



Problematizing Cool Germany: Constructing Images of Refugees on the Covers of German Picture Books

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Abstract. The 2012 Syrian conflict forced millions of refugees to Germany that introduced changes to German policy. In the middle of public weighing of the pros and cons, a special edition of *The Economist* (April 2018 edition) published an editorial titled *Cool Germany* voiced a tone of optimism for the refugees and projected Germany as a more open, diverse and in vogue than other nations. This research scrutinises children's picture book covers in an attempt to investigate whether or not the spirit of *Cool Germany* is introduced as the foundation of multiculturalism in early literacy programmes in Germany. The selected children books were published after 2012, and all of them discuss issues pertaining to refugees. By applying the semiotic concept of signs, this study concludes that the spirit of *Cool Germany* is indeed to be found in early literacy material meant for German children and that this essence is expected to become a driving force for Germany for generations to come.

Keywords: *Cool Germany* · Children's picture book · multiculturalism · refugee

1 Introduction

An immense number of refugees fled to different countries in the aftermath of the 2012 Syrian conflict. Germany opened its borders in 2015 in the spirit of humanity and allowed access to refugees from Middle Eastern countries experiencing conflict, including Syria. Chancellor Angela Merkel's slogan *wir schaffen es* (we can do this) demonstrated optimism that Germany could take care of the refugees, and the country's *willkommen kultur* was tangible in its gesture of acceptance. In fact, German society's euphoric acceptance of refugees in 2015 was influenced by not only Angela Merkel's call of *wir schaffen es* but also by emotional factors, such as empathy. At the time, the whole world was shocked by a photograph of a tiny figure of a 3-year-old boy curled on his side on a beach, as if asleep. This viral picture depicted Aylan Kurdi, a refugee toddler who drowned in the Mediterranean Sea during the course of his parents' flight from Syria and washed up ashore on a Turkish coast on 2 September 2015. Hashtags such as #CouldBeMyChild and #refugeewelcome were ubiquitous on social media. Aylan's fair skin helped cast the light of humanity on the issue of refugees in Europe, as it brought home the message to people of Caucasian descent that he could have been one of their own [1].

However, as crimes involving refugees showed an increase, the mood of the majority of German citizens changed. Dissenting and anti-immigrant voices are now becoming clearly heard in Germany's public spheres. In Germany's 2017 general elections, the right-wing party won a significant number of votes for the first time since the Nazis won in 1939 [2]. The right-wing party *Alternatif fuer Duetsche/AfD* placed third on Germany's official website for the general elections, winning 12.6% of the votes and occupying 94 seats in the federal parliament [3]. Such a result reveals growing German scepticism regarding the policy of inclusion and the general populace's rising rejection of the refugees who entered the country.

It is undeniable, however, that the German population is becoming increasingly diverse despite the dynamics of the acceptance and rejection of refugees. A large expatriate *gastarbeiter* (literally, guest worker) population has already made German society diverse, but the nation's multiplicity has been further intensified by the arrival of refugees. An issue of *The Economist* published on April 14 2018 contains an editorial titled *Cool Germany*, which argues that the country is entering a new era of more diversity, openness, and informality, and that it is therefore becoming more trendy or "hip." The illustration accompanying the editorial shows Berlin's icon *Branderburger Tor* as a crosswalk, and a green-lit *Ampelmaennchen* (traffic icon used in Eastern Germany) can be seen crossing *Brandeburger Tor* carrying the Germany Flag. Such an illustration conveys the message that if the *Ampelman* icon once used to reference Eastern Germany can turn into a trendy tourism icon for Berlin, Germany's image in the world can be made to undergo the same transformation by sending out the message that the nation is becoming more diverse and more open.

The *Cool Germany* editorial exhibits an optimism toward Germany's socio-demographic makeup as well as its cultural identities, economy, and current state of politics. Given the right leadership in the form of Merkel's successor, Germany can become an example for other Western countries [4]. It did not take much time for the jargon *Cool Germany* to evoke statements of the pros and cons of this ethos from individuals and media. "Deutschland, Ploetzlich Cool?" in *DeutscheWelle*, "Deutschland: Cool oder Aengstlich, wie geht's Deutschland" and "Schluss mit Apokalypse Deutschland ist weltoffen und cool!" on *Spiegel Online* as well as the news platform's comment section provide examples of such outpourings of opinions. The latest developments involve the media's negative framing of the refugees and the significant victory of the AfD party. Hence, a looming pessimism surrounds the idea of *Cool Germany*, which is expected to be a transient condition.

