

# Newspaper advertisements as an indicator of verticalization: A case study of the Eureka Post

Samantha M. Litty

Europa-Universität Flensburg

Comparing advertisements published in both the English and German versions of the *Eureka Post*, a newspaper from Eureka, South Dakota, this study explores one avenue of potential language shift under the verticalization model and aims to gauge external influences on this one particular community-controlled institution. By assessing advertising language in two parallel publications, external and internal community influences should be visible over time. If external factors are attributing to a shift of the print language from the community-dominant language (which is non-dominant in broader society) to the dominant language, this should be evidenced in an increase of advertisements in the non-dominant community language. However, the results indicate that at a time where verticalization processes are changing the publishing landscape in other areas of the Midwest, in Eureka, South Dakota, the opposite appears to be true. The community-dominant language, German, sees an increase in advertisements published in German and a decrease in those published in English.

Keywords: historical sociolinguistics, verticalization, language shift, German-language newspapers, German in America

## 1. Introduction<sup>1</sup>

Recent research on heritage languages in the American Midwest applies Warren's (1963) theory of "verticalization" in community structure to language shift. Many argue that shift transpired when community-controlled institutions ceded to extra-community organizations, e.g., local to state education boards or local newspapers merging with regional or national publications (Bousquette 2020; Brown 2022; Johnson 2018). This shift from horizontal to vertical community structure took place at a time of rapid industrialization, when many industries underwent a change from being controlled at a local level to being controlled or influenced externally. Salmons (2002: 192) looks at the German press in Wisconsin and how the immigrant language press fits into this shift from horizontal to vertical community structure and finds, "The decline of the ethnic press fits neatly within the broader societal process of the Great Change and the resultant increasingly loose social

---

<sup>1</sup> This research is supported by a Postdoctoral Research Fellowship through the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation. In addition to the audiences at the Workshop on Immigrant Languages in the Americas (WILA 12) held digitally and hosted by the University of Helsinki, I thank the following for comments, suggestions, and discussion on this topic: Mirva Johnson, David Natvig, Maike Rucker, Joe Salmons, two anonymous reviewers, and the editors of this volume. Any remaining shortcomings are my own.

networks.” This case study examines advertisements from two concurrent newspapers in Eureka, South Dakota, one in English and one in German, to see if this follows for the South Dakotan German-language press, which developed after the German-language press was established in other parts of the Midwest.

## **2. The press as an indicator of verticalization**

Historically, older immigrant languages and heritage language communities across the Midwest built and fostered a horizontal community structure allowing decisions regarding language use to be made at the local level. In Wisconsin, such immigrant-language institutions, such as schools, churches and newspapers, came into existence at a similar time as English-language institutions. For example, the German-language press developed alongside the English, rather than competing against already existing majority language presses. Eventually these institutions, which were previously controlled locally, often in an immigrant language, began to see outside pressures impacting domains controlled by these institutions. Some of these external pressures came from state, regional, or federal organizations such as the passing of new governing laws or regulations, for example from state school boards. These changes eventually forced the community to turn from a horizontal structure to a vertical structure, influenced or controlled from outside the community. This led to a phase of domain loss, where the community language, in this case German, competed with the majority or national language, English. Eventually, the loss of outward looking domains led in turn to a shift in private domains, which led to English becoming the primary language across all domains.

The foreign-language press as a whole has been considered as a factor in the process of shift from local, community-run publications in the language of the local community, to press organizations run from outside the community. This case study explores how external factors other than the consolidation of smaller presses into larger conglomerations might lead to a shift in language use from the community language to the majority language. The focus on “external contributors” explores how their contributions impact language use in the publications. Advertisers are considered external if they originate outside the local community, or if they are linguistically external, publishing advertisements in the community’s lesser-used language. If the external contributors have an impact on advertising language choice, it would be expected for advertisements in the majority language to increase in the minority-language press, or for advertisements which were previously printed in the minority language to shift to the majority language. In other words, this case study explores what impact advertisements from outside the community have on the print language. To achieve this aim, I compare two newspapers as regards their external contributors, who advertises in which paper, and in which language.

