

Concepts of society

Melting pot

Metaphor for a heterogeneous society becoming more homogeneous, the different elements "melting together" into a harmonious whole with a common culture.

Used to describe [assimilation](#) of immigrants to the USA from 1780 on

*"...whence came all these people? They are a mixture of English, Scotch, Irish, French, Dutch, Germans, and Swedes... What, then, is the American, this new man? ... He is an American, who, leaving behind him all his ancient prejudices and manners, receives new ones from the new mode of life he has embraced, the new government he obeys " – J. Hector St. John de Crevecoeur, *Letters from an American Farmer*.*

For [immigrants to the United States](#), the "melting pot" meant: [Americanization](#) / [cultural assimilation](#) + intermarriage of [ethnicities](#),

African-Americans: fully culturally integrated into American culture/institutions

BUT intermarriage between African-Americans and other ethnicities is much less common than between different white ethnicities, or between white and Asian ethnicities. (long-time taboo, illegal in many US states until 1967)

After 1970 the desirability of assimilation and the melting pot model were challenged → cultural differences within society rather seen as valuable /worth preserving.

Cultural assimilation:

Process by which a person or a group's language or culture come to resemble those of another group.

Full assimilation: new members of a society become indistinguishable from members of the other group.

- quick or gradual change
- desirable for an immigrant group?

Immigrant assimilation:

- complex process in which immigrants fully integrate themselves into a new country.
- four primary benchmarks to assess immigrant assimilation:
 - socioeconomic status (education, occupation, income)
 - geographic distribution
 - second language attainment
 - intermarriage.

Multiculturalism - ethnic diversity

descriptive: fact of [cultural diversity](#):

normative: ideologies or policies that promote this diversity - multiculturalism as a society "at ease with the rich tapestry of human life and the desire amongst people to express their own identity in the manner they see fit."

- focus on interaction and communication between different cultures.
- focus on diversity and cultural uniqueness.
- common aspect : no specific ethnic, religious, or cultural community values presented as central

Salad Bowl

The **salad bowl** concept: integration of the many different cultures of United States residents combine like a salad, \leftrightarrow more traditional notion of [melting pot](#).

Various American cultures are juxtaposed — like salad ingredients — but do not merge into a single homogeneous culture. Each culture keeps its own distinct qualities.

Supporters: being American not tied to a single culture, but rather to citizenship and loyalty to the United States → no need to abandon cultural heritage

Critics: America needs common culture to preserve a common "American" identity.

Amy Chua: 'cultural tolerance' as a prerequisite for global dominance of hyperpower USA, that remains a tolerant nation ...

Cultural Mosaic / American Mosaic / American Kaleidoscope

Mix of [ethnic groups](#), [languages](#) and [cultures](#) co-existing within society. (originally a concept from Canada)

→ ideal of [multiculturalism](#), opposed to systems like the [melting pot](#) / [assimilation](#)

*Immigration to Canada over the past 100 years has shaped Canada, with each new wave of immigrants adding to the nation's ethnic and cultural composition. ... As a result, the number of **visible** minorities in Canada is growing a varied, rich cultural mosaic.*

Statistics Canada, 2001

Sources:

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Melting_pot

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cultural_assimilation

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Multiculturalism>

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Salad_bowl_\(cultural_idea\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Salad_bowl_(cultural_idea))

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cultural_mosaic