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Personal names and migration: An overview

Michelle Waldispühl

Abstract: This paper seeks to offer a broad examination of themes related to personal names within the context of migration. It gives a survey of how language contact effects the name form and reviews various socio-onomastic perspectives, including name choice and multilingual identity, name changes and social belonging, names in multilingual interaction, as well as legal considerations surrounding foreign names in contemporary societies. For a thorough perspective, this overview includes research pertaining to both present-day and historical situations.

Keywords: Personal names, multilingualism, migration, multicultural identity, socio-onomastics, cross-cultural conflicts, personal name law, historical personal names

1. Introduction

The movement of individuals across geographical regions results in encounters with other people, their languages, language practices, and linguistic repertoires. Personal names, as linguistic entities, play

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Michelle Waldispühl (University of Oslo). Personal names and migration: An overview.

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a pivotal role in such interactions. They often serve as initiators in interpersonal communication, conveying a narrative about one's social identity and belonging when disclosed. A person's name remains an integral part of their individual identity, travelling with them across diverse cultural and linguistic contexts. Although cross-cultural and multilingual encounters involving names have been, and continue to be, prevalent, this subject has yet to receive comprehensive exploration within the realms of multilingual studies and onomastics. Surprisingly, personal names, and names in general, remain conspicuously absent as a dedicated area of interest in relevant sociolinguistic perspectives on language and migration. Furthermore, historical angles on this topic are particularly scarce, as indicated by Waldispühl & Wallis (2023:2). In name studies, instances of language contact in names have received notable attention in etymological studies (see e.g. Hengst 2016:15–22), yet socio-onomastic aspects have been relatively neglected (Ainiala & Östman 2017:12). The subject area of personal names and migration has surprisingly also been largely absent in anthropological studies (Guccini 2017:25).

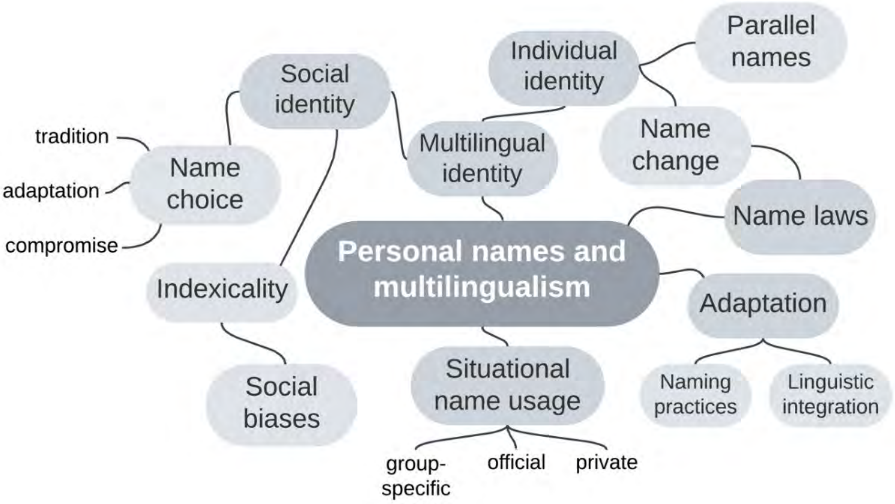
In this overview, I make a distinction between mobility and migration, with a focus on the concept of 'settledness' and enduring change of residence for the latter term (Andersson 2018:17). In works addressing language and migration, such as the *Routledge Handbook on Language and Migration* (Canagarajah 2017), migration and mobility are often used interchangeably, with the latter considered a crucial factor in understanding language use in a globalized world (Blackledge & Creese 2017). However, while mobility encompasses the mere movement of individuals through physical space, migration carries a more extended temporal dimension and implies a more prolonged stay in a place distinct from one's origin. Consequently, migration inherently involves mobility, yet not all instances of mobility culminate in migration. This distinction is of noteworthy importance for comprehending linguistic contact processes and intercultural language practices, particularly concerning personal names. Interactions with foreign languages and cultures during mobility without migration are occasional and potentially involve a greater number of people with frequent changes in communication participants. In contrast, migration-related interactions are characterized by their repeated, long-lasting nature and their occurrence between distinct social groups. In this overview, the main focus lies on issues that concern the names of first or second-generation immigrants. However, the names of mobile individuals and also those of members of longstanding minority language or cultural groups who have been in a country for more than two generations will be touched upon. As a comprehensive term encompassing this research domain, I propose using 'personal names and multilingualism'.

This contribution aims to provide an overview of the themes explored within the field of personal names in the context of migration. Personal names are names given to human individuals in order to identify and individualize them. The centre of attention in this overview lies on the given name and the surname while unofficial personal names such as bynames, nicknames or pseudonyms are only marginally included in the discussion. It is important to keep in mind the distinction between the given name that is usually chosen by parents upon a child's birth and the hereditary surname(s), especially with regard to how identity is mirrored in the names (see Section 3).

The overview encompasses research on both modern and historical contexts, despite the volume's primary dedication to a historical perspective. The rationale for this expansive approach in the introduction stems from the relative scarcity of research on historical personal names and the limited coverage of specific areas. Furthermore, the thematic links between contemporary and historical circumstances offer a broader view of the subject, providing a solid foundation for prospective theoretical examinations.

It is important to note that this overview is not exhaustive, but rather illustrative, aiming to provide a conceptual framework for further research by highlighting major topics and links between modern and historical settings. It primarily draws examples from research in the Nordic countries within the modern context. Occasional examples from other European contexts and different parts of the world are introduced and become more prominent in the section discussing historical perspectives.

Figure 1 presents a comprehensive overview of research topics previously explored in studies concerning personal names and multilingualism. In the ensuing discussion, I will expound upon the aspects illustrated in the figure, with an initial focus on the impact of language contact on name structures in Section 2. Sections 3 and 4 subsequently address prior research on various socio-onomastic aspects of the subject, including name choices and multilingual identity, name changes and social belonging, and names in multilingual interaction. Section 3 centres on contemporary contexts, also discussing the legal aspects associated with foreign names in modern societies. In Section 4, a historical perspective on the subject is presented, incorporating diachronic approaches that examine the impact of migration on the onomasticon of a language.


Personal names and multilingualism
Multilingual identity
Individual identity
Parallel names
Name change
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Naming practices
Linguistic integration
Situational name usage
group-specific
official
private
Indexicality
Social biases
Social identity
Name choice
tradition
adaptation
compromise

Figure 1. Overview of previous research topics within the area personal names and multilingualism.

2. Adaptation of personal names in language contact

In the domain of traditional onomastic studies, the primary concern within multilingual contexts has historically centred upon the exploration of structural linguistic effects induced by language contact. Within this field, place names have traditionally attracted more scholarly attention than personal names, a trend highlighted by Sandnes (2016). Nevertheless, contemporary research has begun to reveal that theoretical frameworks, previously confined to the study of toponymic language contact, have certain degree of transferability to the analysis of personal names. Such research suggests that similar mechanisms of contact-induced modification are operative across both categories of names (Waldispühl 2020:38–39).

