Namen und Migration
Onymische Indizes
hybrider sozialer Zugehörigkeiten

Herausgegeben von Antje Dammel, Simona Leonardi,
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Antje Dammel insegna Linguistica tedesca (con focus su storia della lingua tedesca e grammatica) all'Università di Münster; è presidente della Commissione per la ricerca sui dialetti e sui nomi della Westfalia. La sua ricerca è improntata sulle dinamiche di variazione e di mutamento linguistico, comprese le prospettive cross-linguistiche. In questi ambiti, combina approcci strutturali e pragmatici nello studio di fenomeni quali la referenza personale e la morfologia valutativa. Autrice di numerose pubblicazioni sul mutamento linguistico in tedesco, in particolare in prospettiva pragmatica, attualmente è componente di un gruppo di ricerca che studia le pratiche di referenza personale in una prospettiva interazionale e diacronica, dove è PI dell'unità incentrata sul pronome indefinito *man* in diacronia

Simona Leonardi insegna Lingua e Linguistica tedesca all'Università di Genova. La sua ricerca si concentra, oltre che sulla pragmatica e la semantica storica, sull'analisi narrativa e conversazionale, nonché sull'intersezione tra memoria, tempo e spazio nel racconto, con particolare attenzione alle interviste narrative del cosiddetto Israelkorpus (cfr. *https://mappaturaisraelkorpus.wordpress.com*). Componente di progetti di ricerca nazionali e internazionali, attualmente è PI del PRIN *Minori in movimento: per una cartografia di migrazioni forzate dal nazismo e delle loro testimonianze.*

Theresa Schweden è attualmente ricercatrice all'Università di Mainz, all'interno del progetto *Humandifferenzierung*, dove analizza in particolare la relazione tra lingua e disabilità e le pratiche linguistiche di disumanizzazione. Tra i suoi ambiti di ricerca la sociolinguistica storica, dialettologia, semantica e onomastica, in particolare la terioonomastica. Autrice di svariati articoli, nel 2013 è uscito il volume *Personenreferenz im Dialekt. Grammatik und Pragmatik inoffizieller Personennamen in Dialekten des Deutschen*, basato sulla sua tesi di dottorato.

Eva-Maria Thüne insegna Lingua e Linguistica tedesca all'Università di Bologna dal 1997. I suoi interessi di ricerca sono rivolti in particolare alla linguistica testuale, all'analisi della lingua parlata e della conversazione e al tedesco come lingua straniera. Ha partecipato a progetti di ricerca nazionali e internazionali (p.es. *https://mappaturaisraelkorpus. wordpress.com*). Nel 2017 è stata Bologna-Clare Hall-Fellow a Cambridge (UK), in seguito Life Member di Clare Hall. Ha condotto interviste a persone in fuga dal nazismo con l'azione del *Kindertransport* e con altre forme di migrazione giovanile, cfr. la sua pubblicazione *Gerettet. Berichte von Kindertransport und Auswanderung nach Großbritannien* (2019) e il sito *Gerettet.*

Evelyn Ziegler insegna linguistica tedesca (con focus sulla sociolinguistica) all'Università di Duisburg-Essen. I suoi principali ambiti di ricerca sono il plurilinguismo e le sue ricadute nei paesaggi linguistici, atteggiamenti linguistici, comunicazione nei nuovi media, sociolinguistica sincronica e diacronica, nonché linguistica delle varietà. Ha collaborato, anche come PI, a diversi progetti di ricerca; tra quelli da lei diretti si ricorda qui il progetto dedicato ai paesaggi linguistici plurilingui nella Ruhr, *Metropolenzeichen: Visuelle Mehrsprachigkeit in der Metropole Ruhr* (cfr. anche la relativa pubblicazione); attualmente è Co-Lead del progetto internazionale *Linguistic practices of coal mining communities in the post-industrial era: variation, documentation, representation, regeneration.*

Antje Dammel ist Professorin für Germanistische Linguistik mit den Schwerpunkten Grammatik und Sprachgeschichte an der Universität Münster; sie ist Vorsitzende der Kommission für Dialekt- und Namenforschung in Westfalen. In ihrer Forschung befasst sie sich mit Fragen von Wandel und Variation des Deutschen, einschließlich sprachübergreifender Perspektiven. In diesen Bereichen verbindet sie strukturelle und pragmatische Ansätze bei der Untersuchung von Phänomenen wie etwa Personenreferenz und evaluativer Morphologie. Dammel ist Autorin zahlreicher Publikationen v. a. zum Sprachwandel im Deutschen, insbesondere aus pragmatischer Sicht. Derzeit nimmt sie an einem DFG-Projekt zur Personenreferenz teil; sie leitet die Münster-Forschungsgruppe *Referenzielle Praxis im Wandel: Das Pronomen* man *in der Diachronie des Deutschen.*

Simona Leonardi ist Professorin für Deutsche Sprache und Linguistik an der Universität Genua. Neben Pragmatik und historischer Semantik konzentriert sich ihre Forschung auf Fragen der Erzähl- und Gesprächsanalyse sowie auf das Wechselspiel zwischen Erinnerung, Zeit und Raum in mündlichen Erzählungen, mit besonderem Augenmerk auf die narrativen Interviews des Israelkorpus (vgl. *https://kartografiedesisraelkorpus. wordpress.com*). Sie hat an nationalen und internationalen Forschungsprojekten teilgenommen und leitet derzeit das nationale (italienische) Forschungsprojekt *Minors on the move: Mapping forced migration from Nazism and its testimonies.*

Theresa Schweden ist Wissenschaftliche Mitarbeiterin im Sonderforschungsbereich SFB 1482 *Humandifferenzierung,* wo sie insbesondere die Beziehung zwischen Sprache und Behinderung sowie sprachliche Praktiken der Entmenschlichung untersucht. Zu ihren Forschungsgebieten zählen diachrone und synchrone Soziolinguistik, Dialektologie, Semantik und Namenforschung, u. a. Tieronomastik. Sie ist Autorin zahlreicher Artikel; 2013 erschien das auf ihrer Dissertation beruhenden Buch *Personenreferenz im Dialekt. Grammatik und Pragmatik inoffizieller Personennamen in Dialekten des Deutschen.*

Eva-Maria Thüne ist seit 1997 Professorin für Deutsche Sprache und Sprachwissenschaft an der Universität Bologna. Ihre Forschungsinteressen gelten insbesondere der Textlinguistik, der gesprochenen Sprache und der Gesprächsanalyse. Sie hat an nationalen und internationalen Forschungsprojekten teilgenommen (z. B. *https://kartografie desisraelkorpus.wordpress.com*). 2017 war sie Bologna-Clare-Hall-Fellow in Cambridge (UK) und wurde anschließend Life Member von Clare Hall. Die Interviews mit Menschen in Großbritannien, die mit Hilfe des Kindertransports und anderer Formen der Jugendmigration vor dem Nationalsozialismus flohen, sind 2019 in ihrem Band *Gerettet. Berichte von Kindertransport und Auswanderung nach Großbritannien* erschienen, vgl. auch und die Website *Gerettet.*

Evelyn Ziegler ist Professorin für germanistische Linguistik mit Schwerpunkt Soziolinguistik an der Universität Duisburg-Essen. Ihre Forschungsschwerpunkte sind Mehrsprachigkeit und deren Auswirkungen auf Sprachlandschaften, Spracheinstellungen, Kommunikation in den neuen Medien, synchrone und diachrone Soziolinguistik sowie Varietätslinguistik. Sie hat an verschiedenen Forschungsprojekten teilgenommen; zu den von ihr geleiteten Projekten gehört *Visuelle Mehrsprachigkeit in der Metropole Ruhr* (siehe auch die entsprechende Publikation). Derzeit ist sie Co-Leiterin des internationalen Projekts *Linguistic practices of coal mining communities in the post-industrial era: variation, documentation, representation, regeneration.*

Indice / Inhaltsverzeichnis

Prefazione

La serie degli *Occasional Papers* è una collana, nata nel 2005 e collocata all'interno dei *Quaderni del Centro di Studi Linguistico-Culturali* (CeSLiC), il centro di ricerca che opera presso il Dipartimento di Lingue e Letterature Straniere e Moderne dell'Alma Mater Studiorum – Università di Bologna e del quale Ana Pano Alamán è responsabile scientifica. Dal 2021 la *collana Quaderni del CeSLiC. Occasional Papers* si è aperta alle *Monografie*, accogliendo all'interno della stessa anche numeri monografici incentrati su un tema specifico con contributi che affrontano vari aspetti dell'argomento.

