



Demographic Investigation of the Mississippi Delta and Blackbelt

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Kyle Kundert with faculty mentors Dr. James B. Foust & Dr. Ezra Zeitler Department of Geography and Anthropology

Delta/Blackbelt

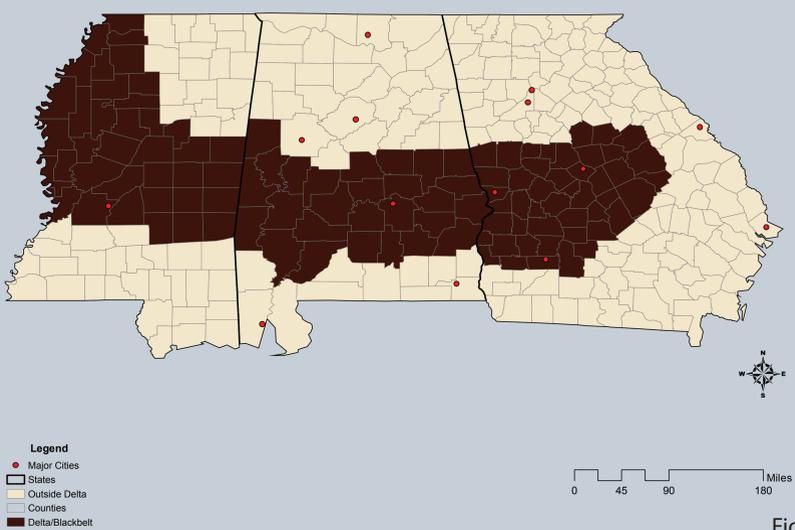


Figure 1

Percent Renter Occupied

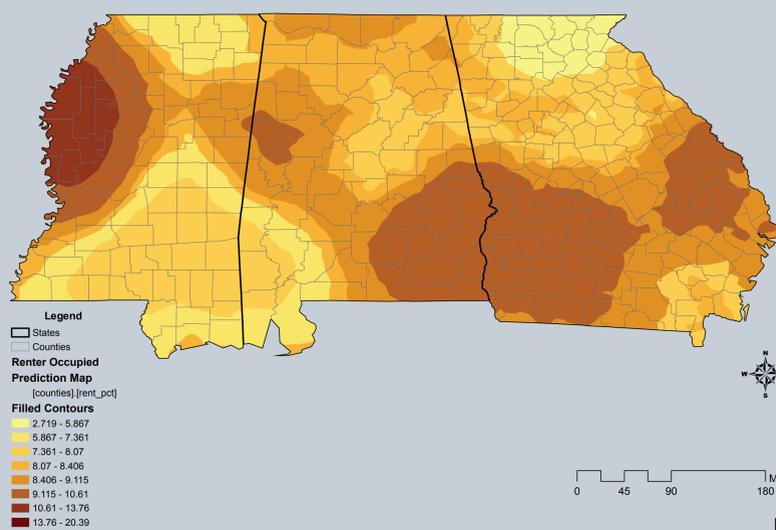


Figure 2

Population Change: 1990-2000

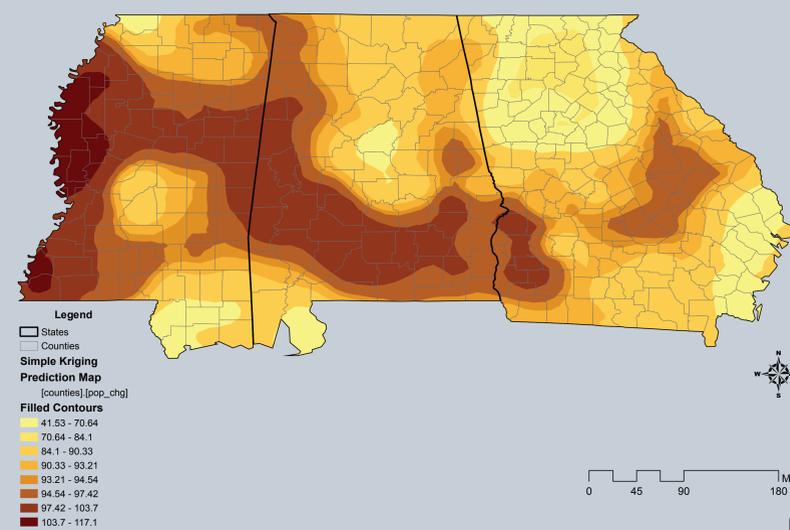


Figure 3

Delta/Blackbelt

The Mississippi Delta is a distinctive region located in Northwestern Mississippi. Typically, it makes up the area between Memphis, in the extreme south-western part of Tennessee and the city of Vicksburg, Mississippi to the south. The Blackbelt is an area extending from the Delta of Mississippi through Alabama and into Georgia. The region as a whole is marked by many physical and cultural characteristics that make it exceptional. The goal of this project was to use census data to identify some of those characteristics. Many factors could have been used besides the ones here, however, these characteristics seemed to show the great contrast that exists between the Delta/Blackbelt and the rest of the U.S.

Percent Renter Occupied

The map above showing the percentage of renter occupied homes or non-owner occupied homes gives some indication of what the Delta/Blackbelt looks like from a homeowner standpoint. This once plantation dominated landscape and the sharecropping that followed have left their mark on the land. Though the actual percentage of renter occupied homes doesn't seem extreme, you need only to look at the areas corresponding to the Delta/Blackbelt to the north and south to see the sharp contrast in non-owner occupied homes. In fact, this region, even today is dotted with homes which were probably made for sharecroppers so that their homes close to the crops which they once tended.

Population Change 1990-2000

The population change from 1990 to 2000 in the map above probably gives the best indication of where the Delta/Blackbelt is located. The rich soils of the Delta and corresponding Blackbelt once made this region the center of cotton production and plantation agriculture, however, starting as early as the 1880's the cotton production centers shifted westward thus taking the wealth that cotton produced for the region. These initial losses of agricultural all with several other factors would set the stage for the great migrations out of the area. As the map shows the region continues to change, as the darker colors usually indicate great population losses and the lighter areas indicate areas of population gain. Like the Atlanta region in Northern Georgia.