Contact-induced adaptations of the name form can manifest across various linguistic levels. *Phonetic adaptation* stands out as the most prevalent form, an intrinsic component of contact-induced name adaptation (Sandnes 2016:545). This phonetic dimension is frequently coupled with orthographic adjustment, a process that brings the written representation into alignment with the writing system and graphemic rules prevalent in the recipient language. Such strategy is often employed in historical situations when names are transmitted orally to a scribe unfamiliar with the original language or the specific name being recorded (e.g. Romanized *Canute* for Danish *Cnut*, see Porck & Mann 2014:242). However, they can likewise occur upon registration of immigrants lacking written documents in modern contexts (*Badijo* for Somalian *Qadijo* in Swedish registers, see Löfdahl & Wenner 2018:76). In this process, the impetus for adaptation largely stems from individuals from the receiving community, who tend to speak the majority language in the immigrant country (see also the examples in Sections 3.2.2 and 4.3).

Written names can also be subject to *orthographic adaptation* upon transcription or copying from exemplars, especially in historical contexts where the written form is not considered fixed and thus allowing for adaptation to alternative orthographic conventions (see

Waldispühl & Wallis 2023). Contemporary contexts, however, may also witness spelling deviations, which, under the scrutiny of a fixed orthography, are classified as errors, a subject further discussed in Section 3.2.1. A distinctive form of written adaptation is the transliteration into an alternative script, for instance, from the Cyrillic to the Latin alphabet. The protocol for handling the transliteration of foreign names in modern public administrative processes may follow established procedures, though instances of spontaneous and idiosyncratic adaptation are not uncommon, see Sections 3.2.1 and 3.3.

A fascinating historical exemplification of phonetic, orthographic, and *lexical adaptation* within the multilingual context of the Cross River Basin region in Nigeria is provided in the work of Mensah (2015:115–116). The study illustrates the adaptations made to native Efik personal names to align them with English phonological and orthographical principles. This process was initiated by missionaries who, upon conducting baptisms, renamed individuals to facilitate pronunciation and the written representation of these names for themselves. The adaptation appears to have been conducted initially following an idiosyncratic method, which subsequently became conventionalized. Among the documented samples of Efik personal names and their anglicized versions are *Ófióñ* [ofioŋ] – *Óffiong*, *Èfiòm* [efıom]–*Effiom*. One prevailing strategy was ‘the establishment of equivalence, where Efik names are replaced by English names not based on any semantic interrelationship but as a result of phonetic resemblance’ (Mensah 2015:116). Among such Efik-English name pairs provided by Mensah are *Ókón–Hogan, Ásibòñ–Archibong, Éné–Henry*. Additionally, Mensah (2015:117) clarifies that phonetic adaptation may also involve the manipulation or incorporation of tonal features.

In the volume titled *Kulturelle Integration und Personennamen im Mittelalter* edited by Haubrichs & Jochum-Godglück (2019), a multitude of investigations scrutinize the phenomena of *morphological integration and language mixing* – referring to the mixture of linguistic forms from several languages in one name. In his study, Haubrichs (2019) chronicles an array of hybrid names that include both Germanic and Latin linguistic components. These include compound formations with a Latin and a Germanic component, such as *Ursobertus* (rom. **urso*- 'bear' and germ. **-berhta* 'shining, famous', ibid:9), as well as instances where Germanic names have undergone phonological or morphological integration to Latin, as in *Flodarius* for germ. **Hluda-hari-* (ibid:12). The concept of hybrid formation is extended to include mechanisms of *semantic adaptation*. A case in point is the translation that underpins the rendering of numerical terms from Latin (e.g. *Septima, Nona*) into their Germanic counterparts (e.g. *Sipunta, Niunta*). Haubrichs further incorporates into the category of hybrid names those which are Latinized versions of Germanic originals.

While semantic transparency of personal names has become less reminiscent in modern Western cultures in comparison to the Middle Ages, it is a prevalent feature in various contemporary African and Asian cultures, thereby allowing for the relative transparency and translatability of such names into other languages. For instance, the Swahili names *Tajiri*, *Furaha*, and *Haiba* are translatable into the English names *Hope*, *Joy*, and *Grace* (Zawawi 1993). Conversely, in intercultural contexts, an alternate strategy employed is the utilization of *cognate names* or what Back (1991) characterizes as 'allonymic equivalents'. Exemplifying this phenomenon are names such as *Franz – Francesco – Francis* and *Alexandra – Alessandra*. However, it is noteworthy to highlight that semantic opacity is a distinct feature of onymic material in Western cultures that often renders names non-translatable, a characteristic that is particularly applicable to personal names. This concept is underlined in the works of Kalverkämper (1996), and summarized in Nübling, Fahlbusch & Heuser (2015:42–43).

An intriguing phenomenon is *translanguaging* evident in personal names, as shown in Guccini's (2017:52–58) study on the selection of international names by Chinese exchange students in Europe and the USA. Her findings reveal that principles characteristic of Chinese naming practices, such as the significance of semantic meaning, the tradition of rhyming with siblings' names, or the pursuit of an auspicious sound, often influence the choice of international names.

Consequently, these names are creatively ‘Chinafied’, a process that becomes apparent only within the specific transcultural environment.

Drawing from an analysis of the surname alterations of Norwegian immigrants in the United States, Haugen (1953:201–205) delineates a ‘diachronic tripartite schema of adaptative strategies’ for Norwegian surnames within the English linguistic setting, wherein adaptative modifications span phonological, orthographic, morphological, and lexical-semantic domains:

1. Preservation of the original spelling of Norwegian surnames is identified as the first approach, despite potential shifts toward an anglicized pronunciation driven by prevailing English-speaking phonetic habits.
2. The second approach involves a structural reconfiguration of the name, which may manifest either through a spelling adjustment that represents the adapted pronunciation, or through a shortening of morphologically complex names.
3. The final approach entails the replacement of the original Norwegian name with an English counterpart. This substitution may operate on a spectrum: at one end lies the direct translation of names with transparent meanings (e.g. *Langhaug* transformed to *Longhill*), while at the other end exists the rare tactic of adopting a distinctly dissimilar name altogether (e.g. *Rauberg* becoming *Edwards*). The intermediary approach takes the form of selecting an English name on the basis of phonetic likeness (e.g. *Bakken* transitioning to *Bacon*).

3. Personal names and migration in modern societies

Research into personal names in cross-cultural encounters within modern societies primarily addresses key questions regarding the underlying motivations for naming children in bilingual and multi-ethnic families, the significance of names for an individual's identity, and the societal implications associated with foreign names. Prior to detailing these themes in the subsequent subsections, the notions of 'identity' and 'indexicality' are presented.

The concept of identity is inherently intricate, and contemporary studies on identity, personal names and migration have underscored the notion that identity 1) is not a fixed or static entity, but rather a constantly negotiable and evolving process that can vary across different situations, contexts, and over time; 2) encompasses values that individuals or social groups may ascribe to themselves, or that the majority society may attribute to the individuals; 3) involves essential values for identity, which are often intersectional and can encompass various aspects, with ethnicity being just one example; and 4) is a duality of sameness, representing shared values within a particular group, and otherness, signifying distinctions from other groups (see Anthias 2012; Aldrin 2016; 2017; see also Löfdahl & Wenner 2018:73–74).

Names function as linguistic entities closely intertwined with the context and herewith the cultural and social structures, including family, clans, and ethnic groups they are used in. As symbols of these aspects, specific names or name categories can carry substantial social or cultural connotations. In recent sociolinguistic studies, this role of linguistic signs is referred to as 'indexicality', signifying the established semiotic connections between linguistic signs and social meanings based on cultural, linguistic, social, and situational conventions and norms (Silverstein 2003:195; Blommaert & Maly 2014:4; Spitzmüller 2023:192–196). Irvine & Gal (2000:37) point out that linguistic ideologies emerge when language users notice, rationalize, and justify these linguistic indices, providing explanations for observed linguistic differences. Particular names or name categories may serve as indices representing specific values integral to an individual's social or cultural affiliation. Consequently, names can signify aspects such as gender, ethnicity, religion, or socioeconomic background. These ascriptions of connotational meaning to particular names or name categories are significantly influenced by cultural trends, traditions, norms, and the prevailing discourses regarding names within a given society. Consequently, they are inherently tied to specific spatial and temporal contexts (Wilson 1998; Botelho & Rudman 2009; Aldrin 2016; Gerhards & Buchmayr 2019).

