Cultural Geography

Chapter 7

Components of Culture

- **Culture** – a society’s collective beliefs, symbols, values, forms of behavior and social organizations
  - Passed on to succeeding generations and undergoes adoptions, modifications, and change
  - Culture is learned, not biological
    - Through imitation, instruction, example

Cultural hierarchy

- **Cultural traits** – learned behavior
  - Language – tools – games
- **Culture complex**
  - Group of culture traits that are functionally interrelated
- **Culture system**
  - Shared, identifying traits uniting two or more culture complexes
    - United States – Melting Pot
- **Culture region**
  - Portion of the earth’s surface in which common cultural characteristics prevail
    - Political organizations, religion, types of economies, clothing or housing
- **Culture realm** - Collective of culture regions sharing related culture sys.

Interaction of People and Environment

- **Human Impacts**
  - **Cultural landscape**
    - The earth’s surface as modified by human action
      - Serves as a tangible, physical record of the culture
        - Housing types, transportation networks, parks and cemeteries and distributions of settlement
          - All are aspects of the human impact on the land

Subsystems of Culture

- **Technological subsystem**
  - Material objects and techniques people use to carry out their productive activities
  - Technologically advanced countries
    - Many people employed in manufacturing or services
    - High per capita incomes, levels of education and nutrition, life expectancies, medical services
    - Economic and political power
  - Technologically less-advanced countries
    - High percentage of people engaged in farming
    - Lower GNI and per capita incomes, life expectancies, literacy rates
Culture Change

- Cultures are always in a state of flux
- Three types of change
  - **Innovation** - an introduction of new ideas, practices or objects that originate from within the group
  - **Spatial diffusion** - where a concept, practice or innovation spreads from its origin to new areas
    - Can spread by the movement of people to new areas, or information about the innovation spreads throughout the culture
  - **Acculturation** - Culture group or individual undergoes major modification
    - by adopting many characteristics of another, usually dominant, culture group
    - May occur in a conquered or colonized region
    - Population relocations

Defining Folk & Popular Culture

- Material culture falls into 1 of 2 categories
  - **Dependant on scale**
- **Folk Culture**: traditionally practiced by small homogenous groups living in isolated rural areas
- **Popular Culture**: large heterogeneous societies that share different habits despite differences in personal characteristics
  - Scale is smaller for folk culture vs. pop culture

Diffusion of Folk & Popular Cultures

- **Pop culture** diffuses hierarchically from nodes of innovation
  - Diffuses quickly via modern communication and technology
    - Hollywood - film industry
    - Madison Avenue - advertising agencies
- **Folk culture** diffuses more slowly and at a smaller scale
  - Typically through migration

Diffusion and Innovation

- Processes for the diffusion of innovations
  - **Hierarchical diffusion**
    - Process by which contacts between people and the resulting diffusion occurs first at the top of the hierarchy before moving to the lower levels
      - Small town residents
  - **Contagious diffusion**
    - Spread from one area to others through contact and/or exchange of information
    - Spreads slowly at first, then more rapidly until saturation
The Amish – Relocation Diffusion

- Distinctive clothing, farming, religious practices, shunning electricity and mechanical power
- Amish folk culture is found in 17 states – despite only 0.03% of the total population
- Land costs are forcing Amish from Lancaster, PA to other areas where land is cheaper
  - Kentucky

World Cup Fans – Pop Culture Diffusion

- Originally an English folk custom
- 1800’s – migrated to pop culture as diffusion occurred via British Empire
- Diffused to become the world’s most popular game
  - Especially in Europe and Latin America
- Sports are now part of popular culture
  - Willingness to of people throughout the world to pay to view
- Global diffusion of sports – Soccer World Cup (most viewed sporting event)
  - Super Bowl

Pop Culture Diffusion

- www.davecarrollmusic.com

Isolation Promotes Cultural Diversity

- Why is folk culture clustered?
  - Isolation
    - Group’s unique folk customs develop through centuries of relative isolation from customs practiced by other cultural groups

Wide Dispersion of Popular Culture

- Diffusion of popular housing, clothing, & food
  - Popular housing styles
  - Rapid diffusion of clothing styles
  - Popular food customs
- Television and diffusion of popular culture
  - Diffusion of television
  - Diffusion of the internet
Rapid Diffusion of Clothing

- Improved communication
  - Reproduced quickly (in large quantities) in Asian factories
  - Previously – 1 year before originals available in stores
    - Sketches, patterns, specifications are sent instantly
    - Fashion Centers → Corporate Offices → Asian factories → stores – as little as 6 weeks

Diffusion of Western Clothing Styles

- <1960’s – low-status manual workers, farmers
- 1960’s – Jeans become popular among young
- Japan & Thailand – second hand Levi’s sell for $100-$1000 (favorites: Levi 501 button-fly)
- Despite locally made jeans available for $10
- Former Soviet Union banned their import during Communism
  - American made jeans were targets for theft
    - Levi opened a store in Moscow after the fall of Communism

Diffusion of TV - 1954

- United States 86% of world’s 37 million televisions (200/1000)
- United Kingdom – 9% (20/1000)
- Canada & Soviet Union – 2% each (2/1000)

TV Distribution, 1970

- Rapid growth in Europe, decline in U.S (to 25%).
- Africa and Asia – had little in any tv broadcasting

TV Distribution, 2003

- Rapid growth in China, Indonesia, Africa and Asia – had little if any television broadcasting

Internet Users, 1995 /1000 pop

- Diffusion of internet service is following the pattern of TV diffusion in the 20th century, but at a much faster rate.
  - 40 million worldwide users
  - 25 million in United States
  - Most countries did not have access.
Internet Users, 2000 - /1000 pop

Increased from 9 to 44% in United States
40 million to 400 worldwide from 1995 to 2000

Internet Users, 2004 / 1000 pop

• From 2000-2004 – increased from 400 to 880 million
• Diffusion likely to increase in future in Latin America and Asia, and to a lesser extent Africa

Internet shop, India

Impacts of the Globalization of Popular Culture

• Threats to folk culture
  - Loss of traditional values – traditional clothing being replaced by Western culture clothing
  - Foreign media dominance
    - Fear western culture programming will threaten their independence
    - Fear American (western) beliefs and social forms will drive out traditional social customs

In Class Assignment

• Describe one activity of folk and popular culture that you engage in.

• Social websites like Facebook and YouTube are changing the way that popular and folk cultures are diffused. Give and support an argument for how the Internet might aid the preservation, or even expansion, of some folk cultural elements.