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Introduction to "Migrants and Migrations: Germans to North America in the 19th and 20th Centuries"

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Introduction

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In the course of the nineteenth century the United States and Canada became the most popular destination for German emigrants.[1] Including later migration waves after World War I and World War II, approximately seven million crossed the Atlantic Ocean making Germans the largest ethnic group in the United States today.[2] Historiography of German migration to North America has evolved in several waves. Prominent topics in the literature include ethnic German religious groups seeking religious freedom in the United States, the 1848/49 generation of liberal refugees seeking political freedom, the mass migration of farmers and laborers in the 1870s and 1880s, anti-German sentiment during World War I, and German Jewish refugees in the 1930.[3] More recently, a large-scale research project by the German Historical Institute in Washington, D.C. was completed, which focused on German-American entrepreneurship in the United States and Canada in the 19th and 20th centuries.

While historiography of migration addresses a plethora of themes, theory-building largely took place in other academic disciplines.[4] Migration sociologists developed approaches to explain the social and economic adaptation of migrants

[1] I would like to thank the *Global Histories*' journal editors for accepting this special issue.

[2] Bernd Brunner, *Nach Amerika: Die Geschichte der deutschen Auswanderung* (München: Beck, 2009 [1918]); Wolfgang Helbich, "German Research on German Migration to the United States," *Amerikastudien/American Studies* 54, no. 3 (2009): 383–404; Günter Moltmann, "Three Hundred Years of German Emigration to North America," in *Germans to America: 300 Years of Immigration*, ed. Günter Moltmann, 8–15 (Stuttgart: Eugen Heinz Druck- und Verlagsgesellschaft, 1982); Kathleen N. Conzen, s.v. "Germans," in *Harvard Encyclopedia of American Ethnic Groups*, ed. Stephan Thernstrom, Ann Orlov, and Oscar Handlin, 405–25 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1980).

[3] For example, see: Horst Weigelt, *Migration and Faith: The Migrations of the Schwenkfelders from Germany to America—Risks and Opportunities* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2017); Susan Welch, "American Opinion Toward Jews During the Nazi Era: Results from Quota Sample Polling During the 1930s and 1940s," *Social Science Quarterly* 95, no. 3 (2014): 615–35; Alison C. Efford, *German Immigrants, Race, and Citizenship in the Civil War Era* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013); Henry L. Feingold, "'It can happen here': Antisemitism, American Jewry and the Reaction to the European Crisis 1933–1940," in *Antisemitism Worldwide: 2000/1*, ed. Dina Porat and Roni Stauber (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2002), 5–20; Mark Häberlein, *Vom Oberrhein zum Susquehanna: Studien zur badischen Auswanderung nach Pennsylvania im 18. Jahrhundert* (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer Verlag, 1993); Bruce Levine, *The Spirit of 1848: German Immigrants, Labor Conflict, and the Coming of the Civil War* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1992); Hartmut Keil and John B. Jentz, eds. *German Workers in Chicago: A Documentary History of Working-class Culture from 1850 to World War I* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1988); Robert Higgs, *The Transformation of the American Economy, 1865–1914: An Essay in Interpretation* (New York: Wiley, 1971).

[4] Caroline Brettell and James F. Hollifield, eds. *Migration Theory: Talking across Disciplines*, (New York: Routledge, 2015); Christiane Harzig, Dirk Hoerder, and Donna Gabaccia, *What is Migration History?* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2009); Charles Hirschman, Philip Kasinitz, and Josh DeWind, eds. *The Handbook of International Migration: The American Experience* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1999).

in ethnic enclaves and ethnic entrepreneurship. This perspective has been widely applied to more recent waves of immigration to North America from Africa, Latin America, and Asia, but so far rarely adapted by historians. Economists focused primarily on migrants' choices in seeking employment and economic gains through migration.[5] For example, a recent paper by economic historian Ran Abramitzky and economist Leah Boustan surveyed the quantitative literature on immigration in American economic history. According to the authors, employment opportunities and wage level were the primary factor shaping migration patterns to the United States and immigrants' assimilation into the American society.[6] Culturalists in turn reject assumptions of rational choice in migration processes and rather focus on migrants' experiences and perceptions, ethnic traditions, and their respective impact on adaptation in host societies.[7]

