Quality of Life  
Affirmative Case by Steven Errico



We Americans live in a country built by immigrants. And in a day and age when mass immigration is occurring worldwide, it’s important that we welcome newcomers while seeking to preserve the unity of our country. That may sound like two conflicting goals, but this case seeks to show that we can in fact have the best of both worlds.

The true measure of any successful culture is its ability to enhance the wellbeing of its citizens. The central message of this case is that the integration that comes from assimilation of a culture is the best way to improve the quality of the lives of not only the immigrants but the natives as well.

When you run this case, really try to put the judge in the shoes of the people you’re talking about. This resolution really deals with the subjective, personal experiences of individual people. If you can capitalize on that by using specific, emotional appeals in addition to the cold, hard evidence, you will be incredibly persuasive.

Quality of Life

If you were to reach into your pocket and pull out any U.S. minted coin, you would find inscribed on the back the Latin phrase *E Plurbus Unum*, which means “out of many, one.” Though the people United States have come from a variety of different backgrounds, at the end of the day, we are all one. And if the United States is to thrive, we must preserve that unity.

# Definitions

**Culture**

Cambridge. *Cambridge English Dictionary*. Accessed September 20, 2019. <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/us/dictionary/english/culture>

Culture noun (WAY OF LIFE): the way of life of a particular people, esp. as shown in their ordinary behavior and habits, their attitudes toward each other, and their moral and religious beliefs: He studied the culture of the Sioux Indians.

**Assimilation**

Encyclopedia Britannica. *Encyclopedia Britannica.* Accessed September 20, 2019. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/assimilation-society>

Assimilation, in anthropology and sociology, the process whereby individuals or groups of differing ethnic heritage are absorbed into the dominant culture of a society. The process of assimilating involves taking on the traits of the dominant culture to such a degree that the assimilating group becomes socially indistinguishable from other members of the society. As such, assimilation is the most extreme form of acculturation. Although assimilation may be compelled through force or undertaken voluntarily, it is rare for a minority group to replace its previous cultural practices completely; religion, food preferences, proxemics (e.g., the physical distance between people in a given social situation), and aesthetics are among the characteristics that tend to be most resistant to change. Assimilation does not denote “racial” or biological fusion, though such fusion may occur.

**Multiculturalism**

Oxford. *Lexico: Powered by Oxford*. Accessed September 20, 2019. <https://www.lexico.com/en/definition/multiculturalism>

The presence of, or support for the presence of, several distinct cultural or ethnic groups within a society.

**Value**

**Quality of Life**

Oxford. *Lexico: Powered by Oxford*. Accessed September 20, 2019. <https://www.lexico.com/en/definition/quality_of_life>

The standard of health, comfort, and happiness experienced by an individual or group.

## Reason to Prefer: Defines Success

Quality of Life should be our value today because it is the measure by which we can determine the success, or lack thereof, of a society in relationship to its people.

**Criterion: Integration**

Integration refers to the idea of taking on many of the values, behaviors, and customs of a host society and effectively becoming part of the group. Integration is necessary for the quality of life of an individual in a society.

**Contention One: Integration Increases Quality of Life**

Rick Goings, 2017. “Stop Telling Immigrants to Assimilate and Start Helping Them Participate.” *World Economic Forum*, 14 Jan. 2017. <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2017/01/stop-telling-immigrants-to-assimilate-and-start-helping-them-participate/>

Today, 244 million people are classed as international immigrants – more than 3% of the world’s population. The trend is clear: immigration is set to continue and is likely to rise. That means we have to figure out a way to make it work. We know it can be done – look at the United States, a country founded primarily by immigrants, or Brazil and Singapore, each with a cultural diversity deeply rooted in their immigrant communities. We need to get it right, not only to because we have a moral imperative to do so, but because the record shows that immigrant populations positively shape and contribute to the economies of their new homelands. We also know that countries that fail to integrate immigrants suffer economic and societal consequences.

## Application: Life Satisfaction in Germany

The Journal of Population Economics analyzed this very phenomenon in Germany.

Angelini, Casi, & Corazzini, 2015. “Life satisfaction of immigrants: does cultural assimilation matter?” Angelini, V., Casi, L. & Corazzini, L. J Popul Econ (2015) 28: 817. “Life satisfaction of immigrants: does cultural assimilation matter?” <https://doi.org/10.1007/s00148-015-0552-1>

To investigate empirically the association between a direct measure of assimilation with a host culture and immigrants’ subjective well-being, this study uses data from the German Socio-Economic Panel. A positive, significant association arises between cultural assimilation and immigrants’ life satisfaction, even after controlling for several potential confounding factors, such as immigrants’ individual (demographic and socio-economic) characteristics and regional controls that capture their external social conditions. Finally, the strength of the association varies with time since migration; it is significant for “established” and second-generation immigrants but vanishes for “recent” immigrants.

