

Anti-German Sentiment in the Midwest During World War I

*The Effects of Anti-German Sentiment on the German
Language and Culture*



Author:	Isabel Steenbergen
Student Number:	4353641
Institution:	Radboud University Nijmegen
Field of Studies:	American Studies
Date of Delivery:	15-06-2016
Supervisor:	Dr. J. van den Berk
Second Reader:	Dr. F. Mehring

ENGELSE TAAL EN CULTUUR

Teacher who will receive this document: J. van den Berk

Title of document: Anti-German Sentiment in the Midwest During World War I

Name of course: Bachelor Thesis

Date of submission: 15-06-2016

The work submitted here is the sole responsibility of the undersigned, who has neither committed plagiarism nor colluded in its production.

Signed

Name of student: Isabel Steenbergen

Student number: 4353641

Table of Contents

Abstract 3

List of Keywords 3

Introduction 4

Chapter One: History of German Immigrants in the US and the Midwest 11

Chapter Two: Anti-German Sentiment in the Midwest: Policies and Propaganda 17

Chapter Three: The Disappearance of the German Language and Culture from the Midwest as a Result of Anti-German Sentiment 27

Chapter Four: The Survival of the German Language and Culture in the Midwest Despite Anti-German Sentiment 33

Conclusion..... 40

Works Cited..... 44

Abstract

This thesis investigates the effects of anti-German sentiment in the Midwest during and after World War I on German Americans, researching to what degree anti-German sentiment hastened the assimilation of German Americans into American society and put an end to many German language and cultural institutions, and to what degree the German culture and language prevailed. I used the theory of assimilation to conduct research. I found the answers to my research question by looking at the history of German immigrant groups coming to and living in the Midwest and how well they were assimilated before World War I, the propaganda and policies that encouraged the rise of anti-German sentiment, and the consequences this had for German Americans in both negative and positive ways. The findings from the research show that the impact of anti-German sentiment on the German culture and language in the US has been quite severe, eradicating much of the German ethnic heritage from American society. There are parts of the German language and culture that remained, but they play an entirely different role in American society now than they did before World War I.

List of Keywords: German-American, assimilation, identity, World War I, Midwest, immigration

Introduction

During World War I, the United States and its allies were fighting against Germany and its allies in Europe. The war had devastating consequences in Europe, but also affected daily life in America. One group that experienced many changes were German Americans, with anti-German sentiment developing across the nation during the years of the Great War. Being anti-German became a way of showing patriotism for the American war effort, and many people began to target German-Americans and their language and culture. Because of the large number of German-Americans living in the Midwest, anti-German sentiment became a serious problem in this area. Therefore, this thesis will be researching to what degree anti-German sentiment in the Midwest caused by World War I hastened the assimilation of German Americans into American society and put an end to many German language and cultural institutions, and to what degree the German culture and language prevailed.

The topics of German immigration and culture in the US and anti-German sentiment are and always have been relevant within the field of American Studies, especially in the Midwest because of the large presence of German Americans in this area. Around 1890, about one-third of all people living in states of the Midwest had German roots. The Midwestern states nowadays still have one of the highest proportions of German Americans in the country, and German is the most-reported ancestry in the Midwest with 26.6% of the Midwestern population being of German ancestry, compared to 15.2% nationwide (U.S. 2000 Census “Ancestry” 6). The U.S. 2000 Census also shows that German is the largest reported ancestry in 23 states, including every state in the Midwest, and in three Midwestern states, North Dakota, Wisconsin, and South Dakota, German was reported by more than 40 percent of the population (“Ancestry” 7). These numbers show that German American heritage and history are topics that still play an important role in present-day America. The presence of German culture and language seriously decreased because of World War I, but that does not mean there is no German culture in the US anymore or that it should be forgotten or ignored. Opposite to what many people think, German immigration is not something only of the past, and speakers considered in some sense to be German are still immigrating to the Midwest today in surprisingly high numbers (Putnam 30). German-speaking immigrants continue to shape the landscape of the Midwest, and therefore the history of German Americans in the Midwest is a topic that will remain relevant to conduct research on.

In previous research on the topic, there are a couple of things that stand out. First of all, there is a lot of material already written on it, and most of it is either on anti-German sentiment in the US in general or focused on specific Midwestern states. There are many articles that are all specifically written about one Midwestern state or even city, which could make for interesting case studies. What I want to achieve in my own research is shedding light on both the fact that anti-German sentiment hastened the Americanization of German Americans and negatively affected German American culture in the US but also the fact that German Americans somehow have also found ways to maintain their culture, since the German culture still exists in present-day America. Keeping this in mind, it caught my attention that most articles and books were written on how anti-German sentiment as a result of World War I has negatively affected German culture and language in the US and stress that the thriving German American culture that existed before the outbreak of the war never really recovered after the war had ended. However, very little attention has been paid to the ways of how parts of the German culture prevailed and to what degree it prevailed. It is occasionally mentioned in articles but not much is written on it in general. What I want to accomplish with writing this thesis is showing that the German American community proved to be more resilient than current scholars give it credit for. This is the most obvious flaw in the research already conducted on the subject and makes my research project particularly relevant and original.

To answer my research question, I will use the theory of assimilation as a theoretical framework. Assimilation in the United States has often been forced and has caused immigrants in general to have severed ties with family abroad. This, for example, shows in the use of languages other than English, which has traditionally been discouraged in the US. Of the estimated 42.8 million US citizens that consider themselves to be of German ancestry, making them the largest ethnic group of American citizens, about 1.4 million of them reported speaking German in their homes in the 2000 U.S. Census (“Language Use and English Speaking Ability” 4). But before focusing on the situation of German Americans and the theories of assimilation that apply to them, I want to briefly discuss the concept of assimilation in general, using the book *Assimilation in American Life* by Milton M. Gordon. Gordon is an American sociologist who wrote several books on assimilation, immigration, and ethnicity. He is most noted for having devised a theory on the Seven Stages of Assimilation, which will be discussed further along in the introduction.

According to Gordon, there are two types of things that are decisive in what happens when “peoples meet” on the American continent. The first one is the displacement of an

aboriginal population, meaning the displacement and attempted incorporation of the American Indian on the white conqueror's terms (Gordon 60). The second one is voluntary immigration which increases the ethnic diversity of a host country. Throughout America's existence, there has been massive immigration into America of over 41 million people, largely from Europe but also from the other Americas and the Orient (Gordon 60). The second one applies to, among others, German Americans, who have a long history of immigration to the US.

Assimilation, according to Gordon, means the processes and results of ethnic "meetings" (61). However, the concept of assimilation is one that brings with it a certain amount of confusion. Many scholars and sociologists have tried to define it and came up with definitions that are quite similar to one another but also slightly differ in some ways. According to the famous sociologists Robert E. Park and Ernest W. Burgess, assimilation is "a process of interpenetration and fusion in which persons and groups acquire the memories, sentiments, and attitudes of other persons or groups, and, by sharing their experience and history, are incorporated with them in a common cultural life" (qtd. in Gordon 62). This definition by Park and Burgess is an early definition of assimilation and has been a very influential one. Park later elaborates a little more on his original definition and explains assimilation as "the process(es) by which people of diverse racial origins and different cultural heritages, occupying a common territory, achieve a cultural solidarity sufficient at least to sustain a national existence" (qtd. in Gordon 63). According to Park, in the US an immigrant is ordinarily considered assimilated as soon as s/he has acquired the language and social ritual of the native community and can participate in the common life, economic, and political without encountering prejudice. "In all ordinary affairs, the immigrant should be able to find a place in the community on the basis of his individual merits without invidious or qualifying reference to his racial origin or to his cultural inheritance" (qtd. in Gordon 63). I think this definition by Park is an important one because it takes the concepts of discrimination and prejudice into account as part of the assimilation process.

Sociologist Joseph Fichter defines assimilation as a social process through which two or more persons or groups accept and perform one another's patterns of behavior. According to Fichter, it is very important that a person or a minority category being assimilated into a group or society must not be interpreted as a "one-sided" process. Rather, it is "a relation of interaction in which both parties behave reciprocally even though one may be much more affected by it than the other" (qtd. in Gordon 65). I think this definition by Fichter is interesting because he is one of the few that specifically mentions assimilation as a two-sided

process instead of just a one-sided process, and he thereby acknowledges the importance of the fact that there are two sides involved.

As the previous section demonstrated, many scholars and sociologists have come up with definitions of the concept of assimilation. Gordon himself does not only discuss other sociologists and their ideas about assimilation, but also devised a theory on assimilation himself, namely the Seven Stages of Assimilation (see table 1). There are several things that are important to mention when looking at the Seven Stages of Assimilation. Cultural assimilation or acculturation, meaning that one changes his or her cultural patterns to those of the host society, is likely to be the first of the types of assimilation to occur when a minority group arrives in a host country. Cultural assimilation of the minority group may take place even when none of the other types of assimilation occur simultaneously or later, and therefore this “acculturation only” may continue indefinitely for some groups of immigrants (Gordon 77). In the history of immigration into the United States, as each succeeding wave spread over America, the first process that always occurred has been the taking on of the English language and American behavior patterns, even when such immigrant groups were often separated from the “core society” and experienced a lot of prejudice and discrimination (Gordon 77). However, being successful in the acculturation process does not guarantee entry of each minority into the primary groups and institutions of the white Anglo Protestant group. Most minority groups actually never fully succeed in becoming part of this “WASP” group. Acculturation success has also not eliminated prejudice and discrimination for most minority groups (Gordon 78).

However, contrary to popular beliefs, acculturation is not the most important element of assimilation. Structural assimilation, meaning the large-scale entrance into cliques, clubs, and institutions of the host society, is the most significant one. Once structural assimilation has occurred, either simultaneously with or subsequent to acculturation, all of the other types of assimilation will naturally follow. Structural assimilation, rather than acculturation, is the keystone of assimilating into a host society (Gordon 81). The price of such assimilation, however, is the disappearance of the ethnic group as a separate entity and the evaporation of its distinctive values.

Table 1

Seven Stages of Assimilation

Sub-process or Condition	Type or Stage of Assimilation	Special Term
Change of cultural patterns to those of host society	Cultural or behavioral assimilation	Acculturation
Large-scale entrance into cliques, clubs, and institutions of host society, on primary group level	Structural assimilation	None
Large-scale intermarriage	Marital assimilation	Amalgamation
Development of sense of peoplehood based exclusively on host society	Identificational assimilation	None
Absence of prejudice	Attitude receptional assimilation	None
Absence of discrimination	Behavior receptional assimilation	None
Absence of value and power conflict	Civic assimilation	None

Source: Gordon, Milton M. *Assimilation into American Life: The Role of Race, Religion, and National Origin*. New York, NY: Oxford UP, 1964. Print.

