
THE GEOGRAPHY of POPULAR CULTURE

Chapter Outline
California State University,
Northridge

Geography



Introduction

- Recall from last chapter the differences between Popular Culture and Folk Culture
- If “folk culture” was defined in geographic terms as “local culture for local people”, then popular culture could be defined as..?



Popular Culture and Place

- Has Pop Culture destroyed place?
 - Ed Relph-argues that the world is increasingly characterized by “placelessness”
 - Have you been to a location that is “placeless”?
 - Homogeneity of place



Place Product Packaging

- Holiday Inn / McDonalds
- Why would franchising, and the construction of expectation be valuable to travelers, tourists?



Niche Places/Lifestyle Clusters

- The opposite of placelessness
- Perhaps communication and transportation have made more specialized places.
- Weiss- “America has become increasingly fragmented”
- Robbin – “lifestyle clusters”



What was this?



Geography

Clicker Question:

- The fact that you recognized the last building as a Taco Bell is proof of what concept?
 - A. Placelessness
 - B. Lifestyle Cluster
 - C. Place Product Packaging



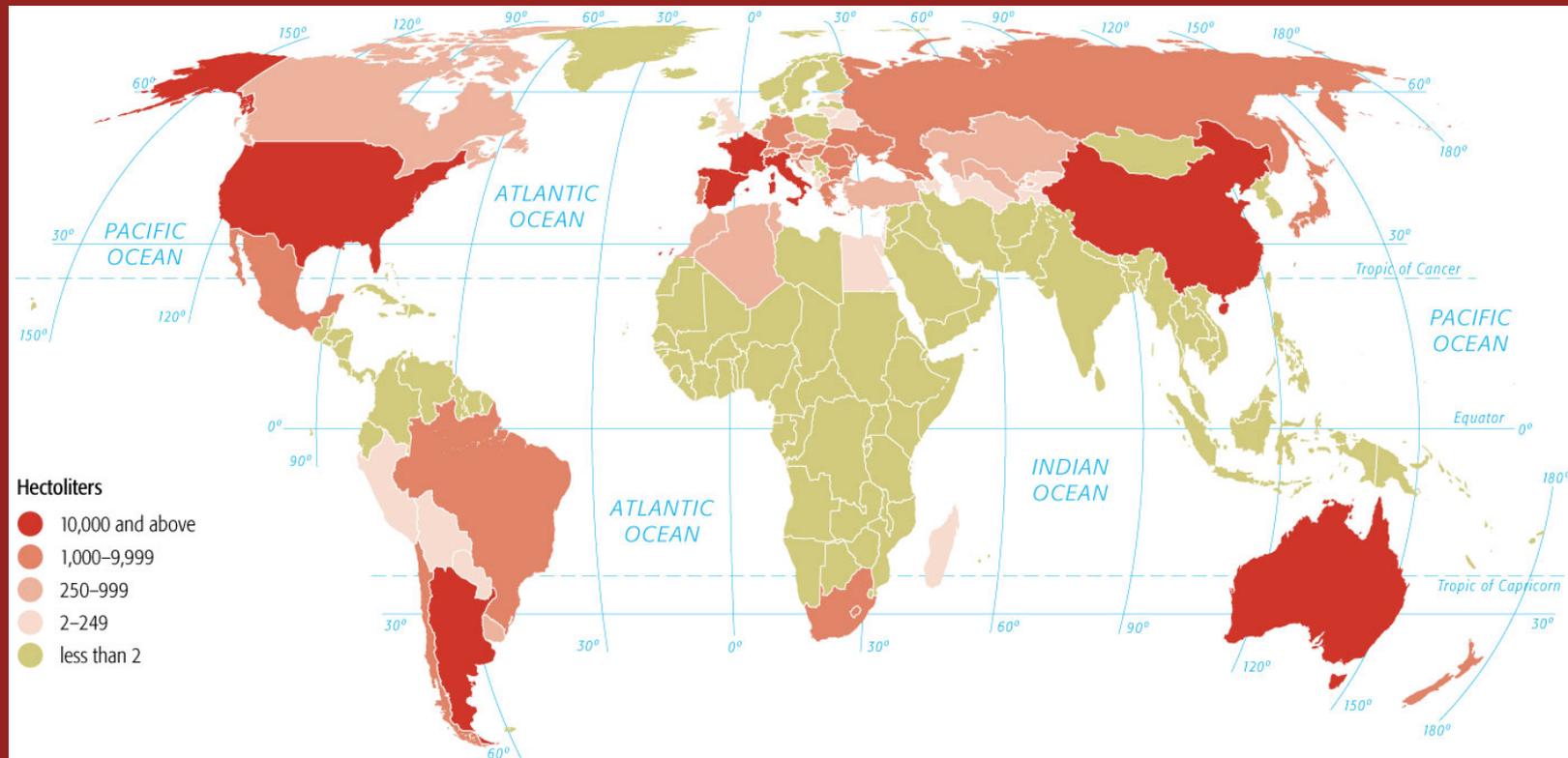
Food and Drink Consumption

- Name some instances of “placelessness” when it comes to food and drink
- Name some instances of regional specialties
- Are regional specialties dying out or getting stronger?
- Utah?
- California
- Wisconsin?



Wine

- Popular as well as folk food custom
- Environmental and geographic constraints
- Location provides distinctive quality
- What pattern is obvious on this map?



Carolina's Cheerwine (fig)



Geography

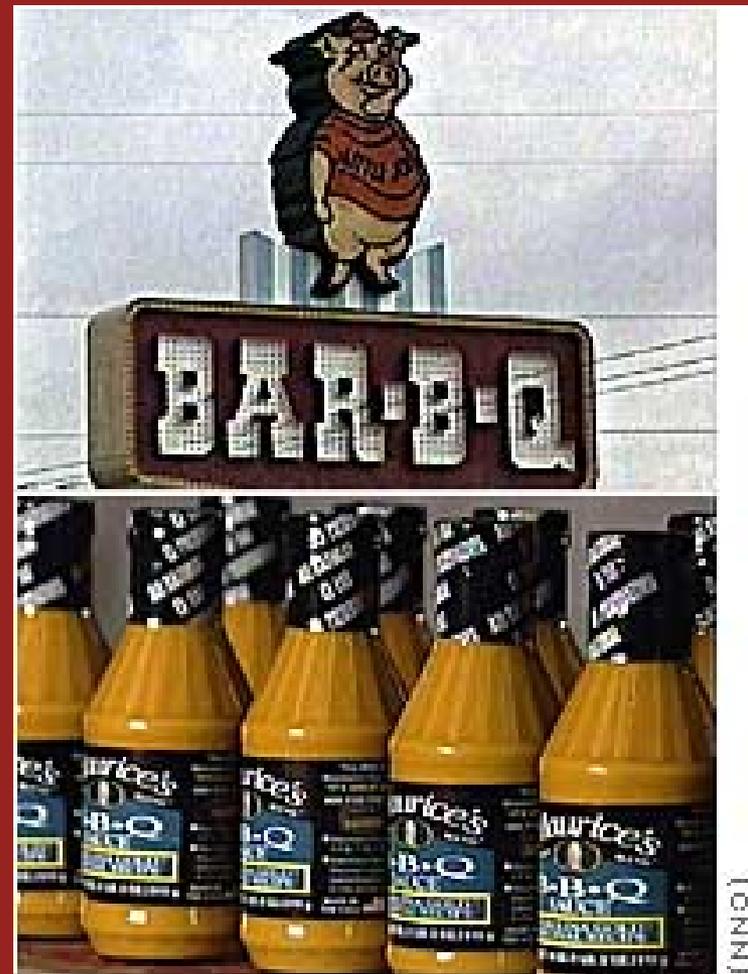
Carolina Bar-B-Q

- Served on a bun
- Served off-the-bone
- Vinegar and tomato based
- Often with red cole slaw



Carolina Bar B Q Sauce (fig)

- Folk ways spilling into popular culture.
- Why pork and not beef bar b q in the Carolinas?
- Where would beef bar b que be more popular?
- Other factors in the style of BBQ?



Geography

Popular Music

- The consumption of music varies from place to place.
- The production of music varies from place to place.