Regarding the link between personal names, identity, and indexicality, two distinctions are crucial. Firstly, when naming a child, it is the identity of the parents that is reflected in the child's name. Additionally, in such contexts, it is predominantly the child's given name that serves as a marker for identity positioning. Secondly, in discussions about adult immigrants' names, the emphasis shifts to the self-identity of the individuals rather than the identities of their parents or family. Furthermore, attention may be given to the full name, encompassing both given and surnames, or to only one component.

3.1 Name choices and multicultural identities

Numerous investigations into the name choices of migrants highlight the dichotomy between sustaining cultural heritage practices versus assimilating into local traditions and the dominant culture's language. This body of research substantiates the pivotal role and significance of names and the act of naming in expressing cultural (ethnic, national, religious) identity. One noteworthy finding from prior studies is the practice among intercultural individuals of using different names in different social contexts: in family settings, a traditional name from their heritage language is often used, while in more formal situations and groups where the majority culture is prevalent (such as schools or workplaces), names that align with that culture are typically preferred. It has been noted that bilingual and multicultural families demonstrate substantial reflexivity regarding their intercultural positioning, often seeking a compromise between contrasting cultures when selecting names for their children.

To illustrate these phenomena, two case studies focused on immigrants in Norway can be considered. The study conducted by Reisæter (2009) investigates the surname choices of cross-cultural couples in the region of Tromsø, northern Norway, spanning the years 1977 to 1996. Up until 2003, Norwegian name law mandated that families select a single surname for their children, precluding the option of adopting a double surname incorporating both maternal and paternal surnames. However, the regulation did permit the inclusion of a 'mellomnavn/mellomnamn' [middle name], positioned between the given name(s) and the surname. Reisæter's findings reveal that, irrespective of whether one or both parents were immigrants, the father's name was selected as the surname in 82 per cent of cases. Additionally, the mother's surname was used as a middle name in 40 per cent of couples, provided at least one parent originated from the Nordic countries. However, only 4.5 per cent of the children with two immigrant parents received a middle name. The data from this case study suggest that traditional name choice practices and gender played a more significant role in the decision-making of these couples than the immigrant background. A subsequent study by Reisæter's (2012) incorporated interviews about the choice of given names for children in families where one or both parents hailed from Ghana, Somalia, India, Sri Lanka, or Thailand and were residing in Tromsø. It was observed that when both parents were immigrants, they generally preserved the naming customs of their heritage cultures. Nonetheless, these parents demonstrated a pronounced consideration for intercultural compatibility when naming their children, deliberately avoiding names that were morphologically complex or phonetically starkly divergent from Norwegian (Reisæter 2012:228). In families consisting of one Norwegian and one foreign (non-Nordic) parent, it was not uncommon to encounter what Reisæter (2012:229) has labelled 'compromise names'. In these instances, the approach favoured was to give children dual names comprising one Norwegian and one cultural heritage name, such as *Erik Carlos* (Norway-Peru) or *Kanayo Sindre* (Nigeria-Norway). Another strategy observed was the selection of cognate names ('allonymic equivalents'), i.e. variants of the same etymological name, e.g. the pair *Frants* (Norwegian) and *Francisco* (Spanish) or *Karl-Carlos*.

Another naming strategy Alhaug & Saarelma (2017:75–81, 88) observed in their research focusing on Finnish-Norwegian mixed couples residing in Norway is to select 'international names'. These are names common across several cultures and languages and may include Biblical names like *Maria* or *David* or widely recognized names of English, French, or German origin such as *William* or *Julia*. These names serve as a neutral option. Alhaug & Saarelma (2017:75–81, 88–89) noted that the mothers had a more decisive impact on naming their children than the fathers, regardless of whether the mother was an immigrant from Finland or ethically Norwegian.

Mangena & Waliaula (2021) provide insight into a related practice in Zimbabwe, where individuals in areas of crosslinguistic interaction often select names for their children from adjacent linguistic communities. This process gives rise to 'hybrid' full names, often combining surnames from the child's own linguistic group with first names from a different, neighbouring group. These naming choices reflect the cultural interchange between different indigenous African cultures and are indicative of the dynamic language practices within certain family settings (Mangena & Waliaula 2021:427).

The practice of adopting double names has been observed also among indigenous minority cultures, such as the Romani community in Sweden. Members of this community frequently carry both a Romani name and a name that aligns with the majority culture; an example provided by Wenner, Löfdahl & Tingsell (2017:196) is *David Poncho*, with *Poncho* meaning 'beautiful, vivid fish' in Romani. Such naming practices are also seen in the trilingual community in Northern Norway, as discussed by Lindgren (2011), where individuals may use Kven, Sámi, and Norwegian names concurrently.

Multiple studies have indicated a pattern where there tends to be greater creativity and innovation in the naming of girls, whereas boys' names are often more traditional and closely linked to heritage culture. This trend has been particularly noted within the Somali community in Sweden (Löfdahl & Wenner 2018:76).

Grima (2020) examines the naming practices of Ethiopian-Americans. She highlights that naming patterns within an apparently homogenous national (immigrant) group may in fact differ based on the experiences of various ethnic groups in the home country. Girma (2020:29–31) notes that members of the subjugated Oromo people reinforced their ethnic identity by consciously choosing Oromo names for their children while Amhara parents were less concerned expressing their Amhara identity through their children's names. Instead, this group was more concerned choosing names that delimit themselves from African-Americans in the United States (ibid:28–29).

3.2 Adult migrants and name changes

Adult immigrants typically prefer to keep their original given names and surnames, as these are intimately connected to their identity and cultural heritage. Numerous studies show that adult immigrants consider their names to be essential components of their identity and cultural background. Despite this tendency, there are factors that can lead to a change in names; in this section, 'change' is broadly defined, encompassing everything from adaptation in pronunciation during everyday interactions to official alterations of the written name.

Name changes among adult immigrants can be involuntary, stemming from external circumstances, or voluntary, driven by personal choices. In the former scenario, enforced name changes might be due to inconsistencies with national name laws or linguistic mismatches between names in the native language and those in the host country's majority language, or even due to errors during the documentation process at government offices related to migration or population registration.

On the other hand, voluntary name changes are often unofficial, revolving around linguistic adjustments of foreign names to align with the local majority language or the adoption of informal names in personal circles. Such changes are usually prompted by practical considerations and a desire to assimilate into the society of the host country but also to circumvent discrimination.

The upcoming two sections will primarily draw on research carried out in the Nordic countries to exemplify and shed light on these issues.

