The Simultaneity of Feeling German and Being American: Analyzing 150 Years of Private Migrant Correspondence

Abstract:

Analyzing the long-term dynamics of migrant integration is a significant challenge for researchers. This paper traces how "ordinary" German-speaking migrants in the US expressed their sense of participation and belonging throughout the 19th and early 20th centuries in the letters they wrote to their families "back home". We analyze a large collection of migrant letters written by German-speaking immigrants in the US between 1830 and 1970 and combine this new data with methods of computerized text analysis. The investigation shows how migrants continuously make and re-make identities within and across their heterogeneous migrant "groups". Our paper highlights the strong incentives for social and cultural integration in the absence of restrictive host state policies. We also show that political events and crises affecting both the country of origin and the destination country act as a catalyst in redefining, at least temporarily, parts of the migrant identities in relation to both the sending and host states.

1. Introduction[1]

Transnationalism occupies a central place in today's study of migration. Green and Waldinger have recently pointed to several dimensions missing from this research: on the one hand, the long-term patterns of the transnational experience are insufficiently understood, and, on the other hand, too little is known for example with regard to the sending and receiving states and shifts in international relations which affect transnational activities (2007: 1,3). In this paper, we take up this call and do not take the stability, intensity, and meaning of migrants' cross-border activities for granted but instead turn them into the central object of inquiry. The article thus brings a long-term perspective to the recent debates on the conditions and political implications of contemporary forms of transnationalism (Chaudhary 2017, Grzymala-Kazlowska and Phillimore 2018, Guarnizo et al. 2017, Meissner and Vertovec 2015, Ryan and Mulholland 2015, Waldinger 2008). At the center of our analysis of 150 years of correspondence between German-speaking migrants in the US and their relatives "back home" are the yet underexplored dimensions of continuity and change in both the context and practices of transnationalism.

We analyze a large corpus of migrant letters that provides insights into the evolution of the identities of "ordinary" migrants and their ways of engaging with the places they came from over a long period of time. Drawing on more than 3,300 letters sent by German-speaking migrants[2] in the US between 1830 and 1970, we argue that how migrants continuously make and re-make identities within and across their heterogeneous migrant "groups". Significant international events, such as wars, are a major catalyst in redefining parts of the migrant identities in relation to both the sending and host states. Our main contributions to the ongoing debates about transnationalism and integration are twofold: the longitudinal nature of our research and the novel methodological approach to a historical primary source.

2. Theoretical and Empirical Perspectives

Ever since the concept of transnationalism came to prominence in the study of migration and the social sciences more general, a debate about how "new" this concept and its corresponding empirical reality are, has accompanied its use. Some sociologists and political scientists have argued for the distinctiveness of the cross-border movements of ideas, norms, practices and goods in the late 20th and 21st centuries (Levitt 2001, Portes 1997), thereby paving the way, for example, for more detailed work on political participation from afar (Boccagni et al. 2016). However, historians have illustrated the existence of equivalent patterns of communication, various types of exchanges, and return migration well before the invention of the term "transnationalism" (Cinel 1991, Lucassen and Lucassen 2009, Manz 2014, Ramirez 1991, Wyman 1993). Nevertheless, these historical approaches and related arguments by migration scholars like Foner (2005) and Morawska (2001) have not led to an overhaul of the way in which migration histories tend to be written. The argument that technological change, related to the frequency and modes of communication, makes transnationalism a distinctly novel phenomenon

has proven difficult to situate in a particular temporal context, thereby suggesting sequences of gradual change or reinforcement of existing patterns rather than an abrupt change at a certain moment in time. In a recent collaboration between sociologists and historians, Green and Waldinger demonstrate that "the pattern of historical change is far more complicated than the now/then contrasts that have thus far preoccupied scholarly discussions" (2016: 3). The longitudinal historical data at the heart of this paper makes a step in the direction of unpacking these dynamics. It provides a basis for the empirical assessment of the (in-)stability of collective identities from the perspective of the individual migrants who, over time, experienced both open and more restrictive policy regimes in the US.

Green and Waldinger aptly refer to migrants as people who "are simultaneously immigrants *and* emigrants" (2016: 17). Their diachronic perspective questions the newness of this simultaneous belonging which a body of literature claims with reference to the challenges of integration in today's context of a new societal "superdiversification" (Grzymala-Kazlowska and Phillimore 2018). Those who emphasize that current transnationalism is distinct also underline that demographic changes due to migration are calling prevailing concepts of society and nation into question (Meissner and Vertovec 2015, Urry 2000). Despite adding nuance to the concept of "integration", a diachronic perspective emphasizes, however, that these dynamics of lived transnationalism do not exclusively apply to contemporary societies. Instead, thinking about integration beyond the paradigm of adaptation should also guide analyses of historical migration to gain a better understanding of how forms of "super-diversity" have evolved over time. Diversity and fluidity have been part of historical migration experiences, as we argue throughout this article. Indeed, local case studies, for instance on the migrant population in Wisconsin, have shown that migrants only very rarely integrated into a pre-existing majority community (Ostergren 1998). Lived transnationalism, as our analysis of the letters shows, was an important

part of the everyday reality of a migrant's life from the moment of his or her arrival in the US irrespective of the time period.

Levitt and Glick Schiller posited that "assimilation and enduring transnational ties are neither incompatible nor binary opposites" and that the migrant experience is "a kind of gauge which, while anchored, pivots between a new land and a transnational incorporation" with the median point being simultaneity of connection (2004: 1011). Migrant networks in the host country, for example, have been shown to correlate with the preservation of cultural identities, a sense of belonging, and political engagement with the home country (Ahmadov and Sasse 2015, Burgess 2012, Careja and Emmenegger 2012, Guarnizo et al. 2003, Soysal 1997, van Tubergen et al. 2004). The extent to which a host society enables inclusion and participation also shapes migrant identities and political preferences, including voting behavior in homeland elections (Ahmadov and Sasse 2016, Burgess 2014, Doyle and Fidrmuc 2004, Escobar et al. 2014, Lafleur and Sánchez-Domínguez 2014, Leal et al. 2012). A broader set of structures and expectations in the destination contexts needs to be included in the analysis, something that Nowicka and Šerbedžija have labeled "the migration script" (2016). Overall, we still know too little about the component parts of these social, cultural, and political identities and the dynamics of identity change over time. The contribution of this article lies here: a longitudinal analysis widens the time horizon and acts as a check on how trends identified for shorter time periods evolve over time. Such an analysis may confirm and refine identified patterns rather than overhaul them.

