Differences in Culture
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.
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
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: Mongolian Herders

- Nomadic Herders on the Mongolian Steppe
  - Live far out away from large cities
  - Reliant on large herds of animals

- Have to rely on the land primarily for their livelihoods
  - Eat animal products
  - Make clothing from animal skins
  - Travel using horses
    - Terrain too difficult and lack of infrastructure for most vehicles
  - Houses (Gers) able to easily be moved to follow herds
Cultural Isolation

- Spatial location makes contact with popular culture difficult
  - Located in high mountains, forests, deserts, or arctic regions
  - Prevents sharing of cultural traits
    - Once group comes into contact with outside cultures their culture begins to change

A tribe in the Amazon jungle that had previously been un-contacted reacts to a helicopter flying above
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

• Boarding Schools used in the United States from late 19th century into early 20th century
  • Native American children taken from their homes on the reservations and sent to schools to be given a western education
  • Goal of the schools was to assimilate the children into United States society
    • Motto of the schools was “Kill the Indian, Save the man”

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

• Culture found in a large, heterogeneous society that shares certain habits despite differences in other personal characteristics.
Effects of Popular Culture: Globalization

• The process by which people, places, regions, and countries become more interlinked and more interdependent at a planetary scale
Effects of Popular Culture: Destruction of Folk Cultures

• Folk traditions and values are often replaced by main-steam concepts
  • Sometimes preserved as museum pieces or “tourists traps”

*Actors portray traditional Korean culture in Seoul, South Korea*
Effects of Popular Culture: Cultural Imperialism

• Media/Commercial hegemony by British, American, and Japanese companies
  • Transition of focus to MDCs
    • Ex. Few news stories about LDCs
  • Worldwide glorification of violence, sexuality, and consumerism