Inclusion and Exclusion of Gender, Social Class, Race and Ability in Elementary German Textbooks

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Inclusion and Exclusion of Gender, Social Class, Race and Ability in Elementary German Textbooks

A Thesis Presented
by
EMMALIE KEENAN

Submitted to the Graduate School of the University of Massachusetts Amherst in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

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DEDICATION

To Marley
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ABSTRACT

INCLUSION AND EXCLUSION OF GENDER, SOCIAL CLASS, RACE AND ABILITY IN ELEMENTARY GERMAN TEXTBOOKS

MAY 2020

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Directed by: Professor Jonathan Skolnik

Elementary German language textbooks today lack diverse representations of gender, social class, race, and ability. This thesis argues that the exclusion of those categories of diversity impedes the objectives of the communicative learning approach for students in first-year German courses. It examines research on diversity in textbooks with a focus on the concept of the “third space”, and shows how these findings apply to German students. An analysis of chapters from three German textbooks published between 2018 and 2020: Netzwerk neu A1, Impuls Deutsch 1, and Grenzenlos Deutsch provides specific examples of how images, texts, dialogs, grammar, and vocabulary exercises could be designed or redesigned to make the German language classroom a space in which all students are able to communicate and express themselves.
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Learning objectives have changed in elementary German language education across the United States at the college and high school levels. Many instructors and textbooks implement the communicative approach which is based on the theory that a language’s primary function is for learners to be able to communicate. Students are supposed to gain communicative competence, where students’ goals are to understand and use language effectively and authentically, because the primary goal for learners is communication and making use of real-life situations. Overall the communicative approach aims for students to be able to interpret and enact the target language appropriately in social situations (Brandl 5). This method is accomplished by utilizing activities which require frequent interaction between learners, using authentic texts in the classroom, and by taking into account the “learner’s background, language needs, and goals, and generally allow learners some creativity and role in instructional decisions” (Brandl 7). This would be in place of the grammar-translation method, which has been widely used in teaching since the nineteenth century. This method focuses on vocabulary lists and explanations of grammar while engaging in translation exercises. Students were expected to learn speaking skills by later immersing themselves in the language by going abroad (Brandl 2).

Students will not be able to accomplish communicative goals if their textbooks do not adequately teach them the vocabulary and culture that pertains to their lives and life in Germany today. There is research—which dates back decades—that has proven that students’ learning is affected by what diversity is included and excluded in their
textbooks, focusing on how the representation of diversity and inclusion of gender, race, ability, and social class affect students learning second languages. Today’s textbooks do not accurately depict German culture and demographics, or the students’ own daily lives and realities. One fifth of Germans today have an immigrant background (Webber 1). Germany passed a law in 2018 allowing Germans to state their gender as *diverse* on legal documents including birth certificates (Eddy 1). Since Germany is progressively changing, it is important for the audience to have an authentic and relatable education from their textbooks.

Elementary German textbooks have the authority to create an image of what it means to be German. Many have already begun to diversify the curriculum categories of race, gender, social class, and ability. Some by altering images and illustrations. Many have male and female characters in similar occupations and roles today. Social class--which is the least touched on topic in current textbooks--mainly appears as the middle-class, but some textbooks have begun to acknowledge different social classes. These shortcomings have been noticed by scholars for decades. I will discuss some of the many who have addressed what is lacking from representations in foreign language textbooks and how diversity affects language learners. While discouraging students from a language is not the goal of any teacher or textbook, if we are using textbooks that allow hegemony and normativity of certain groups and exclusion of others with regards to certain gender, race, social class, and ability, students may become discouraged or uninterested in German altogether. This also affects the ability to create a comfortable and accepting environment for students--or the third space--which is
crucial for language learning classrooms (Moje et al. 58). If students do not feel comfortable to participate or ask questions in class, they will not succeed to their best ability. In order for students to feel comfortable, they need the correct vocabulary to be able to talk about themselves and their peers. Germany is a diverse country, this fact should not be hidden from those learning German, including the elementary courses. With so many backgrounds and lifestyles present in both Germany and our classrooms, there should not be one image to represent them all. Many textbooks today do not offer this diversity or do not offer enough of it. Although their intentions may be to give students a look into Germany today, many authors have not been successful in portraying diversity in Germany.

In this thesis, I draw on scholars who have argued that withholding information students need to talk about themselves or see themselves in the target culture is detrimental to their learning, and examine the representation of race, ability, gender, and social class in three post-secondary elementary German textbooks: 1) Netzwerk neu A1 (2019), currently used at UMass Amherst as well as in other college level introductory German courses across the United States; 2) Impuls Deutsch 1 (2020) which is already being used in some college-level elementary German courses and is praised for its diversity; and 3) Grenzenlos Deutsch [http://grenzenlos-deutsch.com/] (2018), which is a newly developed online “open education” resource. The open education movement aims to create no-cost curriculums that are open for anyone to use without permission. I will deliberate on how the contents of all three textbooks can become more diverse and inclusive without losing or altering their learning objectives.
While newer textbooks like *Impuls Deutsch* and *Grenzenlos Deutsch* have made great efforts to show more realistic diversity by including a more diverse vocabulary set, images, scenarios, etc., crucial adjustments still need to be made to all textbooks in order for them to be adequate in the category of diversity for ability, gender, class, and race. Other textbooks, such as *Netzwerk neu A1* have made little effort by comparison, and therefore are missing crucial information about Germany’s people and culture.

As an instructor of elementary and intermediate German at UMass Amherst, I have seen how students are directly affected by the lack of diversity in the textbook *Netzwerk A1* and *A2*. I have had to alter vocabulary lists, grammar explanations, and exercises. I have also had to supplement the textbook with outside resources to create a more realistic view of Germany, and to enable my students to talk about themselves and their peers. By analyzing and offering edits to textbooks currently used today, my goal is to offer suggestions for textbooks to continue to revise their exercises, vocabulary, grammar, and other activities to more accurately represent language and culture, as race, gender, ability, and social class continue to progress in both Germany and the United States. Adjustments need to be made in order to accurately represent today’s Germany and the United States. I will demonstrate how textbook authors can adjust exercises and include diversity in these four categories without changing the grammatical objectives of the exercises.

Textbook authors can make updates and include edits like those I will offer in my analysis. I will discuss in my conclusions what obstacles there are for new editions of printed textbooks versus digital Open Education Resources. I do not believe it is
realistic that every scenario in textbooks will have members from every type of diverse community, but including a diversity in race, ability, gender, and social class throughout textbooks is achievable. I hope to help create an environment where students feel comfortable learning because they are able to see themselves in textbooks; where what they learn is relevant to their lives, while also showing a more diverse Germany.
2.1. Introduction

Various scholars have discussed the subject of diversity in textbooks and how it affects students. Images can convey diversity through the people or characters portrayed as--but not limited to--having different races, genders, abilities, and social classes. Grammar and vocabulary also play a large role in portraying diversity. This section will emphasize the importance of inclusion and exemplify the negative impacts of exclusion. Active engagement is crucial in today’s communicative language classrooms, as students are required to speak frequently during classes, and often about themselves or their peers. Therefore they need the proper grammar and vocabulary to do so. I will discuss how teaching all students to speak with equal and unbiased opportunities is crucial for language acquisition and for students to use their learned skills in social situations. In this section I will discuss the ideas behind what affects language learning students in their classrooms, emphasizing the impacts their textbooks have in the categories of race, ability, social class, and gender.

2.2. The Third Space In Elementary German Classrooms

The many societal pressures which affect students today outside of the classroom may affect them inside, unless teachers create an environment their students feel comfortable in. Homi K. Bhabha, an Indian English scholar and critical theorist
introduced the concept of the ‘third space’ in 2011. Bhabha focuses on racial and cultural backgrounds affecting students based on homogeneity. He claims only when it is acknowledged that cultural statements and systems are constructed can we “challenge our sense of the historical identity of culture as a homogenizing, unifying force, authenticated by the originary Past, kept alive in the national tradition of the People” (1). His ideas state the importance of creating a space where peers feel as equals with each other as well as the teacher. The third space—which is physically unrepresentable— is an environment where students can learn with equal opportunity of success.

