Culture and Cultural Landscapes

If we asked you "What are you?" how would you answer? What defines you? How do you see yourself? If you had to describe yourself and your place in the world, what would you say? Humans derive their identity from many different sources, so naturally the answers to this question would be extremely diverse. Some people define themselves based on where they live ("I'm a Texan"), while others might refer to religion ("I'm a Muslim"). Still others might use race or ethnicity as an identifier ("I'm Asian") or a historical marker in their lives ("I'm a Holocaust survivor"). Someone might use nationality ("I'm British"), political beliefs ("I'm a Republican"), or an occupation ("I'm a firefighter").

Who we are as humans is complicated, but a great deal of identity in the world is derived from our cultural and ethnic backgrounds. Culture and ethnicity are difficult concepts to understand, but they are the focus of a great deal of attention by geographers. Culture and ethnicity are both etched on the global landscape for us to see and study, and they are often the source of conflict and pivotal points in history. In this chapter, we look at culture and cultural geography in general. In the next two chapters, we investigate religion and language, two important components of culture, and then in Chapter 9 we focus on ethnicity and the geography of ethnic groups.

6A   Culture and Cultural Geography

Cultural geography is the study of both the distribution and diffusion of culture traits and how the culture modifies the landscape around us. It is an important subfield within the discipline of geography and has contributed a great deal to the larger field over the past century. But what exactly is culture and what is a culture trait?

Culture can be defined as shared patterns of learned behavior, attitudes, and knowledge. This is just one of countless definitions, but it works for our purposes. We can break down the definition a bit further.

What is meant by "shared patterns"? This means that things that are part of our culture are believed or practiced by a lot of people, so toothpaste is part of our culture because a lot of people use it. But if you brush your teeth with mustard, it should not be considered part of our culture because it is not a behavior shared by a lot of people. The word *patterns* also implies that we will find an element of a culture repeated over and over again in different places.

The word *learned* is important because it excludes race as a part of culture. Culture is not inherited. It is taught to children as they grow up. For example, if a racially Asian baby is raised in the United States by white Polish immigrant parents, will the baby grow up speaking Japanese and eating miso soup for breakfast? Not unless that is what the parents teach their child. Both language and food choices are taught or learned as we grow up. Many times race and culture seem to be related because skin color is often a common feature across a cultural group, but it is not a requirement.

▲ **Figure 6A.1 Culture in the Landscape** Look at this photo and try to identify all of the things that are traits of American culture that might not be found around the world. How many can you see? Don't just think about what people are wearing or doing, although that's important. Also think about what the photo says about what Americans value. Can those things be seen in the photo?
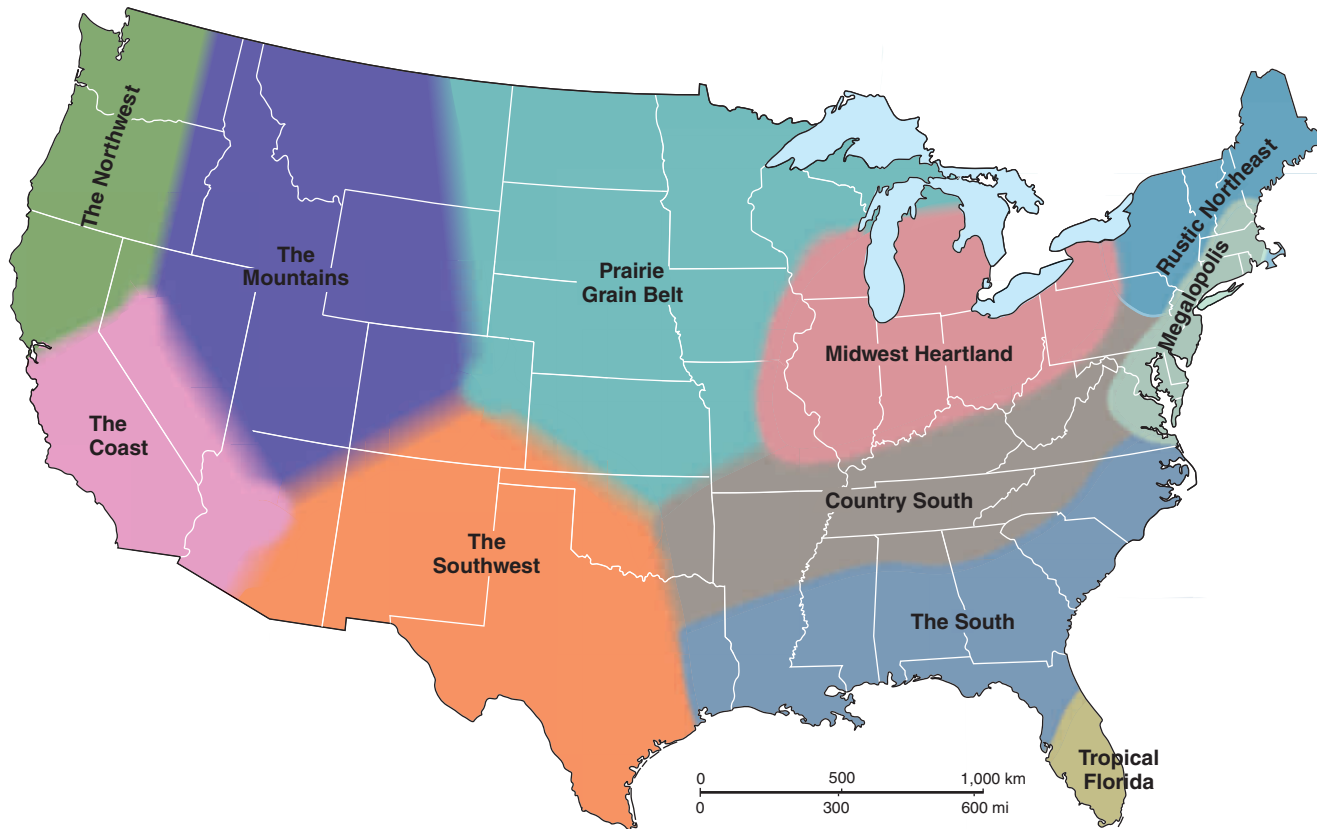
▲ **Figure 6A.2 Culture Regions of the United States** Take a close look at this map and see if you agree or disagree with the regionalization. Are the boundaries between regions distinct or fuzzy? Why or why not? What are the cultural traits that you think define each region? What are the cultural differences among the regions? What parts of the country do you think have the most distinctive culture?

Scholars refer to a single component of a culture as a **culture trait**. The wearing of a baseball cap by an American teenager is a trait of American culture that is less common in some other places in the world. So, too, is eating cereal for breakfast or using certain slang terms. These are all culture traits of American and many other cultures. This raises an important point. Culture traits do not have to be unique to one culture. In France, for example, people do not work on Sunday, sharing a culture trait with the United States and Canada related to religious beliefs. But most people in France speak French, while only a portion of North Americans do the same. So we share some traits, while others are unique.

If an area shares a large number of culture traits, geographers refer to it as a **culture region**. North Africa could be defined as a culture region because of similarities in language (Arabic and Berber variants) and religion (Islam). In the United States, a region such as New England could be defined as the area in which many people root for the Red Sox, pronounce *chowder* "chowda," and use the word *wicked* as an adjective for something extreme, as in "It's wicked cold out there!"

Culture regions can be grouped into even larger areas called **culture realms** that are based on a few broad cultural similarities. For example, Northern Europe, Western Europe, the Mediterranean region, and Eastern Europe could be combined to form a European culture realm because there are general similarities in religion, daily life, and to some extent language. Can you think of culture traits that might be found in different European countries and not in Asia, sub-Saharan Africa, or even the United States? The history of the United States is closely tied to Europe's, but do we have cultural differences?

6B   Culture Complexes

Individual culture traits themselves are often related. For example, the common practice of giving employees Sundays off is a culture trait of the United States. Another fact about the United States is that the majority of Americans are Christians. Are these culture traits related? Yes, Sunday is the Sabbath to Christians. In many states, alcohol sales are prohibited on Sunday or Sunday morning. These regulations, commonly known as "blue laws," are related to Christianity and resting on Sunday. The leaders of many early colonial settlements considered the consumption of alcohol on the Sabbath to be improper and banned liquor sales outright. Thus, commerce, religion, and leisure time are all related culturally.