The articles in this special issue connect migration history with theoretical approaches in the social sciences and other disciplines. They focus on three distinct categories of German migrants to North America, namely political migrants, economic migrants and religious migrants, thus addressing the high variety of motivations of why and how people migrate. The first article by Andrew Dorsey, Jacqueline Wagner, and Mary Walle looks at a 1848er revolutionary, Franziska Anneke, and her contribution to the women's movement in the United States. Applying an intersectional analysis of newspaper reports, the authors examine Anneke's images as portrayed in six newspapers in the United States after her speech at the Annual Meeting of the American Equal Rights Association in 1869. The article links Anneke to perceived gender roles in the U.S. Women's Rights Movement in the nineteenth century. The authors show that Anneke's strong stance in favor of women's rights was widely and positively interpreted as "masculine," adding to the overall acknowledgement of her work in the media. Moreover, Anneke's work for women's rights was intricately linked to her "Germanness," her participation in the 1848/49 revolution and her high standing in the German-American community. The intersectional analysis thus contributes to the scholarly debate on migration and gender in American history.

[5] Alejandro Portes and Josh DeWind, eds. *Rethinking Migration: New Theoretical and Empirical Perspectives* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2007); Jimy M. Sanders and Victor Nee, "Limits of Ethnic Solidarity in the Enclave Economy," *American Sociological Review* 52, no. 6 (1987): 745–73; Alejandro Portes and Leif Jensen, "What's an Ethnic Enclave? The Case for Conceptual Clarity," *American Sociological Review* 52 (1987): 768–71.

[6] Ran Abramitzky and Leah Boustan, "Immigration in American Economic History," *Journal of Economic Literature* 55, no. 4 (2017): 1311–45.

[7] Rachel Rubin and Jeffrey P. Melnick, *Immigration and American Popular Culture: An Introduction* (New York: New York University Press, 2007); Roger Daniels, *Coming to America: A History of Immigration and Ethnicity in American Life* (New York: Harper Perennial, 2002); William H.A. Williams, "Immigration as a Pattern in American Culture," in *The Immigration Reader: America in a Multidisciplinary Perspective*, ed. David Jacobson (Malden: Blackwell, 1998), 19–28.

The second article by Karl Dargel, Tyler Hoerr, and Petar Milijic analyses the economic dimension of chain migration. While the authors contend that every type of migration—also migration for primarily religious and political reasons—has an economic component, they focus on economic push-factors which influence migrants' choices to leave their home countries. Applying an approach developed by historian Donna R. Gabaccia, they argue that economic migrants were particularly inclined to keep relations between their home and host countries. The authors thus provide empirical evidence to the theoretical debate on migrations patterns and the typological categorization of migrants.

The third article by Derek Hattemer, Fritz Kusch, Selena McQuarrie, and Louise Thatcher looks at 'desirable' citizenship in the context of Hutterite migration from the United States to Canada between 1917 and 1919. Hutterites were a small German-speaking religious group from the Anabaptist religious tradition that had recently immigrated from Southern Russia to South Dakota in the 1870s due to increasing pressure to assimilate in the Tsarist Empire. In this period, the Hutterite population grew from about 425 to more than 2000 people who lived in small-scale communal settlements called "Bruderhöfe." Due to military conscription and anti-German sentiment during World War I, the vast majority of Hutterites decided to relocate to Canada in order to escape religious and ethnic discrimination. Focusing on this micro-case of a small Anabaptist community, the authors address wider questions concerning migration and the modern state's codified ideals of 'desirable' and 'undesirable' citizens.

The three articles are the result of the research-oriented Master-level seminar "Migrants and Migration. Germans to North America in the 19th and 20th Centuries" taught in the winter term of 2017/2018 at Humboldt-Universität in Berlin. The seminar's discussions greatly helped shape the authors' analytical precision, understanding of theory, and empirical application. I would like to thank all the seminar's participants for their contributions.