Multilingual memory albums in Wisconsin and the Duchy of Schleswig

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Abstract. Memory albums, sometimes known as poetry albums or autograph books (German *Stammbuch*; Danish *stambog*), have existed in some form for centuries, and by the 19th century, the practice was common among many members of society and were often kept by school-aged children or young adults. Such albums are considered to have been kept for the purposes of group affiliation and for collecting personal memories for the future. Because of this, they are a useful source in historical sociolinguistic research, particularly regarding the reconstruction of social networks and understanding community of practice. By focusing on memory albums created during the same time period in two distinct locations by bi- or multilingual social groups, this chapter aims to shed light on differences and similarities of the communities of practice taking part in memory album creation; one in Wisconsin, the other in the Duchy of Schleswig. Results from this chapter show that for each location, a dominant language is apparent, and similarities arise according to the sex of the album owner.

Keywords: multilingualism, historical multilingualism, memory album, semi-public text, Poesiealbum, Herzogtum Schleswig, Wisconsin, Duchy of Schleswig, community of practice

1. Introduction. This case study examines two sets of memory albums from two distinct multilingual regions. The first set was written in Wisconsin, a multilingual region due to (im)migration[2], and the second set originates in the Duchy of Schleswig, a region known for its longstanding historical quintolingualism or quintoglossia. Memory albums are a semi-public text type, a categorization which might fall somewhere between private letters and a printed lecture, following Koch & Oesterreicher's model for 'language of immediacy' and 'language of distance' (1985:18). This categorization is intended only as a reference point, as much previous research in historical sociolinguistics has focused on the use of private letters, due to their proximity to spoken language (Elspaß 2005, among others). However, in settings where personal letters are not available, Elspaß (2019) advocates for an expansion to non-traditional text types for the study of the writing practices of individuals and groups. As such, the *community of practice* framework guides this comparative study (Eckert 2006:109). Although multilingual communities have not yet become a consistent focus of research in historical sociolinguistics, this chapter adds to the growing research in historically multilingual regions and adapts the Lauersdorfian principle of drawing on data and resources, from as many sources as possible and including those which are

[2] I use the term (im)migration as it was both immigration from other countries and migration from inhabitants of the eastern United States that was occurring at this time.

not traditionally used in linguistic research to paint a more complete picture of how people used language(s) in their daily lives in the past (Lauersdorf 2021). Memory albums, though addressed to one individual, are intended to be read by multiple members of a particular social group. The analysis undertaken here is intended to determine whether the creation of memory albums in multilingual communities (an (im)migrant community and a longstanding, stable multilingual one) differs from previously studied practices determined by other factors (the sex of the owner and author of the memory album; familial vs. peer-social group). Thus, the communities of practice here should be understood not simply as those who partake in the shared practice of keeping and writing in memory albums, as this applies to both sets of albums, but also as a combination of these additional factors and identifiers.

2. Memory albums. Memory albums, also known as poetry albums or autograph books (German *Stammbuch*; Danish *stambog*), were first found in scholarly circles among the Wittenberg Reformers in the 1530s. Male students would collect autographs and inscriptions or dedications from their male role models on individual pieces of paper and later bind them into an album (Schnabel 2003). Over time the practice moved to upper-class social circles (Tienken 2015:143–144). Guestbooks and genealogical (hand)books of the nobility, which were primarily kept and written in by women, are considered another precursor to the memory albums of the 19th century (Delen 1989), when memory albums became common among all social classes and were often even kept by school-aged children and young adults. Memory albums include many different types of entries, such as religious or philosophical maxims, aphorisms, emblematic texts and adages, rhyming sayings, obscenities, and gibes. Despite the wide variation of entry types in this genre, the type of inscriptions within one album does not typically vary much (cf. Helk 2001).

Tienken (2014:105) describes memory albums as books "in which a person collects inscriptions and dedications of socially relevant individuals for the purposes of affiliation or later remembrance"[3]. She goes on to explain that the memory albums themselves are a form of social contract in which the album owner and the entry writers knowingly enter with the intent of showing their belonging to a particular social group (Tienken 2014:207).

Memory albums can be understood then as written intentionally for an audience—not only are they written for the album's owner, but also for the other signatories. The act of writing itself demonstrates the performative nature of this text type and the contract made between the entry writer and the album's owner (Tienken 2014:108–110). Memory albums thus belong neither to the private nor public text types, but rather to the category of semi-public texts (Litty & Penning forthcoming). They are handwritten and not intended for wide circulation, but they are also not intended for a single, private recipient. Although the signatories will have understood that they are partaking in a performative semi-public ritual, the audience was likely not known in its entirety.