Why Memphis – Rock n' Roll?

- Why did so many of the early stars of the rock n' roll era come from Memphis?
- What cultural factors were *in situ* in 1955 that made Memphis an ideal location?
- The invention of magnetic tape a decade earlier made recording music cheap and accessible to more people. What parallels are there today?



Why Seattle - Grunge?

- Why did the city of Seattle have very few bands in the national spotlight from 1970 to 1990, and then suddenly experience an explosion of popularity?
- What was the role of Seattle's isolation on the ability of local bands to secure record contracts?
- What was the role of isolation in the creation of the grunge subculture?



Which of the following statements is incorrect?

- A. Both Seattle and Memphis had isolated musical cultures
- B. Both Seattle and Memphis had many talented musicians.
- C. Both Seattle and Memphis created musical innovations.



Why Bronx – Hip Hop?

- See folk culture notes...
- A different kind of isolation from Seattle
- Different cultural inputs



Sports

- Regions of the country have differing tastes in sport.
- Certain regions of country are especially productive in terms of athletes.
- Who produces the most football players?, Basketball?, Hockey? Baseball?
- Who watches what sports most closely?

Highest Percentage of High School Girls Participating in Organized Sports



Basketball Is Leading Girl's High School Sport



Highest Membership Levels in American Bowling Congress



Leading Per-Capita Producers of Major College Basketball Players



Sports (fig)

