

Social problems that arise from integrating in a foreign country

Sociology



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Integration into a foreign country has always been a subject of interest to me. Since I had to grow up in both America and Germany, I have never really had the experience of a huge culture shock. My mother was German who married an American who was in the army so I had the advantage of having both parents who were from each of these countries. This is why I have always wondered how well a person could integrate with having neither the advantage of having parents from the foreign country nor the advantage of growing up in one. Strictly speaking, I suppose I have never really lived in a foreign country.

Germany and America were different in often annoying ways but were never unknown or new to me, just different. Even the German language wasn't completely foreign. My earliest memories were of my mom speaking a mixture of German and English with me and being around my German relatives. I understood most of what was being said and when I didn't I was still familiar with the sounds. Living in Germany for 14 out of 19 years, I would almost consider America as being the foreign country if it hadn't been for the Army umbrella that kept me surrounded in American culture.

Overall, Germany is a country that a person can move into without being forced to integrate completely, even without the Army. However, there are people who do choose to integrate completely into the culture, and being raised in the army made me grow up with those who I call Neithnoreans. They are a sort of American/German sub-culture in which each person is neither a complete American nor German but an awkward blend. In my research, I wanted to know exactly why they integrated, what sort of

problems they had and if those problems similar to mine and how exactly they became this new blend.

Although I would have also loved to survey people who had to integrate in interesting places such as china, Mongolia, or Iran for example, my friends and acquaintances are only from Germany and America. Before I even started my project I knew certain things about Americans and Germans that could (and many times does) create problems for those who have to integrate. The German way of thinking is definitely different than the way Americans think. Since I think more like an American I also view these differences as one. German's have general fear in regard to what others think about them.

I have determined that this “fear factor” is a left over from the state-church manipulation of men's conscience. Hitler capitalized on that fear and employed informants when sniffing out the Jews across the countries he conquered. Germans are also typically nervous when it comes to fixing something themselves. For example, my American church bought a new building and fixed it themselves. The German neighbors were astounded. My church tore down old wooden planks, walls, re-did wiring and plumbing, and cemented a whole floor, all by themselves. A German would have a called a separate man for each of one those jobs.

This is because Americans are used to having a lot more freedom doing it themselves, they have the attitude of “Get'er done”. Many Americans might also find it difficult to handle a Germans direct manner of communicating and lack of regard for people's oversensitive feelings. What I noticed personally is that they are typically more liberal than Americans and that <https://assignbuster.com/social-problems-that-arise-from-integrating-in-a-foreign-country/>

most of them are pseudo-intellectuals, they seem to have the inability to say “ I don’ t know. “ What I learned over the years of living here is that many Americans are annoyed that Germans seem to be so aloof and often cold.

This is because they are used to people trying to sell or talk them into giving money and are much more wary than the average American. However they are also very loyal. Even though, they may have to evaluate you for a good 5 years before you are truly a friend, once you are, it is a much deeper relationship than what the American’s view as “ friend. ” The topic of food is a controversial subject for Germans and Americans. Germany has a cultural lag, but one I think is in their advantage. They still sell healthy normal food compared to the “ everything boxed with extra flavoring” that the Americans sell.

They have little unique stores that sell different types of grains, spices, noodles, fresh dairy, meat and vegetable produce. Also, a lot of their food hasn’t been sprayed by a million different chemicals. When a German moves to America I have heard them complain that they can hardly find any natural food and wish they could just find some good bread. American’s usually complain about the lack of processed foods. Over the recent years, there has been more American foods that have slowly filtered into Germany. I have noticed more and more American boxed foods are being introduced in the German Supermarkets.

Germany also has a Burger King or McDonalds at every street. Transportation usually takes some getting used to, but most Americans that I know actually enjoy the choices. In Germany, walking, biking, or taking the city train is very normal. When I was in America there were a lot less
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sidewalks and everything was so spread out that you really had to use a car. German cities are geared so that people can to walk and take buses. It is not uncommon to find a fit little German 70 year old to be riding around on a bike. These are a few examples of how Germans and Americans are different.