In the case of multilingual memory albums, the use of different languages may be seen as an act of *enregisterment*, or the process of association of a specific language (or dialect) with a particular social group (Agha 2005:38, cf. Tienken 2014:125 regarding memory albums). Beyond the possibility for the use of a specific language as an indicator of group association, in the albums presented here, the variation in languages used indicates conventions associated with these specific multilingual communities or communities of practice.

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[3] Original quote: "in dem eine Person Inschriften und Widmungen sozial relevanter Individuen zum Zwecke der Affiliation oder späteren Erinnerung sammelt" (Tienken 2014:105).

3. Multilingual communities: Duchy of Schleswig and Wisconsin. The memory albums analyzed here originate in communities where multilingualism was widely visible and existed over an extended period. In the Duchy of Schleswig there was a longstanding, stable multilingualism, and the region is known for its "quintolingualism"[4] (Langer 2011:168). The five *named languages* of the region are High German, Low German, *Rigsdansk* (Standard Danish), South Jutish, and North Frisian. These five languages dominate linguistic discussions as the region's three *autochthonous* languages, Low German, South Jutish, and North Frisian were the mother tongues of most of the population, and the *allochthonous* languages, High German (Standard German), and Standard Danish, were the main languages of education and correspondence. Politically, the Duchy of Schleswig underwent several changes in the 19th century, including following the First Schleswig War (1848-1850) when strict Danish-language policies targeted officials and public servants in an attempt to strengthen the Danish element of the duchy. This was followed by the Second Schleswig War (1864), in which the Austro-Prussian alignment defeated the Danes, leading to Denmark ceding all rights in the duchies of Schleswig and Holstein, and Schleswig-Holstein becoming a Prussian province in 1867. It was in this post-war period when the memory albums were created, in a region which then belonged to Denmark, but which had only a decade prior belonged to the Duchy of Schleswig. Thus, despite the region's long-enduring multilingualism, political turmoil caused shifts in language policy—at least at an official level—throughout the region.

This situation differs from the linguistic setting in Wisconsin where the other albums were created. Comparatively, Wisconsin's multilingual setting was relatively new, beginning around the 1830s with large influxes of northern European immigrants and migrants from the eastern United States. This im(migration) meant there were multiple languages in contact (i.e., German, Norwegian, Polish), and multiple varieties of those languages (Swiss German, Oderbrüchisch, Pommersch, etc.).[5] The (im)migration of German speakers to Wisconsin began in the early 19th century, peaked around 1890 and continued into the early 20th century (Eichhoff 1971:46–47). The relatively early arrival and extended duration of continued (im)migration of German speakers created a situation in which German-language institutions such as churches, schools, and newspapers, were built at the same time as English-language ones, likely allowing German speakers to continue using the language alongside English longer than would have otherwise been expected (Litty forthcoming).

The geographic locations and the political and social context surrounding the album creation differ greatly. Section 4 describes and explains the respective historical context and what effect this may have had on their creation and composition.

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[4] Any discussion of the region's languages begins from a standpoint of "bigger" or *named languages*, and the true number of languages or language varieties remains hidden behind the terms typical for simplified discussion, i.e., "North Frisian" is counted in this quintolingualism as one, when there are more than nine North Frisian varieties. This designation also leaves out languages which were either not widespread, i.e., Dutch was very important in Friedrichstadt, but not beyond, and languages such as Yiddish and Romanes are also not included in this count.

[5] Discussions of this region's languages also lead to unintentional invisibilization, but for other reasons than in the Duchy of Schleswig. Because this region's Native American inhabitants were forced out before major European (im)migration began, contact was therefore unlikely (the Midwest region around the Great Lakes was opened for white, European settlement following the Blackhawk War of 1832 (Conzen 2009:19)). Due to this, discussions with a focus on language in the region in the late 19th century tend to focus on 'older immigrant languages' from northern Europe. These memory albums were created on land belonging to the Ho-Chunk and Potawatomi (Krueger) and Dakota and Ojibwe (Schlegelmilch), but the time of their creation makes any contact between those languages unlikely.

