Tønder Teaching Seminary
Biernamen as an indicator of group belonging[1]

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1. Introduction

This article explores the sociolinguistic and cultural significance of *Biernamen* 'beer names'[2] or nicknames given and used among members of student societies, here specifically at the Tønder Teaching Seminary in the 19th century. Drawing from two primary texts – a guestbook from a country inn and a memory album from a former student at the teaching seminary – this analysis investigates how the use of *Biernamen* as part of the signatures served to create and reinforce group identity among the authors. The texts provide a unique lens through which the customs, traditions, and linguistic practices of these student societies are examined, offering insights into the social cohesion fostered by shared languages and ritualized behavior. In order to show the importance of the student society and the Tønder Teaching Seminary in the lives of the writers analyzed in §5, we begin with an

2 As this term is specific to universities in a German/German-language context, we are unaware of a sufficient term in English and therefore use the German term throughout. Other German terms (and their approximate translations) for this type of nickname include *Cerevisname* 'beer' (Latin) = 'beer name', *Kneipname* 'pub name', *Vulgo* 'commonly named' (Latin), and *Burschenname* 'student name'. Unless otherwise noted, all translations are our own, including fraternity specific jargon as these do not have consistent translations in the English academic literature.

explanation of the educational expectations of the time period, and some specifics regarding the Tønder Teaching Seminary (§2). We then turn to necessary historical background on the German fraternities and student societies as created in teaching seminary contexts in §3, before introducing the two main semi-public texts (§4) used in our analysis, in which we include some qualitative assessments, namely the Ranzelberg Guestbook in §4a and the Trede Memory Album in §4b. We then turn to a quantitative analysis in §5 before concluding with some final thoughts in §6.

2. Tønder Teaching Seminary

Prior to education reforms in the late-18th and early-19th century, both city and country schools in the Duchy of Schleswig (as was also common throughout much of the German-speaking lands) only provided pupils with a minimum education as they sought to support the local clergy by making sure that the people were equipped with a basic level of reading and writing skills and familiarity with the catechism (Siemonsen 1925: 6ff.). Over time this progressed to include more subjects including basic mathematics or hymn singing, for example. Because of this, it was not necessary for the teachers who taught in these schools to achieve an advanced level of education (i.e., at a university) themselves, and they were therefore trained at so-called teacher training or teaching seminaries.

In the Duchy of Schleswig, the seminary-based teacher education, and thus the professionalization of the teaching profession, began with the establishment of the two German-language seminars in Kiel in 1781 and in Tønder in 1788 (Siemonsen 1925: 11, 17). At both of these institutions, young men were to be systematically trained and prepared for their duties as *Volksschullehrer* 'elementary school teachers' (Bruhn 1997: 12).

In the second half of the 18th century, school language was to be determined according to the language of the church, or often more specifically the language of the sermon, which was German, even in areas of *Nordschleswig*[3] where the vernacular was South

3 The administrative district 'North Schleswig' or Nordslesvig (Danish), made up the northern part of the Duchy of Schleswig, and since the 1920 plebiscite, belongs to Denmark.

Jutish (Siemonsen 1925: 51). This means that the perceived – or at least according to official record – need was for teachers who spoke German, and so German was also the norm for the language of education in the Tønder Teaching Seminary. In total, more than 3,200 elementary school teachers were trained at the Tønder Teaching Seminary between 1788 and 1925, highlighting the significant role this educational institution played for the school system of the Duchy of Schleswig (Bruhn 1997: 57).

3. Student societies and '*Burschenleben*'
While attending the teaching seminary, a strict code was intended to promote the moral and character development of the young men while simultaneously fostering internal cohesion (Bruhn 1997: 58). Despite these regulations, the seminarians were granted enough freedom to form student societies, often modeled after those they knew from the university context, specifically *Burschenschaften* 'fraternities'. One such society at the Tønder seminary was called *Concordia*. It was through participation in this student society that the seminarians established and developed a variety of customs, traditions, and linguistic peculiarities.