Contrary to the political philosophy debate about the significance of national and group boundaries (see, for example, the cosmopolitan and communitarian arguments, as exemplified by Carens (2013) and Miller (2016)), a growing body of ethnographic research in sociology, anthropology and political science has provided ample empirical evidence about the diversity *within* migrant groups with regard to their socio-economic characteristics and their political

attitudes and strategies of managing the migration process (Glick Schiller and Çağlar 2009, Wimmer and Glick Schiller 2002). This research, mostly based on detailed case studies, tries to avoid the fallacies of "methodological nationalism" (Beck and Grande 2010, Wimmer and Glick Schiller 2002) that equates migrants with representatives of a national group. In the attempt to frontload individual experiences and avoid equating migrants with national groups, the pendulum has arguably swung too far, neglecting the fact that a group – though not necessarily defined by ethnic or territorial origin – provides an important reference-point in processes of self-identification. Our research starts from the experience of individual migrants, thereby allowing for within-group diversity to show up, while also picking up the migrants' own reflections about themselves as an identity group in the US and in relation to the homeland.

Scholarship oscillates between the terms "assimilation" (Alba and Nee 2003, Gordon 1964, Morawska 2003, Portes and De Wind 2004), "integration" (e.g. Levitt and Glick Schiller 2004), and "incorporation" (Freeman 2004) when describing the relationship between immigrants and their host societies. We refer to "integration" in this article, but our key concern is not a particular term but rather the in-built linearity and exclusivity shared by the various concepts. We conceptualize integration as having four latent dimensions and aim to flesh out two of them in this article. We distinguish between *social* integration, defined as the degree to which migrants interact with individuals from other groups (mostly defined in ethnic or linguistic terms by the migrants themselves and by the host state), *economic* integration, defined as the active involvement in the host society's economic sphere, *political* integration, defined as the participation in and the feeling of being affected by the politics in their country of residence, and *cultural* integration, defined as the process of actively endorsing the perceived norms of the host society (which, in turn, continuously evolve).

Our approach is informed by Levitt and Glick Schiller who distinguish between "ways of being" and "ways of belonging". "Ways of being" refer to "the actual social relations and practices that individuals engage in rather than to the identities associated with their actions. (…). 'Ways of belonging' refer to practices that signal or enact an identity which demonstrates a conscious connection to a particular group." (2004: 1010). We suggest that the categories *social* and *economic* integration best capture "ways of being", while our categories *political* and *cultural* integration link to "ways of belonging". In order to expand our understanding of the interactions between "ways of being" and "ways of belonging", we have chosen to empirically explore the dimensions of *social* and *cultural* integration. Notably, research on socio-cultural integration has lagged behind that on socio-economic and political integration (Ersanilli and Koopmans 2011, Heath and Cheung 2007).

Based on historical research on migration, the conceptualization by Levitt and Glick Schiller presented above and the recent scholarship on the fluidity of "integration", we hypothesize that the migrants' perception of integration along these dimensions is in permanent motion, shifting between feelings of being more or less integrated. Integration is therefore a non-linear process and a relational concept and not one where migrants "discard one political identity for another" (Waldinger and Feliciano 2004: 8-9). We therefore hypothesize that the process of integration into the host society coexists with integration in the society of origin. In other words, a migrant's reality is one of lived transnationalism and layered integration. Moreover, everyday transnationalism is not merely the result of physical interactions or travel to the home society. It also takes place through the interaction with the diversity of immigration in the host society.

3. Research Design

The emigration of German-speakers to the US was rooted in economic and, to a lesser extent, political motivations (Grams 2013, Helbich 1988, Roeber 1997, Taylor 1971). Before 1830, German-speakers moved primarily to regions in the vicinity of "Germany", notably across East-Central Europe (Oltmer 2010). Throughout the 19th century, German-speaking migration expanded across the Atlantic. It quickly grew into mass chain migration and accounted for about a quarter of all immigrants in the US around the turn of the century (Immigration Commission and Dillingham 1911). "German" culture in the form of settlements, schools, associations and churches was very visible in public life (Bergquist 1984: 9, Hawgood 1940, Kazal 2004). The resulting German-speaking networks remained distinctive from those of other migrant groups and provided practical and emotional support to migrants (Krawatzek and Sasse 2018b). The way networks were embedded in the place of residence changed over time as did its functions (Ryan and Mulholland 2015).

However, like many other Europeans, German-speakers did not have a clear sense of national identity for most of the 19th century (Berger 1997, Dann 1996). They tended to identify with their local or regional places of origin. "Deutsch-Amerika" included migrants from Austria, Luxembourg, Alsace, as well as Romanian and Russian Germans and Swiss (Helbich 1988: 48). The process of emigration and transnational communication as well as a shared interest in preserving the German language spurred a sense of "Germanness" (Kazal 2004: 40). Compared to other groups, and despite their extensive ethnically defined infrastructure, the Germans are generally presented as one of the most quickly assimilated groups in the US (Krawatzek and Sasse 2018). Thus, German migration into the US represents a "hard" case to test transnational identities. Our analysis finds a strong sense of transnational belonging despite (or because of) various forms of integration. In turn, less quickly assimilated migrants can thus be expected to exhibit even stronger transnational identities.

Our research uses a large collection of letters sent by German migrants from the US (*Auswandererbriefe*).[3] Beyond commented editions of noteworthy letters (Helbich 1988, Helbich et al. 1988, Kamphoefner et al. 1991, Kamphoefner and Helbich 2006), the corpus our research is based on, has not yet been analyzed in its entirety. The *Forschungsbibliothek Gotha* (Germany) hosts the letter collection[4], mostly in hard copy, only partially transcribed and often heavily annotated. This poses serious challenges to a systematic use of the collection. We had to digitize the individual pages, undertake the optical character recognition (OCR), correct irregularities in the transcription and the hand-written annotations through a specifically designed software tool, supplemented by manual checks, before being able to transfer the letters into a database and add available metadata for individual letters. The database for this article includes about 3,300 of the 8,000 letters from the collection.