4. Duchy of Schleswig and Wisconsin memory albums. The Wisconsin data set consists of two memory albums: the first owned by Alexander Krueger of Dodge County, Wisconsin, and the second owned by Dora A. C. Schlegelmilch of Eau Claire, Wisconsin. The Duchy of Schleswig data set consists of four albums owned by Marie Jörgensen from Holm on the Danish island of Als in the Baltic Sea. These albums were chosen due to availability (Wisconsin) and the similar creation period (Jörgensen). Both sets originate from multilingual regions and give indications of the multilingual reading capabilities of the album owners.

The Krueger album is part of a larger collection, which includes over 100 letters spanning three generations of speakers. Previous research into this collection (Bagwell et al. 2019) shows that the owner is second generation living in the US (that is, the first generation of speakers to be born there). The first dated entries in Krueger's memory album were written when he was 10 years old. It consists of 22 entries, from 19 people, including family and friends, with dated entries spanning 1882-1887. Entries are written in both German and English. The album is housed in the Wisconsin Historical Society in Madison, Wisconsin. The Schlegelmilch album is – as far as I know – not part of a larger collection. Dora A. C. Schlegelmilch was the oldest daughter of Herman and Auguste Schlegelmilch, and was born in Wisconsin in 1859, meaning her album was created when she was 20 years old. According to the US Census of 1880, both of Dora's parents were born in German-speaking Europe and immigrated as adults. This album also consists of 22 entries, all from different signatories, including friends, family, and teachers, with entries dated 1877-1880.

The second data set comprises four memory albums owned by Marie Jörgensen, with dated entries from 1887-1898. These are part of a collection of memory albums housed in the archive of the Dansk Centralbibliotek for Sydslesvig in Flensburg. Because this set of albums belongs to a collection of similar albums, little information is readily available regarding Marie Jörgensen or her social or familial connections. Due to the nature of the archive, which consists primarily of documents by or pertaining to the Danish minority in Germany beginning after the referendum which set the modern border between Germany and Denmark in 1920, there may be an expectation for documents in this collection to tend to be in Danish. This is discussed further in 4.1.

4.1. DUCHY OF SCHLESWIG ALBUMS: MARIE JÖRGENSEN. The entries in the Jörgensen books are of a similar type, namely in that they express affection for the book owner and the wish that the owner will remember the signatory in the future, which follows expectations based on previous studies (cf. Helk 2001). Language choice among the four books is also mostly consistent. Although there are individual entries in both German and Danish, there are none which mix the two languages in the text body. The number and percentage of each is shown in Table 1.

	D7614	D7617	D7615	D7617	Total
Dates of creation	1887-1890	1890-1892	1892	1892-1898	1887-1898
# German entries	1 (2.4%)	1 (2.2%)	1 (3.1%)	5 (25%)	8 (5.8%)
# Danish entries	40 (97.6%)	44 (97.8%)	31 (96.9%)	15 (75%)	130 (94.2%)
Total	41	45	32	20	138

Table 1. Jörgensen albums by language of entry

Overall, 94.2% of the entries are written in Danish, with only one German entry in each of the first three memory albums and five total in the final album, or 5.8% of this sample. Not all entries are

labeled with a date, nor are entries spread evenly according to chronology through the four books. This means that although it seems there may be an increase in German entries in the final period, this may be because this album covers more than half of the time span of the entire collection. Nonetheless, the apparent language of Jörgensen's social group is primarily Danish.

If we consider the writer's sex,[6] the signatories are overwhelmingly female, as shown in Table 2.

	D7614	D7617	D7615	D7617	Total
Entries by female writers	28 (68.3%)	26 (57.8%)	27 (84.4%)	19 (95.0%)	100 (72.5%)
Entries by male writers	13 (31.7%)	19 (42.2%)	5 (15.6%)	1 (5.0%)	38 (27.5%)
Total	41	45	32	20	138

Table 2. Jörgensen albums: Entries according to sex

In sum, 72.5% of the entries are made by female writers, which indicates that at this time, at least in the Jörgensen's albums, the signatories are primarily female. This reflects what has been found among the wealthy and upper classes (Tienken 2015:143–144). If we consider the language and the sex of the writer together, all entries written in German were written by female writers.

Another factor we might consider when looking at the Jörgensen albums is the relationship of the signatories to the owner. In this case we have three classifications which were made by the signatories themselves: family, friend, or classmate. The breakdown of these classifications is shown in Table 3.

