

# Kenyan immigrant experiences in the united states essay

Countries, United States



Anthropology is the study of human history and cultures in relation to the present and existing cultures. The study focuses on how humans live and interact with each other in the contemporary social settings. The aim of this study is to understand the existing complexities of human cultures and apply the knowledge in the resolution of the existing problems. The chief focus of this interview schedule is to collect information concerning the experiences of an immigrant to the United States. The experiences include immigration experiences, gender roles, and adaptation experiences. The interview schedule also focuses on experiences relating to racial discrimination, values, religious inclinations, and family associations. Therefore, the purpose of this essay is to present the experiences of a Kenyan immigrant to the United States in terms of social, religious, economic, and other aspects of life.

The researcher collected information from a Kenyan immigrant to the United States. The immigrant is a 45-year old man who works and lives in the state of California. He has a second degree in business studies from the University of California. Like many immigrants, Africans usually travel to the United States and other European countries because they believe that these countries have many job opportunities, stable economic and political environment, and lucrative opportunities for businesses. Hence, the immigrant travelled to the United States with the hope of getting a good education and a well paying job, so that he would improve his living standards and support the family. According to the immigrant, he has encountered many socio-cultural experiences regarding the contemporary lifestyles of diverse societies in the United States.

According to the immigrant, there are diverse cultures and lifestyles in America. The respondent attributed this phenomenon to the high number of people who have unique cultural backgrounds. He noted that his lifestyle has changed because of the experiences he has undergone while in the United States. Moreover, the immigrant stated that the lifestyle of people in America is very different from the lifestyles of individuals living in his native country, Kenya. Some of the changes that the respondent made in his lifestyles emanate from the experiences he went through during his immigration to America. He argues that the experiences were from many areas such as gender, religion, marriage, family ties, workstations, relationships, and social life. Hence, the immigrant explains that he has transformed his lifestyles while staying in America. In his view, the respondent highlighted the changes in his values and lifestyles, which have made him to fit well into the American society.

In addition, the immigrant observed many changes concerning the relationship between men and women. Contrary to his native country, where men and women experience different treatments, in the United States men and women are equal before the society. The respondent stated that in his native country, the society has created norms that define the roles that men and women should perform in the community. In his native country, the society follows stereotypes and believes that women are inferior to men. In the United States, he experienced great changes as women and men relate in a different manner and respect one another. Furthermore, the society values and respects the feelings and opinions of every member irrespective

of the gender. Thus, the immigrant had to adjust and change his view relating to how he perceives people of different gender in the society.

According to the respondent, in his native country, members of the society, especially those who reside in the rural areas, believe that women should perform household duties and remain indoors. For example, the society expects women to cook, clean laundry, and take care of the children. On the other hand, the society expects men to engage in activities such as herding, cultivation, and other professional activities.

The stereotypes have led to a scenario where men have become the sole breadwinners of their respective families, while the women have become dependent on them. However, in the United States, the respondent observed that men and women share domestic responsibilities and each member of the family contributes towards the daily family expenses. The respondent realized that in the family, workplaces, and social places are social settings where the society appreciates and treasures people of different genders and subjects them to equal treatments. The respondent then adjusted his lifestyle, as well as that of his family so that he would fit into the lifestyle of the United States.

The respondent also noted that, he experienced various challenges while adapting to the lifestyles of people in the United States, which depict industrialized state. The challenges were inevitable because in Kenya, the respondent's native country is still a developing nation. He stated that many infrastructures such as roads, electricity, and other social resources are

highly developed in the United States. According to his observation, he found out that the state undertakes regular maintenance of the infrastructure and ensures that they are in good conditions. Therefore, cases of inconveniences such as delays, breakdowns, and accidents are minimal. Since the infrastructure is in good condition, production, supply, and delivery of goods and services is effective and efficient. Consequently, the respondent had to improve his driving skills and the way he uses the social facilities, as the state strictly observes the laws governing the use and abuse of these facilities.

The experience is not similar to what happens in his native country. In the respondent's native country, roads are not in a good condition. He noted that the country has few roads that have tarmac, but many of the roads are in poor states. In addition, the roads have potholes and cracks, and therefore, many of them complicate the movement of people and goods from one point to another. Thus, the country experiences frequent accidents, breakdowns, and delays. The respondent also highlighted the availability of electricity as another major experience. According to him, his native country relies on a few sources of power stations such as Turkwel and the Seven Folks to generate electricity to its citizens. Therefore, the residents sometimes experience blackouts or power rationing especially during the dry seasons. These experiences changed the respondent's lifestyle when he moved to the urbanized lifestyle in the United States.

Furthermore, the respondent highlighted that he has experienced few instances of racial discrimination. The respondent noted that in some few

occasions, he experienced some form of racial discrimination. He stated that some Native Americans and White Americans treated him unfairly.

