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Assimilation and acculturation patterns of German Ohioans

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Introduction

Ohio — an area of immigrants

Before analyzing the north west German exodus to Ohio, which constitutes the main objective of this paper, it seems rather appropriate to me to start with a brief premise regarding some concepts about migration theories and about cultural and historical geography of the United States.

Migrations have always been undertaken, initially on the Asian continent and in Europe, as well. Thus, the settlement of the world can be considered as the outcome of enormous transfers of human beings: migrations can be either voluntary or coercive. There are numerous linguistic testimonials of ancient migrations today, being conspicuous consequences of the diverse allocations of ethnic groups (Dagradi 1995: 157).

In Dagradi's view there are several immigration types:

a) mass migrations consisting of transfers of relatively compact ethnic groups that usually bring ethnic features from their homeland to a host community;
b) there are the so–called infiltration migrations occurring when single human beings or families move from one country or continent to another;
c) internal migrations characterized by a change in residence occurring when people move from one region to another in the same country;
d) temporary migrations which regard principally irregular or seasonal transfers implied by agricultural works or building tasks;
e) commuter relocations occurring when workers or students move in the mornings to another city or town and go back home in the evenings (Dagradi 1995: 157).

The Italian migration to North America starting in 1861 with 100.000 people emigrating to the New World, reached its apex in 1913 with 900.000 people moving to North–America.

Dagradi also dedicates a succinct comment in relation to German migration to North America, claiming that the German emigration to North America in the 20th century, which comprised over 6 million people, consisted almost exclusively of specialized workers leaving for the United States and to Brazil, as well (Dagradi 1995: 167–168). This statement, however, is in sharp contrast with the theories concerning German migration to North America throughout the 18th and 19th centuries, when numerous German immigrants moving to the United States, usually belonged to low social classes and wanted to get rid of misery and economic hardships they had been forced to handle in Germany. Hence, they were in search for better life conditions in North America. Also the German ethnicity in Ohio, which will be analyzed in this paper, was characterized by an intense desire to make a fortune in the New World.

The great migration flux to North America occurring prevalently in the 18th and 19the centuries clearly belongs to the first migration category, the so–called mass migration: among 17 million British people migrating, approximately 65% went to the United States. The Irish left their home country mostly due to economic reasons, such as recurring famines; consequently, the Irish population residing in the United States today is numerically superior than the Irish population residing in Ireland itself.

North America is characterized by the presence of numerous ethnic spaces and ethnic cultural landscapes whose description is of primary importance in the literature of cultural and historical geography of the United States. The conceptualization of ethnic space in North America has been recently reevaluated; some researchers have endeavored to define other types of ethnic space within the parameters of the "homeland" discussion (Anderson 2001: 135). The homeland debate emphasized the notions of hearth areas in order to understand and map ethnic regions in North America. The intrinsic features of ethnic homelands, which distinguish them from other types of cultural areas are:

a) a sense of belonging to a specific place
b) ethnic self–consciousness

c) politico–socio–economic control in the homeland
d) elaboration of a distinctive cultural system that functions in the homeland
e) ecological adjustment to place over time (Anderson 2001: 136).

Ethnicity has a leading part in American culture regions. If culture areas are compared to ethnic substrate regions, it will be deduced that they are endowed with an ethnic "lithic" base, in which "regional and local ethnic cultural influence derives from an underlying ethnic latency, for example a Germanic Midwest, a Mexican–American Southwest, or a Yankee northeast. In such substrate regions, ethnic heritage on the part of the population for which it is named, is usually no more than 5% to 10% (Anderson 2001: 136).

As I have explained elsewhere (Tondi 2016) the German ethnicity in the United States is numerically very significant, although it has been submerged thus not being tangible and visible any more almost all over the country. As a matter of fact according to the US Census conducted in 2000, 42. 8 million Americans identified themselves as being of German descent, representing 15.2% of the total US population. Irish Americans comprised solely 10.8% of the population, while African Americans and Americans of English ancestry each accounted for just under 9% http://mki.wisc.edu/HGIA/Settling.htm. It is generally assumed that between 1800 and 2000, more than seven million German people emigrated to the US, the majority of whom arrived between 1840 and 1914; the peak period almost certainly was in the early 1880s http://mki.wisc.edu/HGIA/Settling.htm. In the 19th century the German immigrants usually settled in the states of the upper Midwest, an area that has been denominated as America's "German Belt". The American population multiplied enormously in the first part of the 19th century: in 1800 the United States had approximately 5,3 million inhabitants, while in 1860 it had 31, 4 million. In the same time period the five states of the *Old Northwest* (Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, and Wisconsin) increased their population from 51.000 to 7 million. The main cause for this dramatic population augmentation must be searched in the east–west migrant flow (Aengenvoort 1999: 143).