Moje et al., scholars from the University of Michigan discuss “the third space theory”, as a concept which represents how the teacher can advance the relationships between students and the classroom; including their peers, teacher(s), and any resources used in the classroom without regard to the students’ backgrounds. The goal being students feel comfortable and accepted in the classroom where each student has an equal opportunity to learn unbiased of their background which could affect others’ opinions of them. Moje et al. explain this allows students to participate and ask questions without fear of being judged. They state that a teacher can facilitate this space in a number of ways, but one which is crucial is allowing students to feel accepted for who they are (Moje et al. 41). If a student does not feel accepted by their teacher(s) or peers, it becomes increasingly difficult for that student to thrive in the class. Those who feel accepted and safe will be more likely to participate and ask
questions during class, which is essential to learning a foreign language, and true for any level student (Moje et al. 49).

A classroom that is inclusive and thus considerate of the students' diversity, including awareness of race, gender, class and ability, can create the third space, and it can thus offer students a safe space to participate freely and without judgement from peers or teachers. Moje et al. explain throughout their study how children who are in racial minorities in schools often feel ostracized by their peers, but that the teacher has the ability to create an environment in which everyone feels like equals. The article states that when students feel equal they will have a better learning experience. They explain this idea through an experience of a teacher who developed trust between her and her students. Students shared more willingly and often included personal details or experiences, even if in other classes they were not as likely to do so (Moje et al. 58). This exemplifies how teachers have the ability to create the third space for their students to have a better opportunity to learn.

Students' learning abilities affect their progress in their education greatly. It is important to recognize what affects a student's learning and what works for them. The Universal Design for Learning (UDL) offers guidelines that “design learning experiences that meet the needs of all learners” (“About the Graphic Organizer”). The guidelines have three main goals of providing multiple means of engagement, the ‘why’ of learning, representations, the ‘what’ of learning, and action and expression, the ‘how’ of learning which are shown below (“The UDL Guidelines”):
These guidelines can be applied to any teaching, including foreign languages. While many of the guidelines focus on teaching styles in the classroom outside of the textbook which goes beyond the scope of this thesis, many ideas correspond with the
ideas of Moje et al. By creating an environment in which students feel comfortable and accepted--the third space--they will be able to learn more effectively and have more interest in the subject. One section of the UDL guidelines focus on clarifying vocabulary and symbols. The first bullet states: “Pre-teach vocabulary and symbols, especially in ways that promote connection to the learners’ experience and prior knowledge” (“Checkpoint 2.1 Clarify Vocabulary and Symbols”). UDL also focuses on what is behind students learning: Experiences, culture, race, gender, social class, etc. Applying UDL to classrooms will look different depending on ages of students, topic, and level of education (Posey 2019). This can be applied to elementary German by including vocabulary terms which pertain to the learner’s life. Students will be able to make connections and store memory more easily if they can make real connections to what they are learning. At the elementary level, students are learning to first speak about themselves and those around them, especially their peers, family, and friends. Therefore, vocabulary should pertain to those categories, allowing students maximum ability to participate and bring their education of German into real social situations.

2.3. Influence of Vocabulary and Active Engagement Through Speech

The way active engagement is offered in textbooks has an impact on language learners. Jane Sunderland—a linguist who focuses on language, gender, identity, and language learning—discusses the consequences of ostracizing genders when teaching foreign languages in her article “Representation of Gender in Foreign Language Classroom”
While Sunderland’s article is now 30 years old, I will compare her findings then to her 2019 article on gender and how that can help scholars understand that although there has been progress, many issues we have seen for decades continue to be present today. In 1990 Sunderland explained how women and girls were being influenced by language textbooks as they had a male bias in their representation and design of activities. She states females were being stereotyped, had limited occupations, or were generally invisible in textbooks. Sunderland stated language use differed between male and female characters as well, that dialogs were started by males and that males had more speaking time overall in textbooks. Students learn by imitation. Textbooks teach students how they should and are expected to talk in real-life situations. Sunderland discusses that when students practice speaking a certain way in the classroom—for example that a male begins conversations—students will bring these experiences with them when using their second languages (“The Representation of Gender” 8). Sunderland’s ideas continue to be seen today. Invisibility is also a problem for other gender based groups, such as non-binary people today, which will be presented in Sunderland’s more recent article.

In Sunderland’s 2017 article “Inclusion and Exclusion in Foreign Language Education” she states the importance of how the representation of gender and sexuality in foreign language textbooks needs to be actively revised (2). She acknowledges many of the same issues she discussed in 1990, especially focusing on exclusion of genders—and now sexualities—affecting foreign language learners. She states in 2017 there is a major exclusion of non-binary students and that language in textbooks is
mainly heteronormative\(^1\) ("Inclusion and Exclusion" 2). Sunderland discusses that teachers will not know their students' sexuality unless students state or profess this information. Sunderland focuses again on ‘dialogic classroom talk’ affecting the conceptual understanding of the target language\(^2\) ("Inclusion and Exclusion" 5). Her research here did not differ from her previous findings, and again her sources date from the 1980s, which are not helpful for today’s language classrooms. She admits there have been improvements to the situation in 2019, but claims the progression in representation is not as strong as it could be ("Inclusion and Exclusion" 8).

Vandergriff et al., professors of German at San Francisco State University, Wittenberg University, and the University of Wisconsin, explain in which ways German textbooks have been improving in the subject of gender in their article “Research on Teaching Materials and Teacher Training” (2008). They discuss various textbooks—including an older edition of Netzwerk neu A1—and the racial and gender representations in images, exercises, and vocabulary. They discuss that textbooks at this point included both male and female human nouns—nouns which refer to people, such as student, friend, etc., which are explicitly gendered male and female in German, e.g. der Student (m.) and die Studentin (f.)—in textbooks in order to be more inclusive. In glossaries, both versions of nouns are supplied, and in textbooks, the percentages of books including both versions of these nouns are increasing, and becoming less stereotyped. Many textbooks are beginning to use Sparformeln which include both male

\(^1\) She does not include the progress some curriculums like Impuls Deutsch 1 and Grenzenlos Deutsch have already made toward the inclusion of sexuality.

\(^2\) Some textbooks today sway from dialogs with names when possible and instead use color coding to differentiate speakers and therefore do not imply gender in characters.
and female versions of nouns together. For example, *StudentIn, Student/in,* and *Student*in* represent male and female students together. (Vandergriff et al. 147). Since, as Vandergrif, et. al. claim, it is important to include female human nouns as well as male, non-binary human nouns should also be included. The same consequences for women being excluded can be applied to non-binary students. As Sunderland stated in 1990 that women and girls are affected by the lack of representation, her argument can be used when discussing non-binary people.

One question Sunderland asked was why does this matter? She states that subliminal messages have been proven to affect how people behave and think. If the messages pertain to a certain gender not having an opportunity to talk, start conversations, or see themselves in realistic roles, it is certainly possible for students to believe this is what life is like in the target culture ("The Representation of Gender" 8). The target audience addressed in this thesis of these textbooks are college students in the United States, a population which is increasingly using non-binary pronouns. Sunderland discusses in both her 1990 and 2017 articles that students would feel more comfortable and would be more willing to participate if they had the correct practice using non-binary pronouns. This would help create the third space for students as their teacher and peers would be able to include all students more fluidly using the correct vocabulary. If a student felt unsure about which pronoun to use to refer to one of their classmates, they may not choose to call on that student during a class activity, denying that student an equal learning opportunity compared to their peers.
Silja Weber, a linguist who focuses on language acquisition, examines race in German language textbooks in “Visual Representation of Whiteness in Beginning Level German Textbooks” (2017). She argues that textbooks create an image of what Germany is, and they not only represent culture, but “construct culture on a white basis” (Weber 2). Weber explains that a textbook can sometimes be a student’s only insight into the culture of the language they are learning. If it only offers one image of what Germany is, this is what students will believe is true. Students in elementary German classes are unlikely to conduct their own research of culture in Germany. If they are not taught that Germany is a diverse country with people from many backgrounds through their textbooks, it cannot be certain they will obtain this information from their teachers. Due to the “current rapid changes and increasing polarization based on racialized cultural differences in both the US and Europe” (Weber 10),³ Weber discusses how elementary German language classes should not be exempt from this critical work of incorporating realistic culture. If diversity is displayed in elementary textbooks it will not only create a more realistic view of Germany today, but also allow a diverse body of students to feel more connected and included.