Looking back I realize that I should have included questions of how Germans and Americans think about each others ways of thinking, food, and travel. When I began my research, I wrote a survey that had questions that let each individual have the choice of fully explaining his/or her integration. I thought a survey would be more useful than an interview because I could have each of their opinions neatly organized in written form and saved. I have surveyed 6 subjects who all were extremely cooperative in helping me with this project. Surprisingly, some of them even offered to pass my survey on to others.

Also, they all gave me back my survey with very thoughtful answers and all within the very same day that I gave it to them. In the survey itself, I not only asked if they personally had to integrate into a foreign country but also if any of their parents had this problem. I thought this information would be interesting to know if integrating or foreign cultures were already a part of their lives because of their parents. I asked questions based on why they had to integrate, what helped them, if they are interested in the country and if they have any problems or negative feelings. Here is a copy of my survey.

As you can see, my survey is a bit long, but I did this on purpose. I wanted to encourage my subjects to write all about their feelings, ideas, and memories.

Also, if you have not noticed I skipped questions about religion completely.
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Germany and America both give their people the freedom to believe as they choose and since I knew that all of my subjects were Christian I knew that there wouldn't have been any problems. I did expect a few things from this survey. I expected that my subjects would have had problems with medical appointments, with the language, and problems with the government.

I also expected that my subjects would have been really interested in the new government they were under, would have clung to people from their own ethnicity and country and would have integrated mostly from their friends. One of the main things that I expected was for people to definitely have negative feelings about Germany/America. About my subjects themselves, 4 were Americans and 2 were German all of which were born and raised in their native country. Only one lady (German Mrs. Angie) said that she had a foreign parent. Her father was from Italy and but only minimally exposed her to another foreign culture.

She said “ My father argued that, being he was from Italy, drinking red wine was normal for him. It was a constant argument between my father and my mother, who thought he was an alcoholic. I thought at the time he was only using his being from a different country as an excuse not to be disciplined and stop drinking. He also talked a lot about Germans being superior to Italians, and he would never want to marry an Italian woman. I thought that was interesting because it was “ racism” in a different direction: here, the minority (my father) didn't want to be part of the majority (the Italians where he grew up).

It makes me look at racism differently to this day: those people who complain that they want to be treated like the majority (or e. g. women who <https://assignbuster.com/social-problems-that-arise-from-integrating-in-a-foreign-country/>

want to be treated like men) actually are making the statement that they feel inferior to the majority group they complain about. Otherwise, they would be happy and proud to be treated as what they are. He didn't actively teach me anything about his customs/beliefs; rather I observed his behavior and came to these conclusions myself. " Other than that everyone else was raised from parents that were from their native country.

Also all the women had to go to a foreign country because they moved with their husbands. The range of years that each person had to stay in a foreign country was from 2 to 21 years. What each of these subjects said about integrating in either Germany or America actually wasn't very different. All of them (I wasn't surprised) had trouble learning the language, and they all had help learning from the TV, radio, and from newspapers. Most of them had the majority of their help through family and friends. What did surprise me was that not only did no one have problems at a medical appointment but one actually developed a clearer understanding.

I guess I should have realized that by reason of the fact that a doctor must learn Latin and is generally higher educated all native German doctors would speak English. Mrs. Angie said " I came to the USA with what I called a *Sehnenscheidenentzündung*. People around me saw me wear an arm brace and would said, " oh, you must have carpal tunnel syndrome", so I thought that's what I had. I went to a specialist to be treated for it. During our conversation of me describing the exact symptoms and trying to translate the word from German, we determined that it wasn't carpal tunnel syndrome at all, but tendonitis.

That was the only medical misunderstanding I had. “ What I found interesting was that no one had problems with the government either. My dad said that “ It hasn’t really hindered my integration, actually it’s helped via its social programs a. k. a. language integration courses. “ In America the government actually helps foreigners integrate. There is actually a law that allows family sponsored immigration, which means that foreigners can live in America if they marry an American. Only one of my subjects said that he was interested the German Government.

He actually made a good point that most foreigners who integrate are too busy getting situated to worry about the new government. Personally I would be very interested about who was controlling/helping my life. Here is what he said “ Who dictates the policies that affect my life and the country in which I’m living is extremely important to me. But let it be noted that a young and/or newly integrated person rarely can or will interest himself in such things. He is still busy with the basics and has little to no capacity for such matters. “ All of the others were only mildly interested.