Compared to other immigrant groups, the many German immigrants that came to the US during different periods of time quite easily fit into the primary groups and institutions of the dominant group of white Protestants. German immigrants generally were immigrants that were considered a well-integrated part of US society and did not experience a lot of prejudice and discrimination. They brought with them to their new country expertise in farming, education, science, and the arts, and they enriched their adopted homeland immensely as they assimilated, serving in government and military institutions (Manning 18). These positive feelings towards German Americans changed with the start of World War I, and so did the prevailing theory of assimilation. This had major consequences for German American communities in the United States.

Assimilation theories prevailing at different times are measuring devices of the political and socioeconomic environments experienced by immigrants. Before the Great War, a growing diversity of immigrants and rapid industrialization of the labor force during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries gave rise to the melting pot theory (Norton 511). The melting pot theory implies that immigrants of different cultural backgrounds with various skin colors, races, and cultural values would arrive in the United States and become members of a homogeneous culture in which all different cultures are “melted together” and form a new, distinct type of people (Gordon 115). However, many ethnic groups proved “unmeltable”, making the US more of a pluralistic society than a melting pot (Norton 511). Furthermore, the goal of the melting pot theory was generally something that white natives wanted and it was often not shared by immigrants themselves, who preferred a way of assimilating called “cultural pluralism” (Gordon 132). Upon their arrival in the United States, many non-English immigrants, like the Germans, created societies in which they could communicate in the familiar tongue and maintain familiar institutions. Moreover, ethnic colonies were places of mutual aid and protection against the uncertainties of a strange and sometimes hostile environment (Gordon 134). So came into being the ethnic church, conducting services in the native language, the ethnic school for appropriate indoctrination of the young, the newspaper published in the native tongue, and above all the network of ethnically enclosed cliques and friendship patterns which guaranteed both comfortable socializing and the confinement of marriage within the ancestral group (Gordon 134). German Americans have always been a group to which cultural pluralism very clearly applied. The Germans used their language as a weapon to ward off Americanization and assimilation, and used every social milieu, the home, the church, the school, the press, in the fight to preserve the German language (Gordon 134).

However, World War I heightened tensions between Anglo Americans and German Americans and changed the way German Americans were seen by Anglo Americans. The concept of cultural pluralism as the existing theory of assimilation of Germans before the war was equated by a form of assimilation called Anglo-conformity during and immediately after the war. Anglo-conformity called for complete cultural assimilation towards an Anglo-American norm on the part of immigrants, and immigrants who opposed such assimilation were accused of disloyalty to the United States. The German American community “was struck a sharp and powerful blow by the pressure to Americanize generated by World War I, a blow from which it never fully recovered” (Gordon 135). Interesting is that the Anglo-conformity ideology was actually one that applied to many of the early immigrants during

colonial times before it was replaced by the melting pot theory in the late nineteenth century. However, it started to apply to German Americans specifically when World War I turned German Americans into “the enemy” and made many US citizens believe that they were a threat to the American nation. Unlike before, this demand for complete cultural assimilation did not apply to all immigrants entering the United States but just to one particular group of immigrants with one particular heritage, and that is what makes it so unique.

To properly research anti-German sentiment in the Midwest caused by World War I and its effects on the German American language and culture, this thesis is divided into four chapters. In the first chapter, a general outline is given on the history of German immigrant groups coming to and living in the Midwest, and how well they were assimilated into American society before World War I. The second chapter will discuss propaganda and policies instigated on both federal and state level that encouraged the rise of anti-German sentiment. The third and fourth chapter will look at the consequences of anti-German sentiment policies and propaganda for German Americans in the Midwest. Chapter Three will focus on the disappearance of the German language and culture from the Midwest as a result of anti-German sentiment, and Chapter Four will focus on the surviving of parts of German American culture and language in an environment that blamed them for a world war. In addition, recurring themes in my thesis are what it was like to be German in America in different periods of time and how that notion changed, and the situation of German Americans in relation to Gordon’s theory of assimilation.

Chapter One: History of German Immigrants in the US and the Midwest

To what degree were German immigrants assimilated into American society before World War I?

In the years before World War I, the livelihood of many Germans in America depended, directly or indirectly, upon a constituency that retained the imported German language and culture (Luebke 28). This included anything from pastors of immigrant churches and editors of German-language newspapers to restaurant owners, brewers, and saloonkeepers. However, this did not mean that German Americans still had strong ties with their country of origin. Most of them were only secondarily interested in the maintenance of German culture, and in all of this, the Germans were not essentially different from other immigrant groups (Luebke 28). Remarkable about the German Americans was that large numbers of them were in high and powerful positions, despite the fact that they were a minority. The difference with other immigrant groups lay with the number of Germans who came to America, the time of their arrival, and the quality of the cultural baggage they brought with them.

The Germans have always been the largest non-English speaking immigrant group in America, and their immigration from Germany to the United States came in several different waves. The first wave occurred in the colonial period, when thousands of Germans came to Pennsylvania, New York, and Maryland, and later spread to the Carolinas and Virginia (Norton 86). Especially Pennsylvania was and still is famous for its high German population, and the German farmers, craftsmen, and indentured servants helped develop the state in colonial times. The Germans that came to the US in the colonial period were mostly pushed by factors such as wars raging in Germany, high taxation, and laws of primogeniture, which are laws that permit only the eldest sons of families to inherit their father's land.

Starting in the late eighteenth century and continuing through much of the nineteenth century, millions of Germans moved to the US and German immigration shifted from the Mid-Atlantic states to the Midwest. This shift occurred because German immigrants, unlike the poor Irish immigrants who came in equally high amounts and in the same time period, came with enough resources to head to states such as Ohio, Illinois, Wisconsin, and Missouri (Norton 280). Many German immigrants were farmers who brought skills that contributed significantly to the agriculture of the Midwest, and many others settled and helped build Midwestern cities such as Milwaukee and Cincinnati. Around the time of the American Revolution between 1765 and 1783, German immigration dropped to a minimum, but a

second great wave of German immigration began around 1830 in the Jacksonian era. Between 1830 and 1860, a total of five million immigrants came to the United States (Norton 279). This wave reached its climax in 1854 and counted 3.3 million immigrants during the peak years between 1847 and 1857, of which 1.1 million immigrants were German (Norton 279). This wave of German immigrants was especially triggered by the German revolutions of 1848 and 1849 and the unrest and chaos that they caused. During the next decades, the number of immigrants was greatly reduced again because of a lack of pull factors in the US, most significantly the Civil War and the depressions of 1873-1878 and 1882-1885 (Lichtenstein 31). Immigration rose again during the boom period of the late 1880s, and around 1890 about one-third of all people living in states of the Midwest had German roots.

In the second half of the nineteenth century, the pattern of German immigration was not only dependent on the situation in the US but also closely related to economic and political conditions in Germany (Luebke 29). First of all, Germany had been deeply affected by the agricultural revolution. Technological improvements in transportation and the adoption of machinery to farm production permitted distant countries to compete for the German market (Luebke 29). By 1875 Germany had become a wheat-importing country, and this had devastating consequences for German farmers, craftsmen, artisans, and shopkeepers. This long industrial depression did not only hit Germany but Europe as a whole, and had been triggered in part by competition from the United States (Lichtenstein 31). All of these push factors occurred simultaneously with a large pull factor in the US, namely the economic boom of the late 1880s, and the result was a flood of German immigration to America. Not all were leaving their home country just because of the economic situation. Some also fled from military service in the new German Empire, which had been forged in 1870 by the Iron Chancellor, Otto von Bismarck. By the 1890s, German immigration to the US plummeted again because the industrial developments in Germany had led to a shortage of labor, and thus a large push factor disappeared. By the time World War I started, the first generation of German immigrants in America was far outnumbered by the second, whose attitudes and behavior were much more deeply conditioned by the social process of assimilation (Luebke 29).

The Germans who came to the United States after the Civil War differed in several ways from the earlier waves of German immigrants. Although most of the pre-Civil War immigrants were peasants, there were also significant numbers of well-educated, highly motivated political radicals and activists who had fled from Germany after the unsuccessful revolutions of 1848 (Luebke 32). The wave after the Civil War contained less well-educated

immigrants and more urban laborers, who usually ended up in businesses dominated by Germans such as furniture making, brewing, and baking (Lichtenstein 32). Different from the earlier waves of immigrants from Germany, few post-Civil War immigrants were dissatisfied with the motherland. The Germany that many people before the Civil War had fled from did not exist anymore. Germany was now a “dynamic empire, united under Bismarck’s vigorous leadership, rapidly moving through a transitional phase to become an industrialized world power and a leader in state socialism and conservative reform” (Luebke 33). Germany had become a source of nationalistic pride for many German Americans.

Apart from the fact that there were several waves of Germans that came to the US in different periods of time with different social backgrounds, there were also many provincial differences, religious divisions, and political distinctions among them. Most native Americans usually tended to think of the Germans as one unified group, but the political autonomy that German petty states had had for centuries had reinforced large linguistic and cultural differences (Luebke 33). Many Germans spoke dialects instead of the language that was used in books, newspapers, and schools, and many of those dialects were so different from each other that Germans who originated from different parts of Germany were often unable to understand each other. They clashed with each other, with their mentality, customs, and outlook being “as different as the French and the English” (Dobbert 666). Most Germans therefore valued their regional identities way more than their German identities.

However, the deepest divisions among Germans were religious. Attitudes, values, and behavior patterns were much more closely related to religious belief than they were to language, place of birth, or economic status (Luebke 34). The Germans have a history of long and fierce religious wars between nations and petty states. Each petty state could determine for itself what religious identity it wanted to have, and this was usually decided by the ruling family of each state. The political boundaries of the petty states thus tended to conform to religious lines (Luebke 34). The German immigrant brought his values, ideas, and prejudices with him to America, and naturally sought out others of his own kind to live with and start communities with, causing concentrations of like-minded Germans to develop. A lot of German Americans identified themselves first of all as Catholics, Lutherans, Evangelicals, or Methodists, and only secondarily as Germans. These Germans were called *Kirchendeutschen* or “church Germans,” because they were prepared to cast off their ethnicity when it would get in the way of attaining their church goals (Luebke 35).