Geography

GREAT
FOR ALL
SWIRE

Leading Per-Capita Producers
of Major League Baseball Players



Leading Per-Capita Producers
of National Football League Players

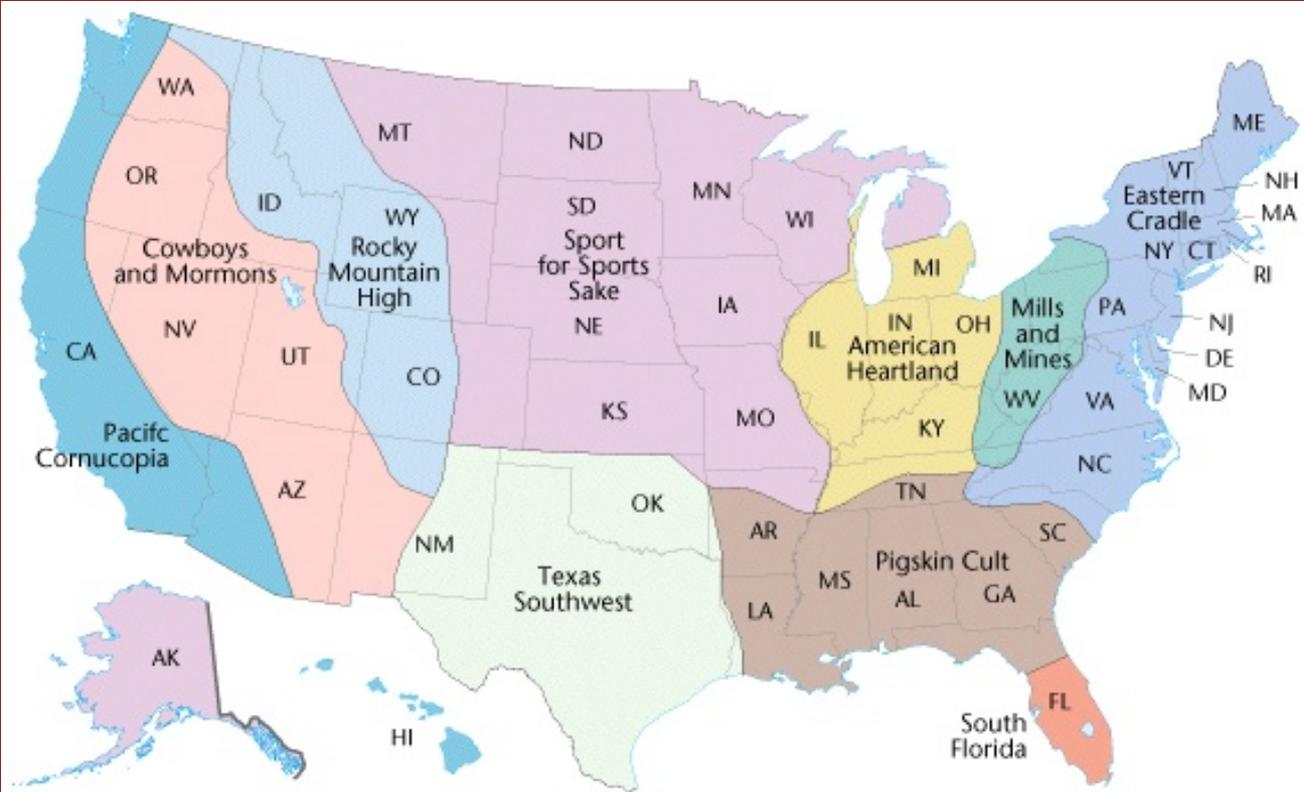


Leading Per-Capita Producers
of Major College Football Players



Leading Total Producers
of Major College Football Players





SPORTS PARTICIPATION RATE

PER CAPITA INNOVATION PRODUCTION OF ELITE ATHLETES

REGION	SPORTS PARTICIPATION RATE				PER CAPITA INNOVATION PRODUCTION OF ELITE ATHLETES	
	High school "trinity" sports	Other high schools sports	Adults	Women	PER CAPITA INNOVATION PRODUCTION OF ELITE ATHLETES	INNOVATION TENDENCY
Pigskin Cult	HIGH	VERY LOW	LOW	VERY LOW	VERY HIGH	LOW
Sports for Sport's Sake	HIGH	VERY HIGH	VERY HIGH	VERY HIGH	LOW	AVG.
Eastern Cradle	LOW	HIGH	AVG.	AVG.	AVG.	HIGH
Pacific Cornucopia	AVG.	HIGH	HIGH	HIGH	HIGH	VERY HIGH
Texas Southwest	HIGH	AVG.	AVG.	HIGH	HIGH	LOW
Cowboys and Mormons	AVG.	VERY LOW	AVG.	LOW	AVG.	VERY LOW
American Heartland	HIGH	AVG.	AVG.	AVG.	HIGH	AVG.
Mills and Mines	HIGH	AVG.	AVG.	AVG.	HIGH	LOW
Rocky Mountain High	AVG.	HIGH	HIGH	HIGH	LOW	AVG.
South Florida	AVG.	HIGH	HIGH	HIGH	HIGH	AVG.



Clothing and Fashion

- Many clothing options have roots in the environmental and/or folk cultural traditions of other countries.
- Occupation or work clothes
- Some have jumped into popular culture.



Which of the following states
would you most likely find folks
playing sports non-
competitively?

- A. New York
- B. California
- C. North Dakota
- D. Utah

Blue Jeans

- Once exclusively the pants of the working class; popularized in _____ during the _____ by Levi Strauss.
- Have become an international symbol of America, and a value system.



Malls

- Consider the shopping mall and how it uses place to sell clothing.
- Can you think of a company that sells a “place” as it tries to sell clothes?
- What places are highly desirable?
- What is it about those places that make them desirable?



“Where” are they selling?