Can the notion of *Cool Germany* become the foundation of German multiculturalism through early literacy? If this framework is made possible, the idea of inclusiveness could linger longer in Germany's public discourse. This paper investigates a few refugee-themed German picture books published after 2012. Children's books have been selected as the corpus for the present study for two reasons. First, children occupy both significant and vulnerable positions in issues relating to refugees at this time. A senior adviser of the United Nations High Commissioner has asserted that the presence of millions of young refugees has resulted in a child refugee crisis [5]. In Germany alone, most of the proposals for refugee shelters involve children younger than 4 years of age [6]. Second, children's books are strategically apt in predicting a society's future, as they encompass

values and messages that are considered important for transmission in that particular culture.

Literature reviews of studies on refugees rarely involve the covers of children's books, and this is another reason this examination has selected this corpus as its data for analysis. Previous research initiatives on children's books have evidenced the power possessed by book covers in delivering certain ideologies or economic concepts. Arunas Gudinašius and Andrius Šuminas' business-related study, titled *Choosing a Book by Its Cover: Analysis of a Reader's Choice*, was conducted in book shops and libraries, and this experiment revealed that certain groups (female/male, old/young) select books according to preferred colours or cover illustrations. Meanwhile, Jane Sunderland and Mark McGlassman from Lancaster University took an ideological perspective on book covers. Their research (*Looking at Picture Book Covers Multimodally: The Case of Two-Mum and Two-Dad Picture Books*) applied a multimodal analysis and employed Theo van Leeuwen's Social Actor framework to investigate the ways in which the discourse pertaining to same-sex parents is shaped by the covers of illustrated children's books [7]. These authors focused attention on the visual and textual elements of the picture book covers and discovered gradations of subtlety in the use of illustrations and words. Subtle to direct expressions were used to communicate the idea of families with same-sex parents for the purpose of "normalisation.". The present investigation, on the other hand, places more emphasis on the refugee-related ideological elements pertaining to the concept of *Cool Germany*, a focus that has not yet been cast by any other study.

This paper examines the covers of children's picture books through the semiotics framework. All the *signifiers* and *signifieds* on the book jackets will be scrutinised and analysed to comprehensively ascertain the meaning they convey. The research problems are formulated in the form of the following two questions: 1) How is the presence of refugees signified in German refugee-themed children's picture books? and 2) Can the notion of *Cool Germany* prevail in future German social discourse? This author's previous research points to the existence of four picture books published after 2012. The books selected are *Du gehöört auch dazu, das grosse Buch der Familien* (2013), translated from an English version published in 2010; *Alle da! Unser Kunterbuntes Leben* (2014); *So Bin Ich Und Wie Bist Du* (2014); and *Bestimmt Alles Gut* (2015).

2 *Cool Germany*: Revisiting Germany's Openness and Diversity

The phrase *Cool Germany* reminds people about Germany's multiculturalism and conveys an optimism with regard to the presence of refugees. Terms such as *integration*, *multikulti*, *parallel gesellschaft*, and *Einwanderungsland* have existed since the 1980s and 1990s but are making a resurgence in Germany's public discourse. The influx of European and Turkish expatriates in the 1960s caused Germany to face a different social reality. There were complications when these expatriates stayed in Germany and brought their family members. At that juncture, the Turkish immigrants outnumbered the other immigrant groups, and they were considered to be difficult to handle since they were *doppelt fremd* (double foreigners) who were both religiously and culturally different [8].

Faced with a society that was becoming more diverse, the government of Germany obligated harmonious living by instituting integration programmes that included German language acceleration, work and educational opportunities for the children of immigrants, and other means of assimilation. Stability was achieved after a couple of generations, and the children of the original immigrants did not problematise their identity in the same way as their parents. In contrast to the first- and second-generation expatriate workers, who felt that they were trapped within an in-between identity, the later generations of people with a migrant background are certain of their German nationality. In the early 2000s, Germany officially declared itself to be *Einwanderungsland* (an immigrant-receiving country), and since 2006, the country has held DIK/*Deutsche Islam Konferenz* to create a future for their Muslim citizens [9].

This successful past experience might have convinced Angela Merkel's government that they could welcome and support the arrival of new refugees. Millions of refugees from different countries have entered Germany annually once Germany's borders were opened in 2015. The new wave of refugees spans various backgrounds (from lower to upper middle class and from unskilled to skilled workers), unlike the *gastarbeiter* (expatriate "guest workers") who belonged roughly to similar backgrounds (unskilled service workers). While the *gastarbeiter* were invited to Germany because Germany's advancing industry demanded more labourers, the new crop of refugees came to Germany of their own accord to seek safety and shelter, and their presence was not a German requirement.