The building of fraternities, particularly in the context of student societies in German-speaking countries, is deeply rooted in traditions, rituals, and a specialized linguistic culture. An important aspect of this culture is the concept of the *Burschenleben* 'fraternity life'.[4] Various aspects of the *Burschenleben* may be constructed specifically for or according to each individual fraternity, although a number of similarities exist between groups at different universities or institutions. Brubaker argues that "[s]trong notions of collective identity imply strong notions of group boundedness and homogeneity" and that although various "degrees of groupness" may occur, a shared identity or "sameness between group members" draws a clear distinction between those who belong to the group and those who do not (Brubaker 2006: 37). This "sameness" of identity formation in the group building

4 Bursch(e) 'regional: boy, lad' is also the German term for a full member of a fraternity, and formerly simply a word for university student. It is frequently used as a sort of prefix to describe fraternity specific concepts, as is done here.

process is particularly relevant in the context of student societies in which group activities or the use of shared linguistic aspects (style, jargon, etc.), may be used to build and solidify a sense of groupness among members. This group identity is further reinforced through shared practices, goals, and life circumstances (for more 'communities of practice' framework, see Eckert 2006; Meyerhoff & Strycharz 2013).

Although fraternities were officially restricted to universities, parallel student societies or organizations were commonplace at other institutions. As such, these student societies also adapted and followed certain ritualized practices including linguistic group norms. The self-proclaimed *Burschen* of the Tønder Teaching Seminary were no exception as they not only wore colorful caps as a sign of recognition and celebrated ritualized festivals, they also used group-specific jargon. This includes addressing their fellow seminarians with group-specific titles indicating their standing according to their respective semester within the seminary. For example, terms such as *Fuchs* 'fox' were applied to newcomers, *Brandfuchs* 'burned fox' to second-semester students, and *altes Haus* 'old house' to more senior seminarians (*Idiotikon* 1841: 15, 21, 24).

One major identifying and unifying factor of this speech community – both in fraternities and in the societies mimicking them – is the use of so-called *Biernamen*. In this group-specific jargon, the prefix "beer" is not necessarily meant in the common sense of the alcoholic beverage, but rather it was used as a prefix indicating ingroup specific concepts. For example, a *Biercomment* '(lit.) beer code of conduct', were the self-imposed rules applied to the members of a fraternity, and if these rules were not followed, it might lead to a *Bierconvent* 'beer court/convention', which was a court-like event where older fraternity members judged the behavior of younger students and when deemed necessary sentenced them to minor punishments (*Idiotikon* 1841: 14).

Biernamen were often humorous or ironic nicknames typically assigned to new society members and were often based on personal traits, physical appearance, behaviors, or specific incidents that occurred during their early time in the fraternity. Through this renaming of the young men, *Biernamen* provide an informal identification within

the group, helping to create a sense of belonging and shared identity. Additionally, the *Biernamen* served – intentionally or unintentionally – a dual purpose, namely, to conceal an individual's identity from outsiders[5] while simultaneously enhancing identification and group cohesion within the society.

The use of *Biernamen* along with specialized group-specific jargon play a crucial role in differentiating between in-group and out-group members. Language becomes a tool for boundary-setting, where the members develop a shared repertoire that strengthen their internal community. By using these names in both formal and informal settings, society members create a linguistic barrier, allowing them to communicate freely while maintaining exclusivity. Even though these men clearly identify as part of the *Burschen*-community, and *Biernamen* distinguish them as members of the group, the names also allow them to retain their personal identity within the student society. These may be even more specific than their given names, as due to traditional naming practices of the time there were frequently cohorts with more than one person with the same name. The *Biernamen*, on the other hand, were unique within the student society for any time frame in which a *Biername* was in use. For example, there may have been several men named Hans Hansen attending the teaching seminary in the same three-year period, but members would each receive a unique name, that would not be doubled within the student society.[6]

In this study, we look at how the use of *Biernamen* appears in two different texts, a guestbook from a country inn, which was frequented by students from the Tønder Teaching Seminary, some of whom additionally self-identify as members of the student society, *Concordia*, and a memory album belonging to a *Concordia* member. We identify instances where *Biernamen* are used and compare with instances where they are not to show how members of the student

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5 We are aware the usage of *Biernamen* may originate from a time of political upheaval when they (similar to *Decknamen* 'code names' or *Tarnnamen* 'aliases') were used to hide the identity of an individual. At the time of our data, however, the concealment of one's identity is coincidental, not vitally necessary.