When several culture traits are related, they can be referred to as a **culture complex**. Think of a culture complex as a bundle of culture traits that have something in common. The Masai culture of East Africa is often used as an example of a culture complex. Cattle are important to the Masai people in many ways. Cattle are the primary basis of their diet because the Masai eat and drink the milk, blood, and meat. Cattle are also the source of wealth and prestige in the Masai culture. If you have more cattle, you're more important. So diet and society are connected in the Masai culture complex because they have cattle in common. The problem with this example is that few of us have ever spent any time with the Masai, although that would be an amazing experience. This makes it difficult to really understand the interconnections among their culture traits.

A more accessible example of a culture complex in U.S. and Canadian culture relates to the importance of the automobile. For most Americans, cars are a source of status and prestige. Many people drive nice cars as a symbol of their place in society. Cars are also a key component of our popular culture. Movies are made about cars, such as *American Graffiti*, *Days of Thunder*, *The Fast and the Furious*, *Gone in 60 Seconds*, *Transformers*, and *Smokey and the Bandit*. Songs are sung about cars and driving, including "Route 66," "I Can't Drive 55," "Low Rider," and "Little Deuce Coupe." Just think about how many rock, country, and rap songs feature cars or trucks.

Automobiles are also part of our social fabric. The United States provides very little public transportation to its citizens because so many people have automobiles. The classic American vacation is to put the family in the car and drive somewhere, a scenario portrayed in movies going back a half century. College students relish the "road trip." Americans spend billions of dollars a year on things to hang in their cars to make them smell better or to put on the outside to make them look better. Teenagers often work their first jobs to save up for a car so they can have more freedom from their parents. Just think of how many movies and television shows use the image of a teenage couple making out in a car on a hill overlooking a city or town. It's part of our collective culture. All of these culture traits are interrelated by a connection to the common car.

Is there a geography to auto-related culture in the United States? Absolutely; the following are a few examples.

▲ **Figure 6B.1** How many movies or television shows can you name that feature cars?

- Traditionally, the automobile industry was located in the northern and northeastern parts of the United States, in places such as Detroit, Michigan. Now, the industry has diffused to the South and to overseas locations. Thus, there is an economic geography to the automobile.
- People drive different types of cars in different states. Trucks are more popular in some areas than in others. One way of looking at popularity is to examine car theft statistics. A 2010 survey by the National Insurance Crime Bureau found that the Honda Civic was the most popular target of thieves in New York, while in Texas it was a Chevy pickup. In Ohio, it was the Dodge Caravan. There is clearly a geography of automobile preference.
- Almost all NASCAR Grand National drivers in the late 1960s were almost entirely from Virginia and the Carolinas. After 1970, due in part to greater national television coverage of the sport, drivers began to be drawn from the Midwest and Northeast. Now, NASCAR drivers come from nearly everywhere in the country, but there is still a concentration of racetracks in the southeastern states. Tracks outside this area are generally located relatively close to major metropolitan areas to ensure a large audience at races. Clearly, there is a geography of auto sports.

Figure 6B.2 What do these photos say about the role of cars in American culture?

6C   The Components of Culture

After exploring the idea of a culture complex of interrelated culture traits, it is clear that culture is a very complicated and multifaceted concept. Many Americans would consider hot dogs to be a part of American culture, but so are the ideas of democracy and freedom. So both hot dogs and democracy are elements of American culture, but clearly they are not similar things. Because culture covers the spectrum from basic physical objects to abstract ideas, geographers and other social scientists divide culture, and culture traits, into three subsystems: the technological subsystem, the sociological subsystem, and the ideological subsystem.

The **technological subsystem** is the material objects that a culture produces, as well as the procedures for using those objects. An individual culture trait that falls within the technological subsystem is known as an **artifact**. Usually when we use this term, we think of an archeologist digging up a shard of pottery or an arrowhead, but in this case the term is used in a much broader sense. Anything that a culture produces is an artifact. A pair of jeans, baseball cards, an iPad, and a bag of potato chips are all artifacts of American culture. Also included in the technological subsystem are the procedures or techniques for using these artifacts. For example, some Native American cultures made canoes. The techniques for making and using a canoe would be part of the technological subsystem, along with the canoe itself. How do you update a Facebook page? You probably know, but these procedures are modern techniques that someone living isolated from the modern world does not comprehend.

Of course, many modern artifacts are available to people all around the world. Given the nature of the global economy, technologies are widely distributed, so at least in this subsystem of culture there is a lot of **cultural convergence**, meaning that two or more cultures share culture traits to such an extent that many aspects of their cultures are very similar. Many Japanese regularly eat hamburgers and drink Coca-Cola, while many Americans regularly eat sushi and read manga (Japanese comic books).

The second subsystem of a culture is the **sociological subsystem**. This component guides how people in a culture are expected to interact with each other and how their social institutions are structured. If two people meet for the first time, are they expected to kiss, shake hands, bow, ignore each other, or fight? The acceptable response is guided by the culture. Similarly, how far apart should two people stand when talking to each other? In some cultures, this distance might only be a few inches, while in other areas of the world it may be several feet apart. Culture traits in the sociological subsystem are known as **sociofacts**. So the socially accepted Western norm of shaking hands when meeting someone is a sociofact.

Social institutions are also part of a culture's sociological subsystem. In some parts of the world, a family commonly includes parents, children, grandparents, and other close relatives. In the United States, nuclear families of just two parents and their children are more common. Single-parent families are accepted and commonplace in American culture, but this is not true of some other cultures. Government institutions are also governed by the sociological subsystem. In the United States, the leader of the country is elected. In other cultures, hereditary monarchs are accepted. The structure of legal and educational organizations also reflects our culture. For example, most American children have summers off from school. In the nineteenth century, the school year was structured to allow farm children the time to help care for crops when they were most needed. The structure of the education system was altered to meet the needs of the economic system. Today, although few Americans are full-time farmers, the structure remains.

◀ **Figure 6C.1 Artifacts 1** Can you identify each of these objects? What would a person who lived 100 years ago think they are? How do these artifacts of our time represent our culture?

▲ **Figure 6C.2 Artifacts 2** Can you identify each of these common household objects from the nineteenth century? If not, what does that say about how our culture has changed? The objects are (a) an ice cream maker, (b) a clothes wringer, (c) a carpet beater, (d) a man's shirt collar (men used to replace the collar of a shirt), (e) a refrigerator (the ice goes in the top section), and (f) a holder to take canning jars out of hot water.

The third component of culture is the **ideological subsystem**, which is the ideas, beliefs, values, and knowledge of a culture. Individual culture traits in this subsystem are called **mentifacts**. Ideas such as democracy, freedom, and justice are values that some cultures hold important, while others do not. Americans see individual rights and freedoms as very important, and in general, individualism is encouraged and praised. But in some Asian cultures in which Confucianism is deeply ingrained, individualism is not as highly valued. Instead, loyalty to a group or an authority figure is more important. What was accepted as "freedom" in Nazi Germany was certainly not what was considered freedom in the United States during the same period. Finally, over time, values and beliefs can change dramatically.

As mentioned previously, all three subsystems of culture can be related. Religion, for example, often encompasses culture traits in each of the three subsystems. Certainly, the ideas and values that a religion teaches are mentifacts. But religions also affect social organizations, such as marriage or the treatment of elders. These norms of interaction are sociofacts. Finally, religious organizations produce all sorts of artifacts. Churches, temples, and mosques (and everything that fills them) are cultural artifacts. As we discuss certain religions in more detail in Chapter 7, think about how the ideological, sociological, and technological subsystems are affected.

Figure 6C.3 ▶ **Mentifacts**
What ideas in American culture are invoked in this photo of a man voting?