3.2.1 Forced name changes and cultural conflicts

Research has identified that discrepancies in national legal naming systems can necessitate involuntary name changes during the migration process. Most prominently in studies on immigrants in the Nordic countries, the challenges that emerge due to the divergence between the East African three-name and the European two-name system is mentioned. The East African system typically comprises a given name, followed by the individual's father's name, and then the paternal grandfather's name. Upon arrival and registration within Nordic population registers, migrants from East African nations have often been forced to adapt their naming structures. Previous studies such as those by Utne (2008:87–93), Reisæter (2012:228), Löfdahl & Wenner (2018:70–72), and Frändén (2017) have documented this practice. For example, in Sweden before the legal change in 2017, immigrants were permitted to register only one name as the surname. Thus, Somali immigrants would typically have the grandfather's name registered as the surname, with the father's name becoming either a second given name or a middle name. This alteration disrupts the vital Somali clan tradition, wherein the sequence of paternal ancestral names plays a critical role in social identity and navigation. Deviation from this tradition through imposed name changes can lead to the erasure of clan lineage in diasporic communities and may present social challenges, especially for men who wish to continue the tradition of passing down their names. Additionally, such modifications in name structure can result in misunderstandings within Swedish society. For instance, in the case of a woman named Sabrin Mohammed Osman, it could be mistakenly assumed that *Mohammed Osman* signifies a man's name due to local naming conventions, causing confusion and potentially impacting her social interactions (Löfdahl & Wenner 2018:72–73).

Reisæter (2012:228) observes that while Somali immigrants in Norway may have been initially dissatisfied with name adaptations required by Norwegian laws, they generally accepted their new, European-style names for formal purposes. However, they continued to use their traditional names in more casual or informal contexts. The research by Löfdahl & Wenner (2018) corroborates this finding among the Somali community in Sweden, noting that Somali immigrants often retain their traditional naming customs privately despite official changes. Yet, the study also reveals that some members of the Somali community were taken aback or distressed by the alterations to their names. Löfdahl & Wenner (2018:71–72) conclude that while established protocols are in place at the Swedish Migration Agency for recording Somali names, the communication of such policies and procedures to the Somali community or to individual migrants is inadequate. This lack of clear communication may contribute to the surprise or discontent experienced by some Somali immigrants upon learning of the changes to their names upon registration.

Due to disparities in spelling and pronunciation between heritage languages and the languages of the host country, spelling errors can occur during the registration process at migration offices or in municipal population registers. While some people may choose to accept the altered spelling of their name in their new country's official documents, others may contest these changes and insist on correcting the spelling as found in Lif's (1999) study. Spelling mistakes can potentially lead to considerable challenges; for instance, if a mother's name is spelled incorrectly in the official documents of the host country, it may not match the spelling of her name on her children's documents from their country of origin, creating potential problems for the family, see Löfdahl & Wenner (2018:76).

An example from Switzerland further illustrates the significance of name spelling. In 2016, media highlighted a complaint by a new Swiss citizen of Serbian heritage about the missing acute accent in the letter *ć* in his surname (Scheidt 2016). In response, a member of the National Council initiated an interpellation titled 'Wer Schweizerin oder Schweizer werden will, soll die Schreibweise seines Namens frei wählen können [Anyone wishing to become a citizen of Switzerland should be free to choose the spelling of their own name (translation by Rhian Coggin)]'.[1] The issue was debated within the Federal Council and potential solutions were explored. Finally, in 2021, with a revised version in 2023, measures were announced to introduce a new name-writing standard as of 2025, accommodating a wider range of symbols and diacritics.[2]

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[1] https://www.parlament.ch/de/ratsbetrieb/suche-curia-vista/geschaeft?AffairId=20163717. (Accessed 18 March 2024).

The fact that Slavic female immigrants with names ending in, e.g. *-ova* or *-ska*, have to adopt their husband's or father's names (ending, e.g. in *-ov* or *-ski*) upon registration in certain western European countries because the host country only accepts immutable family names further illustrates the intersectional aspect of name adaptations (Teutsch 2016:566).

While much of the existing research emphasizes the strong connection between personal names and identity, there are also records of migrants exhibiting different attitudes towards their names. Frändén (2017:117–118) cites an example of an individual with a Finnish surname who moved to Sweden as an adult and saw their surname as 'just a code' for navigating everyday life, rather than a marker of their identity. This individual, a frequent traveller with a global perspective, represents an alternative viewpoint on the subjective significance of personal names in the context of migration.

3.2.2 Voluntary name adaptations and changes

Aside from changes in the spelling of foreign names, immigrating individuals frequently note variations in how their names are pronounced, especially when their names feature sounds unfamiliar to the language(s) of their host country or have an unknown spelling. Immigrants tend to familiarize themselves with the pronunciation most commonly used in the majority language of their host country and adapt the pronunciation of their own names accordingly.

This phonetic adaptation was the subject of a study conducted by Frändén (2016), which examined the attitudes of individuals in Sweden with foreign surnames – defined as those not registered in Sweden before 1920 (Frändén 2014:32–33) – toward varying phonetic renderings of their names, as well as their usage of these variants. The study found that, among the research subjects, the phonetic adaptations of their surnames into Swedish were the most commonly used, especially when introducing themselves to Swedish-speaking individuals. Contributors cited practical reasons for these adaptations – such as facilitating easier communication with Swedes, particularly authorities, and circumventing discussions about their names. The use of original heritage language pronunciations amongst the researched individuals largely depended on their linguistic background and whether they still spoke their heritage language and their degree of engagement with their heritage community, be it in their host or home country. Subjects maintaining strong connections with their heritage language tended to use dual pronunciation forms of their surname: an adapted Swedish form for engagement with the majority culture, and the original form in heritage language contexts, such as with family.

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[2] https://www.admin.ch/gov/de/start/dokumentation/medienmitteilungen.msg-id-95012.html. (Accessed 18 March 2024).

Additional findings from Frändén's research further illuminate the complex relationship between personal names, integration, and identity among immigrants. In one example, a participant reported that the adaptation of her surname's pronunciation into Swedish coincided with her subjective sense of integration into Swedish society (Frändén 2016:139–140). Meanwhile, other participants expressed a stronger connection to the heritage language pronunciation of their given names compared to their less frequently used surnames. Lastly, the research subjects appreciated when their friends or colleagues showed interest in learning to pronounce their names in the heritage language, interpreting it as a sign of respect.

A study by Löfdahl & Wenner (2018:71) focused on Somali names in Sweden and noted a generational divide in name pronunciation. The younger generation, having grown up in Sweden, preferred the adapted pronunciation of their given name [aksmad] aligning with the written form *Axmad* as opposed to the original [ahmad] pronunciation. They perceived this as more practical. Meanwhile, the older generation adhered to the original pronunciation. Gerhards & Buchmayr's (2019) study also identified a generational shift. The divisions between the majority and minority societies appear to lessen among second-generation immigrants, as suggested by their attitudes towards foreign names. However, this pattern was not evident among immigrants from Turkish and Arab regions, underscoring the heterogeneity among different immigrant groups and their variable interactions with the host country's majority culture. A similar trend could be shown for immigrants from North Africa in France (Coulmont & Simon 2019).

Another strategy employed by immigrants to circumvent mispronunciation and related challenges with foreign names is changing their names unofficially. An instance of this was recorded by Reisæter (2012:231), who reported a Chinese student in Norway who changed his given name from *Shuai* – prone to mispronunciation and difficult to remember, as per his experience – to *Rice*. He considered this name easier to use, given its association with Chinese culture. Similar findings are reported in Guccini's (2017:49–50) research on Chinese exchange students in Europe and the USA.

Political or religious reasons can also motivate name changes. Individuals may change their names upon converting to a different religion or to shed a name that was imposed upon them in a country from where they have fled. Moreover, marriage is another context in which name changes occur. Immigrant women may adopt their husband's surname not only for traditional reasons, where it has been expected that a wife takes her husband's surname, but also for practical reasons, such as sharing a common surname with their children for practical purposes or because of a will to integrate. Reisæter (2012:231–232) notes that these practices are also driven by the desire to facilitate social and administrative interactions. For further examples of mixed multicultural full names of women due to marriage see Odebode (2021).

