Cultural Diffusion

What is Diffusion?

Cultural diffusion- spread of cultural ideas from their place of origin to other regions, groups or nations

Globalization- the exchange of cultures, ideas, goods, and services around the world

How Does Diffusion Occur?

People are not isolated to their regions. Movement of culture occurs by people migrating or traveling, trading products and spreading information around the world. In an increasingly globalized world, culture has become fluid and may adapt and change because of new influences. Some might say cultures are becoming more similar. The development of technology has certainly changed culture. Images can now be spread around the world via the internet. Technology has also made it possible for people to travel to other nations.

Examples of How Culture Diffusion: How Cultures Changed and Adapted

Language: The most widely spoken language in the world is Mandarin, followed by English and Spanish. English has become an international language. It is the first language used in many international conferences, in business and in media. It is also the language most commonly taught as a second language.

Food: Most countries have traditional dishes that they are famous for and they might have regional dishes. However, with increased migration global foods have spread around the world and most cities will now have Indian, Chinese, Arabic, Mexican, and Italian restaurants. Most cities also have fast food restaurants like Burger King, KFC and McDonald’s. With the globalization of food there has also been the development of fusion food e.g. the mixing of food from two or more countries (Tex-Mex). Globalization has increased the variety of foods available to new places and reduced the consumption of traditional dishes.

Religion: There are five major religions in the world: Islam, Christianity, Buddhism, Hinduism, Judaism and Taoism. Out of these probably only Islam and Christianity can be regarded as truly global. They both began in the Middle East. Today, each group has over a billion followers globally. As people learn about other religions, they may convert or simply learn and understand other religions.

Dress: Most countries have traditional dress. However, globalization has meant that in many countries traditional dress is worn less as global fashions take over, ex: jeans.

Ethnicity: For many centuries there were very distinct ethnic groups. There was little migration between regions, let alone around the world. Mixed race marriages were also very rare. However, with the increase in migration and international tourism, mixed race marriages are now common practice. In many countries, children may have parents who are of different ethnicity, different nationality, speak different first languages and follow different religions.