This migration flux, often having typical features of chain migration, was not chaotic but rather systematic and regular: the German emigrants commonly settled in the area of the Great Lakes, and in the northeastern

part of the United States, first of all because of climatic reasons. Moreover, the German settlers had an averseness to economic structures based on slave work characterizing the American south, and secondly, in areas surrounded by main roads, rivers, channels, and railroads the presence of immigrants was particularly numerous (Aengenvoort 1999: 142).

The map below shows the distribution of European born German speakers based on the 1890 census.

As has just been mentioned, the majority of the German immigrants moved to the American Midwest; they often settled in Ohio, an essentially Teutonic state. The German immigration to Ohio did not really begin, but it is symbolically represented by the first legal document written in German language: in 1772 the village Schönbrunn, situated in Eastern Ohio was founded by German missionaries, the *Herrnnhuter*, also called *Moravians* who recorded several urban rules in the above mentioned document (Aengenvoort 1999: 149).

Ohio, being characterized by an astonishing rapid demographic increase, joined the Union in 1803. It had about 45.000 inhabitants in 1800, and only 50 years later, its population rose to nearly 2 million. The greatest immigration flux to Ohio occurred in the 1830s and

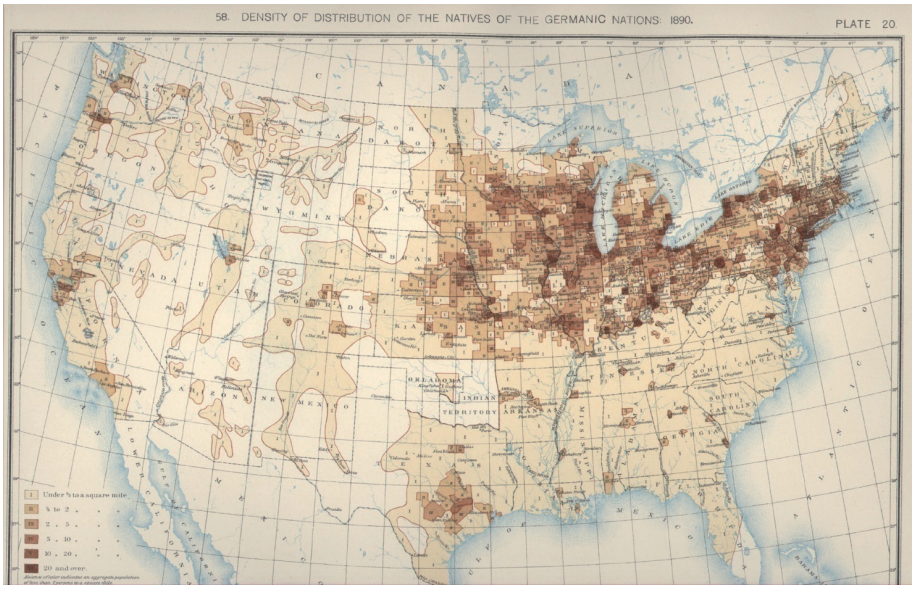

Figure 1.

1840s (Aengenvoort 1999: 144–145). Due to its central geographic position, the presence of the Ohio river in the south of the state, the Great Lakes, situated in the north, and the National Road, as well, it has frequently been defined as a "gateway to the west" thus assuming a principal strategic role, a sort of "corridor" as far as the internal migration, i.e. mainly from Pennsylvania and Virginia is concerned (Wilhelm 1982: 12). However, Ohio often represented the final destination of numerous immigrants who rarely intended to move further west.

The majority of the internal migrants, the Pennsylvania Dutch, thus represented the first generation of German settlers in Ohio. The percentage of these immigrants in relation to Ohio's total population was initially rather modest: 3,6%. But in the following decades of the 19th century, it augmented considerably. Hence, Ohio always represented a state having one of the highest percentages of German immigrants: approximately 50% of the total population. In 1850 nearly 1/5 of all the German immigrants in the United States, resided in Ohio (Aengenvoort 1999: 147).