When permitted by national laws, immigrants may choose to officially change both their given name and their surname. The reasons for this can vary widely, but common themes include avoiding societal discrimination and disassociating from negative personal experiences, see Section 3.4.

3.3 National name laws as a challenge

Conflicts can arise in cross-cultural and multilingual contexts when personal names do not conform to national naming laws. These conflicts can be individual and unique, for example, when an immigrant's name cannot be registered or when it is modified by public authorities to comply with national naming laws and spelling conventions. However, these issues can also extend to and affect an entire community, especially when naming customs or spelling rules in a minority language are dismissed by national laws based on the majority's cultural practices and language. While this latter context does not directly pertain to migration and mobility in the strictest sense, it is relevant in the broader discussion around personal names and multilingualism and will be briefly included in the upcoming discussion. The following examples, mainly from Nordic countries, will illustrate the conflicts and challenges that arise from national naming laws, specifically regarding immigrants, minority groups, and public administration.

The development of name laws in many European countries can be seen in the light of the nation-building processes and the ideologization of language that took place during the 19th and early 20th centuries. These laws often link the form of names closely to the national majority language, reflecting broader sociopolitical dynamics of the time.

The initial purpose of Sweden's first name law from 1901, the 'släktnamnsförordning' [surname ordinance], was to establish the systematic use of surnames throughout Sweden to aid in the identification of its citizens. The regulation of immigrants' names was not directly addressed in this early legislation. The Swedish onomasticon had already been influenced by German and French names, prompting purification efforts to advocate surnames derived from the Swedish language. This movement aimed to strengthen the national identity through names and is evidenced by the creation of books with suggested surnames (Hedberg 2021). The subsequent personal name law of 1963 continued to emphasize the stability of the name inventory, reflecting an interest in maintaining conformity with 'inhemskt språkbruk' [national language use]. The phrase implied that surnames should conform to Swedish linguistic patterns in terms of formation, pronunciation, and spelling. However, subsequent legislation, such as the name law from 1982, signalled a shift towards greater liberalization and individual freedom. The requirement for surnames to be adequate ‘i det här landet’ [in this country] left more room for interpretation (Brylla 2009:141). According to Frändén (2010:115) it was not legally assessed whether the names of autochthonous minority groups such as the Sámi people in Sweden, whose names often use letters such as *đ, ž* not included in the Swedish alphabet, were conform with this name law. For Norway, it is known that the names of autochthonous minority groups were forcibly Norwegianized (see Sannhets- og forsoningskommisjonen 2023:462–468). The most recent Swedish Personal Names Act from 2016 introduced even greater flexibility, focusing more on individual freedom. It allows persons with foreign citizenship to retain their surnames, marking a departure from the more restrictive past to a more diverse, internationalized society.[3]

Similar trends can be observed in Iceland. However, considering that the standard naming practice in Iceland is the use of a given name followed by a patronym or matronym as a second name, the discourse surrounding foreign names extends to naming practices, particularly the use of hereditary surnames. In the Icelandic name law of 1913, foreigners were allowed to ‘write their legal name in the manner to which they are accustomed’ (Article 13, translation by Willson 2017:164), reflecting an acceptance of foreign naming conventions. However, the subsequent law of 1925 does not specifically mention the names of foreigners. Instead, it applied a unifying principle that said:

> Each person shall have one or two Icelandic names and identify him- or herself by his or her father, mother or foster father and always write the name and identifying name (patro- or metronymic) in the same way throughout his or her life. […] People may not have other names than those that are correct according to the laws of the Icelandic language. (Articles 1 and 4, translation by Willson 2017:162)

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[3] https://www.riksdagen.se/sv/dokument-och-lagar/dokument/svenskforfattningssamling/lag-20161013-om-personnamn_sfs-2016-1013/ (Accessed: 1 November 2024).

Moreover, it states that ‘no one may adopt a surname henceforth’ (Article 2) (see Willson 2017:162 with literature). The name law of 1996, which is the one currently in effect, relaxed the previous regulatory structure somewhat by requiring that names must be able to adopt an Icelandic genitive ending and that ‘it may not be contrary to the Icelandic language system’ (Article 2, translation by Willson 2017:163). This formulation allowed for a certain degree of flexibility while still prioritizing the Icelandic linguistic framework. Under this law, individuals of foreign origin are permitted to retain their foreign surnames, though these names could not be used as hereditary, but rather as non-heritable middle names. Additionally, children with one Icelandic and one foreign parent were given the option to have a second given name derived from the non-Icelandic parent’s cultural background (Willson 2017:163–164). This reflects a broadening acceptance of multicultural influences within the Icelandic naming system. However, when it came to obtaining Icelandic citizenship, the 1952 Icelandic Nationality Act mandated that foreigners adopt an Icelandic name. The rationale behind this law was to prevent discrimination against individuals with native Icelandic names and to maintain a uniformly Icelandic identity. Nevertheless, strict enforcement of this regulation led to public dissatisfaction, resulting in several exceptions to the rule. This shift was informed by the need to align with the European Convention on Human Rights, considering a name as an integral aspect of personal rights. The outcome of these processes has been that immigrants may have more leeway in name choices compared to native Icelanders, a situation that reflects a tension between maintaining national identity and respecting individual rights. This contrast has been a subject of ongoing public discussion in Iceland, highlighting the complexities that emerge as societies contend with issues of cultural integration, identity, and personal freedom (Willson 2017:168–176).

Willson (2021:35) highlights that conflicts and misunderstandings about foreign names in public administration can arise ‘because language planners, administrators, and private citizens have different priorities and different views of language’. She cites several cases where the original orthography of a foreign name could not be registered in official databases due to the lack of diacritics or special characters in various administrative systems. While administrators may prioritize practical aspects, the spelling of a name can carry symbolic value for an ethnic minority and contribute to their identity – this is applicable to both immigrants and indigenous populations. To resolve such conflicts, Willson (2021:46–47) suggests that the different parties engage in dialogue to develop a better understanding of the various perspectives. She also proposes drawing inspiration from library cataloguing, which allows for greater variation in recording names and their variants.

Currently, personal names are not mentioned in the European Convention of Human Rights (ECHR). However, Tirosh (2010) notes that there have been several cases at the European Court of Human Rights, where conflicts between national name laws from different countries provoked complaints from individuals. In the field of legal studies, it has also been observed that national name laws can be problematic from an international perspective, particularly regarding the principle of equality (see Eriksson 2021:54–68, for instance, discussing the situation in Sweden).

Teutsch (2016:566–569) offers more examples of personal names in cross-cultural settings clashing with legal jurisdictions. There remains a need for a comparative study on these issues, and more broadly, for international perspectives on personal name legislation in Europe and other regions, and the routines for interacting with foreign names.

3.4 Indexicality of names and societal attitudes towards foreign names

Just like other linguistic forms, names can be associated with specific social groups, cultural meanings, or certain usage contexts. This function of linguistic features is referred to as ‘indexicality’ in sociolinguistics – the association of linguistic forms with social meanings through cultural, linguistic, and social conventions or norms (see the introduction to Section 3 above).

An early study on the indexicality of surnames by Ris (1977) showed that individuals in Berne, Switzerland, shared the perception of specific Swiss surnames being indicative of the name bearers' regional origin within Switzerland (such as *Gysin* for residents of the Canton of Basel) and their occupations (*Vischer* and *von Tscharner* as diplomats or bank directors, *Ott* as dairyman, sculptor, teacher or construction handyman).