6 *Biernamen* were reused within the student society context, however, only after the member using that name had left the teaching seminary.

society navigated their personal and group identity in these two contexts.

4. Semi-public texts

The two documents used in the analysis here both originate from the Duchy of Schleswig in the 19th century. The first is a guestbook which was laid out in a North Frisian country inn for over 50 years, and the second is a memory album belonging to a seminarian at the Tønder Teaching Seminary.

As these documents were neither entirely publicly available, nor entirely private or intimate text types, we characterize them as *semi-public*, following terminology suggested by Litty & Penning (2024: 92-93). Semi-public texts belong to a category of written communication, which is characterized by the availability of the texts as well as their functional context. They are not intended for the broader public, but may be circulated within a limited social, geographic, or institutional circle. Characteristic for these texts is that they have a concrete owner or recipient to whom they are addressed, but it is openly known to both the owner and the writer, that the text will be read and potentially edited, added to, or even partially constructed by others (Litty & Penning 2024: 92).

This dynamic creates a unique form of communication, in which the intended recipient is defined, but the knowledge of the possibility of other readers and/or potentially unknown co-authors, affects the manner in which the texts are composed. Because of the context of their creation, they may exhibit a particular usefulness in group-creation or maintenance. Thus, the self-presentation could be customized or adjusted according to individual language use, or to match that of other writers. Taking this into consideration, the texts analyzed here may depict different stages of the creation and/or maintenance of a specific group identity, namely that of the members of the student society, *Concordia*.

4a. Ranzelberg Guestbook

The so-called Ranzelberg Guestbook was accessible in a North Frisian country-inn along the western *Ochsenweg* 'cattle drove' in what is

now Schleswig-Holstein for over 50 years. The *Ochsenweg* was used by travelers through the region, from Jutland to Hamburg, as this part of the Duchy of Schleswig had no other 'easy' means of transportation to offer. This inn, sometimes called "Petersburg" after the innkeeper, Peter Matthiesen, served as a place for travelers, such as cattle drovers, tradesmen, merchants, or others to stop for food or to spend the night. It was also a beloved (and cheap) stop for seminarians on their way to or from the teaching seminary (Riecken 2018: 24).

In 1834 a group of seminarians gave the then blank book to the innkeeper with the understanding that the book would be in Matthiesen's possession but could be reclaimed by the seminarians at any time, underscoring the seminarian's connection to the book. The guestbook remained available to guests until 1888 (with the final approximately 10 years at a second location in a guesthouse in Leck (Riecken 2018: 25)), where travelers immortalized themselves within its pages with literary anecdotes, or by simply noting their presence there. The seminarians, however, used the book not just for general immortalization purposes or to share pleasantries with the innkeeper, but they used the book to communicate with and among themselves. It is this interactive communication style within the guestbook that makes it such a valuable and unique document. The seminarians wrote guestbook entries about why they stopped to visit, with whom they stopped, and sometimes added short poems or stories, mottos, political slogans, or even gave life advice, meaning they not only described their social networks, but they also showed how they interacted with members of other groups (i.e., carriage drivers, or Danes), which gives insights into popular and important topics among their group members. For example, among the *Concordia* members, the most common phrase in the guestbook was likely, *Wer nicht liebt Wein, Weib und Gesang, der bleibt ein Narr sein Leben lang* 'who doesn't love wine, woman, and song; he remains a fool his whole life long' which hints at some of the seminarians' favorite topics, i.e. drinking (alcohol) and women (Litty et al. 2023b: 14-15).