The church Germans were mostly immigrants that came during the wave of German influx between roughly 1816 and 1848, and this group accomplished cultural maintenance

through membership in a religious community (Hoyt 153). Churches not only served as places of worship but also provided cultural support for new immigrants by offering counseling, schools, help for immigrants in need, and a place for socializing with other people of German heritage. Churches were an enclave where the German language could be freely spoken and the culture freely practiced (Hoyt 153). German language and culture did serve different purposes for different groups among the *Kirchendeutschen*. Among the Catholics, Lutherans, and Mennonites, the emphasis on the European heritage widened the gulf separating the several German religious groups from each other and from American society (Luebke 41). Among the Evangelicals, the United Brethren, and the German Methodists, attachment to German culture was less intimately tied to religious goals (Luebke 42). For some, this meant that church membership was no hindrance to full assimilation into American society, and for others it meant there was no religious hindrance to full participation in the activities of German societies which stressed German character and culture (Luebke 42). However, it is important to note that the maintenance of German language and culture among the *Kirchendeutschen* had nothing to do with the political goals of Imperial Germany in any way.

Although religion was extremely important, not all Germans had bonds with their country of origin in the form of religion. Some also had bonds with the German culture centered in secular societies, called *Vereinsdeutschen* or “club Germans”. Club Germans were mostly immigrants who arrived in the US between 1848 and 1861. They were more likely to be highly educated and were often social and political liberals or even radicals who tended not to associate with religious institutions. In contrast to the church Germans, who mostly lived in rural areas and small towns and who were conservative in their religious, economic, and political beliefs, the club Germans were oriented towards secular values and attitudes and mostly resided in urban areas (Hoyt 160). This group also had a great appreciation for the arts and domestic life and found it very important to maintain their German heritage and values and pass them along to the next generation (Hoyt 160). The secular organizations were very diverse and included, among others, singing societies, shooting clubs, card clubs, and fire companies. For many urban German immigrants, the *Vereins* provided the same kind of social function that the churches afforded the *Kirchendeutschen*. Most members of the *Vereins* were people from the lower middle classes who usually cared little about the process of assimilation into American society (Luebke 44).

The *Vereinsdeutschen* and *Kirchendeutschen* take on the most importance in maintaining and disseminating German culture in America (Hoyt 160). Furthermore, it also explains why Germans were so slow to assimilate. In the theory of assimilation discussed in

the Introduction, structural assimilation, which is the large-scale entrance into cliques, clubs, and institutions of the host society, is named as the keystone of assimilating into a host society (Gordon 81). However, because there were such high numbers of Germans living in the United States, they did not enter Anglo cliques, clubs, and institutions because they had their own ones. According to Gordon, once structural assimilation has occurred, all other types of assimilation will naturally follow, but in the case of German Americans, structural assimilation did not occur in most communities until the effects of World War I forced it to occur.

Despite the great diversity of the German American population, they were still unified in a way by the German-language press (Luebke 45). By the 1890s, there were nearly 800 German newspapers and journals published in the US. By the time the US entered the war in 1917 and anti-German sentiment started to play an increasingly bigger role, the number had dropped to 522. The tone of the German American press had undergone changes in the years since the 1880s when immigration had reached its peak. Earlier, the German-language newspapers were focused on Americanization and helping the newcomers to adjust in their new country. The form, style, and even content of most newspapers were very similar to Anglo American newspapers. However, as mentioned before, Germany underwent important changes while many people were immigrating to the US, and it became a country that one could be proud of. This meant that the newspapers became less critical of the fatherland and contained more news on Germany instead of just on America. Thus, in the years before World War I, the German-language press tended to give full, uncritical support to the maintenance of language and culture and the German American community and interest (Luebke 46). However, the German-language press changed the content of their newspapers not only because of nationalistic pride. Another important reason was an economic one, namely that the German newspapers depended on the steady influx of immigrants from Germany, which declined sharply after 1890. In order to maintain their newspapers, they adapted the content to hold readers.

Something that shows that German Americans were not entirely unwilling to integrate into American society is their concentration in cities and rural areas. As discussed before, the German immigrants were high in numbers and they often tended to settle among others of their kind. For example, in 1850 the city of Milwaukee was composed of 6000 Germans and 4000 native-born Americans, and only six of the Germans were married to non-Germans (Gordon 134). By 1910, more than 85% of all German immigrants resided in either the Middle Atlantic or the Midwestern states. The Midwestern cities of Milwaukee, Cincinnati,

and Saint Louis were the most famous centers of German immigrant culture. However, what the German communities in most cities lacked was a distinct German neighborhood. The Germans were generally well distributed throughout most cities in 1910, and the same was true for rural concentrations of German Americans (Luebke 31). This shows that, although German immigrants did continue to speak their own language and cherish their heritage, they did not entirely separate themselves from the rest of the population.

In 1910, Germans were by far the most numerous immigrant group in the United States, with 8.6 million people of either German birth or parentage on a total population of 92 million (Capozzola 179-80). Of course, there were many German Americans who assimilated quickly and did not identify in any meaningful way with the German culture and values, but this group was far outnumbered by Germans that continued to speak German and cherish their heritage (Luebke 30). That the Germans living in the US in the early twentieth century seemed separatist or that they resisted Americanization was not caused by national characteristics or ethnic traits, but was related to the numbers in which they came to America, their religious, linguistic, political, and social diversity and the lack of occurrence of structural assimilation because of *Kirchen* and *Vereins* (Luebke 47). While it is true that later German immigrants tended to be less critical of the fatherland than their predecessors had been, that does not mean they agreed with everything that happened in Germany. They had a natural affection for their old country because they had friends and family there, and hoped that America would be able to maintain peaceful relations with Germany (Luebke 48). However, their political allegiance belonged to the United States of America and not to Germany. In their opinion, the use of German language and the cherishing of German culture had nothing to do with Germany as a political unit. Before World War I started, Anglo Americans generally shared this view. Being a German in America meant that you were a respected part of American society, and people were allowed to feel German and American at the same time. It was widely accepted that one could have both the German and the American identity, combining elements of both nationalities. However, the view of Americans on this changed dramatically in the years to come.

Chapter Two: Anti-German Sentiment in the Midwest: Policies and Propaganda

What policies and propaganda against German Americans came into existence during World War I and how did they influence their situation?

Even before the United States had joined the conflict that started in Europe in July 1914, not just German Americans but immigrants in general had a hard time living in America. The loyalties of all hyphenated Americans were seriously questioned because immigrants were seen as potentially more loyal to their countries of birth than to their adopted land (Lichtenstein 293). However, suspicion and hostility focused particularly on German Americans, and the positive feelings towards Germany from before 1914 began to fade with the outbreak of hostilities in Europe (Wieland 54). Initially, Americans were not sure how to feel about the war and which side they should support, but after reports of atrocities such as rape and mutilation being perpetrated by the German army in Belgium, which later turned out to be propaganda, negative feelings toward Germany in Europe and the United States stirred up (Wieland 54). Although President Wilson's initial decision to remain neutral in the conflict was supported by the vast majority of Americans, many German Americans rallied to support their homeland. This display of German patriotism exacerbated an existing cultural division between Germans and nativist Americans.

By the time the US joined Britain and France in the war against the German Empire in 1917, the negative feelings of Americans extended to German Americans as well, putting them in a dreadful situation. First of all, German Americans were trapped in a crisis of loyalty. A great majority of them had developed a firm allegiance to the US, but at the same time the bonds of affections for their German culture remained strong, as we have seen in Chapter One (Luebke 3). Second of all, people began to express their distaste for everything German throughout the country, both by organized pressures on German-American institutions and by personal attacks on private citizens (Wieland 54). Mobs attacked German American stores and drove German American performers off the stage. German Americans were harassed, beaten, tarred and feathered, forced to kiss the flag, and, in at least one instance, lynched (Lichtenstein 294). German Americans became the "face of the enemy" as their businesses were boycotted and many people of German heritage were physically and verbally attacked. But the assault on Germans was also, from the very first day of the war, a federal undertaking (Capozzola 183). The hatred towards German Americans and the removal of many German cultural and language institutions was strongly encouraged by both policies instigated by

federal, state, and city governments and by propaganda setting Germans and Germany in a negative light.

Firstly, I want to discuss some of the policies the federal government of the US instigated during the war years. Doubts about the loyalty of America's large foreign-born population started to grow when the outbreak of the war in Europe served as a cause around which to rally and as a reason to recover their roots for the German American community. Between 1914 and 1916, the subscription numbers of German American newspapers skyrocketed and German club memberships rose to pre-1890 heights. Those expressions of self-assertion by a group that was otherwise seen as a well-integrated part of the population raised questions about the nations "assimilative capacities" and the impact of "ethno cultural diversity on American security", and resulted in people increasingly calling for government policies promoting national conformity (Trommler 247). This demand was met with the instigation of multiple policies. In the year 1917, shortly after the US entered World War I, the Espionage Act was passed (Gerstle 91). This act was intended to prohibit interference with military operations or the draft, and to prevent insubordination to the military and the support of US enemies during wartime. It also included a section which closed the mail system to any materials "advocating or urging treason, insurrection, or forcible resistance to any law of the United States", which largely impacted the German-language press because it gave postal inspectors the authority to determine what printed matter was seditious or treasonable (Luebke 241). Another law passed by Congress in the same year, as part of the Trading-with-the-Enemy Act, required German-language newspapers to supply English translations of "any comments respecting the Government of the United States", which meant the end of many German-language papers operating on a marginal budget (Luebke 242). In 1918, the Espionage Act of 1917 was extended by the Sedition Act, which made it unlawful to obstruct the sale of war bonds and to use negative language to describe the government, the Constitution, the flag, or the military uniform. Both acts thus gave the government increased power over thought and speech (Allen 418).

Also in 1917, a law called the Immigration Act of 1917 was enacted over President Wilson's veto and imposed a literacy test and other restrictions on immigration (Lichtenstein 294). This law did not remain the only one that restricted immigration and worsened the situation for "aliens" in the US. The year 1918 saw the codification of the Alien Enemy Act of 1798. This act was one of the four Alien and Sedition Acts passed in 1798 by John Adams, which were a series of laws passed under the label of national security but that were intended to suppress dissent and mostly targeted recently arrived immigrants (Norton 194). Three of

the four acts were already repealed before the Great War started, but the Alien Enemy Act remained in effect and was revised and codified for use in World War I. After revising, the government was now able to apprehend and intern aliens of enemy ancestry upon declaration of war or threat of invasion (Manning 16). Furthermore, federal authorities directed state governments to create state councils of defense to prepare the US against foreign aggressors as the war escalated in Europe. The resulting state councils of defense were varied in function and authority. In some states the governor did appoint a panel of citizens but hardly gave them any authority. In other states, especially in the Midwest where the German population was frequently perceived as a genuine threat to national unity, legislatures enacted statutes creating the councils and granted them sweeping legal powers, including the authority to subpoena witnesses and to punish for contempt (Luebke 214).