As elucidated by the above discussion, Germany's foundation as a "cool" country began since the arrival of the *gastarbeiter*. The strength of this foundation of inclusion and assimilation is now being tested with the arrival of a large number of refugees into Germany. The problems arising from the immense influx of refugees poses a dilemma for Germany. As an immigration officer in Berlin explicitly stated, "we can do this – but it's a hell of a lot of work" [10].

3 Judging a Book by Its Cover: *Cool Germany* Expectations in Cool German Picture Books

A famous proverb states, "don't judge a book by its cover." There is some truth to this adage, since it encourages people to appreciate the substance rather than the wrapping of both people and things. However, as mentioned above, a book's cover plays a vital role in presenting the prevailing, desired, or discoured ethos, and four refugee-themed picture book covers are analysed in this paper through the framework of semiotics.

Du Gehoert dazu Das Grosse Buch Der Familie is a book written by Mary Hoffman and Ros Asquith. It was originally published in the UK in 2010 by Dial Books. In 2013, the book was translated into German by Stephanie Menge and was republished by Sauerlaender. The translated book was selected under the assumption that this book is chosen for translation into German precisely because it showcases the values sought to be upheld by German society. The book's cover is slightly different from that of the English version, although both editions show a white background, which represents a bright but neutral atmosphere. The cover displays four ethnic groups. On the top right corner of the German edition, three children are shown jumping in excitement. Their

happy energy is palpable from their facial expressions and the uplifted positioning of their arms. Each child is given a different hair colour or texture: blonde, brunette, and black hair, which is either straight, shaggy, or curled. This illustration obviously depicts unity amidst diversity. The cheerful and animated expressions of the faces that adorn the cover project a positive impression about the contents of the book (Fig. 1).

The sentence *Du Gehoert Dazu* (you belong, too), written in capital letters, appears directly under the three happily jumping children. This statement, emphasised so strongly in the German version, is not taken from the original book, which is titled *The Great Book of Families*. The statement in question begins with *du*, or you, and this second-person pronoun refers directly to the reader. It forms an interesting strategy, since readers of the picture book are personally engaged with and involved in the group on the cover as they read the message “you belong, too.” Furthermore, the visual accompaniment of happy and energetic children reinforces the positive atmosphere that the book wants to build.

Two pictures occupy an equal position immediately after the title. A toddler, a teenage boy, and a teenage girl appear on the left. The trio is similar in appearance, with dark skin and curly hair. All three are reading oversized books that are perhaps so portrayed to highlight their importance. Their expressions convey both serious engrossment and pleasure, implying that they are enjoying the activity of reading. On the right, a perplexed-looking child holds a white-coloured volume that sports the word *Tagebuch* (diary). A diary is commonly used to record things that make an impression upon us in our daily lives. The child’s confusion and the blank journal serve to underscore the children’s innocence and the potential that their lives and minds can be filled in many ways. Under



Fig. 1. Cover of *Du Gehoert dazu Das Grosse Buch Der Familie*.

the three people and the diary-wielding child appears the formal title, *Das Grosse Buch Der Familie* (*The Great Book of Families*).

The bottom of the cover offers the most interesting illustration of the concept of a family. There are seven adults who are positioned closely with six children. This group is noticeably larger in size than the others illustrated on the cover, and it displays a harmonious plurality. People with different physical appearances and different outfit colours are positioned close to one another with happy facial expressions. They are physically in proximity, signifying an intimacy of relationship. A laughing nun gazes at a Muslim family that is looking intently at a baby. The depiction of a nun, a *jilbab*-wearing woman, and a *taqiyah*-wearing man with a thick beard clearly underlines the happy harmony among people from different religious backgrounds.

The illustration also displays a smiling father of two children. Interestingly, this *allein-erziehende* (single parent) is positioned between two men. One of them has blonde hair and wears jeans, while the other has yellowish skin and dark hair. These two men also carry children. In a subtle way, this portrayal may be interpreted as a depiction of a two-father, same-sex family. However, the Asian man stands next to a young woman who is also given a similar appearance, and the woman seems to be minding two children, one of whom has dark skin, wide eyes, and curly hair, while the other is shown with reddish skin, wide eyes, and blonde hair. If the group on the left emphasises religious peace, this other group emphasises happiness and harmony between people of different genders and sexual orientations. It should also be noted that all the grouped figures in the illustration are minding their own businesses, but they are still pleasantly coexistent.