Namen und Migration: Onymische Indizes hybrider sozialer Zugehörigkeiten

Nomi e migrazioni: indici onimici di appartenenze sociali ibride

Nell'ambito delle ricerche sull'interazione tra lingua e identità, i nomi delle persone sono considerati come "atti identitari" elaborati simbolicamente, che servono sia all'etero- sia all'autoidentificazione (cfr. Tabouret-Keller 1998). Negli ultimi decenni, approcci interdisciplinari e transdisciplinari negli ambiti della linguistica applicata, dell'antropologia, della geografia umana, della sociologia, della storia e delle scienze sociali hanno sollevato nuove questioni di ricerca sulle dinamiche di cambiamento di antroponimi e toponimi: queste si sono tradotte in studi che si occupano del contesto sociale e delle dimensioni ideologiche della denominazione e del cambiamento dei nomi (Nick 2024).

Al termine di un primo convegno tenutosi a Münster (2023) è stato deciso di approfondire i temi trattati e, se necessario, di affrontarne di nuovi in un secondo incontro del gruppo di ricerca, tenutosi a Genova nell'ottobre 2024. L'analisi si è allargata in questo caso ai toponimi, poiché anche questi ultimi possono mostrare una dinamica. Variazioni dei toponimi corrispondono solitamente a mutamenti nelle costellazioni di potere e conoscenza (Gierczak 2020), che spesso riguardano aree di confine multiculturali (Walkowiak 2021; cfr. anche Thum 2011).

Il presente volume, che raccoglie contributi degli incontri di Münster e Genova, si inserisce nel quadro appena delineato: i nomi – e i cambiamenti che li interessano – sono campi di negoziazione privilegiati tra lingua, sua dimensione esperienziale (*Spracherleben*), potere e ideologia, perché riguardano azioni linguistiche che non sono solo strumentali, ma anche costitutive di molteplici costruzioni discorsive.

Parole chiave: antroponimi, indessicalità, migrazioni, posizionamento, repertorio plurilingue, *Spracherleben*, toponimi

Valeria Zotti
General Editor dei *Quaderni del CeSLiC*

Bologna, 3 dicembre 2025

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New Land – New Name?
About the Name Changes of German Emigrants to North America. Research Overview, New Findings and Suggestions for Further Research

Anna-Maria Balbach*

Abstract

Millions of Germans have emigrated to North America over the past few centuries. They started a new life, often with a new name. This article focuses on emigrants to the North American region of what is now the United States and asks: When did they change their names? What were the reasons for or against it? Did the linguistic structure of the German name play a role in the change? How can name changes be reconstructed and studied today? This article seeks answers, reviews existing research, presents some new findings, and encourages further research.

Keywords: personal names, emigrant names, name change, American names, Anglicized names

1. Introduction

This topic starts with a big myth. It is the myth of the merciless inspectors at Ellis Island who, when frightened immigrants arrived, changed their 'unpronounceable' names to appropriate English names, and then the immigrants had to live with those names[1]. Since almost all Americans have a history of immigration, this myth can be found in many American families. However, the story of the German name being changed upon entry is

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[1] This myth can still be found in Jones (1990: 53). Eichhoff (2001: 246) already casts doubt on it. The US Immigration Department actively works against this myth on its Internet pages and writes under the heading "Immigrant Name Changes": "The report that the clerk 'wrote down' the immigrant's surname is also suspect. During immigrant inspection at Ellis Island the immigrant confronted an inspector who had the passenger list already created abroad. That inspector operated under rules and regulations ordering that he was not to change the name or identifying information found for any immigrant unless it was requested by the immigrant or inspection demonstrated the original information was in error". U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (ed.) (2024) Immigrant Name Changes. Online at: https://www.uscis.gov/records/genealogy/genealogy-notebook/immigrant-name-changes (25. June 2024).

particularly common. This is because Germans have been immigrating to North America[2] for over 400 years and were the largest immigrant group in the 19th century with over 5 million immigrants[3]. Today, almost 43 million Americans claim German ancestry, according to the 2000 census (Brittingham/de la Cruz 2004: 3; see Fig. 1).
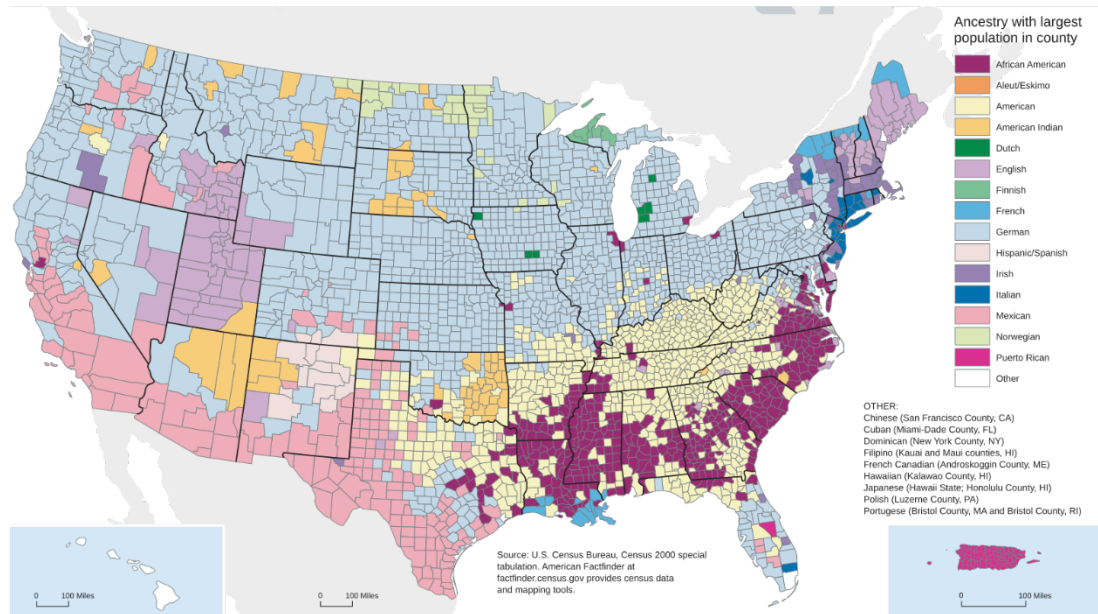
Figure 1: Results of the US Census survey in 2000 on the question of ancestry. The light blue areas are predominantly inhabited by Americans of German descent (Source: Brittingham/de la Cruz 2004: 8).

Consequently, the majority of American surnames today should be traceable to originally German surnames – and we should therefore have an abundance of onomastic data at our disposal. As is often the case in research, it is not that simple. Just as the myth of forced name changes at Ellis Island is nothing more than a myth and never happened, we do not have an abundance of name data, and especially not in a form that is easy to analyze. So far, the history of German emigrants changing their names to what is now the USA is a story with many unknowns. Little research has been done on when and why German emigrants changed their names. Only the manner in which names were changed has been studied (e. g., Eichhoff 2001).

But there are still questions to be answered:

- At what point in the emigration did the name change usually take place?
- Was it initiated from outside or at the request of the emigrants themselves?
- What were the reasons for the name change? Are there any linguistic, social, societal, or historical factors involved in the name change and its timing?
- Were first names and surnames changed in the same way and at the same time, or were there differences?

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2   As the United States was the preferred destination for German emigrants, with over 90% choosing to settle there in the 19th century, this article focuses on this North American territory (Hahn/Berding 2010: 172).

3   Cf. the exact data from the US Census Bureau at: https://www2.census.gov/library/publications/ 1949/compendia/hist_stats_1789-1945/hist_stats_1789-1945-chB.pdf?# (7. August 2024).