In 1917, Congress also created an Amendment on Prohibition that was sent to all the states for ratification. In 1919 the Eighteenth Amendment to the Constitution was passed, which banned the manufacture or sale of alcoholic beverages. Although Prohibition was long advocated on moral grounds or as a means of increasing productivity, nativism and xenophobia were involved too. Alcohol was commonly associated with immigrants, especially with German Americans, who dominated the brewing industry (Lichtenstein 294). Therefore, the passing of the Eighteenth Amendment was something that hit German Americans particularly hard. Apart from economic reasons, alcohol and specific drinking habits also played an important role in the German culture. As becomes clear when comparing some of the agencies that were created and acts that were passed by the US government, most of them were not specifically created for German Americans but were general in nature. However, German aliens were generally touched more directly by federal regulations than other immigrant groups (Luebke 255). Acts specifically created for German Americans are more frequently found on state and city levels than on a federal level. This especially happened in places with large German populations such as the Midwest.

Acts passed on state and city level that targeted the German population and their language and culture were numerous in the Midwest during and shortly after the Great War. Examples of institutions that were targeted were the German-language press and the German churches. For example, the German-language weekly *Die Neue Washtenaw Post* from Ann Arbor, Michigan published its first issue of 1918 entirely in English, because the newspaper had collapsed under the restrictions of the Trading-with-the-Enemy Act and the pressure in Ann Arbor to Americanize (Wieland 55). However, mostly assaulted were the teaching and continued use of the German language, because it was through language that German

Americans maintained their cultural heritage (Ramsey 285). In the 1910 US Census, 9.2 million respondents identified German as their first language (Capozzola 180). However, the continued use of the German language was viewed by many Americans not only as the means of instilling disloyalty to America and love of the Kaiser, but also as the means of spreading German propaganda and maintaining the German Kaiser's control over Germans now living in America (Luebke 251). To combat this, many patriotic citizens viewed the banning of the German language from schools and public places as necessary. Repression of the German language was repeatedly justified on the grounds that the German churches and schools, as well as the German-language press, were intent upon retarding the assimilation process, thereby making the "100 percent Americanism" that Theodore Roosevelt spoke of impossible (Luebke 251). As a result, dozens of cities decided to remove German from the curricula of their school systems, and state governments followed suit.

An example of a state that turned against the German language is Iowa. Iowa was a state that dealt with a lot of anti-German sentiment during the war years, since many Iowans were of German birth or ancestry (Allen 418). By 1900, German immigrants had settled in all ninety-nine Iowa counties and represented the largest immigrant group in the state (Frese 60). William L. Harding, Iowa's war-time governor, felt the various nationalities living in Iowa could and should become more thoroughly Americanized. Although he did not outwardly question the loyalty of German Americans, the governor did express the belief that "misunderstandings" resulted from the use of foreign languages (Allen 419). On May 23, 1918, Governor Harding issued a proclamation called the Babel Proclamation, banning the use of languages other than English (Allen 419). The proclamation required that "English be the only language of instruction in public and private schools; all conversations in public places, on trains and over the telephone should be in English; all public addresses must be in English; and those who could not speak or understand English were required to conduct their religious worships in their homes" (qtd. in Frese 62). Although antagonism toward Germans and their language escalated nationwide, Harding became the only governor in the United States to outlaw the public use of *all* foreign languages (Frese 59). Harding was convinced that destroying the vital bond of language within ethnic communities would force assimilation of minorities into the dominant culture and heighten a sense of patriotism in a time of war (Frese 59).

The end of the fighting in Europe and the repealing of the Babel Proclamation did not bring an end to the fear and distrust of the use of foreign languages in Iowa. In 1919, a law was enacted requiring that instruction in secular subjects in all schools in Iowa had to be in

the English language, and foreign languages could be taught above the eighth grade only. Furthermore, a law was passed requiring citizenship instructions to be given in schools and a new organization, the American Legion, became important in Iowa in the years after the war. Its emphasis on Americanism and patriotism did not allow for Iowans using any other language than English. Although pressures and tactics such as the ban on foreign languages were not designed specifically to coerce German Americans, obviously they felt the weight of public opinion more than the average citizen simply because of their birth and ancestry (Allen 426). Although pressure to use English abated after the war, it did not completely end. Americans had been encouraged during the war to view anything German with distrust and some of this feelings lingered. Governor Harding's language proclamation, combined with the anti-German feeling during World War I, caused a decline in the use of German in Iowa. Although the German language was spoken more frequently again in the twenties and German language courses resumed in many Iowa schools in the thirties, it is doubtful if it ever attained the importance it held before the war. Societal pressure for complete assimilation into the dominant culture no longer prevailed, but the once strong German American community had been irreparably harmed and many of their customs and traditions were lost to wartime intolerance (Frese 64).

Another state that attacked the German language in its war against German American culture was Indiana. The demand for the removal of German language instruction from schools was met in Indiana by the passage of the McCray Bill in 1919 (Ramsey 287). In 1917 German Americans were a sizable and visible segment of the Indiana population, as was the case in many Midwestern states. The typical German immigrant in Indianapolis was "Americanized in a political and economic sense" rather quickly but "maintained his customs and used his mother tongue". As we have seen in Chapter One, this was true for many German immigrants in the Midwest and the US. German language instruction before the war was very common. Midwestern states like Ohio, Kansas, Missouri and Iowa all had it and it also existed outside of the Midwest. In Indianapolis high schools, students were also acquainted with German culture and literature besides the German language (Ramsey 292). However, "Germanophobia" progressed in both the country and in Indiana during the war years, and the assault on the Indianapolis Public Schools' (IPS) German language program began the month after the declaration of war. At this point in time, some high schools still offered German classes but enrollment was already seriously decreasing. By 1918, Indianapolis's teachers had loyalty clauses written into their contracts and could be terminated

if they spoke out against the US or were found “to inculcate or aid in the support of or the admiration for the *Kultur* of Germany” (Ramsey 297-98).

As was the case in Iowa, the assaults on the German language in Indiana did not end after the fighting ended in Europe either. After the war, a statewide law banned German not only from public schools but also from private and parochial elementary schools. This became known as the McCray Bill and made Indiana one of the first states to pass such a law. German Americans started to adjust to the “mood” in the country and became self-conscious about their ancestry. Very few of Indiana’s German language newspapers continued after the war, and another law was passed that addressed the remaining high school German courses and stated that “Latin or any modern foreign language except German” was required to be taught in the state’s high schools (Ramsey 299-300). Indianapolis’s once flourishing German language program had come to an end, and German American culture in both the city and the state had been heavily damaged. Although German language instruction eventually found its way back into the high schools of Indiana and the McCray Bill was declared unconstitutional, German language instruction in Indiana never fully recovered (Ramsey 301).

One last example of a state that passed a bill attacking the German language is Nebraska. On April 9, 1919, Nebraska enacted a statute called the Siman Act, which imposed restrictions on both the use of a foreign language as a medium of instruction and on foreign languages as a subject of study. In May 1920, Robert T. Meyer, a school instructor from Hampton, Nebraska, was caught teaching the subject of reading in the German language to a fourth-grader and was charged with violating the Siman Act. Meyer lost his case in the Nebraska Supreme Court and appealed to the Supreme Court of the United States, where it was decided that the Siman Act violated the liberties protected by due process of the Fourteenth Amendment and that citizens had the freedom to communicate in any language (Capozzola 195). This did not only make the Siman Act unconstitutional but also applied to many other acts, such as Indiana’s McCray Bill and Iowa’s Babel Proclamation. Despite this decision, the overall numbers show that the teaching of the German language was hit hard by anti-German sentiment during the war. In 1915, 24 percent of high school students nationwide took German; by 1922, only 1 percent did (Capozzola 192).

As becomes clear in the previous paragraphs, the German language was deeply affected by anti-immigrant policies during the war, and the decline of the use of German also led to a decline in the existence of *Kirchen*, *Vereins*, the German-language press and many more German cultural institutions. Apart from all the policies against immigrants and Germans, there was something else that caused anti-German sentiment to reach a peak in the

war years: propaganda. Widespread anti-German propaganda in the US gave birth to the Germanophobia sweeping the country and created the image of a “rapacious and bloodthirsty Germany” (Connors 27). It transformed the once admired Germans into dreaded and savage “Huns” and encouraged persecution of Americans with German heritage (Gerstle 85). The large and centralized propaganda machine of Woodrow Wilson’s administration did everything it could to spread images of the vicious and threatening Hun, as a way of getting America ready to fight. Judging from the ferocious anti-German hysteria that swept the United States, the Hun propaganda campaign seemed to work. Wilson set up the Committee on Public Information (CPI) in April 1917, which was created to publicize and popularize the war and conducted a propaganda campaign on a grand scale (Gerstle 89). As chairman of the committee, Wilson chose George Creel, a muckraking journalist from Missouri. The CPI published scores of pamphlets in millions of copies, produced dozens of short movies, distributed thousands of posters and photographs, prepared war exhibits, and staged patriotic pageants and loyalty days for ethnic groups (Luebke 212). The major task of the Creel Committee was to win the support and cooperation of America’s numerous and varied immigrant population, and special attention was given to the German Americans (Luebke 213). However, despite the sensible efforts of the committee to encourage and counsel rather than to command and threaten, it contributed immeasurably to the climate of intolerance. By its calculated manipulation of public opinion, the CPI cultivated hatred for everything German (Luebke 213).

Propaganda setting Germans in an extremely negative light was everywhere in American public life between 1914 and 1918. The Germans had committed atrocities against Belgian civilians while on their way to France, and this presented the opportunity to expose the savagery that allegedly “lurked deep within the German race”, causing many Americans to develop strong anti-German feelings (Gerstle 85). These feelings were further developed when the British liner Lusitania sank in 1915, which was torpedoed by a German U-boat as part of a submarine warfare between Germany and the UK. The Lusitania carried 128 American passengers, none of whom survived the incident, turning American public opinion decisively against the German cause (Trommler 241). The Lusitania disaster marks the beginning of creating public narratives as part of the symbolic battles that made this four-year conflict the first truly worldwide propaganda war (Trommler 242). Clever propaganda by the US government confirmed the beliefs of many Americans that Germans were indeed the “barbaric Huns” they were portrayed to be (Connors 38). However, little attention was paid to the German charges that the Lusitania was armed and carried munition. Furthermore, well in

advance of the sinking, the German government had advertised multiple times in the American press, warning American passengers of the danger they faced while aboard British vessels in a war zone (Connors 38). This too was ignored, and if anything, it only added to the suspicion of German guilt.