6D   Cultural Diffusion

The movement of culture traits from one place to another is called **cultural diffusion**. **Diffusion**, or **innovation diffusion**, is an important concept to geographers, and it generally consists of the movement of people, ideas, or things from a point of origin to another location over time. *Diffusion*, of course, refers to non-cultural phenomena as well as culture traits. Diseases, for example, diffuse across space and time (see Modules 4A and 4C). If one person in a dorm gets a bad cold, other people in the same building who come in contact with the infected resident may get sick. They, in turn, go to class and may spread it to other students. If these students live in a different dorm building, the disease may diffuse over the entire campus. But ideas and innovations can also diffuse. Rumors are a good example, spreading quickly from person to person. Geographers are interested in identifying the pathways of diffusion and understanding what **barriers to diffusion** exist to slow or stop movement.

Geographers have many terms and theories to describe and explain the concept of diffusion. Most phenomena begin somewhere, and sometimes we can identify the origin. The place where something begins is termed the **hearth**. Most phenomena have at least one hearth; some, such as agriculture, have multiple hearths. The hearth of a phenomenon can be well known. In the case of religion, the hearth is usually associated with a historical figure and, so, is known. In fact, it almost always carries a great deal of symbolic weight.

▲ **Figure 6D.1** We know that the hearth of Islam is Mecca. This place became enshrined in the Islamic religion and long ago emerged as a place of pilgrimage for the hundreds of millions of Muslims around the world.

Figure 6D.2 ▶ Hagerstrand divides his population into people who do not know of an innovation, people who do know the innovation but choose not to adopt it, and people who adopt the innovation. Over time, the percentages of adopters and of people who know of the innovation increase at the expense of those who do not know of it. If it is a successful innovation, many people who know of it will eventually adopt it. If there are some major barriers to adoption, the number of non-adopters will remain high, even as they gain knowledge of the innovation. Hagerstrand also includes a population of people who are simply too geographically isolated to have any knowledge of the innovation.
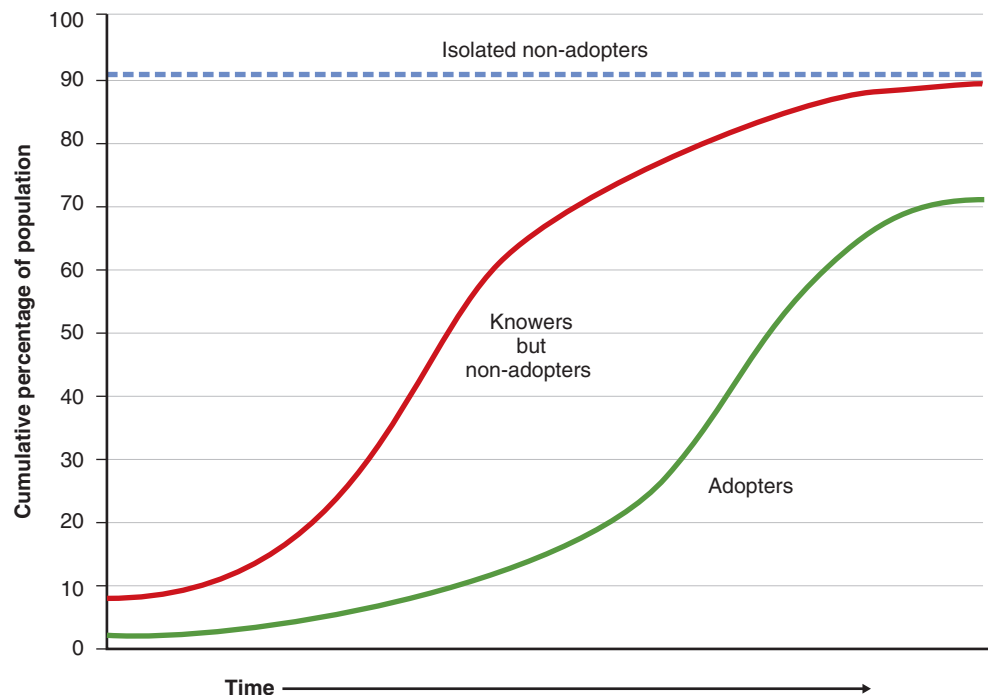
In the 1950s, Swedish geographer Torsten Hagerstrand developed a model of diffusion. While this process has been turned into a mathematical model, complete with equations, for our purposes let's consider this as a stage, or sequential, model that shows how diffusion progresses.

Diffusion results from the transfer of an idea or a thing from one place to another. The transfer can occur through communication, observation, marketing, or a physical means. The agent of diffusion is termed a vector, and the type of vector can help explain exactly how various items diffuse and where they are most likely to be experienced or adopted. In the case of diseases, the vector can be sexual contact (in the case of AIDS), mosquitoes (in the case of malaria), and drinking water (in the case of cholera) (see Modules 4D and 4E).

History is littered with countless "great ideas" that never caught on. So how does an innovation successfully broadcast to a larger group?

In his book *The Tipping Point*, Malcolm Gladwell came up with some interesting insights into how ideas or practices may diffuse by focusing on particular vectors. In his view, the diffusion occurs via a few basic principles. The first principle Gladwell terms "the law of the few." This means that ideas and items alike are diffused through the efforts of a select group of people. Some of these people may be particularly well connected to lots of other people. Some may be particularly well informed and good at explaining things to others. And some may be remarkably good at selling an idea. Each of these people helps move an idea to a larger population.

Gladwell calls the second principle the "stickiness factor." This refers to how well an idea resonates once it is introduced. People need to see a good reason for the idea or item and how to fit it into their lives. For many people, something as difficult as learning a new language or adopting a new technology becomes "sticky" only when there is a real need to learn.

The third principle introduced by Gladwell has to do with the "power of context." Diffusion relies on prevailing conditions: the place and time have to be right to accept the new thing; otherwise, it just falls flat.

The diffusion of an innovation depends on acceptance. Conversely, acceptance depends a great deal on what is being diffused. New technologies may be readily accepted as long as the price is right and the product is good. When videocassette recorders were introduced in the 1980s, it did not take long for electronics stores to sell them at a very rapid clip. These were clearly something that people found quite useful to their lives. Soon, specialty video stores opened up as a way to provide movies to rent. The introduction of DVD technology in the 1990s was also rapidly accepted.

But what if something represents a difficult change, often true of more profound cultural innovations? Consider what it would mean to change a language, religion, or way of making a living. Even when all of the circumstances are favorable to the diffusion, these attributes can take a very long time to be accepted.

▲ **Figure 6D.3** Paul Revere's message mobilizing residents from Boston to Concord worked because of who Revere was—a well-connected and respected man whom people listened to.


▲ **Figure 6D.4** *Sesame Street* has become the most successful children's program of all time because it divided its programming into several small chunks, retaining the attention of children used to the rapid-fire delivery of commercial television.


◀ **Figure 6D.5** Can crime be reduced by focusing on the little things? An influential theory suggests that criminal activity thrives in a context where small insults—graffiti, panhandling, petty vandalism—are allowed to occur. Clean up the context and people are less likely to commit major crimes. How might the physical appearance of a neighborhood encourage or discourage certain behaviors?

Geographers have categorized some of the spatial patterns involved in the diffusion of phenomena from one place to another. Three patterns have been commonly identified.