Robert Lafayette and Renate Schultz, scholars from Indiana University and Otterbein College add to this idea of inclusiveness in their article “Evaluating Cultural Learnings” in the book The Culture Revolution in Foreign Language Teaching: a Guide for Building the Modern Curriculum (1976), a collection of language learning articles edited by Lafayette. As they argued nearly 45 years ago, textbooks have the power to

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³ Weber discusses polarization in the U.S. and Europe as people seeing through a ‘white lens’. That teachers and students need to discuss and evaluate this, and determine how people shape society and social capital in the coming years (10).
affect how language learners view the world. Since language mirrors society, students will learn that a culture could be--for example--male or white-dominated by examples given through dialogs, images, and other activities (Lafayette & Schultz 107). They focus on American textbooks written in English, but the same ideas can be applied to foreign language textbooks.

Lorraine A. Strasheim, a scholar from Indiana University states in her contribution to the collection, “We’re All Ethnics: Hyphenated Americans, Professionals, Ethics, and Ethnics by Attraction,” that textbook authors need to create a more diverse and realistic view of their target culture, or else the silence--of a certain race, gender, ability, or class, for example--will imply it is then un-American--or in this case un-German--to have those characteristics which are excluded. Strasheim focuses on bilingual people in the United States, and how it is unimpressive to come to school bilingual, while it is impressive to leave the school system acquiring a second language. This can be applied to what is and is not being stressed in elementary German textbooks. Strasheim stresses that the lack of positive attention given to these students is a “silence [and] will be an indication that it is un-American to be bilingual” (Strasheim 3). Strasheim’s research shows the effects silence of diversity has on students. These bilingual students did not see themselves in their textbooks and did not feel accepted in their classrooms (Strasheim 3). Similar effects can be seen today in elementary German classrooms. This idea of silence can be applied to the aspects of diversity which continue to be excluded from textbooks. What remains silent in elementary German textbooks can be indicators to its audience that if they do not see themselves in their textbooks, then people like them are
not considered a part of Germany’s society. Strasheim demonstrates the disadvantages of the exclusion of diversity in textbooks, as it skews the view students have of that culture to be less diverse than it actually is. Not only are students to believe a false image of that nation, but since they may be in a diverse category which is not included, they may feel less invested or inclined to continue with the language.

Even though these articles are from nearly 45 years ago, their ideas still hold true in many ways today. It emphasizes the effects of exclusion of information in textbooks, and shows what happens when information that was once excluded becomes included. The fact that many of these issues still persist in elementary German textbooks needs to be a warning sign that textbooks have to be making modifications at a faster speed if these issues are going to be resolved, and they need to be continuously assessed. Elementary German textbooks are focused mainly on the population and everyday life of Germany. In order for textbooks to stay relevant they need to progress as society does. The main ideas of building images of Germany for students through their textbooks continues to happen today as it did 45 years ago. Additionally, as seen with Sunderland’s study of women in 1980, exclusion of a group will affect that group negatively, which can be applied—as she did—to non-binary people today. Since improvements have been made to female character in elementary German textbooks, similar improvements can be applied to non-binary people and pronouns being included and having positive impact on students who use them.

Although Amir Hossein Mirfakhraie’s *Curriculum Reform and Identity politics in Iranian School Textbooks: National and Global Representations of “Race”, Ethnicity,
Social Class and Gender (2008) offers similar ideas about race and gender to those already mentioned, it stands out as he discusses specific examples of what represents social class in textbooks. While discussing the use of images for social class, Mirfakhraie, a sociologist, states that including working-class, agricultural, and service jobs displays more than the middle-class in images (111). To put this into context for elementary German textbooks, chapters on food focus on people shopping in supermarkets but not farms where the food is grown. Offering both would allow students to see agriculture, working class in the supermarket, and daily lives shopping in supermarkets. Another example for representing social class is through images and sketches of clothing and furniture and their different types and styles (Mirfakhraie 112). Mirfakhraie’s ideas can be applied to elementary German textbooks because including a variety of images in these categories makes textbooks more realistic and inclusive to their audience. With a diverse representation of audiences, textbooks will no longer be only relating to the middle-class, which will open the possibilities for all students to see themselves in textbooks.

Mirfakhraie also discusses that there are more than pictures which can represent social classes. He discusses how vocabulary is also mainly middle-class centered in textbooks today and that it can be altered to include other socio-economic groups. He discusses the importance of including various occupations in addition to middle-class jobs like ‘doctor’ which is almost--if not every time--found in elementary language textbooks. He gives the example of jobs like construction workers, as they are often excluded, yet could be applicable to many students. He also highlights how including
terms that refer to different living communities, wealth statuses, etc. would allow students to discuss these alternative ways of living. This differs from including pictures because it allows students to talk about what they see, about themselves and others in a real way. By being more inclusive, students will have a better opportunity to apply their language skills outside of the classroom.

Similarly as discussed with gender and race, the representation of social class in textbooks can create an image of Germany, and sometimes a false one. Christine Sleeter and Carl Grant, educational reformers, articulate the effects of symbolic representation that textbooks and other media have that legitimize dominance in certain social groups (46) in their article which focuses on major textbooks used in schools across the United States in social studies, English language arts, mathematics, and science titled: “Race, Class, Gender, and Disability in Current Textbooks” (2011). They state that false impressions can affect a student’s view of a country. Sleeter and Grant’s ideas can be applied to elementary language learners: If students understand Germany to be a wealthy and expensive country because of the examples in their textbooks, they may feel excluded or uninterested if they are not of that wealth status. For example, if textbooks only show expensive boutiques to buy clothing, students who do not shop there will not be able to talk about themselves accurately. I would add students could believe one may need to be wealthy in order to live in or visit Germany because of these misconceptions offered in many textbooks. Students may choose to study abroad in both high school and college, but if they have learned through their textbooks that
Germany is an expensive country--which in many ways is inaccurate--they may choose not to do so because of financial fears.

Sleeter and Grant discuss how vocabulary plays an important role in how the world is viewed by students. Similarly to the other diverse groups, with regard to ability, students who are deprived of vocabulary regarding themselves will be unable to relate their place in the society of the country where the target language is spoken (Sleeter and Grant 23). Sleeter and Grant state that by including a more rounded vocabulary, character representation, and a variety of situations through dialogs, listening exercises, etc., students will be able to see themselves in their textbooks and talk about themselves and their peers.

Additionally, vocabulary of disability in textbooks plays an important role in real-world-context in terms of need based assistance. In addition to being able to talk about oneself, students with disabilities may be in situations where they must vocalize needs because of their disability. Without the correct vocabulary, students may not be able to ask for help when needed outside the classroom communicating in their target language.

Sleeter and Grant’s ideas can be applied to the idea students need to talk about more than their own being in order to talk about themselves. For example, when talking about your occupations, hobbies, shopping, etc. one often talks about with whom they do those activities with: Family and friends. Cognitive ability is not addressed in current elementary German textbooks, yet it can play a large role in family and friends, one of the first topics discussed at this level of German. Although many cognitive disabilities do
not show physical features, there are some which do. Acknowledging these people in textbooks allows for better diversity and allows students to talk about their lives and see their lives more realistically in their textbooks.
CHAPTER 3
ANALYSIS

3.1. Introduction

This thesis focuses only on inclusion and exclusion of gender, race, social class, and ability in elementary German textbooks. Intermediate and other levels of German go beyond the scope of this work. It is important to note that incorporating these categories of diversity in elementary German is possible and crucial. If students do not feel seen or included, why should they feel inclined to continue learning the language? This is an example of teachers not allowing the third space for their students. There are limitations on what can be included for elementary German learners, as their language skills are only beginning to develop, but this period forms the building blocks to their education in German. What is included does not need to be complicated, but repetition is important for long term memory of language. Therefore if a student sees a vocabulary term in elementary German, when the topic is further discussed in an intermediate or advanced level, the knowledge will not be completely new and can be easily stored.