### 3. German-language press in South Dakota<sup>2</sup>

Unlike the German-language press in Wisconsin and other areas of the Midwest, which developed simultaneously with the English-language press, the German-language press in South Dakota came into being a decade and a half after English-language presses were already established throughout the state, and several decades after German-language presses had already been established elsewhere in the Midwest. South Dakota, as we know it today, belonged to the Dakota Territory, formed in 1861. While settlement of this region by Yankees, or white European settlers, was small in numbers and slow growing, an English-language press had already formed in Dakota Territory, with the first English-language paper, *The Democrat* (Sioux Falls) arising in 1859. The white population in the Dakota Territory grew slowly until the “Dakota Boom” from 1870 to 1880, which is largely attributed to the expansion of the North Pacific Railroad – making travel to the Dakotas much easier – and the discovery of gold in the Black Hills in 1874 (Olson 2005: 117). This is also the time that the first German settlement appears in the Dakota Territory. While there may have been individual German-speaking settlers here prior to this time, the first German settlement is dated to 1873, with the first German-language press appearing in 1874.

In its entirety, the known German-language press in South Dakota existed for 80 years, from 1874 to 1954. During that time, there were 37 German-language publications, which included newspapers, church bulletins and church calendars, club handbooks, and other publications. The last of the German-language publications, the *Eureka Rundschau*, was founded in 1915 (Litty forthcoming).

Of the newspapers, most can be classified as one of three types.

1. Majority German
2. Majority English
3. German/English Parallel Editions

Majority German papers, such as the *Dakota Freie Presse*, the earliest and longest-running German-language paper in South Dakota, appeared almost entirely in German but included an occasional English-language advertisement. Majority English papers were often entirely in English for some period of time and later added German, mostly in the form of a regularly occurring column dedicated to news printed in German. Among these, there is a small subcategory that added regular German-language columns only during World War I. Notably, none of these includes German advertisements. Finally, the third category is that of German and English parallel editions. These are newspapers which had the same or a similar name or were from the same publishing house/publishing location, such as the two papers discussed here, *Die Eureka Post* and the *Eureka Post*. This third category, which forms the basis for analysis of advertisements in in this study, allows for a

---

<sup>2</sup> Although South Dakota did not become a state until 1889, I simply refer to “South Dakota,” including when referencing press which existed prior to statehood.

direct comparison of how the papers are structured and how their advertisements appear.

#### **4. Data: *Die Eureka Post* and the *Eureka Post***

Eureka, South Dakota, was first listed as having a post office in 1887 and was incorporated in 1892. The first businesses, according to town articles of incorporation for the Dakota Territory (history.sd.gov; retrieved from archive Feb. 10 2022), were the Eureka Gas Company, the German Baptist Church of Eureka, and the German Implement Company, all founded between April 1888 and February 1889. In April of 1889, the printing office of Flinn & Lutgen began publishing *Die Eureka Post*, a weekly German-language newspaper consisting of eight pages of six columns each (LOC Chronicling America; SD State Historical Society Archive). In 1896, the *Eureka Post*, a weekly English-language paper, began publication under the same owner. It consisted of four pages of six columns each, and is considered a supplement to the German paper (LOC Chronicling America; SD State Historical Society Archive).

Both papers eventually ceased publication due to mergers with larger, local papers. The English version ran until 1907, when it merged with *The Northwest Blade*, and the German version ran until 1912 when it merged with what would become the *Eureka Rundschau*.