At least 250 million letters were sent to Germany from the US between 1820 and 1914, of which about 100 million were private and the rest business mail (Helbich 1987: 1-2). Until World War I, the letters rarely constituted a private exchange between two individuals but were instead, family letters. Similarly, family members, friends, and whole village communities widely shared the letters on the receiving end. This practice further underlines the significance senders and recipients attached to the letters (Serra 2009: 138) and calls for greater scholarly attention to be paid to this type of primary source.

However, migrant letters – like any other source – come with their own methodological limitations. No historical letter collection is the result of a truly random selection process. It is difficult to establish how the archived letters were selected into the sample, most likely through a combination of chance, censorship, family history, and the perceived historical value of the letters. Moreover, it is not always possible to acquire reliable background information on the

migrants – often their professions or socio-economic status can only be derived from their own writings.

Given these limitations, we are cautious with generalizations about the migrant population at large based on the sample of letters. Nevertheless, the collection at our disposal stands out in terms of its size and the amount of detail it offers. Besides reports about the latest harvest and food prices, family quarrels, or the state of an individual's health, they contain a wealth of untold experiences of immigration and integration. The analysis of historical migrant letters fits the methodological underpinnings of "life story research" in migration studies (e.g. (Harrison 2009).

Figure 1: Letters sent per year about here

The temporal and geographical coverage of our corpus spans the whole period of German emigration and includes all of the German-speaking provinces of Europe and all of the German-speaking concentrations in the US.[5] Starting with German migration to the US at the beginning of the 19th century, the number of letters rises constantly and peaks in the 1860s. The frequency remains high throughout the second half of the 19th century and, after a drop in the period prior to World War I, it increases again slightly in the interwar period (Figure 1). Though not strictly speaking randomly selected, the collection exhibits no obvious biases and matches the overall German emigration patterns. The data covers periods of open immigration with light touch regulation by the American state, easy access to citizenship and a wide array of migrant organizations in the 19th century as well as periods of increasingly restrictive immigration policies in the early 20th century and explicitly anti-German rhetoric during World War I.[6]

Once the migrants had arrived in the US, a large majority of them maintained contact with their families and friends "back home" for about six years. After that, the frequency of letters

drops to a remarkably lower level which then remains constant for a long time. In several cases we see children and grandchildren continuing the letter exchanges, which explains the overall timespan.

Figure 2: Total letters sent yearly after first letter about here

In our empirical strategy for understanding patterns of integration and identities, as expressed in the letters, we have opted for fine-grained techniques of text analysis commonly used in corpus linguistics and lexicometry.[7] This approach privileges localized interpretations and can therefore pay justice to the often idiosyncratic language use across the letters written by, at least initially, inexperienced writers. The methods used center on the use of specific key terms and determines the statistically relevant correlation with neighboring terms. Such so-called collocations extract the more than random use of one term in combination with another particular term given the overall number of terms in the corpus. There are different methods for computing collocations, the most frequently utilized ones being the log likelihood ratio statistic and the Pearson's χ^2 statistic (Church and Mercer 1993: 20). Given the sparsity of our term-document matrix, i.e. the existence of a large number of unique terms across the total number of documents, we worked with the likelihood ratios, as these are more appropriate for rare "events" than the assumption of normality (Dunning 1993). The computed likelihood ration statistics (G2) indicates how much more likely a particular term occurs jointly with another one given its base rate of occurrence across the letter collection.[8]

Our iterative preparatory work during the coding of the letter collection enabled us to determine the particular keywords to be included in our analysis and determine their most significant collocations.[9] These terms stand out as carrying meaning for the migrants' sense of

integration. The second term from the collocation pairs was used as the search tool to extract from the whole corpus the relevant text excerpts in their particular context. Thus, once we had extracted the relevant collocations, for example HIESIGE AMERIKANER[10], we delved deeper into the argumentative embedding of these terms by studying what is referred to in corpus linguistic research as "Key Words in Context". From this part of the analysis, we have drawn patterns according to the social and cultural dimensions of integration and the respective migration waves represented in our corpus. Specific letters illustrating these patterns are referenced.

Our expectation is not that our methodological approach will generate radically different findings compared to those arrived at by historians through an in-depth analysis of a small sub-section of letters or other historical sources. Similarly, we do not expect to invalidate recent social science analysis on transnationalism and integration. We rather expect to confirm or add to both strands of research and, above all, gain greater confidence in the temporal parameters of the identified patterns of continuity or change over a longer period than both historical and social science research typically captures.

4. Social integration: interaction with individuals from other groups

5.1 1800-1870: Speaking English but a persistent German "Art und Weise" (way of life)

Collocations centered on THE GERMANS, A GERMAN, MANY GERMANS and GERMANS HERE ("hiesigen Deutschen") reflect awareness of the presence of a sizeable group but also a sense of being different from both the host society and the Germans left behind in Europe. Ample qualifications of AMERIKANER (American/s) point to both friendly interactions with Americans interested in talking to Germans (E007_002) and listening to German music (G007_013) but also

to the fact that they mingled with Germans because "Americans" did not invite them (H008_068).[11] Thus, migrants distinguished between a broader range of more superficial social contacts or business links (B121_047) and the experience of deeper trust and friendship in German circles.

Notwithstanding the importance of German networks in the US, migrants interacted with people from beyond that circle. Terms collocating with ENGLISH highlight some of the interactions that occurred between different social groups in the early 19th century. German-speaking migrants often considered other English-speaking migrants as being "the Americans". Most agreed that learning English was crucial, though not always easy. Those who successfully overcame the language barrier underlined their frequent interaction with individuals of other groups and conveyed the extent to which they felt socially integrated also amongst non-German speakers. Contrary to prevailing historical scholarship, it seems that migrants in this early phase made significant efforts to quickly learn English, even though one might have expected the individuals in our sample to have had a greater disposition towards not doing this, given their overall numbers, settlement patterns, and regular contact with their home societies.

Table 1: Main collocations with term amerik* about here

Table 2: Main collocations with term deuts* about here

Table 3: Main collocations with the term englisch* about here

Learning English could only happen in a context of frequent, if not daily, interaction with non-German speakers. The migrants' everyday transnationalism also played out in their local communities: being bi- or multi-lingual proved helpful, and many letter writers emphasized that if one failed to learn the new language(s) of daily communication, migration could turn into an experience of isolation, underlining the "meaningful contact" beyond one's own migrant

community (Valentine 2008). During the early 19th century large parts of the US were sparsely populated, many migrants lived far apart, complaining for example that one "has no neighbors within half an hour" (T006_010). In those cases, learning at least rudimentary English was vital to facilitate contact with the geographically distant neighbors.

