Common Good  
Affirmative Case by Steven Errico



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We’re better together. That’s a Fifth Harmony song. It doesn’t have anything to do with this case, but it summarizes my affirmative philosophy pretty well.

The basic idea of this case is that assimilation best promotes the common good and thus should be valued above multiculturalism. While we should certainly appreciate the diverse backgrounds from which we all come, there are certain values and habits we must share if we are to have a productive society that benefits its members.

Under the criterion of interdependence, we’re arguing that within a culture we are and must be mutually dependent on one another in order to flourish.

As always, keep it simple and do your best to give the judge the big picture. Evidence and applications are your friends here.

Common Good

The values of a community affect everyone in that community. This is why each culture should look out for the good of all its members. It’s as simple as that.

# 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: Common Good**

Oxford. *Lexico: Powered by Oxford*. Accessed October 3, 2019. <https://www.lexico.com/en/definition/the_common_good>

The benefit or interests of all

## Reason to Prefer: It’s why society exists

**Criterion: Interdependence**

Cambridge Dictionary. *Cambridge*, Accessed October 4, 2019. <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/interdependence>

the state of being dependent upon one another **:**mutual dependence

**Contention One: Assimilation Promotes the Common Good**

## Application: The Middle East (past and present)

National Affairs issue 41, Spring 2018. Luma Simms. “Identity and Assimilation.” *National Affairs*, 2018, <https://www.nationalaffairs.com/publications/detail/identity-and-assimilation>.

Yoram Hazony, in a 2016 essay in *Mosaic* entitled "Nationalism and the Future of Western Freedom," argues that one of the first sources for the idea of the nation is the Hebrew Bible. In the establishment of Israel, "The Bible...puts a new political conception on the table: a state of a single people that is united, self-governing, and uninterested in bringing its neighbors under its own rule." Hazony seems to share with Catholic philosopher Jacques Maritain a common definition of "nation" — it is a people united around a shared language, tradition, history, culture, and (often) religion. These elements have an inherent, unifying force that brings a people together. A people united by these forces, and at the same time shaped in mind and heart by these very forces, will form a political body working toward its common good. A people can be united in this way without sharing the same religion, though the situation is more complex. There are Iraqi Muslims and Iraqi Christians, for instance, and yet they are both Iraqi. But even in such cases, the same model of evolution and formation of a people still holds. In Biblical terms, then, we see that the metaphysical source of a nation is made up of two horizons, the vertical and the horizontal: the vertical being the bond between a given people and God; the horizontal being the bonds among the people, such as language, tradition, history, culture, and religion. Without the vertical bond, the horizontal bonds disintegrate.

## Application: America

The Heritage Foundation. Matthew Spalding. “Assimilation More Than Learning English.” *The Heritage Foundation*, May 24, 2006, <https://www.heritage.org/immigration/commentary/assimilation-more-learning-english>

Assimilation is necessary to foster not only "that temperate love of liberty, so essential to real republicanism," to use Alexander Hamilton's phrase, but also to establish a genuine attachment to *this* country and to *these* people. The objective is for the immigrant to come to regard this nation as *my* country, to develop an enlightened patriotism based on an understanding of and commitment to America, what it stands for and who we are as a people. The result of immigration policy throughout American history has been to strengthen our social capital, expand our general economy and provide constant renewal of this national purpose. America has been good for immigrants, and immigrants have been good for America. But this policy can succeed only if we revive the one policy that makes American immigration work, and get back to the hard and noble task of making citizens.

## IMPACT: The interdependence that comes from assimilation fosters the good of everyone involved.

**Contention Two: Multiculturalism Harms the Common Good**

The Heritage Foundation. Mike Gonzalez. “Patriotic Assimilation Is an Indispensable Condition in a Land of Immigrants.” *The Heritage Foundation*, January 8, 2016, <https://www.heritage.org/immigration/report/patriotic-assimilation-indispensable-condition-land-immigrants>

The history above is the story of ethnic groups coming to America, seeking no entitlement, “overcoming disadvantage…and proving themselves as competent as those who came before.” It is also a story of immigrants assimilating to their new nation by developing an emotional attachment to the principles, habits, and characteristic virtues of the American way of life. This produced a free and self-ruling republic with a unique culture and national purpose. For the past 40 years, however, America’s new cultural and political elites have chosen to spin an opposing narrative. They have arrayed all the forces at their disposal—governmental, educational, corporate, and cultural—to *dissimilate* Americans into different groups, the very practice against which Wilson had thundered. The catch-all term for this new philosophy is multiculturalism. Often portrayed by its promoters as nothing more than appreciation for other cultures—something no reasonable person could be against—multiculturalism in reality attempts to revive transnationalism as the organizing principle for a country of immigrants. While assimilation unites the country around affection for a set of principles, habits, and shared cultural experiences, multiculturalism is an attempt to make ethnic differences permanent by rewarding separate identities and group attachment with purported short-term benefits. It deters national unity by requiring Americans to reduce their complex heritage and national identity to a checkbox on a form.

## IMPACT: While the cultural diversity in a country is valuable, a multicultural approach to culture creates a fragmented society that can’t work together.

Culture must do what is best for the people. If we want a society that will last, we have to work together. We can’t be separate or secluded.

Thank you.