The success of the German-language paper may be attributed to the high percentage of German-speaking population in Eureka. According to data gathered from the 1900 U.S. Census, Eureka's population was 960, consisting of 218 families. While the overall numbers barely changed in the 1910 U.S. Census, where the recorded population was 961 people from 220 families, the percentage of families with at least one monolingual-German adult grew from 65 households to 123 households. In 1900 this amounted to 341 people who lived in a household with at least one monolingual German-speaking adult, or 36 percent of the total population. In 1910, however, this increased to 540 people, or 56 percent of the total population. While the percentage of households that were possibly bilingual<sup>3</sup> remained between 31 percent and 41 percent of the population, the percentage of households which were presumed to be monolingual-English speaking decreased from 29 percent to only 13 percent in 1910. This increase in the monolingual German-speaking population may reflect increased German-speaking (im)migration to the area, or it may reflect changes in the census<sup>4</sup>.

The data for this project come from the Library of Congress: Chronicling America digitized newspapers collection. One newspaper was selected per year for each year the English version is available online (1902-1907), and from the German

---

<sup>3</sup> Following the taxonomy put forth in Wilkerson & Salmons (2012: 8–9).

<sup>4</sup> In 1900, the U.S. Census, column 24, simply asked the census taker to indicate if the person “Can speak English”, where the 1910 U.S. Census introduced a new question (column 17), which was required to be answered for everyone over the age of 10, “Whether able to speak English; or, if not, give language spoken.” One possible explanation for this change in recorded monolingual speakers may be due to this new wording.

paper for approximately the same time (1904–1909)<sup>5</sup>. From the 12 newspapers which were sampled, 613 advertisements were collected: 254 from the *Eureka Post*, and 359 from *Die Eureka Post*.

The advertisements in these two papers appear in different forms, sometimes in differing formats (in-text, customer references, block advertisements, etc.) or differing languages, whereas others are identical in form and language in both papers. Notable is that all 254 advertisements in the English version of the paper are printed in English. In the German paper, 349 advertisements appear in German, with only 10 in English. When the raw number of advertisements per paper is considered, however, trends emerge, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Total number of advertisements per paper, per year, per language

	1902	1903	1904	1905	1906	1907	1908	1909
Eureka Post: English	50	57	56	33	33	25	-	-
<i>Die Eureka Post</i> : English	n/a <sup>6</sup>	n/a	4	2	2	0	1	1
<i>Die Eureka Post</i> : German	n/a	n/a	42	56	72	67	46	66

The first trend shows that the overall number of advertisements in the English paper decreases by half from 1902 to 1907. Next, although the overall number of English advertisements in the German paper is small, there still appears to be a decrease. This is the opposite of what we would expect to see if community external press contributors carry noteworthy weight in the community. An increase in English advertisements in the German paper might suggest greater outside pressure and more contact to English, but instead the results show fewer English advertisements over time. When coupled with the third trend, that the number of German advertisements in the German paper increases over the six-year period, this may indicate an attempt to separate the two languages by paper, or that the German paper enjoys a particular status among community members.

In both cases, the language question is clear: English advertisements are published in the English paper, and German advertisements are published in the German paper. However, upon examination of what these advertisements are for and where they come from, new questions arise. The “locality,” or where an advertisement is from (as opposed to where it was printed), and the category of products/services vary across the two publications, shedding light on what purpose these advertisements were serving in the community.

<sup>5</sup> Not all years of either paper are available in digital form online. Due to this, it is not currently possible to select fully overlapping time periods of both papers. The chosen range allows for the closest possible comparison.

<sup>6</sup> N/A indicates data from this year not included in analysis due to digital unavailability.

#### 4.1. Locality

Locality as a factor of analysis explores place of origin of the product or service advertised. Based on the advertisements found, six classifications were considered: assumed local<sup>7</sup>, local (<50 miles), state (>50 miles, North or South Dakota), assumed national<sup>8</sup>, unknown, and international. The distribution of locality for the German language papers is shown in Figure 1.