- How were the names changed? Can we identify certain linguistic strategies and patterns that were used at a certain time or under certain conditions?

These questions and the study of them belong to the field of cultural-analytical linguistics, in this case cultural-historical linguistics. It is precisely such questions that give us insight into historical language worlds and their linguistic practices, "with the intention of capturing and presenting the cultural interpretations of the self and the world expressed in them, the socio-cultural orientation systems as well as the norms, values, attitudes and feelings of the corresponding communication communities", as Linke (2018: 348) puts it. Or in short – also in the words of Linke (2018: 362), based on the famous question of Fishman (1965): "It is about the question: why (exactly) this (right) now?"

I cannot answer that question completely and conclusively today, but in this article I will attempt to find an answer and consider the necessary steps to do so. To that end, I will first discuss the various aspects that can play a role in researching name changes (see Chapter 2). Chapter 3 then presents possible sources that can be used to research name changes. Chapter 4 provides an overview of the studies that have already been conducted. Eichhoff's (2001) study is discussed in more detail, as it has already produced a well-founded typology of German surname anglicization that can serve as a basis for further research. Finally, some initial answers to the questions posed at the beginning are attempted, including two small studies of my own, and suggestions for further research are given.

2. Considerations for Researching the Name Change

Why is this happening now? As a first step, I took a closer look at this question and broke it down. What exactly is the WHY? What is THIS? And what is the NOW?

I will start with: THIS, the name change (see Fig. 2). To get to the bottom of the name change, we first have to take a closer look at the names. Namely, the original German name with which the emigrants came to America and the Anglicized name to which they changed over time. The process of change from the German name to the Anglicized name is also very important.

The linguistic structure of the German name could play a role. If the name contained graphic elements that are not used in English, such as umlauts (*ä*, *ö*, or *ü*) or the letter *ß*, or if it contained phonological structures that differ from English and represent sound groups that are difficult for Americans to pronounce, these structural challenges may have encouraged an early name change (Eichhoff 2001: 249f.).

The Anglicized names can tell us if they are similar to the original German names and what the similarity is. Whether there were frequent translations of the names, or whether there were phonological or graphic changes. The switching process can be studied to determine what linguistic switching strategies were used. Eichhoff (1996, 2001) has already done fundamental research in this area. His typology of surname anglicization could be extended to a diachronic perspective in order to determine whether certain change strategies were particularly popular at certain points in time.
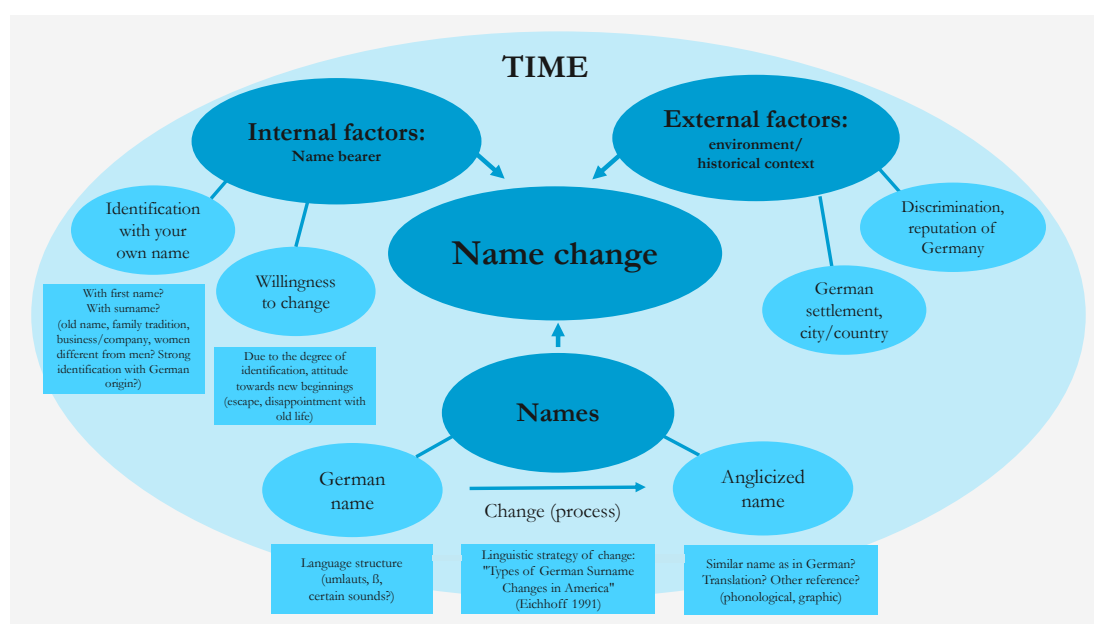
Figure 2: Graph of name change dynamics. Listed are the various factors that can influence the name change of German emigrants to the USA.

Let's look at the WHY. These are the many different reasons, the factors that lead to a name change. I have divided them into internal and external factors. The internal factors are to be found in the name bearers. The decisive factor here is how strongly they identify with their German name and how willing they are to change it. In terms of identification, a distinction must be made between attachment to the first name and attachment to the family name. These attachments can vary in strength: One person may identify more with their first name, another with their last name. A strong identification with the family name may exist, for example, if the family is an old noble family or a family that has been running a family business under that name for 200 years. The gender of the surname holder may also play a role, as men and women may have different levels of attachment to the surname. Are women more likely to change their surname because they were expected to do so at certain life events, such as marriage? (Rosar 2023: 84ff.) And conversely, do men hold on to their surnames longer because it was unusual for them to change their names at the time? Identification with one's own nationality may also play a role. Someone who identifies strongly as German may find it more difficult to give up their German name.

The willingness to change one's name is determined by the degree of identification with one's own name, but also by the fundamental willingness to change. The reasons for emigration play an important role. For example, someone who fled from military service or criminal reasons will certainly be very willing to change their name. Or someone who was dissatisfied with their old life and now wants to make a completely new start may also want to associate this new start with a new name. These are all internal motivations for or against a name change.

External motivations, on the other hand, arise from the emigrant's environment or historical context. For example, if someone emigrated to a German settlement in Pennsylvania, there was probably little reason to anglicize their name because of the predominance of the German language. If they lived in a multicultural city with many other immigrants, there was also little pressure to drop the German name. But if someone

lived in the country, surrounded only by English-speaking people, that might have been a reason for an Anglicized name. Discrimination, e.g. in the workplace or financially, may also have been a reason for a name change. The reputation of the Germans at different times would also have influenced the name change. When the Germans were enemies of the Americans during World War I and World War II, there were important reasons not to identify as German.[4]

  The last aspect is the NOW, the time when the names were changed. The point in time is connected to and results from all the other factors. In the illustration, it is graphically positioned as an oval behind all the other factors to express the fact that it is interwoven with them all.

3. Possible Sources for Researching the Name Change

How can these various factors that may have influenced the name changes of German emigrants to North America be identified and compiled into data for research? The following section provides an overview of the possible sources that could be researched.

  Possible sources of data on the various factors influencing name changes:

Sources for data about the name bearers

- Emigrant letters
- Diaries, other ego documents
- Official correspondence on the name change
- Name lists from Scheben (1939)

Sources for data about the social, societal, historical context

- Literature on American and German history
- Literature on the history of emigration
- Sociological studies

Sources for data about the names and their change
- Passenger lists
- Emigration files
- Census lists
- Emigrant letters
- Gravestones/memorial stones
- Death notices
- Family announcements in newspapers (birth, wedding, death announcements)
- Naturalization files

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[4]   There are numerous studies on the assimilation processes of German-Americans at the beginning of the 20th century in the aftermath of the First and Second World Wars, which assume, among other things, a strong adaptation due to, for example, bans on the German language as a school subject and public hostility; see Luebke (1974); Higham (2001); Kazal (2004).