Upon closer scrutiny, the nun, positioned on the far left side, may be interpreted as looking at the entire group and not just the Muslim family. Perhaps she is meant to act as the satisfied “guardian” of the contentment, harmony, and diversity that she is witnessing. Germany’s positioning of itself as *Christliches Abendland* (a land with Christian values) can be used as the basis of this interpretation. The smiling nun can be taken to signify Germany’s happiness at the presence of diversity that can be sheltered in harmony under its gentle protection, an image that is very different from the erstwhile picture of a Germany that wanted to preserve its pure and “original” heritage through an “exclusive” culture and values.

Overall, this book cover conveys the enthusiasm of children as they convey their belonging (*du gehöert*) to diversity, as depicted in the plurality of their larger “family.” The reading of books and the search for new knowledge assist in the filling out of empty “diaries” of childhood, and a big, happy, peaceful, and harmonious family can form from the existing diversity if there is hope. This book’s cover depicts Germany’s forthcoming generation as one people who are ready to ensure that Germany remains “cool” in the future (Fig. 2).

Alle da! Unser Kunterbuntes Leben, written by Anja Tuckermann and Tine Schulz, was published in 2014 by Klett Kinderbuch. The book’s front and back covers will be analysed next to understand the discourse of *Cool Germany*.

The picture book’s jacket sports a bright yellow background with green illustrations on the top and bottom margins. The pattern of a leafy tree forms the top margin, and the bottom design represents grass. These motifs present a bright, joyful impression of a warm environment.