The first pattern is **relocation diffusion**, the diffusion of a particular phenomenon that results from the migration of people who practice that phenomenon. In other words, people move and take their cultural baggage, economic know-how, and technology with them. They also take diseases.
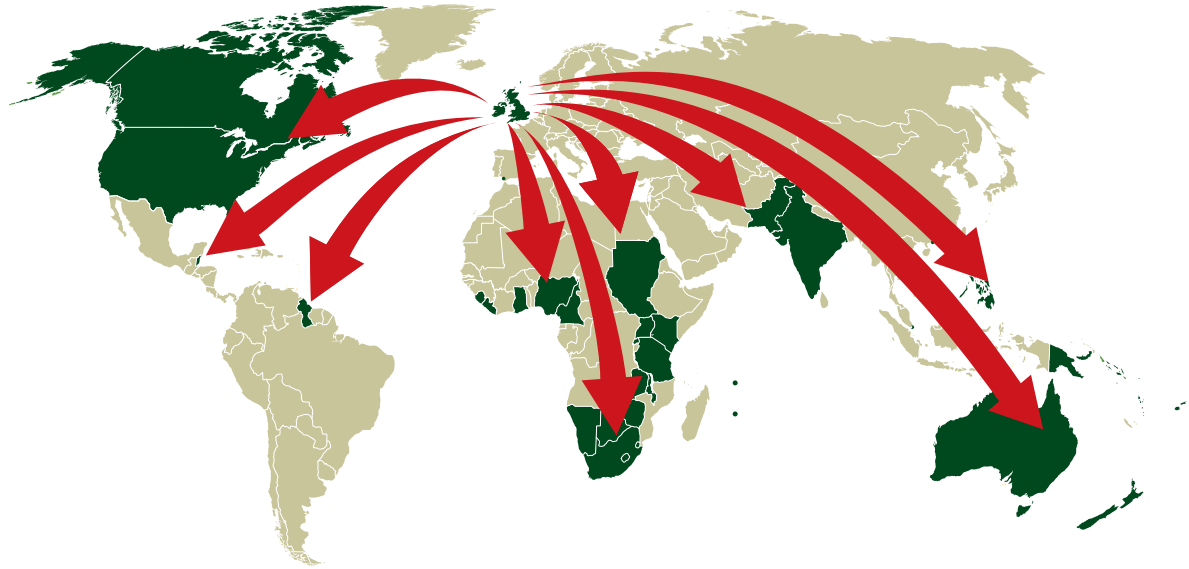
▲ **Figure 6D.6** From 1600 to 1900, the English language spread from England to much of the rest of the world. This map shows countries in which English is an official language. Much of the spread had to do with the movement of English men and women to these areas, taking their language with them. This did not have to be the case; in many instances of migration, people adopt the language of the place they move to, and the usage of their original language withers away after a couple of generations. This did not happen with English. Because migration is such a common occurrence, many types of phenomena have been spread via relocation diffusion.
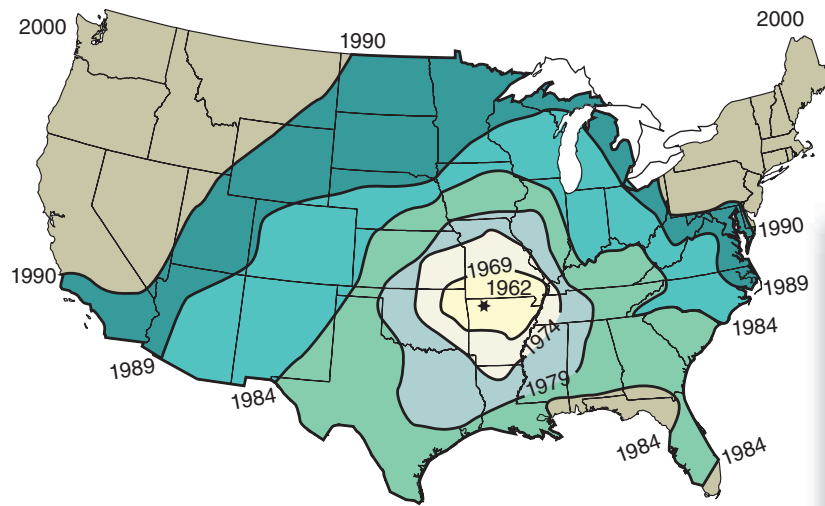
▲ **Figure 6D.7** Walmart is an economic and cultural phenomenon that shows clear lines of dispersal from a hearth area in Arkansas to much of the rest of the Southeast, to its eventual saturation of most of the United States. Walmart's diffusion depended on a number of different things, most notably a marketing strategy. At the same time, it depended on locating stores in what it viewed as more hospitable terrain. Urban areas were mostly shunned in favor of small towns, although this has changed in recent years.
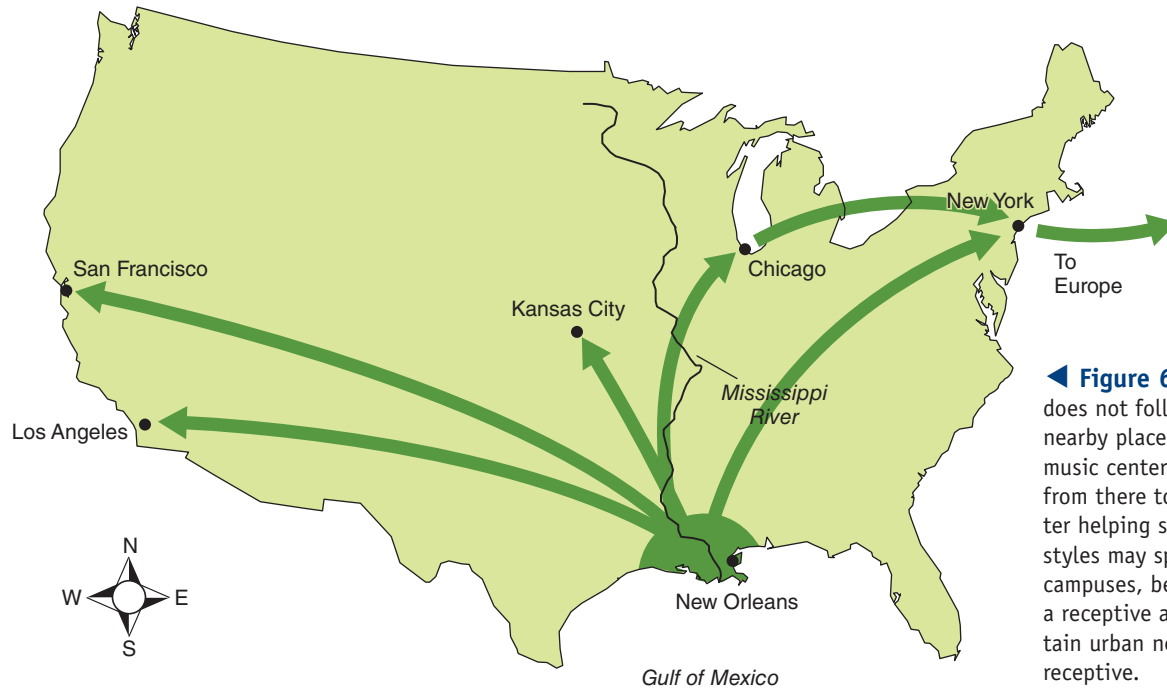
◀ **Figure 6D.8** Music, such as jazz, does not follow a ripple movement to nearby places. Rather, it moves from music center to other music centers and from there to smaller centers, each center helping spread the innovation. Music styles may spread most easily to college campuses, because there they can find a receptive audience. Other times, certain urban neighborhoods will be more receptive.

The second pattern is **contagious diffusion**. In this case, the phenomenon spreads to nearby places. Diffusion often depends on contact, close communication, and even observation. As a result, it makes sense that phenomena ripple out from the hearth. Some types of phenomenon that undergo this type of contagious diffusion are farming techniques, diseases, and sometimes different cuisines.

Diffusion patterns are not often continuous; phenomena can skip across space. **Hierarchical diffusion** is a pattern whereby things move from one place to other places that have some similarities or are otherwise going to be more receptive. These places are often large cities, college campuses, or places that share a cultural affinity with each other and the phenomenon being diffused. In fact, there can be all different types of hierarchies established when transmitting different phenomena from one place to another. The actual process of diffusion depends on what is being diffused. Fashions, contraceptives, and slang are examples of this kind of diffusion.

One could also consider a kind of **reverse hierarchical diffusion**, in which a particular innovation begins in places that are distinctly not centers and then over time begins to make its way up conventional hierarchies. Sometimes these are referred to as "groundswells" because they emerge from the smallest places. Some political movements, religious revivals, even sports have diffused in this way. This could be viewed as a type of hierarchical diffusion, but the process appears as a bottom-up movement rather than as a typical movement down the hierarchy.

Figure 6D.9 ▶ The populist movement of the 1890s was a reaction against the alleged stranglehold of northeastern banks and industrial interests on the agricultural heartland. Populism arose as a true grassroots movement, coming out of small towns and rural areas in the Great Plains. William Jennings Bryan later became the standard bearer for this movement, nominated by the Democratic Party to run for president three times.