Similarly, personal names can signal ethnic affiliation and national origin. According to a study by Frändén (2017), people with Finnish surnames living in Sweden tend to be categorized as 'Finns' and are often expected to be fluent in Finnish, regardless of their proficiency in Swedish or how long their families have lived in Sweden. Conversely, their Finnish surname serves as an important identity marker for the name bearers themselves. This particular significance of Finnish names was found to be even more pronounced among those who no longer have strong ties to Finland and do not speak the language.

The ethnic or national index of a personal name can have societal consequences for individual name bearers. Language ideologies and attitudes towards certain social groups are reproduced in the reception of names in everyday name usage. People with foreign names may be at risk of discrimination, for instance, on the labour or housing markets (see e.g. Zschirnt 2020; Molla, Rhawi & Lampi 2022; Martinello & Verhaeghe 2023).

As Bursell (2012) and Khosravi (2012) found in their separate Swedish studies, one of the main motivations for migrants seeking official name changes is to evade potential discrimination in society. A Swedish report from 2006 showed that individuals with foreign-sounding names are more likely to request official name changes in Sweden than those with Swedish names, with the majority of these requests coming from individuals of African, Asian, or Slavonic origin (Arai et al. 2006). An interesting economic dimension to these changes was highlighted, indicating that after changing to a Swedish-sounding name, individuals on average experienced increased earnings compared to those who retained their foreign names.

Hagström (2006:145) claims that there are hierarchies between languages with regard to societal attitudes towards them that are mirrored in given names. According to her, names that signal ‘un-Swedishness’ are at the bottom of the hierarchy while so-called international names (commonly from English, French or German origin) hold a higher position and conjure more positive associations.

Obojska’s study (2020) further illustrates the indexicality of Polish names in Norway, both from the societal perspective, through a discourse analysis of media representations, and from the perspective of Polish immigrants living in Norway, based on interview data. She explored the narrative of a Polish immigrant in Norway who changed his name officially, revealing that his primary reason was to distance himself from unhappy school memories where his Polish name symbolized ‘an identity of a disempowered, bullied and marginalized migrant, rejected by the members of the majority’ (Obojska 2020:346). His name change facilitated ‘constructing an opposing one [identity] – that of an agentive decision maker who launches his own name change and who thereby gains access to social resources’ (ibid.).

On sociocultural, legal and institutional constraints in immigrants’ naming agency on the basis of examples from Canada, see Pennesi (2016; 2018).

3.5 Names in multilingual interaction

The research field of socio-onomastics is increasingly considering how names function within conversations and interactions (see Stefani 2012 with a focus on place names; Droste 2022). One aspect of this research focuses on how personal names, along with titles and kinship terms, are used in multilingual interactions, an area that has not been widely studied.

One study that exemplifies this interest investigated the use of names within a breakdance group of people with Italian heritage in Mannheim, Germany (Bierbach & Birken-Silverman 2007). It found that the use of names, including those in standard Italian and regional dialects, played a significant role in forming a modern, urban, adolescent group identity. The names were used strategically to delineate group boundaries and to signal membership within the in-group, distinguishing them from external groups. The authors highlight that names and naming practices are a linguistic and cultural resource for a multilingual community. These practices, alongside other resources like code-switching, can be drawn upon in communication to construct identities and socio-symbolic meanings. Names thus become an instrumental part of a multilingual community's interactional dynamics. An interesting finding from Bierbach & Birken-Silverman's study (2007:148) is the 'syncretism of ethnic, socio-cultural, and gender identities' in the use of names and the process of identity construction. This intersection shows that names can embody multiple layers of identity at once and that the context of their use can switch or blend these layers.

Further research into how names are used in multilingual interactions could shed more light on how individuals negotiate the complexities of identity and belonging, especially in cross-cultural settings. Such studies could also reveal potential conflicts that arise when multilingual individuals navigate various social contexts and interact with different people, each with its unique linguistic and social conventions.

4. Historical personal names and migration

As stated in the introduction, research focusing on the historical aspects of personal names and multilingualism is scarce. Nevertheless, the field is beginning to gain more attention. Recent works such as those by Haubrichs (2011) and Haubrichs & Jochum-Godglück (2019) primarily explore Western Europe during the Middle Ages, whereas a latest volume regarding multicultural aspects of names, edited by Felecan & Bugheșiu (2021), provides both modern and historical perspectives from different parts of the world.

Berecz's (2020) book on names and naming in the Late Habsburg Borderlands gives an essential historical exploration of the complex relationships between names, identity, national ideologies, and political power. The study conducts a thorough examination of naming in linguistic minority communities under national name policies and language ideologies based on the national majority language. Although it does not directly address migration, these perspectives are valuable for a broader understanding of personal names and multilingualism.

When it comes to research on historical personal names and migration, popular topics include name choices in cross-cultural families and communities, combined with the methodological question of how such choices and naming practices reflect identity, group belonging, and cultural assimilation and integration (Sections 4.1 and 4.2). Section 4.3 addresses name changes and Section 4.4 discusses the use of parallel names. The final aspect highlighted in this chapter is the influence of migration on a language's name inventory over time (Section 4.5).

4.1 Name choices and cultural accommodation

In the exploration of historical personal names and migration, one pertinent theme is how name choices in multilingual contexts signal cultural identity positioning and accommodation within local communities for migrant populations.

Haubrichs (2019) provides valuable insights into name choices and name forms during the Early Middle Ages when Germanic, Romance, and Latin contexts intersected. He identifies two main types of onomastic assimilation practices among the Germanic people when in contact with Romance and Latin cultures. The first type involves onomastic assimilation, where Germanic-Roman mixed couples would choose Latin or Christian names for their children. Haubrichs interprets this choice of Latin names as indicative of an identity change from Germanic to Roman, representing a move towards linguistic and cultural alignment with the dominant Roman culture. Conversely, Haubrichs also notes instances where Germanic names were maintained despite the cultural assimilation of a Germanic family into the Roman context. Retaining Germanic names in such cases might reflect a desire to preserve elements of the original, or perhaps non-dominant, cultural identity. The second type of cultural assimilation documented by Haubrichs (2019:4–5) is the adoption of the Latin naming convention of *tria nomina* – a practice whereby individuals of Germanic origin would take on names consisting of a first name (praenomen), second name (nomen), and third name (cognomen), as seen in the names recorded on grave inscriptions such as that of *Flavii Servilio Traustaguta* from the end of the 4th century. This shift towards Latin naming customs, however, was generally limited to the 5th and 6th centuries and predominantly seen among the upper class.

Haubrichs (2019) also examines how hybrid names emerged and what these names can tell us about social dynamics and cultural integration during the Early Middle Ages. Haubrichs (2019:8–15) highlights the development of linguistic hybrid names that combined Germanic and Romance elements, for instance in *Urse-bertus* (see Section 2). The creation of these names indicates a cultural synthesis as Germanic people settled and integrated into Latin/Romance-speaking regions (Haubrichs 2019:11). The adaptation of names to form blends suggests a bidirectional exchange, with cultures influencing each other and creating a new, hybrid identity in certain contexts.

Jochum-Godglück (2019) digs deeper into the factors that promoted the introduction and establishment of Germanic personal names in Romance-speaking areas in Gallia, north and central Italy, the Rhineland, and the Donau and Alpine regions in the 6th–8th centuries. She found that it was not just multicultural families (where one partner was of Germanic origin) who contributed to the spread of Germanic names, couples of full Romance origin also named their children with Germanic names. This suggests a readiness or even eagerness to assimilate under Frankish rule and adapt to changing social conditions. These name choices went beyond mere personal identity; they became political signals demonstrating allegiance to the prevailing Frankish authority.

