**CULTURAL DIFFUSION**

Cultural diffusion is a process by which cultural traits are spread from one society to another.  Cultural diffusion has become common in current society, and it happens all over the world from food restaurants to new technologies. Crossing societal boundary lines leads to having interactions with each other, and these interactions lead to cultural diffusion.  Cultures can use new ideas from foreign countries to suit their own need. Cultural diffusion is important to the development of culture because it allows cultures to improve based on what they learn from the others.  Cultural diffusion can lead one country to influence another’s culture through trade, travel, or immigration. The first influence on culture is through trade. When different areas of the world trade their goods, these goods can be incorporated into different cultures, and they can be adopted in new areas. In current society, we often use planes, trips, trucks to transport the goods around the world. The second influence on culture is though travel or immigration. When people want to travel or migrate to another country, they often bring their custom with them.

One example is the cultural diffusion of Chinese food into American society. As the Asian population grows throughout the United States, more and more Chinese restaurants have also expanded. One reason Chinese food has become so popular is that Americans love the taste of Chinese food, such as stir fry, lo mien, fried rice, and especially egg rolls.  Another reason is they enjoy how quickly the food is prepared in Chinese restaurants. Also, many Americans believe it is healthier to eat out in Chinese restaurants than American fast food.

As Chinese food expands in America, American food also expands to other countries in the world. An example is McDonald’s expanding in Vietnam. When I was young, I never ate hamburgers at McDonald’s. Nowadays, my nephews and nieces eat food in McDonald’s all the time. Vietnamese love McDonald’s because it helps them save time from having to make breakfast for their family and children.

Cultural diffusion can have both positive and negative effects on both cultures. Many cultures have benefited from cultural exchange. One advantage is cultural diffusion causes Americans to become more aware of diversity in society. The knowledge and understanding of other cultures help people to stray away from cultural discrimination. When people are informed about cultural diffusion, they interact with one another with more tact and respect. Another advantage of cultural diffusion is new technologies around the world, such as computers, the internet, transportation, and scientific technologies (microscopes and telescopes), have a big impact on how people live in every area of the world. Now more than ever, people have used technologies, such as laptops, I-pads, smart phones, and Blu-Tooth, as a communication device and change the idea of socialization forever. However, cultural diffusion also has disadvantages on culture such as loss of cultural identity, traditions and languages. One example was when cultural diffusion spread to Vietnamese teenagers by foreign countries’ movies. Couples in Vietnam began living together before they got married. The living together of Vietnamese couples never happened in Vietnamese culture before. Here’s another example, from a long time ago.  Vietnamese men often wore long dresses called “Ao Dai” on their wedding day. Nowadays, they wear suits to wedding celebrations.  The spread of diseases from visitors when they travel to other country is also negative effect of culture diffusion. Diseases such as AIDS, smallpox, and bubonic plague have killed millions of people as they spread from one to another. Cultural diffusion occurs every day, and will continue to happen due to the fact that new technology has caused our world to become completely interdependent.

Cultural Diffusion

In a very simple definition cultural diffusion is when different [cultures](http://bookbuilder.cast.org/view_glossary.php?book=63595&word=46995#curr) are spread into different areas. It is the mixing or blending of different ideas, beliefs, and [innovations](http://bookbuilder.cast.org/view_glossary.php?book=63595&word=46996#curr) from one group to another. Cultural diffusion happens all over the world, from fast food restaurants to new technologies, cultures are constantly [interacting](http://bookbuilder.cast.org/view_glossary.php?book=63595&word=46997#curr) with each other. These interactions lead to cultural diffusion. Cultures can [adopt](http://bookbuilder.cast.org/view_glossary.php?book=63595&word=46998#curr) new ideas and use them as they are or they can [adapt](http://bookbuilder.cast.org/view_glossary.php?book=63595&word=46999#curr) these [foreign](http://bookbuilder.cast.org/view_glossary.php?book=63595&word=47000#curr) ideas to suit their own needs and wants.

There are three basic ways that cultural diffusion takes place. The first way is through trade. When various areas of the world trade goods, these goods are [incorporated](http://bookbuilder.cast.org/view_glossary.php?book=63595&word=47004#curr) into different cultures where they may not have been before. The goods can be adopted or adapted for use in these new areas. In Ancient times, [caravans](http://bookbuilder.cast.org/view_glossary.php?book=63595&word=47005#curr) would travel along the Silk Road to trade items between Asia and Europe. Now, we use planes, ships, and trains to [transport](http://bookbuilder.cast.org/view_glossary.php?book=63595&word=47006#curr) goods around the world. Warfare can also lead to cultural diffusion. Any time two or more groups come together, cultures can be blended. A major effect of the [Crusades](http://bookbuilder.cast.org/view_glossary.php?book=63595&word=47007#curr) was the opening cultural diffusion that took place between Europe and the Middle East as the soldiers traveled. The last way cultural diffusion takes place is through [migration](http://bookbuilder.cast.org/view_glossary.php?book=63595&word=47008#curr) . The mass migration of Irish to America in the 18th and 19th centuries, led to a increase in Irish culture in North America.