Many textbooks and curriculums, including Netzwerk neu A1, Impuls Deutsch, and Grenzenlos Deutsch include ancillary materials such as videos to aid the learning of objectives and often use these resources to include culture in their language curriculums. I want to stress in this thesis the importance of including culture and diversity within the textbook (in basic vocabulary and grammar exercises) and not relying on ancillary materials to supplement them.
In this section, I will analyze three recent elementary German textbooks. They all facilitate the communicative approach as they emphasize interaction and communication, use authentic materials, and put the learner at the center. The first is *Netzwerk neu A1*, published by Klett in 2019, a popular college level elementary book. This is the most recent edition of the textbook. *Netzwerk Neu A1* is organized around topics and situations taken from everyday life, and the introduction of speech acts that learners need to master. Grammar structures are only introduced and practiced as to what is needed for the mastery of these speech acts. Since *Netzwerk neu A1* puts so much emphasis on interaction and communications, including many dialogs about the learners’ own experiences, this book highlights the importance of supplying correct terms for students to talk about themselves and others correctly. The new edition has made some improvements in terms of diversity in representation from its previous edition. *Netzwerk neu A1* is the only of the three analyzed books which is entirely written in German. Therefore the intended audience could be much broader than *Impuls Deutsch* and *Grenzenlos Deutsch* which use both German and English. I will be focusing only on the audience from the United States.

*Impuls Deutsch 1*, also published by Klett in 2020, and *Grenzenlos Deutsch*, available online since 2018, are both being discussed by instructors at universities today because of their efforts of diversifying the German textbook/curriculum. *Impuls Deutsch 1* has aimed to diversify the German textbook in many aspects while including elements of STEM\(^4\) in addition to arts and humanities promoting communication and

\(^4\) STEM learning is focused on science, technology, engineering, and math.
critical thinking. (Tracksdorf i). It aims for the flipped classroom approach, where students are expected to teach themselves material before they come to class, as well as completing homework after. Klett marketing states:

*Impuls Deutsch* sees its students and instructors as belonging to the German-speaking community. In this view, its interaction with and depiction of people is purposely sensitive to race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender, and dis/ability. (“Impuls Deutsch.”)

The authors of *Impuls Deutsch* are aware of many issues discussed in this thesis and strive to be inclusive to their audience. This is the first and crucial step to creating a realistic and accepting textbook. I will discuss its accomplishments and offer suggestions on how to continue to make their activities and images more inclusive.

*Grenzenlos Deutsch* is an online open-access curriculum for elementary German. By being cost-free, this curriculum is more accessible in terms of social class. The goals of *Grenzenlos Deutsch* include being diverse in the categories I have discussed throughout this thesis. They encourage students to conduct much of their own research as well, including cultural topics and suggest that students will hone their critical thinking skills. The authors explain:

We seek to represent a breadth of perspectives that will enable our students to talk about their own lives; thus we have designed content that is actively feminist, anti-racist, anti-classist, anti-ableist, LGBTQIA+ friendly and represents a spectrum of experience. We hope that GD will
enable students to communicate with other speakers of German about a range of topics, including their own lives (Abel et al.).

I will analyze what *Grenzenlos Deutsch* has accomplished and what it can continue to improve. Emphasizing students being able to talk about themselves is extremely important and crucial for the continuation of students in foreign languages and a large part of what helps create the third space in classrooms. Therefore I agree with the goals of *Grenzenlos Deutsch* and am happy to see people working toward a more inclusive version of language learning. Units introduce grammar and offer exercises for practice. Culture is integrated through characters introduced in chapters, but also the website prompts students to conduct their own research of culture in Germany depending on the topic of the chapter.

Each of these curriculums include diversity in different ways. I will highlight the topics of gender, race, social class, and ability; how they are represented and discussed. I will examine how the textbooks treat these categories and demonstrate how authors could alter their choices to be more diverse and inclusive while still obtaining goals of the exercise or chapter. By making these alterations of diversity, textbooks would help create the third space by allowing students to feel more comfortable in class by being able to see themselves in their textbook. I will emphasize the chapters or sections of each textbook which involve clothing, because of the topic’s popularity and appearance in most elementary foreign language textbooks. The topic allows audiences to see flaws easily, as there is much room for diversity and inclusion. Textbooks can exclude or stereotype certain genders, races, social classes and abilities.
when discussing clothing. I will also be discussing occupations, as German titles are
gender specific, as well as how curriculums integrate and apply non-binary pronouns. I
will also discuss how the textbooks include gender pronouns.

3.2. Gender
Diversity in gender in elementary German does not need to complicate learning
objectives. Including non-binary pronouns is the first step to being inclusive of gender
diversity. non-binary pronouns are pronouns for people who do not identify with feminine
or masculine pronouns. The most common option in the United States is they/them and
in Germany is xier/xien/xiem. This should be done with the introduction of all pronouns,
and continue to be included whenever pronouns are used in all levels of German. While
non-binary pronouns are becoming increasingly popular in the United States and
gaining popularity in Germany, many people are still uneducated about what they are
and how to use them. In order to avoid this, an explanation of all pronouns should be
included when pronouns are introduced. Each personal pronoun should have an
explanation of when it would be used. For example, when introducing er, sie, and xier
(personal pronouns for he, she, and singular they) they could be described as this: Er is
the pronoun used in the third person when referring to someone who identifies as male.
Sie is the pronoun used in the third person when referring to someone who identifies as
female. Xier is the pronoun used in the third person when referring to someone who
identifies as non-binary. Then teachers and students will be educated together on how to properly use all pronouns.

Overall, Netzwerk neu A1 lacks in inclusivity of gender. It needs to incorporate non-binary people by including their pronouns, which will allow the vocabulary and grammar for students as many are and/or have friends or know people who do not use masculine or feminine pronouns. Throughout both the Kursbuch (used in class) and the Arbeitsbuch (used for homework) all people are seemingly male or female, and there is no use of the third gender (xier, xien, xiem) throughout both books. Non-binary pronouns should be included from the start of elementary German textbooks as the other personal pronouns are introduced, but here I will display how these pronouns can be integrated in this next example when students are learning dative pronouns:

![Figure 2: Dative pronoun exercise. Netzwerk neu A1 Übungsbuch pp. 143]
The Übungsbuch—meant for homework—exercise 8b and c (shown above) could incorporate the xier/xien/xiem (they/them) pronouns. First, the non-binary pronouns should be included in the table for 8c. Then, one or more pronouns from the example sentences in 8b can be altered to be non-binary. The directions are asking students to highlight the pronouns in the dative case, and pair a sentence from the first column with a response from the second column. For example number four states: “Clara finds the T-shirt really cool.” The response would be letter B: “Yeah, it definitely appeals to her. How much does it cost then?” Which pronouns are used are not important, the goal of the exercise is to understand what pronouns are in dative, and when they are used. Therefore if non-binary pronouns were substituted here, the objective would remain the same. The answer could be changed to: “Ja, das gefällt xiem bestimmt. Wie viel kostet es denn?” (Yeah, it definitely appeals to them. How much does it cost then?). Swapping these pronouns did not change the objective of the exercise, and it allows students to see non-binary pronouns in context. It is important to practice all of the pronouns, therefore another option would be creating an example in addition to those already given in this exercise for non-binary pronouns. For example, a seventh practice sentence could be added with: “Die Jacke steht Max toll! (The jacket suits Max great!), with an answer from the letter column: “Ja, aber es ist zu groß für xien” (Yes, but it is too big for them\(^5\)). Therefore students would practice both the non-binary and feminine dative pronouns.

