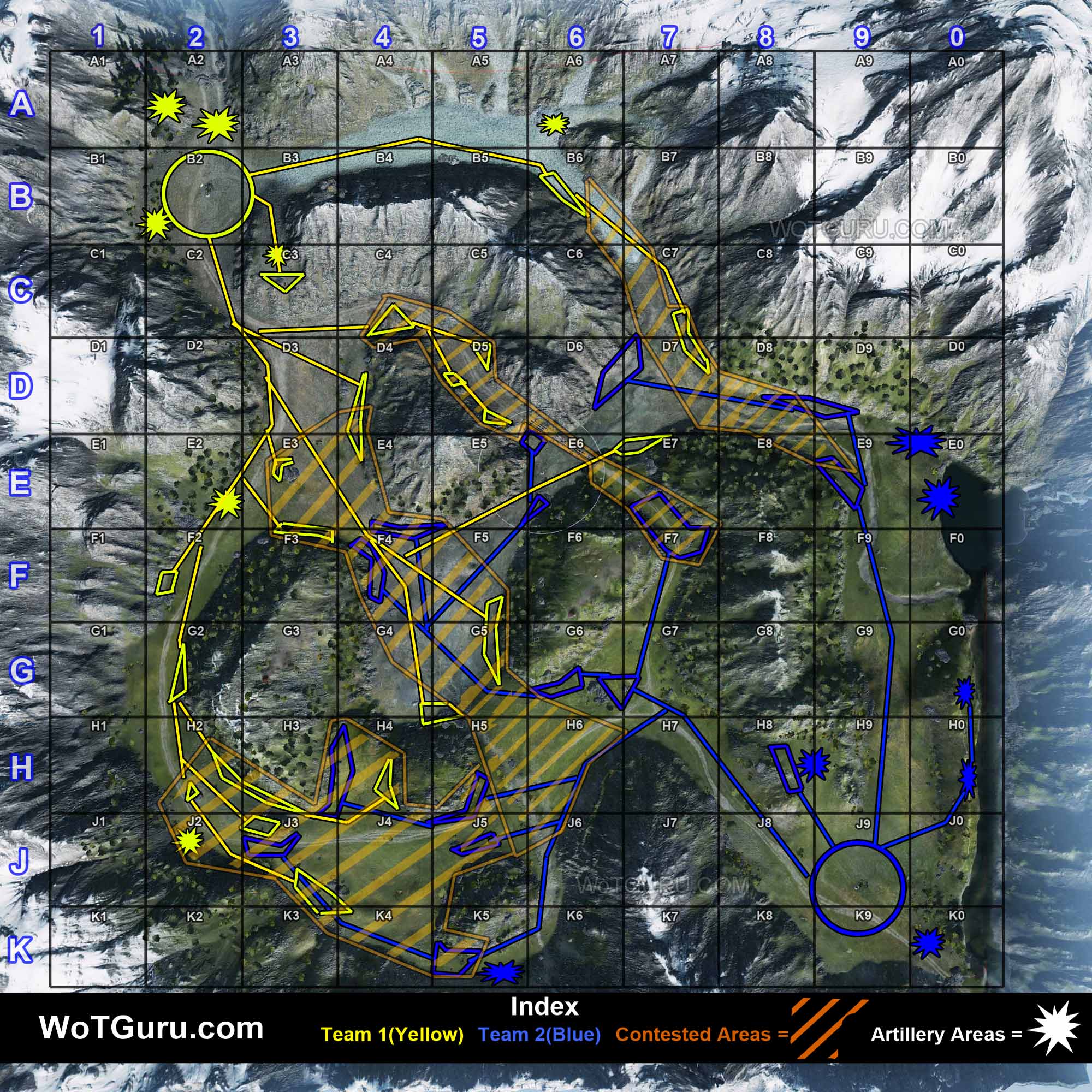
Good Examples  
Applications Article by Mark Csoros



Hello! As you can tell from the subtitle, this piece is all about applications. Part I contains some advice on how to successfully set up, run, and respond to applications, Part II contains Affirmative applications, and Part III contains Negative applications. Part IV, which I’ve entitled “Applications that Muddy the Water” is designed to give you some new concepts and perspectives to think about.

# Part I: General Guidelines

## Definitions are key

To run good applications, you have to run definitions that are convincing and strategically sound. By that, I mean that your definitions must support your resolutional analysis, be reasonable enough for the judge to accept, and allow you to run persuasive applications. Far too often, debaters settle on a set of applications and then tailor their definitions around those applications. That’s exactly, 100%, completely backwards. There are hundreds of applications out there, and only a few good definitions for each side of the resolution. So, pick your definitions first, frame the resolution in the most advantageous way, and then find examples to support your logic.