Information about emigrant letters, diaries, and other ego documents can be obtained from the name bearers. There is also official correspondence on name changes in American archives that can be viewed. The most accessible of these sources, however, are the emigrants' letters. There is a large online database, the *Deutsche Auswandererbriefsammlung* (*DABS*)[5] (*www.auswandererbriefe.de*), which currently contains over 11 000 letters. The individual letters cannot (yet) be viewed online, but this is being worked on[6]. Once this is done, it will be possible to extract the names from these letters and also to search the contents for meta-linguistic statements about names and possible name changes. Currently, individual letters can be identified by content mapping, a list by year and family, and by place of emigration, and then ordered for a fee. This means that emigrant letters from the database can already be used for name research and provide insights into one's own identification with the German or Anglicized name and into name change processes. Various internal factors can be gathered in this way. I will illustrate this later with a small example.

The external factors are well described in the historical and sociological literature. There are numerous publications on the history of settlement and emigration with their push and pull factors[7].

The names themselves are more difficult to obtain. A corpus of names must consist of the original German names as well as the new Anglicized names, which makes it very difficult to obtain comprehensive and reliable data. Most sources contain only either the German or the Anglicized name. Hence, you have to use different sources and link them together to get both names.

Possible sources for the German names are passenger lists of emigrant ships, German emigration files, and newspaper advertisements. For the Anglicized names, US Census lists, American telephone directories, obituaries, family notices in American newspapers, and tombstones[8] can be examined. Both names can be found in some emigration letters and in the naturalization files of the American authorities, as it is still possible to adopt an American name when taking American citizenship. However, such records have only been kept since the late 19th century. An overview of the various sources and their respective characteristics is given in Table 1. It shows whether the German or the Anglicized name, or even both, comes from the source, depending on how reliable and accessible it is, how extensive it is, and how much work and financial effort is required to compile a corpus of names from it.

The result is sobering in so far as it is possible to collect the names of almost all types of sources, but only with great effort and financial expense. The work of Scheben (1939) may serve as an example. In his dissertation, he showed how German and

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[5] The online database *Deutsche Auswandererbriefsammlung* (*DABS*) was created from two previous letter collections: the *Bochumer Auswandererbriefsammlung* (*BABS*) and the *Nordamerika-Briefsammlung* (*NABS*). The *BABS* was compiled in the 1980s under the direction of Wolfgang Helbich at the Ruhr University Bochum, the *NABS* between 2003 and 2007 under the direction of Ursula Lehmkuhl, University of Trier, and in close cooperation with the Gotha Research Library. While the *BABS* has a regional focus on the western German states, the *NABS* primarily comprises letters from the eastern German states. Cf. https://www.auswandererbriefe.de/quellenbestand.html (8.07.2024).

[6] Some letters are already available, e. g. for teaching purposes: www.auswandererbriefe.de/unterricht.html (20.08.2025).

[7] See, for example, the detailed introductions in Helbich/Kamphoefner/Sommer (1988) and Helbich/Kamphoefner (2002).

[8] See, for example, Vajta (2017); vanDam (2009).

Anglicized names could be brought together by careful research and comparison of different sources. To do this, he collected mid-19th-century emigration records for the district of Adenau (Rhineland-Palatinate), which showed that a large proportion of its inhabitants had emigrated to Westphalia, MA. He then compared these names with the census lists from the 1860 census of Westphalia, MA, and thus identified the original German names as well as the Anglicized names of those who had emigrated from there (cf. Scheben 1939: 14–38 and 49–89). Scheben's work shows that it is possible to identify the German and Anglicized names of various people in this way, but that it is also very time-consuming, so he did it as part of a dissertation.

4. Previous Research on the Name Change

4.1 Overview of Literature and Name Corpora

The effort involved is certainly also the reason why, although millions of Germans have emigrated to America, very little research has been done on their names. In concrete terms, very little means that there is nothing at all on first names, and only six works that have dealt – more or less extensively – with German surnames in the USA in the last 120 years (see Table 2).

Table 2 provides an overview of the literature and the name corpora used. Since only the study by Macha (1998) gives the exact size of the corpus and Jones (1990) gives an estimate, the corpus information for the other studies could only be categorized as "small", "medium" or "large" from the few details given by the authors. Also, only Macha (1998) gives the specific German and Anglicized names of his corpus, so that these can be used for further investigations. In terms of content, however, the studies by Eichhoff (2001) are the most fruitful for our topic. They are therefore presented in the following as an overview.

Source	German name	Anglicized Name	Reliability of the source	Accessibility of the source	Number/scope of the source	Workload Names from the Source to raise	Financial Expenditure
Emigrant letters	✓	(✓)	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	11,085 letters in *Deutsche Auswandererbriefsammlung (DABS)* (Engl.: German Emigrants' Letters Collection). Online: http://www.auswandererbriefe.de/sammlung.html (15.5.2023)	Medium - high (read each letter and extract names, names usually at the end as signature or in address/sender)	High (each letter costs)
Emigration files	✓	-	✓✓✓	✓✓	Varies from region to region. In most regions, only a few are preserved, often incomplete. But: Emigration database with over 300,000 entries available online for Baden-Württemberg. Emigration database for southwest Germany: https://www.leo-bw.de/web/guest/themen/auswanderer (15.5.2023)	Low for BW, high for the rest of Germany (files must be researched in archives throughout Germany)	Low for BW, high for the rest of Germany (archive trips throughout Germany and digitization costs)
Departure documents (citizenship waiver certificate, military passport, etc.)	✓	-	✓✓✓	✓	Presumably small number. Alternative to the emigration files: Emigration papers from the emigrants' private possessions. No database known so far, private property in the USA?	High (as papers have to be found first)	High (locating and writing to descendants of German emigrants in the USA?)
Newspapers	✓	-	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	Very many	High (newspaper archives mostly accessible online, but the names have to be found)	Low (newspaper archives mostly accessible free of charge via university)
Passenger/ ship list	(✓)	(✓)	✓	✓✓✓	Approx. 5 million names in the "German Emigrants Database" of the Bremerhaven Emigration Museum https://www.deutsche-auswanderer-datenbank.de/ueber-uns/online/	Low Easy to collect because everything is digitally accessible	Low - high Only names with year of emigration can be retrieved free of charge, entire data record (destination, all information in the passenger list) 15 euros per person. Possibly more cost-effective variant for science?
Entry registrations	(✓)	(✓)	✓	✓✓✓	65 million from 1820-1957, Germans must be filtered out. https://heritage.statueofliberty.org/	Medium - high (Ship lists are available online, are also transcribed, but contain errors and must at least be checked and improved. Due to the amount of work involved)	Medium - high (Individual names can be called up free of charge, but ship lists are 29 dollars each)
Naturalization files USA	✓	✓	✓✓✓	✓✓	Very many at the National Archives, Washington, DC	Medium - high	High (travel expenses, scanning costs)

Table 1: Overview of possible sources for the collection of a name corpus, with information on the scope of the source, the workload, and the cost.

Title	Contents	Name corpus
Kuhns (1902).	German surnames in Pennsylvania, which are mainly interpreted etymologically.	Middle name corpus
Baumann (1938).	Systematically evaluates a corpus of names for which she analyzes all names of German origin from a place in the "German Belt" in the Midwest.	Extensive corpus
Hilbig (1958).	He looks at the anglicization processes in spelling and pronunciation but can only draw on a very small corpus of names, so that his results are only selective.	Very small corpus
Jones (1990 and 1996).	1990: a lexicon of German-American names: "a very simple list of German surnames with their meanings in English translation" (Eichhoff 2001: 249). 1996: very short article on German-American names and their path to anglicization.	Approx. 12,500 names
Macha (1998).	Small essay on the connection between name spelling, name change and identity on the basis of emigrants' letters, emigration files and census registers.	Small corpus of 42 German and Anglicized names
Eichhoff (1991, 1996, and 2001).	Begins in 1990 to systematically analyze the Pennsylvania telephone directories and compare them with the immigration files, census files, etc. Then he creates a typology of the anglicization of German surnames. In three essays from 1991, 1996 and 2001, he presents the various mechanisms by which a German surname can be anglicized. His last essay from 2001 is the most comprehensive.	Extensive corpus of names

Table 2: Works from the last 120 years on surnames of German emigrants to the USA