\(^5\) Third gender pronoun in English
Chapter 11 of *Netzwerk neu A1, Die Jacke gefällt mir!* has made various improvements in its treatment of gender roles over its first edition. One example of an improvement is the activity on the first two pages that shows an illustrated story of two people--one male, one female--preparing themselves for a party. Both characters go to a clothing store at a mall, they try on clothes, both buy something--the girl is shown purchasing a dress for 119 euros--they run into each other and get coffee, and are shown dancing together later at the party. Students are supposed to match a sentence given to each picture.

This story has improved in the category of gender since the last edition, where only the female character went to the store, and the male character later commented on her outfit; this time both characters are shown shopping, and both receive compliments. While I do think this example has satisfactory elements, in terms of gender there are still only male and female characters (including the female worker at the clothing store). Although this is the case, I would not specifically change this activity in terms of gender, but would make sure the activities throughout chapters are balanced in terms of gender of its characters.

*Impuls Deutsch 1* introduces *xier* on page 14 of its homework book and is explained only in the nominative form, stating it is the most widely used gender-neutral pronoun in Germany, but that *nin* is also used. It offers a few example sentences--in the nominative--of how to use *xier*. If students were to realistically use this pronoun, they would need to know how to use it in other cases as well.
Clothing in *Impuls Deutsch 1* is scattered on a few pages in various chapters. On page 108 of *Impuls Deutsch 1*, students are introduced to the verb *tragen* (to wear). The first thing that stands out is the small grammar box to conjugate *tragen*, pictured:

![Grammatik](image)

[Figure 3: *Tragen* conjugation. *Impuls Deutsch* pp. 108]

Here we see the conjugations without including the *xier* (they/them pronoun) pronoun. *Impuls Deutsch* has made a reputation that it aims to be diverse, and stated they aimed to be inclusive in most of the diverse groups mentioned, with the exception of social class. Both *xier* and *nin* are introduced as non-binary pronouns, but after this initial introduction students do not have the opportunity to practice the use of these pronouns.
Here we see the pronouns I, you (informal), you (formal), he, it, she, we, you all, they (plural). It continues: “We will start with the most important ones for informal conversations: [I, you and he/it/she]” (5). Despite the book’s stated committment to diversity, *Impuls Deutsch 1* excludes non-binary pronouns. The book could include this here by adding *xier* to the list with *er/es/sie/xier* (he/it/she/they). Not only is the book neglecting this group of people, it states on page five they are not included in the most important pronouns. This is an example of how a textbook can make students feel excluded and less significant.

In order to make *Impuls Deutsch 1* more inclusive, changing the usage of this pronoun and including it when personal pronouns are introduced, and continuing to use it throughout the books (classroom book and workbook) in the various components of this textbook would be inclusive for students who use those pronouns. The objectives of exercises would not change if non-binary pronouns were included, and therefore this would only be allowing students to practice using *xier* correctly.

Occupations in German can also pose an issue when discussing gender, since position titles differ based on gender of the person holding the job, for example the difference between *der Maler* (male painter) and *die Malerin* (female painter). On page 21 of the workbook, 22c is a section labeled ‘Gender’, and it describes how occupations in German are either feminine or masculine and how to distinguish between the two. It touches on the multiple forms used to say both forms (masculine and feminine)
simultaneously\textsuperscript{6}. The textbook mentions that this does not leave space for those who do not identify as male or female and offers the ‘gender gap’ or the ‘gender star’ as an alternative which leaves space for various genders. It does not offer an example of how to say an occupation for a non-binary person. For example, the book offers \textit{der Arzt} and \textit{die Ärztin} (male/female doctor) but does not offer \textit{dier}\textsuperscript{7} \textit{Arzt} (non-binary doctor).

The following page in \textit{Impuls Deutsch 1} has a list of occupations in the masculine form in which students then fill out the feminine versions, and vise versa, but does not offer options for non-binary occupations. If an instructor were to use this exercise in a classroom in the United States what then would a student who uses the third gender do if they needed to participate in saying what their occupation was or what they wanted to be? They are not supplied with the vocabulary to do so, and therefore cannot talk about themselves in a realistic way. This should be changed to include the three genders, and to be more inclusive of a diverse student population. This activity would then include three columns: Occupations in the masculine form, feminine form, and gender-neutral form. Students would then fill out the three columns and then learn how to speak about their occupation and those of others correctly.

\textit{Grenzenlos Deutsch} addresses gender more effectively and realistically than \textit{Impuls Deutsch 1}, and \textit{Netzwerk neu A1}. First, the representation of gender through images is more inclusive than \textit{Impuls Deutsch 1} and \textit{Netzwerk neu A1}. \textit{Grenzenlos Deutsch} and \textit{Impuls Deutsch} both accomplish gender diversity in images by using

\textsuperscript{6} As discussed by Vandergriff et al.: \textit{der Student} (male student) \textit{die Studentin} (female student) \textit{Student*in} (one example of having the male and female version of 'student' together so be more inclusive.

\textsuperscript{7} \textit{Dier} is the relative pronoun for \textit{xier} (non-binary pronoun in German) in the nominative case.
models or characters whose appearance does not reflect gender stereotypes. Second, *Grenzenlos Deutsch* introduces two forms of non-binary pronouns: *xier* and *they* with the standard set of pronouns. At first, *xier* and *they* are represented in their own row (as seen in the image below), but later they join the row with *sie/es/er* (she/it/he).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>singular</th>
<th>plural</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ich (I)</td>
<td>wir (we)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>du (you, informal)</td>
<td>ihr (you, informal)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sie (you, formal)</td>
<td>Sie (you, formal)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sie (she)</td>
<td>sie (they)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>es (it)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>er (he)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>xier (non-gendered)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>they (non-gendered)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

[Figure 5: Introduction to pronouns. https://grenzenlos-deutsch.com/familie/e1/l4/]

It is a great start to show and explain how to use *xier/they* right away, but students need to continue to see it in use. As seen in the image below, the *xier/they* are introduced but not included in the exercise to be practiced:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>singular</th>
<th>plural</th>
<th>das Verb <em>haben</em>: Drag the verbs into the correct boxes to match the pronouns</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ich</td>
<td>habe</td>
<td>haben</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>du</td>
<td>hast</td>
<td>habt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sie</td>
<td>haben</td>
<td>Sie haben</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sie/es/er</td>
<td>hat</td>
<td>sie haben</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>xier/they</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wir</td>
<td>habt</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ihr</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sie/sie</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

32
It is shown which conjugation of *haben* (to have) correlates with *xier/they*, but during the activity, *xier/they* are not included in the list with *er/sie/es*. *Xier/they* could be added to the line with the gender specific pronouns in order to keep consistency and equality for all students.

This inconsistency continues throughout the examples and exercises. In the image below, we see the *xier/they* represented in the first box reviewing the conjugation of the verb *wohnen* (to live/reside), but when explaining the rules of conjugation, they are left out:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>singular</th>
<th>plural</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ich</td>
<td>wohne</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>du</td>
<td>wohnst</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sie</td>
<td>wohnen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sie/es/er</td>
<td>wohnt</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The base form of the verb is called the infinitive, like *wohnen* or *machen*, and it is translated into English as “to live” or “to do.” To conjugate the verb, you need the verb stem, which is what you get when you take the “-en” off the end of the verb: “wohn-”. Then you add the following endings:

- ich -e
- du -st
- sie/es/er -t
- wir -en
- ihr -t
- sie/sie -en

If these pronouns were included, students would have more exposure and consistency for understanding how to correctly use them. Consistency and repetition is important to learning any foreign language concept.
An examination of the quizzes and their inclusion of the *xier/they* pronouns further reveals a lack of the non-binary pronouns:

![Conjugation exercise](https://grenzenlos-deutsch.com/familie/e1/l3/)

The green box (bottom left) only includes *it/she/he/y’all* but does not include *xier/they*. For the sake of being inclusive, these need to be added to the activity.