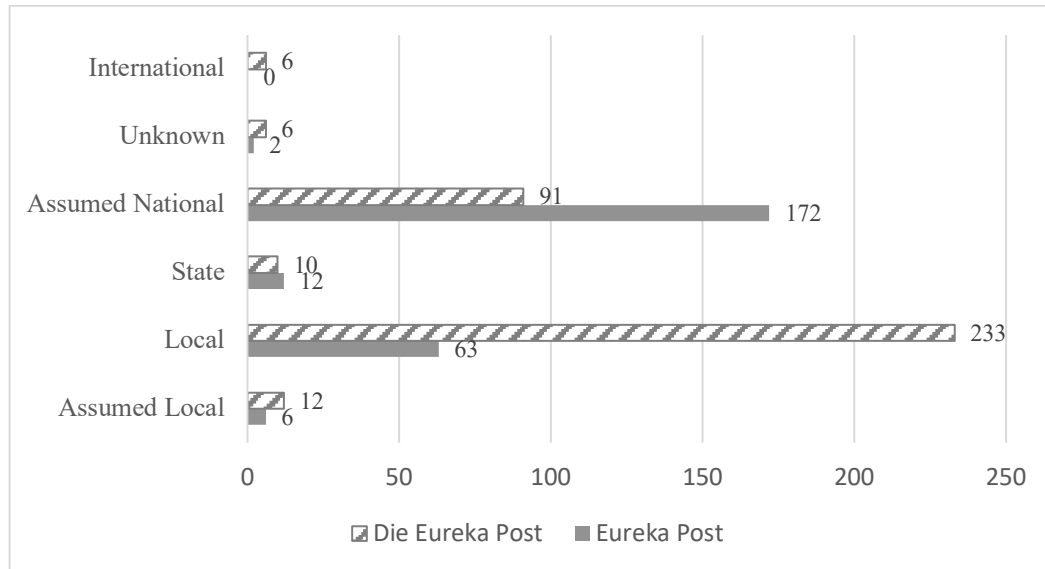


Figure 1. Locality: *Eureka Post* versus *Die Eureka Post*

Figure 1 shows the total number of advertisements broken down by locality, with the English paper, depicted by a solid bar, and the German paper, depicted by a striped bar. Immediately, two things stand out. First, the local and assumed national categories are by far the most represented localities. Second, the distribution of these two categories by paper is in complementary distribution. For the English paper, the largest category is assumed national, followed by local. Overall, there are nearly three times as many assumed national advertisements in the *Eureka Post* as compared to its German equivalent. For the German paper, the largest category is local advertisements, followed by assumed national. The number of local advertisements is more than double that of assumed national.

Considering only the two largest categories for each paper and how these change over time for the English paper, while both local and national advertisements decrease, the category of assumed national advertisements decreases at a faster rate, as shown in Figure 2.

<sup>7</sup> Assumed local advertisements do not explicitly give a location but use location-specific information that implies the advertisement must be local; for example, they might say something like “Located around the corner from the German Bank.”

<sup>8</sup> Assumed national advertisements are listed as “assumed” because they originate well beyond the local or state categories; for example, a job advertisement from New York City is presumed to appear in many papers in different states. This would imply the dispersal radius is nationwide; however, most have not been cross-referenced to verify actual nationwide availability.

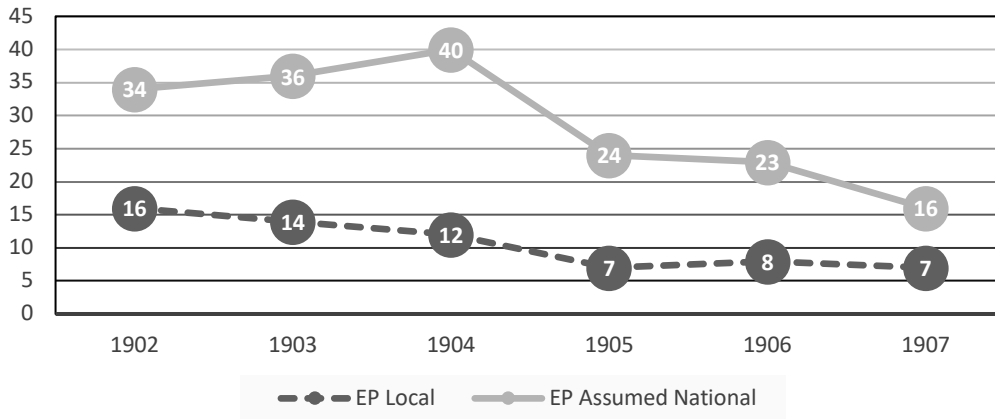


Figure 2. *Eureka Post*, advertisements by locality over time

In Figure 2, local advertisements are represented by the dashed line and the assumed national advertisements are represented by the solid line. Unlike in the English paper, where both types of advertisements decreased over time, in the German paper, the two categories of advertisements diverge, as shown in Figure 3.