In addition to English, some migrants learned other languages; French, Italian or Spanish were considered vital (A102_006) and some mentioned an even wider array of languages (T005_017). Living in Santa Fé, one migrant emphasized how proud he was to have quickly learned English and Spanish (B107_004), and others reported with amazement about the language proficiency of their fellow Germans (W008_002). This diversity of language use could only emerge through social interactions with a diverse set of people. Learning a language, in turn, enabled greater spatial and occupational mobility. Those who wrote about how quickly they learned English also mentioned their close contacts with other migrant communities (B102_002). Not without pride, migrants compared themselves to their family members and acquaintances in Europe who only spoke one language (V002_009). Even in places with dense German-speaking communities, such as New York, migrants acknowledged that they needed to quickly learn English to avoid isolation (T005_001, T005_028), and some described their cosmopolitan lifestyle (K002_003). The question "integration into what", as these examples highlight, was a particularly pertinent issue for the first generation of German-speaking migrants in the US. The perception of a need to engage with the "majority community" points to important similarities between historical and contemporary experiences of transnationalism.

While family planning among the first generation of German migrants concentrated on fellow German-speakers from the homelands and from within the new German-speaking migrant circles in the US, the children of German-speaking migrants often married migrants from other European countries. In those cases, at least some knowledge of English was an obvious

prerequisite (A105_005). In the letters, such close contact with migrants from other communities was not considered unusual. Parents readily acknowledged that English had become the main language for their children (B111_007, B023_017) and proudly reported about their progress in learning English (E007_026). Bilingual school education was common throughout the 19th century (B110_006).

Somewhat counterintuitively, contacts with fellow German-speakers could further facilitate learning English and social integration. German migrants wrote about relying on other Germans to learn how to speak and write in English (B110_006). Moreover, German migrant organizations were sometimes administered in English (H010_003).

However, the collocation ENGLISCH SPRACHE also conveys a sense of persisting distance, fractions and prejudice among the different migrant groups. For instance, it was common to have separate church services, for example within the Catholic Church (T006_005). Services took place in English, Irish, French or German, although the Latin language used during the Eucharist loosely held the linguistically diverse Catholic community together (T006_003). However, even in densely German-speaking populated Illinois, newly arrived migrants spoke of their wish to learn English to participate in English-language services (A103_003). Those who did not speak English frequently expressed embarrassment (G006_005) and loneliness (S004_001).

While learning English opened the door for social interaction and mobility, by itself this process was not indicative of German-Americans having embraced or even absorbed "American" culture. Learning the language and social integration were primarily presented as pragmatic necessities, which did not call into question one's "Germanness". One migrant summed up this feeling by writing, that Germans in America spoke English, but that the "deutsche Art und Sitte" (German ways and tradition) lived on (K002_004).

5.2 1871-1913: Interacting in English but longing to see Germany

The collocations centered on GERMAN confirm the continued use of the German language but also a growing, more conscious emphasis on wanting to preserve the German language (H014_011), in parts a reaction to having fewer opportunities to speak German in public in this period. Some letter writers describe this as being "trampled under foot" (B109_009). The collocation VIELE DEUTSCHE (many Germans) is matched by the opposite pair WENIGE DEUTSCHE (few Germans). The letters thus document the continued concentration of German settlements, but they also signal that living in such settlements is no longer the norm. They comment on their visits to such areas to participate in social events, practice their language and attend church services (W015_063). Thus, the field of social interaction widened significantly already before World War I – commonly World War I is presented as the turning point in this regard (Kazal 2004). This process goes hand in hand with a more conscious self-reflection upon wanting to maintain links to other German-speakers and German organizations.

Compared to the first phase, collocations tapping into social interactions based on AMERIK* are less frequent. The collocations now signal the increased mobility of the migrants in the US and therefore a deeper understanding of the country. Migrants remain generally optimistic, though uncertainty about the future is a recognizable theme, for example captured by AMERIKANISCHE VERHÄLTNISSE (American conditions) (H017_004). Some widely celebrated American public holidays are singled out as the events bringing together Americans and all other nationalities (F009_025).

Collocations relating to ENGLISH exhibit some continuity between the first and the second migration wave. Learning English still features as an important precondition for social integration, and many letter writers acknowledged their will and effort to do so. ENGLISCH SPRECHEN remains important across this second wave. Either the migrants wrote about their own

progress or the lack thereof – both are considered equally noteworthy. Compared to the first wave, the verb SPRECHEN (to speak) is more important in association with ENGLISH than the noun SPRACHE (language), which points to a gradual shift towards a more active and widespread language practice in daily life.

Table 4: Main collocations with term deuts* about here

Table 5: Main collocations with term englis* about here

Learning to speak English, migrants reported, was much easier if the contact to fellow German-speakers was reduced (B100_029). The satisfaction with which one migrant linked his English language knowledge to having become a real "Englishman" after 10 years was no exception (G009_036). During this second migration wave, children generally learned to speak English quickly and families increasingly felt that they had to make an effort to maintain German as the language spoken at home (S022_001, W015_063). It is reported, as a matter of fact rather than as a surprising event, that the children no longer necessarily married a person of German origin (G002_003). Moreover, children were reportedly "Americanized" and spoke primarily English once they had grown up (G004_014).

In order to improve their English, young recently arrived migrants also pro-actively changed employers and regions frequently (G009_011). In due course, these migrants confirmed that they interacted primarily with people who did *not* speak German (G009_014, H001_002, S008_001) and reported satisfactory progress in learning English (G009_037, H001_008). English had become the generally accepted primary language in the workplace, and those who could not speak the language admitted that they felt "like children" (P006_004).

In many regions across the US, English language knowledge also became necessary for interactions beyond the workplace, for example to communicate with doctors (S008_004) or because everyone around spoke English (F009_059) – an insight into changing settlement

patterns which are normally dated later. Bi- or multilingual individuals provided an important bridge, able to navigate between the different social and economic worlds (H021_034). Many America neighborhoods remained multilingual throughout this second phase (T005_052), and people spoke different languages in their daily life (D004_003, H001_002). Even in areas densely populated by German-speaking migrants, such as Philadelphia or Chicago (H017_002)[12], Germans did not necessarily remain amongst themselves. Expressing a sense of social integration into the US, however, did not mean that emotional and cultural ties to those left behind in the homelands were cut (S015_006).