Furthermore, some employers discriminated against him by underpaying or overworking because he was not an American.

He also noted that he experienced racial discrimination in social places such as shops, churches, and even in colleges. The respondent referred to a scenario that occurred one day when he visited a shopping mall. The attendant of the mall was reluctant to attend to him as he was an African, but instead attended to the Americans. In addition, he asserted that police officers frequently stopped and frisked him, but did not do that to the White colleagues. The respondent had not gone through such experience before in his motherland. However, he realized that with time, the level of discrimination reduced as law enforcement officers and the state put effective measures to curb racial discrimination, as a vice in the United States.

According to the respondent, the impacts of discrimination are many. The impacts include reduced performance, confidence, and self-esteem. Low performance and productivity normally occur due to factors that relate to unfair promotions and treatment of the Blacks in workstations. This may happen when employers bypass Africans and promote their juniors who are Native Americans. Moreover, discrimination results in hatred and strife among the affected individuals, as they feel undermined and disrespected. He noted that for a good and successful living, people should love, respect,

and appreciate each other, irrespective of their racial or cultural backgrounds.

In addition, the respondent experienced many changes regarding religion and moral values, as well as in the education system. In Kenya, the society still upholds moral values and cultural beliefs. However, the respondent went through challenging moments, as many Native Americans no longer adhere to specific ethics and moral values, because many people in the United States are no longer conservative. Hence, Americans are liberal and not subject to any cultural ties and norms. In the mother country of the respondent, many people still value cultural and societal norms. The belief is more prevalent in the rural areas than in the urban areas. Furthermore, many people in Kenya are still conservative because they uphold cultural values. This posed a challenge to the respondent as he was compelled to adjust and adopt some of the lifestyles demonstrated by the Americans.

Moreover, the respondent experienced a challenge in the education system of the United States. The system of education is different from that of the respondent's native country. The respondent realized that he had to go through a special standardization program so that he could continue with his education and fit into the United States system of education. The education systems are different because children in the United States undergo through the K-12 system, while in Kenya, they undergo through the 8-4-4 system. Additionally, he had to make many adjustments on his religious inclinations. The respondent who is a protestant and a member of the Africa Inland Church became acquainted with the church services of his mother country.

However, the respondent experienced many changes in the way Christians worship. Hence, the respondent made major changes so that he could fit into the American society.

The respondent stated that after visiting the United States he went through a number of economic experiences. Some of the experiences relate to payments of bills, purchase of foodstuffs, and other daily expenses.

According to the immigrant, the economic level of the United States is higher and more complex than that of the respondent's native country. In his native country, the economy is unstable and unpredictable. This makes many economic activities in Kenya to be unstable and seasonal. In addition, there are a number of employment openings in the United States when compared to the few and low paying job opportunities in the respondent's native country. The respondents highlighted the expensive nature of life in America, which is different from the cost of living in Kenya. The respondent claims that, when he arrived in America he was surprised to note that the cost of living was very high, yet he did not have any form of employment. However, he managed to secure employment because there are many job opportunities in the United States.

The immigrant also experienced many changes in the way people in the United States relate with one another. He asserted that in his mother country, the societies are conservative on matters relating to marriage. Conversely, this is not the case in the United States as the respondent stated that in the United States, marriage and divorce are common. Additionally, the respondent noted that in his mother country, the laws of marriage do not



permit same-sex marriages, but in the United States, he attended gay marriages, an experience that was new and unique to the respondent. While Kenyan laws do not recognize unions of people who are not married, the United States has the constitution that permits civil union, domestic partnerships, and co-habitation. The respondent noted that the experiences changed his understanding of marriage, family, and relationships.

Another experience that the respondent experienced was the difference in family ties and relationships. In the respondent's motherland, people value relationships and family ties to an extent that an individual belongs to the family and the society. In Kenya, communities believe in the power of the extended family. People in Kenya hold regular family meetings, which bring members of the family together. However, in the United States people do not value the extended families. The family ties in the United States are not very close as they are in many African countries like Kenya. The respondent said that he experienced cases where some of his American colleagues could not recall second generation of their family lineages, while many of his friends in Kenya could give the whole lineage of their families. The respondent observed this experience as common in the United States.

According to the findings from the interview, it is evident that many immigrants who travel to the United States undergo through various experiences. These experiences cover areas like marriage and dating, religion, gender, and employment. In addition, the experiences result in major transformations on how individuals perceive cultural and social values. Unlike the respondent who is an adult, many young immigrants may find

themselves in a dilemma of choosing to maintain their former lifestyles or adopt new lifestyles. The immigrants grapple with challenging experiences when adapting the cosmopolitan culture of the American states and cities. In America, many cities and states have people from different countries with different cultures and beliefs. Thus, the diversity of lifestyles creates a blend of cultures and in some instances makes individuals to lose their societal norms, which define moral values of life.