With that said, it’s important to choose definitions that allow you to debate the applications well. We can’t usually challenge the facts of an application, so we respond by minimizing, coopting, or definitionally excluding the application. Here’s what that looks like:

Minimization: *His application is true, but only represents a tiny fraction of the cases where multiculturalism and assimilation are in conflict.*

Cooption: *His application is true, but definitionally, it actually supports my side of the resolution.*

Definitional exclusion: *His application is true, but definitionally, it doesn’t apply to the resolution.*

Because two of these three responses rely on definitions, it behooves us to choose definitions that we can use, and can’t be used against us. Nothing hurts more than spending a minute and a half on a detailed, logical, well-impacted application, only for your opponent to kill it in fifteen seconds, using your own definition. That’s tough to come back from.

## Applications exemplify concepts

Replacing value-centric debate with application-centric debate is one of my LD pet peeves. It’s called Lincoln-Douglas VALUEdebate, not Lincoln-Douglas APPLICATION debate, because we determine what to value through logical principles that are supported by, but not overshadowed by, real-world examples. This isn’t to say that applications are unimportant. They’re vital, because logic seems highly suspect if it’s never been played out in 6,000 years of human history. However, applications should never replace value-centric argumentation.

If your opponent tries proving his case with applications, there’s an effective counter. This is especially useful against debaters who try to set Guinness World Records for the most applications in an LD round, fail to discuss the principles of their case, and tout the sheer number of applications as grounds for victory (“Judge, I’ve given you eight applications, my opponent has only run two. That’s six reasons I deserve your ballot.”). In this situation, explain to the judge that in LD debate, we use values, not examples, because you cannot prove universality via anecdotal evidence. Applications are stories (or anecdotes, hence the name) about what happened in a particular situation, they do not prove a general principle or support a general rule. If we were debating about whether we should value dogs or cats, an application about how Ol’ Yeller was a great dog doesn’t prove we should value dogs more. But, an application about Ol’ Yeller that supports the argument *“dogs should be valued above cats because dogs are loyal, and loyalty is the most important value when it comes to pets”* is a powerful piece of support.

# Part II: Affirmative Applications

As we learned in the Strategy Overview published two weeks ago, you can view this resolution from the perspective of a dominant culture (the one accepting new culture groups), a minority culture (the new, usually incoming or conquered group), or both. Most of the applications here will focus on the “both” paradigm, since cross-applicable applications will make the most efficient use of your reading time, dear reader. However, I will include a few applications that only work with the dominant or minority culture view, and I’ll specify which applications correspond to which paradigm.

## America (Conceptually) – “Both” Paradigm

The U.S. can be both a positive and negative application for the affirmative (it shows why assimilation is good and why multiculturalism is bad). Some of our worst moments as a nation: slavery, segregation, the Trail of Tears, Japanese internment camps – all of which can be run as individual applications – were the result of multiculturalism in its worst forms, as enforced by the dominant culture. Some of our greatest accomplishments: the Bill of Rights, the Emancipation Proclamation, the Reconstruction Amendments, the Civil Rights Act – which are also complex enough to form individual applications – all reflect our shared national commitment to equality, unity, and freedom. America is the Great Melting Pot, the place where everyone, no matter what culture they come from, is simply an American. A study published in 2017 by the Stanford Institute for Economic Policy Research had this to say about American assimilation:

*“For example, people with names like Hyman or Vito were almost certain to be children of immigrants, while youngsters with names like Clay or Lowell were likely to have native parents. In this respect, children’s names are signals of cultural identity. Giving a child an American-sounding name is a financially cost-free way of identifying with U.S. culture…Our key finding is that for immigrants who arrived in the 1900s and 1910s, the more time they spent in the U.S., the less likely they were to give their children foreign-sounding names….after 20 years in this country, half of the gap in name choice between immigrants and natives had disappeared.”[[1]](#footnote-1)*

## America (Educationally and Politically) - “Both” Paradigm

To further this point about America’s underlying commitment to assimilation, Harvard Ph.D. in government Mark Lilla (a self-proclaimed liberal) spoke out against the recent fixation on multiculturalism in education. He argues that the celebration of diverse and separate cultures creates people who cannot look outside of their own enclaves, and that this costs America a political price:

*“…the fixation on diversity in our schools and in the press has produced a generation of liberals and progressives narcissistically unaware of conditions outside their self-defined groups, and indifferent to the task of reaching out to Americans in every walk of life. At a very young age our children are being encouraged to talk about their individual identities, even before they have them. By the time they reach college many assume that diversity discourse exhausts political discourse, and have shockingly little to say about such perennial questions as class, war, the economy and the common good. In large part this is because of high school history curriculums, which anachronistically project the identity politics of today back onto the past, creating a distorted picture of the major forces and individuals that shaped our country. (The achievements of women’s rights movements, for instance, were real and important, but you cannot understand them if you do not first understand the founding fathers’ achievement in establishing a system of government based on the guarantee of rights.)”[[2]](#footnote-2)*