	D7614	D7617	D7615	D7617	Total
Family	6 (15.0%)	9[7] (19.1%)	2 (6.5%)	1 (5.0%)	18 (13.0%)
Friend	17 (42.5%)	14 (29.8%)	26 (83.9%)	19 (95.0%)	76 (55.1%)
Classmate	1 (2.5%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	1 (0.7%)
Unlabeled	16 (40.0%)	24 (51.1%)	3 (9.7%)	0 (0.0%)	43 (31.2%)
Total	40	47	31	20	138

Table 3. Jörgensen albums: Entries according to relationship to owner

This collection consists primarily of signatories classified as friends, followed by those who did not identify how they knew the owner, and then family. Only one signatory who identified themself does not belong to either group, namely the one who signed as 'classmate'. Notable is that the latter two albums appear to show a trend toward a preference for entries by friends rather than by family members.

Section 4.2 shows whether similar patterns are found in the Wisconsin data set.

4.2. WISCONSIN MEMORY ALBUMS. Both the Schlegelmilch and Krueger albums follow a similar format and style, especially regarding the structure of the albums and the content of the entries. Most express affection for the album's owner and the wish that the owner will remember the signatory in the future. Some are short poems (2 to 4 lines), and others give life advice.

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[6] Sex here is distinguished either by self-identification of the writer via gendered terms, i.e., *veninde* ('friend, female' Danish) or *ven* ('friend, male' Danish), or based on the sex traditionally associated with the name.

[7] Three of these entries are made by the same person.

Language choice in the Schlegelmilch album resembles those of the Jörgensen collection, in that there is only one German language entry, with the rest of the entries in the other community language – here English. Language choice in the Krueger album varies more than in either the Schlegelmilch or the Jörgensen albums, with a more even division between German and English, and with two entries exhibiting a mix of both languages (Table 4).

	Krueger Album	Schlegelmilch Album	Total
# German entries	9 (40.9%)	1 (4.5%)	10 (22.7%)
# English entries	11 (50.0%)	20 (91.0%)	31 (70.5%)
# Mixed entries	2 (9.1%)	1 (4.5.%)	3 (6.8%)
Total	22	22	44

Table 4. Wisconsin albums by language of entry

The Schlegelmilch album is overwhelmingly English, with only one entry—the earliest according to pagination, but the latest chronologically—in German, and one entry which includes two languages. However, this is not a mix of German and English. The mixed entry here includes a quote in Latin. In the Krueger album, of the two entries classified as mixed, one is further classified as primary language German, with supplementary language English. The other entry is classified as primary language English, with supplementary language German.

Turning to the division of entry writers according to sex (Table 5), both albums show a tendency for more female than male signatories.

	Krueger Album	Schlegelmilch Album	Total
Entries by female writers	11 (50.0%)	20 (91.0%)	31 (70.5%)
Entries by male writers	9 (40.9%)	1 (4.5%)	10 (22.7%)
Unknown	2 (9.1%)	1 (4.5%)	3 (6.8%)
Total	22	22	44

Table 5. Wisconsin albums: Entries according to sex

However, where the split according to sex is more even in the Krueger album, 91% of the entries are signed by female writers in the Schlegelmilch album. This may have something to do with the relation of the signatory to the album owner, which is shown in Table 6.

	Krueger Album	Schlegelmilch Album	Total
Family	16 (72.7%)	1 (4.5%)	17 (38.6%)
Friend	5 (22.7%)	14 (63.6%)	19 (43.2%)
"loved one"	1 (4.5%)	0 (0.0%)	1 (2.3%)
No designation given	0 (0.0%)	7 (31.8%)	7 (15.9%)
Total	22	22	44

Table 6. Wisconsin albums: Entries according to relationship to owner

The distribution of entries according to the signatories' relationship to the owner shows the Krueger album is nearly three-fourths family members. This could be one reason for the larger number of male signatories. Another possible explanation is related to the sex of the album owners themselves. Both the Jörgensen and the Schlegelmilch albums are owned by women and the overwhelming majority of signatories in both are also women. This may reflect societal conventions of the memory albums themselves (that memory albums were kept and written in by women), or it may reflect the general makeup of the memory album owner's social circle.

If we consider the language of the entries and the sex of the writers, a couple of trends emerge. The distribution of entries and the sex of the writer is shown in Table 7.