6E   Culture Hearths

If culture traits diffuse out from a point of origin, where did significant aspects of human culture begin? For a great many aspects of human culture, the answer to this question is vague. We often know roughly where a particular innovation began, but not exactly where. Roughly 8,000–10,000 years ago, the domestication of agriculture and livestock led to civilization, the settling down of people in permanent settlements. This dramatic change from a wandering, nomadic way of life led to surpluses in agriculture (see Module 15D), allowing some members of society to devote their time to science, religion, trade, government, and engineering. Many of the innovations that they created are still parts of our culture today. Ideas such as mathematics, writing, legal systems, and religious ideas emerged out of these newly "civilized" urban areas. While individual innovations may have begun nearly anywhere on the planet, geographers and other scholars recognize a handful of places that had an unusually large impact on the planet by virtue of being the foundry that produced a large number of influential new ideas and technologies. These locations are referred to as **culture hearths**, areas from which important culture traits, including ideas, technology, and social structures, originated.

Mesopotamia

Many historians believe that civilization originated in Mesopotamia, an area now largely in Iraq. The word *Mesopotamia* means "between rivers," referring to the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers. This fertile area was ideal for early human populations to settle and farm. Early Mesopotamian civilizations included groups such as the Sumerians, the Babylonians, and the Assyrians. Their important contributions include the creation of writing, innovations in mathematics and astronomy that are still used today, and architectural developments that allowed them to build large ziggurats, pyramid-shaped temples. Perhaps the most widely mentioned contribution of Mesopotamia, however, is the development of complex legal systems, such as the Code of Hammurabi, developed starting about 3800 years before the present (1790–1750 BC). A series of 282 laws cover business agreements, marriage and divorce, property crime, and violent crime, such as "If any one gives another silver, gold, or anything else to keep, he shall show everything to some witness, draw up a contract, and then hand it over for safe keeping. If he turns it over for safe keeping without witness or contract, and if he to whom it was given deny it, then he has no legitimate claim."

The Americas

There were two important culture hearths in the Americas. Numerous cultural groups were located in the Andes Mountains of South America, culminating in the most well known, the Inca Empire. The Inca Empire arose in the fifteenth century and lasted until the arrival of the Spanish just a century later. The Incas unified the peoples of the Andes and are known for building thousands of miles of roads high in the mountains that still exist today. The Incas kept control by forcing a proportion of conquered peoples to resettle to other areas. Strong taxes were also levied to support the central government. They also established two capitals, one at Quito in the northern Andes and another at Cusco in the southern Andes, for better control over their long, thin empire. One legacy of the Incas is the persistence of Quechua, the empire's official language, which still is used today in the Andes. Meso-American civilizations, such as the Mayans, built elaborate pyramids that still survive today. The Aztec culture, centered on what is now Mexico City, had extremely complex religious systems, a detailed calendar, and an effective bureaucracy.

West Africa

For much of modern history in the United States and Europe, little was known or taught about the early cultures of sub-Saharan Africa, such as the important West Africa hearth. The reasons for this are complicated, but they include a lack of known written information and racism. Oral histories were common in this area, so many of the descriptions of these areas come from Islamic traders and others passing through. Some Western scholars simply refused to believe that ancient African peoples were capable of having established large political units. But we know today that ancient West African civilizations, such as Mali, Ghana, and Songhai, were impressive by any world standard. The Mali Empire, for example, flourished from the twelfth to sixteenth centuries AD in the broad grasslands south of the Sahara and along mighty rivers, such as the Niger. Trade in gold, salt, and other commodities at cities such as Timbuktu made the empire very wealthy and allowed art, religion, and other components of society to flourish.

Greco-Roman

The Greco-Roman culture hearth evolved a bit later than the others discussed here. Ancient Greece has its precursors in the Minoan civilization, which existed on the island of Crete between 2500 and 1500 BC, and the later Mycenaean civilization, which arose about 1400 BC. Classical Greece flourished after 800 BC and lasted for about 500 years. Although the Greeks had a well-organized political system, they are most remembered for their contributions to art, philosophy, and science. Significant legacies include the great philosophical works of Plato and Aristotle, some of the oldest surviving theatrical works, and contributions to science, such as the idea that the earth and the other planets revolve around the sun. Ancient Rome is traditionally said to have been founded in 753 BC, but the most important achievements of the civilization occur after the founding of the Roman Republic in 509 BC and the establishment of the Roman Empire in 27 BC. The empire began to collapse in the fifth century AD. While the Greeks are remembered for their scientific, artistic, and philosophical ideas, the Romans are recognized primarily for their achievements in government structures, military organization, engineering, and bureaucracy. Rome was able to extend far beyond its borders and control large areas of the world successfully and efficiently. A surviving geographic reality of the importance of Rome is the fact that large areas of Europe still speak languages derived from Latin.

Indus Valley

The early civilization of the Indus River valley was centered on cities such as Harappa and Mohenjo-Daro. Flourishing about 2500–1800 BC, the cities of the so-called Harappan civilization were arranged in a grid pattern and serviced by an early but working drainage system. Large communal baths, possibly for ritual purification, have also been uncovered. Excavations at Harappa also reveal organized facilities for storing and processing grain, which indicates the importance of agriculture to these early cities.

North China

The North-Central Chinese culture hearth was centered near where the Wei and Yellow Rivers converge. This area saw the domestication of millet and rice more than 7,000 years ago. Later, soybeans were also cultivated, as were tea and a variety of fruits and vegetables. Politically, the area included a variety of small, regional groups, but by about 5,000 years ago these groups had begun to interact more. By about 1,800–1,600 BC, many areas had been consolidated under what is called the Shang dynasty. The Shang period is remembered for elaborate bronze art, the first Chinese writing system, and a well-organized political system, which was based on kinship ties.

Figure 6E.1 Major Culture Hearths
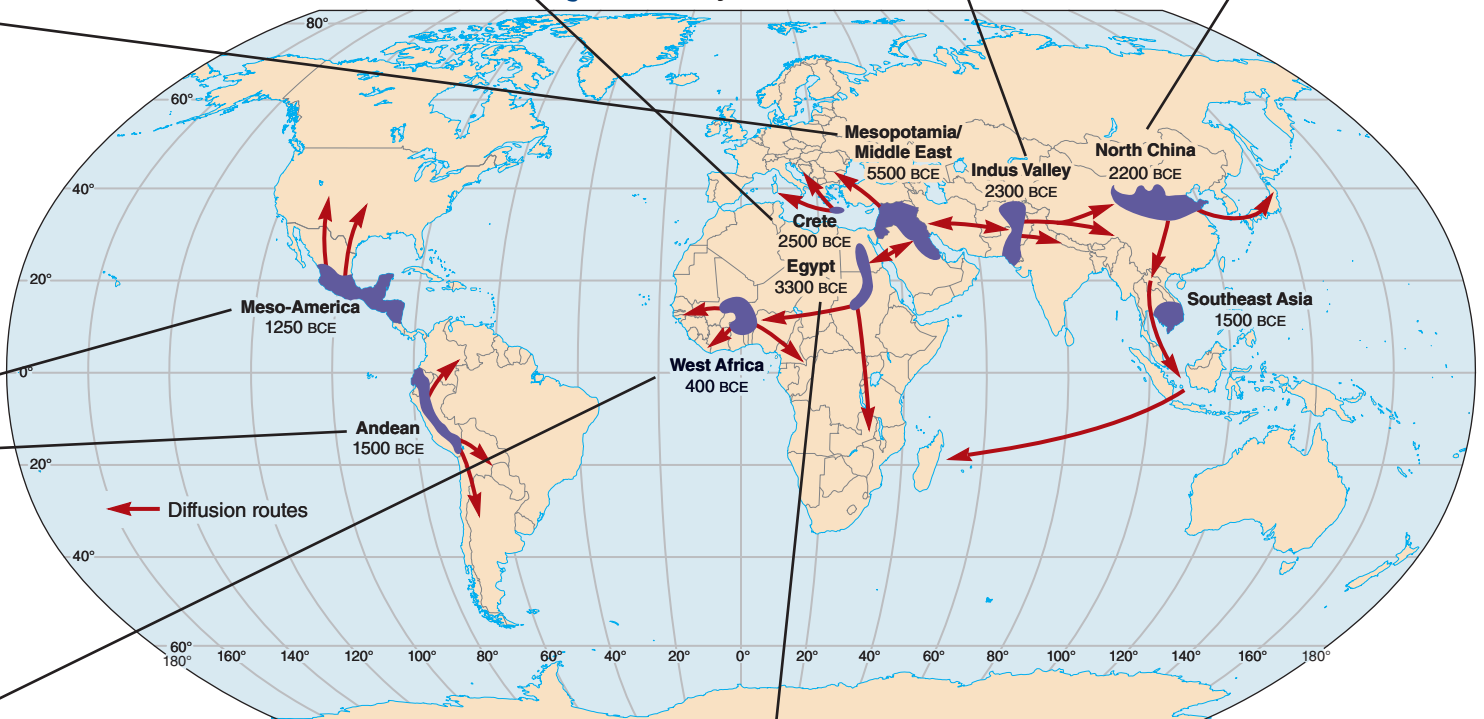
Nile River