## America (Economically) - “Both” Paradigm

To add to the persuasive power of our national tendency towards assimilation, the economic benefits to both our dominant culture, and incoming minority cultures, represent another reason to vote affirmative. The Atlantic reported in 2015 that:

*“Immigrants tend to contribute more to the economy once they’ve learned English and become citizens. A few cities—notably, New York—have a long history of ushering immigrants into the mainstream society and economy…The foreign-born population in the Nashville metropolitan area has more than doubled since 2000; immigrants accounted for three-fifths of the city’s population growth between 2000 and 2012, and now constitute an eighth of all Nashville residents…They’ve been drawn to Nashville’s booming economy, which has ranked among the fastest-growing in the nation in recent years. But they’re not only benefiting from the local prosperity—they’re contributing to it. Immigrants are twice as likely as native-born Nashville residents to start their own small businesses, according to data compiled by the Partnership for a New American Economy. They also play an outsized role in important local industries, including construction, health care, and hotels*.*”[[3]](#footnote-3)*

## England (Identity and Reality) – “Both” Paradigm

In some nations, especially those with high rates of immigration, multiculturalism has led to some shocking results. In Britain, Dame Louise Casey (Dame, here, is an honorific used in England to denote a rank of achievement, the same way they use the title “Sir”) was commissioned to conduct a study on the progress of assimilation in England. She found a mess. Assimilation was so undervalued that some minority cultures might as well have been living in their countries of origin. Dame Casey reported:

*Taken together, high ethnic minority concentration in residential areas and in schools increases the likelihood of children growing up without meeting or better understanding people from different backgrounds. One striking illustration of such segregation came from a non-faith state secondary school we visited where, in a survey they had conducted, pupils believed the population of Britain to be between 50% and 90% Asian, such had been their experience up to that point. Research examined during the review suggests that concentrations of ethnic communities can have both positive and negative effects, and that outcomes do not appear to be uniform for all groups. Ethnic concentration can improve bonding between people from similar backgrounds, particularly when they are new to an area, but it can also: • limit labour market opportunities, notably for Pakistani and Bangladeshi groups – although it appears to improve employment opportunities for Indian ethnic groups; • reduce opportunities for social ties between minority and White British communities; and • lead to lower identification with Britain and lower levels of trust between ethnic groups, compared to minorities living in more diverse areas.”[[4]](#footnote-4)*

# Part III: Negative Applications

## America (Conceptually) – “Both” Paradigm

There’s a compelling argument that America is a multicultural nation. We’re all Americans, yes, but many of us are Irish-American, Indian-American, Chinese-American, or, even among the native-born, African-American or Caucasian-American. It’s hard to argue that these groups are not culturally different, and it’s equally hard to argue that America’s commitment to free speech, free association, freedom of religion, and all-around freedom doesn’t support a multicultural nation.

## America (Social Engagement) – “Both” Paradigm

Moreover, it may be better for everyone involved to avoid assimilation. In 2007, the Manhattan Institute published a book review of *Bowling Alone*, by Robert Putnam (a professor of public policy at Harvard’s Kennedy School of Government). The book is not publicly available for free, but the Manhattan Institute gives us a peek at the contents:

*“In the 41 sites Putnam studied in the U.S., he found that the more diverse the neighborhood, the less residents trust neighbors. This proved true in communities large and small, from big cities like Los Angeles, Chicago, Houston, and Boston to tiny Yakima, Washington, rural South Dakota, and the mountains of West Virginia. In diverse San Francisco and Los Angeles, about 30 percent of people say that they trust neighbors a lot. In ethnically homogeneous communities in the Dakotas, the figure is 70 percent to 80 percent.*

*Diversity does not produce “bad race relations,” Putnam says. Rather, people in diverse communities tend “to withdraw even from close friends, to expect the worst from their community and its leaders, to volunteer less, give less to charity and work on community projects less often, to register to vote less, to agitate for social reform more, but have less faith that they can actually make a difference, and to huddle unhappily in front of the television.” Putnam adds a crushing footnote: his findings “may underestimate the real effect of diversity on social withdrawal.””[[5]](#footnote-5)*

## Australia and Canada (Economics) – Dominant Culture Paradigm

Assimilationist countries don’t have a monopoly on economic gain. Eddie Ng, a Ph.D. professor of economics and business at Canada’s Dalhousie University, wrote in 2015 that:

*“Australia and Canada have successfully promoted multiculturalism to convey a climate of tolerance and inclusion to attract skilled workers.  As a result, both countries saw an influx of talents, foreign capital, and international students helpful in bolstering their economies.  Immigrants also retain transnational ties with their countries of origin which are conducive to promoting trade and international business between their countries of origin and new countries of residence.  As an example, Canadian export is projected to grow by 10% annually simply by matching exports to countries represented by its immigrants’ countries of origin.”[[6]](#footnote-6)*

# Part IV: Applications That Muddy the Waters

## Canada’s Assimilation into Multiculturalism

Sometimes, assimilation into a culture means embracing multiculturalism. A spectacular example comes from a Canadian social researcher and a Senator from Ontario, who wrote this in a 2018 op-ed published in the Globe and Mail.