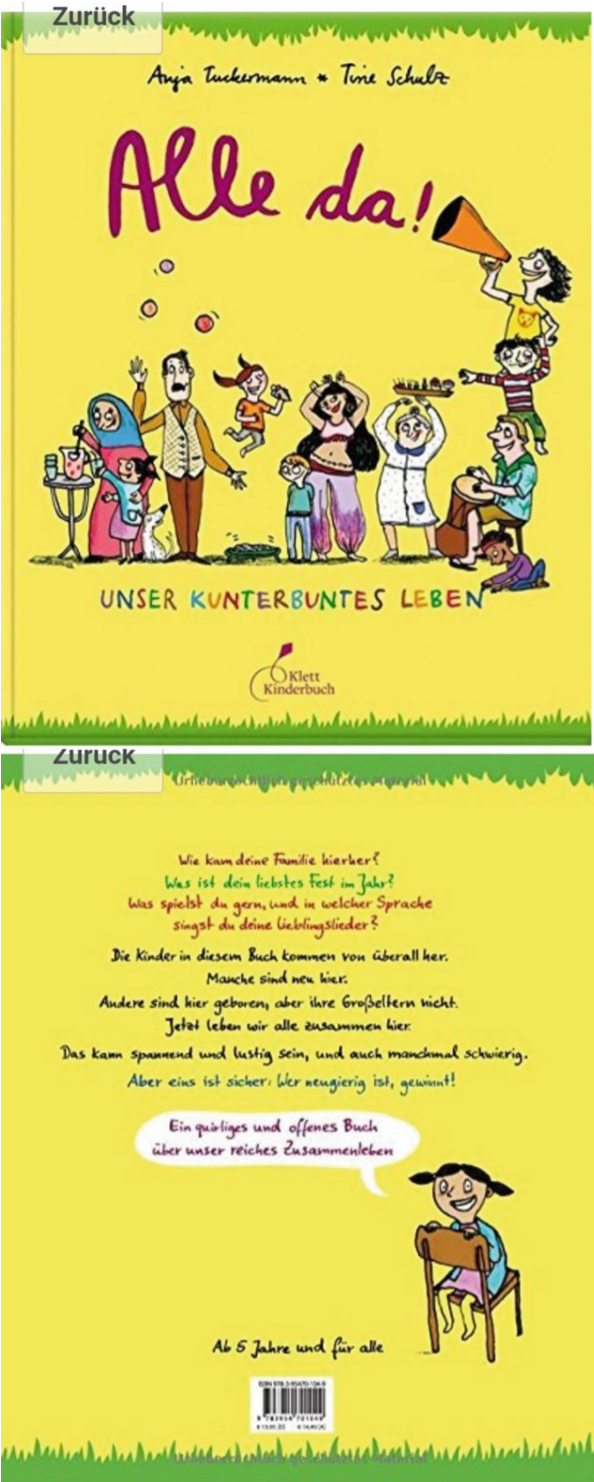


Fig. 2. The front and back cover of *Alle da!*

The book's title *Alle da!* (All Here!) is written in cursive letters and placed on top, just below the names of the authors. The title seems to emanate from a megaphone held by a smiling child, signifying that an important announcement is being made over a loudspeaker. The letters on the left are larger than the smaller ones on the right in accordance with the direction of the megaphone, and an exclamation mark appears at the end to imply the loud voice and cheerful tone in tune with the child's happy facial expression. The child making the announcement is assisted by two people below him, signifying that diversity can only be realised through cooperation. Sitting on a stool at the bottom, a dark-skinned child writes with chalk on the ground near his feet, and a grown man plays a percussion instrument. This blond man acts as the "foundation" for the two black-haired children who stand one on top of the other on his shoulders. As an adult, this person is considered mature enough to sustain the structure of harmony and to control the rhythm of the group.

Unlike *Du Gehoert Dazu's* depiction of togetherness, in which each figure is engrossed in personal business, all the figures in this second cover illustration participate in a single shared activity. Everyone seems to be celebrating by dancing to a rhythm created by the percussion. Similar to the first book, this cover depicts diversity in physical appearances, outfits, and ages. An elderly woman with tied-back blonde hair dances merrily while carrying a tray full of food high above her head with both hands. Her legs are grounded, but her hips are caught in a sway. The child on the percussionist's shoulder who is holding up the child with the megaphone with one hand seems about to pick up an item of food from the tray this woman carries above her head. A girl wearing a Middle Eastern belly dancer's outfit is dancing next to the old woman. The party atmosphere is supported by another young girl, who is jumping and singing as she holds a scoop of ice cream in a cone as if it were a microphone. A man with a thick moustache, typical of the Turkish people, is playing handball. A *hijab*-wearing woman is happily pouring a drink for a little girl, and a white dog wiggles his tail happily at their feet.

The dog's presence is interesting because dogs are avoided by people who follow Islam. This is because according to Muslim laws, a dog's saliva must be washed off by a special and rather difficult procedure. In this case, however, the dog seems to be attached to the Muslim woman, and neither the woman nor the dog looks bothered. Everyone is smiling happily and existing in a peaceful state of diversity. The depicted outfits, food, and drinks (including the barbecue grill, ice cream, cold drinks, and cakes) demonstrate that it is summer, a season often associated with celebration and warmth. Just below the group, the dark-skinned, curly-haired child sitting on the ground next to the percussionist has just finished writing the phrase *Unser Kunterbuntes Leben* (Our Diverse/Colourful Life) with chalk of different colours, and a synergy is drawn between the boy (as the writer of the message written in varied hues) and his message of living a vivid life, rich in diversity.

The back cover has text in the form of questions related to the theme of the book: "How did your family arrive here (in Germany)? Which celebration do you like the most? In which language do you sing your favourite song?" These questions trigger curiosity about aspects of identity that are usually unrealised by a child or a reader belonging to cultural backgrounds that differ from the German majority. These questions are also

written in colourful letters, underscoring the message of diversity. The book's synopsis is written after the questions, and its message may be paraphrased as: "The kids in this book come from different regions. Some of them have just arrived (referring to the child refugees who have just recently come to Germany); some were born in Germany, but their grandparents were not born here (possibly the *gastarbeiter*'s third generation, or the descendents of people who came to Germany in the 1960s and 1970s)."

The statement, "Now we live together here, and it can be terrifying, funny, and sometimes difficult," defines the book's theme, asserting that communal living can create many experiences, good and bad. The synopsis ends with the claim, "but one thing is sure: whoever is curious shall win," motivating people to keep trying to understand what they do not yet know. The little girl who, on the front cover, was given a cold drink from the *hijab*-wearing woman reappears on the back cover, where she is seated with her legs dangling from the gap at the back of a front-side back chair, in a child's typical casual and explorative poses. The illustration makes it clear that this child immigrant/refugee can freely and nonchalantly state her opinion about the book, which appears in a speech bubble from her mouth: "a book that is open to the precious life that we live together." Her informal and happy expression evidences her complete comfort, as her presence is accepted and even celebrated through a book whose title proclaims, "All here! Everything is here!" and which openly discusses the issues of togetherness in Germany. The word "we" in the phrase "the life that we live together" proves that the child has become an integral part of such togetherness.

The overall appearance and elements of the front and back covers of *Alle da!* make it clear that acceptance and harmonisation of Germany's diversity results from placing an increased emphasis on German citizens who belong to non-German ethnicities. As of 2016, 38.1% of children younger than 5 in Germany belong to migrant families [11]. A warm, peaceful, celebratory, musical, happy summer such as the one depicted on the book's cover is the harbinger of hope for a Germany that will always be *cool*.