The study went on to say,

In the next columns, we shift to our main analysis focus: the relationship between assimilation with the host culture and the subjective well-being of immigrants. For this assessment, we introduce measures of ethnic identity (German and foreign identity) and language proficiency. The results support our main theoretical prediction, because after we control for the traditional determinants of life satisfaction and individual and time fixed effects, stronger (perceived) assimilation with the host culture is associated with higher levels of life satisfaction. The sense of belonging to the German culture is very important, but identifying with the native culture does not have significant effects on life satisfaction. This result is substantively meaningful; it implies that moving from not feeling at all German to feeling completely German has 1.2 times the impact on life satisfaction as does being married (column 3). Being able to interact with local citizens also is very important, such that German language proficiency has a strong, significant, positive effect on immigrants’ well-being, even when we control for socio-economic conditions and labor market status. Importantly, as we control for time-invariant personality traits and response styles by including individual fixed effects, our results are not driven by spurious correlations of cultural assimilation and life satisfaction.

It concluded by saying,

Our contribution goes beyond previous socio-economic research, with two main novel results. First, we indicate a direct association between cultural assimilation and immigrants’ subjective well-being, unmediated by labor market outcomes (e.g., employment status, wages), time-invariant unobserved individual characteristics, or regional controls that capture the external social conditions of immigrants. Second, we show that the potential benefits of cultural assimilation go beyond the time dimen- sion of the integration process, as widely debated in sociological literature, because its association with life satisfaction is stronger for established immigrants than for recent ones.

**IMPACT: It is clear that integration into a society has an overwhelmingly positive impact on a person’s overall wellbeing.**

**Contention Two: Multiculturalism Harms Quality of Life**

The problem with multiculturalism is that it leads to isolation and thus harms unity, which in turn harms quality of life.

**Multiculturalism leads to isolation**

Gonzalez, 2015. Mike Gonzalez. “The Difference Between Multiculturalism And Assimilation.” *The Federalist*, 7 Oct. 2015. <https://thefederalist.com/2015/10/06/how-to-know-the-difference-between-multiculturalism-and-assimilation/>

Multiculturalism, which pretends what holds a nation together is the mutual recognition and respect of differences, seeks to dissolve those bonds and scorns the shared virtues and traits that give Americans freedom and fortune.

## Application: The Berlin Christmas Market Attack

The isolation that multiculturalism creates, intentionally or not, is not without its consequences. This was illustrated quite vividly just a few years ago. On a Monday evening just before Christmas, a truck purposely plowed into a group of shoppers at a Christmas market in Berlin, Germany, killing 12 and wounding almost 50 others. How is this related to multiculturalism? Time said in January of 2017,

Gonzalez, 2017. Gonzalez, Mike. “Assimilation by Immigrants Has Benefits Beyond Security.” *Time*, Time, 17 Jan. 2017. <https://time.com/4626002/multiculturalism-assimilation-immigrants/>

But some are pessimistic that wide acceptance that a problem exists will translate into action, and doubt that, even if there is political will, there is time left to solve the problem. Gloomy observers such as Douglas Murray, an associate director at the Henry Jackson Society, believe that Europe has allowed in so many Islamic immigrants without demanding assimilation that the problem now is nearly unfixable. The Berlin terror attack that capped an already bloody 2016 will only reinforce the view that allowing the existence of parallel societies creates an environment in which radicals and recruiters thrive.

**IMPACT: Multiculturalism in a society leads to isolation and factions. And when the people don’t have common bonds with their fellow citizens, the culture self-destructs.**

It is evident that in order to have a robust, long-lasting society, there must be unity. When people enter a country, they should be encouraged to assimilate. They should make themselves at home and make home a part of themselves. No one has to lose their identity, but integration is essential.

Thank you.

Opposition Brief

**Assimilation Causes Conflict**

Skerry, Peter. “Do We Really Want Immigrants to Assimilate?” *Brookings Institute*, 28 July 2016, www.brookings.edu/articles/do-we-really-want-immigrants-to-assimilate/.

“The third and final point I wish to make about assimilation is that it is fraught with tension, competition, and conflict. I offered a glimpse of this when I earlier focused on the emergence of ethnic groups as part of the assimilation process. Whether we’re talking about Italians yesterday or Hispanics today, such group identities in part signal the efforts of immigrants and their offspring to secure their place in America. Such efforts have in our history almost always been contentious. It is difficult to imagine that they could be otherwise. Stanford sociologist Susan Olzak provides systematic evidence for this assertion. Based on her study of 77 immigrant-impacted American cities from 1877 to 1914, Olzak rejects the conventional view that intergroup conflict is caused by segregation. Instead, she argues that intergroup competition and conflict resulted from occupational desegregation. In other words, tensions are caused not by the isolation of ethnic groups but by the weakening of boundaries and barriers between groups.”

**Not Every Culture is Worth Assimilating**

Simms, Luma. “Identity and Assimilation.” *National Affairs*, 2018, nationalaffairs.com/publications/detail/identity-and-assimilation.

“Assimilation has proven so difficult lately not because our culture is too cohesive and self-confident but because it has lost the capacity to tell its own story coherently. Immigration will become easier, not harder, when we become more self-assured as a people with a firm national identity rooted, as all national identities are, in metaphysical as well as in historical and cultural commitments.”