For modern geographers, the achievements of the Nile River culture hearth are easier to envision because they left for us the glorious pyramids that have been a tourist destination for thousands of years. In fact, 2,000 years ago ancient travelers from around the Mediterranean would travel to Egypt to see them. But naturally, we know that the legacies of ancient Egypt go beyond giant burial structures. The Egyptians had complex theological, political, and social systems. The first dynasties arose just after 3000 BC and continued until the Macedonians conquered the region in the fourth century BC. Like other early culture hearths, the Egyptians cultivated a variety of grains and had a complex trade system. This allowed Egyptian science, math, and technology to influence other civilizations around the Mediterranean and to the south along the Nile.

6F   Cultural Landscapes

To many geographers, the central focus of cultural geography is the **cultural landscape**. As introduced in Module 1H, *landscape* refers to the appearance of a location, the items in a location that give it a particular appearance, or the general area itself. For example, *a natural landscape* might refer to the vegetation, rocks, and water bodies in that area. *The cultural landscape*, therefore, refers to the cultural impacts on an area, including buildings, agricultural patterns, roads, signs, and nearly everything else that humans have created.

North American geography's emphasis on the cultural landscape dates to the 1920s and a geographer named Carl Sauer. Before Sauer, the most common view of culture emphasized the effect that the natural environment has on culture, rather than the effect that culture has on the physical landscape. This view was epitomized by the notion of environmental determinism, which was addressed in Module 2D. Sauer was one of several geographers who challenged the view that nature determines culture. While he acknowledged that the physical environment can influence human actions, he emphasized that cultural groups modify their environments extensively.

If humans enter a wilderness area to settle, they will build towns that have buildings in the style that is popular in their culture. They might lay out the community in the same way as was done in their homeland. They may put up signs written in their own language. They may start farming using methods they learned

Figure 6F.1 Cultural Landscapes

◄ Ordinary, day-to-day landscapes are important to geographers because it is in these environments that our culture forms. Thus, we would expect culture, and change in culture, to be expressed here. What culture traits can you see in this photo? Which represent old ideas and which represent new?

▶ While our first tendency may be to focus on the mountains or trees, the imprint of culture is strong in rural areas. For example, in this photo from northern Italy, the cultural landscape includes not only the building and roads, including a Christian church, but also the land-use pattern. The large, grassy areas are the result of cultural preferences for grass around homes and agricultural traditions, such as grazing.

back at home. In each case, the structure or appearance of the landscape is modified. If two nearly identical areas of wilderness are settled by two distinct cultural groups, the resulting cultural landscapes will be different. As each group develops and adapts to the new area, its culture may change, and this change, according to Sauer, will be reflected in the environment.

Similarly, if an area is settled by a particular culture, but later another cultural group moves in, the landscape will be modified again. Over time, each new group tends to leave some evidence of itself in the cultural landscape. This was Sauer's main goal for cultural geography—using the cultural landscape to uncover evidence of past cultures. He, and countless geographers after him, focused on "reading" the visual clues in a landscape to identify and better understand past cultural influences in a particular area. For example, if you were in a largely Asian community but noticed that most of the street names were French, that would be a clue to a past reality about that area.

The emphasis so far is clearly on material culture, but later cultural geographers also note that cultural landscapes can reflect the presence of nonmaterial culture, including ideology or power. For example, many communities in the American South have great geographic disparities between where whites live and where blacks live. This spatial difference reflects the ideological culture trait, the mentifact, held by the majority of whites in the past that the two groups should not live near each other. The physical layout of the city was thus arranged to support this idea. Often, the two groups were literally separated by train tracks to add more of a barrier. A more recent example might be a community's acceptance or rejection of gay lifestyles. Some communities openly welcome the flying of the rainbow flag, a symbol of the gay community, but in other areas this might cause a backlash. Therefore, the liberal or conservative nature of the community might thus be visible.

That nonmaterial culture can be identified in the landscape reflects the work of late twentieth-century cultural and social geographers on the subject of the **social construction of space**. Namely, this is the idea that society shapes the spatial nature of our world. How is the cultural landscape of your community reflective of the values of your community?

▶ Researchers tend to focus on either locals' difference as a reflection of cultural or ethnic diversity or on similarities among places caused by some larger cultural or national ideal. Thus, local areas can be distinct, but also may be changing to reflect national trends. In other words, even though this Japanese neighborhood has a McDonald's restaurant, part of a global chain, it has not lost its local, Japanese character.

◀ Some landscapes show signs of recent change. In this scene, we can see the impact of recent Hispanic immigration into a community. The signs have both English and Spanish words, and the flags show a diverse clientele drawn from several different countries.

6G   Folk Culture and American Foodways

You will often hear the terms *folk culture* and *popular culture*, but what are the differences between the two? **Folk culture** generally refers to culture traits that are traditional, no longer widely practiced by a large amount of people, and generally isolated in small, often rural, areas. **Popular culture**, on the other hand, refers to aspects of a culture that are widespread, fast-changing, and transmitted by the mass media. Think about something like quilt-making. Although nearly every household had someone who could sew a quilt 200 years ago, today it is a folk tradition only. On the other hand, kids carrying lunchboxes featuring characters from the latest movie to elementary school is a popular culture fad. It is widespread and perpetuated by the popular media, but it is unlikely ever to be considered a "tradition."

One of the most common types of folk culture that affects daily life are **foodways**, which means how we prepare and consume food. While much of what we eat is motivated by popular culture (think of the latest kids' cereal with a cartoon character on the box), there are still folk traditions that affect food choices in some parts of the country. Before you read ahead, can you think of types of food that you eat in your part of the country that are not eaten as much in other regions? Why?

◀ **Figure 6G.1 New England Food** Traditional New England foods are a product of the region's geography. Seafood dishes, such as lobster and clam chowder, are common because much of the region's population lived close to the ocean. From native peoples the early settlers of New England were introduced to the "three sisters": corn, beans, and squash. Any traditional New England feast is bound to have something from at least one of these three categories, although corn was used less as a grain than it was in the South because wheat was available to richer residents through imports. Items like baked beans use ingredients such as molasses, which was not produced in New England at all but was readily available from European trading ships moving up the coast from the Caribbean before sailing back to Europe. With honey and maple syrup also available, New England foods are often sweet. Hot spices are rare in northeastern cooking because the climate is not conducive to growing peppers and hotter spices.

◄ **Figure 6G.2** **Southern Food** Southern food is well known for having a distinct character. The reasons that Southern cuisine is different are due to geography and history. First, African slaves and immigrants made a huge impact on cooking. In many households, African slaves were responsible for nearly all food preparation and they changed the traditional recipes of their English owners to reflect their own traditions. The use of okra to produce thick soups and gumbos is a direct result of African cooking traditions. So is frying food, such as fried chicken and fritters. Both draw on West African techniques. Speaking of chicken, although foods like fried chicken are considered southern staples, it has become more common only in the last century. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, chickens were most commonly used for eggs rather than meat. Pork was much more common as a meat in the South and continues as a typical southern food in dishes such as barbeque. Corn is also traditionally Southern. Foods like grits and hushpuppies are quintessentially Southern and can rarely be found outside the region. Try ordering a bowl of grits in Maine and you may have a hard time. Rice is also common in traditional Southern cooking but not Northern cooking. While we sometimes think of rice as Asian, rice growing was common in parts of Africa where slaves originated. Rice was introduced to the United States before 1700 and flourished in places such as South Carolina because slave laborers had prior knowledge of rice cultivation techniques. Many Southern soups utilize rice, and red beans and rice is a common Southern dish.