Overall, we see a tendency for the guestbook entries written by seminarians and *Concordia* members to express pride and joy of the *Burschenleben*, further cementing their group identity. Figure 1 shows

a sample page from the Ranzelberg Guestbook, which includes three entries. First, an unsigned poem, followed by two entries which both include *Biernamen*. The second signed entry (final entry on the page) includes the *Biername* in parentheses, which may indicate that in this context the real name was of greater importance or may simply be reflective of the societal norm. The inclusion of the *Biername*, however, suggests the writer wishes to be recognized as a member of a student society or fraternity. Although those who knew him may have recognized him as a member of *Concordia* specifically from this *Biername*, it is likely that other readers of the guestbook would have simply recognized the signer as a member of a student society (if at all).
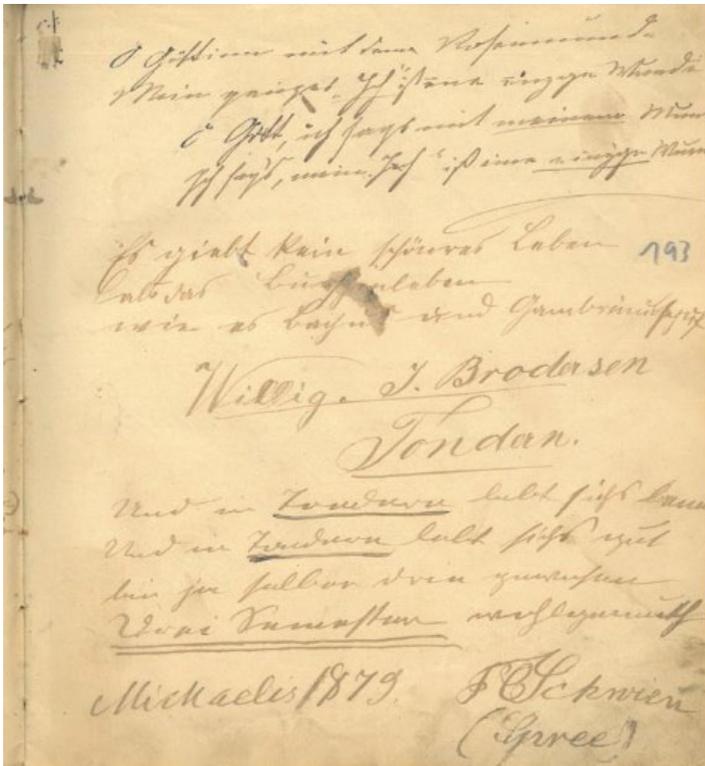

Figure 1. *Ranzelberger Gästebuch* 'Ranzelberg guestbook' page 193r with entries from three different hands (used with permission of the *Nordfriisk Instituut*).

O Göttinn mit dem Rosenmunde	O goddess with the rose-colored mouth
Mein geistes „Ich" ist eine einzge Wunde	My soul's "self" is but a single wound
O Gott, ich sags mit meinem Munde	Oh God, I say it with my mouth
Ich sag's, mein „Ich" ist ein einz'ge Wunde	I say it, my "self" is but a single wound

Es giebt kein schönres Leben	There is no better life
Als das Burschenleben	than the fraternity-life
wie es Bachus und Gambrinus schuf	as Bacchus and Gambrinus created it
Willig J. Brodersen	*Willig J. Brodersen*
Tondern.	*Tondern.*

Und in <u>Tondern</u> lebt sichs bene	Life is good in Tønder,
Und in <u>Tondern</u> lebt sichs gut	Life is good in Tønder,
Bin ja selber drin gewesen	I spent time there myself
<u>Drei Semester</u> wohlgemuth	<u>Three semesters</u> full of cheer
Michaelis 1879 *F C Schwien*	*Michaelis* 1879 *F C Schwien*
(Spree)	*(Spree)*

The entries in the guestbook were generally signed, either with real names or with *Biernamen*, such that the other entry writers could identify each other. In total, over 1,600 entries and nearly 1,000 different writers have been identified (Litty et al. 2023a). However, the following analysis includes only sections of the guestbook which coincide with the dates of the memory album (1879-1882). During this time 60 people wrote entries in the guestbook and of those 44 were seminarians. These 44 entries make up the basis of the analysis in §5.