The self-correcting exercises also do not recognize the non-binary pronouns and possessive adjectives as correct answers. In the following exercise, students are asked to fill in the blank with the correct possessive adjectives. Students are asked to assume gender for the given names: Lena, Claudia, Max, Katrina, and Christopher. I answered

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8 *xier/they* have the same conjugation as *he/she/it/y’all* for the verbs listed, and therefore would be included only in this box.
the questions with the assumed genders for each name, although all names could be androgeonous, and therefore non-binary pronouns could be used for any name. I used the non-binary *xier* for Max—which could be a full name or short for Maxwell, Maximillian or Maxine--the exercise marked my answer false:

![Figure 9: Possessive pronoun exercise. grenzenlos-deutsch.com](image)

Even though *xies* is grammatically correct based on the information provided in the explanation directly above the exercise online, it still prompts students to use *sein* (his) instead of *xies* (their). Exercises like this could be more gender inclusive by prompting to refer to the character chart for information on a person’s pronouns. There would then be no confusion about which pronoun the activity is asking for.
In the image above, four characters are introduced, which happens at the beginning of each section. There could be a fifth row added to include their pronouns. Then these character’s names could be used throughout the chapter without confusion of pronouns during activities.

Gender and sexuality are often paired together when discussing diversity. I do want to praise the use of sexuality throughout Grenzenlos Deutsch as it is consistently diverse. Many characters included at the beginning of chapters are introduced as homosexual or with same-sex parents. This is emphasized as their first section is about family, and they introduce many types of families. This can also be seen in the above image. The fourth row: Familienstand (family/marital status) shows the characters sexual orientation through their partner. For example, it is stated that Haroon has a wife, and Susanne has a female life partner. This information allows students a broader
image of Germany which is not included in *Netwerk neu A1* or to the same extent in *Impuls Deutsch 1*.

### 3.3. Race

Diversity in race in elementary German textbooks is often mistaken for changing the color or tone of a character’s skin. Including different races through images and illustrations is very important, but it is also important to include ethnically different people and items. Throughout the chapter 11 in *Netzwerk neu A1*--as well as in the Übungsbuch (workbook)--there is one tan illustration, all others are white or light-skinned characters in all photographs and illustrations with one exception of a black colored manikin (which does not have a face). These scenarios could contain a more diverse group, and should, considering the diversity of Germany today. For example, there are no Turkish-Germans represented in this chapter, yet in Germany, almost 15.1 percent of immigrants of Germany are of Turkish descent (Hanewinkel and Oltmer 1). The representation of race throughout *Netzwerk neu A1*--both the Kursbuch and Übungsbuch--is skewed to represent a much whiter Germany.

When assessing race in *Netzwerk neu A1*, there is little diversity to work with. Other than the first activity, there are only white or light-skinned characters shown, but I would like to go beyond representation of groups of people for this textbook and look at what clothing is used, and how clothing could be more diverse. The image below from *Netwerk neu A1* is the only image of clothing included in the *Kursbuch*. As the Kursbuch
does not include its own glossary, during class these are the vocabulary items for clothes the students refer to the most:

![Clothing Items](image)

[Figure 11: Netzwerk clothing vocabulary. Netwerk neu A1 pp. 128]

The glossary in the Übungsbuch contains these and other basic clothing items, no clothing from ethnically diverse groups are included. Here the textbook could exchange or add clothing that is more diverse in order to be more inclusive. For example, in this particular list, *das Tuch* (scarf) could be replaced with *das Kopftuch* (headscarf). Having two variants of ‘scarf’ in the example above seems arbitrary when students could be learning other more applicable vocabularies. In addition to *das Kopftuch*, I would include *der Turban* (turban) and *der Sari* (saree). By including these, students will be able to talk about themselves, their peers, and other groups that populate their own reality and that of Germany today.

Diversity in race is the category *Impuls Deutsch 1* thrives the most in. From the start, its characters show different diversities and backgrounds. This is a great quality
because it not only appeals to its audience of diverse college students--or possibly high school--but also displays how Germany is a diverse nation.

For example, the image above--learning about clothing--displays clothing from various types of people including ability\(^9\), size, male/female gender, race, and clothing that represents the diversity of German culture. Here we see both a turban and a headscarf, which is not mentioned in other elementary German textbooks thus far, and examples of how *Impuls Deutsch 1* succeeds in this category of diversity.

Overall, diversity of race seems to be an accomplishment of *Grenzenlos Deutsch*, the curriculum consistently includes people of various racial backgrounds and

\(^9\) It is also interesting to note the diversity of body image. As there seems to be a range in the females shown, the males seem to all have a trim and athletic build. Additionally, these characters are all of the same age range. This could be due to appealing to the target audience of the traditional college-aged student, but today people of all ages enroll in college and elementary German.

\(^{10}\) Ability in this image will be discussed in detail in the ability section of this analysis.
their cultures of Germany today through their personal bios of characters at the beginning of each section. The section on clothing, however, reveals that diversity was not a primary consideration for clothing vocabulary.

![Table of clothing vocabulary](https://grenzenlos-deutsch.com/einkaufen/e1/l2/)

**[Figure 13: Grenzenlos Deutsch clothing vocabulary.](https://grenzenlos-deutsch.com/einkaufen/e1/l2/)**

I would include items of clothing that are seen in other cultures or religions. For example, since the book includes suits and dresses, it could also include a saree. Other vocabularies I would include are, turban, saree, and kimono. In addition, I would include information about *Tracht* (the traditional clothing of southern Germany) in sections about clothing in any curriculum to give students a cultural background about part of Germany. Many students have seen these clothing items but do not know their names. This will also allow them to address any stereotypes they may have heard about German clothing.
3.4. Social Class

The middle-class seems to be the most prominent social class throughout Netzwerk neu A1. Returning to the activity that focuses on the two people shopping on page 126 and 127 of the Kursbuch exemplifies the over representation of the middle-class in elementary German language textbooks. The two characters are shopping at a mall and the female buys a dress for 119 euros--we don’t see how much the male’s shirt is--and neither the male or female wears what they purchased to the party. This activity could be altered in order to be more inclusive of different social classes. First, the dress could cost much less, but second, the situation could appear in a second-hand store. Not only is this accessible to most people, but it’s also very popular today for young members of all social classes in both the United States and Germany today.

The Netzwerk neu A1 edition saw one update from the first edition that indicates that the authors of the textbook are aware of the fact that some people prefer to shop at places other than expensive boutiques. In exercise 3a of chapter 11 on page 128 of the Kursbuch: “Wo kaufen Sie Kleidung?” (where do you buy clothing?) a second-hand store has been added. It is not used in any other exercises including dialogs, which could be changed in order for students to see it used in an example sentence or applied to a real life context.
There are many opportunities where *Netzwerk neu A1* could incorporate diversity in social class through prices and where characters shop. The following exercises demonstrate how *Netzwerk neu A1* could incorporate diversity in social class in exercise 5a (shown below).

[Figure 14: Clothing exercise. *Netwerk neu A1* pp. 129]

In this activity, three friends are discussing clothing that one purchased online. Andreas bought a hat and t-shirt. Susi states she purchased clothing online but nothing had fit and therefore she either returned or exchanged everything. Andreas likes the t-shirt and hat but Susi does not like the hat on him, which he paid 29 euros for. There are opportunities in activities like this to incorporate diversity in social class, by including different classes, which I will demonstrate.
Since this textbook already covers the middle-class by having student-aged characters shopping and purchasing expensive items, ideally characters who shop in different ways would also be included. This activity could be revised to include relatable characters to students who spend less money on their clothes. First, online shopping is very popular, and it is a good idea to include in an elementary German textbook, but it can be altered in ways which show more than the middle-class. For example, there are many online sites for second-hand shopping that are popular today. Tim could have purchased his hat and t-shirt there. eBay Klein is a popular German site to sell and purchase second-hand items in a smaller, local area. Including this would not only show diversity in social class but also show a bit of culture from Germany. In addition to eBay Klein, Poshmark is also very popular in Europe and the United States and could make the situation relatable for students. I would leave Susi as is—as she purchased clothes somewhere online where she could return and exchange, which would likely be from a first-hand store—but Andreas could mention he cannot return the hat—which Susi does not like—because he bought it second-hand. The last detail I would alter in terms of social class is the price of the hat, 29 euros seems expensive for an audience of university students. Since the hat would be second-hand, it could be anywhere from 5-15 euros. With these changes, the dialog becomes more diverse but also more relatable and allows the students a variety of vocabulary.

