

Chapter 5 – Cultural Nationalism

- **Cultural Nationalism** – an effort to protect regional and national cultures from the homogenizing impacts of globalization
- Cultural nationalism is one manifestation of a much wider set of beliefs known as nationalism
- The idea of nationalism holds that individuals have a shared identity with others of the same nation, a group often defined by family ties or geography
- Nations endeavour to secure their identities by the promotion of their own distinctiveness, and they use different ways to achieve this
- Some groups may attempt isolationism as a way of sealing themselves off from undesirable influences
- Other groups may attempt to legislate the flow of ideas and values

Maintaining Cultural Borders: Canada and the US

- Canada has developed an extensive and very public policy of cultural protection against the onslaught of US media
- For example, back in 1995 the Canadian government levied an 80% excise tax against Time Inc's Canadian version of Sports Illustrated because it was not Canadian enough
- Other government bodies such as the National Film Board of Canada and the Canadian Radio-Television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC) are active in monitoring the media for the incursion of US culture.
- US dominance on Canadian airwaves is becoming more common, with popular culture in Canada almost reflective of the US.
- **Multiculturalism in Canada**
 - Canada has developed policies based around multiculturalism to counter the US cultural policies
 - Such policies enable different culture to maintain their distinctiveness rather than to require them to be assimilated into the mainstream cultures
 - Approach has become especially valuable as the number and diversity of immigrants into this country have increased and as the sizes of ethnocultural communities within Canada have grown
 - The term multiculturalism is used as:
 - To refer to a society, such as Canada's, that is characterized by ethnic or cultural heterogeneity
 - To refer to a country's ideal of equality and mutual respect for its minorities
 - To refer to federal government policies proclaimed in 1971 and set out in the Canadian Multiculturalism Act of 1988 which aims "to recognize all Canadians as full and equal participants in Canadian society"
 - Multicultural policies since 1971 have not met the needs of all immigrants since they were tailored much more for the needs of long-established ethnic groups of European background
 - Critics have seen multiculturalism as a way of either distracting Canadians from the implications of official bilingualism, diluting the political clout of francophone Canada or of "bribing" Canada's ethnic communities with cultural blandishments

- William Kymlicka's "Multicultural Citizenship: A Liberal Theory of Minority Rights" suggest that in "multi-nation" or "polyethnic" states, it is necessary to protect ethnocultural minorities from the political and economic power of the majority
- Can be done through the use of multicultural policies that either promote the self-government of particular groups
- Example: 2005 Ontario proposal to recognize sharia-based tribunals in family arbitration cases illustrates very clearly some of the dilemmas of multicultural policy.
- In proposing to recognize differences, the province appeared to disavow universal rights
- Policies that promote the self-government of particular groups or advance the rights of ethnocultural communities are "group-differentiated" rights and not "collective rights"
- Minority rights "should not allow one group to dominate other groups and they should not allow a group to oppress its own members"

Culture and Identity

- **Ethnicity and the Use of Space**
 - **Ethnicity** – a socially created system of rules about who belongs and who does not belong to a particular group based on actual or perceived commonality
 - A geographic focus on ethnicity is an attempt to understand how it shapes and is shaped by space, and how ethnic groups use space with respect to mainstream culture
 - Cultural groups – ethnically identified or otherwise – may be spatially segregated from the wider society in ghettos or ethnic enclaves
 - These groups may use space to declare their subjective interpretations about the world they live in and their place in it.
- **Race and Place**
 - **Race** – problematic classification of human beings based on skin colour and other physical characteristics
 - Technically, there is no such thing as race in the human species
 - Western ideas about the Chinese as a racial category enabled the emergence and perpetuation of Chinatown as a type of landscape found throughout many North American cities
 - Visible characteristics of hair, skin, and bone structure made race into a category of difference that was (and still is) widely accepted and often spatially expressed
 - Mainstream approach to neighbourhood is to see it as a spatial setting for systems of affiliation more or less chosen by people with similar skin colour
 - Cultural geographers have begun to overturn this approach and to see neighbourhoods as spaces that affirm the dominant society's sense of identity
 - From the perspective of white society, Chinatowns were the physical expression of what set the Chinese apart from Caucasians
 - Distinguishing characteristics revolved around the way the Chinese looked, what they ate, their non-Christian religion, their opium consumption, gambling habits, and other "strange" practices
 - Place maintained and manifested differences between Caucasian and Chinese societies. Furthermore, place continues to be a mechanism for creating and preserving local systems

of racial classification within defined geographical confines.