In contrast to the first wave, migrants now reported with satisfaction that newly arrived migrants were astonished about how well they still spoke German (H021_045). Thus, the general expectation now centered on being able to function in English rather than retaining proficiency in German. For the majority of German-speaking migrants who arrived without any knowledge of English the network of fellow Germans continued to provide vital help (H017_001). However, the letters also warned that in times of economic turmoil, those networks could falter. Moreover, migrants wrote about the difficulty in finding work and interacting with others without knowledge of English (D005_002). The church remained a significant social and cultural place for many migrants, in particular for the newly arrived and those who failed to learn English. Parts of the sermons and the confession continued to be in German, even in some rural areas without a sizeable German population, such as Kentucky (A100_022).

It is difficult to assess what degree of linguistic nuances migrants understood. Misunderstandings between migrants who spoke in English to each other, without anyone completely mastering the language, were deemed newsworthy by the letter writers (W003_001). Despite the considerable and underappreciated extent of cross-cultural contact, underlined by the letters, these social interactions also embodied the potential for conflict.

English had become an increasingly important bridge within the growing number of ethnically mixed households. In 1895, a Franco-German couple of 55 years was said to only speak English with one another, although their linguistic capacities were considered "terrible" [schauderhaft] (G009_130). But for many, English had turned into the everyday language. The collocation ENGLISCH SPRECHEN (to speak English) conveys that even members of originally German-speaking families, now often spoke English to each other. Some considered speaking German as "too stiff" (H007_015). Depending on the social context, particularly in rural areas, the choice to speak English seemed "natural" (H014_012, Decatur (AL)).

The collocations GUT ENGLISCH (good English) or even BESSER ENGLISCH (better English) indicate how migrants were increasingly conscious of their progress in English. In particular children who went to "English school" in areas where bilingual education was not on offer, were frequently said to only write in English. Even some first generation migrants stated that their English had become better than their German. Indeed, those who arrived in America with only rudimentary primary education often found that classes in English taken in the evenings led to their English being stronger than their native German. This combination of obtaining an education and host society language acquisition is a critical feature underpinning the migrants' perceived social integration.

5.3 1914-1939: Perfect English but preferring the German Hymn Book

During the interwar period, the collocation ENGLISCHE SPRACHE (English language) by and large disappeared in the corpus. English turned into the normal language of communication. The most frequent collocation even highlights that migrants spoke or judged themselves or others by whether they spoke PERFEKT ENGLISCH (perfect English) (B119_011, B119_023, B119_026). A shift in the occupational structure towards the services sector suggests that "perfect English"

became a necessity at work. At the same time, some letter writers admit that "pure English" was not very frequent (K025_001). Their own knowledge of English was contrasted with the weak knowledge of English observed among some of the other migrant "groups" around them (D004_008).

However, even among these second- or even third-generation migrants, some emphasized their anger about the fact that fewer church services were held in German (H023_029). Other terms collocating with ENGLISCH point to an increasing politicization. The interaction and attitudes towards groups other than the English-speaking communities are discussed in more detail. Although this trend might reflect the increasing inflow and greater mobility of migrants, the comparison with earlier periods strongly suggests that the spread of more narrowly defined national identities in reaction to a perceived "other" also infiltrated German-America.

Table 6: Main collocations with term englis* about here

Table 7: Main collocations around terms relating to other groups about here

Social interaction got manifestly more diverse in this period, now stretching beyond migrants from Europe. In large cities, one could meet migrants of Chinese or Japanese origin. The letters illustrate local encounters and "meaningful contact" (Valentine 2008) with an even more diverse migrant population, for instance at school, university or in the workplace. The fact that some of these migrants spoke German caused astonishment (D004_008). When a migrant writes with fascination about a young woman of "German-Spanish-French descent" (K025_003), it becomes apparent that by the interwar period even the perceived fit of national categories had become tenuous. Developments in the homeland reinforced this process. In particular the frequent shifts of who controlled German-speaking regions, meant that many migrants considered themselves as having multiple origins (D002_052). Thus, our analysis suggests that while in the

19th century the German-speaking migrants were not yet part of a clearly defined nation "at home", by the early 20th century their social integration in the US meant that they were no longer part of such a definition due to inter-ethnic contacts and the social and political context in the host society.

5.4 1940-1970: German-America dissolves as social practice

The last wave covered by the letters (significantly fewer letters compared to the previous waves) exhibits a striking disappearance of discussions about the English language as a marker of social integration. The term "English" had become politicized and was used as a way to discredit American politics, seen as depending on "the English". In the letters of this period, writers prominently reaffirmed their solidarity with Germany when complaining about English propaganda and strategic calculations during and after World War II.

We can interpret this absence of references to mastering the language as a measure of self-perceived and actual social and cultural integration. Even those German-Americans who maintained contact with friends and family members in Europe underlined that German-speaking networks in America no longer played a significant role for their social life but that such networks needed to be maintained with great effort (Krawatzek and Sasse 2018b). The collocations generated do not allow for meaningful extensions of the discussion about the earlier waves. Instead, the normality of mixed backgrounds took center stage: "My Husbands folks came from Denmark the same year my folks came from Germany and England so our children are quite a mixture. When our oldest daughter was a little girl she would say. she was a Yankee English Dane German" (M15_027).

The collocations referring to AMERICAN and GERMAN are best subsumed under "cultural integration" (see below). Generally, there was less discussion about these categories, and the

German language of the letter writers had become shaky or they had switched to English altogether. If they wrote in German, they tended to underline their "SCHLECHTES DEUTSCH" (bad German).

5. Cultural Integration: Endorsing the perceived norms of the host society

6.1 1800-1870: At home in two worlds

From the beginning of migration to the US, simultaneity of shared norms and standards in two separate, but interconnected worlds characterized the migrants' cultural integration. At times, the letters conveyed a sense of astonishment or admiration for the norms they encountered, thereby indirectly acknowledging both a different kind of socialization at home and an openness towards re-socialization in the host society (B121_038). While they frequently affirmed that they had found a new home country, approving of American habits and culture, German-speaking migrants underlined that they were still rooted in their places of origin. On the level of collocations the combinations of HEIMAT (homeland) or VATERLAND (fatherland) with temporal references such as ALT (old) and NEU (new) and emotive labels such as LIEBE (beloved), TEURE (dear) or SÜßE (sweet) captures this identification.