Atrocity propaganda was also widely used throughout the US. Tales of German barbarism in Belgium and France gave rise to the idea of German savagery that influenced the thinking of many American citizens (Connors 45). For example, German soldiers were told to amuse themselves by cutting off the hands of Belgian babies and there were persistent rumors about the crucifixion of Canadian soldiers. Atrocity propaganda was immeasurably effective in the United States during the First World War (Connors 47). In the American papers of May 11 and 12, 1915, the week the Lusitania sunk, the Bryce Report on alleged German atrocities was published. This report, produced by the Bryce Committee, was a major propaganda form that the British government had commissioned to investigate the reports about German atrocities in Belgium (Trommler 246). The headquarters of British propaganda made sure it went to every newspaper in the United States. Bryce's description of the atrocities showed the Germans in the worst possible light and convinced millions of Americans and other neutrals that the Germans were "beast in human form" (Trommler 246). Members of the Bryce Committee were appointed by the British Parliament and included some of the most distinguished jurists and historians of Great Britain (Connors 47). To Americans, it seemed that those people would never off themselves as tools of propaganda. The Bryce Report was dismissed as fabrication after the war and later partly confirmed again, but most of its content is nowadays seen as untruthful war propaganda. The Bryce Report shows how effective war propaganda can be, even if it lacks true and reliable sources.

Lastly, I will discuss some propaganda posters released by the US government and cartoons published in US newspapers to show how Germans were portrayed and why this would lead to anti-German sentiment to the degree that it did. Figure 2 is an example of official United States government propaganda, produced by George Creel's Committee on Public Information. This particular propaganda poster shows the drawing of an Allied Forces soldier pushing a German soldier away from a frightened woman who is holding a child in her lap. The German soldier has blood on his hands and the American soldier is portrayed halting the German soldier. This poster perpetuates the stereotype of the German soldier as a Hun who rapes women and bayonets children. Propaganda posters such as these turned public opinion in America strongly against Germans and made them believe that the Germans were cruel and committed all kinds of atrocities in Europe.



Fig. 2. “Halt the Hun” by the Committee on Public Information, from *Bonds of Loyalty: German Americans and World War I* by Frederick C. Luebke

Figure 3 is a newspaper cartoon called “The Hun”. Germany is depicted as the Hun in this 1918 Dayton, Ohio newspaper illustration. The Hun looks uncomprehendingly at a document listing President Woodrow Wilson’s idealistic peace aims. This cartoon portrays Germans as dumb and as people who do not understand and are confused by peace and democracy.

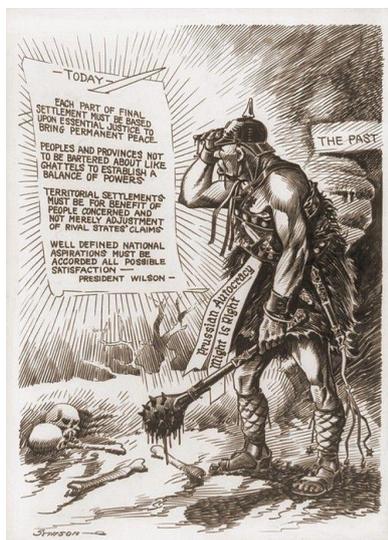


Fig. 3. “The Hun” in a Dayton, Ohio newspaper, 1918, from *American Crucible: Race and Nation in the Twentieth Century* by Gary Gerstle

When taking into account how governments on both federal, state, and city level created laws, acts, and bills to attack German Americans and their language and culture, the Germanophobia that swept the country in the years of the Great War seems nothing more than

a logical reaction to this. On top of that, lies about Germans and German Americans were spread on a wide scale through propaganda, which was also controlled by the government and heightened hatred and suspicion towards Germans in the US even more. This explains partly why anti-German sentiment came into existence in the first place, and also why it became as widespread and popular as it did. However, some wartime xenophobia and anti-Germanism had deep roots and already existed long before the war. World War I did, unlike what many people think, not create anti-immigrant feelings, but it was used to justify them. For example, some publications already made fun of German stereotypes in the nineteenth century, temperance movements targeted German's political power and German militarization in the 1900s and 1910s caused diplomatic tensions between the US and Germany (Capozzola 181). However, most anti-German sentiment developed only after 1914, partly because of reasons discussed in this chapter. Some Americans became anti-German after hearing about German atrocities in Belgium and others out of fear of German espionage and subversion at home (Capozzola 181).

Yet, at a deeper level, anti-Germanism had little to do with anything specifically German. Native-born Americans projected general anxieties about immigration and ethnic difference onto unlucky Germans, who were basically just in the wrong place at the wrong time (Capozzola 182). Americans were often confused about who or what exactly was the enemy here. Was it the German state, the German culture, or the German people themselves? However, one thing that was sure was that their feelings intensified suddenly and dramatically after 1917. This change had major consequences for what it was like to be German in America. The situation as it was for Germans in America as described in Chapter One completely disappeared. Germans were no longer seen as a respected and accepted part of American society, and more importantly, they were no longer allowed to feel both German and American but were more or less forced to leave either one of those identities behind. The German Americans who lived through the war years would never again feel the same about their heritage, or about America, because the new situation meant that loyalty to the one required cutting all ties with the other (Allen 429). The question is what consequences this had for the German American communities in the US. Did they entirely Americanize and lose their cultural distinction in the US or did they manage to maintain parts of their culture?

Chapter Three: The Disappearance of the German Language and Culture from the Midwest as a Result of Anti-German Sentiment

To what degree did anti-German sentiment hasten the assimilation of German Americans into American society and put an end to German cultural and language institutions?

After the sinking of the *Lusitania*, German Americans were increasingly accused of being unpatriotic, despite their reputation as a steadfast, well-integrated segment of the American nation (Trommler 247). In the two-year period until the declaration of war, German Americans came to be identified as different, dissenting, disagreeable or un-American. Calls for cultural ethnic cleansing of German Americans under the suspicion of collaboration with the enemy and cultural subversion of the country became louder and more frequent (Trommler 249). German Americans felt threatened by growing anti-German sentiment and many of them chose to display their patriotism in several ways. By changing their names, discontinuing the use of their native language outside their homes, and altering instruction and services offered in schools and community organizations, German Americans have lost part of their ethnic identity. They attempted to shake off all traces of their heritage and become fully “American”, which hastened their assimilation into American society and put an end to many German language and cultural institutions in the United States and the Midwest.

The fight against German *Kultur* manifested itself in different ways. First of all, as discussed in Chapter Two, the battle against all things German included a ban on the use of the German language in schools, universities, libraries, and religious services. Books with German content of any kind were removed from the shelves in libraries and German-language schoolbooks were burned in many places. By March 1918, thirty-eight out of forty-eight states had restricted or ended German-language instruction in schools. Patriotic organizations claimed that the preservation of the German language would hinder German American’s assimilation into American life. The patriots of the American Defense Society claimed that “any language which produces a people of ruthless conquistadors such as now exists in Germany, is not a fit language to teach clean and pure American boys and girls” (Capozzola 181). The American Defense Society was an elite patriotic society founded in 1915 that attacked German American institutions in general but made special war on the German language (Luebke 216). On February 25, 1918 an article was published in the *New York Times* in which the Society called on Congress to take action on a series of measures required by US entry into World War I, called “Calls for Strict Ban on German Language: American Defense Society Also Urges Vigorous Steps to Put an End to Plots”. It called for an

overwhelming force to be sent to France to quickly end the war and for the internment of enemy aliens and sympathizers to prevent sabotage, especially the interning of “aggressive pro-German sympathizers, whether German citizens or not” (“Calls for Strict Ban on German Language”). On the German language, the American Defense Society said the following:

The appalling and complete breakdown of German *Kultur* compels a sweeping revision of the attitude of civilized nations and individuals toward the German language, literature, and science. The close scrutiny of German thought induced by “Hun” frightfulness in this war has revealed abhorrent qualities hitherto unknown, and to most people unsuspected. Hereafter, throughout every English-speaking country on the globe, the German language will be a dead language. Out with it forever! (“Calls for Strict Ban on German Language”)

At the end of 1918, another article was published in the New York Times called “To Fight German Teaching”, in which the American Defense Society launched a campaign to eliminate instruction in German nationwide. Patriotic organizations such as the ADS largely influenced public opinion during the war years and were important in eliminating the German culture and language from American society. Restrictions and bans on language are of such great significance because it influenced everything else that was part of the German culture in the United States. Many German American cultural institutions suffered from the language bans and restrictions and disappeared as a result thereof.

An example of a cultural institution that suffered from the language bans is the German-language press. Before the US officially entered World War I, German-language newspapers were already viciously attacked. For example, an article was published in the *Atlantic Monthly* in July 1917 which claimed that the entire German-language press was disloyal and did not support the United States but spread pro-German propaganda (Luebke 235). Around the same time, the *Topeka Kansas* demanded the suppression of every German-language publication because each was “disloyal and desired victory for the Kaiser” (Luebke 237). Throughout the war, German-language newspapers were subsequently shut down or lost so many advertisers that they were forced out of business (Manning 16). Because of the work of patriotic organizations such as the ADS, many readers cancelled their subscriptions on German-language newspapers, companies stopped advertising in them, no one wanted to deliver them anymore, and vendors stopped selling them. The German-language press, which, as we have seen in Chapter One, was the glue that held the ethnic community together, was devastated by changed attitudes in the country (Luebke 271). Laws that were passed by the federal government did not help the case of German newspapers either. As mentioned in

Chapter Two, the requirement that was made by the government for German-language newspapers to supply English translations of any matters related to the US government forced many smaller newspapers out of business. Because such small newspapers usually had tiny staffs, much time and energy was consumed in translating and many papers could eventually just not keep up anymore (Luebke 242). Publishers tried hard to save their newspapers, for example by changing their newspapers' names from German to English, publishing all war news in English to avoid having to translate everything for the government, and even by attacking the methods and goals of Imperial Germany. In spite of all these attempts, the ethnic press was hit hard by anti-German sentiment and a large amount of newspapers failed to survive the war. German publications declined from 554 in 1910 to 234 in 1920, and daily German newspaper circulation plummeted to a fourth of its 1910 numbers (Capozzola 183). Casualties among the small-town weeklies were especially severe, for example in the Midwestern states of Iowa and Indiana (Luebke 271). In Iowa, twenty-six newspapers had been published before the war and only eleven were still in business two years later. In Indiana, only one of the three dailies survived and all six weekly newspapers were discontinued. In states where the German ethnic population was small, the German-language press usually ceased to exist altogether.