- **Gender**

- **Gender** – category reflecting the social differences between men and women rather than the anatomical differences that are related to sex
- Gender implies a socially created difference in power between groups
- In the case of gender, the power difference gives males an advantage over females and is socially and culturally created rather than biologically determined
- Class position can intensify the power differences among and between groups
- Implications of these differences are played out differently in different parts of the world
- For example, in South Asia, women bear the greatest burden and most suffering as South Asian societies are intensely patriarchal, though the form that patriarchy takes varies by region and class
- Common denominator among the poor throughout South Asia is that women not only have the constant responsibilities of motherhood and domestic chores but also have to work long hours in informal-sector occupations.
- There is a high preference for male children and an increase in practices for selective abortions and female infanticide
- Studies have shown in Canada that the suburbs have tended to be seen as “female” space and the downtown and industrial areas as “male” space
- This was seen as a divide between the spaces based on their role in society; Residential space was seen as the site of social reproduction and private life, and commercial and industrial space as the site of economic reproduction and public life
- Under gender stereotypes prevalent at the time, the residential space was identified as female space; the industrial space was identified as male space
- **Feminist Geography** – a field that examines the extent to which women and men experience spaces and places differently and to show how these differences themselves are part of the social construction of gender as well as that of place
- Males and Females created different spatial experiences for men and women
- Studies of gender travel pattern in North American cities showed that a clear distinction existed between men and women
 - Men would take many short trips during the middle of the day across the city; women would take long trips at the beginning and end of the day
- Feminist geographers have more recently sought to look beyond research that demonstrates the fact that a clear difference exist, to explore the underlying societal reasons why those differences exist and the processes that sustain their continued existence

Culture and the Physical Environment

- Geographers continue to focus their attention on people's relationships with the natural world and how the changing global economy disrupts or shapes those relationships
- **Cultural Ecology**
 - **Cultural Ecology** – The study of the relationship between a cultural group and its natural environment

- Aim is to understand how cultural processes affect adaptation to the environment
- Cultural ecologists seek to explain how cultural processes affect adaptation to the environment
- **Cultural Adaptation** – the use of complex strategies by human groups to live successfully as part of a natural system
- Cultural ecologists recognize that people are components of complex ecosystems, and that the way they manage and consume resources is shaped by cultural beliefs, practices, values and traditions as well as power institutions and power relationships
- Cultural ecology approach incorporates three key points:
 - Cultural groups and the environment are interconnected by systemic interrelationships. Cultural ecologists must examine how people manage resources through a range of strategies to comprehend how the environment shapes culture and vice versa
 - Cultural behaviour must be examined as a function of the cultural group's relationship to the environment through both material and nonmaterial cultural elements. Such examinations are conducted through intensive fieldwork
 - Most studies in cultural ecology investigate food production in rural and agricultural settings in the periphery to understand how change affects the relationship between cultural group and the environment.
- Three points illustrate the way in which cultural geographers go about asking questions, collecting data and deriving conclusions from their research
- Show how cultural ecology is both similar to and different from Sauer's approach to the cultural landscape
- Cultural ecologists look at food production, demographic change and its impacts on ecosystems, and ecological sustainability
- Scale of analysis is not on cultural areas or cultural regions, but on small groups' adaptive strategies to a particular place or setting
- Cultural ecologists have been able to understand complex relationships between cultural groups and their environment
- **Political Ecology**
 - **Political Ecology** – An approach to cultural geography that studies human-environment relationships through the relationships of patterns of resource use to political and economic forces
 - This perspective requires an examination of the impact of the State and the market on the ways in which particular groups use their resource base
 - Political ecology incorporates the same human-environment components analyzed by cultural ecologists
 - Political ecology is seen to go beyond what cultural ecologists seek to understand
 - Local cultural practices are being abandoned as people develop a taste and preference for low-cost and convenient imported agricultural commodities.
 - Production for export also opens up the local economy to the fluctuations of the wider global economy

Globalization and Cultural Change

- Globalization is impacting on the multiplicity of cultural groups that inhabit the globe
- More and more places around the world are being interconnected and similar
- Norms found in some parts of the world have become universally acceptable
 - Eg. The business suit has been culturally accepted as the proper dress code for business practices
 - Jeans, T-shirts and athletic footwear have become the norm for young people as well as those in lower-wage jobs
 - Music, Cars, Fashion, Entertainment found in one part of the world can be found in many parts of the world today
- Commonalities that provide a sense of familiarity among the inhabitants of the “fast world”; this global familiarity can be connected to the culture of fast food and popular entertainment that emanates from the US
- Popular commentators have observed that cultures around the world are being “Americanized” which represents the beginnings of a single global culture that will be based on material consumption, with the English language as the medium
- Economic success of the US entertainment industry has helped reinforce the idea of an emerging global culture based on Americanization.
- In 1996, the entertainment industry was a leading source of foreign income in the US, with a trade surplus of US \$23 billion.
- Similarly, the US transmits much more than it receives in sheer volume of cultural products
- Neither the widespread consumption of US and US-style products nor the increasing familiarity of people around the world with global media and international brand names, adds up to the emergence of a single global culture
- What is happening is that process of globalization are exposing the inhabitants of both the fast world and the slow world to a common set of products, symbols, myths, memories, events, cult figures, landscapes and traditions
- It is important to recognize that cultural flows take place in all directions, not just outward from the US
- **A Global Culture?**
 - There is no global culture, contrary to popular belief
 - Although an increasing familiarity exists within a common set of products, symbols, and events, these commonalities become configured in different ways in different places, rather than constituting a single global culture
 - Local interacts with the global, often producing hybrid cultures
 - Sometimes traditional, local cultures become the subject of global consumption; sometimes it is the other way around