4.2 Overview of Eichhoff's (2001) "Typology of Anglicization"

Eichhoff (2001) works with an extensive corpus of German and Anglicized surnames collected from telephone directories and official name registers. He systematically analyzes this corpus in order to trace the various mechanisms of name change from the original German name to an Anglicized name. He has presented his findings in what he calls a "typology of anglicization". This typology is a detailed description of 24 different name change strategies. According to Eichhoff (2001: 249), "the anglicization phenomena of German names" are thus "incomparably more differentiated" than for names from other countries that have been anglicized. Fig. 3 provides a compact overview of

Eichhoff's comprehensive typology. Fig. 4 shows examples of the different strategies of name change.
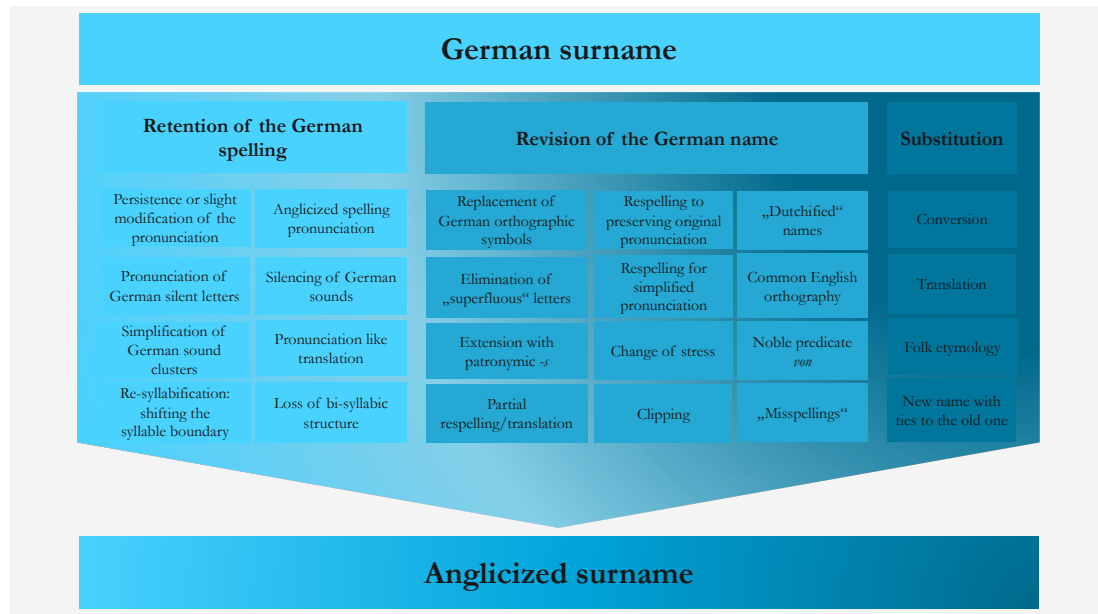
Figure 3: Diagram of the 24 name change strategies based on Eichhoff's (2001) typology. Own illustration.
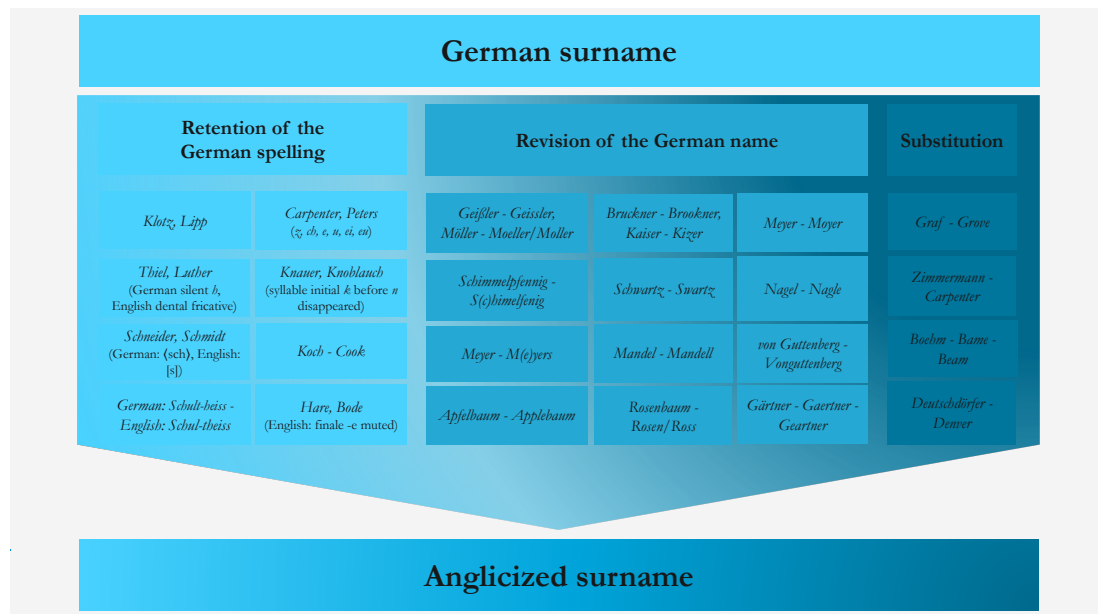

Figure 4: Examples of surnames for the individual name change strategies according to Eichhoff (2001). Own illustration.

The scheme is briefly explained below. For this purpose, the comprehensive explanations of Eichhoff (2001), which are presented with many examples of names, are summarized, and an insight into selected linguistic strategies is given.

At the top of the scheme is the German surname with which the emigrants come to America. Eichhoff (2001) identified three main strategies of anglicization: The first (on the left in the graph) attempts to preserve the written form of the German surname. The result is a different pronunciation of the name. The second strategy (in the middle of the graph) is a modification of the German spelling, usually with the goal of achieving at least a similar sound to the German name when pronounced in English, or changing the name so that it is easier to pronounce for the English-speaking environment. The third strategy (to the right in the graph) is to replace the German name, resulting in a fully Anglicized name. Each of these three main strategies has several different linguistic mechanisms by which the name change can be achieved. The result of the name change is then a surname name that, depending on the strategy used, has a different degree of anglicization: from barely or only slightly modified to completely anglicized (cf. the coloring in the diagram from light blue to medium blue to dark blue).

By retention of the spelling, the German name is not changed graphically. However, its pronunciation will change in an English-speaking environment. In the rarest of cases, this results in only a slight change in the name, as only a few German names have a linguistic structure that results in a similar pronunciation in German and English. Such rare names include *Klotz* and *Lipp*. They are pronounced similarly, but in some regions of the USA, a distinctly Anglicized pronunciation can still be heard, namely where the <l> is pronounced velar ("dark") rather than alveolar ("light"), as in German (cf. Eichhoff 2001: 250f.).

Pronunciation by spelling, the second strategy, is the most common way German surnames are pronounced by English speakers. "Here, the characters are given the sound values that are typical for them in English (and not in German)" (Eichhoff 2001: 251). Differences arise primarily in the consonantal character <z>, in the digraph <ch>, and in the vowels and diphthongs. <z> is pronounced like [ts] in German, but as a voiced *s* [z] in English. The *Zimmermann* family will therefore find their name pronounced with a voiced *s* in English. Family names with <ch>, which in German are realized with either a palatal fricative [ç] (e. g. *Minich*), a velar fricative [x] (e. g. *Achermann*) or a uvular fricative [χ] (e. g. *Balbach*), are pronounced as [k] in English. When it comes to vowels, especially the German long *e* and short *u* are pronounced differently in English: "The [e:] in an open syllable becomes [i:] in names like *Peters, Seeman(n)*. The short *u* becomes a short *a*-sound [ʌ] in names like *Hutter, Dunkelberger*" (Eichhoff 2001: 251). Among the diphthongs, <ei> in particular is often pronounced as a long [i:], as in the name *Goldstein* (see Eichhoff 2001: 251f. for further examples). Then there are characters that are silent in German but spoken in English. This applies, for example, to the German silent *h*, as in the names *Thiel* and *Luther*. In English, however, the combination of <t> and <h> is read as a digraph for the labiodental fricative, and the names *Thiel* and *Luther* are therefore pronounced with the English *th*-sound (cf. Eichhoff 2001: 252)

The second major category is revision of the German spelling. Here we have the fact that German has characters like <ß> and the umlauts, which are unknown in English. As a result, names with <ß> have to be replaced by double *s* (*Geißler* to *Geissler*) and names with umlauts by the corresponding vowel plus <e> (*Kühn* to *Kuehn*) or the dots are simply omitted (*Löblich* to *Loblich*).