Figure 6G.3 ▶ **Southwestern Food** Southwestern foods represent the combined geographic influences of Mexicans, Spanish settlers, Native Americans, and eastern cowboys and migrants. The most notable difference between Southwestern cooking and the cuisine of the rest of the United States is the use of the chili pepper to make the food spicy. Beans and corn are widely used in Mexican and Native American cooking and continue to be popular in the region. The Spanish are responsible for introducing more meat into the diet, particularly pork and beef.

◄ **Figure 6G.4** **Midwestern Food** Geographically, the Midwest was primarily settled by central, eastern, and northern Europeans. Foods in this region tend to make use of agricultural produce grown locally and are often simple and hearty casseroles and fruit pies. Because dairy products are abundant in the region, cheese and cream are often used in dishes such as casseroles. Grains are also common in the breadbasket of America, which allowed immigrants to continue to eat items such as Polish *pierogis* and various types of pancakes and allowed German immigrants to help make the region the beer capital of the country.

(a)

(b)

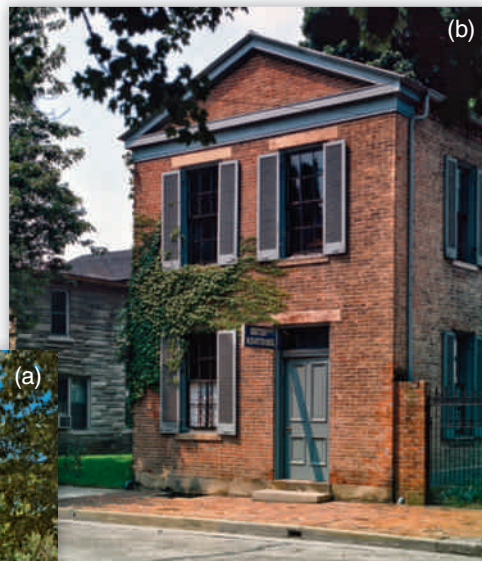▲ **Figure 6H.1 Early American Homes** The typical home of the well-off colonial American was what we now call a *Georgian* style home. Notice in the photos that the homes are generally rectangular and the home's gables are on the side of the house. In other words, the roofline runs from the side of the home to the other side. On very old homes, the roof rarely overhangs the walls, as seen in this 1790 colonial in Connecticut (a). On homes built toward the end of the eighteenth century and into the early nineteenth century, this basic style was often supplemented with small flourishes, such as a semicircular fanlight over the front door, as seen in the second photo (b) showing the 1820 Davenport House in Savannah, Georgia.

6H   Popular Culture: House Types

Cultural geographers are traditionally quite interested in architecture because what we build often stays on the landscape for a long time. Thus, old buildings offer a way of examining cultural ideas of the past. For example, old school and government buildings often are named after people who were well known in their time but are generally unknown today, or the buildings may have carvings or artwork that represents what people in the past felt were important events or people.

House styles are an excellent way to examine popular trends of the past. People generally build new homes in the style that is popular at the time. Few people, for example, build castles today. If you drive through an area with new homes, they generally all look the same or at least have a small number of styles. People rarely build one-of-a-kind homes. Notice, too, that the colors of homes are usually quite limited. You rarely see a fluorescent orange home. Because people are relatively conservative about their home styles, most homes built in a certain decade are generally of the same small number of styles. And because homes usually stay around for decades or longer, we can often look at a home and tell roughly when it was built.

(b)

◄ **Figure 6H.2 Early Nineteenth-Century Homes** In the early nineteenth century, Americans were in love with ancient Greek and Roman civilizations because we felt that our new republic was similar to these great ancient societies. Many towns that were founded during this time have classical names, such as Utica, Ithaca, Rome, and Athens, and children were sometimes given classical names, such as future president Ulysses S. Grant, born in 1822 (Ulysses was actually his middle name). Can we see this interest in ancient civilizations in our homes? Yes. Notice that Greek Revival homes from this era often have columns and other touches that make them look like ancient temples. (a) The first image is a home in Madison, Indiana, built in the late 1830s. For the first time in history, a large number of homes were built with front-facing gables. In other words, the roofline runs from front-to-back rather than side-to-side. Even smaller houses (b), such as this 1840s brick house in Madison, were front gabled. These features make the homes look more like ancient structures, such as the Parthenon.

(a)

Figure 6H.3 ▶ Mid-Nineteenth-Century Homes The (a) *Gothic Revival* and the (b) *Italianate* house styles were, for the most part, built between the 1840s and 1870s. Thus, if you see an area with a large number of these houses, it tells you that the area was flourishing at that time because a lot of people were building new homes. This was the era of railroad expansion, and many towns witnessed economic booms.

(a)

(b)

▲ **Figure 6H.5 Victorian Homes** *Victorian* homes were built from about the 1870s to 1900. Many of these homes have crazy rooflines, odd-shaped windows, porches, and ornamental designs on the outside walls. If you think about a bed & breakfast or a horror-movie house, chances are you're thinking about a Victorian home. These types of homes are rarely built today. The examples here are in the Queen Anne style of Victorian architecture and were built in 1893 and 1881.

▲ **Figure 6H.4 Second Empire Homes** The *Second Empire* style was only built between 1855 and about 1875, with most built in the 10 years after the Civil War. They were based on trendy styles in Europe at the time and feature the unique mansard roof. Because these were rarely built after the mid-1870s, they are a great indicator of an area that was booming just after the Civil War. Both of these examples were built in the early 1870s.

▲ **Figure 6H.6 Early Twentieth-Century Homes** Common house types in the early twentieth century included *Prairie*-style homes, *Tudor* designs, and (a) smaller bungalow-style homes. Catalog homes, which could be purchased from Sears, Roebuck & Co. and other companies, were also common before World War II. (b) The Sears house, sold around 1910 for $2,065, would be delivered to the building site and the homeowner would hire local carpenters to assemble it.

Figure 6H.7 ▶ Post–World War II Homes Many Americans live in (a) split-level or single-level *ranch*-style homes. These smaller styles flourished in the baby boom era of the 1950s and 1960s. (b) By the 1970s, contemporary styles with unconventional shapes had begun to appear in large numbers, but today, home styles have returned to colonial and more traditional layouts.

6I   A Cultural Geography of Sports

Think about how important sports are in American society. Sports are intricately entwined with our cultural lives. In this section, as a case study, we explore the geography of sports and how the landscapes of sport reflect our cultural values.

Figure 6I.1 ▶ Location of Pro Hockey Teams, 1971 and 2010 Geographers recognize that certain sports have specific patterns. Look at the maps of hockey teams in (a) 1971 and (b) 2010. In 1971, nearly all the hockey teams were in the northern United States or Canada. Why? Climate plays a large part. Hockey was traditionally played outdoors in cold environments. You simply could not play hockey in the southern United States until modern refrigeration technologies became available. And certainly not enough rinks existed in the South to support a fan base for a pro team. But what changed in the past decades that caused a southward migration of the sport? First, technology allowed indoor rinks to be more practical. But more importantly, the U.S. population shifted southward and westward. These areas of the country now have enough people to support major sports teams, and their populations are made up of transplanted northerners who grew up playing and watching hockey. So, in this case, demographic change spawned cultural change.
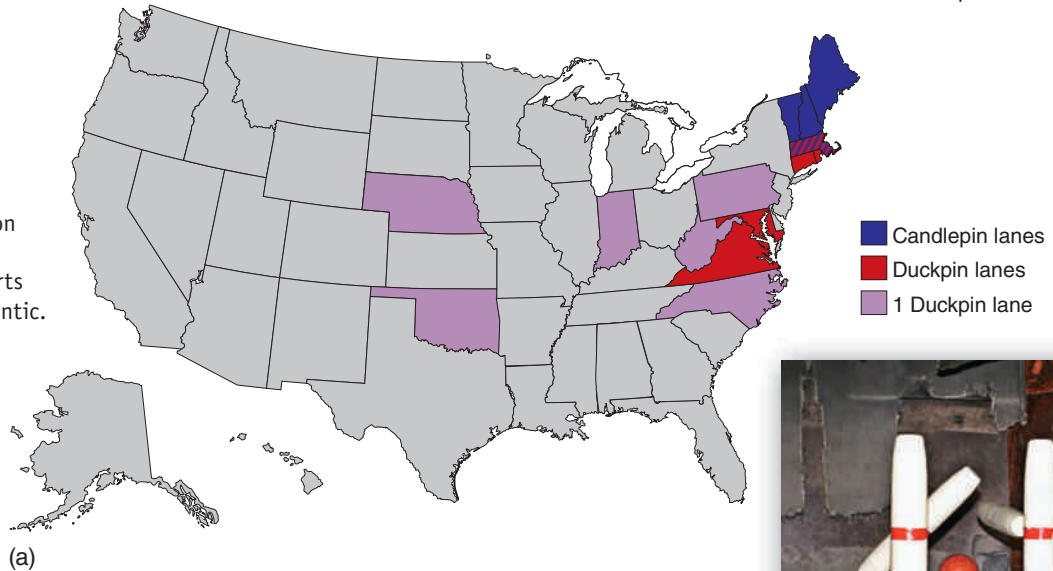
NASCAR is another sport that has expanded its area of cultural influence. Forty years ago, most NASCAR drivers were from the Southeast, but national television coverage of racing beginning in the late 1960s brought knowledge of stock-car racing to other areas.

