

Views on Multiculturalism

- 1 Since the 1960s, Canada and the United States have become more **culturally diverse** than at any other time in their history. In 1957, for example, 95 percent of people who settled in Canada were European; thirty years later, 76 percent of immigrants were from Asia and elsewhere in the developing world. In the United States, between 1970 and 2000 the **foreign-born population** doubled and experienced significant changes in ethnic makeup. In 1970, 59 percent of the foreign-born population were European, while 27 percent were from Latin America and Asia. By 2000, the proportions were very different. Of the 31.1 million foreign-born, 78 percent were Latino and Asian, whereas Europeans *made up* only 16 percent of the total. (See Table 2.2 for historical shifts in immigration patterns.)
- 2 Also since the 1960s, the governments of the United States and Canada have supported **cultural diversity** by developing a policy that is often called multiculturalism. Both countries, for example, *shifted from* immigration laws that favored Europeans (and admitted few people from other parts of the world) *to* more open, fairer policies. In the United States, the **Bilingual Education Acts** of 1968 and 1978 provided funds to educate the children of **non-English-speaking immigrants**. In the Multiculturalism Act of 1988, the Canadian government *committed* itself *to* the idea that all citizens had the right to preserve their cultural inheritance. It also established a **Ministry for Multiculturalism**.
- 3 Multiculturalism, however, is a **controversial issue** in both countries. In the United States, multiculturalism is closely associated with bilingual education - public

school programs that use the native language of immigrant children to teach them math, science, and social studies. These programs have caused disagreement both within immigrant communities and in the wider American public. In the 1990s, for example, **public opinion polls** showed Americans were *divided on* bilingual education, sometimes equally, sometimes with a majority *opposed to* it. By 2003, small majorities in California, Arizona, and Massachusetts had voted not to allow any more state funds to be spent on bilingual education.

- 4 In Canada, similar divisions on the issue of multiculturalism are also visible. A 1988 public opinion poll found that approximately 60 percent were *in favor of* encouraging immigrants *to assimilate into* Canadian culture, whereas **38 percent** thought that **immigrants** should be **encouraged to retain** their cultural **traditions**. Support for assimilation was strongest, at 73 percent, among Canadians with low educational levels; however, such support was also found among 52 percent of university graduates.
- 5 Why is multiculturalism such a **divisive issue**? Some people *argue that* the poll results and the votes against bilingual education are **empirical evidence** of a growing racism in U.S. and Canadian society. Yet such an interpretation appears unjustified. In both countries, polls in 2002 showed that large majorities of Americans (75 percent) and Canadians (77 percent) believed that immigration has benefited their countries. In Canada, the 1988 poll also showed that approximately 80 percent of Canadians disapproved of using **country of origin** as a way to select immigrants. Such responses would be *highly unlikely* to occur in societies in which racist

attitudes were widespread.

6 There is a more likely explanation why public opinion seems divided on the issue of multiculturalism. Because the concept has never been clearly defined, people inevitably use their own experiences *to arrive at* a definition. Different experiences lead to different interpretations of multiculturalism.

7 One common interpretation of multiculturalism is that society should encourage immigrants to retain their own culture and language. *Under this definition*, multiculturalism seems to imply that immigrant families need not *adapt to* the culture of their new country. Canadians and Americans who interpret multiculturalism *in this way* oppose it, perhaps justifiably. Common sense tells them that people cannot be full members of a new society if they are not willing to adapt and use the new society's cultural rules at least some of the time.

8 *On the other hand*, many people interpret multiculturalism differently. For them it means accepting American or Canadian cultural traditions for public behavior and retaining their own culture *in private life*. If multiculturalism were explicitly defined *in this way*, much of the controversy would probably disappear. This definition, *after all*, reflects the experience of earlier first-generation immigrants to the United States and Canada. Later generations, however, considered themselves fully integrated North Americans.

Noun Concept Collocations

culturally diverse
foreign-born population
cultural diversity
Bilingual Education Acts
non-English-speaking immigrants
Multiculturalism Act
Ministry for Multiculturalism
controversial issue
public opinion polls
divisive issue
empirical evidence
country of origin

Preposition Collocation Phrases

for example
in favor of
in which
Under this definition
in this way
On the other hand
after all

Preposition Collocations with Verbs

settled in
made up
shifted from
committed to
associated with
divided on
opposed to
to assimilate into
to arrive at
adapt to

Miscellaneous Collocations

argue that
highly unlikely

In Preposition Phrases

Specific time period

In 1957
In 1970
In the 1990s
in 2002

General time period

in their history

Specific location

in Canada
In the United States
In the United States
in both countries
In the United States
in California, Arizona, and
Massachusetts
In both countries
In Canada

General location

in the developing world
in the wider American public
in U.S. and Canadian society
in societies
in private life

As an adjective phrase

in ethnic makeup
in immigration patterns

With/ Regarding

In the Multiculturalism Act

As collocation prepositional phrase

in favor of
in which
in this way