4b. Trede Memory Album

Otto Carl Rudolph Trede (born in 1860 in Kiel and died in 1938 in Hamburg-Altona), was a seminarian at the Tønder Teaching Seminary from 1879 to 1882 (Lampe 1963: 131). During his time there, he was

referred to by the *Biername* "Phillip" and kept a memory album, which he asked some of his fellow seminarians to write in, and which he also later used to keep detailed record-keeping lists of those who attended the seminary at the same time as him. This memory album forms the second point of comparison used in this analysis.

In the 19th century it was fairly common practice to ask the people closest to oneself to write a personalized entry in a memory album (Tienken 2015: 143). Entries in memory albums generally adhere to a set of structural elements, some of which are considered obligatory, while others are regarded as optional. The content of the entries largely depends on the preferences of the album owner and the particular context in which they are created. However, a typical entry usually includes a form of address to the album holder, sometimes hinting at the nature of the relationship between the contributor and the holder (i.e., dearest sister). This is followed by a mandatory textual component, frequently consisting of poetic sayings, verses, life wisdom, personal memories, or in-group affirmations. Subsequently, a personal dedication by the contributor may be added. Each entry concludes with information regarding the date and name(s) of the inscriber (Schnabel 2003: 60; Solling 2018: 15; Stoeva-Holm 2017). The motivations surrounding the requests to make an entry in one's memory album are wide-ranging. On the one hand, entries might serve as a simple reminder of the writer, but on the other hand, they might also be used to symbolize and refer to personal belonging in a particular social group (Tienken 2014: 107).

Trede used his memory album as a place for his cohort to write remembrances and dedications but went beyond what is commonly found in such memory albums and additionally used each page to add information regarding each person who wrote in the album, which adds a level of chronological coherence to each entry. Figure 2 shows an example of the common structure of the pages of Trede's memory album. It begins with a bit of life advice in the form of the four-lined poem *Wahl* by Friedrich Schiller, and is then signed with a *Biername*, followed by the signer's real name which appears much smaller and in parentheses, indicating that the *Biername* was of greater importance. Next to and below the date and writer's signature, are six lines of additional biographical information added by Trede.
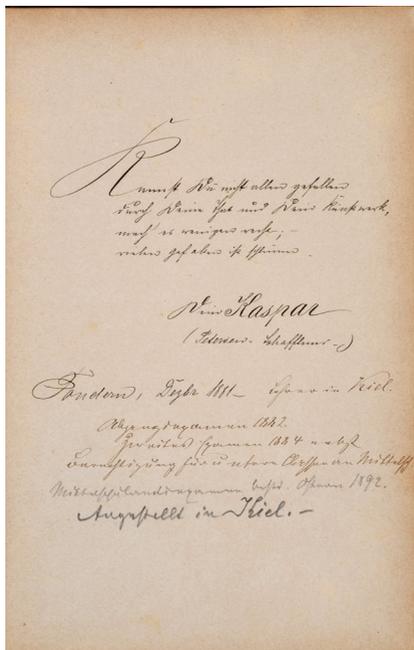
Figure 2. Entry written by seminarian, Petersen, with supplemental information in Trede's hand (LASH Abt. 418 Nr. 52).

Kannst Du nicht allen gefallen	You cannot please everyone
durch Deine That und Dein Kunstwerk	With your actions and your artwork
mach' es wenigen recht; –	Please only a few; –
vielen gefallen ist schlimm.	To please many is bad.
Dein *Kaspar*	Your Kaspar
(*Petersen – Schafflund –*)	(*Petersen – Schafflund – *)
Tondern, Dezbr. 1881_ Lehrer in *Kiel*	*Tønder*, Decbr. 1881_ Teacher in *Kiel*
Abgangsexamen 1882	Final exam 1882
Zweites Examen 1884 nebst Berechtigung für untere Classen am Mittelsch.	Second exam 1884 alongside Authorization for lower classes at second. sch.
Mittelschulexamen best. Ostern 1892	Secondary school exam pass. Easter 1892
Angestellt in *Kiel*. –	Employed in *Kiel*. -