Opposition Brief

**Assimilation Has Mixed Results**

National Library of Medicine and National Institutes of Health. Emily Greenman and Yu Xie. “IS ASSIMILATION THEORY DEAD? THE EFFECT OF ASSIMILATION ON ADOLESCENT WELL-BEING.” *National Library of Medicine and National Institutes of Health*, March 2008, [10.1016/j.ssresearch.2007.07.003](https://dx.doi.org/10.1016%2Fj.ssresearch.2007.07.003)

The relationship between assimilation and the well-being of immigrant children has been the focus of debate in the recent sociological literature. Much of this work has questioned whether classical theories of immigrant adaptation, which assumed assimilation to be an integral part of the process of upward mobility for immigrants, are still applicable to today’s immigrant children. This study reevaluates the applicability of classical assimilation theory with a comprehensive empirical assessment of the relationship between assimilation and the well-being of Hispanic and Asian immigrant adolescents. Using Add Health data, we examine the effect of different aspects of assimilation on educational achievement, psychological well-being, and at-risk behaviors. We find that the effect of assimilation varies greatly depending on the ethnic group and outcome under consideration, but that it is generally related to both greater academic achievement and more at-risk behavior. We conclude that assimilation theory is still relevant, but suggest an interpretation that emphasizes a process of decreasing differences between groups rather than either detrimental or beneficial effects of assimilation.

**The Success of Multiculturalism in Canada**

Forbes. Andy J. Semotiuk. “Multiculturalism -- The Distinguishing Factor That Makes Canada Great.” *Forbes*, October 18, 2017, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/andyjsemotiuk/2017/10/18/multiculturalism-the-distinguishing-factor-that-makes-canada-great/#5f5aa50a6b11>

**History of Canada's Multiculturalism**

In the 1960s in Quebec, in French Canada, "The Quiet Revolution" of discontent resulted in the creation of the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism (the B&B Commission). "The Other Ethnic Groups" were the focus of the fourth volume of the Commission's work, and the Commission pointed out the non-English, non-French in Canada were growing in significance. The upshot of the work of the Commission was that while bilingualism was true in Canada, multiculturalism was a better description of Canadian reality than biculturalism. Recognizing this reality, on October 8th, 1971 Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau announced the federal government's new program of,  "Multiculturalism Within a Bilingual Framework." The federal government announced that while there are only two official languages in Canada, there are many cultural groups and they are worthy of recognition. Following this policy, in the 1970s when discussions turned to a Charter of Rights and Freedoms, Section 27 recognized the multicultural reality of Canada. Multiculturalism was thereby made part of the constitutional character of Canada.

**Various Levels of Multiculturalism**

There are various levels of multiculturalism in today's Canada.

a) Firstly, when understood as a description of the country's cultural reality, Canada always was, is now and always will be multicultural. That is to say, Canada is made of English, French, Native, Irish,  Scottish, Germans and Ukrainian, etc. ethno-cultural communities. Put another way, the policy recognized Canada as a multicultural country, but did not talk about "multicultural groups" in Canada. That was because there are no multicultural groups in Canada, only ethno-cultural communities. An ethno-cultural community is an open community based on a predominant ethnic origin, but made up of people of various races and backgrounds.  It is distinguished not so much by a geographic base, as by a sense of belonging, an identification with it on the part of its members. For example, in the Ukrainian community there are Catholics, Orthodox, Baptists, Anglicans, Muslims and Jews. There are white, black and brown individuals. There are men, women and LGBTs. There are the disabled and there are seniors. All of them live and thrive in the Ukrainian community in Canada. Other ethno-cultural communities are exactly the same. Multiculturalism recognizes and celebrates this reality seeking to integrate but not assimilate immigrants as well as native born members of ethn0-cultural communities into Canada's cultural mosaic.

b)  Secondly, there is government policy. Here we see the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, the Policy of Multiculturalism within a Bilingual Framework with the work of the specially created Bilingualism Commissioner and the provincial initiatives, such as Alberta's Heritage Act and so on.

c)  Thirdly, there is the race-relations, human rights level, where the policy is used as a means of promoting diversity in the sense of advancing the rights of minorities to gain access to and equality with individuals in mainstream society. Advancing diversity is the level at which most current developments in the area of multiculturalism are taking place currently.

d)  Fourthly, multiculturalism is a way of managing group relations and community development. At this level, the adage, "You can get anything you want in life, so long as you help enough other people get what they want" applies. For example, a Jewish-Canadian may lead most of his life within institutions of a general character, such as governments, companies, banks, hospitals and the like. But in order to cultivate his culture and heritage, he seeks to teach his children the Hebrew language, he works in his Jewish-Canadian community to create institutions that are uniquely Jewish, such as Hebrew schools, synagogues, choirs, dance groups and the like. To achieve these goals, a Jewish Canadian also works through institutions that he shares with others, for example schools that teach in English or French most of the day, but may also teach Hebrew part of the day. Members of the Jewish community strive to achieve a sense of institutional completeness in this way, working partly in unique institutions, partly in shared institutions and partly in general institutions. At this level each group must recognize that the key to their success is to support the success of other groups like theirs.

e) Most ethno-cultural groups in Canada are made up of Canadian-born members – some who are third and fourth generation Canadians. In this sense, their 'ethnicity' is a Canadian phenomenon. However, an enlightened immigration policy would bring in artists, musicians, writers and teachers who can strengthen the cultural heritage of various ethno-cultural communities.

**The Success of Multiculturalism in Australia**

The Australian Human Rights Commission. Dr. Tim Soutphommasane “The Success of Australia’s Multiculturalism.” *Australian Human Rights Commission*, March 9, 2016, <https://www.humanrights.gov.au/about/news/speeches/success-australias-multiculturalism>

Multiculturalism is a reality of Australian society. We live it everyday: in our cities and suburbs, in our schools and workplaces, on our buses and trains. In all these places, Australians mix with those from different backgrounds.

For the most part, we are comfortable with this reality. Surveys have shown that public acceptance of multiculturalism has been consistently high. The 2015 Mapping Social Cohesion survey, for example, found that 86 per cent of Australians agree that multiculturalism has been good for the country. This level of agreement has been constant for the past three years.