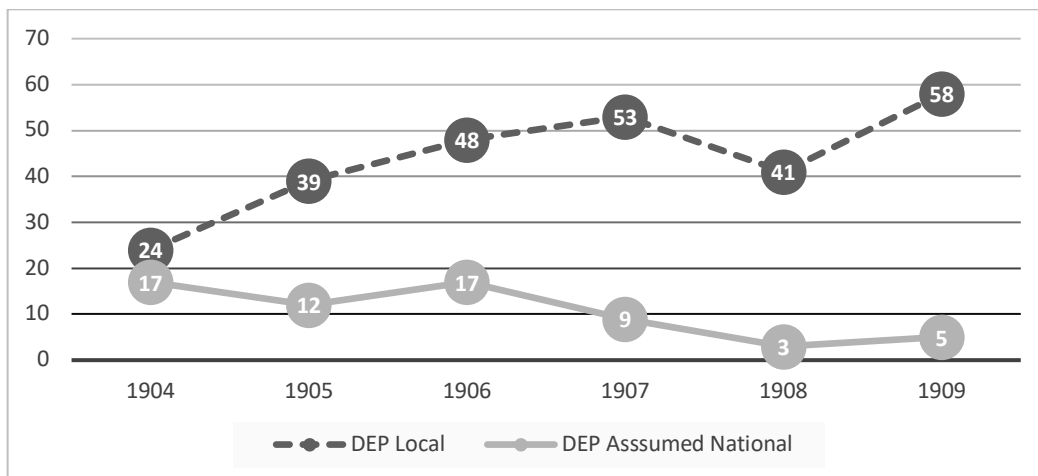


Figure 3. *Die Eureka Post*, advertisements by locality over time

The German paper shows an overall increase of advertisements. Where the local advertisements more than doubled from 1904 to 1909, the assumed national advertisements, represented by the solid line in Figure 3, decrease by 60 percent. While this finding alone is striking, analyzing the advertisements according to product/service category gives more nuanced insights into what is happening regarding internal and external contributors to the German-language press in Eureka.

#### 4.2. Types of products and services

Based on the advertisements, I created categories<sup>9</sup> to examine the type of product/service offered. The categories are shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Advertisement categories, listed alphabetically

1. Agricultural processing and sales	13. Education	25. Medicinal
2. Alcohol/Tobacco	14. Farming implements	26. Music
3. Animal husbandry	15. Firearms	27. Patents
4. Auction	16. Hospitality	28. Photography
5. Bank	17. Household	29. Professions
6. Beauty and fashion	18. Insurance	30. Rail
7. Bicycles	19. Job postings	31. Recreation
8. Blacksmiths	20. Land Sales/Agents	32. Store
9. Books and publishing	21. Lost/Found items	33. Buy/Rent/Sell
10. Construction and building supplies	22. Lumber	34. Transport
11. Craftsmen	23. Meat processing and sales	35. Travel/Travel agency
12. Drilling	24. Medical institutions	36. Utilities

Some categories of advertisements appear in only the English or the German paper. These “all or nothing” categories are shown in Table 3.