Figure 6I.2 ▶ Candlepin and Duckpin Bowling
(a) The location of candlepin and duckpin bowling alleys in the United States are shown on this map. As you can see, the sports are concentrated in parts of the Northeast and Mid-Atlantic. (b) Candlepin bowling uses a small ball and pins that are much straighter than a standard pin and are not cleaned away after the first ball is thrown. Duckpin bowling also uses small balls, but the pins look like regular bowling pins that have been shrunken. Candlepins were invented in 1880 by a Worcester, Massachusetts, alley owner, and the sport has remained largely confined to New England and the maritime provinces of Canada. If you grew up outside this area, you may have never even seen the sport. Duckpins were probably invented in eastern Massachusetts as well in the 1890s but were introduced to the Baltimore area around 1900. Notice the pattern on the map. Because the sports are isolated in these areas and are not widely known, candlepin and duckpin bowling might be considered a folk culture sport. Can you think of other sports that are found in some areas of the country but not others?

(a)

■ Candlepin lanes
■ Duckpin lanes
■ 1 Duckpin lane

(b)

It's obvious from our examples that the location of a sport on the landscape reflects the culture and people of the area to some degree. If you've been to a large US city, you've probably seen recent immigrants playing soccer on weekend mornings in parks where nobody played soccer 20 years ago.

Earlier in this chapter, we discussed the social construction of space. In other words, cultural geographers believe that what we build and how we organize our cities and towns reflects our culture. In modern American cities and towns, sports facilities are often given prominent locations. Large stadiums for professional teams are often given more priority than affordable housing or other infrastructure improvements. Sometimes these projects are justified because they generate economic revenue that helps the city, but other times sports stadiums are supported because they help the morale of the community. We want to rally around the home team, even if the economy is bad. In American culture, rooting for the home team is valued. Think about how many people have Super Bowl parties and you have a good idea of how important sports can be to Americans.

There's another way of looking at the cultural landscape of sports. Picture in your mind the inside of a major league sports stadium. Trying to understand a society's cultural values by observing the built environment is referred to as "reading the landscape."

Figure 6I.3 ▶ Pro Baseball Stadium Sports landscapes often indicate more about our society than just our entertainment or recreational preferences. Look carefully at the photo of Fenway Park and make a mental list of all the different things in this photo that indicate something about modern American or global culture. What do these say about American values? Do you see nationalistic or patriotic symbols? Economic symbols? Do you see indicators of social differences? If you had to analyze American society just from inside a major league baseball stadium, what would you conclude?

Key Terms

artifact (6C)
barriers to diffusion (6D)
contagious diffusion (6D)
cultural convergence (6C)
cultural diffusion (6D)
cultural landscape (6F)
culture (6A)
culture complex (6B)
culture hearth (6E)
culture realm (6A)
culture region (6A)
culture trait (6A)
diffusion (6D)
folk culture (6G)

foodways (6G)
hearth (6D)
hierarchical diffusion (6D)
ideological subsystem (6C)
innovation diffusion (6D)
mentifacts (6C)
popular culture (6G)
relocation diffusion (6D)
reverse hierarchical process (6D)
social construction of space (6F)
sociofact (6C)
sociological subsystem (6C)
technological subsystem (6C)

Basic Review Questions

1. Define *culture*.
2. What is a culture trait? Give a few examples.
3. Is culture inherited?
4. What is a culture region?
5. How are culture traits related to a culture complex?
6. Define and give examples of artifacts, sociofacts, and mentifacts.
7. What parts of our lives are included in the sociological subsystem?
8. What is the ideological subsystem?
9. What is cultural diffusion?
10. Explain the differences between expansion diffusion and relocation diffusion.
11. What is hierarchical diffusion?
12. Why is migration diffusion a type of relocation diffusion?
13. Describe some barriers to diffusion.
14. What is meant by *culture hearth*?
15. What are some important world culture hearths?
16. Where was the Mesopotamian civilization?
17. Where was the Harappan civilization?
18. Where was the culture hearth in ancient China?
19. What were some important culture hearths in sub-Saharan Africa?
20. What were some important culture hearths in the Americas?
21. What is environmental determinism?
22. Explain what is meant by the social construction of space.
23. Compare and contrast folk culture and popular culture.
24. What is a foodway?
25. What is a Georgian-style home? A Gothic Revival house?
26. What are some differences between Classical Revival and Greek Revival homes?
27. When was the Victorian period?
28. Describe some geographic patterns of sports in the United States.

Advanced Review Questions

1. What is meant by *reading the cultural landscape*? What can be learned from this technique?
2. What are some key ways in which culture is passed along to young children?
3. What culture regions in the United States do you think are most distinctive? Is your school in a well-known culture region? If so, what are the boundaries of that region?
4. The text discusses the culture complex of the car. What other important culture complexes can you identify in US or Canadian society?
5. Identify examples of culture convergence in modern society. Specifically, what common elements of our culture are borrowed from other cultures?
6. What are the most important artifacts, mentifacts, and sociofacts in the culture of your country or region?
7. How does the Internet affect cultural diffusion in the world today?
8. What were the important contributions to world culture of the ancient culture hearths?
9. How are food patterns in the United States related to the country's cultural history?
10. Explain how house types can be used to date an area of the United States. Why are houses a good cultural artifact? In other words, why are homes so indicative of particular time periods and cultural attitudes at those times?

Further Study Topics

• What mentifacts in American or Canadian society are driving the primary political debates of this era? Have those critical ideologies changed with time? How? What were the important mentifacts in American culture at the time of the American Revolution?

• How is jihadist Islamic fundamentalism different from contemporary American culture from a perspective of the technological, sociological, and ideological subsystems of culture? Which subsystem is the most important to understanding the clash of cultures?

• Research the hierarchical diffusion of design in the fashion industry, focusing on how ideas generated in places such as New York, Paris, and Milan end up in "big box" stores in small towns.

• Are there culture hearths in the world today? Imagine you're a cultural geographer 2,000 years from now. What will you describe as the culture hearths of this era? Some would argue that the United States is the center of global culture. Do you agree or disagree?

• Examine how ancient African cultures were treated by European historians and scholars over time. Did Eurocentrism or racism lead to an undervaluing of the accomplishments of African society? Did European attitudes about African culture contribute to the slave trade? Do unfair stereotypes about Africa exist today?

• How do city governments socially construct space to change the culture of a city? Think about the renaming of places or roads, development projects, gentrification, and similar initiatives.

- Many scholars have argued that the United States has more and more "placeless" locations because of the proliferation of chain stores. For example, Home Depot, Barnes & Noble, and Walmart are common everywhere. Are we moving toward a country with no regional culture? Is there a single American culture without regional variations?

Summary Activities

Study the map below and discuss some of the cultural features that you see. How many different cultures are referenced? What does it say about this area and its history? Can you figure out what part of the country it is?