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11 Most second-hand items cannot be returned online unless it is not as described.
12 In addition to these suggestions, clothing swaps are also popular in the United States, and could be a way to include people who have little or no extra money to spend on clothing. Clothing swaps would allow characters to trade and receive clothing without having to spend money.
Impuls Deutsch 1 does not specifically address social class when discussing clothing. The image mentioned [from page 34 of Impuls Deutsch 1] does display a wide range of clothing which could be worn by different social classes. For example, person 12 is wearing a simple t-shirt with jeans and flip-flops, which I believe is a relatable outfit to members of many social classes, but when showing clothing again on page 108 the clothing seems to all be higher end clothing:

[Figure 15: Impuls Deutsch clothing 2. Impuls Deutsch pp. 108]

Exercise 4 on this page talks about where students buy their clothing. The two example stores given are Forever21 and Target. I believe this was a good effort at trying to make the exercise more relatable and possibly accessible to students, but there are flaws in these options. First, Forever21, a fast-fashion store filed for bankruptcy in September 2019 and is closing many of their stores and becoming less popular due to
their use of cheap labor and poor quality clothing (Biron 1).\textsuperscript{13} In terms of social class, I find this store to be rather accessible in terms of price, as you can find many items under ten dollars. One major issue I find with these two examples is it does not touch on the target culture of Germany. Both Forever21 and Target are not in Germany, and therefore students are not learning about its culture. If one wanted to use a store similar to Forever21, I would swap it with H&M, which has similar prices but is also popular in both Germany and the United States.

_Grenzenlos Deutsch_ addresses a great range of social classes that creates a more diverse and inclusive environment. For example, in the section _Einkaufen und Essen_, (shopping and food) there is much diversity in character’s jobs, prices, and where people are shopping (like second-hand stores). This curriculum, as mentioned previously, introduces character biographies in each section. In this section on clothing, we are introduced to four characters:

\textsuperscript{13} This is an example of the challenges printed textbooks face. It is more difficult to make updates and therefore could face issues of something being dated, whereas an online curriculum could make instant changes.
The first character is Fatma, who is 32 and is a cook and cashier in a vegan café. This shows diversity in social class as she is working two positions at the same job. It emphasizes she has a small fruit and vegetable garden, and she lives in an apartment with two friends. This is a great example of ways to incorporate different social classes in elementary German textbooks. *Grenzenlos Deutsch* continues this throughout its character biographies with characters from varying social classes. The activities included in the clothing section omit prices, and instead describe what the clothing looks like. This ambiguity allows for diversity of social class because none are
established. *Grenzenlos Deutsch* is the only curriculum option discussed which I would not alter in order to be more diverse in this category.

### 3.5. Ability

As stated in the introduction of this analysis, the limitations of what should be included in elementary German is based on the ability of the students language skills. At this stage students do not have many needed structures, and are only able to hold very basic conversations; however, there is still diversity in ability that can be included. Ability and disability could still be integrated in the elementary German material, I will make specific examples for the textbooks included in this thesis. Although *Impuls Deutsch 1* and *Grenzenlos Deutsch* represent some diversity in physical ability, they do so infrequently. *Grenzenlos Deutsch* has far fewer photos than *Netzwerk neu A1* and *Impuls Deutsch 1* in general, and therefore has less of an opportunity to include people with visible disabilities. It does show images of ability access, for example at a train station in its chapter *Reisen und Transport* (Travel and transportation) under the unit *Reisen und Urlaub* (Travel and Vacation) but is not integrated into the vocabulary list or exercises. *Netzwerk neu A1* has one image of an elderly woman in a wheelchair at a hospital being pushed by a nurse on page 97, this is the only image of a person in a wheelchair, or showing any signs of physical disabilities throughout the *Kursbuch*. The activity asks students to match a description of a job--in this case nurse--to each photo given. It does not use the term wheelchair or refer to the specific patient. This is an
example where the term *der Rollstuhl* (wheelchair) could be incorporated in elementary German textbooks. Allowing students to see the vocabulary now will give them information they may need, and when they can discuss topics such as this more in intermediate or advanced German the repetition will allow for better implicit memory and recall when they need a vocabulary term such as this. *Impuls Deutsch 1* is the most progressive when it comes to integrating different physical abilities through images, but still lacks in diversity of ability. There are multiple images of people in wheelchairs, but this seems to be the only diversity of ability shown.

Going back to the image mentioned before in *Impuls Deutsch 1*, although there is one person in a wheelchair, overall there is a lack of diversity in ability in this image, and throughout the book:

![Figure 12: Impuls Deutsch clothing. Impuls Deutsch pp. 34](image)
This image--and those throughout textbooks--has the potential for a broad representation in ability. Textbook images can portray various abilities from physical to cognitive. Here, a model could be replaced with a model who has Down Syndrome, crutches, a prosthetic leg or arm, etc. Even though there are numberless possibilities, a person in a wheelchair seems to be the main disability which makes an appearance. *Impuls Deutsch* does include an image of a man with a prosthetic leg exercising in a gym (Tracksdorf et al. 100). The same activity shows a woman doing yoga in a wheelchair. This activity asks students to determine what exercises are being performed and which they find good and bad. In order for textbooks to be inclusive in ability, there needs to be a range of ability and disability included in images throughout the book.

Overall, textbooks rarely include the representation of those with learning or cognitive disabilities. One specific example is there are not many people with Down syndrome learning German as a second language in the classroom setting, but there are people who have friends or family members with Down Syndrome. *Impuls Deutsch* does include an image of a man with a physically visible cognitive disability (shown below) on page 100 of the *Machen* textbook, the intended classroom textbook. This image is an example of including people with physical cognitive disabilities in representation through images:
This activity engages students in discussing workouts completed by each person in the three photos and to decide which one they feel is the best or most realistic while learning new vocabulary about weight lifting. These objectives are not altered by the people included in the images. Not all cognitive abilities are physically visible. There are students who learn German at universities across the United States who have learning disabilities, and although many people do not show physical differences with these disabilities, terms regarding those disabilities could still be included in the textbooks.
Many high schools and universities in the United States are involved with Best Buddies programs\textsuperscript{14}. Textbooks could feature the kinds of events that Best Buddies programs sponsor—for example, dances—including the diversity of all participants. A scenario could be the following: For a chapter on clothing, a group of friends might need to figure out what they are wearing to this dance, including people with a range of cognitive abilities—including those physically visible—and show them at the dance later that night. This is comparable to \textit{Netzwerk}'s activity discussed previously of the male and female characters shopping for clothes to attend a party. This could be exchanged for people shopping for a Best Buddies dance. Disabilities like these could be incorporated in \textit{Grenzenlos Deutsch} in the personal bios they offer in many chapters. People with cognitive disabilities attend school and have jobs in both the United States and Germany. Why not include their experiences and lives in textbooks that encourage students to talk about themselves and their experiences in the world?

Textbooks can incorporate diversity in physical and cognitive ability through images and vocabulary. Including every day people in wheelchairs throughout textbooks is a start, but there are also several opportunities to make them a focus. In addition to the character bios in \textit{Grenzenlos Deutsch} including cognitive disabilities, they could include physically disabled people. If the person uses a mobility aid—a wheelchair, service animal, white cane, crutches, etc.—or a seeing or hearing aid, this vocabulary could be included in their bio. Textbooks like \textit{Netzwerk neu A1} and \textit{Impuls Deutsch 1

\textsuperscript{14} Best Buddies is an international program in countries including the United States and Germany which aims to end the social, physical and economical isolation of individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Best Buddies aims to connect people both with and without these disabilities to create lasting friendships ("About Us.")
could incorporate this vocabulary through stories and dialogs. For example in sections discussing clothing and going to stores, images could portray a physically disabled person using an elevator instead of an escalator.