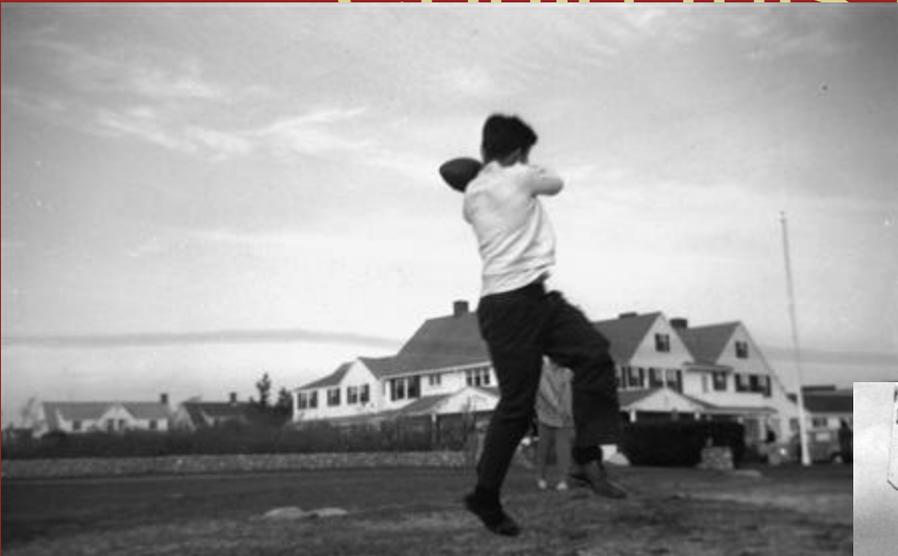


- Exclusivity? Escape? Where can you get that?

Geography

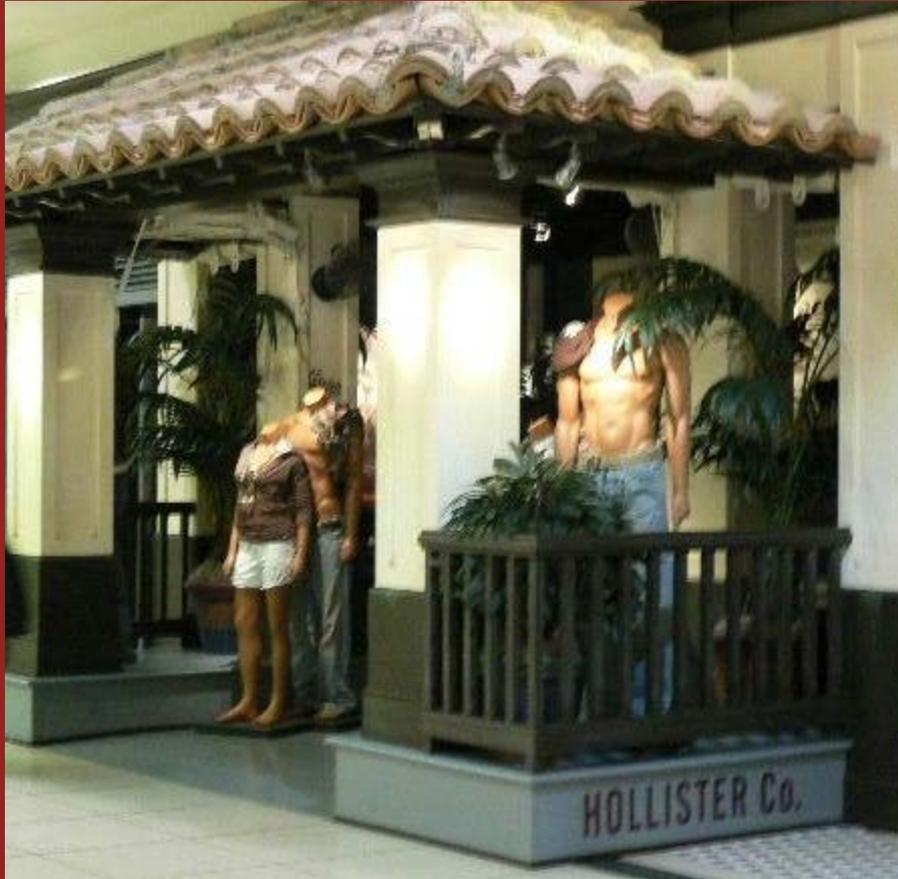


Could this be the place?



Geograph

Where about these guys?



- Where?