Published in the same year (2014) as *Alle Da!* and by the same publisher (Klett Kinderbuch), the third book to be discussed in this paper is titled *So Bin Ich Un Wie Bist Du?*

The cover of the book uses a similar colour palette as *Alle da!* and it is predominantly bright yellow. A sun also shines brightly at an almost centred position on the top part of the front cover, emphasising a similarly happy and warm atmosphere. A person is shown lounging on a rainbow-coloured hammock directly under the sun. She sunbathes and enjoys the light. The rainbow hammock is a quick reference to the rainbow flag frequently used by LGBTQ (Lesbian, Gay, B, Transgender, and Queer groups), who are also discriminated against in most societies. The rainbow colour can also be interpreted as the beauty that results from the harmonious coexistence of differences. The presence of the rainbow and the shining sun illustrates natural splendour and harmony and represent hope for peace and beauty in living together with different people (Fig. 3).

Just below the rainbow hammock, the title *So bin Ich un Wie Bist Du?* (This is How I Am. How About You?) is written in different font sizes and colours. The selected phrase *so bin ich* (this is how I am) establishes a strong sense of self that does not hesitate to state its own situation and identity. Self-belief and possession of a secure and robust personality are vital elements of living in tune with different groups of people. A

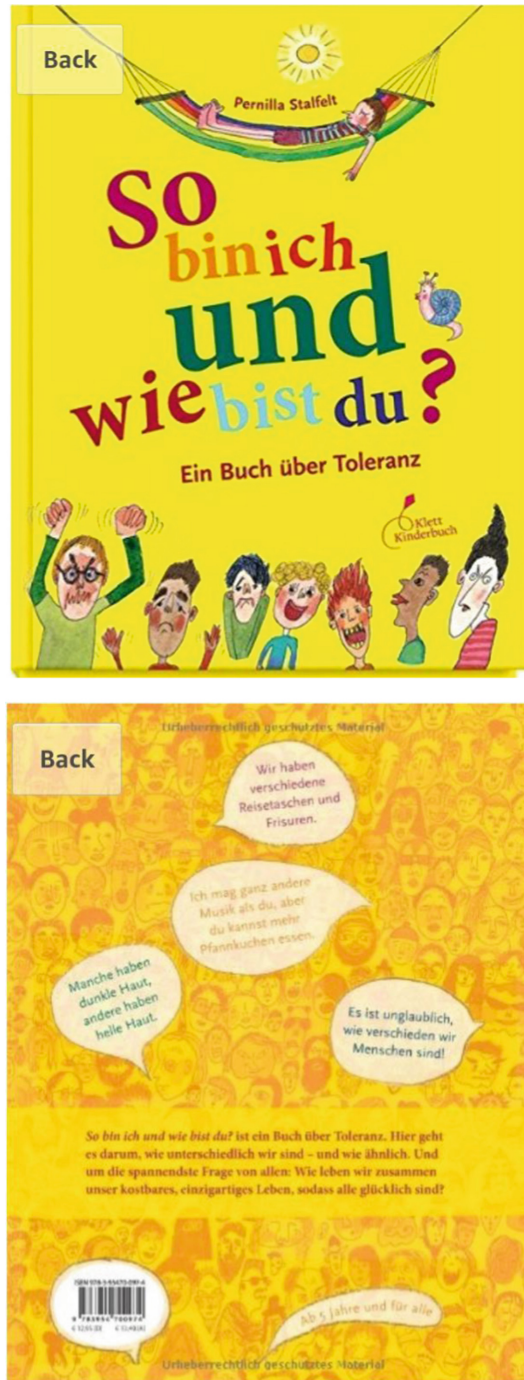


Fig. 3. The front and back cover of *So bin ich und wie bist du? Ein Buch über Toleranz*

confused identity can, in fact, obstruct this process of communal living. However, the title's compelling conviction with regard to identity does not end in a full stop (which could imply an arrogant and exclusive form of identity); it continues with curiosity and openness to lead to the question, *und wie bist du?* (and how about you?). The openness implied by the title's interrogative tone is strengthened by a straightforward explanation, *Ein Buch Ueber Toleranz* (A Book About Tolerance). Such an explicit statement is not found in the titles of the two books previously discussed. More interestingly, if the people depicted on the covers of the first two books are diverse in age, religion, and culture, the cover of this book shows more physical diversity in terms of face shapes, hair colours, and skin tones. This difference in physical features might represent cultural diversity.