*“The architects of the original policy framework of multiculturalism might not have anticipated that it would become so central to the national identity, or so deeply embraced by people whose ancestors fit easily into old, colonial ideas of monocultural or bicultural Canada. But while they might not have foreseen the exact contours of contemporary Canada, they did understand the importance of a strong social fabric. Canadian multiculturalism has always aimed at integration, not fragmentation. Three of the four original pillars of the policy focused on participation and inclusion, while only one committed to supporting groups’ efforts to sustain their heritage cultures.”[[7]](#footnote-7)*

## America’s Backfiring Assimilation Efforts

When it comes to assimilation, we don’t have a perfect record in the U.S., even when we’re trying our best. Vicki Fouka, a Ph.D. in Economics and an assistant professor of Political Science at Stanford, wrote this in the abstract of a 2019 paper published by Oxford University Press:

*“This article examines how a specific assimilation policy—language restrictions in elementary school—affects integration and identification with the host country later in life. After World War I, several U.S. states barred the German language from their schools. Affected individuals were less likely to volunteer in World War II and more likely to marry within their ethnic group and to choose decidedly German names for their offspring. Rather than facilitating the assimilation of immigrant children, the policy instigated a backlash, heightening the sense of cultural identity among the minority.”[[8]](#footnote-8)*

This isn’t an uncommon outcome. Paradoxically, the best way to aid assimilation may be to value multiculturalism. Eddie Ng once again tell us that:

*“In general, countries that embrace multiculturalism report more positive outcomes in the form of better integration of ethnic minority immigrants. Conversely, societies that demand immigrants to assimilate report poorer ethnic minority integration and experience backlash from its citizens.  For multiculturalism to be effective, assimilationist societies must be prepared to change elite and public attitudes and implement policies that do not produce backlash among the native-born majority population.”[[9]](#footnote-9)*

# In Conclusion

Hopefully this piece has helped you conceptualize the resolution in new and productive ways, and provided some new avenues to research. Keep up the good work, and may you prosper in competition.

1. # Ph.D. of Economics Ran Abramitsky, 2017. “What history tells us about assimilation of immigrants”; Stanford Institute for Economic Policy Research. <https://siepr.stanford.edu/news/what-history-tells-us-about-assimilation-immigrants>

   [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Ph.D. Mark Lilla, Professor of Humanities at Columbia. Nov 18 2016 “The End of Identity Liberalism”; The New York Times

   <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/11/20/opinion/sunday/the-end-of-identity-liberalism.html> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. # Ted Hesson, July 21 2015. “Why American Cities Are Fighting to Attract Immigrants”; The Atlantic

   <https://www.theatlantic.com/business/archive/2015/07/us-cities-immigrants-economy/398987/> [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Dame Louise Casey, Dec 2016. The Casey Review: A Review Into Opportunity and Integration <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/575973/The_Casey_Review_Report.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. John Leo, writing for the Manhattan Institute’s City Journal. Writing about Bowling Alone, by Robert Putnam, Harvard professor of public policy and former Dean of Harvard’s Kennedy School of Government) <https://www.city-journal.org/html/bowling-our-own-10265.html> [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Ph.D. Eddie Ng, July 20 2015 “Multiculturalism Around the World”; Psychology Today

   <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/diverse-and-competitive/201507/multiculturalism-around-the-world> [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Michael Adams (President of the Environics Institute, a polling and research firm) and Ratna Omidvar (Senator from Ontario and visiting professor at Ryerson University). Sept 15, 2018. “Multiculturalism doesn’t divide. It encourages belonging”; The Globe and Mail

   <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/opinion/article-multiculturalism-doesnt-divide-it-encourages-belonging/> [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. P.hD. of Economics Vasiliki (Vicky) Fouka, May 26th, 2019 “Backlash: The Unintended Effects of Language Prohibition in U.S. Schools after World War I” Published by Oxford University Press on behalf of The Review of Economic Studies.

   <https://academic.oup.com/restud/advance-article-abstract/doi/10.1093/restud/rdz024/5472346?redirectedFrom=fulltext> [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Ph.D. Eddie Ng, July 20 2015 “Multiculturalism Around the World”; Psychology Today

   <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/diverse-and-competitive/201507/multiculturalism-around-the-world> [↑](#footnote-ref-9)