3.6. Conclusion of Analysis
The newest edition of *Netwerk neu A1* has made efforts to be more diverse and that will not go unnoticed, but calling it diverse would be an understatement. It continues to have flaws concerning diversity which could be improved. Overall the book lacks in all categories of gender, race, social class, and ability. The choice of characters needs to be reconsidered when creating the next version of *Netzwerk neu A1* to be more realistic and inclusive of race, starting with the representation in images and illustrations. Simply changing the color of an illustrated character’s skin is not the same as depicting and engaging with the experiences of diverse groups of people. I do not want to imply every scenario in elementary German textbooks needs to contain a character from every diverse group. It would be unrealistic to not include heteronormative couples, places like shopping malls, white characters, etc. Many students will relate to the examples above which are often included in elementary German textbooks and students will use that vocabulary in the real world when talking about themselves or others.

*Impuls Deutsch 1* stands out in their diversity of race and culture by offering diverse images and items, but continues to lack in the remaining three categories of diversity discussed. There are few photos of people with physical disabilities offered,
and there is an absence of diversity in cognitive disabilities. Diversity in social class is ignored, but many images imply the middle-class without evidence of other social classes. As for gender, although they do mention non-binary pronouns briefly, non-binary people and pronouns are not included throughout the chapters in the form of grammar exercises, in images, or dialogs or reading sections.

_Grenzenlos Deutsch_ is the most advanced option in terms of diversity and inclusion of race, gender, social class, and ability. Although improvements and additions in all categories could continue to better the curriculum, I applaud the authors of this online book for their work in creating a platform that will initiate change in German language textbooks and curriculums to be more diverse.
CHAPTER 4
CONCLUSION

This thesis identified the continuing and/or remaining issues of representation of diversity in elementary German textbooks and offered examples of how they can be adjusted to be more realistic and inclusive. I focused only on representation inside the textbooks in terms of images, vocabulary, grammar, and how people are represented or omitted throughout activities. I did not talk about the actual accessibility of textbooks for students with various abilities, which would be a separate, equally important thesis. Similarly in social class, I focused on the representation and inclusion of various social classes and not the accessibility of the textbooks, for example, price. *Grenzenlos Deutsch* is free to use, while *Netzwerk neu A1* is low-cost in terms of textbooks, with its physical copies ranging from $25--when purchasing the classroom book alone--to $50 when purchasing both the classroom and homework books together. Many printed textbook prices can range much higher. *Impuls Deutsch 1* approaches $100 for the classroom and homework hard copies, but is intended to be used for multiple semesters. This can pose its own issues as many students come into German at higher levels in college. Students would still be required to purchase the entire textbook even if they would not be using the whole book. In that case *Netzwerk neu A1* would be more appealing price wise for students who do not intend to complete all levels of elementary German. As mentioned, high textbook prices--especially those of new textbooks which
cannot be purchased second hand—may not be accessible to all students if they cannot afford it.

I believe an online learning curriculum like Grenzenlos Deutsch is the easiest form that can be edited and immediately updated without having to spend money on printing. Therefore there is no lag time between edits and when it becomes available to its audience. Textbooks like Netzwerk neu A1 and Impuls Deutsch 1 are physical textbooks and would have to wait for a new version of their textbook to be edited and printed. Additionally, when textbooks release new versions, students can no longer save money by purchasing used textbooks, forcing students to pay full price online.

This is not to say a free online textbook would always be the most accessible in terms of cost because that would be assuming students would have a laptop they can bring to class if they needed to use the book, or accessibility to a computer to use at home. Although it would take longer to implement, I would still encourage printed textbooks to continue to edit their activities as exemplified in my analysis, as textbooks will continue to print new versions, it will allow students whose schools use these textbooks in the future to have a more inclusive and realistic view of Germany.

4.1. Applying Information in the High School Classroom

This thesis focused on university level introductory German classes, but what has been discussed is equally as important at the high school or middle school level. College students are normally responsible for obtaining their own personal textbooks; high
school students are not, and therefore schools use the same textbook for multiple years. I would like to offer a few examples of how high school teachers can use this analysis to allow their students a barrier free and diverse German language classroom.

Many high school teachers make their own activities or pull activities from multiple textbooks and make print copies for their students as high schools do not have the funding for new textbooks. Teachers can change already existing activities or create their own without losing the learning objective to include diverse images, names, vocabulary, gender, prices, etc. Teachers have the ability to make adjustments based on their class’ needs. Creating material at the high school level—especially as many high schools only have one German teacher for all levels—takes an immense amount of extra time and effort many teachers may not have. Open Education Resources—like Grenzenlos Deutsch—already exist and are free to use for anyone. Teachers being able to share work with each other is a great way to save time and allow teachers to work together to create materials needed. There are already many online groups and websites which offer these kinds of communities that all teachers should take advantage of including Facebook groups such as “German Teachers in the U.S.” and “AATG”.

As stated, it is important to know and form a relationship with students and create the third space in the classroom. By knowing their students, teachers can make sure the vocabulary needed for their specific class is incorporated into activities. Exercises which are taken from textbooks can be adjusted as shown in my analysis. Aspects of already existing exercises can be altered to be more diverse in class, ability, race, and gender.
Although this takes extra time for teachers, it can make a large impact on their students’ learning.

4.2. Using Extra Resources in the Classroom

Whether teachers--high school or college--are using textbooks or creating their own materials, there are free online options to include more diverse and authentic teaching materials. Using extra resources can help the language classroom in a multitude of ways. For example, using video resources that incorporate various diverse peoples can supplement culture for textbooks. There are many free curriculums that supply vocabulary, grammar, and culture lessons or activities creating less work for teachers, for example Deutsche Welle and EasyGerman (“Easy German”; Deutsche Welle).

Grammar can be practiced in a multitude of ways. Using authentic texts representing a diversity of perspectives can help students see real-life examples of grammar used by German speakers. Using song lyrics is a popular way to practice grammar by examining grammar used. Another example would be taking authentic texts like a poem or short story in German and looking for specific grammatical structures like adjective endings. Social media forms like Twitter or even memes and GIFs are popular today, and their grammar can be worked into a classroom setting and can be an engaging activity for students.

Taking authentic material from the German language is a great way to incorporate a realistic and authentic experience for students. If a class wants to discuss
a specific topic like non-binary pronouns, finding articles from well-known German sites can allow students to practice their reading and comprehension skills while learning about diversity in Germany.

Extra resources on teaching methods for learning abilities is available online. Organizations like UDL and Understood, an online resource for the Universal Design for Learning, offer educators a wide range of teaching styles and philosophies which can help aid different learning styles and abilities. Although teaching learners with different abilities is beyond the scope of this thesis, it should be noted it is equally as important for materials to be accessible to all learners as well being represented in the material. Teachers can access these resources online to learn about teaching guidelines to meet the specific needs of their students.

4.3. Goals

My significant contribution here is to expand how people think about language teaching at the elementary German level. These additions and adjustments will allow students to learn more advantageously for themselves, what applies to them, and those in their lives. These differences could encourage many students who once did not feel accepted or welcomed in the elementary German classroom to now be able to see themselves in their textbooks and Germany.

I would like to encourage Netzwerk neu A1, Impuls Deutsch, and Grenzenlos Deutsch to continue to make adjustments as suggested in my analysis to all parts of
their curriculum. For Grenzenlos Deutsch, as per their ‘About’ section on their website which encourages feedback of any type, I will reach out and offer these improvements. Improvements on their end have already been seen during the writing of this thesis, as many images and vocabulary lists were updated or exchanged while I was analysing them. For example, in February 2020 I had analysed the clothing vocabulary which did not include das Kopftuch (headscarf), but by April it had been updated to include it. Additionally, they could offer a free printable version of their explanations and activities. This would allow anyone access to their information. Those who do not have a personal computer could use a free computer at a school or town library as some schools offer free printing, but overall printing individual pages is less expensive than having to purchase an entire textbook.

Realistically every textbook will not make these adjustments, therefore in order for teachers to create the third space in their classroom it is important they acknowledge and discuss the shortcomings of their textbooks with their students. This is the first step for discussion and learning of the diversity of Germany and the United States. Textbooks authors should all strive to be more realistic and inclusive, and I hope to see improvements in those mentioned in this thesis, especially those already concentrating on creating more diverse textbooks.