Table 3: All or nothing categories (total number of advertisements)

<b><i>Eureka Post</i> (English)</b>	<b><i>Die Eureka Post</i> (German)</b>
Bicycles (1)	Auction (5)
Firearms (6)	Bank (14)
Insurance (1)	Drilling (3)
Medical institution (1)	Hospitality (9)
Patents (6)	Photography (3)
	Recreation (2)
	Transport (2)

While none of these categories have large numbers of advertisements, they nonetheless indicate a distinction between the German and English papers. Both firearms and patents, which happen to be the two largest categories of advertisements appearing only in the English paper, are also both entirely national categories. While it may not be surprising that national advertisements appear only in the English paper, it may be surprising, and certainly notable, that several local categories, like banks and hospitality (hotels, restaurants, taverns) appear only in the German paper. This shows that the German paper includes stronger ties to the local community and indicates that the target audience for many of these local establishments is German speaking.

<sup>9</sup> Categories were created based on the advertisements found in these specific newspapers. This list is not exhaustive and may differ for different types of publications or different regions.



When considering only the top 10 categories for each paper, only two categories, Medicinal and Professions, appear in both. The top 10 categories in the English paper mostly have a clear tendency for locality. Only Medicinal has a noteworthy number of advertisements in both local and assumed national localities, with more than three times the number at the assumed national level. It should be noted, however, that medicinal advertisements categorized at the local level are defined as such because they specifically stated local retailers, where the products themselves were likely advertised more broadly. The top 10 categories with the number of advertisements per locality are shown in Table 4.

Table 4: Advertisement categories by locality, *Eureka Post* (English)

	Assumed Local	Local	State	Assumed National	Unknown	International
Medicinal		21		72	1	
Professions		28	3	1		
Job Postings				28		
Land				10		
Sales/Agent						
Craftsmen			5	3		
Rail				8		
Beauty and fashion	1	1		5		
Books and publishing				6		
Firearms				6		
Patents				6		
	1	50	8	145	1	

Beyond those listed here, several categories exist only on the assumed national level in the English paper (although they may appear in different localities in the German paper): Agricultural processing and sales, Insurance, Medical institutions, Travel/Travel agents, and Music. There are also those which exist only on a local level in the English paper which are: Buy/Sell/Rent, Lost/Found item, and Meat processing and sales.

Turning to the German paper, we see a clear contrast, as the majority of the advertisements originate at the local level, consistent with a horizontal community structure. This local support could help shield the paper from verticalizing forces by delaying a merger with another paper. The distribution of the top ten categories, with the number of advertisements per locality, are shown in Table 5.

While there is more variation among the advertisements in the German paper compared to the English paper, there are still several trends to note in the German data. Advertisements appearing only on the local level in the German paper include Auction, Bank, Beauty and fashion, Blacksmith, Farming implements, Hospitality, Lost/Found item, Lumber, Meat processing and sales, Music, Photography, Stores, Transport, and Utilities. Those which appear only on the national level in the

Table 5. Advertisement Categories by locality, *Die Eureka Post* (German)

	Assumed Local	Local	State	Assumed National	Unknown	International
Store	1	70				
Medicinal	1	11		36	1	
Professions	4	30		1		
Buy/Sell/Rent		18	1			
Meat processing and sales	1	18				
Bank		14				
Alcohol/Tobacco		7	1	1	4	
Agricultural processing and sales	3	7		2		
Lumber		11				
Travel/Travel Agency				5		6
	10	186	2	45	5	6

German paper are Books and publishing, Craftsmen, Job postings, and Travel/Travel Agency. International advertisements – mostly trips to Europe – occur only in the German paper and belong to the Travel/Travel agency category.

## 5. Conclusions

While there is considerable crossover in these parallel newspaper editions, there are clear distinctions regarding advertising language; namely, English in the English paper, and very little English in the German paper. From the 613 advertisements compared across the German and English parallel editions of the *Eureka Post* and *Die Eureka Post*, several trends regarding the language of the advertisements, their locality, and the category of the products/services emerged.

