Differences in Culture: Folk Culture
Examining Behavior

• **Habit:** An action one person does repeatedly (biting nails, reading the newspaper each day)

• **Custom:** An action of a group done often enough that it becomes a characteristic of the group (clothing style choices)

• **Taboo:** An act or behavior that is prohibited by social and religious norms
Defining Folk and Popular Culture

- **Folk Culture**: Traditionally practiced by groups in homogeneous, rural, isolated areas.
- **Popular Culture**: Found in large, heterogeneous societies that share certain habits even if there is much diversity.
Case Study: Nelson Mandela

Nelson Mandela in traditional Xhosa Style clothing

Nelson Mandela in modern business suit
Folk Culture Characteristics

• Stable and close knit communities
  – Usually a rural community
  – Clustered in isolated areas
    • Allows for unique characteristics tied to physical landscape

• Traditional controls
  – Resistant to change
    • Few changes over time
  – Culture spreads slowly via migration diffusion
Diffusion of Culture

• Popular Culture: Hierarchical diffusion
  – Rapid diffusion through modern communication and transportation
    • Ex. Films or Internet

• Folk Culture: Relocation diffusion
  – Slow diffusion through the actual movement of people
Human-Environment Interaction of Folk Cultures

- Clothing is made from available materials to meet environmental needs
- Diets based on available agriculture and social norms
- Housing styles are initially a result of the natural world.
Case Study: Mongolia
Cultural Isolation

• Spatial location makes contact with popular culture difficult
  – Located in high mountains, forests, deserts, or arctic regions
  – Prevents sharing of cultural traits
Folk Regions of North America
Case Study: Inuit
Threats to Folk Culture

• Loss of traditional values
  – Change in food, shelter, and clothing preferences because of exposure to popular culture

• Changes in culture can lead to controversy, especially in very religious places.
  – Ex. State Religious Affairs Bureau Order 5
Case Study: United States

Tom Torlino (Navajo), pictured 1882 (left), and three years later (right) Carlisle Indian Industrial School.