Ohio, perhaps more than any other state, served as a conduit in the nineteenth century for the westward movement of Americans seeking to escape the overcrowded eastern seaboard. After the War of 1812, with fertile lands opening west of the Appalachians, public officials were eager to attract immigrants to fill a population vacuum. No small portion of these newcomers was from Central and Eastern Europe, especially Germans, who streamed across the Allegheny Plateau into the Till Plains, descended the Ohio River, or entered the lake ports. As a result, a corridor of German settlements emerged from Cincinnati in the southwest to Toledo in the northwest parts of Ohio. These sites became the basis for a belt of Germans, largely from Pennsylvania, Maryland, and Virginia, who occupied a two–hundred–mile swath that extended to the Mississippi River. They were reinforced by another wave of German immigrants after the 1848 revolutions in Europe and by a potpourri of nationalities who sought jobs along the newly urbanized Erie lakefront at the end of the century. The German community was distinguished by such place names as Berlin, Hanover, and Potsdam, but the largest concentration was in Cincinnati where Germans increased from 5 percent in 1830 to

41 percent in 1900. But by the 20th century, Cleveland replaced the "Queen City" of the West as "Ohio's most ethnic city". The number of foreign–born in Cleveland (speaking over forty languages) increased from 97,095 in 1890 to 196,170 in 1910, making it literally a collage of central, southern, and eastern European nationalities.' (muse.jhu.edu/journals/ohh/summary/v117/117.fair.html).

It were the Germans, however, who planted the seeds of ethnicity. About half of Ohio's foreign–born residents were German by the 1850s. German Ohioans more than doubled in number from 1850 to 1890, and German was the dominant ethnic group in thirty–seven of Ohio's eighty–eight counties from 1850 to 1950. Most notable were their distinctive cultural proclivities. Civic–minded people, they formed improvement societies, patronized the arts, and bonded through spirited beer–drinking and singing fests. Evidence of this "cohesive spirit" abounded, notes William Downard, in Cincinnati's Over–the–Rhine district; Germans patronized "its many saloons, beer halls, beer gardens, concert halls, and amusement places, while the breweries ... kept the supply of beer flowing." That these ethnic traditions did not long persist into the next century may be attributed to a natural blending of Germans into America's mainstream. It was hastened, however, by the anti–Teutonic sentiments generated by the First World War and the onset of Prohibition, leading Kathleen Conzen to conclude that the «tribal idols as we once knew them are lost to the tribe for good» and that «most, along with most of those who once worshipped them, are now irretrievably ensconced in the larger cave that is American culture itself.»(muse.jhu.edu/journals/ohh/summary/v117/117.fair.html).


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Greene
Fayette
Pickaway
Morgan
Butler
Warren
Clinton
Hocking
Washington
Ross
Vinton
Athens
Hamilton
Clermont
Highland
Pike
Jackson
Meigs
Brown
Adams
Scioto
Gallia
Law-rence

Figure 2.

It has been deplored for several decades that German American studies lack in a thorough analysis of the history and the development of the German speaking population in Ohio. Consequently, the cultural achievements and the usage of German dialects in that area have not been entirely explored yet (Auburger 1979: 1). Ohio — a multiethnic state — is marked by the presence of almost 500. 000 foreign–born residents corresponding to 4.1% of the total population.

According to the US census from 2010 the largest ancestry groups in the state are:

— 26,5% German;
— 14,1% Irish;
— 8,1% Slavic countries;
— 6,4% Italian;
— 2,5% French. (www.wikipedia.org).

The 2010 census also claims that numerous people residing in Ohio speak languages other than English:

— 10, 100, 586 English;
— 239,229 Spanish;
— 55,970 German. (www.wikipedia.org).

By examining the statements above, it seems apparent that German plays a rather predominant role in the state both as an ancestry group, and as a language, as well. Numerous Ohioans are descended from German progenitors. Today, German Ohioans, indeed greatly enhance Ohio's cultural and social landscape. People from German heritage were among the earliest white settlers of Ohio. The majority of them migrated from Pennsylvania during the late 1700s and the early 1800s along Zane's Trace. Christian Friedrich Post arrived in Stark County / Ohio with other *Herrnhuters* in 1761. Successively numerous Pennsylvania Germans began settling in Ohio; big cities, such as Cincinnati, Columbus, Cleveland, and Toledo played a crucial role in relation to the German ethnicity (Auburger 1979: 1). Those immigrants established numerous communities across Ohio and supported the construction of several canals during the 1820s and 1830s. They were well represented in modern–day Columbiana

County, Hamilton County, Auglaize County (as will be delineated in chapter II), Jefferson County, Mercer County, and Perry County (www.ohiohistorycentral.org).