Table 8: Main collocations around Heimat & Vaterland about here

The ALTE HEIMAT (old homeland) was permanently present in the early migrants' imagination. They wrote about how frequently they thought about friends and family back home (B102_002, B023_013). Working and living in close proximity to other German-speaking migrants helped to maintain the emotional bonds with Germany, whilst also becoming a vehicle for participation in the US. The emotionally loaded term HEIMAT helped to emphasize how difficult it had been for migrants to leave in the first place (W006_030). Linkages through letters

and personal acquaintances stirred the desire to visit Germany (H018_003, H021_012, W006_029). However, references to ALTE HEIMAT also conveyed a sense of emotional distance (B103_008, G004_004). Writing critically about the "old homeland" the bad news available through the German-language press directly encouraged others to emigrate to the US (E006_001).

NEUE HEIMAT (new homeland) complements the discussions about ALTE HEIMAT. Once the US were elevated to the status of NEUE HEIMAT, migrants began to express a deeper emotional commitment to their host society (B103_008). The collocation NEUE HEIMAT also puts migration into a temporal perspective. It implied that migrants anticipated longer time horizons and projected themselves into an "American" future (B103_011, G004_004). Already shortly after their arrival in the US they were contemplating becoming American citizens (collocation AMERIKANISCHER BÜRGER, see for example S011_001). Moreover, migrants distinguished between their approval of norms and life in the US and a more sober assessment of American politics, as exemplified by the plea "not to judge the American people by its representatives in Washington" (H008_070). One migrant captured a typical turning-point: while acknowledging his emotional links to the ALTE HEIMAT he underlined that since he had become a father he felt more and more at home in the NEUE HEIMAT, thereby explicitly thinking in more long-term time horizons (B023_017).

Time already spent in the NEUE HEIMAT served as a reference point to underline the depth of cultural integration, even for those who emphasized the importance of their links to their place of origin (S004_001). The desire to stay in touch with friends and families was frequently acknowledged, in particular because life in the US was so remarkably different (T006_010). Migrants furthermore stated that the presence of family members made feeling at home in the US easier (W006_016), a direct reference to so-called "strong ties' enabling cultural integration.

The frequent references to LIEBE HEIMAT express the importance of emotional links migrants maintained with "beloved" family members and friends in Germany. They were the tangible and imaginary link across the Atlantic (B107_004, E006_002, G007_029, H008_103, K002_006, S011_001). Those who enquired about news from the LIEBE HEIMAT were clearly anchored in their region of origin and expressed their "Sehnsucht" (longing) for family and friends (H012_004). Moreover, the collocation LIEBE HEIMAT also implies difficulties in integrating into a new society the US (S003_015). Elaborating on HEIMAT, the migrants frequently mention the possibility of returning to their homeland (DEUTSCHLAND ZURÜCK/ZURÜCKKEHREN) at some point in the future or upon retirement (W006_001, W006_027, W006_035, F003_024).

The collocations further point the significance of charitable German organizations in the US (e.g. DEUTSCHE GESELLSCHAFT), the reliance on the many German newspapers in the US as a source of information about developments in the homeland, a multitude of German cultural events, church-based networks (DEUTSCHE LUTHERISCHE), German settlements (DEUTSCHE BEWOHNTE) and widespread opportunities to speak and read German (GELÄUFIG DEUTSCH, IN DEUTSCH, DEUTSCH SPRECHEN).

Table 9: Main collocations around deuts* about here

Collocations around AMERIK* highlight that the emphasis in the early letters was on describing the new and in many ways still foreign society and lifestyle to family and friends back home. Many expressed astonishment at the technological progress (F008_003), the opportunities (B110_006) but also the hard work Americans were willing to put up with (E007_001, K002_003, K002_005, K002_007). The collocations AMERIKANISCHEN VOLK (American people) contains generalizations, for the most part positive ones, about the perceived national character (H008_030). While many describe the Americans as honest and hard-working (K002_007), there

were also occasional complaints that one could not trust them (A103_010), a discrepancy that clearly reflects a range of different personal experiences right from the beginning.

6.2 1871-1913: At home in the US and aware of one's origins

Around 1900 the predominant collocations shifted. The German equivalents of "beloved" and "dear" lost in importance and instead terms such as "our", "one's own", and "my" were used in combination with HEIMAT. References to HEIMAT were less emotionally charged, in particular among those migrants who had arrived in the US during the first wave. Expressions of the simultaneity of belonging to two places at once decreased remarkably.

Table 10: Main collocations around Heimat & Vaterland about here

By the end of the 19th century, German-speaking migrants began to use ALTE in connection with HEIMAT to also refer to their movements within the US. For instance, one migrant mentioned a family that had moved back to the "alte Heimat" in Virginia (A104_004). Others wrote that they were once again in their "alte Heimat" in Versailles, Kentucky (H021_066), or Ohio (W015_060).

During this second wave a less pronounced emotional attachment to the homeland can be discerned. Some of the migrants who had been in the US for more than 20 years emphasized that the "alte Heimat" now primarily belonged to the past (A104_006), although they maintained contacts with the "old homeland". Implicitly commenting on their re-socialization, they acknowledged that they would feel lost in the places where they spent their youth (A104_009). German-Americans remained "curious" about news from Germany but with a vibrant German-American infrastructure, such news became less vital (V002_011). This tendency partly changes again with the onset of World War I (see below).

The wish to return to the "alte Heimat" in old age persisted (A104_011; S016_004, S019_048). Return visits occurred and served as a reminder of the ALTE HEIMAT which brought the cultural differences between German-Americans and Germans in Europe to the fore (D003_006). In this period, photographs also enabled "virtual" visits to one's place of origin (T004_006), underpinning an emotional depth which letters alone may have failed to sustain.

Acquaintances in the ALTE HEIMAT were clearly seen as the ones that were left behind. The letters illustrate that by the end of the 19th century brothers, sisters, parents and the extended family were no longer part of German-America (E001_003, D003_006). Indeed, as one letter writer put it, "this land is made to forget the old homeland almost entirely" (F009_048). For those born in the US, the links to the ALTE HEIMAT became more diffuse, and some underlined that Germany was "their fathers' home" (W015_049). Meanwhile, the letters regularly "updated" the notion of ALTE HEIMAT as they remained occasions for members of a family to gather and reactivate memories (H023_017).