Percent in Poverty

The map below from the Census Bureau shows poverty in the U.S. by county in 2000. The map shows several areas of extreme poverty throughout the U.S. and as you can see the Delta/Blackbelt region is obviously recognizable. From the Delta in Mississippi on through Alabama and into Georgia the line of counties marked by at least twenty percent of their residents in poverty is apparent. Recent economic times have hit this region of the U.S. as hard as anywhere else. Home foreclosures, job losses in many sectors of the market especially in manufacturing and agriculture have further stripped this area of any economic foothold that it had. Abandoned homes are one of the most stunning cultural features of this landscape.

Median Home Value

The map below showing median home values, again brings to light some of the problems that the Delta/Blackbelt faces. Home values in the Delta/Blackbelt are visibly lower than those in the urban centers outside of the Delta/Blackbelt. Most striking are the median home value differences in the suburbs of cities like Atlanta (Georgia), Montgomery (Alabama), Jackson (Mississippi) and the corresponding rural areas that weave their way around the urban centers, roughly following the Delta/Blackbelt region. This map may be unconvincing as to the relative poverty of this region because this area as a whole is rather impoverished, but nationwide in 2000 the median home value was approaching 120,000; Significantly higher than the Delta/Blackbelt.

Percent Black Population

The map below showing the percentage of the population that is African American in the Delta/Blackbelt gives an indication to the legacy of slavery and cotton production in this region. This map, as well as any other, exemplifies where the Delta/Blackbelt is and how it differs from the area's that surround it. As stated earlier, the legacy of cotton agriculture and the continued hardships that African Americans face is perhaps best shown in the history and culture of the Delta/Blackbelt. Almost nowhere else in the U.S. has the history of African Americans been so well acknowledged.

