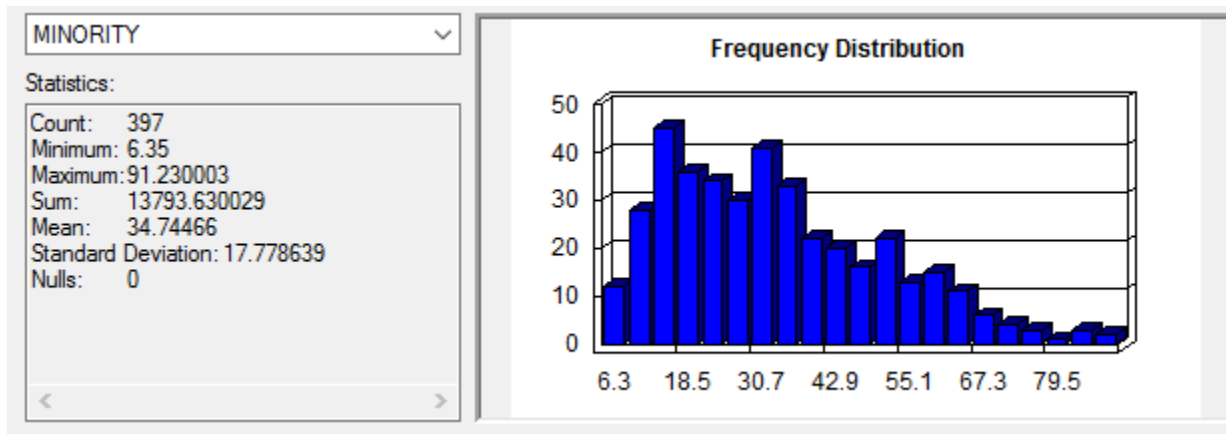


Table 4



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