Apart from the German-language press, the presence of *Kirchen* and *Vereins* also drastically declined during the war years. Whereas Church Germans relied on the recognized division between American life and their German-speaking God, many Club Germans felt compelled to push the overwhelmingly unorganized, vaguely informed and uncommitted majority of the ethnic group to remain steadfast in its ethnic pride and its relief efforts for the German victims of war (Trommler 252). However, once the war progressed, *Vereins* faded quite easily under superpatriotic pressure. They were already assimilating more than the *Kirchen* in the years before the war, so when pressures to conform built up, many *Vereinsdeutschen* started to Americanize and left their German heritage behind (Luebke 233). However, unlike the German clubs, German churches and their institutions refused to fade away, making them the most likely group of Germans to be seen as disloyal by the superpatriots (Luebke 311). Churches that had been founded as German speaking or bilingual were forced to discontinue their German services, but the *Kirchen* tried to maintain a "business-as-usual" policy and were not willing to modify their use of German language and culture (Luebke 233). They believed that they had every right to continue using German in their worship services, schools, business meetings, and publications. Some assimilationists did take measures to Americanize their German churches, but most conservatists tended to

ignore the demands that were made upon them by superpatriots. This made people especially fearful of German American churches and they thought of them as agents of German imperialism. However, collapsing under the pressure of patriots and patriotic organizations, many *Kirchen* eventually switched to English for their religious services or ceased to exist and worshipped in German in the privacy of their own homes. Many churches that continued their services replaced preachers that only spoke German and dropped the word “German” from their names, such as the German Evangelical St. John’s Church in Saint Charles, Missouri, that was renamed the Evangelical St. John’s Church (Richardson 87).

Several patriotic organizations started campaigns to Americanize the United States and get rid of its German influences. Since names were the most obvious evidence of German ethnicity, many name-changing campaigns were established during this period of time (Luebke 247). The American Defense Society was one of such organizations, campaigning to change the names of cities, streets, parks, and schools in America to the names of Belgian and French communities destroyed in the war (Luebke 217). Name-changing campaigns were very successful, and many of the existing phrases that sounded German were replaced by more English-sounding words. The popular hamburger became a “liberty burger,” dachshunds became “liberty hounds,” sauerkraut was called “liberty cabbage”, and German measles became “liberty measles” (Manning 17). Groups like the American Defense Society were also responsible for many city and street names being changed from German-sounding designations to more Americanized ones. For example, East Germantown, Indiana was renamed Pershing; Germantown, Nebraska was renamed Garland, and Berlin, Iowa became Lincoln. Not only cities but also street names were changed, such as Cincinnati’s German Street which was transformed to English Street. German ethnic businesses also had to change their names in order to survive. If they chose to keep their German names, customers would often stay away and it was likely that they eventually had to close their businesses (Luebke 270). An example occurred in Saint Louis, Missouri, where the Kaiser-Huhn grocery became the Pioneer Grocery Company after stones were thrown at its drivers (Richardson 86). Name-changing had become a common phenomenon as the war progressed, and thousands of Germans voluntarily and consciously removed the most obvious mark of their ethnicity. They sought to avoid further harassment by changing their family names, often shortening them or translating them into English. Schmidt became Smith, Schwartz became Black, and so on. In Milwaukee, Wisconsin, more than two hundred families changed their names during the first four months of the war (Luebke 282). All these name changes caused German to disappear from the street scene more and more.

Something else that was hit hard by anti-German sentiment was German music. Before the war, compositions of German composers like Beethoven and Wagner were very popular in the United States and were played at many concerts. During the war, however, few other elements of German culture were so savagely attacked as was German music (Capozzola 183). Many superpatriots and patriotic organizations attempted to “protect” American audiences from the contamination of disloyal music (Luebke 249). The American Defense Society, for example, claimed that German music was “one of the most dangerous forms of propaganda, because it appeals to the emotions and has power to sway the audience” (Capozzola 183). This idea found supporters all over the country but especially in the Midwest. The mayor of Lincoln, Nebraska ordered all German composers eliminated from the program of the visiting Minneapolis Symphony Orchestra, and teachers in Columbus, Ohio pasted over the pages of music textbooks containing German songs (Capozzola 183). Some musicians of German descent or who sympathized with Germany were even put in alien detention camps. Musicians such as Dr. Kunwald, who was the conductor of the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra, were arrested and interned because they were seen as threats to the safety of the country (Luebke 249).

The treatment of German-Americans during the war varied from region to region. There was less harassment in places where there were few citizens of German descent, since they were not perceived as a real threat there. This made the Midwest an area where anti-German sentiment was strongly present. After the war, German Americans lost a lot of their visible presence in communities and German had been rooted out from the schools, churches, newspapers, and public discourse (Wieland 59). World War I had accelerated the assimilation of most German-American groups, and it is safe to say that anti-German sentiment as a result of the war at least hastened assimilation of German Americans into American society to a reasonably high degree. The Anglo-conformity theory forced complete cultural assimilation upon them, and those who opposed such assimilation were accused of disloyalty to the US. By taking away the churches, clubs, newspapers and schools of German Americans, they were forced to enter the clubs and institutions of the host society instead, causing the structural assimilation that Milton M. Gordon calls the keystone of assimilating into the host society to finally occur. The price of such assimilation, however, was the disappearance of the ethnic group, in this case Germans, as a separate entity and the evaporation of its distinctive values (Gordon 81). This also affected the notion of what it meant to be a German in America. The fact that so many Germans were getting rid of their German identity to fully assimilate into American society shows that it was apparently a heavy burden to be a German in

America at this point in time. The German Americans had always been proud of their ethnic heritage and I think they would not distance themselves from their German identity unless they really felt pressured and forced to do so. As I discussed at the end of Chapter Two, being loyal to one country and identity meant cutting all ties with the other, and after the results I found while writing this chapter, it appears that a significant part of the German American population chose to cut ties with Germany.

The Great War thus was the starting sign of a cancellation of the German influence in America, and for several decades this contributed substantially to the development of an immigration society with an Anglo-Saxon hegemonic culture towards a modern unified nation (Trommler 262). After the war, families stopped speaking German in their homes, programs for the maintenance of language and culture faded, and ethnic heritage hardly played a part anymore in their daily lives (Luebke 329). Many German Americans preferred to conceal their ethnic background instead of being proud of it. In the first postwar census, about 900.000 German-born Americans vanished and reappeared under the categories of “American-born” or “other ethnicity” (Wieland 59). Although some of the German language and culture would return to the Midwest and the US from the 1920s onwards, the Americanization that had begun in the 1910s could never be entirely reversed. The thirties were marked by Hitler and Nazism gaining power in Germany, which made the tendencies of German Americans to bury their ethnicity even stronger. The decades directly following the First World War were no time to take pride in German heritage and to revive the once-thriving German American communities in both the Midwest and the US. However, does this mean that German Americans were now fully assimilated and Americanized? Or did the German Americans and their culture turn out to be more resilient than what was initially thought?

Chapter Four: The Survival of the German Language and Culture in the Midwest Despite Anti-German Sentiment

To what degree did the German American community prove to be resilient and manage to maintain parts of their language and culture?

As discussed in the previous chapter, World War I put an end to an era where German Americans were a proud and visible ethnic group throughout many places in the Midwest, with their own distinct language and *Kultur*. This cultural superiority that German Americans had always felt, despite being a minority in the United States, disappeared and they were now looked upon as traitors. As we have also seen in Chapter Three, many German Americans reacted to this by shedding their German roots and Americanize, thereby losing their German identities. However, in this last chapter I want to show that there is another side to it and that the German American community proved to be more resilient than was initially thought, managing to maintain parts of their language and culture in the post-World War I era.

Since language was the aspect of German Americanism that was most viciously attacked, it is interesting to see to what degree the German language remained in the Midwest after the war. According to Michael T. Putnam, professor of German and linguistics at Pennsylvania State University, and Joseph Salmons, professor of German linguistics at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, the linguistic landscape of the Midwest has always been profoundly shaped by German, and German-speaking immigrants continue to shape the landscape of the Midwest even today (29-30). No other immigrant groups resisted learning English to the extent that the Germans did. Most Germans did not learn English for a couple of generations and often held on to their language generations longer than other immigrant groups (Putnam 33). However, the view that World War I was the death knell of the German language in America and the Midwest is overstated and called a myth by Putnam and Salmons. According to them, the reason that a language shift from German to English occurred is because of the process of verticalization, which is a shift of control from local to non-local hands. In the past, communities such as the German American communities were quite autonomous and their local institutions were tied more closely to one another than to state or national ones (Putnam 33). However, over time, control of institutions such as schools and churches “verticalized” and moved beyond local control towards broader control. After communities have verticalized, the support structure for minority languages within a community steadily erodes (Putnam 34). Before World War I, German monolingualism was so widespread in the Midwest because of the relatively large German-speaking population in

the area. This German-speaking population had an enormous amount of institutions in the German language, such as schools, churches, and newspapers. The language shift from German to English did not only have to do with anti-German sentiment but also had to do with factors caused by verticalization. Schools, for example, became more controlled by the state, which influenced language and put the focus mainly on the language that all Americans shared: English.

The war also had, as we have seen in previous chapters, an enormous impact on the press. Some newspapers indeed switched to English because of patriotic pressure, but economic changes had a large impact as well (Putnam 34). Not just German papers but small papers in any language simply became less viable over time. Larger circulations became necessary to make newspapers and magazines economically viable. Smaller German language publications often went out of business for that reason, but so did English language newspapers. In religion, it was not always the case that churches changed its services to English because German services were forbidden or kept people away. Sometimes, German-speaking clergies were simply not available anymore. The shift was thus driven by an inability to conduct services in German in some instances (Putnam 34). Putnam concludes that World War I was certainly a difficult time to be a German speaker in the United States, but “the war and that period by no means killed the German language in the US” (44).

Neither the reasons mentioned above nor anti-German sentiment during the war have completely rooted out German and Germans from the Midwest. Of Pennsylvania Germans alone, in 2012 there were 375 settlements in Ohio, 246 in Indiana, 93 in Wisconsin, 49 in Missouri, and 40 in Iowa, where the language continues to be transmitted to children and used in daily life (Putnam 41). Another group of Germans, the Old Colony Mennonites speaking Mennonite Low German, started to move to Kansas in the late 1970s from other US and Canadian areas. Starting out as a small group, in 2007 there were approximately four to five thousand Old Colony Mennonite migrant farmworkers in Kansas (Putnam 42). German immigration to the Midwest thus still exists even today. It is important to keep in mind that there is no group of “Midwestern Germans”. As discussed in Chapter One, Germans came from many different parts of Germany, or even from other German-speaking countries, and had different dialects, histories, cultural values, and political ideas. Although some form of standard German, in writing and to a lesser degree in speaking, was and is still known in the Midwest, German ethnic identities were and are still very distinct (Putnam 43).