Similar to the meaning of the collocation ALTE HEIMAT among the migrants of the first wave, these letters highlighted the persistence of strong emotional attachments. Newly arrived migrants expressed the hope to return to the ALTE HEIMAT, even if only for a short visit (W012_003). Others hoped that they would return as rich people after having worked in the US for some time (C001_004). In the words of one newly arrived migrant, "unsere wahre Heimat" (our true homeland) remained in Germany (F009_030). By the turn of the century, when the political influence of the German empire was expanding and industrialization was gathering pace, migrants also observed that people in Germany might not necessarily be worse off than in the US.

The collocation UNSERE HEIMAT is new at this level of significance when compared to previous periods. It captures the appropriation of the US as the center of one's life (A103_015, B114_001, B102_011), a sign of far-reaching cultural integration in the US. Feeling at home in

the US provided an additional impetus for migrants to engage with local customs, to learn English, or to learn how to read and write in the first place (H022_006).

Speaking about UNSERE HEIMAT also conveyed that migrants wanted to stay in the US and possibly move to more desirable cities or regions (S012_004). In this second phase, UNSERE HEIMAT could increasingly refer to a different place *within* the US rather than the initial move to the US (B102_007, H007_015, H013_010). Similar to the first period, references to NEUE HEIMAT introduced a temporal component. Migrants projected themselves into their American future and talked about their expectations, hopes and fears (A100_013), underlining that they felt part of the host society's cultural fabric (D002_026). Families back in Germany approved of the NEUE HEIMAT in America (B116_003). By referring to the US as the NEUE HEIMAT, German-Americans implicitly encouraged those left behind to follow them to the US; the term signaled that it was possible to integrate fairly quickly and enjoy a higher standard of living (G010_018).

Among the most significant collocations around "American" and "America" there is a striking emphasis on American citizenship (AMERIKANISCHE BURGER, AMERIKANISHER BIRGER). Many writers expressed their happiness about their naturalization (D002_016). Rational calculations about the usefulness of American citizenship (E003_008) are as prominent as the respect for American norms and values (V002_016) among the motivating factors. The principle of equality was particularly highlighted (S012_001). Naturalization was presented as an either-or-choice between the US on the one hand and, in the words of several letter writers, Prussia and the Kaiser on the other hand (S012_006, S012_010). However, many migrants seem to have endorsed this easily (G009_024).

Table 11: Main collocations around amerik* about here

6.3 1914-1939: Heimat - the place left behind

During the third wave of migration, the collocations around HEIMAT shift. Whereas the earlier periods saw a structure of [adjective/pronoun] + HEIMAT, the most significant collocations now follow the structure HEIMAT + [verb]. It is about an action vis-à-vis the homeland rather than a description or qualifier.

Table 12: Main collocations around Heimat & Vaterland about here

The combination of HEIMAT + [verb] is indicative of some nostalgia amongst German Americans. They write about having left the Heimat a long time ago (D002_062) but that this decision had been rewarded (B119_004). Leaving home is portrayed as a major decision that should not be taken without careful consideration (B119_013, B119_039). German music and other external stimuli remind migrants of their HEIMAT (B119_019), but the term is less emotionally charged than before.

In the context of an increasing cultural integration in the US, references to LIEBE HEIMAT and LIEBE VATERLAND (D002_063) increasingly appear to have a self-reassuring function, maintaining personal links across the Atlantic rather than depicting daily concerns. Writers estimated that after more than 60 years in the US one had become fully American. LIEBE HEIMAT is part of a very distant past – even more so than during the previous period. For those who had left Germany in the middle of the 19th century, travel to the places where were born had become more or less impossible. NEUE HEIMAT has disappeared as a relevant collocation.

Interestingly, in this period the (almost) complete "Americanness" of the migrants is frequently discussed (HUNDERTPROZENTIGE AMERIKANERSCHAFT, VOLLSTÄNDIG AMERIKANISIERT (e.g. K025_002), ECHTE AMERICANISCHE), suggesting a perceived need to reassure themselves,

their fellow Americans and their families and friends in Germany of their rootedness and well-being. The emphasis remains on being an American citizen (K025_010, D002_063), but the need to distance oneself publicly from the image portrayed of Germany in the American press revitalizes emotional ties to the homeland. In this period, the political events triggered the revival of more emotional descriptions of the homeland (LIEBES DEUTSCHLAND – "dear Germany") and thinking about the DEUTSCHE VOLK (German people). The letters describe the "hatred of the Germans" experienced in the US. This period sees a more prominent use of the term "German-American", a self-designation that reflects a layered sense of being integrated. The longing for at least occasional German cultural events is once again expressed clearly in the letters.

Table 13: Main collocations around amerik* about here

Table 14: Main collocations around deuts* about here

6.4 1940-1979: German-America disappears

By the 1940s, the term VATERLAND has completely disappeared from the corpus and HEIMAT is much less frequently used. The few mentions point to an understanding of HEIMAT being the US. The simultaneity of embeddedness in two places, characteristic of the earlier periods of German migration, has vanished. Collocations that use possessive pronouns together with AMERICAN (e.g. UNSER AMERICAN – "our American" - and self-identification as "we Americans" (WIR AMERIKANER)), together with references to vague memories underline that the cultural identification with Germany had become minimal. The level of generalization inherent in the description of American values, now fully internalized, is reminiscent of the observations of the first generation of migrants: "The American loves freedom above all else" (S038_051). Actual engagement with Germany, apart from writing occasional letters, is now more likely to

come in the form of care packages sent to the American Sector in post-war Germany rather than through "strong ties" or detailed knowledge.

Table 15: Main collocations around amerik * about here

The issue of having (nearly) lost the German language and depending on acquaintances to translate letters dominates the collocations around DEUTSCH in this period (W015_077, W015_085, W015_088). Cross-references to the parents' generation are made in an attempt to pinpoint when the German language was "lost" (W015_080). Moreover, the letter writers bemoan not having any/many German relatives left in Germany (W015_089).