In this example, we can see both from differences in writing utensil and from the variation in the way the word "Kiel" is written that Trede created these additional entries at at least two different times. Trede supplements all of the entries in his memory album in this manner. Thus, it is not simply the creation of the album which shows us the connection between Trede and the entry writers, but the additional biographical information indicates the strength of the connection and sincerity of interest between Trede and the rest of the *Burschen*. The addition of supplemental information at multiple periods of time tells us that there was repeated contact between Trede and his fellow students.[7] Particularly because of the abundance of historical data, of both private and of a semi-administrative nature contained within these few pages, this memory album presents us with an object of incredible value for historical sociolinguistic analysis.

Only three of the 55 entries in the memory album remain uncommented. Two of these entries were made by women – who were obviously not members of the student society – and a third entry which appears unidentifiable, not only to us, but also to Trede, as the entry is simply signed with *Gegenw*, which we believe to be an abbreviation of *Gegenwärtig* 'current, present', possibly indicating that the signer was simply someone who was 'present' at the time these entries were completed. This neither appears to be an abbreviated real name, nor a *Biername*, as it is not found anywhere in any of Trede's many lists, nor is the page given any additional commentary by Trede. Although the specific entry writers in the memory album may have been explicitly curated by Trede, after comparison with class lists it appears that nearly every member of Trede's cohort is present in the memory album. Given the fact that Trede kept additional lists of seminarians belonging to the cohorts adjacent to his, including some *Biernamen* and the location of where each ended up, it seems likely

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7 This is confirmed by the discovery of a *Klassenprotokoll*, a record book that was initially used to keep minutes in student society meetings, but the function shifts after the graduation of the seminarians to a circulating correspondence among that specific cohort. They would discuss current affairs, organize class reunions and more via the record book. We would like to thank Claas Riecken of the *Nordfriisk Instituut* for bringing this material to our attention. As this text was discovered after the completion of this analysis, it is not further incorporated in this study.

that Trede remained in contact with or at least apprised of many of the other seminarians and *Concordia* members. This long-year contact and information gathering regarding the seminarians highlights the group-cohesion and sense of belonging formed and fostered during the time spent at the teaching seminary. It is, however, notable that in these additional lists, Trede only notes *Biernamen* in instances where there are multiple instances of a given surname in one cohort. This is indicated in Example 1, where the surname "Hansen" appears five times.

(1) Lists of fellow students according to Trede, with both real names and *Biernamen* (excerpt transcribed from LASH Abt. 418 Nr. 52)

Seminarkollegen von 1877-1880 in Tondern	Fellow seminary students from 1877-1880 in Tønder
1. Alsen, angest. in Flensburg.	1. Alsen, employ. in Flensburg.
[…]	[…]
5. Frahm, ” ” Hamburg.	5. Frahm, ” ” Hamburg.
6. Grünewaldt, gestorben 1883.	6. Grünewaldt, died 1883.
7. Hansen (Knötschke) angest. Hamptrup	7. Hansen (Knötschke) employ. Hamptrup
8. ” ” (Mops) ” ” Brunsbüttel.	8. ” ” (Mops) ” ” Brunsbüttel.
9. ” ” (Karen) ” ” ——	9. ” ” (Karen) ” ” ——
10. ” ” (Jens) ” ” 2E.	10. ” ” (Jens) ” ” 2E.
11. ” ” (U. Sievers) ” ” 2E. Föhr.	11. ” ” (U. Sievers) ” ” 2E. Föhr.
12. Hieronimus, angest. in	12. Hieronimus, employ. in
[…]	[…]

Rather than listing the fellow students with their given first names, Trede identifies these with their *Biernamen*: *Knötschke, Mops, Karen, Jens* and *U. Sievers*. While we know that these *Biernamen* were unique within a given time period – there would have only been one person in the student society with the *Biername* "Mops" in the period from 1877-1880 – the fact that Trede uses this form of indicator in his own personal record-keeping tells us that the *Biernamen* were indeed more important, or (at least) more common, as indicators of personal identity than first names, and perhaps signifies how important they were within the broader group and the setting of the teaching seminary.

