Seven Immigration Methodologies,
with Case Studies Across the Centuries

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Methodologies

- In genealogical research, a ***methodology*** is a tool or technique used to gather, analyze, or correlate data.
- Sound methodologies empower you to identify ancestors, establish relationships, and produce accurate family histories.
- Methodologies guide research and are based on genealogy ***standards***.
- Methodologies emerge from basic ***principles***.

Sound Methodologies Based on Standards

Whether planning research, collecting data, reasoning from evidence, or using DNA evidence, apply the standards outlined in *Genealogy Standards*, 2nd edition, by the Board for Certification of Genealogists. These are some of the standards found in this book:

23. Reading handwriting
24. Understanding meanings
25. Note-taking content
32. Transcribing, abstracting, and quoting
35. Source analysis
36. Information analysis
40. Evidence mining
42. Evidence discrimination
47. Evidence correlation
48. Resolving evidence inconsistencies
49. Assembling conclusions from evidence

Methodologies Emerge from Basic Principles

These seven methodologies apply especially to immigration research:

- **Family handprint**: robust family handprints guarantee unique identification
- **Follow the witnesses**: social networks may reveal related immigrants
- **Naming patterns**: contemporary naming patterns provide onomastic clues
- **Cluster research**: extended family and neighbors may have the same origins
- **Surname heat maps**: surnames cluster geographically

- **DNA clusters**: cousins trace shared ancestors via alternate lineages
- **Chain migration**: immigrants often followed family and friends

Family Handprint

Methodology: using records in the country where the immigrant settled, describe the immigrant family in sufficient detail to uniquely characterize them; use the resulting family handprint to find them where they originated

Principle: robust family handprints guarantee unique identification

Usage: apply this mainstay technique when an immigrant arrived with other family members

Follow the Witnesses

Methodology: trace witnesses to provide additional evidence on immigrant origins

Principle: social networks may reveal related immigrants; thus, witnesses, sponsors, godparents, and other signatories may be related and traceable to the same place or family of origin

Usage: apply this methodology when you suspect the witnesses were relatives or emigrated from the same locality

Naming Patterns

Methodology: determine namesakes of the immigrant's children based on naming practices that likely influenced name choices

Principle: contemporary naming patterns provide onomastic clues

Usage: apply this methodology when you suspect that the names of an immigrant's children might help identify the immigrant's parents

Quotes on naming patterns in New England in the late 1700s:

> By bestowing the names of lateral rather than lineal kin, parents privileged the personal relationships they shared with their siblings over the cross generational replication of the family. No longer driven by obligation to preserve the familial hierarchy, they were free to give more consideration to an emotional connection.[1]

[1] Schwartz, Kaila Knight, "Calling Changes by Name: The Massachusetts Family Viewed through an Onomastic Lens, 1660–1860" (Thesis for a Master of Arts in History, Simmons College, Boston, Mass., 2014), 63-64.

> Over time, brothers and sisters of parents (uncles and aunts of the children) grew in importance as a source of names while parents and grandparents declined, a function perhaps of the growing awareness of the importance of lateral kin….[2]

Cluster Research

Methodology: trace people close to the immigrant who might have been connected or have shared origins

Principle: extended family and neighbors may have the same origins

Usage: apply this methodology to leverage the traceability of neighbors, associates, and people living nearby with the same surname

Surname Heat Maps

Methodology: pinpoint the likely place of origin by identifying where emigrants' surnames were most densely co-located

Principle: surnames cluster geographically, often with multiple generations of the family occupying or farming the same land

Usage: apply this methodology to refine an approximate place of origin based on the colocation of surnames associated with the immigrant

Quote on employing surname heat maps in family history research:

> The usefulness of this approach lies in...identifying the areas in which a specified ancestral event potentially occurred and...ranking those areas in order of likelihood so that the most-promising ones can be pursued first.[3]

Example: this Irish example counts families of two surnames, Lysaght and Browne, parish by parish across County Kerry, Ireland, per Griffith's Valuation of Ireland, normalizing by parish population per statistics gleaned from *Topographical Dictionary of Ireland* by Samuel Lewis. These are the steps used to construct the table below:

1. Enter surname frequencies for each parish
2. Multiply these frequencies to "score" each parish
3. This provides an initial ranking of parishes
4. Record the historical population for each parish

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[2] Rutman, Darrett B. and Anita H. Rutman, "'In Nomine Avi': Child-Naming Patterns in a Chesapeake County, 1650–1750," *Generations and Change—Genealogical Perspectives in Social History*, Mercer University Press, 1986, 253.

[3] Hennessy, James. "Probability Analysis and the Ancestral Place of Origin." *National Genealogical Society Quarterly* 79 (Dec 1991): 245.

5. Divide by population to normalize each score
6. This induces a better parish ranking
7. The new scores imply a probability for each parish

Surnames	Parish	C1	C2	C1xC2	Rank	Pop.	C1xC2/Pop.	Rank*	Prob.
Lysaght/Browne	Ballyheige	8	3	24	1	3,766	0.00637	1	**49.7%**
Lysaght/Browne	Killury	4	3	12	2	4,974	0.00241	2	**18.8%**
Lysaght/Browne	Killahan	1	3	3	3	2,567	0.00117	3	9.1%
Lysaght/Browne	Marhin	1	1	1	5	978	0.00102	4	8.0%
Lysaght/Browne	Kilmoyly	1	3	3	3	3,525	0.00085	5	6.6%
Lysaght/Browne	Ardfert	1	2	2	4	3,585	0.00056	6	4.4%
Lysaght/Browne	Ballincuslane	1	2	2	4	4,700	0.00043	7	3.3%

This process prioritizes parishes to research in order to find people of both surnames in places where families of both surnames lived in close proximity.

DNA Clusters

Methodology: research the family trees of genetic cousins to trace immigrant origins through multiple lines of descent

Principles: cousins trace shared ancestors via alternate lineages; tracing descendants is often easier than tracing ancestors

Usage: apply this methodology to compare family trees of autosomal cousins (and patrilineages of Y-DNA matches) to help identify shared ancestry

Chain Migration

Methodology: trace the ancestral origins of others who might have emigrated from the same place

Principle: immigrants often followed family and friends, and these people may be easier to trace to their shared origins

Usage: apply this methodology in cultural enclaves where you suspect people emigrated from the same village