Digilio's (2019) research on names recorded in charters of the Langobardian Duchy of Benevento in the 8th century adds further nuance by associating name choices with social hierarchies. In her study, Germanic names and naming practices were popular among aristocratic and free populations, suggesting the preservation of Germanic cultural identity among the ruling and free social classes. In contrast, Romance and hybrid names were more common among the less powerful social strata, such as bonded peasants and unfree servants, reflecting a cultural dominance imposed by the immigrant Longobards, who had conquered and subjugated the native Italo-Romance populations. What is particularly striking in Digilio's (2019:190, footnote 8) analysis is the finding that Longobard leaders were resistant to cultural integration. Their preference was to maintain their cultural heritage and identity rather than blend with the local (subjugated) population. Naming practices were a demonstration of this intention, with the Longobards seeking to preserve their distinct identity through the use of traditional Germanic naming conventions. The observations from these studies indicate that naming practices were closely tied to social status and political power.

In a more recent case of name assimilation involving Norwegian immigrants in Koshkonong, North America, Haugen (1953:211–213) examined name choices for children as recorded in church book records dating from 1856–1886. He identified a three-stage development that mirrors the process of cultural assimilation and identity construction. During the first stage, the names given to children by the initial settlers were primarily of Norwegian origin, reflecting their cultural roots and connections to their homeland, Norway. This practice shows the immigrants' initial efforts to preserve and transmit their cultural heritage through names. The second stage sees the influence of the surrounding American community becoming more marked, leading the Norwegian immigrants to adopt names that resonated with both Norwegian and American urban fashion trends. During the third and final stage, the use of Norwegian names diminished, as more distinctly American names were chosen for the children. The weakening of the inclination for Norwegian names suggests a linguistic and cultural assimilation into the broader American society. Nonetheless, it is worth noting that some descendants occasionally chose to use a Norwegian name as a mark of their heritage, preserving some connection to their ancestral culture. This deliberate choice suggests that names can serve as a platform for asserting ethnic or cultural identity, even within the broader context of cultural assimilation. Interestingly, such cultural markers become more salient over time or across generations as a counter-narrative to the overall trend of assimilation. This pattern underscores names as dynamic features of personal and communal identities that can simultaneously conform to and resist broader cultural and societal influences. A similar tendency could be noted with immigrants from Northern Europe in Argentina (Sippola 2023).

4.2 Names and (multi)cultural identities

Patzold & Schorr (2019) shed light on a crucial methodological question regarding names and identity in historical societies. They highlight that the concept of ethnic identities – in the case of their study, Germanic versus Roman – may not have existed or been recognized during late antiquity. They further suggest that etymology of a name may not necessarily correlate with ethnicity. This perspective poses a challenge to the notion of linguistic determinism in naming conventions and their associations with historical cultural or ethnic affiliations. As a case in point, they explore the name choices of bishops from the 5th–7th centuries in the Germanic-Romance contact zone of Gallia. They note that many among these bishops used parallel names – full forms next to hypocoristic forms – and that, in numerous instances, the etymology of these names was ambiguous. Patzold & Schorr interpret these name choices as an expression of intercultural awareness among this highly mobile group of social elite. Use of parallel names, particularly those with ambiguous roots, may reflect an ability to navigate multiple cultural spheres and a heightened sense of sociolinguistic pragmatism. By moving away from strictly dichotomous notions of ethnic identity and recognizing the interplay and fluidity of linguistic and cultural elements in naming practices, their discussion underscores the complexity and dynamism of self-identification in history.

Conversely, Laliena Corbera's (2002) study on personal names in 11th and 12th-century towns in the Aragon Crown demonstrates distinct naming practices among migrant groups and how these practices mirrored their cultural identities and social integration. The research found that indigenous Aragonese peasants typically used archaic Basque names accompanied by patronyms in the genitive case, reflecting a strong local tradition. In contrast, the 'Francos', migrants from regions such as Southern France, Normandy, and Italy, often carried a second name of toponymic (*Gocelm de Montepellier*) or occupational nature (*Roger, cabater* 'Roger, shoemaker') in the nominative case. These naming practices, retained by the 'Francos' in their new settlement, were seen as a means of preserving social identity. Laliena Corbera (2002:124–125) points out that these migrant groups not only held onto their traditional names but also reinforced their collective identity through economic solidarity, residential proximity, and intermarriage. Similarly, Muslims in the region who – despite being subject to discriminatory practices and being predominantly peasants – maintained their Arabic naming system well into the 15th century, even under the pressure of Christian integration. An exciting case highlighting the contrast between the in-group names of Muslims and the naming of the majority community are documents from Tudela near Zaragoza written in Arabic with an interlinear Latin translation. While the names in Arabic consisted of three or more elements indicating the paternal family line of a person, the Latin translations shortened the names to two elements, and sometimes even bynames were added. This practice reflects a top-down adaptation of Arabic names into the Christian naming framework. Muslims used their Arabic names within their community but adopted official Christian-designated names in interactions with the wider society (Laliena Corbera 2002:129–130).

Haugen's (1953) study on Norwegian immigrants in North America reveals parallels to the findings in Laliena Corbera's work and modern multilingual naming practices. Norwegian immigrants would use their original names within their community but adopt anglicized names – often phonetic adaptations or cognates – in external and official contexts. This practice extended to tombstone inscriptions, preserving the in-group naming convention for posterity (e.g. *Klein Pedersen Hesthammer*), whereas in public life and legal contexts, the anglicized names were necessary (e.g. *Cleng Peerson*) (Haugen 1953:195). Parallel name usage can also be noted with given names. When entering school, for instance, Norwegian immigrants were given American names. Common strategies defining these names were to choose an alliterating American name similar in sound (e.g. *Kari* > *Carrie*, *Steinar* > *Stanley*) or, if available, cognate names (e.g. *Harald* > *Harold*, *Johan* > *John*). The immigrants usually accepted these names forced upon them, but maintained their Norwegian names in the family.

These studies show that parallel name usage or 'polyonomastics' as the practice is labelled by Pina-Cabral (2010:298), is not only a modern phenomenon linked to migration and multiculturalism but also a historically consistent pattern across diverse contexts. It underlines how immigrants negotiate identity, preserving cultural roots while adapting to new environments. Furthermore, it highlights that names function on different levels – as personal identifiers and as symbols of cultural belonging and adaptation. Pina-Cabral (2010), in his work on Lusophone personal naming practice where present-day individuals use parallel names or several name variants, emphasizes the salience of the concept of the 'true name' among his interviewees. On the basis of case studies in Macao, Brazil and Portugal, he comes to the conclusion that the conditions for a 'true name' are threefold. The concept applies to the name form inscribed in the Civil Register, to the name that 'relates to the person's unitariness' and represents the person's 'dominant national or ethnic identity' (ibid.:302).

4.3 Name changes

A name's recorded form can be significantly impacted by the scribes responsible for registering them, especially in historical contexts. As highlighted by scholars like Porck & Mann (2014) and Waldispühl (2020), scribes tended to adapt unfamiliar names phonetically, morphologically, or semantically to fit their own linguistic conventions. This process inevitably introduces variability, especially when these names are transcribed from spoken language.