5. Comparison and analysis

A quantitative analysis of the signatures on each entry in the Ranzelberg Guestbook and the Trede memory album for the time

period 1879-1882 (the complete span of years present in the memory album) was conducted. Focus of the analysis is, of course, only those entries which could be identified as having been written by students of the Tønder Teaching Seminary. This was done by triangulating known information from the entries themselves, with Trede's biographical lists, and a directory of the Tønder Teaching Seminary's teachers and alumni (Lampe 1963). Any entries by non-seminarians were excluded from the analysis.

Of the 55 entries from the Trede memory album, 52 were created by seminarians, meaning only three entries (5.5%) were excluded. The memory album represents a group actively selected and managed by Trede, which is likely reflective of this particular constellation in Trede's social network. In contrast, there were 61 entries in the Ranzelberg Guestbook from this time period, and 17 were excluded (27.9%), as they were written by merchants, sailors, unidentified individuals, or were unsigned. This means a total of 44 entries from the guestbook were included in the analysis. The difference in exclusion rate underscores how openly accessible the guestbook was compared to the memory album, attracting a more diverse and less controlled set of contributors. Overall, the 96 entries deemed appropriate for analysis were categorized into three modes of signature usage: "real name only", "*Biername* only", or "both". An overview is shown in Table 1.

	Real name only	*Biername* only	Both	Total
Trede Memory Album	5	1	46	52
Ranzelberg Guestbook	12	5	27	44
				96

Table 1. Overview of signature types in the Ranzelberg Guestbook and Trede Memory Album.

In the memory album there are five entries without any reference to *Biernamen*. While it might appear that these were simply not members of the *Concordia*, we were able to determine through a class record book (*Klassenprotokoll*, see fn. 7) that two of these, did actually belong to the student society and had received *Biernamen*. The remaining three are still unidentified. A possible explanation for this could be

that these individuals were not (or not yet) members of the *Concordia* student society.

Notably, there is one entry that includes only a *Biername*. This is the first entry in the album and is by far the longest, consisting of 414 words – more than double the length of the next longest entry. Given that this entry is the first in the book, is substantially longer than the average entry, and includes reminiscences of personal events and time spent together, we posit the exclusive use of the *Biername* in this case as indicative of a close personal relationship between Trede and the entry writer.

In the memory album, both real names and *Biernamen* were used more frequently together than either real names or *Biernamen* alone. This is likely reflecting the semi-formulaic nature of memory albums in which those writing entries follow a semi-structured set of formulae, seen in this setting as including the fullest extent of the person's name possible, which does indeed include the *Biername*. While we see that the *Biernamen* appear to be more important in the memory album, often appearing first and in a larger script (see Figure 2), the combination of both might also be attributed to the fact that memory albums are intended as an enduring memory or reminder. It would not be unexpected for the author to suspect that the owner might have forgotten them after many years have passed, so the combination of real name and *Biername* may act to strengthen the memory of the owner by connecting the two names. Additionally, the use of *Biernamen* showcases their identity as a member of the *Concordia* student society.

In contrast, there is a statistical difference between when the *Biernamen* are deployed in the guest book versus when they are used in the memory album. A chi-square test indicates that the seminarians used different formats of signature depending on the text type.[8] In considering the usage of *Biernamen* in the Ranzelberg Guestbook, they could conceivably serve as a means of differentiation from the everyday travelers. However, where *Biernamen* could be used as a strategy of concealment or anonymity, or to intentionally mask their identities in a more public context, this does not appear to have been

8 The result of the test, $X^2 (1, N = 96) = 9.89, p = 0.007$, was significant at $p < .05$.

the case. Even in the context of entries with explicit or vulgar content, the entry writers tended to sign their real names. This tells us, that the use of *Biernamen* in the guest book is less of a reminder (as in the memory albums) and not intended as a means to conceal identity, but rather is used with the intent of expressing the entry writer's belonging to a group, namely that of the student society. Using the *Biernamen* distinguishes the seminarians as belonging to an in-group in contrast to all other guests who stopped at the inn.