Two terms, "culturally specific" and "culturally generic/neutral" are used to explain whether the presented differences in the multiculturalism depicted in children's books actually convey a diversity of cultures (differences in habits, values, or attributes of identity) or not (mere dissimilarities in hobbies, dream jobs, and height) [12]. According to this classification, the depiction of the figures illustrated on the cover of this book can be classified as 'semi-culturally specific' since their physical differences might actually represent cultural differences. These semi-culturally specific figures with different expressions are put together. Their expressions show anger, confusion, sadness, surprise, and happiness.

Spatially, there are gaps between the people in this book's cover illustration. It seems at a glance that the people illustrated on this book's jacket do not represent the notion of intimacy, portrayed by the spatial proximity or harmonious communal activity shown in the covers of the previous two books. The closeness is explicitly elaborated by the title, but this claim is not supported by the illustration. In fact, the graphic places more weight on the diversity and disparity between the figures without providing any unifying concept. Nonetheless, the back cover of the book contains some other intriguing details. Many faces are drawn close to one another, almost as watermarks on the yellow back cover. Clear religious and cultural identities are revealed by these faces, which include veiled, *hijab*-clad women, *taqiyah*-wearing men, and ponytailed women. The illustration implies that there are innumerable different faces, and no one face is identical to another in this illustration. Along with the myriads of faces, there are a few statements summarising the content of the book. These mention differences in skin colour, hairstyles, favourite music, and other ways in which the human race represents diversity. The book's fundamental thesis is also declared in a full sentence that reads, "This is a book about tolerance, about how we can be totally different but also similar. And the most terrifying question is: with all the existing uniqueness and diversity, how can we live together and make everyone happy?" The word "terrifying" suggests uncertainty and doubt, but at the same time, it demonstrates hope. Like the front cover does, the back cover includes an open-ended question that requires an answer that will emanate from the collective effort of creating a happy communal life while allowing differences to exist.

Such open-ended questions are primary strategies for some books. They invite their readers to actively involve themselves in the creation of a joyful and shared living experience. The illustrated, semi-culturally specific figures and the existence of the rainbow-hued hammock evidence that this book offers a neutral space for discussing culture and religion while also emphasising the discourse pertaining to differences in

sexual orientation and gender. Moreover, the myriad cultural and religious identities that form the background of the back cover evince that the book embraces all the existing disparities in present-day German society. Asking open-ended questions about how a fulfilling and satisfying life can be led within a community that is mixed but unified, this book offers a reflection of to the way an inclusive future may be created in a *Cool* Germany.

Finally, *Bestimmt Wird Alles Gut* is a picture book written by Kirsten Bole and Jan Birck and published by Klett Kinderbuch in 2015. Compared to the books that have already been examined, this one has a grey cover and a clear illustration detailing the arrival of refugees. A gloomy, sad, and serious atmosphere permeates the jacket. The illustration in the foreground shows a family with four children that has just arrived at a coast. The dark grey sky and the lights switched on in the back signify that it is late night or early dawn. A boat far away at sea and the people who are swimming to the coast symbolise the struggle people have to undergo to reach the shores of a new land, where they will be safe and accepted. The faces of the refugees are marked with worry and exhaustion. Two children drag their feet, looking fatigued, while two others are held in their parents' arms. Also, the shore that is directly connected to the sea serves as a strong reminder of the viral photograph of Aylan Kurdi, a little boy whose dead body washed up on a Turkish shore. This photograph caused many Europeans to wake up to the real suffering of the refugees, and countries began to grant asylum. In fact, Germany officially started opening its borders the year the book was published. Demonstrating how difficult the journey is for refugees, the illustration on this book cover elicits the empathy of its readers. In Nadin El-Enany's words, the refugees are humanised [1].

Interestingly, the title of the book is also inscribed in Arabic, which suggests that the book is also written for child refugees to give them hope that as the title says (*bestimmt wird alles gut*), everything will be all right. This book directly refers to the real and ongoing issue of the children's refugee crisis by welcoming the child refugees who mostly come to Germany from conflict-ridden Middle Eastern countries. It attempts to accord them the gift of hope through the telling of their story and through an inscription written in a language that they understand. At the same time, German children are also given a visual and textual glimpse of the refugees' immense suffering as they seek safe harbours. Forgiarini said that this strategy is employed to evoke and nurture empathy, which is the basic cornerstone of tolerance [1].

