
Abstract:
As an evolving cornerstone of the Sunbelt at the beginning of a new century, Florida deserves increased attention from cultural geographers. Most of what is known of cultural patterns in the Sunshine State is based on some good, traditional 20th century research. For instance, in his Cultural Geography of the United States, Wilbur Zelinsky identified a cultural divide extending in a "U" shape from coast to coast across the Florida Peninsula. We seek to update our understanding of this important boundary through study of its evolution, elaboration and experiential consequences. Using historic maps and census data, we looked for evidence of the beginnings and movement of that boundary. We suggest that the divide originated with the arrival of northeasterners in southeast Florida around the turn of the 20th century, and then moved northward along the coasts. Interior South Florida retained significant southern population elements throughout this century. At present, the boundary area of this cultural divide along portions of both coasts exhibits complex socioeconomic characteristics associated with what some have called a "blight belt." On these bases we suggest a partial realignment, renaming of the blight belt as the blight archipelago, and fuller meaning of this primary cultural divide on the Florida peninsula.

Keywords: Florida; Cultural boundary; Blight archipelago