Name changes are particularly pertinent in the context of immigration. For instance, the first Norwegian immigrants to 19th-century America often had to choose a fixed surname, despite this not being a standard practice in Norway at the time (Haugen 1953:199). As a convention, Norwegians more commonly used patronyms (father's name + *-sen* '-son' or *-datter* '-daughter') as second names, and farm names as third names. These would change every generation or with each dislocation. Upon arrival in America, Norwegian immigrants had to adopt a consistent surname. While patronyms were more adaptable to English, farm names were seen as more distinctive and symbolically representative of Norwegian heritage. However, the choice between patronyms and farm names was not always straightforward. The lack of a fixed convention often led to inconsistency within the same family, with siblings sometimes choosing different surnames. Haugen (1953:201) documents an extreme case of a family of four brothers who were registered under three different names: the patronym *Johnson*, and the original farm's name in two variant spellings, *Opstedal* and *Opdahl*. Some individuals even changed their chosen surnames over their lifetime, adding further variation.

The examples stress the importance of understanding the context, processes, and influences surrounding the recording of names in historical sources. In contrast to today, names need not have been as fixed in their composition of a full name or their written form.

4.4 Individual parallel names and blurred linguistic boundaries

The study by Vakareliyska (2003) presents an intriguing look at naming practices within the German-speaking minority of 'Russian Poland', where the German community had settled following an invitation from Russian rulers Catherine II and Paul I. This study further illustrates the complexity of cultural and linguistic identities in multilingual settings. In this community, where German was the home language and Polish and/or Russian were also viewed as equally native, the individuals did not necessarily maintain a clear separation between their heritage name and the name adapted to the language of the dominant culture. Instead, there was a fluid use of names that could shift between various linguistic forms, reflecting the multiple language identity that these 'Russian Germans' held. The pastors, who were responsible for the church records in the 19th century, often recorded Polish variants of the names. However, the personal signatures by the community members sometimes revealed different preferences that could include German, Polish or Russian naming traditions and orthographies. What is particularly striking about this case is that individuals did not consistently associate each version of their name with specific contexts, such as family or official interactions, which is a deviation from the more predictable pattern of parallel name use discussed earlier. The lack of a clear pattern for the choice of name variants also suggests that for these Russian Germans, names were a flexible aspect of identity rather than rigid markers of ethnicity or cultural belonging. This fluidity underscores the complexity of how multilingual individuals navigate their social world and express their identities.

Another famous case of an idiosyncratic use of parallel names is the musician known as Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart. Mozart's varied use of his given names reflects cultural practices of his time and his personal circumstances. Born in 1756, he was christened with the Latinized names *Joannes Crysostomos Wolfgangus Theophilus Mozart* used in official church records. In his private and professional life, however, he chose to use different variants. In several autograph documents, such as letters or scripts, Mozart used different linguistic variants of his given names, such as *Wolfgang Amadè* or *Amadeo Wolfgango*. *Amadè* and *Amadeo* are cognate translations of Greek *Theophilus*, which in German would be *Gottlieb* (see Rolker 2009). Mozart was a highly mobile and multilingual individual and he demonstrated a flexible use of interlingual allonymic equivalents.

Today, names are often seen as a marker of identity with legal and bureaucratic significance. In many modern societies, people are required to use consistent and official name forms in documents and identification. This rise in standardization corresponds with the development of nation states and the emphasis on monolingual national identities. The increased salience of written language in contemporary societies has also given the written name body more significance and divergence from the 'original' and 'correct' written form stands out. Moreover, in modern Western societies, spelling variants such as *Sofia–Sophia* are perceived as two different names while previously such a variation might have been seen as minor and acceptable. Today, there might even be tendencies that spelling variation such as *Soffia, Sofhia* is used to make individualized given name choices (Eggert 2023).

The examples in this section signal that the notion of having one 'true' version of a person's name is relatively modern and closely linked to the broader standardization processes in society. Names in historical contexts could be more fluid and adapted according to language, regional customs, and personal choice, reflecting a more multifaceted and less nationally bound sense of identity (see Waldispühl forthcoming).

4.5 Migration and changes in the name inventories

Migration has a significant impact on naming practices and the evolution of the name inventory in the host country. When individuals or groups migrate, they carry their names – part of their cultural and personal identities – to their new homes. Over time, these imported names, especially surnames, become part of the linguistic inventory of their adopted country, attesting to historical patterns of immigration.

As noted by Haugen (1953:192) and Frändén (2016:124, 126), surnames often survive beyond the language from which migrants originated. This durability of surnames means they can become the most enduring linguistic trace of a heritage language, even when the community shifts to the majority language.

This phenomenon is evident in the *Dictionary of American Family Names* (Hanks & Lenarčič 2022), which chronicles a fascinating tableau of American immigration history. The original Swedish surnames *Öberg, Larsson, Ljungström*, and *Granberg*, for instance, appear in their anglicized forms—*Oberg, Lawson, Youngstrom*, and *Granberry*, respectively, see also Hedblom (1984) and Ryman (2021).

The historical shifts in name inventory can also shed light on social and power dynamics of a given period. Chetwood's (2018) study on the influence of social changes mirrored in naming practices in post-Conquest England provides a case in point.

5. Conclusion

The discussion presented in this overview reveals the remarkable persistence of certain patterns in the interplay between personal names and multilingualism across time and space. Regardless of historical context, names function as markers of personal and group identity, serving as indicators of linguistic, cultural, and societal affiliations.

Timeless themes connecting names to multilingualism include:

- Personal identity and cultural heritage: Names can represent the individual's heritage, family background, and cultural ties. In both historical and modern contexts, names are an important marker and preserver of personal and cultural identity.
- Adaptation and integration: Just as names have been adapted to fit new linguistic and cultural environments historically – e.g. the adaptation of immigrant names to the English language and naming practices in the United States – similar strategies of name modification occur in contemporary multicultural societies. These adaptations may be seen as strategies for integration or as responses to societal pressures.
- Parallel names: The use of parallel names or cognates of a name in different languages can reflect a bilingual or

multilingual identity. This was true for figures such as Mozart and is also evident in modern examples where individuals might use different versions of their names in different cultural or linguistic contexts.
- Names as mirrors of societal dynamics: Just as Chetwood's (2018) study on naming practices in post-Conquest England sheds light on historical societal changes, modern naming practices can reflect contemporary issues such as globalization, and the interaction between certain cultures.

However, despite these enduring themes, there are noticeable shifts over time:

- Fluidity vs. standardization: Historically, names and name forms could be more fluid, allowing individuals to use various linguistic variants with less formal rigidity. Modern societies, particularly with the rise of nation-states, have introduced greater standardization of names, putting more emphasis on having correct and consistent name forms for legal and bureaucratic purposes.
- Legal systems and official name changes: In contemporary contexts, legal frameworks provide structured processes for name changes, reflecting the significance of names within the bureaucratic systems of modern states. These frameworks were not as formalized or necessary in historical settings, where name variations were more commonly accepted without legal alteration.

These comparisons show that while the essence of naming practices as a reflection of identity and societal structure remains constant, the way names are managed – legally and socially – has changed over time with the establishment of more formalized bureaucratic systems and greater emphasis on written language and documentation.

The outline of previous research on personal names and multilingualism presented in this article also underscores the complex interplay between personal names, identity, and integration experiences, and they demonstrate the sociocultural significance that names carry within a multilingual and multicultural environments. Further research that connects historical to present-day settings more comprehensively and includes a comparative approach spanning over various national and cultural contexts is needed to shed more light on this complex interplay and the significance of personal names in migration.

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