
Successful Integration And Adapting Into A New Culture

What does it mean to become a real Canadian? For an immigrant, being able to feel like they belong in the new country they live in, it is not an easy thing to do. Having to learn a new language, a new way to express themselves and behave, could be a hard thing to achieve. To have a successful immigration process is necessary to consider different aspects to be able to successfully integrate into the new cultural environment. Acculturation and adaptation of the immigrant to the new culture is probably the most important step of this process, acculturation is a way to embrace multiculturalism caused by immigration, helping the immigrant to adapt to its new reality. Another important step of the immigration process is the capability of both, the natives and the immigrants to successfully integrate as a society. This process culminates with the immigrant having a sense of belonging to the new culture. It is important to accomplish these three steps to have a successful integration into a new culture as an immigrant.

Acculturation was defined as “those phenomena which result when groups of individuals having different cultures come into continuous first-hand contact, with subsequent changes in the original culture patterns of either or both groups” (J. W. Berry, 1995, p. 458). From this concept, a different theoretical model was born. These models take into account the socio-cultural aspect and the psychological adaptation aspect. The most accepted model is the acculturation model proposed by John Berry (1980). Berry (1980) shows in this model that immigrants can have four different reactions towards the new culture they are: integration, assimilation, separation, and marginalization. For the purpose of this essay, we are going to focus only on integration. This means that immigrants can learn the operating rules of the new culture all the while keeping their original values, this means they can learn the new language but they will still speak and embrace their native tongue in the home because that’s of their heart and soul, the representation of their homeland and heritage. We can view acculturation as learning a second culture, adopting some customs and behaviors of the new country, and becoming bicultural. Immigrant has to create strategies of acculturation to relate to the locals. At the beginning can be a hard thing to do, but getting out of their comfort zone can help them immensely to start learning about the new culture. Obtaining social support from the locals for an immigrant is key in the psychosocial adaptation process (Ruiz, 2012).

Another important process to have in mind while trying to accomplish a successful cultural adaptation is the process of integration. For an immigrant is very important to feel part of a group. This allows the immigrant to identify with the locals. In this process, both cultures have to adapt to the change, the new culture and the receiving culture. Most of the time the immigrant culture has to make the most adjustments to try and adapt, very often they feel certain hostility towards them from the locals. This process is not easy, the society receiving the foreign culture need to understand that they play a very important role in the process of integration of the immigrant. Isabel Vincent (1990) tells in her article the hard process she and her family went through while trying to integrate into the new Canadian culture, it was very hard for her and her brother to identify with the locals at the beginning but with time she was able to feel part of her new culture. For an immigrant having social support and feeling part of the society makes the integration process very easy for both parties.

Finally, achieving a sense of belonging makes the immigrant appreciate the new culture and

place, developing a love and respect for the new culture. This is a result of interaction and relationship with the society. The identity of a person is not just the personal characteristics, identity has also to do with social groups we are part of. First, we are born into a family, later we form our own, then, people belong to a social circle with people from work or school, this creates a link with the rest of society and helps with the process of cultural integration. This sense of belonging is a result of acculturation, adaptation, and integration. This sense of belonging is what defines the identity of an individual. When trying to integrate into a new society, immigrants have to learn the new cultural aspects and adapt to the changes: new customs, culture, values, and rules. This gives the immigrant a sense of belonging to the new culture and the achieves a successful integration to the new culture.

In conclusion, for an immigrant to successfully integrate into a new culture is a hard thing to do but not impossible. The immigrant has to have in mind that he/she needs to learn the language and has to be ready for the cultural differences and has to be willing to learn about the new culture, adapt and integrate to the new culture. The immigrant also has to have the willingness to work with the society and the local society has to also be willing to let immigrants integrate into their culture, this will give the immigrant a sense of belonging in the new culture, achieving a successful integration to the new culture.

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