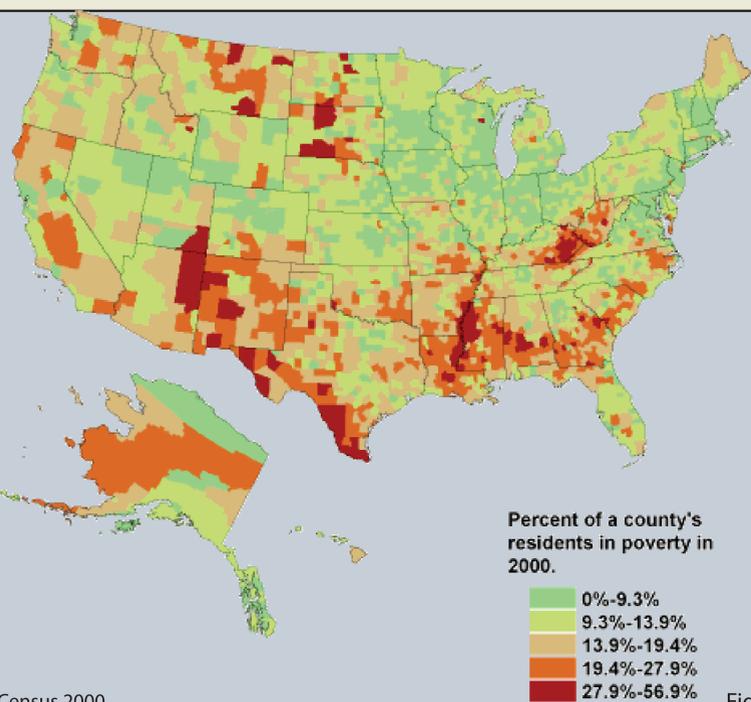


Figure 4

Median Home Value

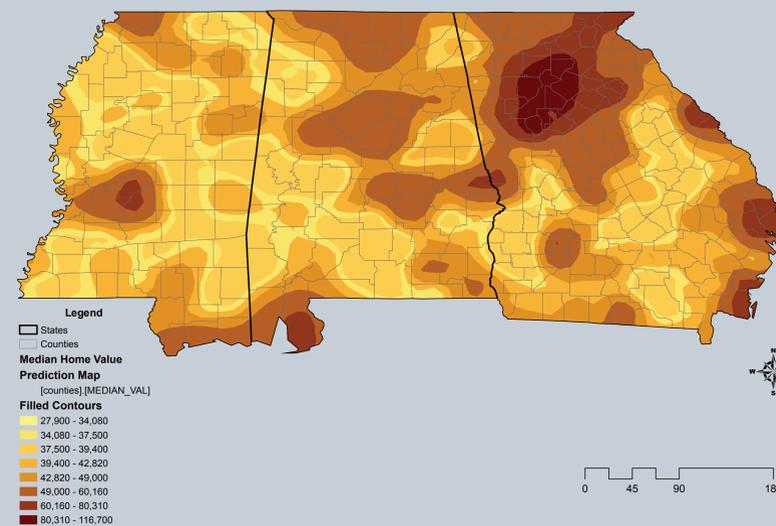


Figure 5

Percent Black Population

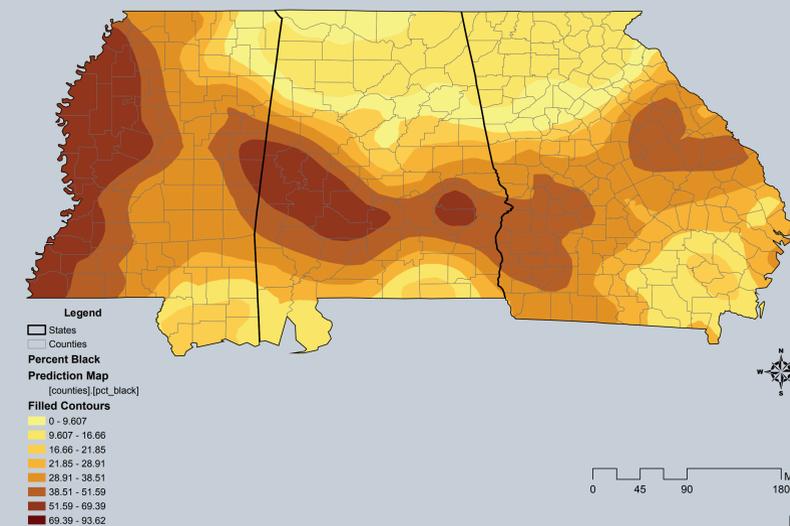


Figure 6

Source: Census 2000