Another anglicization strategy is respelling with the goal of preserving the original pronunciation. Eichhoff (2001: 256) finds numerous names whose spelling suggests a

respelling based on the German pronunciation. The most striking example he cites is the observation that many surnames in German begin with <j>, but hardly ever with <y>. In American phone books, it is the other way around. There you will find many surnames with <y>, because this letter has a phonetic value in English that comes closest to the German <j> (e. g., *Jäger* becomes *Yager*).

The third category is substitution. Eichhoff understands this as "the process by which any externally recognizable connection with the original name is severed" (Eichhoff 2001: 263). This can happen in three different ways:

- by conversion, where a complete assimilation of the German names takes place because they are very close to the English names phonetically, graphically, and semantically: as in *Miller* and *Smith* from *Möller* and *Schmidt*;
- this is to be distinguished from the deliberate translation of names where there is no phonetic similarity, such as *Carpenter* from *Zimmermann*;
- Eichhoff describes the process as folk etymology when the name has changed several times until it has a semantic meaning in English: for example, *Böhm* first became *Bame*, which has no meaning in English, and therefore evolved into *Beam*, which means 'Balken' in English (Eichhoff 2001: 264f.).

The last anglicization strategy mentioned by Eichhoff is a new surname that is adapted to the English-speaking environment but still has some connection to the abandoned name. Examples range from very creative name inventions, such as *Charles Cist*, who formed his American surname from an acronym of his German birth name *Karl (Charles) Jakob Sigismund Thiel*, to the simple use of the same initial letter, as in the case of *John Deutschendorf*, who became *John Denver* (cf. Eichhoff 2001: 266).

5. The Utility and Knowledge Gain of Names from Emigration Letters and Census Lists

Even this overview of Eichhoff's (2001) comprehensive typology of name change strategies of German emigrants to America, which presents only selected linguistic strategies, clearly shows how diverse the linguistic processes of integrating German surnames into the English-speaking environment of names are. Some strategies result in Anglicized surnames that are completely assimilated into the English-speaking environment, while others still reveal more or less of their German origin. When did who choose which strategy and for what reasons?

In the studies of Macha (1998) and Eichhoff (2001) I found some hints for first answers and supplemented them with two small studies of my own. On the one hand, I collected some emigrant letters from the above-mentioned database as well as from the emigrant letters published by Helbich/Kamphoefner/Sommer (1988), collected the names mentioned there, and examined the contents of the letters for meta-linguistic statements on names and name changes. In addition to the results, I wanted to gain experience with the database and its usefulness for name research. Second, I took a closer

look at the first names in the 1860 census lists of Westphalia, MA, made available by Scheben (1939)[9].

5.1 Letters from the emigrant letters database

The letters in the database were searched for the keywords 'name' and 'name change' using the database's content mapping. Since the database consists of two parts, one from the former *Bochum Emigrants' Letters Collection* (*BABS*) and one from the *North American Letters Collection* (*NABS*)[10], the content mapping was searched for both collections. It turned out that only 25 hits for 'names' and 'name changes' could be found among the 14,028 content mappings of the *BABS* and the 11 854 mappings of the *NABS*. This suggests that the topics of 'names' and 'name changes' are not the main focus of the letters but rather are mentioned in passing alongside a number of other topics. It can be assumed here that a search in the digitized letters will be more productive in the future than is currently the case via content mapping.

The 25 hits are spread over 19 letters (with a total of 27 433 words on 45 pages), which were ordered for further investigation. 12 letters were written in the 19th century and contain 22 239 words on 34 pages. Seven letters were written in the 20th century and comprise 11 pages with 5 194 words.

138 personal names (first names and surnames) were extracted from the 19th century letters. 108 names referred to emigrants who were reported in the letters to their German relatives[11]. 86 % (n = 93) of these names are written in German, only 14 % (n = 15) of the names are anglicized. In most letters, the German or Anglicized form of the name is used consistently. Only one letter deviates from this: It introduces the German first name at the beginning so that German readers know who is referred to, but then uses the Anglicized form of the name for the rest of the letter:

> (1)
> Ich weiss nicht ob Carl / Euch bereits die Todesnachricht / von Bruder **Heinrich** geschrieben. […] Oh wie / das so plötzlich kam, und wie schrecklich / der Schlag für eine arme Frau, / die nun Wittwe mit 7 Kindern / ist. Am 3ten July Morgens 8.20 / starb **Henry** nach kurzem Kranksein. / Unser Arzt glaubte zuerst, er / habe sich überhitzt und angestrengt […].[12]
>
> Letter from Ida Wencker dated August 23rd, 1896 to her German relatives. Source: www.auswandererbriefe.de; signature: Fischer/Wencker No. 5414.

In the 20th century letters, the ratio of German and Anglicized name forms shifts slightly in favor of Anglicized names. However, only 21 names (13 of emigrants, 8

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9 Macha (1998) also uses these lists but focuses on the names of the 42 male heads of family. This article also looks at the names of women and children born in Germany and compares them with those born in the USA.

10 See footnote 5 above.

11 30 other names referred to German relatives in the home country. These names are always used in their German form.

12 Translation: "I don't know whether Carl / has already written to you / with the news of brother **Heinrich's** death. [...] Oh how / this came so suddenly, and how terrible / the blow for a poor woman / who is now a widow with 7 children. On July 3rd in the morning at 8.20 / **Henry** died after a short illness. / At first our doctor thought he / had overheated and overworked himself […]".

of German relatives) could be extracted from the seven letters, so the database is very small. 76% of the emigrant names (N = 10) are used in their German form, 23% in their Anglicized form (N = 3). However, these 20th century letters contain more reflections on names and name changes than the 19th century letters. For example, the German relatives are told of the difficulty of choosing a baby name that is both German and appropriate for the English-speaking environment:

> (2)
> Der Nachmittag ging mit Namensberatung dahin; wir sind uns nun wenigstens über die in Frage kommenden Namen einig. (Ps: ein langwieriges Problem, da der Name auch in Englisch auszusprechen sein muss!)[13]
>> Letter from Eberhard and Gisela Hahn dated June 22nd, 1952 to their German relatives. Source: www.auswandererbriefe.de; signature: Hahn/Hahn no. 7131.

Another letter reports on the "strange custom" of using only first names in English. The letter writer even puts quotation marks around his new employer's first name:

> (3)
> 'Fred' (wir reden uns hier alle nur mit Vornamen an) und ich holten den Überseekoffer, der auch in Quebec war, mit dem anderen Gepäck in seinem großen Chrysler zur Farm[14].
>> Letter from Eberhard Hahn to his German relatives dated Oct. 10th, 1951. Source: www.auswandererbriefe.de; signature: Hahn/Hahn no. 6803.

Two other letters indicate that the German name form in emigrant letters is used primarily to address German relatives and does not correspond to the form used in the letter writer's everyday English-speaking life. In a letter to his relatives back home, Heinrich Mende uses his Anglicized first name when he recounts how he met his fiancée in New York:

> (4)
> […] lebt sie nun in New York, wo **Henry Mende** sie entdeckte[15].
>> Letter from Heinrich Mende to his German relatives dated August 90th, 1937. Source: www.auswandererbriefe.de; signature: Kirstein/Mende No. 9435.

The surname is mentioned in another letter. It seems that several letters from Germany did not reach the addressee, Ernst Kuchenbecker. He therefore recommends that the letters be sent to another post office or that the last name be abbreviated, as the Americans do locally:

> (5)

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[13] Translation: "The afternoon was spent discussing names; at least we have now agreed on the names we are considering. (Ps: a complex problem, as the name also has to be pronounceable in English!)".

[14] Translation: "'Fred' (we're all on a first-name basis here) and I took the suitcase, which was also in Quebec, to the farm with the other luggage in his big Chrysler".