Table 16: Main collocations around deuts * about here

6. Conclusion

Speaking to a large literature on transnationalism, this article provides an analysis of the long-term patterns behind the factors influencing the variation in migrant identities. Through a historical letter collection covering 150 years or migrant correspondence, we have gained access to the self-reported perceptions of integration by "ordinary" Germans in the US over a long time period characterized by varying host country conditions and immigration policies as well as major political upheavals and wars in places of residence and origin.

Our text analysis of the migrant letters demonstrates that a comparatively quickly "assimilated" group like the German migrants maintained strong and varied transnational links. This historical perspective adds to recent scholarship that found that contemporary immigrant integration increases the participation in politics in the place of origin in some cases whilst integration decreases transnationalism in others depending on the migrants' individual resources

and the context in receiving and origin countries (Chaudhary 2017). Importantly, our research highlights that such findings should not be seen as a distinctive feature of the present – instead, the simultaneity of belonging and everyday transnationalism have been constitutive of migrant experiences throughout history.

We have explored two hypotheses in particular, relating to how individual and collective identities of migrants change over time. First, we hypothesized that the migrants' perception of being integrated remains in flux. "Belonging", in Levitt's and Glick Schiller's sense, clearly is a dynamic process, contingent on political events and the various local networks in which migrants are embedded in their places of residence and origin (Guarnizo et al. 2017: 28, Ryan 2018, Ryan and Mulholland 2015). Second, we hypothesized a long-lasting simultaneity of integration into the host society and the society of origin. Integration and transnationalism, as seen through the lens of the letters, are best thought of as interconnected processes that can both complement and contradict each other at the level of individuals, at the level of networks, and at the level of broader contextual factors.

Conceptually, we have distinguished between four dimensions of integration, operationalizing Levitt's and Glick-Schiller's "ways of being" and "ways of belonging". Our conceptions of social and economic integration primarily capture "ways of being", while political and cultural integration denote "ways of belonging". Our empirical analysis demonstrates how social integration is a necessary condition of cultural integration. With regard to social integration, the most important finding of our research is the extent to which (often non-educated) migrants quickly became part of a complex network of interactions composed of different nationalities beyond the German-speaking community. This fact is best captured by references in the letters to the need to learn English and reports about progress in this regard. The primary motivations were to participate in the job market and avoid social isolation. This is a noteworthy

finding, as the widespread German-speaking infrastructure of the early period of migration could have made this less of a priority. Our type of analysis points to the existence and intensity of this international interaction early on in the migration cycle that has been underappreciated in the historical literature on the case or US migration more generally.

In particular in the two early waves of migration, a relatively quick cultural integration into the norms and values of what was considered "American" occurred – interestingly in the *absence* of a strong state presence. Migrants quickly absorbed those norms which they saw as the key characteristic such as equality or democracy, but at the same time, they emphasized the importance of their attachment to Germany until the post-World War I period. The letters provide ample evidence of the lived transnationalism and layered integration of the Germans. Becoming an American citizen was an important and positive act in the early waves of migration (when the bureaucratic process was very straightforward). When the political climate – both in the US and Europe – changed in the run-up to and during World War I, our data show that the political discourse and policies targeting particular groups of migrants and a perceived lack of information about the homeland can undo parts, though not all, of the cultural integration. With the activation of identities through both states, the German migrants briefly identified self-consciously as Germans and conveyed a more critical assessment of the reality of life in America before the disappearance of German-America in the aftermath of World War II.

Overall, a longitudinal approach to the issue of integration and transnationalism helps to link the rather disparate historical and contemporary literature on migration. In particular, the continuities in migrant experiences and strategies over time as well as the role of contextual factors, such as international events, become more apparent. Moreover, the procedural and non-linear nature of both processes and their different forms of interaction, identified by recent scholarship, become even more visible on the basis of data covering an extended period of time.

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[1] We would like to thank Leandra Bias, Oliver Ditthardt and in particular Christian Fastenrath for their help with the preparation of the letters collection. We gratefully acknowledge the Small Award from the John Fell

Fund/OUP Research Fund (143/003) that enabled this preparatory work. The project as a whole was part of a Large Leverhulme Trust Grant "Political Remittances: Understanding the Political Impacts of Migration" (M3RVQL00).

[2] For the sake of readability we refer to "German migrants" throughout the paper, but it should be noted that their places of origin are not congruent with present day German borders. The corpus covers most of the German-speaking regions in Europe at the time.

[3] *Auswanderer* is the German term for the 19th and early 20th century migrants who left German-speaking regions.

[4] We are grateful to Ursula Lehmkuhl for granting us access to the entire collection.

[5] There are also letters sent from South America, Asia, or Australia, but these have not been included in the analysis.

[6] The letter collection does not allow for a systematic exploration of German Jewish emigration. Occasionally, the written language in the letters resembles Yiddish expressions, but compared to the many references to Protestant or Catholic Church practices, there are hardly any explicit references to Jewish culture. Moreover, the collection contains only few letters from the World War II period.

[7] A comprehensive introduction to corpus linguistics can be found in (O'Keeffe and McCarthy 2012). There is a large, primarily French literature on *lexicométrie*, see for instance (Guilhaumou 2002, Tournier 1975). Emma Moreton (2016) has studied Irish migrant letters with corpus analysis.

[8] More formally, the likelihood ratio statistic G^2 are based on the ratio between the maximum likelihood of the observed data under a null hypothesis of non-association and its unconstrained maximum likelihood. It is determined as follows:

$$2\sum_{i,j} O_{i,j} log \frac{O_{i,j}}{E_{i,j}}$$

The observed frequencies are referred to by *O*, the expected one by *E* of term $_i$ in document $_j$. Using the natural logarithm and the factor 2 ensures that the likelihood ratio statistic is a χ^2 with one degree of freedom (Evert 2004: 83).

[9] For an analysis of the qualitatively coded letters, see (Krawatzek and Sasse 2018a).

[10] We CAPITALIZE collocations to emphasize the analytic rather than source language.

[11] The abbreviations refer to the database of letters where the first capital letter indicates the first letter of the series, the following three numbers are a number for the series, and the last three numbers refer to the number of the letter in that series. The complete dataset will be publically available under the DOI https://10.6084/m9.figshare.4516772.

[12] However, the picture was mixed. In Wisconsin, in particular in Milwaukee, migrants underlined that the "German language gets you as far as English" (G009_002).