Cultural Diffusion and Culture Change

Cultures are dynamic. Some traits are originated by that society (innovation), others are borrowed and adapted from other societies (diffusion).

Cultural Diffusion (borrowing): The process of borrowing, adapting and even forcing culture traits from one society to another society.

Types of Diffusion:

Relocation Diffusion: People move and bring culture traits with them
Examples: Immigrant societies like the USA, Canada, Australia, Latin America – all of these cultures are based on the colonizer cultures, not the native cultures.

Other examples:
Baseball in Japan was brought by US servicemen after WWII.
Soccer was spread around the world by the British.

Stimulus Diffusion: The diffusion of an idea or concept from one culture to another that is changed/improved to fit that cultures tastes/needs.
Examples: Fast Food Restaurants have different menus in different countries
Western-style clothing is worn throughout the world though styles are different.

Hierarchical Diffusion: The diffusion of a trait through hierarchical classes like wealth, social standing, size classifications, etc.
Examples: Hip Hop and Rap spread from lower class to upper class.
Technology often diffuses from Upper class to lower class as it gets cheaper.

Contagious Diffusion: Diffusion that spreads out from the hearth through personal contact in a continuous manner.
Examples: Wal-mart spread out from Arkansas.
Islam spread out from Mecca across the Middle East and South Asia.

Acculturation: The changing or adaptation of a culture as a result of mixing with other cultures. Often results in the changing of both cultures.

Assimilation: The concept of giving up your original cultural traits and practicing the cultural traits of the majority culture.