Ohio's German ethnicity can be subdivided in these two categories of German immigrants: the Pennsylvania Germans moving westwards and later German settlers stemming from Northwestern Germany. This issue will be described more accurately below.

But Ohio is a state which has always been settled by numerous other different migrants. The first migrants came from Eastern Europe, from Poland, Hungary, and Czechoslovakia, while successively, in the early 20th century, the Germans formed the dominant ancestry group: approximately 205.000 native born Germans resided in Ohio, and a large number of other Ohioans boasted German descent. (www.ohiohistorycentral.org). In the second half of the 20th century, however, new German immigrants moving to Ohio were relatively rare. For example, in 1940 the number of native born Germans in Ohio was less than 66,000, while in 1900 there had been 111,893 native born Germans in Ohio, thus being the largest foreign born populace in the state (www.ohiohistorycentral.org).

By 2000 only 3% of Ohioans were foreign born; the major places of origin are Germany, Italy, and the United Kingdom (www.citydata.com/states/Ohio) while in the 21st century some revitalization efforts as far as German culture in Ohio is concerned, have been undertaken: there are several German social organizations, such as the "Oktoberfest" which has been held in Cincinnati since 1976. The Oktoberfest, being characterized by German food, beer and music, is held along Fifth Street in downtown Cincinnati and usually starts on Friday, September 19th (www.oktoberfestzinzinnati.com).

Chapter I

Cincinnati Germans

A general overview

German Cincinnati has been thoroughly examined by numerous linguists, but particularly by Don Heinrich Tolzmann who maintains that the German immigrants coming to Cincinnati have extensively influenced the social, political, cultural, and religious growth of Cincinnati. Consequently, Cincinnati has earned a huge reputation as one of the major centers of German heritage in the United States today (Tolzmann: 2005 *German Cincinnati*).

The first settlers, arriving in Hamilton county, after Cincinnati's founding in 1788, were predominantly Irish and Scottish, and members of Protestant denominations. In 1830, approximately 5% of Cincinnati's population was of German background. Ten years later it rose to 30%, and that number doubled within 1850. By that time the German language was used in newspapers, church school classes, for sermons at church, and in transactions at banks and stores, as well. (www.cincinnati–cityofimmigrants.com). The most significant wave of German immigration to Cincinnati occurred in the 1880s. In 1890, 57% of the total population of approximately 300,000 people was either born in Germany or had German progenitors. It is esteemed, moreover, that at the turn of the 21st century, about half of Cincinnati's population was of German ancestry (www.familysearch.org).

At the beginning of the 19th century the absolute majority of German settlers in Cincinnati lived in the southeastern part of the city, but successively, they started moving northwards towards the city line, where property prices were lower. They named this area "Over the–Rhine" in honor of Germany's *Rhein* River. After some years, at the end of the 19th century, approximately 75% of the residents in Over–The–Rhine were of German descent (www.familysearch.org).

In the 19th century Cincinnati became one of the three major centers of German heritage along with St. Louis and Milwaukee forming the so–called "German Triangle" (www.germanheritagetours.com). But despite such a heavy German language usage, and despite the German immigrants' great significance, as I have always remarked, German loanwords are not very widespread and customary in the American Midwest in the late 20th and early 21st century (see my previous works).

The German immigrants, moving to Cincinnati, left behind them economic depression, political instability, and unsuccessful land reforms. The immigration of the so–called "Forty–Eighters" was notably encouraged by enormous economic stability, and by significant occupational possibilities the city offered. By 1850 the total population of Cincinnati was 115,435 of which 30,758 were German settlers (www.otrbrewerydistrict.org/history_district.php).

Over the Rhine

As has just been mentioned the great majority of the population of Cincinnati was of German extraction by the early 1900; precisely more than 60% were German Americans. It was home to numerous brewing companies, German newspapers, and German speaking schools, as well. The evidence of German migration could be seen and perceived everywhere, specifically in Cincinnati's neighborhood "Over the Rhine" which was characterized by a typical German flair (www.voices.yahoo.com). The percentage of German residents in this neighborhood was growing steadily thus peaking at an estimated 75% in the early 20th century. After their arrival, German entrepreneurs progressively built up a profitable brewing industry that became identified with Over–the–Rhine (www.otrbrewerydistrict.org/history_district.php). When lager beer was introduced in the 1830s, German brewers became the predominant force in the industry, and the number of breweries in Cincinnati, which produced for both local consumption and export, increased from 8 in 1840 to 36 in 1860 (www.otrbrewerydistrict.org/history_district.php).