Unlike in the English paper, where the total number of advertisements decreased over time, the German paper experienced an increase in German-language advertisements and a slight decrease in English advertisements over time. While the locality categories of local and assumed national are the two largest in both the German and English papers, their distribution is opposite, with the English paper having the most advertisements in the assumed national category (70%), followed by local advertisements, and the German paper with the most in the local category (73%). Over time, both categories decreased in the English paper. In the German paper, the number of local advertisements more than doubled, whereas the assumed national advertisements decreased by 60 percent. Phrased differently, there are clear distinctions in advertising locality according to the language of the newspaper, with the majority of national advertisements appearing in the English paper and the majority of local advertisements appearing in the German paper. Finally, the category of an advertisement impacted the paper in which it appeared, with banks, for example, being advertised only in the German-language paper.

As an indicator of verticalization in this community, these results suggest that external contributors do not have much influence on these local papers. If external contributors to the newspapers had a substantial impact on publishing language of advertisements, we would expect an increase in English-language advertisements overall, an increase in English language-advertisements in the German-language paper over time, or an increase in advertisements from the national level. However, in this particular community, none of these possible outcomes were manifested. Instead, we see an increase in the total number of advertisements in the German paper, with a decrease in the number of English advertisements in the German-language paper over time. We also see a decrease in the number of national advertisements over time in both papers. While the sample taken is from the time where the English paper was nearing its merger with another local English paper, these results might indicate that the German paper had not yet reached a point in time or in its individual trajectory where these increases in external contributors, financially or linguistically, comes into play, or it may indicate that this particular community had become more insular and more aware of their German-language status over time. As the German-language paper began earlier and remained longer, and the number of households with at least one monolingual German speaker increased from 1900 to 1910, this may be the case.

## References

- Articles of Incorporation DT, 1878-1889 Alphabetical. 2014. *South Dakota State Historical Society*. <https://history.sd.gov/archives/AI.aspx> (February 10, 2022).
- Bousquette, Joshua. 2020. From Bidialectal to Bilingual: Evidence for multi-stage language shift in Lester WJ ‘Smoky’ Seifert’s 1946-1949 Wisconsin German Recordings. *American Speech*. 1-30.
- Brown, Joshua R., ed. 2022. *The Verticalization Model of Language Shift: The Great Change in American Communities*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Johnson, Mirva. 2018. Language shift and changes in community structure: A case study of Oulu, Wisconsin. *Scandinavian-Canadian Studies Journal / Études scandinaves au Canada* 25. 30–49.
- Litty, Samantha M. Forthcoming. The German-Language Press in South Dakota. In Jon K. Lauck (Ed.), *South Dakota History: Old Trails and New Roads*. Sioux Falls, South Dakota: Center for Western Studies Press.
- Olson, Gary D. 2005. Yankee and European Settlement. In Harry F. Thompson (Ed.), *A New South Dakota History*. Sioux Falls, SD: Pine Hill Press. 117–142.
- Salmons, Joseph. 2002. The shift from German to English, World War I and the German language press in Wisconsin. In Walter G. Rödel & Helmut Schmahl (Eds.), *Menschen zwischen zwei Welten: Auswanderung, Ansiedlung, Akkulturation*, 179–193. Trier: Wissenschaftlicher Verlag Trier.

- SD Town List. 2010. *South Dakota State Historical Society*.  
<https://history.sd.gov/archives/towndates.aspx> (February 10, 2022).
- South Dakota State Historical Society – State Archives. About Die Eureka Post.  
*Library of Congress: Chronicling America*.  
<https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn99062854/> (February 10, 2022).
- United States Census Bureau. 1900 United States Federal Census.  
<https://www.ancestry.com/search/collections/7602/> (February 10, 2022).
- United States Census Bureau. 1910 United States Federal Census.  
<http://search.ancestry.com/search/db.aspx?dbid=7884> (February 10, 2022).
- Warren, Roland L. 1963. *The Community in America*. Chicago: Rand McNally.
- Wilkerson, Miranda E., & Joseph Salmons. 2012. Linguistic Marginalities:  
Becoming American without Learning English. *Journal of Transnational  
American Studies* 4(2).

### **Address for correspondence**

Department of Frisian & Minority Studies  
Europa-Universität Flensburg  
Auf dem Campus 1  
24943 Flensburg

samantha.litty@uni-flensburg.de