

## CASE STUDY

### DIVERSE SOCIETIES FACE CHANGE



How can many cultures  
form a unified nation?

The diverse heritage of the United States is evident in this group of students in California.

As you read earlier in this unit, the first immigrants to North America are believed to have come from Asia. They are thought to have crossed a land bridge that existed in what is now the Bering Strait thousands of years ago. Since that time, millions of people from countries all over the world have immigrated to the United States and Canada. They have come in search of a new life in a new homeland. The challenge for citizens and governments of both the United States and Canada is to make sure that these diverse peoples continue to remain unified.

### “Mosaic” or “Melting Pot”

After centuries of immigration, the United States and Canada are culturally diverse. They contain large populations of the world’s cultures. Ethnic neighborhoods with populations of Asians, Eastern Europeans, and Latin Americans are found in most large cities of both countries. In New York City alone, immi-

grant schoolchildren speak more than 100 different languages. The arrival of so many peoples over the years left the United States and Canada with the difficult task of forming a unified society. Each country approached the task of unifying its many cultures differently.

**CANADA’S CULTURAL “MOSAIC”** Canada’s earliest settlers were its native peoples. Its first European settlers came, as you have learned, from two distinct cultural groups—French and English. All of these groups kept their separate identities as the nation developed. Also, Canada encouraged immigration from all over the world. It wanted to fill its vast lands and expand its workforce and its domestic markets. These immigrants also were encouraged to retain their cultural heritage.

As a result, many Canadians have strong ethnic ties. In fact, as you read in Chapter 7, the ethnic identity of French-speaking citizens in Quebec has been so strong that at times they have even considered separating themselves from the Canadian confederation.

The Canadian government has officially recognized the multicultural nature of Canada. In 1988, it enacted the Canadian Multiculturalism Act to protect and promote diversity. Many Canadians believe that this policy ensures equality for people of all origins and enriches their nation. But not all agree. Some Canadians feel that diversity has promoted difference at the expense of “Canadianness.”

**AMERICA'S "MELTING POT"** For many years, people in the United States believed that assimilation was the key. It was thought to be the best way to build one nation from many different peoples. Assimilation occurs when people from a minority culture assume the language, customs, and lifestyles of people from the dominant culture. Native Americans were an example. In the late 19th century, they were encouraged and even forced to learn English, adopt Western dress, and become Christians to assimilate into the dominant white culture.

People expected immigrants to assimilate, too. Those who did not could face prejudice because of their cultural differences. Immigrants soon learned that life would be easier if they adopted the ways of their new country—if they underwent "Americanization." Most of these immigrants had come from Europe. Many wanted to assimilate. They wanted to adopt a common language and culture—to become Americans.

## New Immigrants Challenge Old Ways

The immigrants who came to the United States in the late 20th century brought different attitudes. They came mainly from Latin America and Asia. They were culturally or racially unlike earlier immigrant groups, who had come mainly from Europe. These later immigrants were less willing to give up their traditions and beliefs in order to assimilate.

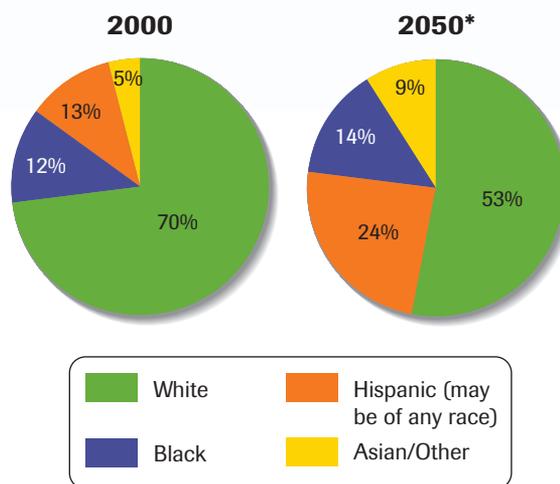
**DIVIDED OPINION** Some Americans felt that the new immigrants did not understand what made the United States unique. According to this point of view, America's strength has come from blending its diverse cultures to create something new—an American. They also believed that encouraging different languages and customs would promote separation, not unity. In response, they wanted immigration limited and English made the official language.