But also the beer gardens in Over–the–Rhine evolved as strong social centers for German culture and attracted patrons from a broad range of economic and ethnic backgrounds. Industry was indeed a significant fac-

tor in Over–the–Rhine's development. The canal area was the location of numerous diversified industries, including lumberyards, tanneries, pork packers, and glycerin works thus providing work opportunities for Over–the–Rhine residents. Other entrepreneurs opened grocery stores, lumberyards, bakeries, and several small businesses. Worth mentioning is undoubtedly the "Findlay Market" where many German Americans operate fruit, vegetable, and meat stands on market days. It is one of the most colorful and vital elements of Over–the– Rhine (www. otrbrewerydistrict.org/history_district.php).

The Germans settling in Cincinnati, in Over–the–Rhine were no homogeneous group, neither linguistically, (since they all spoke different German dialects: Pomeranian, Swabian, Saxonian, or Bavarian, etc.), nor religiously: among the German immigrants there were Catholics, Lutherans, Reformed, and Jewish. Moreover, they were of different social backgrounds, i. e. numerous Germans were rather humble and impecunious people thus searching for better employments in Ohio, in order to ameliorate their social status, while others, forming a minority, were efficient workers endowed with technical skills. The German immigrants often faced rather serious problems and suffered extreme hardships while establishing themselves in Cincinnati, (prevalently in Over–the–Rhine), and while searching for employment. They generally worked as tradesmen, butchers, bakers, and tailors. Unfortunately, German culture often clashed with the life–style of American born Protestants who frowned on the way German immigrant families spent Sundays in saloons, theaters, and singing societies. Secondly, German Catholics were often not allowed to work at publicly financed construction jobs, and were excluded from several clubs founded by native–born Cincinnatians (www.cincinnati–cityofimmigrants.com). In order to mitigate the impact with the American host community, several organizations and institutions were founded in Cincinnati. In "Over –the–Rhine" the Cincinnati Germans developed a rich subculture: there were numerous German schools, churches, breweries, and beer gardens (www.cincinnati–cityofimmigrants.com).

However, the above mentioned German institutions rarely outlived the generation which founded them, save the churches that frequently multiplied by fission. A high number of them was established during the first wave of the new German immigration, i. e. between 1830 and 1849 (Dobbert 1980: 230), while the second wave predominantly consisted of

the so–called "Forty–Eighters". Their most outstanding and remarkable contribution was the "turnverein" successively becoming the hub of the German community in Cincinnati (Dobbert 1980: 230).

The community of the early 20th century was mainly the work of the third and last wave (1865–1914). The German belonging to that group, differed considerably from their predecessors, since they were by far more expendable to their fatherland, and also more critical and demanding of their new situation (Dobbert 1980: 231). By 1900, however, Germandom's cohesiveness of Over–the–Rhine, which had already lost an enormous part of its political and economic power, was severely affected by the Germans' geographical dispersion. It only gained new importance as a spiritual core. But what has to be necessarily pointed out in this context is the community's erosion by the rapid assimilation of its second generation. This was due in the first instance to a considerable diminution of immigration; and moreover, Germany was changing so abruptly in this time period that each generation and each social category of German immigrants was characterized by the absence of common features (Dobbert 1980: 231). Thus, significant means to shore up the community against erosion had to be sought: these were to be the federations "Taggesellschaft" and "Stadtverband".

Anti–German sentiment in Cincinnati

The period following World War I was marked by a rather noteworthy anti–German sentiment and a general hysteria which was manifested in diverse ways. This implied the repression of the German language in numerous schools in Cincinnati, although the teaching of German was not immediately banned. Ohio was the first state legally favouring the institution of German and bilingual public schools (Aengenvoort 1999: 269).

Authors dealing with this somewhat understudied issue were Carl Wittke, who wrote *German Americans and the World War in 1936*, and more recently, in 1989, there was W. Knepper, the author of *Ohio and its People*. But the work that exhaustively examined the events occurring in Cincinnati in those days was Don Heinrich Tolzmann's *The Cincinnati Germans After the Great War,* published in 1987.

It was Cincinnati having the oldest and the most efficient German–A-