**Assimilation is Boring**

Fraser, Giles. “Assimilation Threatens the Existence of Other Cultures | Giles Fraser | Loose Canon.” *The Guardian*, Guardian News and Media, 8 Dec. 2016, www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/belief/2016/dec/08/assimilation-threatens-the-existence-of-other-cultures.

“This week a doctor from north London was telling me about one of his patients, a lad of 20 who has lived in the borough of Hackney all his life. He was born here and grew up here. And he’s a bright boy – yet he speaks only a few very rudimentary words of English. The language he speaks at home and at school is Yiddish. Some may be appalled by the insularity of the community in which this young man was raised. But I admire it. In particular, I admire the resilience of a community that seeks to maintain its distinctiveness and recognises, quite rightly, that assimilation into the broader culture would mean the gradual dilution, and the eventual extinction, of its own way of life. It is no surprise to me that the ultra orthodox are thriving, with high birth rates and predictions that they will be constitute a majority of the Jewish population within 20 years. They have refused assimilation. It adds immeasurably to the richness and diversity of how life is apprehended that not everyone sees the world in the same way. It is mind-expanding to be challenged by those who commit to another way of life. What a miserably grey one-dimensional place it would be if the dominant model of middle-of-the-road liberal secular capitalism became the only acceptable way of living.”

**Assimilation is Not the Problem, and Requiring it Would Cause Undue Harm**

Lalami, Laila. “What Does It Take to 'Assimilate' in America?” *The New York Times*, 1 Aug. 2017, www.nytimes.com/2017/08/01/magazine/what-does-it-take-to-assimilate-in-america.html.

“Immigrants contribute to America in a million different ways, from growing the food on our tables to creating the technologies we use every day. They commit far fewer crimes than native-born citizens. But hardly a week goes by when poor assimilation isn’t blamed for offenses involving immigrants — and the entire project of immigration called into question. In Michigan, an Indian-American emergency-room doctor who belongs to the Dawoodi Bohra community, a Shiite Muslim sect, was charged with performing female genital mutilation on several young girls. In Minnesota, a black police officer, the first Somali-American cop in his precinct, shot an unarmed Australian woman. Both incidents were immediately seized upon by the far right as examples of the inability — or refusal — of Muslims to assimilate. So far this year, American police officers have killed more than 500 people, but for the commentator Ann Coulter, the shooting in Minnesota would never have happened in Australia because ‘they have fewer than 10k Somalis. We have >100k.’ Earlier this month, the Fox News personality Tucker Carlson ran a segment in which he said citizens of a small town in Pennsylvania claimed that several dozen Roma who had been resettled there ‘defecate in public, chop the heads off chickens, leave trash everywhere.’ (The police said they issued citations where relevant.) ‘The group doesn’t seem at all interested in integrating,’ Carlson complained. ‘You have to assume it’s a statement.’ One reason immigration is continuously debated in America is that there is no consensus on whether assimilation should be about national principles or national identity. Those who believe that assimilation is a matter of principle emphasize a belief in the Constitution and the rule of law; in life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness; and in a strong work ethic and equality. Where necessary, they support policy changes to further deter any cultural customs that defy those values. For example, Rick Snyder, the governor of Michigan, signed a new law that increases existing penalties for anyone who performs female genital mutilation on a minor. But for those who believe that assimilation is a matter of identity — as many on the far right do — nothing short of the abandonment of all traces of your heritage will do.”

**Assimilation Doesn’t Always Have the Expected Benefits**

Edmonston, Barry. “Statistics on U.S. Immigration: An Assessment of Data Needs for Future Research.” *National Academies Press*, 1996, www.nap.edu/read/4942/chapter/5.

“An important concern in immigration research involves the effects of immigration and assimilation on health, education, and social programs, particularly in areas of high immigration concentration. Much folk wisdom has viewed assimilation as a linear process of progressive improvement and adjustment to American society. The general assumption is guided by an implicit deficit model: to advance socially and economically in the United States, immigrants need to "become American" in order to overcome their deficits in the new language and culture. As they shed the old and acquire the new, they acquire skills for working positively and effectively—a process that may not be completed until the second or third generation after entry. Today's immigration is overwhelmingly composed of newcomers from Asia and Latin America, areas with significantly different languages and cultures than those of previous European immigrants in the late 1800s and earlier decades of the 1900s. Concerns have been raised about the speed and degree to which these immigrants can assimilate—and hence about the social "costs" of these new immigrants—before they begin to produce net benefits to their new society. The traditional assumption is that immigrants have costs to U.S. society in the initial period after arrival, but that the costs decrease and the benefits to society increase as duration of residence increases. It is further assumed that the benefits to society also increase with greater assimilation to American culture. Recent research findings, however, especially in the areas of perinatal health, mental health, and education, raise significant questions about such assumptions. Indeed, some of the findings run precisely opposite to what might be expected from traditional notions and theories of assimilation.”