Not just the immigration rates of recent years but also the immigration rates of Germans right after the end of the war prove that Germans were not completely rooted out of

American society after World War I. The German defeat in the war was followed by years of political crisis and economic hardships in Germany, and this led to the immigration of more than 420.000 Germans to the United States between 1918 and 1924 (Adam 18). These immigrants were for the most part young single men of the World War I generation, and most of them were academics, professionals, or merchants (Adam 19). Prior to the Great Depression, growing restrictions in American immigration policy influenced all immigrant groups, but some to a lesser extent than others. The 1921 Emergency Immigration Restriction Act introduced the quota system, which fixed yearly quota of immigrants from any given country. This act restricted annual immigration of a given nationality to three percent of immigrants from that nation already residing in the US in 1910, meaning that the act heavily discriminated southern and eastern Europeans, whose numbers were comparatively small in 1910. Interesting is that the German quota was set on 25.000, which was relatively high in general and much higher compared to eastern European quotas (Adam 19). The Immigration Act of 1924, also known as the National Origins Act, was passed three years later and replaced the Quota Act mentioned above. It restricted annual immigration from any foreign country to two percent of each nationality residing in the United States in 1890 and limited the total annual immigration to 150.000 (Adam 19). Significant here is that the act openly discriminated against Asians by banning them completely, and also further restricted southern and eastern Europeans, since fewer of those groups lived in the US in 1890 than in 1910. However, Germans were yet again one of the immigrant groups that did relatively well in this act and were not discriminated against. Both acts indicate that anti-German sentiment did not survive the war because first of all, German Americans apparently wanted to immigrate to the US again, and second of all, the US still allowed a relatively high number of Germans into the country, meaning that the suspicion and hatred of World War I must be a lot less present than it was during the war.

An important factor in the survival of the German language and culture in the US were pro-German societies. Patriotic societies such as the American Defense Society discussed in Chapter Three largely influenced public opinion on German Americans in a negative way, but there were also societies and associations that defended the cause of German ethnics. Although there were many, large and small, I am going to discuss only three of such societies in the remainder of this chapter, one that was especially active during World War I and two that gained importance after 1918. The National German-American Alliance (NGAA) was a federation of ethnic German associations founded in 1901 and became the single-largest German American ethnic organization in American history, claiming 2.5 million members at

its height in the years immediately preceding the outbreak of World War I (Adam 805). It came into existence because the German American community started to feel obliged to organize their group on a national scale because of the national immigration restriction in the 1890s and the more urgent demands for national prohibition in the early 1900s (Luebke 68). The mission of the NGAA was to promote and preserve German culture in America, and it essentially sought to resist the assimilation of Germans in America and wanted to end immigration restrictions. The NGAA promoted German language instruction in schools, the foundation of educational societies, and the publication of histories and journals to demonstrate the role German Americans had played in the development of the United States and to preserve the memory of German American contributions to the growth of the US and its institutions (Adam 805). They also sought to create a higher sense of unity among the people of German origin in America (Dobbert 679). In 1907, the NGAA was given a United States congressional charter. In its most successful years, they represented about 2.5 million people of German lineage and they controlled a comparably large part of public opinion, if not votes (Luebke 98).

One of the things that the Alliance felt very strongly about was prohibition, especially during the prewar period. German Americans dominated the brewing industry, but to many German-born voters, breweries and beer were more than just an economic factor. Prohibition, to them, was a type of legislation that threatened their lifestyle and value system and was considered a threat to the customary German-American way of life (Dobbert 663). The NGAA viewed any restrictions regarding the consumption of alcohol not only as a threat to German culture in America, but also as a violation of personal liberties granted by the Constitution (Adam 806). Prohibition of alcohol would take away the tradition of the “Sunday beer garden,” a weekly social gathering emphasizing family and friendship that served as one of the main social outlets within German American communities (Adam 806). Germans took the attack on prohibition very personal, with John Schwaab, president of the Ohio branch of the NGAA, calling prohibition “a fight against the Germans” (Dobbert 680). Despite all their efforts against prohibition and using the patriotic motivation of calling prohibition a potential threat to other personal liberties enjoyed by Americans, the suspicion of people made sure it could never become very successful. Since the brewing industry was controlled by German Americans, forces opposing the NGAA used this to show that they were only defending their own economic interests (Adam 806).

Although the NGAA remained in existence until 1918 and actually reached the peak of its growth around 1916, the war years were very hard on them. Especially after the sinking of

the Lusitania, many German Americans understood that this event greatly reduced the tolerance American society had for them and for divergent opinions (Luebke 134). The NGAA became one of the many targets during the war, with its president Charles J. Hexamer receiving threatening letters from many parts of the country. Many people from the NGAA and from other pro-German organizations started to do away with their German ethnicity and outwardly displayed their loyalty towards “the Stars and Stripes.” However, some NGAA-members also responded to the new intensity of anti-German sentiment by becoming even more ethnically solidary. The New York branch of the NGAA, for example, held a great mass demonstration on 24 June 1915 in Madison Square Garden with more than 70.000 people participating (Luebke 135). However, the sinking of the Lusitania later turned out to be the beginning of the downfall of the NGAA. In an atmosphere of rising anti-German sentiment, the NGAA’s outspokenness against prohibition, its stance for neutrality during World War I, and its support of Germany led to the revoking of their charter and the collapse of the Alliance in 1918.

In May 1919, the Steuben Society was founded in New York City by a small group of German Americans who were suffering from considerable anti-German sentiment following World War I (Adam 1007). To combat this anti-German sentiment, this group wanted to create an organization that would celebrate the numerous social, cultural, political, and scientific contributions of German Americans to American society (Adam 1007). Despite similarities, the Steuben Society was not a revival of the National German-American Alliance. The Society, for example, used English in its meetings and publications instead of German, only pursued political goals, and only accepted memberships of persons rather than of organizations (Luebke 320). The organization mainly sought to promote and retain a sense of pride and dignity in the heritage of German Americans, and they provided a uniform identity that represented the millions of Americans of Germanic descent (Adam 1007). The Steuben Society recognized English as the predominate language in the US but did strongly advocate studies in German-language education, not necessarily for the purposes of identity but because the German language possessed a reasonable level of importance in international matters (Adam 1007).

The Steuben Society never achieved much popularity, and neither did the German-American Citizens League, which was another successor of the NGAA and had much more similarities to it than the Steuben Society did. The Citizen League, for example, was also dedicated to the revival of German language and culture, just like the NGAA. The reason both organizations never gained a lot of support was because German diversity was simply much

too great (Luebke 321). *Kirchendeutschen* had always mistrusted the National Alliance and they had similar attitudes towards the Citizen League and the Steuben Society. The support of both organizations thus mostly existed of *Vereinsdeutschen*. However, the National Alliance still had more than two million members at its peak, while neither the Citizen League nor the Steuben Society ever exceeded 20.000 (Luebke 320). There are a couple of reasons for this. First of all, the NGAA was founded in a time where German Americans felt that they had to organize as a group on a national scale in order to protect their German identity, and this was less so in the twenties. Furthermore, anti-German sentiment during the war not only had negative effects on German Americans but also stirred up ethnic pride, which the NGAA benefitted from. This was an advantage that the Steuben Society and Citizens League did not have. Apart from that, both the Citizen League and the Steuben Society were plagued by internal dissension and indecisive leadership, things that the NGAA did not struggle with (Luebke 320).

Although the Steuben Society never gained a lot of popularity, its presence in the years after the war was still important in maintaining parts of the German culture. It tried to compensate for German American passivity during and after the First World War and wanted to regain the respect German Americans had had before anti-German sentiment took over the country (Kupsky 96-97). Despite not being able to gain national political strength, some cultural and social efforts of the Society were successful (Kupsky 100). Although it was not their ultimate goal or main purpose, its most effective work was the preservation of the German language. It opened a number of “Steuben schools” in the New York area to teach both the German language and “the ideals and works of the German writers and thinkers,” and it created “Saturday schools” in Midwestern cities for teaching German. The Steuben Society was also significant in establishing October 6 as German-American Day in recognition of the first German immigrants to settle on the North American continent in 1683 (Adam 1008). The holiday was officially recognized in 1983, but the Steuben Society already organized German Day celebrations in major cities many years before that. It thus managed to designate itself as a representative of the “German element” in social functions in a number of localities (Kupsky 101).

Although anti-German sentiment during World War I largely affected the presence of German language and culture in a negative way, German Americans still found ways to hold on to parts of their ethnic identity. In my opinion, Putnam and Salmons slightly underestimate the impact of anti-German sentiment in their article and I think it is wrong to call the fact that the war was the death knell to the German language a myth. However, they do show that the

presence of Germans and the German language in the Midwest never disappeared, and I agree with them that World War I did not entirely root out the presence of Germans and the German language in the Midwest. Furthermore, pro-German societies have really helped to maintain the German culture and more importantly, have been successful in trying to maintain some sense of ethnic pride. They showed German Americans that it was still possible to be a German in America and that they did not have to choose sides and pick either the German or the American identity but could be proud of both identities. I think this feeling of ethnic pride is probably the most important factor in keeping the German culture alive in the US right after World War I, because without that pride German Americans would probably not have returned to parts of their “Germanness” after the war and would have assimilated into American society for good.

Conclusion

In the Introduction of this thesis, three important theories of assimilation were discussed. While Anglo-conformity used to be the dominant theory of assimilation when early immigrants came to America, this theory was later replaced by the melting pot theory. However, both the Anglo-conformity theory and the melting pot theory were theories that were primarily supported by white Anglo Saxons. Most immigrants preferred something called cultural pluralism, of which German Americans were a perfect example until World War I. As mentioned in Chapter Two, the typical German immigrant was Americanized in a political and economic sense rather quickly but maintained his customs and used his mother tongue while assimilating in America. However, cultural pluralism for the German in America seemed no longer to present an acceptable solution for his assimilation once the war started (Dobbert 665). As a result of this, many Germans either blended themselves completely with their American environment, or took refuge in an almost total ethnic isolation. The former meant a wholesale rejection of their German cultural heritage, the latter an identification with the German Empire which precluded any adoption of worthwhile American ways (Dobbert 665). German *Kultur* thus lost its final battle for superiority during World War I, because it either disappeared from communities altogether or was only still present within the safety and privacy of German homes.

Ironically, the hatred of World War I only hastened what was already happening before the war: Germans were choosing to become American (Wieland 59). Census data from 1900 suggest Germans were the most likely immigrants to become Americans, with over 90 percent of German-born respondents either filing papers to gain citizenship or assuming citizenship (Wieland 59). This shows that Germans were willing to Americanize and that they wanted to become citizens of their adopted homeland. It is therefore ironic that out of all immigrants, the Germans should have suffered the forced eradication of their ethnic heritage to the degree that they did.