[15] Translation: "[...] she now lives in New York, where **Henry Mende** found her".

Vielleicht sollst Du Deinen Brief mal woanders aufgeben oder schreibe einmal blos **E. Becker** statt **Kuchenbecker** hier kürzen sie meistens meinen Namen so ab ich bekomme es dan auch[16].

Letter from Ernst Kuchenbecker on October 17th, 1900 to his German relatives. Source: www.auswandererbriefe.de; signature: Wehrmann/Bohn no. 13547.

The conclusion about the utility of the emigrants' letters for name research is ambivalent. On the one hand, the emigrants seem to use more German names because of the German addressees, although they have long used an Anglicized form of the name for themselves and other emigrants in everyday English-speaking life. Name collections from emigrant letters are therefore not particularly suitable for quantitative name analyses that want to find out something about the time of the name change. For qualitative analyses, however, the letters are a good source for meta-linguistic statements about names and name changes, especially once the letters in the database have been digitized and are fully searchable.

5.2 Letters from the Helbich Collection (1988)

Although the 20 emigrant letter series[17] edited by Helbich/Kamphoefner/Sommer (1988) is part of the *German Emigrant Letter Database*, their print version published in 1988 can still be helpful for name research, at least as long as the letters of the *DADS* are not yet fully digitized and provided with biographical information. The print version provides such biographical data. In addition, Helbich/Kamphoefner/Sommer (1988) has compiled a table of contents that lists the emigrant letters with their original German and Anglicized names, as well as the year of the first and last letter. This makes it possible to create a small corpus of names which, in conjunction with the year, also shows the chronological sequence of the name change (cf. Table 3). Of the 20 series of letters, 9 provide information about the original German names of the emigrants and their later Anglicized names. This may be too few names for quantitative studies, but the names are a good start for qualitative analyses.

Table 3: German and Anglicized Names from Helbich/Kamphoefner/Sommer (1988)

No.	German name	Anglicized name	Period of correspondence
1	Carl Blümner	Charles Blumner	1836–1860
2	Johann Bauer	John Bauer	1854–1891
3	Franz Joseph Löwen	Franz Joseph Loewen	1857–1888
4	Heinrich Möller	Henry Miller	1865–1901
5	Michael Probstfeld	Randolph M. Probstfield	1876–1900
6	Johann Witten	John Witten	1885–1922

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[16] Translation: "Maybe you should post your letter somewhere else or just write **E. Becker** instead of **Kuchenbecker**, here they usually abbreviate my name like that, so I get it too".

[17] There are not 20 letters, but 20 different series of letters from emigrants and their German relatives in the old homeland. Each letter series thus consists of several letters over a certain period of time (cf. Helbich/Kamphoefner/Sommer 1988: 32f.). As the editors write, the series of letters offered are not 'atypical' but can be 'representative of millions of similar letters' (Helbich/Kamphoefner/Sommer 1988: 32).

7	Johann Carl Wilhelm Pritzlaff	John Pritzlaff	1839–1849
8	Wilhelm Bürkert	William Buerkert	1875–1881
9	Ludwig Dilger	Louis Dilger	1885–1936

This clearly shows that the first name is anglicized for seven out of nine people within this average 28-year[18] series of letters: *Carl* becomes *Charles*, *Johann* becomes *John*, *Heinrich* becomes *Henry*, *Wilhelm* becomes *William*, and *Ludwig* becomes *Louis*. The surnames, on the other hand, do not change, at least orthographically (*Bauer, Witten, Pritzlaff, Dilger*), or change only slightly. For example, the spelling of the four surnames with umlauts is adapted (*Blümner* to *Blumner*, *Löwen* to *Loewen*, *Möller* to *Miller*, *Bürkert* to *Buerkert*) and one surname is partially translated: *Probstfeld* to *Probstfield*.

5.3 Names of Emigrants from the Census Lists of Westphalia, MA (Scheben 1939)

These lists contain 1089 persons living in Westphalia, MA at the time of the 1860 census. The individuals are listed by family, so that family relationships can be seen, and include their name, sex, occupation, property, place of birth, years of schooling, ability to read, and special characteristics (deaf, blind, poor, sick). For name research, these lists allow us to identify German emigrants by name, age, and gender based on their place of birth. Since Macha (1998) has already taken a closer look at the first names and surnames of the 42 male German family heads and found that the first names were anglicized much earlier than the surnames, and since Eichhoff (2001) has already described the linguistic strategies with which the surnames of the German emigrants to Westphalia, MA, were also anglicized, the first names of all the emigrant families will be examined more closely in the following. If the first names were anglicized so early and thus, in Macha's (1998: 166) words, "apparently much more readily abandoned" than the surnames, what first names were given to the children born in America after the emigration? Is there a caesura with the previous naming in the family? For example, do children born in America receive first names that are widely used in English, or first names that are easy to pronounce in both languages? Or do emigrant families rely on continuity in the assignment of first names?

The lists identified 754 first names of people who emigrated from Germany in the mid-19th century and were living in Westphalia, MA in 1860. The names of the emigrant families are distributed as follows:

- 135 first names of fathers,
- 135 of mothers,
- 95 first names of children born in Germany and
- 389 first names of children born in America and named there.

The first names of the 135 fathers are spread over 43 different names, while the first names of the mothers are spread over only 38 different names. There are clear name

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[18] The nine series of letters range from just 6 years to 51 years, but most cover an average period of 28 years.

preferences for both groups. *John* and *Mary* are by far the most common names, followed by *Anthony* and *Michael* for fathers and *Catherine* and *Elizabeth* for mothers (see Table 4).

Table 4: The most common first names of the fathers and mothers of the German emigrant families from the census lists of 1860, Westphalia, MA (all names that are given at least three times are listed)

No.	First names fathers	Quantity	%	First names mothers	Quantity	%
1	John	22	16,3%	Mary	29	21,5%
2	Anthony	12	8,9%	Catherina	19	14,1%
3	Michael	11	8,1%	Elizabeth	16	11,9%
4	Mathias	9	6,7%	Anna	7	5,2%
5	Nickolas	8	5,9%	Anna Mary	6	4,4%
6	Francis	7	5,2%	Therrissa [sic!]	6	4,4%
7	Joseph	6	4,4%	Gertrude	5	3,7%
8	Peter	6	4,4%	Barbara	3	2,2%
9	John Peter	4	3,0%	Caroline	3	2,2%
10	Adam	3	2,2%	Christina	3	2,2%
11	Conrad	3	2,2%	Margaret	3	2,2%
12	Paul	3	2,2%	Sophia	3	2,2%
13	Theodore	3	2,2%			
14	William	3	2,2%			

The 95 first names of children born in Germany are divided into 28 different boys' names and 15 different girls' names. As with their parents, the most common girl's name is *Mary* and the most common boy's name is *John*. Since the number and variety of children's names is smaller than that of their parents, Table 5 shows the most common girls' and boys' names of emigrant children with a frequency of 2 or more.

The 195 girls born in America have 46 different first names, while the 194 boys have 43 different first names. For both sexes, there is again a clear concentration of names.