Other Americans, including many educators, held different views. They thought that American society would benefit by stressing multiculturalism, as the Canadians do.

As you can see, bringing many cultures together is a continuing challenge both in the United States and in Canada. So, how can cultural diversity be preserved and national unity forged? The Case Study Project and primary sources that follow will help you explore this question.

SEE  
PRIMARY SOURCE C

### U.S. Population by Race and Ethnicity



\* projected  
SOURCE: U.S. Bureau of the Census

#### SKILLBUILDER: Interpreting Graphs

- ANALYZING DATA** What groups made up about the same proportion of the population in 2000?
- MAKING GENERALIZATIONS** What changes are expected to take place in the composition of the U.S. population during 2000–2050?

# CASE STUDY

## PROJECT

Primary sources A, B, C, D, and E offer differing opinions about assimilation and maintaining cultural identity. Use them along with your own research from the library or Internet to prepare for a talk show discussion on the issue of today's cultural diversity.



RESEARCH LINKS  
CLASSZONE.COM

## Talk Show Discussion

### Suggested Steps

1. With a group totaling five students, prepare a talk show discussion on the topic, "Can Many Cultures Form a Unified Nation?" One member should act as the discussion leader. Each of the other members should select one of the following positions: for assimilation or against assimilation.
2. Think about the following questions as you prepare for your role. "Must a unified nation have a single culture?" "What are the advantages and disadvantages of assimilation, or the advantages and disadvantages of multiculturalism, in unifying a nation?"
3. Use online and print resources to research your topic.
4. Write an opening statement of your position. Prepare visuals, such as charts or graphs, if you need them to support your position.
5. Present your position as a part of the talk show. Discuss with the leader and other group members the focus question given above.

### Materials and Supplies

- posterboard
- colored markers
- reference books, newspapers, and magazines
- Internet access

### PRIMARY SOURCE A

**Newspaper Article** In 1998, the Washington Post published a series of articles titled *The Myth of the Melting Pot*. Staff writer **William Booth** offered the following comments about immigration and cultural identity in his piece, "One Nation, Indivisible: Is It History?"

The immigrants of today come not from Europe but overwhelmingly from the still developing world of Asia and Latin America. They are driving a demographic shift so rapid that within the lifetimes of today's teenagers, no one ethnic group—including whites of European descent—will comprise a majority of the nation's population. . . .

[M]any historians argue that there was a greater consensus in the past on what it meant to be an American, a yearning for a common language and culture, and a desire—encouraged, if not coerced [forced] by members of the dominant white Protestant culture—to assimilate. Today, they say, there is more emphasis on preserving one's ethnic identity, of finding ways to highlight and defend one's cultural roots.

### PRIMARY SOURCE B

**Social Commentary** Michelle Young is a writer and editor. Much of her work has focused on issues of multiculturalism. In the following excerpt from a 1996 article in the online publication *Career Magazine*, Young contrasts assimilation with multiculturalism.

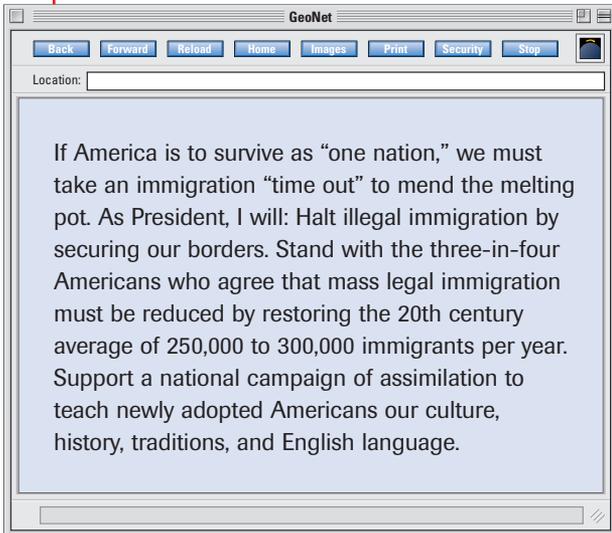
The melting pot concept spoke of all Americans being part of the enormous "cultural stew" we call America. . . . Many people . . . saw the United States of America as a place where historical hurts from their homelands could be erased. . . .

