

Intercultural Transitions: The Stories of Positive Intercultural Interactions Between German Citizens and Refugees

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Abstract

In 2015, Germany was at the center of one of the largest displacements in history as upwards of a million refugees, many from Syria, fled to Germany. In my study, I was fortunate enough to spend three months living in Germany and interacting with Germans and refugees to hear their stories of positive intercultural interaction and how they negotiate and renegotiate their “being in the world.” Through the integration of Acculturation Theory (Berry, 1980), Cross-Cultural Adaptation Theory (Y.Y. Kim, 1980), and Coordinated Management of Meaning Theory (Pearce & Cronen, 1980) I conducted a qualitative research project where I interviewed 44 individuals representing both German citizens (25) and refugees (19) and collected their stories of positive intercultural interaction with one another. These stories affirmed the importance of certain practices by both migrant groups and host nations as they move between old and new worlds. Furthermore, this research underscored the need to address both host and migrant affects during intercultural transitions to attend to how both groups grapple with performances of identity in this new cultural landscape. Ultimately, as the nations of the world become more diverse, our approaches to studying intercultural interactions need to become more diverse as well. Drawing on the positive stories from both host nations and migrants alike allows for the multitude of paths towards positive interaction to be illuminated from both sides and all voices. In the end, I hope finding ways to facilitate positive interactions will lead to positive and lasting change as people move from place to place and space to space in our ever changing world.