As mentioned in Chapter Three, because of the rise of Nazism in Germany, the decades right after World War I were no time to take pride in one's German heritage, and a revival of German *Kultur* like it existed before the war did not occur during this period. However, some groups of German Americans did manage to survive into the thirties and forties. Nazism pressured German American organizations to revise their notions of ethnic nationalism: only those organizations that adapted, placing Germanness within a new notion of Americanness, survived into the 1930s and 1940s (Kupsky 12). After World War II, the

situation for German Americans improved because communism and the Soviet Union replaced Nazi Germany as symbols of evil (Luebke 331). West Germany became more like the US and other Western-European countries again, and the US started to sympathize with it more and more. This made the negative elements of German stereotypes fade away. However, only little traces of German ethnic life remained and the Germans as a group had mostly disappeared, completely assimilated into mainstream America (Luebke 331).

German heritage nowadays does play a role in US daily life again, but in a different way. The research question that I introduced at the beginning of this thesis questioned to what degree anti-German sentiment in the Midwest caused by World War I hastened the assimilation of German Americans into American society and put an end to many German language and cultural institutions, and to what degree the German culture and language remained. Up until World War I, German Americans had their own distinctive, vibrant, prosperous communities and the German language was by far the most widespread language in the United States. As discussed in Chapter One, Germans were a well-integrated and respected part of American society but held onto their own language, customs, and values. The transition to the English language and culture was abrupt, forced by anti-German sentiment during World War I, caused by policies and propaganda instigated by the federal government, as we have seen in Chapter Two. After 1917, the German language was seldom heard in public anymore, and today, only around 1.38 million people in the US speak the German language, while 42.8 million Americans claim German ancestry (U.S. 2000 Census “Ancestry” 2). The Census also shows that German ancestry is decreasing both absolutely and relatively, a process that started after World War I but is still going on right now. For example, as a proportion of the population, German decreased from 57.9 million people in 1990, comprising 23% of the population, to 42.8 million people who made up 15% of the population in 2000 (“Ancestry” 3). However, despite this decrease, German is still the largest-reported ancestry in the US.

From 1920 onwards, prohibition shut down many cultural institutions of the Germans such as taverns, beer gardens, and saloons. The ones that reopened in 1933 spoke English. By the 1940s, most German Americans were thoroughly assimilated in American society. However, despite this assimilation, there is also a distinct German American ethnicity that survived well into the mid-20th century in some places, most of them located in the Midwest or Pennsylvania. To this day, as was discussed in Chapter Four, there are also still German-speaking groups in the US such as the Pennsylvania Dutch. Furthermore, German American societies also organize celebrations held throughout the country to celebrate German heritage,

such as the German-American Steuben Parade in New York City. Traditional Oktoberfest celebrations and German-American Day are popular festivities throughout the US, and there are major annual events in cities with German heritage including Chicago, Cincinnati, Milwaukee, and Saint Louis. Such events and celebrations show how important organizations discussed in Chapter Four have been, despite the fact that they never achieved much popularity at the time of their existence. Although the current situation is not in the slightest how it used to be before World War I, it does demonstrate that it is accepted and respected again to be a German in America (Luebke 331).

In conclusion, I think anti-German sentiment caused by World War I hastened the assimilation of German Americans into American society to quite a high degree, and it definitely put an end to many German language and cultural institutions. Although some of the language and culture also survived World War I and is still in existence today, it is safe to conclude that World War I and anti-German sentiment largely reduced the presence of German language and culture in the US and the Midwest. Furthermore, as I have explained in the previous paragraphs, the parts of German language and culture that remained play an entirely different role in American society than it did before World War I, and I think this is something that will never be restored again. However, something that is restored is the notion of what it means to be German in America. Nowadays, being a German in America once again means that you are a respected and accepted part of society and you are allowed to feel both German and American, although Germans nowadays express this in different ways than Germans before World War I did.

The answers that I found while working on my thesis show why this research project is important. It is obvious that, in one way or another, Germans and their heritage are still present in the United States today, not only because they make up such a large part of the population but also through celebrations, food, and certain communities of people from German descent. However, many people do not know how the current situation came to be, and I think this is important to know considering how influential German Americans have been throughout America's history. They have always been one of the biggest and most important immigrant groups in the country, and World War I highly influenced the position of German Americans in American society. Anti-German sentiment in World War I can be used to explain how the present situation came to be. Since Germans have always been important to America and will probably always remain important, research on this topic will continue to be relevant. The 2000 U.S. Census showing that German nowadays still remains the most reported ancestry of the country only confirms this statement.

Another reason why research on this particular topic is relevant is that by looking at the bigger picture, it becomes clear that it is not just an isolated topic but that it is applicable to many situations throughout American history and that it is even applicable to the situation that is going on in America as we speak. The Germans are not the only group of immigrants in the US that were attacked because of their heritage during times of crisis and war. For example, during the Red Scares of 1919-1920 and 1947-1957, both occurring right after a World War, Anglo-conformity was expected from many Russian-Americans and (suspected) communists, and during these periods of time, they were the ones that people were suspicious of. Another example are the Japanese during World War II. Thousands of Japanese Americans were imprisoned during this war, the sole reason for that being that they were of Japanese ancestry. Despite lack of evidence in most cases, Japanese Americans were suspected of remaining loyal to their country of origin and anti-Japanese paranoia increased in the country. The government once again released a lot of propaganda with slogans such as “Slap the Jap” and the Japanese were discriminated by the government through policies such as Roosevelt’s Executive Order 9066, which cleared the way for deportation of Japanese Americans to internment camps. The situation of Japanese Americans in World War II shows many similarities with the situation of German Americans in World War I, and the same theories of assimilation can be applied.

Today, a new issue has appeared that shows similarities with the situation of the Germans during World War I. The rise of IS in the Middle East and the run for president by Donald Trump have affected the lives of many Muslims living in America in an extremely negative way. Terrorist attacks by IS have become very frequent in the last couple of years, and meanwhile Donald Trump is building more and more of his presidential campaign on demonizing Muslims and the Islam. Trump even vowed to ban Muslims from entering the United States altogether. The media, which could be seen as a modern form of propaganda, is extremely influential, painting a very selective picture of Muslims and the Islam. Right now, it is hard to say what the outcome of this situation will be. Will American Muslims end up shedding their Muslim religion and identity and conform to American society, or will they succeed in holding on to their own identity in an environment that grows increasingly hateful and suspicious of them? This is a subject that is still developing and changing every day, and I would strongly recommend this as a topic for further research. Keeping my own research in mind, I, for one, hope history will not repeat itself and that Muslims and all other immigrants in the US will never find themselves in the position German Americans were in because of World War I.

Works Cited

- Adam, Thomas, ed. *Germany and the Americas: Culture, Politics, and History*. Vol. 3. Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2005. *Google Books*. Web.
- Allen, Leola. "Anti-German Sentiment in Iowa During World War I." *The Annals of Iowa* 42.6 (1974): 418-29. *Iowa Research Online*. Web.
- "Calls for Strict Ban on German Language: American Defense Society Also Urges Vigorous Steps to Put an End to Plots." *New York Times* 24 Feb. 1918. *TimesMachine*. Web.
- Capozzola, Christopher. *Uncle Sam Wants You: World War I and the Making of the Modern American Citizen*. New York, NY: Oxford UP, 2008. Print.
- Connors, Michael F. *Dealing in Hate: The Development of Anti-German Propaganda*. Newport Beach, CA: Institute for Historical Review, 1969. *Institute for Historical Review*. Institute for Historical Review. Web.
- Dobbert, G.A. "German-Americans between New and Old Fatherland, 1870-1914." *American Quarterly* 19.4 (1967): 663-80. *JSTOR*. Web.
- Frese, Stephen J. "Divided by a Common Language: The Babel Proclamation and Its Influence in Iowa History." *The History Teacher* 39.1 (2005): 59-88. *JSTOR*. Web.
- Gerstle, Gary. *American Crucible: Race and Nation in the Twentieth Century*. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton UP, 2001. Print.
- Gordon, Milton M. *Assimilation in American Life: The Role of Race, Religion, and National Origins*. New York, NY: Oxford UP, 1964. Print.
- Hoyt, Giles R. "Germans." *Peopling Indiana: The Ethnic Experience*. Ed. Robert M. Taylor and Connie A. McBirney. Indianapolis, IN: Indiana Historical Society, 1996. 146-81. *Indiana Historical Society*. Indiana Historical Society, 2010. Web. 7 Apr. 2016.
- Kupsky, Gregory J. "'The True Spirit of the German People': German-Americans and National Socialism, 1919-1955." Diss. Ohio State U, 2010. *Electronic Theses and Dissertations Center*. Ohio.gov, 2010. Web.
- Lichtenstein, Nelson, Susan Strasser, and Roy Rosenzweig. *Who Built America? Working People and the Nation's Economy, Politics, Culture, and Society*. Ed. Stephen Brier and Joshua Brown. 2nd ed. Vol. 2. New York, NY: American Social History Productions, 2000. Print.
- Luebke, Frederick C. *Bonds of Loyalty: German Americans and World War I*. DeKalb, IL: Northern Illinois UP, 1974. Print.
- Manning, Mary J. "Being German, Being American." *Prologue* 46.2 (2014): 14-22. *America: History & Life*. Web.

- Norton, Mary Beth, Carol Sheriff, David W. Blight, Howard P. Chudacoff, Fredrik Logevall, Beth Bailey, and Debra Michals. *A People & A Nation*. 9th ed. Canada: Wadsworth Cengage Learning, 2012. Print.
- Putnam, Michael T., and Joseph Salmons. "Multilingualism in the Midwest: How German Has Shaped (and Still Shapes) the Midwest." *Middle West Review* 1.2 (2015): 29-52. *Project MUSE*. Web. 3 Mar. 2016.
- Ramsey, Paul J. "The War against German-American Culture: The Removal of German-Language Instruction from the Indianapolis Schools, 1917-1919." *Indiana Magazine of History* 98.4 (2002): 285-303. *America: History & Life*. Web.
- Richardson, Chris. "With Liberty and Justice For All? The Suppression of German-American Culture During World War I." *Missouri Historical Review* 90.1 (1995): 79-89. *America: History & Life*. Web.
- "To Fight German Teaching." *New York Times* 31 Dec. 1918. *TimesMachine*. Web.
- Trommler, Frank. "The Lusitnia Effect: America's Mobilization against Germany in World War I." *German Studies Review* 32.2 (2009): 241-66. *JSTOR*. Web.
- United States. Department of Commerce. U.S. Census Bureau. *Ancestry: 2000*. 1 Apr. 2000. 1-12. Web.
- United States. Department of Commerce. U.S. Census Bureau. *Language Use and English-Speaking Ability: 2000*. 1-11. 1 Apr. 2000. Web.
- Wieland, George. "Americanization: Hastened by Hate?" *Michigan History Magazine* 94.4 (2010): 54-59. *America: History & Life*. Web.