But America was not the nation they'd been promised, where the streets were paved with gold. Many newcomers knew that from experience because "they" were doing the paving! As a result, people began to realize that the concept of the melting pot just wasn't realistic. . . .

In contrast to the melting pot, multiculturalism encourages us to take pride in our own roots first, in our ingredients we've added to what has become America's multicultural stew. The nation's promise lies in that multicultural stew, and by appreciating our own cultures, we develop an eagerness to learn about others' origins.

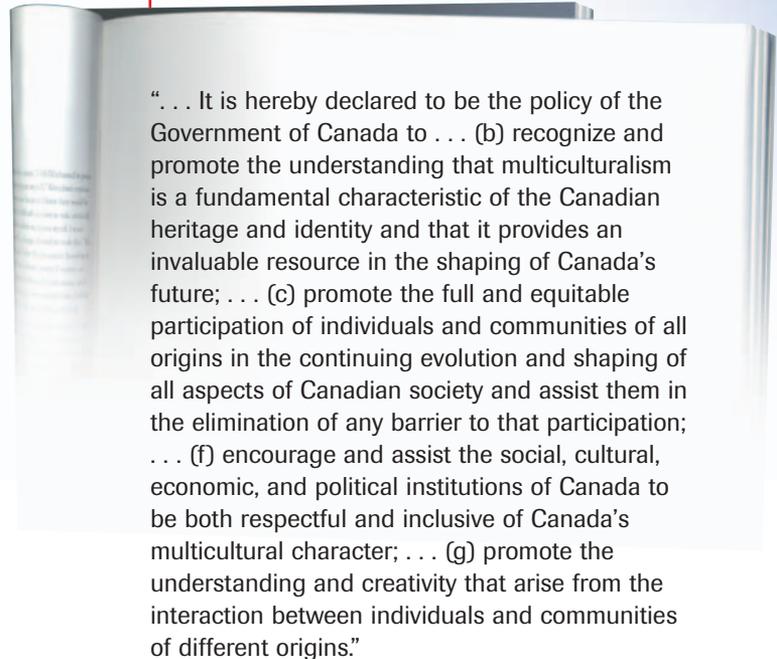
**PRIMARY SOURCE C**

**Political Commentary** *Patrick Buchanan is a politician who was the presidential candidate of the Reform Party in 2000. Buchanan was a strong supporter of immigration reform and assimilation, as is evident in these words posted on his Web site on August 6, 2000.*



**PRIMARY SOURCE D**

**Government Law** *The Canadian Multiculturalism Act was passed by the Canadian parliament in 1988. Its purpose was to make the preservation and enhancement of multiculturalism in Canada the law of the land.*



**PRIMARY SOURCE E**

**Government Document** *The 2000 census form contained detailed racial and ethnic classifications, showing the diverse peoples that make up the population of the United States.*

**Person**

**1**



Your answers are important! Every person in the Census counts.

**6** What is this person's race? Mark  **one or more races** to indicate what this person considers himself/herself to be.

- White
- Black, African Am., or Negro
- American Indian or Alaska Native – Print name of enrolled or principal tribe. ↴

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

- Asian Indian
- Chinese
- Filipino
- Japanese
- Korean
- Vietnamese
- Other Asian – Print race. ↴
- Native Hawaiian
- Guamanian or Chamorro
- Samoan
- Other Pacific Islander – Print race. ↴

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

- Some other race – Print race. ↴

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**1** What is this person's name? Print the name of Person 1 from page 2.

Last Name \_\_\_\_\_

First Name \_\_\_\_\_ MI \_\_\_\_\_

**2** What is this person's telephone number? We may contact this person if we don't understand an answer.

Area Code + Number \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_

**3** What is this person's sex? Mark  **ONE** box.

- Male
- Female

**PROJECT Checklist**

Have I . . .

- ✓ fully researched my topic?
- ✓ taken into account both sides of an issue?
- ✓ created informative visuals that make my presentation clear and interesting?
- ✓ practiced the delivery of my presentation?