Table 5: Names of children born in Germany

No.	First names boys	Quantity	%	First names girls	Quantity	%
1	John	10	16,9%	Mary	11	30,6%
2	Peter	7	11,9%	Catherine	7	19,4%
3	Michael	6	10,2%	Anna	4	11,1%
4	Jacob	4	6,8%	Elizabeth	2	5,6%
5	Joseph	4	6,8%	Marie	2	5,6%
6	Anthony	3	5,1%			
7	Adam	2	3,4%			
8	John Peter	2	3,4%			
9	William	2	3,4%			

Table 6: Names of children born in Westphalia, MA

No.	First names boys	Quantity	%	First names girls	Quantity	%
1	John	38	19,6%	Mary	37	19,0%
2	Joseph	26	13,4%	Catherine	32	16,4%
3	Peter	22	11,3%	Elizabeth	24	12,3%
4	Anthony	19	9,8%	Therrissa	10	5,1%
5	Michael	12	6,2%	Anna	8	4,1%
6	William	8	4,1%	Gertrude	7	3,6%
7	Nickolas	7	3,6%	Margret	6	3,1%
8	Bernard	5	2,6%	Caroline	5	2,6%
9	Conrad(s)	4	2,1%	Lana	5	2,6%
10	Mathias	4	2,1%	Anna Mary	4	2,1%
11	Charles	3	1,5%	Hel(l)s	4	2,1%
12	Lorenzo	3	1,5%	Mary Ann	4	2,1%
13	Theodore	3	1,5%	Rosina	4	2,1%
14				Agatha	3	1,5%
15				Anna Marie	3	1,5%
16				Barbara	3	1,5%

A comparison of the first names surveyed between the parents' and children's generations shows that the first names are very consistent. *John* and *Mary* are the most common first names for both fathers and mothers, as well as for German-born and American-born sons and daughters. In the small community of German emigrants in Westphalia, MA, more than one in five women are named *Mary* (21.0%) and more than one in six men are named *John* (18.0%). A comparison with the distribution of these names in the USA shows that *John* and *Mary* also topped the charts for American first names in the 1880s. However, "only" 7.6% of boys born in a birth cohort there were named *John* and "only" 6.5% of girls were named *Mary*[19]. The group of German emigrants examined here thus shows a clear concentration on these names.

The other names given to children born in English-speaking countries are also largely found in the name pool of the parents' generation. A comparison of all the first names of the children born in America with the first names of their parents shows that of the 389 children, 372 (95.6%) received a first name already given to their parents. Only 17 children (4.4%) were given a name that was not a first name in their parents' generation. These are the six girls' names *Amelia*, *Josephine*, *Julia*, *Laura*, *Louisa*, *Rosea* (*Rosina*?), and the eight boys' names *Andrew*, *Constantine*, *Edward*, *Hobert* (*Robert*?), *Lorenzo*, *Queremus* (*Quirinus*?), *Stephen*, and *Termaine Furgeson* (*Germaine*?). All names are found with

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[19] See the official American names statistics from United States Government/Social Security, available at: https://www.ssa.gov/OACT/babynames/decades/names1880s.html (17.11.2025). Unfortunately, there are no comparable names statistics for Germany.

one record each, only the name *Stephen* was given to two boys born in America, the name *Lorenzo* to three children.

Even if these first names are not documented under the parents' names, there is a possibility for the majority of the names that they have a tradition in the respective family. This possibility is unlikely only for the name *Termaine Furgeson*, which is a first name in the family of the German emigrants Anthony and Catherine Clockner, with or without a spelling error (presumably *Germaine* and thus a reference to the German origin). He was preceded by six siblings named *Jacob, John, Margret, Catherine, Lawrence* and *Mary*. As the seventh child, he is given the first name *Termaine Furgeson*.

The naming of German emigrants in Westphalia, MA, seems to be limited to a very small and traditional pool of names. First names that were not already present in the parents' generation are rarely given – and if so, then only to the seventh child, after all siblings have been given traditional names. Thus, although first names are very quickly adapted to the new environment and anglicized, value is placed on a specific, small pool of names so that the first names of the parents, and thus of the emigrant generation, are passed on. Identical first names also indicate solidarity and belonging. The great constancy of the pool of first names suggests a kind of compensation strategy on the part of German emigrants: although first names are adapted to the English-speaking environment and anglicized very early, they are passed on all the more traditionally and only from a small pool of names.

6. First answers and research suggestions

Finally, I would like to summarize the results of my small studies and those of the research by Macha (1998) and Eichhoff (2001) in five points, in order to provide initial answers to the questions posed at the beginning and to stimulate further research:

1. The timing of the name change was different for first names and surnames. Therefore, they must also be considered as separate objects of study. First names were anglicized in the first generation of emigrants, often shortly after their arrival in America. (Macha 1998: 166) The arrival or first settlement in the new country thus represents a caesura, which is also indicated onymically: new land – new first name!

2. However, the first names are then strongly preserved, so that a pool of first names of the first emigrants is passed on to the next generation. The striking similarities between the first names of parents and children within the emigrant families indicate that traditions and affiliations are given a high status through subsequent naming. Multi-generational name studies could provide information on how long this small pool of names is passed on from generation to generation. Studies of names in other areas where German emigrants settled may reveal whether this preservation of first names was also common in other regions or was a peculiarity of the Germans in Westphalia, MA.

3. In contrast to first names, however, surnames were anglicized much more cautiously. Macha (1998: 166) suggests: "A change of the first name concerns the individual life story, whereas a change of the surname always means the concealment, the overriding of a supra-individual origin story" (Macha 1998: 166f.). Unlike the first name, which could at most be adopted by one ancestor and

passed on to another, the family name was passed on to all family members generation after generation. It thus symbolizes a sense of belonging to a family, a region, a nation that transcends space and time[20]. Since emigration to America already resulted in a spatial separation from the family of origin, the onymic separation from the family name of origin seems to have been avoided as long as possible. Both the emigrants' letters and the census records show that the first generation of emigrants largely retained their German surnames, at least in spelling (cf. Macha 1998: 166). Where changes are found, they are due to the linguistic structure of the German names. Names with umlauts, with <ß> or with <sch> are anglicized particularly early. In addition, names such as *Schmidt* or *Müller*, which have phonetic, written and semantic equivalents in English, such as *Smith* and *Miller*, are anglicized particularly quickly.

4. Most surnames are anglicized only in the 2nd and 3rd generation (cf. Eichhoff 1990: 266), i.e. several decades after the emigration of the parents or grandparents. As a linguistic strategy, the spelling of the names is then most frequently modified, so that here too numerous different types of anglicization can be identified (cf. Eichhoff 2001: 250; 254-263). This finding can also be explained by the historical context. Most of the German emigrant names studied so far date from a time "when people were identified more by the sound of their names and less by their spelling," as Eichhoff (2001: 256) puts it. The reason for this is that in everyday life names were more often spoken than written, and for a long time there were no fixed spellings for names. It was not until the end of the 19th century, with the introduction of registry offices, that a binding spelling of first names and surnames became established. Since most Germans emigrated to America in the course of the 19th century, it can be assumed that the "correct" sound of the surname was still more important than the "correct" spelling. (cf. Eichhoff 2001: 247; 256) This is also indicated by an American custom that was used to track land ownership. Since every land purchase had to be officially registered, but in the documents the German surnames "appear in all possible forms, either perfectly German or completely Americanized, or somewhere in between" (Eichhoff 1996: 24), the American authorities proceeded as follows: They "solved the problem by establishing the principle of idem sonans, i. e., if different spellings of a name 'sounded the same,' a claim to an unbroken line of ownership was recognized" (Eichhoff 1996: 24).

5. This observation requires a comparison with the surnames of later emigrants. This is because surnames that were anglicized during the First and Second World Wars were presumably changed using other strategies to avoid any connection to the original German name. Initial evidence for this can be found in a political science study by Fouka (2019), who used quantitative methods to demonstrate an increased number of German name changes in America during World War I. Qualitative evidence for this type of name change can be found in Hammer (1965: 33). Using the example of the *Klein* family, which emigrated to America in the nineteenth century, he shows that the first generation retained the German

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[20] Cf. also Eichhoff (2001: 244) and Nübling (2021: 18f.), who refers to the "perceived affiliation of the surname to the biological heritage (the origin and meaning of this name is perceived by many as a hereditary trait or a body part that one cannot get rid of)".

spelling of the surname *Klein*. The second generation already used an anglicized spelling: *Kline* and also *Cline*. In the third generation the family changed names again. One part of the family was now called *Small*, another *Little*, and another *Short*. This third generation lived at the time of the First World War and used with the names *Small*, *Little* and *Short* completely Anglicized surnames, which had no connection to the original German name (cf. Helbig 1988: 11).

6. The example of the *Klein* family shows not only that different generations adopted different naming strategies, but also that even within a single generation different family members chose different surnames (for further examples see Macha 1998: 169 and Eichhoff 2001: 266f.). A purely linguistic approach can therefore only provide limited information about the name changes at that time. The example of the *Klein* family shows once again how important it is to take a cultural-linguistic approach that includes more than just linguistic material. This is the only way to answer the question under which conditions which persons changed which names.

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