The 12 seminarians who signed with their real names only have not yet been found among any of our sources as having been members of the *Concordia*, which would indicate that they did not use *Biernamen*, because they did not have any. The five guestbook entries signed solely with the *Biername* of the writer reflect the general content and character of the *Burschen*-community contributions. One entry praises the inn through a drinking song, while another links the educational life of a seminarian with the practice of *kneipen*[9] 'to hang out in or spend one's time in a pub' (Idiotikon 1841: 28). Two additional entries contain literary anecdotes from renowned poets, and one writer nostalgically reflects on his past and the "golden days" of his *Burschenleben*. At least one of these authors created several entries in the guestbook, in which he used both his real name and his *Biername*, which reinforces that the use of the *Biername* only here was not intended to hide his identity, but rather to strengthen his connection to the student society and his identity as a member.

6. Conclusion

Guestbooks and memory albums, though both considered semi-public texts, differ significantly in several key aspects in respect to group forming and establishing or retaining a group identity. One major distinction lies in the more public nature of guestbooks, which are generally more accessible to a larger number of people. As a result of this increased accessibility – primarily due to their fixed location – more individuals can contribute to guestbooks, even those with

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9 This verb was used only by student societies (not the general public) to describe spending their time in pubs (Idiotikon 1841: 28). The term is later used by many fraternities, including up to modern times, to indicate a specific event or ritual.

no personal connection to the owner. This then also offers a unique opportunity to examine how members belonging to a specific group such as the *Concordia* could identify themselves within this semi-public context.

Additionally, since guestbooks are a more passive kind of text type, and usually contain entries spanning a long time period, there is opportunity to examine how individuals or members of specific groups present themselves over time. Whereas memory albums are often compiled due to a specific life event of the owner, such as class graduation, a birthday, or religious confirmation, there is often little opportunity to garner more than a simple snapshot of one specific time in the owner's life. Trede's extensive additions to the memory album, allow for a more nuanced understanding of the memory album's owner and those who initially wrote in it.

While *Biernamen* appear in both of the two semi-public text types presented in this brief analysis, we have shown that they are more frequent in the memory album type (90% of entries included *Biernamen*) over the guestbook type (72.7% included *Biernamen*). This may be explained by a number of reasons, including that the memory album owner, Trede, curated the group from his own social network, whom he invited to immortalize themselves in his memory album. We know from Trede's detailed list keeping and supplemental entries added over the years, that this was not only an important document in his life, but we may infer that these were also important people to him. The importance of the teaching seminary and their time spent there as part of the *Burschen*-community is reflected in their entries in the guestbook as these frequently contain references to student songs and the distinct language of student fraternities, invoking a sense of camaraderie and shared identity. Many entries draw on Tønder and *Concordia*, serving to evoke memories of their time as seminarians, offering brief recollections of significant moments, such as their admission, exams, or holidays. We interpret these, despite being brief, as simple yet meaningful attestations of their shared experiences and journeys, reflecting their connection to this particular social group.

According to the preceding statistical analysis, the difference between whether an entry writer uses a *Biernamen* across the

specific text types of the guestbook and memory album is significant. However, the motivations of the writers remain unclear, as they left no metalinguistic comments explaining their choice to use *Biernamen*. Nonetheless, patterns emerge suggesting that when personal bonds are stronger, the use of *Biernamen* increases, up to and even superseding the necessity of using a real name. The preceding comparison and analysis of the two semi-public texts has shown some of the differences between when *Biernamen* are used to sign guestbook or memory album entries, however an expanded analysis of other text types, or other documents belonging to this group of writers would be necessary for a more nuanced explanation of why and when *Biernamen* are as part of the signature are used as an indicator of group belonging.

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