No. of Entries	Krueger		Schlegelmilch		Total	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
German	5 (55.6%)	4 (36.4%)	0 (0.0%)	1 (5.0%)	5 (50%)	5 (16.1%)
English	3 (33.3%)	6 (54.5%)	0 (0.0%)	19 (95%)	3 (30%)	25 (80.6%)
Mixed	1 (11.1%)	1 (9.1%)	1 (100.0%)	0 (0.0%)	2 (20%)	1 (3.2%)
Total	9	11	1	20	10	31

Table 7. Wisconsin albums: Language of entry and sex of writer, 'unknown' excluded

We have seen that there are more female than male writers, and more English than German entries, so it is not unexpected that in both data sets more than half of the English entries are written by women. In the Krueger album, the distribution between male and female is nearly even, with nine male writers and eleven female writers. However, there is a slight preference for language based on sex, with males exhibiting a preference for German and females for English.

If we look at the entries in the Schlegelmilch album, we see that 19 (95%) of the English entries are written by women, and only one (5%) is in German. The singular mixed language entry is also the only entry written by a man. This entry is composed of a quote in Latin, followed by location, date, and name of the signatory (in English). This example of *academic multilingualism* (cf. Litty & Penning: forthcoming) can be explained by the fact that the signatory was the principal of East School in Eau Claire, Wisconsin. While I have no direct evidence of Dora Schlegelmilch attending the East School, at least one other signatory has been identified as a teacher at the school, making it likely that she did, and that this book was composed while she was a student there. This would also account for the distribution of signatories in the Schlegelmilch album according to relationship to owner, as shown in Table 8.

# entries	Krueger		Schlegelmilch		Total	
	Family	Friend	Family	Friend	Family	Friend
German	8 (50.0%)	1 (20.0%)	0 (0.0%)	1 (7.1%)	8 (47.1%)	2 (10.5%)
English	6 (37.5%)	4 (80.0%)	1 (100%)	13 (92.9%)	7 (41.2%)	17 (89.5%)
Mixed	2 (12.5%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	2 (11.8%)	0 (0.0%)
Total	16	5	1	14	17	19

Table 8. Wisconsin albums: Language of entry and relationship to owner (family and friend only)

When language of entry and relationship to owner are considered, there is a preference for friends to write in English (89.5%). When it comes to family, the distribution of German and English is nearly even, with German being present in one entry more. However, if we consider the

memory albums individually, despite both of Schlegelmilch's parents immigrating from German-speaking Europe as adults – which makes it more likely that Schlegelmilch had at least passive knowledge of German – it is a friend who uses German, not a family member. Given that the one family member in the Schlegelmilch album is Dora's younger sister, it is conceivable that the children of this family had already shifted to English, especially given that it appears to be the language Schlegelmilch used at school and in her social circle. On the other hand, an entry from a friend written in German may hint at more than a passive knowledge of German, as passive knowledge among heritage speakers is often restricted to spoken language. In the Krueger album, 80% of those in the friend circle also exhibit a preference for English, but 50% of family members write in German and 37.5% in English.

5. Conclusions. Regarding the linguistic abilities of the owners and their social circles, in all instances, because the entries were created for the owners in both languages, it can be presumed that each had at least passive or reading knowledge of those languages. It appears from the entries in the albums that the social circles of both female owners were primarily other women, who primarily spoke the majority societal language (English in Eau Claire; Danish in Holm).

Krueger was ten when his album was started, which might explain why there are more family members than friends as signatories in his album, whereas by contrast the albums of the two women are comprised predominantly of entries written by friends (55.1% Jörgensen, and 63.6% Schlegelmilch). The composition of the Krueger album, therefore, may be a combination of the younger age making it more likely for family members to sign it, or it might be related to the owner himself being male, so more males wrote in it as compared to the other albums.

The only two entries which mix the majority and minority societal language occur in the setting of multilingualism due to (im)migration. Where there was longstanding multilingualism, both languages are used, but not mixed within individual entries, which might suggest that in the contact setting due to (im)migration more variability and mixing was accepted by the readers of the region. It may also imply that where multilingualism had long existed, that community norms delineating the use of one language at a time were in place. However, as these mixed entries were both written by family members, it may say more about language use in that family as a community of practice than the society at large. Further analysis of bi- or multilingual memory albums in contact settings is necessary to make this determination.

Finally, rather than similarities appearing between the sets of albums based on their geographic locations—which would have indicated that the makeup of the multilingual community was an important factor in identifying the community of practice—similarities appear among the albums owned by women. Despite the location, the length of multilingualism in the community, and the two written languages being different, this suggests that the factors determining their communities of practice include the sex of the album owner and the signatories and the makeup of their social circles (peer-group over family).

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