On the back cover, the same shore is represented, but this time, it is empty of people, and the depiction conveys a feeling of silence and coldness. The textual description relates that the book tells the story of Rahaf, a ten-year old girl, and her brother Hasan, who is nine. They used to live in a city named Homs in Syria. The exposition is followed by an incomplete statement: "However, one day the planes came..." For adults, this clearly references the war. However, such an incomplete sentence triggers the curiosity of children with regard to the events that transpired in Homs. To introduce kids to war and its effects on humanity is a vital but problematic strategy (Fig. 4).

Additionally, the book contains an appendix with a mini glossary of "words and basic sentences to learn the German and Arabic languages." This attached appendix is extremely important, as it demonstrates that the book does not merely tell a story about refugees in two languages. It also facilitates the readers to acquire a second language, an

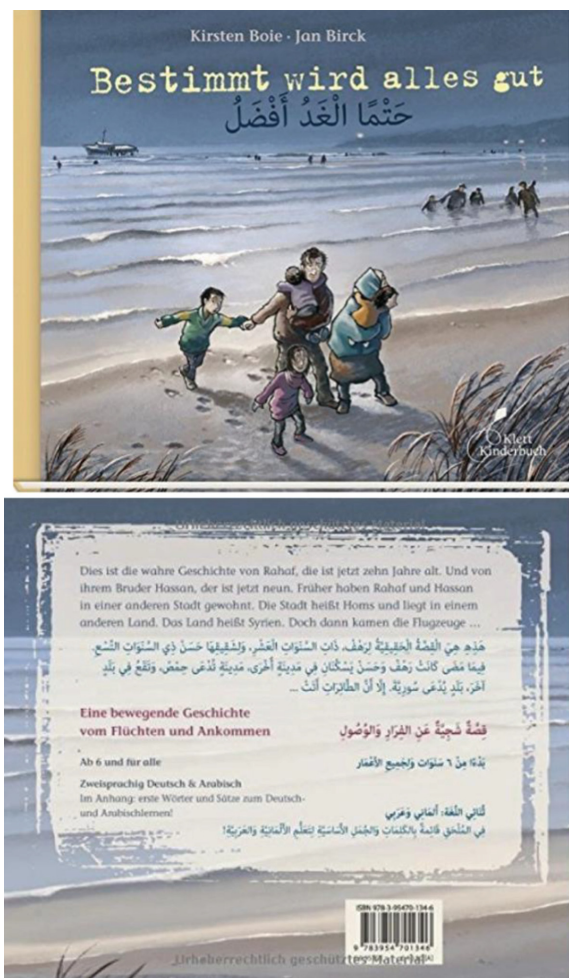


Fig. 4. The front and back cover of *Bestimmt wird alles gut*

element that is necessary for communal living. In indicating that the listed basic words and sentences are meant both for those who wish to learn German and for those who wish to learn Arabic, the book emphasises that new knowledge is not only meant for refugees, but also for those who accept them into their lives and neighbourhoods.

Overall, the book's cover makes compelling use of the dimensions of emotion. The gloomy and dark atmosphere of the setting aptly depicts the despair of the refugees and touches a chord of empathy in readers. The book's protagonists, Rahaf and Hasan, are easily relatable and identifiable for younger readers, whether they are refugees or German children. The book's bilingual feature also proves that the book welcomes, accepts, and extends hope to child refugees. At the same time, it nurtures the empathy and human emotions of German children and adults so that they may understand the personal tragedies and the struggles that the refugees have suffered. The strategy of attaching a

mini glossary for German and Arabic also creates the hope that with cooperation on both sides, a Germany that is gradually becoming more diverse can prevail as a harmonious and unified nation.

4 Conclusion

The four picture book cover illustrations that have been scrutinised evince that the principles of *Cool Germany* are introduced in early literacy material as the foundation of multiculturalism in Germany. Despite all the difficulties that confront communal living in Germany and the rise of the right-wing party, the four covers of the German picture books advocate friendship, acceptance, and tolerance toward the creation of a happier, more assimilated, and more peaceful Germany. The book covers present varied messages pertaining to community life in a diverse society, ranging from German optimism as *Christliches Abendland* to the suggestion of constant learning and openness to new things to the acknowledgement that communal living is not always easy to the empathy-nurturing depiction of the intolerable suffering and strife the refugees have to go through. As these picture book covers become instruments that advocate the spirit of German harmony in the future, *Cool Germany* can begin newer discussions with regard to the understanding of the term “diversity” in the German context, particularly in terms of its relation to migrants and refugees who keep knocking on its borders.

Acknowledgments. Financial support from Hibah PITTA UI 2018 is gratefully acknowledged.

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