There can be many [positive](http://bookbuilder.cast.org/view_glossary.php?book=63595&word=47009#curr) effects of cultural diffusion. Many cultures have [benefited](http://bookbuilder.cast.org/view_glossary.php?book=63595&word=47010#curr) from cultural exchanges. During the Colombian exchange both the Americas and Europe gained new foods and animals that they had never seen before. This changed both cultures as each place was able to expand their diets as well as benefit from the newly [domesticated](http://bookbuilder.cast.org/view_glossary.php?book=63595&word=47012#curr) animals which were brought over. Another positive effect of cultural diffusion is when new technologies are shared around the world. Inventions such as the telescope, the printing press, steam engines, cars, and computers have all had big impacts on how people live in every area of the world. These inventions also increase the rate at which cultural diffusion can take place.

Cultural diffusion does not always lead to positive exchanges. Sometimes when different cultures come into contact with each other [conflict](http://bookbuilder.cast.org/view_glossary.php?book=63595&word=47015#curr) occurs. There are many examples of when differences in cultures have led to war. An example of a negative effect of cultural diffusion would be when the European explorers [decimated](http://bookbuilder.cast.org/view_glossary.php?book=63595&word=47016#curr) the Native American population during the Age of Exploration. New weapons and diseases brought to the Americas by the Europeans directly led to hundreds of thousands of deaths of the natives who had never had contact with the new weapons or diseases. The spread of diseases is another negative effect of cultural diffusion. Diseases such as [AIDS](http://bookbuilder.cast.org/view_glossary.php?book=63595&word=47017#curr) , [Smallpox](http://bookbuilder.cast.org/view_glossary.php?book=63595&word=47018#curr) , and the [Bubonic Plague](http://bookbuilder.cast.org/view_glossary.php?book=63595&word=47019#curr) have killed millions of people as they were spread from one are to another.

There have been many groups who, throughout history, have not welcomed the process of cultural diffusion. For hundreds of years, both China and Japan did not allow foreigners to enter their countries, they also did not allow trade with outside countries. These countries limited their [interactions](http://bookbuilder.cast.org/view_glossary.php?book=63595&word=47023#curr) with other cultures well into the twentieth century. Both China and Japan were concerned that their cultures would be weakened by the introduction of ideas from other cultures. China had an [ethnocentric](http://bookbuilder.cast.org/view_glossary.php?book=63595&word=47024#curr) view, they believed that no other culture was worth coming into contact with since China believed itself to be the best culture in the world. With the inventions of such things as the computer and the Internet, these countries have since allowed contact with other areas of the world to occur and have welcomed cultural diffusion.

The United States of America was built on the concept of cultural diffusion. This country is made up of thousands of different cultures, many have blended into each other to create a [melting pot](http://bookbuilder.cast.org/view_glossary.php?book=63595&word=47020#curr) culture. There are Mexican and Chinese restaurants next to stores which sell African and European goods. Americans come into contact with many different cultures on a daily basis. Our clothing is often [manufactured](http://bookbuilder.cast.org/view_glossary.php?book=63595&word=47021#curr) in other countries and then shipped to the United States, food that we eat has origins in the Caribbean and Asia, and the language that we speak often includes words and phrases from language from other countries. Cultural diffusion happens every day, and will continue to occur due to the fact that new technology has caused our world to become completely [interdependent](http://bookbuilder.cast.org/view_glossary.php?book=63595&word=47022#curr) .

Cultural Diffusion

Since the first person set out to travel to a new place cultural diffusion has been taking place. The exchange and infiltration of ideas between different cultural groups, so that any time in history when two diverse groups met there was either a willing or unwilling exchange of ideas and the culture of one group was forced into another. This created a third unique culture nor resulted from the interaction. There are many different examples of this cultural diffusion over the course of history through migration, trade and ideas.

Migration

As any one group moved around in the world, they inevitably spread their ideas to others. It could have been done on purpose but most often it is a natural byproduct of the movement of people and ideas. One great example would be manifest destiny. As the United State pushed continually west they infiltrated lands that were inhabited by indigenous people. Each of these groups were given the option of assimilating to the culture of the United States or they were ultimately destroyed. The Native American culture made some contributions to the overall culture of the United States, and the culture of these indigenous groups was irrevocably changed.

Trade

There are constant examples of how the quest for trade changed the way in which ideas were spread. Marco Polo and his famous trips to Asia changed the goods that were used and desired throughout the western world. Christopher Columbus brought European culture, ideas and disease to an entirely new land in the name of trade. Even though he was looking for a new trade route to India, he found an entire continent in the way. This was one of the most significant examples of cultural diffusion in history. There are also many examples where trade led to a benefit for both sides of the trade. As new methods of doing things and making things more efficiently are accepted by cultures, it makes production more efficient.

Innovations

These are the most important messengers of cultural diffusion because innovations (new ideas and practices) change everything. As we look through history there are many examples of how an idea changed the society forever. The ideas of the enlightenment changed the way the world looked at science. The ideas of individuality and personal freedom have led to political revolutions in the United States and France and beyond. Countries were formed and governments deposed simply on the power of an idea being shared from one culture to another.

Cultural diffusion is going to happen in all aspects of life as human beings living in groups are always going to be looking for better methods and ideas to help them live their lives in a more productive and fair fashion.