Place Imagery

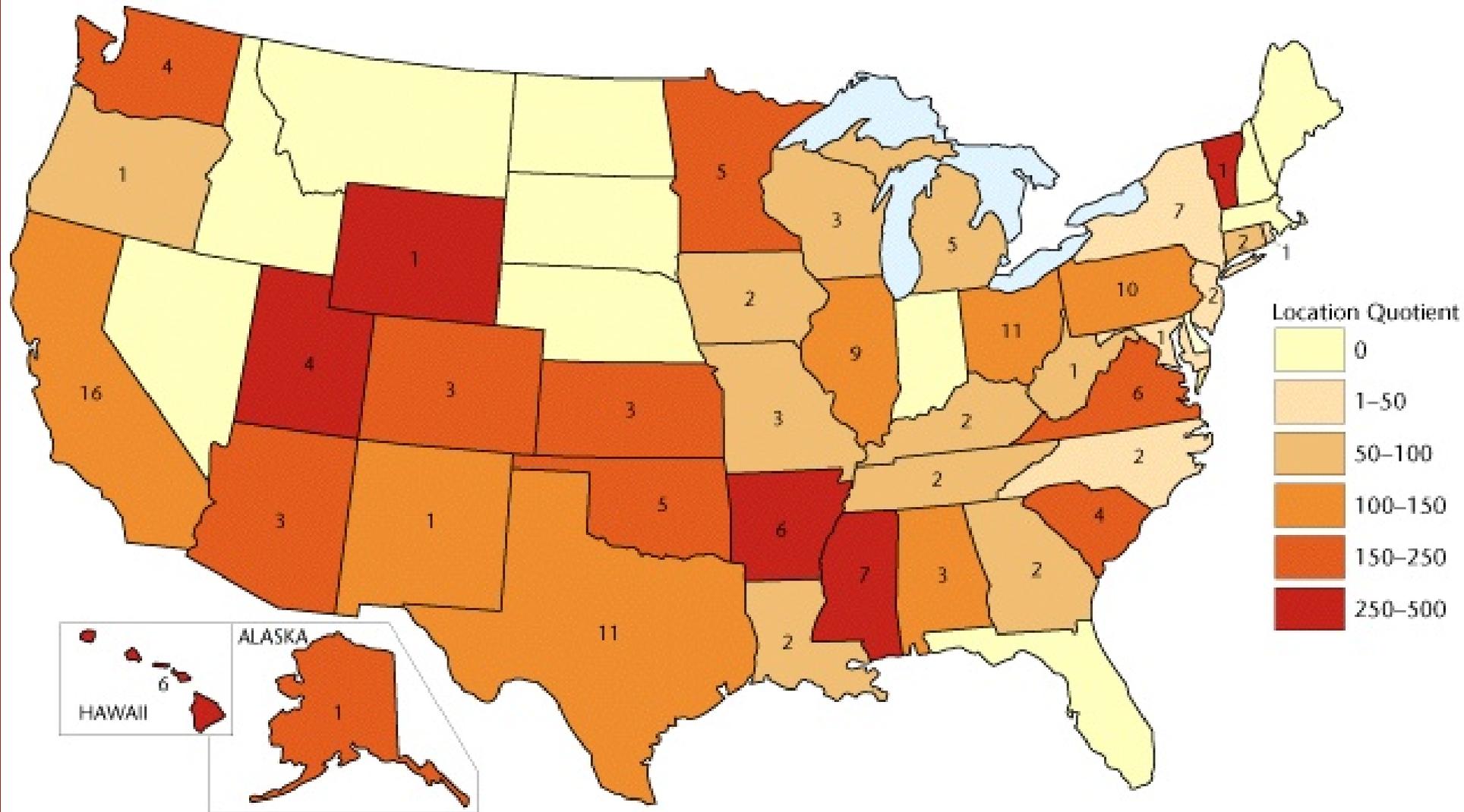
- Place image is a highly manipulatable and highly contestable notion.
- Advertisers use it heavily
- Realtors
- Chambers of Commerce
- Others?



Beauty Pageants

- Popularized in Atlantic City during the 1920s
- A beauty queen belt can be discerned stretching from Mississippi to Utah
- What do you supposed are the causal factors behind this pattern?