What shocked me the most was that none of my subjects had any (extremely)negative things to say about living in Germany or America. I was really hoping for some more drama. My dad complained, “ Just hate the Tax! Also they seem a bit too liberal for my taste. “ but Mrs. Angie said “ I greatly enjoyed my time in the US. “ As far as integrating itself all of my subjects considers it easy (besides the language). My pastor had a valid point when he said that integration is an ongoing process. It is very much like socialization of an individual. These are the responses of each of my subjects on how well they felt integrated.

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Are you integrated now? If so how long did it take you? From my Dad- “ I think that I am integrated more than I was, but I don’t think that I am completely integrated“ From my Mother- “ I’ m not really integrated into either culture. I Tend to stay around European things in the USA and American things in Germany. “ From Mrs. Cindy- “ Yes, I would say I fit in here better than in my home country. By the time I had lived here for 6 years or so I knew this had become my home. “ From Mrs. Angie - “ When I was in the US, I felt integrated pretty much right away. “ From Mr.

Thomas- “ Yes. But anyone who has ever “ integrated” knows that you can’t put a date on it. Integration is a quality-measured process that is rarely ever complete. Or, the only other option is to better define “ integration” lest the semantic battle rage amongst its judges. By reason of the limitation of a singular personality, integration is thereby limited to the social class of the person being integrated. I am not integrated into the social lifestyle which includes bars, bikers, strippers, rappers, clubs due to my personal choices of lifestyle and my moral choices.

Neither am I integrated into the rowing club, debate club, fashion scene, etc... based upon my subjective personal interests. Therefore my knowledge of the country into which I’ve integrated in those areas is limited if not non-existent. I can shop, pay a mortgage payment to my bank, talk with a stranger on the street, order dinner, speak on the phone, etc... When? With increasing ability all of these tasks were tackled twenty years ago. Today, I can simply say, I can do them better now. Perfect? Doubtful.

“ From Jeanette- “ I feel somewhat integrated.... ut definitely not completely.

I am accepted by the Germans in my neighborhood and welcomed at my <https://assignbuster.com/social-problems-that-arise-from-integrating-in-a-foreign-country/>

child's school events and whatnot. This makes me feel " integrated. " However, I don' t always know or understand what is going on in my town or in Germany as a whole due to the language. From Mark - " No. " What did not surprise me was that the children of these families integrated easily. This usually is the case. Children have little to no sense of racism in color or in ethnicity unless otherwise taught by their parents, so different cultures are more readily excepted.

Also, children can learn a new language much faster than adults. Some smarter children can become mostly fluent in a foreign language in less than a year. Mrs. Jeanette' s child learned so fast that in than a year of being in Germany she was integrated in school and even helping her parents understand the language. Jeanette wrote " Although my oldest daughter had a hard time at first, she very quickly picked up the language and was not shy to go to kindergarten before she learned the language. Kindergarten obviously was her sole outlet for learning the language.

The teachers gave her special attention to teach her the language and catch up to the other children and be able to interact in the same way the other children did. " In conclusion, there were actually very little social problems between Americans and Germans. They all said that language was the hardest problem in integration, but family and government helped them through this and other problems. Some of their answers I did expect. Language problems, help from friends to integrate and for their children to have integrated easily, were easy to assume, but I wanted to make sure these things were true.

Some of the results were not what I expected. Only -- percent were interested in government even though I had thought that naturally all of them would be, 0% had problems with medical appointments, 0% percent clung to only their ethnicity and 0% felt any resentment towards the other country. I have to admit that the course and my behavioral science book changed my outlook in social science and not this paper. Although I had unexpected results I also did not learn anything really new during my research for this paper.

I believe that Germans and American are really too friendly with one another to create any serious problems. Since America was started from many German immigrants and its language is nearly 25% German, Americans probably feel very much at home in Germany. For Germans they practically worship Americans. They cheer for President Obama more than Americans themselves, love American Holly Wood movies, and are starting to become addicted to American processed foods. So really from this survey I realized that integrating into America or Germany is mostly straight forward and creates only minor social problems.