The Beauty Belt (fig)



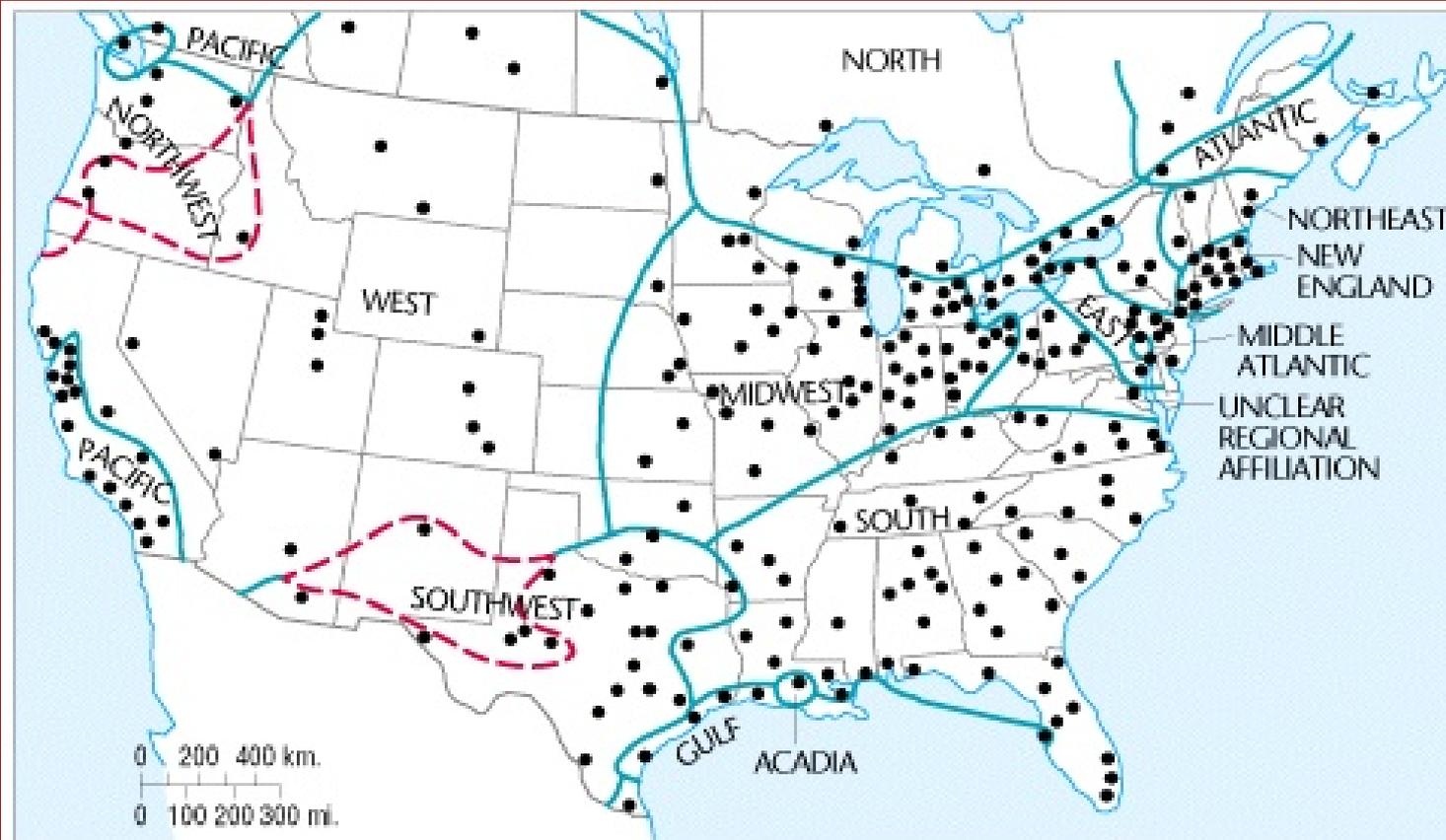
What might account for the relationship between football fandom and beauty pageant success?

- A. Poverty
- B. Gender Roles
- C. Race/ethnicity
- D. Religious values

Vernacular Culture Regions

- Defined: regions perceived to exist.
- Such regions often overlap and have poorly defined borders.
- In what region of the country do we live?
- Where is Dixie?
- Where is “So Cal”?
- Where is “the Midwest”?
- How would you delimit such a region?

Phone Book Regions (fig)



- Regional boundary
- - Regional boundary is uncertain
- Telephone directory used in the study

Diffusion of Classical Place Names

- Demonstrates an abiding fascination with all things Greek and Roman during the 19th Century





What does this building “say”?

- A. Democracy
- B. Persistence (lasts a long time)
- C. Style (at least in 1830)
- D. All of these



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